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EVER-MOVING REPOSE

**The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy
Through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology**

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Abstract

This thesis is an exposition of Maximus the Confessor's (580-662 AD) understanding of temporality. Maximus the Confessor's theology constitutes a philosophical 'system', a philosophical *Weltanschauung* with a particularly unique ontology. Primarily to this philosophical vision owes Maximus the recognition that he has achieved in recent decades as one of the greatest 'Byzantine' thinkers. (Furthermore, he has been widely acknowledged as a Church Father that unites East and West.) There is neither a systematic treatment on the subject of time by Maximus nor an articulated 'theory of time' in his works. However, scattered remarks on time can be traced in his writings; remarks that point to a unique and distinct understanding of temporality's nature. In attempting to reconstruct this Maximian theory of time, we are primarily relying on two sources: (a) The Aristotelian philosophy of motion and time that Maximus used as the basis in order to accomplish a radical innovation thereof, and (b) contemporary readings of Maximus, mostly by Christos Yannaras (and John Zizioulas), as well as contemporary philosophical systems that were developed implicitly on an Maximian background. With the latter, we are referring to Christos Yannaras' critical and relational ontology, which will serve as a hermeneutic tool and a contemporary perspective in our approach of Maximus the Confessor's *Gedankenwelt*. After examining Maximus' life and works, we provide an overview of the secondary literature concerning Maximian scholarship and 'Byzantine' philosophy. Following an overview of the ecclesial *Weltanschauung* in which Maximus operates and writes (and, in particular, of the apophatic nature of this tradition of thought), we introduce the reader to Maximus' ontology and to the importance of the created/uncreated distinction in it, as well as to elements of his philosophical anthropology. Subsequently, we use Christos Yannaras' critical and relational ontology as a potent tool provided by a contemporary 'Maximian commentator' in order to understand and explicate Maximus the Confessor's philosophy and we then proceed to Maximus' doctrine of the λόγοι of beings, i.e. of ontology as a dialogical reciprocity. Ensuing an introduction to the Aristotelian theory of motion and time, we proceed to unfold Maximus' radical innovation thereof, Maximus' own theory of motion as *returning* motion and to his understanding of time (χρόνος) as a spatiotemporal continuum. Our conclusion is that Maximus acknowledges three distinct modes of temporality, i.e. *time* (χρόνος), *the Aeon* (αἰὼν) and the radical transformation of temporality and motion in the *ever-moving repose* (στάσις ἀεκίνητος). With these three distinct modes of temporality, a unique Maximian *theory of time* can be reconstructed. In this theory, time is not merely measuring ontological motion, but it rather measures a *relationship*, the consummation of which effects the *transformation*

of time into a dimensionless present devoid of temporal, spatial and generally ontological *distance* – thereby manifesting a perfect communion-in-otherness.

Zusammenfassung

Gegenstand dieser Untersuchung ist die Zeitauffassung Maximus' des Bekenners (580-662 n. Chr.). Das theologische Denken Maximus' des Bekenners ist als ein philosophisches ‚System‘ zu lesen, als eine philosophische *Weltanschauung* mit einer herausragenden Ontologie, auf deren Grundlage Maximus in neuerer Zeit als einer der bedeutendsten ‚byzantinischen‘ Denker breite Anerkennung gefunden hat (wie auch als ein Kirchenvater, der Ost und West vereint). Im Werk von Maximus ist das Thema der Zeit nicht systematisch behandelt, es existiert keine systematisch ausgeführte und ausformulierte ‚Zeittheorie‘. In seinen Schriften finden sich jedoch mehrfach Bemerkungen über die Zeit, die eine besondere und ausgeprägte Auffassung von der Natur der Temporalität belegen. Im Versuch, diese maximistische Theorie von der Zeit zu rekonstruieren, stütze ich mich hauptsächlich auf folgende zwei Grundlagen: (a) auf die aristotelische Theorie von der Bewegung und von der Zeit als den Ausgangspunkt, von dem aus Maximus eine radikale Innovation geleistet hat, und (b) auf zeitgenössische Lektüren des Werkes von Maximus, hauptsächlich durch Christos Yannaras (und John Zizioulas), wie auch durch zeitgenössische philosophische Denkrichtungen, die implizit vor einem maximistischen Hintergrund entwickelt wurden. Ich beziehe mich auf Christos Yannaras' kritische und relationale Ontologie, die mir bei meiner Beschäftigung mit der *Gedankenwelt* Maximus' des Bekenners als ein hermeneutischer Schlüssel und eine zeitgenössische Perspektive dienen wird. Diese Dissertation fängt mit einer Darstellung von Leben und Werk des Maximus und mit einer kritischen Durchsicht der einschlägigen Sekundärliteratur zu Maximus und zu der ‚byzantinischen‘ Philosophie allgemein an. Nach einem Überblick über die ekklesiale *Weltanschauung*, in deren Rahmen Maximus wirkt und schreibt, und unter Betonung der apophatischen Natur dieser Denkrichtung, wird der Leser in die Ontologie des Maximus eingeführt, insbesondere in die Bedeutung der Unterscheidung zwischen der geschaffenen Welt und der Ungeschaffenheit, wie auch in Elemente der maximistischen philosophischen Anthropologie. Folgend gehe ich auf die kritische und relationale Ontologie von Christos Yannaras ein, zumal sie einen wichtigen Zugang zum philosophischen Denken Maximus' des Bekenners darstellt, und in Maximus' Auffassung von der λόγοι-Lehre, d.h. von Ontologie als dialogische Reziprozität. Nach einer Einführung in die aristotelische Theorie von der Bewegung und von der Zeit, gehe ich auf die diesbezügliche radikale Innovation des Maximus ein, auf Maximus' eigene Theorie von der Bewegung als *rückkehrende* Bewegung und auf sein Verständnis von Zeit (χρόνος) als ein raumzeitliches Kontinuum. Meine Schlussfolgerung ist, dass

Maximus zwischen drei verschiedenen Arten von Temporalität unterscheidet: zwischen *Zeit* (χρόνος), *Äon* (αἰὼν) und der radikalen Transformation von Temporalität und Bewegung in eine *ewig-bewegliche Ruhe* (στάσις ἀεικίνητος). Mit diesen drei verschiedenen Arten von Temporalität kann eine besondere maximistische *Zeittheorie* rekonstruiert werden. Hierin misst *Zeit* nicht lediglich eine ontologische Bewegung, sondern eher eine *Beziehung*, deren Vollendung die *Transformation* von *Zeit* in eine unendliche Gegenwart zur Folge hat, frei von zeitlicher, räumlicher und generell ontologischer *Entfernung* – und manifestiert so eine perfekte Gemeinschaft-im-Anderssein.

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Moreover, I am very thankful to Prof. Christos Yannaras for his ongoing valuable counsel and guidance, as well as for the initial inspiration for this work. It is to him that this thesis is humbly dedicated, the least reason for which being that he first introduced me to one of the most original and innovative thinkers that I have ever encountered, Maximus the Confessor. My special thanks are extended to Prof. Andrew Louth, who has repeatedly offered his expert counsel to me out of genuine kindness and interest, without having any obligation to do so by an academic involvement in this doctoral procedure. For this, I am indebted to him.

I wish to also thank scholars and friends Dionysios Skliris, Andrew Kaethler, Timothy Carroll, Travis Buchanan, Pui Him Ip, Prof. Chryssi Sidiropoulou and Johannes Borjesson for their vigorous engagement in constructive conversations that helped the formation of this thesis both directly and indirectly, as well as Prof. Pantelis Golitsis for his critique and suggestions concerning Aristotle's understanding of temporality and motion. I would also like to thank Father Maximos Simonopetritis (Nicholas Conostas) for his kind permission to cite passages from his translation of Maximus' *Ambigua* prior to its publication for the purposes of this book.

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It goes without saying that I am solely responsible for every omission, inadequacy and error in the present work.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations denote our primary sources:

CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca</i>
PG	Migne's <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
Cantarella	Cantarella, Raffaele: <i>S. Massimo Confessore. La mistagogia ed altri scritti</i> . Florence: Testi Cristiani 1931.
Ceresa-Gastaldo	Ceresa-Gastaldo, Aldo: <i>Massimo Confessore - Capitoli sulla carità. Ed. criticamente con introd., versione e note</i> . Rome: Ed. Studium (Verba Seniorum, collana di testi e studi patristici, n.s. 3) 1963.

The translations are the author's if not otherwise noted.¹ Where available, we will provide published English translations of Maximus' passages. Many translated passages have been modified (in accordance with the Greek original) in order to retain a certain uniformity in terminology throughout our study, while the original translator is still cited. When a Maximian quote's paraphrase is provided in the text, we will often cite the original Greek passage in the footnotes, depending on its importance and size. In cases of crucial terminology, both the English translation and the original text will be provided for reference. We will use the following abbreviations for translated passages:

Berthold	Berthold, George C.: <i>Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings</i> . New York: Paulist Press 1985.
Blowers	Blowers, Paul M. & Robert Louis Wilken: <i>On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor</i> . Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 2003.
Constas, DOML	Constas, Nicholas: <i>Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers – The Ambigua</i> (two volumes). Cambridge: Harvard University Press (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 28 & 29) 2014.

¹ With the exception of chapter 3.4, "The Fundamentals of Temporality, Spatiality and Motion: Sections 35-40 from the Tenth 'Difficulty'", where all translations derive from Andrew Louth's *Maximus the Confessor*.

- Lollar** Lollar, Joshua: *Maximus the Confessor: Ambigua to Thomas and Second Letter to Thomas*. Turnhout: Brepols (Corpus Christianorum in Translation) 2010.
- Prassas** Prassas, Despina (ed.): *St Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts*. Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press 2009.
- Louth** Louth, Andrew: *Maximus the Confessor*. New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis e-Library 2005.
- Theokritoff** Loudovikos, Nikolaos & Elizabeth Theokritoff (transl.): *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Brookline: HC Press 2010.

We will avoid the use of italics for Greek terms rendered in Greek characters, as the use of Greek characters sufficiently differentiates these terms from the rest of the text – for the same reason, we will not include Greek quotes in quotation marks. Throughout our study, we will employ double quotation marks (“ ”) for direct quotes and single quotation marks i.e. inverted commas (‘ ’) in order to denote technical terms and terminology or quotes within quotes or when discussing a particular term/phrase.

*PART I: Introduction – Maximus' Life and Status
Quaestionis*

I.1. Aim, Scope and Method

The hypothesis of this thesis is that Maximus' hermeneutic approach to time and temporality constitutes a unique theory of time and that this theory of time can either be reconstructed from Maximus' definitions and references or that a theory of time *based* on Maximus' definitions, formulations and overall *stance* on ontology and cosmology can be constructed. And that this theory of time interests philosophy not only in a historical/philological way, as a part of the history of 'Byzantine'² philosophy, but also as an input to today's ontological dialectics.³ That is, not as a perspective on temporality irrevocably constrained in its *pre-modern* origination, but rather as a *new* theory of temporality that could contribute to the efflorescence of contemporary ontological enquiry. Therefore, this study has a primarily *systematic* –rather than historical– character and goal.

Maximus has not written a treatise on time, nor has he composed a comprehensive theory of time like, for example, Aristotle.⁴ However, the definitions and formulations scattered in his work bear the marks of a unique understanding of this pillar of ontology and cosmology, i.e. time and temporality. Maximus is not merely influenced by Aristotle, but neither does he resume the Stagirite's philosophy or try to fit the Christian worldview into Aristotle's system. Even identical terminologies do not necessarily signify identical worldviews. Maximus' use of Aristotelian philosophy as *the language of philosophical thinking and expression*, as a potent tool to formulate and express a radically different

² As is common knowledge today and cited in nearly every book on 'Byzantine' history, the Eastern Roman Empire did never conceive of calling itself 'Byzantine', but Roman. Byzantium was the name of a Greek colony founded by colonists from Megara in 657 BC. Many centuries later and without any substantial connection to the area's colonial past, the Roman Emperor Emperor Constantine I chose to rebuild this city and to inaugurate it as the new capital of the Roman Empire (330 AD), renaming the city New Rome (*Nova Roma*). The city was subsequently renamed Constantinople and remained the capital of the Roman Empire until 1453 AD, even after the fall of the western part of the Empire and its older capital, Rome, in 476. The first time that the word 'Byzantine' was used to denote the (Eastern) Roman Empire is as late as the sixteenth century, in Hieronymus Wolf's *Corpus Byzantinae Historiae*. This later renaming of the Eastern Roman Empire constituted a part of western historiography's claiming of the Roman past through Charlemagne's *Holy Roman Empire* in the early ninth century (the idea of *translatio imperii*) and the later Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*). There is a widespread tendency to correct this historiographical bias in scholarly circles today. This tendency, however, has not yet reached to the abolition of the name 'Byzantine Empire' or to the consolidation of the correction in the popular level. We will side with Albert Camus' famous aphorism, that "to call things by incorrect names is to add to the world's misery" ("*Mal nommer les choses, c'est ajouter au malheur du monde*"), and will use the word 'Byzantine' within inverted commas every time we employ it in this study, if it refers to the Eastern Roman Empire and not to the ancient colony of the seventh century BC. To use the terms 'Roman Empire', 'later Roman Empire' or 'Eastern Roman Empire' throughout our study could be a source of great confusion to the lay reader, so we will be content in indirectly reminding the issue through the use of inverted commas.

³ In this thesis, the word 'ontology' will be used to denote Metaphysics as a whole, i.e. the philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence and reality and its basic premises and categories.

⁴ Aristotle's theory of time is primarily located in *Φυσικά*, 217b-224a.

ontology from that of Aristotle's, leads us to examine his understanding of time, Aeon and temporality in relation to Aristotle's theory of time. A philological and historical approach to these subjects would require to also take into account other influences on Maximus such as Plato and his notion of time and *Aeon* (αἰών) in *Timaeus*, or earlier notions of time in general. However, it is our conviction, as will be expounded in the relevant chapters, that Maximus consciously draws a parallel to Aristotle's theory of time in particular in his definitions and formulations concerning temporality. If that is the case, a comparison between Aristotle and Maximus rather than between Plato and Maximus would lead to a fuller hermeneutical efflorescence concerning Maximus' ontology, if one is to study this subject philosophically rather than historically. In a way, Maximus *wants us* to examine his concept of time in contrast to and comparison with Aristotle's theory.⁵ This becomes clear when we recognize Maximus' *theory of motion* (κίνησις) in his works, a theory of motion that originates from Aristotle's but is simultaneously markedly differentiated from his. Again, we witness Maximus' consistent use of Aristotle's *language* to express a *different* philosophy and ontology. Before proceeding to the examination of Maximus' hermeneutic approach to temporality, we will attempt to summarize his ontology, cosmology and anthropology and to expound his *theory of motion*.

Aristotle was not the only major influence on Maximus. The Areopagite writings⁶ are crucial in understanding the Confessor, and a large part of his works is dedicated to explaining them (which also means: in dispelling accusations of 'too much Neoplatonism' in them and in helping to incorporate them -or

⁵ We must here note that the reception of Aristotle and Plato in Maximus' time, in the 7th century BC, was radically different from today's. Plato and Aristotle were considered as more or less complementary to each other, resulting in an 'Aristotelian Plato' and a 'platonized Aristotle'. According to this, we cannot speak of Maximus as *either* Aristotelian *or* Platonic: his education must have incorporated both philosophers, while 'Aeon' as a notion in Maximus' work seems to have originated from Plato's *Timaeus*, amongst other influences. However, the *language* that Maximus uses, his way of articulating philosophical thought, is clearly primarily Aristotelian in nature. We can draw much more fruitful conclusions by approaching Maximus' understanding of time as a continuation and –most importantly– radical renewal of Aristotle's understanding and definition, while at the same time examining Plato's passages concerning the Aeon (cf. Τιμαίος 37, especially 37d).

⁶ The fifth/sixth century author(s) of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* wrote under the pseudonym of Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian convert of St Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34 and Athens' first bishop in the first century: his exact identity is still unknown, despite numerous hypotheses. The false attribution was not revealed until many centuries later, and we can safely suppose that his commentators, Maximus the Confessor and John of Scythopolis, as well as the whole of the undivided Christian church, thought that the *Corpus Areopagiticum* was indeed Dionysius' work (despite the documented suspicions concerning the lack of citations in earlier Church Fathers). However, the *Corpus Areopagiticum*' unknown author has been elevated to the status of one of the most important Church Fathers due to the brilliance of the writings themselves (one's writings can never be the sole criterion for such an exalted status in the church, but this is the matter of another discussion). Today, researchers refer to the author of the Areopagite corpus as 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite' or 'Pseudo-Denys' in their works. In our study, we will prefer the impersonal phrase 'the Areopagite corpus' to refer to the *Corpus Areopagiticum* and its unknown author. (For a short introduction to the Areopagite corpus, consult Andrew Louth: *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, pp. 154-173, and *Denys the Areopagite*. London: Continuum 2001.)

to keep them incorporated- in the tradition of the Church Fathers recognized by the undivided Christian church).

Part of this thesis' hypothesis is that Maximus' notions of time (χρόνος) and the *Aeon* (αἰών) play a crucial part in his teaching on deification (θέωσις), and that the seemingly contradictory concept of 'ever-moving repose' (στάσις ἀεικίνητος) and 'stationary movement' (στάσιμος ταυτοκινήσια)⁷ is a key concept for both the understanding of θέωσις and στάσις ἀεικίνητος. Apart from examining Maximus' perspective on time as an attribute, a quality of the *cosmos*, we will also approach it as a key component of his anthropology, or rather his 'ontological anthropology', i.e. the participation of man in an event of primarily ontological importance, θέωσις.

Apart from Aristotle's theory of time and the Areopagite corpus itself, we will not focus on tracing the *influences* on Maximus' thought, but on implementing our hermeneutic tools in order to understand Maximus' ontology. We will examine Maximus' work from a philosophical standpoint, recognizing not merely the annotation of a given *doctrine* in his work, but an *original synthesis*, a philosophical interpretation of the nature of creation, existence, reality, being and becoming, meaning, cause and purpose; an *ontology*. The question of time and temporality being a primarily ontological one, we would classify this thesis under *Ontology/Metaphysics* due to its subject and under '*Byzantine*' *philosophy* due to the author, whose work is here examined.

A considerable aid in approaching Maximus' ecclesial language as a philosophical theory and an instrument for the realization of this undertaking will be the philosopher Christos Yannaras⁸ (and also the theologian John Zizioulas⁹) work in philosophy and theology respectively, who undertook a task similar to that of Maximus', namely to express the testimony of the Church Fathers and of the ecclesial body in a consistently philosophical language. It is no coincidence that their work draws heavily on Maximus the Confessor among the Church Fathers, and we hold that their focus on Maximus played an important

⁷ Maximus the Confessor: *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.544-546: ἐν τῷ θεῷ γινομένη, [...] στάσις ἀεικίνητον ἔξει καὶ στάσιμον ταυτοκινήσιαν, περὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἐν καὶ μόνον ἀϊδίως γινομένην.

⁸ We will use a great part of Yannaras' work but will primarily rely on the approach expounded in his greatest work, *Person and Eros* (Brookline: HC Press 2007). As our study will be saturated by the perspective found therein while focusing on Maximus' work, we will attempt to keep our explicit references to this monograph at a minimum, in order to minimize the reader's distraction. However, it must be clear that the basis of our *approach* to Maximus and the patristic thought in general is to be traced in *Person and Eros*. Our illustration of *apophaticism* will also rely on Yannaras' monograph entitled *On the absence and unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite* (London, New York: T & T Clark International 2005). His general philosophical approach will be studied through *Relational Ontology* (Brookline: HC Press 2011) and *Propositions for a Critical Ontology* (*Προτάσεις κριτικῆς ὀντολογίας*, Athens: Domos 1985).

⁹ We will rely on *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1985) and *Communion and otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T & T Clark 2006).

role in the kindling of the recent scholarly interest on Maximus, among other factors. As a consequence, the *perspective* of our study will be the *perspective* of a critical and relational ontology, i.e. of Yannaras' contribution to philosophy. In our work, we will implement Yannaras' approach more extensively than any other's in philosophy and Maximian scholarship. As such, this thesis is not only about Maximus the Confessor, but also about Christos Yannaras' philosophical approach.

This thesis is divided into three parts. In the first part, we examine Maximus' life and work in order to obtain a better understanding of his thought. After providing an overview of the secondary literature on Maximian scholarship and 'Byzantine' philosophy, we proceed to the second part. This begins with an overview of the ecclesial *Weltanschauung* in which Maximus operates and writes, along with an introductory exposition of Maximus the Confessor's ontology and the importance of the created/uncreated distinction in it, as well as of elements of his philosophical anthropology. Subsequently, an examination of our primary hermeneutical tool in approaching Maximus follows, namely Christos Yannaras' critical and relational ontology. We find in this ontology (and in John Zizioulas' theology) a useful perspective by a contemporary 'Maximian commentator' in order to understand Maximus the Confessor's philosophy. We examine key terms such as apophaticism, the notion of λόγος, substance, hypostasis, otherness et al., while elucidating this particular choice of methodology. This analysis offers us a distinct hermeneutic perspective, which acts as a considerable aid in our subsequent approach of Maximus' theory concerning the λόγοι doctrine, the theory of motion and his unique understanding of temporality. The second part is concluded with an examination of Maximus' doctrine of the λόγοι, a key concept in his ontology and a prerequisite for approaching our main research question.

The third part of our thesis is dedicated to the study of motion and temporality. First we introduce the reader to the Aristotelian theory of motion and time, in order to proceed to Maximus' radical innovation thereof. We examine Maximus' understanding of motion as either a motion according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν), i.e. a *returning* motion, or a deviation thereof. Subsequently, we examine the motion and motionlessness of the uncreated according to Maximus, as well as the world as the outcome of a perpetual creative motion and repose (στάσις) as the goal of the *returning* motion. In understanding Maximus' conception of time as χρόνος, we see that he speaks of the unity of spatiality and temporality in the sensible world, a kind of spatiotemporal continuum; as a consequence, spatiality and temporality are examined together on the basis of a number of passages from his *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*. Furthermore, and drawing from a number of Maximian primary sources, we proceed to the examination of the Confessor's

second mode of temporality apart from time (χρόνος), i.e. *the Aeon* (αἰών), a “time without movement” and the temporality of the intelligible – but not quite what we understand with the concept of eternity. After an examination of the notion of καιρός, we proceed to Maximus’ *third* mode of temporality, i.e. the radical transformation of temporality and motion in the ever-moving repose (στάσις ἀεκίνητος) of deification. We expound Maximus’ understanding of temporality in deification through the λόγος-τρόπος distinction and the notion of the ‘eighth day’.

With these three distinct modes of temporality, χρόνος, αἰών and στάσις ἀεκίνητος, a unique Maximian theory of time can be reconstructed. In this, time is not merely measuring ontological motion, but rather a *relationship*, the consummation of which effects the transformation of time into a dimensionless present devoid of temporal, spatial and generally ontological *distance* – thereby manifesting a perfect communion-in-otherness. This Maximian understanding of temporality is far from being commonplace among his contemporaries (or Christian philosophy in general) and, in our opinion, demands more attention than it has received – both in the context of the history of philosophy and in today’s ontological enquiry concerning the question of time.

I.2. Maximus the Confessor's Life and Work

I.2.1. Maximus' Life

The presence of Maximus the Confessor in the history of the Christian church and of the Eastern Roman ('Byzantine') Empire, and as such in the overall History of Ideas, is truly unique. Living the life of a simple monk (not merely without the episcopal powers of a bishop or a prominent rank in the church, but probably even without the priesthood) and facing rejection, persecution, exile and martyrdom, his name was restored only after his death in the consciousness of the empire and the doctrine of the church, both of which he changed for ever. And he is facing now, in the dawn of the twenty-first century, an explosion of interest among scholars in his work and his historical presence.

According to his tenth century biographer¹⁰ and today's research concerning this version of his life (the elimination of contradictions, the confirmation of historical events etc.), Maximus seems to have been born in 580 AD in Constantinople, in a wealthy, aristocratic family.¹¹ His biographer informs us that he received the extensive education and deep training which was customary for every young man who would seek to serve the imperial court, the church or other posts of responsibility (ἐγκύκλιος παιδείσις): grammar, rhetoric and philosophy, which included arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy and philosophy itself.¹² His biographer tells us that young Maximus had shown from a very early

¹⁰ The *Greek Vita of St Maximus the Confessor* (PG 90 58-109) was most probably written in the 10th century by a certain Michael Exaboulites, while the text itself credits a bishop named Nicolas as its author (PG 90 109 AB: ἱεράρχης...ὁμωνυμίαν τοῦ ἐν Μύροις ποιμενάρχου). Elements of this *Vita* stem from St Theodore the Studite's *Life* and other sources (cf. Andrew Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*. New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis e-Library 2005, p. 4, Despina Prassas (ed.): *St Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts*. Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press 2009, p.4) while a number of contradictions can be spotted, rising questions concerning its accuracy. The other main source on Maximus' early life is the earlier Syriac *Vita*, which introduces a completely different narration and which will be referred to later on in our study. On the different biographical sources, see the introduction in Brownen Neil & Pauline Allen (eds): *The life of Maximus the Confessor. Recension 3*. Strathfield: St Paul's 2003, pp. 3-34 (and the 'third recension' itself).

¹¹ PG 90 59 B. His subsequent place in the emperor's court indicates this as well.

¹² See Polycarp Sherwood: *An annotated Date-list of the works of Maximus the Confessor*. Romae: Herder 1952, p. 1, under fn. 1 of which the most important research up to 1952 concerning Maximus' life is listed. However, we cannot be certain about his early education, as both the Syriac and Greek *Vitae* cannot be taken as reliable sources concerning Maximus' early years – which is not the case for the information about his later life. As Andrew Louth puts it, "Michael [Exaboulites] pieced this *Life* together from diverse materials, and that, for Maximus' early years, he simply paraphrased the beginning of the *Life* of the eighth-century reformer of the Stoudios monastery, St Theodore the Studite, omitting the proper names: from which we can infer that he had no direct evidence at all. The evidence about his service under the Emperor Heraclius is, however, more secure, since it appears to be dependent on earlier material and has some independent attestation" (Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 4). Andrew Louth has mentioned to me that Maximus' reference to his lack of even rhetorical learning in his preface to the *Mystagogia* is obviously a modesty *topos*, but not to be ignored because of that: we know no convincing evidence that Maximus' philosophical learning was not drawn from Christian

age a profound interest and rare talent for philosophical thought.¹³ It is quite probable that Maximus had studied in the course of his education the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as of their commentators, either in the original or through Christian sources like e.g. *florilegia*. His extensive knowledge of Aristotle's works in the form in which they were delivered to the society of Constantinople and the profound influence which they exerted on him in articulating his philosophical and theological *language* is evident in his later works, as we will see, and decisively shaped the way in which he would raise and answer questions and attempt hermeneutic approaches concerning the universe, philosophy, and his ecclesial faith.

According to the Greek *Vita*, after the rise of Emperor Heraclius to the throne of Constantinople in 610, Maximus received the high office of the head of the imperial chancellery¹⁴ (πρωτοασηκρήτης, as the office would be called in later centuries). Despite his good relationship with the people of the imperial court, which is to be concluded from later letters to them, Maximus' mentality has not allowed him to stay in this high office for a long time. In 613-614, being about thirty-three years old, Maximus would become a monk at the monastery of Chrysoupolis (modern Üsküdar) on the Asian shore across Constantinople. According to his biographer, he decided to be tonsured "because he loved the quiet (or hesychast) life" (τὸν καθ' ἡσυχίαν βίον ἐρῶν),¹⁵ which seems to be a plausible explanation. His spiritual progress must have been rapid,¹⁶ if we are to judge from the fact that he had already acquired a student in the ascetic life by 618, the monk Anastasius, who would follow him until the end of his life.¹⁷

In 624/625 Maximus is located in the Monastery of St George at Cyzicus in Asia Minor (modern Erdek), from which he would later (626) withdraw due to the risk of the Persian army. During his stay at the monastery of Cyzicus he began to write his first main works.¹⁸

A few years later (628-630), Maximus traveled to Africa after having briefly stayed in Crete and probably also in Cyprus.¹⁹ In Africa he continued his monastic and ascetic life and gradually developed an intense activity, against

sources (e.g. *florilegia* etc.), and his Greek style would confirm his professed lack of rhetorical training. This, however, would contradict his alleged aristocratic heritage.

¹³ PG 90 69 CD. See also Lars Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*. Chicago: Open Court 1995, p. 1f.

¹⁴ PG 90 72 C: ὑπογραφέα πρῶτον τῶν βασιλικῶν ὑπομνημάτων.

¹⁵ Ibid. 72D.

¹⁶ Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 2.

¹⁸ See Hans Urs von Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2003, p. 74.

¹⁹ See Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 5, Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 75.

Monoenergism at first and subsequently against Monothelitism.²⁰ His struggle against the heresy of Monothelitism and Monoenergism would last throughout his life and would be the cause of his exile and martyrdom,²¹ while it would also be his primary contribution to the ecclesiastical history of the undivided Christian church.

In Carthage he became acquainted with the monk Sophronius, later to be elected patriarch of Jerusalem (634). Both of them lived in the monastery of Eucratas, where Sophronius served as the abbot before being elected patriarch, as is derived from Maximus' addresses in his letters to him.²² During the first years of his stay in Africa, Maximus completed two of his most important works: *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον, περὶ διαφορῶν ἀπόρων τῆς θείας Γραφῆς* (Quaestiones ad Thalassium) and the earlier, more extensive version of his *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν τῶν ἁγίων Διονυσίου καὶ Γρηγορίου*, better known by its Latin name *Ambigua*.²³

According to Sherwood and Thunberg,²⁴ Sophronius' contribution was decisive in order for Maximus to become conscious of the crucial nature of the issue of Monothelitism and Monoenergism. His earlier writings before this time do not betray his exceptional awareness concerning the definitions of one or two wills in the person of Christ all along: the need for theological exactness and preciseness emerged and originated after the intensification of Christological disputes.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 had pronounced the 'Chalcedonian Definition', the doctrine according to which Jesus Christ has a complete human nature/substance and a complete divine nature/substance (οὐσία/φύσις) realized in one single person/hypostasis (πρόσωπον/ὑπόστασις). According to this terminology, hypostasis (the person) is the specific, actually existing realization of the substance (i.e. nature), and in this case the singular person of Christ is the realization of his two natures. The Council of Chalcedon condemned Monophysitism (Miaphysitism), i.e. the notion of a single nature in Christ, either his divine nature or a synthesis of divine and human nature respectively, as heretical.

Large populations of Monophysites resided in the eastern boundaries of the Empire, and a new Christological dispute had begun to shake the Empire,

²⁰ Monothelitism: The doctrine that Jesus Christ possesses one will rather than two, a divine and a human will. Monoenergism: The doctrine that Jesus Christ possesses one activity (ἐνέργεια/energy) rather than two, a divine and a human activity.

²¹ See Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 5.

²² Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 6.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6 and Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 4.

different from Monophysitism as such. In an effort to bridge the Chalcedonian faith with Monophysite Christology, a new formulation started to surface according to which, whereas Christ's person realizes two natures, his will (θέλησις) and his activity (ἐνέργεια/'energy') is singular: Christ's person does not possess two wills and activities, a divine and a human one.²⁵ This dogmatic formulation was also attractive to the political leadership of the empire, since it offered the possibility to affiliate parts of the Monophysite populations or the populations with a 'Monophysite substrate', thereby reducing the doctrinal and, as such, political friction within the Empire. Maximus would gradually recognize in these Monothelite and Monoenergist formulations a crucial distortion of his faith, of the ecclesial body's testimony and experience concerning the hypostasis of Christ, a confutation and annihilation of the Chalcedonian Definition 'in the small print', an indirect enforcement of Monophysite Christology.

The patriarch of Constantinople Sergius I (610-638) introduced Monoenergism officially in an attempt to support Emperor Heraclius in his war against the Persians and in his political decision to promote the union between the two sides of the doctrinal dispute. Sergius promoted the position that Jesus Christ had two natures, one divine and one human, but one activity (ἐνέργεια) which is to be ascribed to his singular hypostasis. This position could satisfy the moderate Anti-Chalcedonians, which in turn could lead to their union with the Orthodox Catholic Church, a burning political challenge of the time. In 633 in Alexandria the restoration of the communion between the Orthodox and the anti-Chalcedonians, their unification, takes place.

Patriarch Sergius issued the *Psephos* (Ψῆφος), a text confirmed by the synod of Constantinople,²⁶ which prohibits any further discussion on Christ's one or two activities and the adoption of a language that attributes two activities to Christ.²⁷ Maximus did not express any objections at that point, but agreed cheerfully to the termination of a dispute that was the cause of much uproar in the life of the church.²⁸ When Sophronius was enthroned as patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, he sent, as was customary, an encyclical with his profession of orthodoxy addressed to all the patriarchs in which, without explicitly attributing two activities to the Christ's hypostasis, he essentially professed his Dyothelite faith and his serious objections to the Monoenergist stance towards Christology.²⁹

²⁵ A lucid exposition of these theological controversies is to be found in Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 7-15.

²⁶ Cyril Hovorun: *Will, action, and freedom. Christological controversies in the seventh century*. Leiden: Brill 2008, p. 70.

²⁷ Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 11.

²⁸ Hovorun: *Will, action, and freedom*, p. 76.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 71.

The friction concerning the one or two activities of Christ continued to be evident, and after Sophronius' death in 638 Emperor Heraclius issued an imperial decree, his *Ecthesis* (Ἐκθεσις) which is essentially an extension and repetition of Sergius' *Psephos* under imperial auspices.³⁰ Heraclius' *Ecthesis* explicitly prohibits any discussion concerning Christ's one or two activities while, instead of proclaiming one activity in Christ, one will is proclaimed (Monothelitism). The *Ecthesis* was supported by all five patriarchs (Pentarchy) of the time: Honorius of Rome, Sergius of Constantinople, Cyrus of Alexandria, Macedonius of Antioch and Sergius, the new patriarch of Jerusalem. Sergius of Constantinople convened a synod to ecclesiastically validate the *Ecthesis* in the same year, while his successor and continuator, patriarch Pyrrhus (638-641, 654) repeated the same procedure soon after his enthronement.³¹

Maximus emerged as a strong opponent of the monothelite position. In 645, a public debate was organized in Carthage under the auspices of exarch Gregory between Maximus and the now deposed, former patriarch of Constantinople Pyrrhus concerning the one or two wills of Christ.³² Pyrrhus officially declared that he was convinced by Maximus and renounced Monothelitism.³³ Maximus travels in 646 to Rome, possibly together with Pyrrhus (who returned to his earlier beliefs next year, becoming a Monothelite again), in recourse to the Pope as the guarantor of orthodoxy in the church. He stays for a number of years in Rome and plays a key role in the realization and organization of the Lateran Council, which was convened by Pope Martin I in 649 and which condemned Monothelitism, with the Pope arising as a defender, protector and guarantor of orthodoxy and Dyothelitism.³⁴

The actions of Pope Martin and Maximus in order to counter Monothelitism were perceived by the Monothelite Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire Constans II as an attack against him and in 653 he ordered the arrest of Pope Martin and the monk Maximus in Rome. Pope Martin was exiled and died in 655 in the Chersonesus region of the Crimean peninsula. Maximus was condemned to exile in Thrace's Bizya.³⁵ In this trial, mainly political accusations such as treason were used against him, he was not accused as a heretic. He was sentenced again in the year 568 in Constantinople, as a heretic this time, with the Emperor of New Rome – Constantinople and the Patriarch supporting

³⁰ Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 13.

³¹ Hovorun: *Will, action, and freedom*, pp. 73-74.

³² *Ibid.* p. 78. The proceedings of the debate are included in the PG's works of Maximus. *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πύρρον*, PG 91 288-353.

³³ von Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 79.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 79.

³⁵ Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 6, Sherwood: *An annotated...*, p. 21.

Monothelitism. Maximus refused to accept the Monothelite doctrine and was therefore sent back to exile for four years. In 662 he faced trial for the third time, he confessed his Dyothelite faith again and he was again named a heretic. After the trial he was subjected to torture: according to written tradition, his right hand was amputated, so that he could not write letters and treatises, and his tongue was cut off, so that he could not confess and defend his faith.³⁶ Subsequently he was exiled to the Lazica of Pontus, where he took his last breath on 13 August 662, physically exhausted from the torture that was incurred on him due to his faith, from old age and from the conditions of his exile. Thus he was later proclaimed a martyr.³⁷ During the last years of his life he was, together with his two disciples, the first Anastasius and Anastasius the *apocrisarius*, virtually the only proponent of Christ's two wills in the vast Eastern Roman Empire, the only person who would confess the two wills of Christ as orthodoxy and Monothelitism as heresy.³⁸

Almost twenty years after Maximus's death, in 680/681, the Sixth Ecumenical Council was held in Constantinople (the Third Council of Constantinople) on the subject on Monothelitism, on the wills of Christ. The Council acknowledged Jesus Christ as having two activities (ἐνέργειαι) and two wills (divine and human) and condemned Monoenergism and Monothelitism: Maximus' theological position was proclaimed as the doctrine of the undivided Christian church. And while Maximus' theological heritage was fully vindicated, his name is not mentioned in the Council's proceedings, as he was up to then a subject of controversy.³⁹ He would be soon thereafter recognized as a saint, a Confessor and a Church Father. Maximus the Confessor is one of the last historical figures to be recognized as a Father of the Church from both today's Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

I.2.2. The Syriac Life

Apart from the *Greek Life* written by a supporter of Maximus and contained in the *Patrologia Graeca*, there is also another major source of infor-

³⁶ Ibid. p. 22, von Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 80. See also §17 of the *Dispute at Bizya* in Pauline Allen and Brownen Neil: *Maximus the Confessor and his companions. Documents from exile*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 118-119.

³⁷ See also Kyriakos Savvidis: *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximus dem Bekenner und ihre Rezeption durch Gregor Palamas*. St Ottilien: EOS-Verl. 1997, p. 13. Thunberg uses the expression that Maximus "died a martyr's death while in exile".

³⁸ See Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 16: "Resistance to Monothelitism was virtually reduced to one man, Maximus."

³⁹ Ibid. p. 17.

mation with a radically different account of Maximus' early years. It is the *Syriac Life* of Maximus,⁴⁰ written by a certain George of Reshaina, a Monothelite and enemy of Maximus, and bearing the pronounced title *The history concerning the wicked Maximus of Palestine who blasphemed against his Creator, and whose tongue was cut out*.⁴¹

According to this account of Maximus' early years, Moschion, the fruit of an adulterous relationship between a Persian slave-girl and a Samaritan, was born in the village of Hesfin and raised in Palestine. He was tonsured a monk and given the name 'Maximus' in the monastery of Palaia Lavra (St Chariton's monastery).⁴²

This *Syriac Life* was written considerably earlier than the *Greek Vita*, probably in the seventh or very early in the eighth century⁴³ and maybe only a few decades after Maximus' death, which could justify a positive impression concerning its authenticity. However, its style is so harshly polemical that one can do more than to simply suspect that there may be false information contained in it (for example, the name Moschion as the former name of Maximus before his monastic tonsure is not known from any other sources).⁴⁴ And while the eulogistic *Greek Vita* is not void of contradictions, for some of which the *Syriac Life* could provide solutions, the account provided by the *Syriac Life* leaves many facts of Maximus' life inexplicable: e.g. his aptness in philosophy, which would require much greater learning than that received by Moschion, or his presence in the imperial court as the emperor's first secretary.

The scholarly debate is still open concerning the accuracy of the two *Lives*,⁴⁵ however our own assessment is that the truth must lie closer to the account of the *Greek Life* than to that of the *Syriac* one. The *Syriac Life*'s highly polemical style, its inconsistencies, contradictions and lacunae prevents us from having confidence in its accuracy.

⁴⁰ Sebastian Brock: "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor" in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), pp. 299–346., 299–346. Scholarship concerning Maximus' *Syriac Vita* or other recensions of Maximus' life is listed in Kyriakos Savvidis' *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximus dem Bekenner und ihre Rezeption durch Gregor Palamas*, St Otilien: EOS-Verl. 1997, pp. 11-12, fn. 2. On recent research concerning Maximus' life, see Neil & Allen (eds): *The life of Maximus the Confessor. Recension 3*.

⁴¹ Brock: "An Early Syriac Life", p. 314.

⁴² Ibid. p. 341, Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 5-6.

⁴³ Brock: "An Early Syriac Life", p. 336.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 321.

⁴⁵ Despina Prassas writes that "neither [Vita] has been proven to be definitive" (*St Maximus the Confessor's Questions and Doubts*, p. 4.)

I.2.3. Maximus' Works

Maximus' voluminous work is to a large extent comprized of individual letters or treatises addressed to a specific person, either in answer to questions or difficulties of a dogmatic and Christological nature or concerning the ascetic life. His purpose is to elucidate on important subjects, to clarify confusions, to give explanations concerning obscure biblical passages, to articulate his position on controversial issues. The context of his writing is almost always his communication with specific persons or his participation in a broader theological debate, seldom are they in the form of an autonomous treatise independent from a specific dialogue or debate. He is particularly fond of the *Centuries* i.e. comments of an apothegmatic character on a particular subject presented in groups of a hundred, a common genre of his time.

While Maximus' texts and passages usually deal with a specific subject or constitute an answer to a specific question, his need for the presence of the conditions that can provide accuracy to his answers and support his theological positions leads him to adopt a personal language of a philosophical nature. As a consequence, the whole of his work composes a philosophical interpretation of existence and reality based on his experience of the ecclesial event,⁴⁶ his testimony of it, his philosophical education and his unique genius.

Maximus does not consider his work to be original, he does not assume to construct a *new*, original philosophical or theological synthesis. It is clear from his work that he perceives it as an analysis, annotation, clarification and restatement of truths that have already been articulated, of his faith's tradition and of the Fathers of the undivided church's first centuries. By doing exactly this, he is led to construct the most complete, most consistent and more markedly philosophical synthesis of the whole of the patristic *Weltanschauung*, from the time of the Cappadocian Fathers up to that of Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century at the very least, in a torrent of originality. This is a common mindset during the centuries of the 'Byzantine' Empire and is not only to be encountered in theological literature, but also in art (see for example the fusion of repetition and originality in the realm of hagiography) etc. It produces originality without consciously aiming at it, but rather in the context of a restatement that strives to be as faithful to the original as possible.

⁴⁶ 'Ecclesial event' is a phrase that is often used by Yannaras, among others, to denote the Christian Church not as a conviction system or an institution but as a fact of life and of Eucharistic communion, the testimony of which is the experience of those that participate in it. Yannaras explains that the ecclesial event, due to its very nature, cannot but be the opposite of religion. See *Against Religion: the Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2013, and particularly pp. 21-48, "The Ecclesial Event". We will prefer this term throughout our study.

Maximus the Confessor's works are included in J. P. Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*,⁴⁷ volumes 90 and 91, in the Greek original and its Latin translation. Migne's *Patrology* is most certainly not a critical edition, and critical editions covering the whole of Maximus' work have not been published so far. A number of Maximus' works have been published in critical edition as part of the *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*,⁴⁸ with the long term aim of publishing critical editions for all of his works, while *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* has also been published as part of the series *Sources chrétiennes*.⁴⁹ Among other attempts at constructing a critical edition we must include Aldo Ceresa-Gastaldo's *Capita de Caritate*⁵⁰ and Raffaele Cantarella's *S. Massimo Confessore. La mistagogia ed altri scritti*.⁵¹ We can conclude from the critical editions that have been hitherto published that the text of the *Patrologia Graeca* is sufficiently reliable, with critical editions showing for the most part rare and insignificant deviations from Migne's text.⁵² In this study we will cite the CCSG editions where available, and use the *Patrologia Graeca* for Maximus' works that have not been published in reliable critical editions.⁵³

⁴⁷ Jacques Paul Migne (ed.): *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. (Series Graeca)*, Volumes 90 & 91, Paris 1865.

⁴⁸ Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca (CCSG), Turnhout: Brepols. Maximus Confessor: *Quaestiones ad Thalassium I*, ed. Carl Laga & Carlos Steel 1980 (CCSG 7). *Quaestiones et dubia*, ed. José H. Declerck 1982 (CCSG 10). *Ambigua ad Iohannem iuxta Iohannis Scotti Eriugena latinam interpretationem*, ed. Edouard Jeuneau 1988 (CCSG 18 – this is only Eriugena's Latin translation, not the original Greek text, and as such will not be used in our study). *Quaestiones ad Thalassium II*, ed. Carl Laga & Carlos Steel 1990 (CCSG 22). *Opuscula exegetica duo*, ed. Peter Van Deun 1991 (CCSG 23). [*Scripta saeculi VII uitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia*, ed. Pauline Allen & Bronwen Neil 1999 (CCSG 39) – on Maximus' life]. *Liber asceticus*, ed. Peter Van Deun & Steven Gysens 2000 (CCSG 40). *Ambigua ad Thomam una cum Epistula secunda ad eundem*, ed. Bart Janssens 2002. (CCSG 48). *Mystagogia. Una cum Latina interpretatione Anastasii Bibliothecarii*. ed. Christian Boudignon 2011 (CCSG 69).

⁴⁹ Sources chrétiennes, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf. Maxime le Confesseur: *Centuries sur la charité*, ed. Joseph Pegon 1943 (Sources chrétiennes 9). *Questions à Thalassios – Tome 1, Questions 1 à 40*, ed. Jean-Claude Larchet & Françoise Vinel 2010 (Sources chrétiennes 529). *Questions à Thalassios – Tome 2, Questions 41 à 55*, ed. Jean-Claude Larchet & Françoise Vinel 2012 (Sources chrétiennes 554).

⁵⁰ Aldo Ceresa-Gastaldo: *Massimo Confessore - Capitoli sulla carità. Ed. criticamente con introd., versione e note*. Rome: Ed. Studium (Verba Seniorum, collana di testi e studi patristici, n.s. 3) 1963.

⁵¹ Raffaele Cantarella: *S. Massimo Confessore. La mistagogia ed altri scritti*. Florence: Testi Cristiani 1931.

⁵² Tollstein Tollefsen: *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, p.6: "According to Lars Thunberg, a comparison between the PG edition and the CCSG edition of the *Ad Thal.* shows that the PG is not inaccurate to a degree that should disturb us unduly. This is the verdict of Andrew Louth as well, when [...] he says that (so far) the CCSG edition for the most part 'has provided welcome assurance of the general reliability of the text (of Combefis and Oehler) published in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* (90-91)'. Tollefsen goes on to say in fn. 10: "Thunberg has told me that he once (by letter) asked P. Sherwood about the condition of the texts, and received the answer that to a great degree we can trust the PG. I hope the future will not show that our trust was unfounded". Tollefsen summons here the testimony of Thunberg, Louth and Sherwood that while the critical editions of Maximus' works are very important for the philological aspect of Maximian scholarship, they don't seem to prove themselves of vital importance for the theological and philosophical aspect of it - until now at least.

⁵³ Concerning the translation of Maximus' quotes, they are the author's if not otherwise noted. We will prefer to refer to published English translations where available, making small changes where appropriate (for example, in order to retain a certain uniformity in terminology).

Undoubtedly, a major contribution to Maximian studies will be Nicholas Conostas' forthcoming critical edition and English translation of the complete *Ambigua* from Harvard University Press.⁵⁴ Nicholas Conostas (currently Maximos of Simonopetra), formerly an Associate Professor at the Harvard Divinity School and now a monk at the Simonopetra Monastery of Mt. Athos, will provide us with the first critical edition and English translation of Maximus' arguably most important work, making it widely available in a reliable edition – a development that is bound to bring new momentum to Maximian scholarship.

We will list here Maximus' works as found in the *Patrologia Graeca*, their original titles followed by the abbreviation with which we will refer to them where this is needed, their Latin titles and their exact position in the P.G. along with the abbreviation of their critical edition, should one be available. Polycarp Sherwood has published in 1952 a date-list of Maximus the Confessor's works, which has not been *substantially* challenged by recent scholarship.⁵⁵

- i. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον, περὶ διαφορῶν ἀπόρων τῆς θείας Γραφῆς* (Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον) *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*. PG 90 244-785. CCSG 7, CCSG 22.
- ii. *Πεύσεις καὶ Ἀποκρίσεις καὶ Ἐρωτήσεις καὶ Ἐκλογαὶ διαφορῶν κεφαλαίων ἀπορομένων* (Πεύσεις καὶ Ἀποκρίσεις). *Quaestiones et dubia*. PG 90 785-856. CCSG 10.
- iii. *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὸν νθ' Ψαλμόν*. *Expositio in Psalmum lix*. PG 90 856-872. CCSG 23, pp. 3-22.
- iv. *Εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν τοῦ Πάτερ ἡμῶν, πρὸς ἓνα φιλόχριστον ἑρμηνεία σύντομος* (Εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν τοῦ Πάτερ ἡμῶν). *Expositio orationis Dominicae*. PG 90 872-909. CCSG 23, pp. 27-73.
- v. *Λόγος ἀσκητικός*. *Liber asceticus*. PG 90 912-957. CCSG 40. Cantarella, pp. 30-98.
- vi. *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*. *Capita de caritate quattuor centuriae*. PG 90 960-1073. Ceresa-Gastaldo.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Conostas: *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua* (two volumes). Cambridge: Harvard University Press (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 28 & 29) 2014. Regrettably, this thesis is to be submitted before the publication of Conostas' critical edition and English translation; therefore, we will have to be content with Migne's edition of the earlier and more extensive *Ambigua ad Johannem* (as mentioned earlier, the first part of the complete *Ambigua*, the *Ambigua ad Thomam*, has already its critical edition in CCSG 48). However, Nicholas Conostas has kindly shared his translation of certain previously untranslated crucial passages of the *Ambigua ad Johannem* with us, for which we express whole-hearted gratitude.

⁵⁵ Sherwood: *An annotated....*, pp. 23-56.

vii. *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας και τῆς ἐνσάρκου οἰκονομίας τοῦ Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ* (Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας). *Capitum theologicorum et oeconomicorum duae centuriae*. PG 90 1084-1176.

(Κεφάλαια διάφορα θεολογικά τε καὶ οἰκονομικά καὶ περι ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας [Κεφάλαια διάφορα] - Apart from l. 1-15, this is not by Maximus as such, but is an anthology based mainly on *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*. *Diversa capita*. PG 90 1177-1392.)

viii. *Πρὸς Θεόπεμπτον σχολαστικόν*. *Quaestiones ad Theopemptum*. PG 90 1393-1400.

ix. *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*. *Opuscula theologica et polemica*. PG 91 9-286.

x. *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πύρρου*. *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*. PG 91 288-353.

xi. *Περὶ ψυχῆς*. *Opusculum de anima*. PG 91 353-361. Cantarella, pp. 220-232.

xii. *Ἐπιστολαί*. *Epistulae*. PG 91 364-649.

xiii. *Μυσταγωγία*. *Mystagogia*. PG 91 657-717. CCSG 69. Cantarella, pp. 122-214.

xiv. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν τῶν ἁγίων Διονυσίου καὶ Γρηγορίου* (Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν):⁵⁶

Πρὸς Θωμᾶν τὸν ἡγιασμένον. *Ambigua ad Thomam*. PG 91 1032-1060. CCSG 48, pp. 3-34. Constat – DOML 28.

Πρὸς Ἰωάννην ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Κυζίκου. *Ambigua ad Johannem*. PG 91 1061-1424. Constat – DOML 28 & 29.

xv. (*Epistula secunda ad Thomam*. CCSG 48, pp. 37-49.)

A discussion is currently taking place concerning the alleged authenticity of the *Life of the Virgin*, a biography of Mary deriving primarily from Georgian manuscripts and attributed to Maximus the Confessor: in a recent translation, Stephen Shoemaker is making a case concerning the authenticity of the

⁵⁶ We know that, from very early on, these two collections of Difficulties have been treated as one book, the *Ambigua* or *Ambigorum liber*. However, there has been a debate as to whether the inclusion of these two distinct books (written at different periods of Maximus' life) in a 'complete' *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν* goes back to Maximus himself or is a later development: see Bart Janssens's article "Does the combination of Maximus' *Ambigua ad Thomam* and *Ambigua ad Iohannem* go back to the Confessor himself?" in: *Sacris erudiri* 42 (2003), pp. 281-286, as well as in his introduction to CCSG 48. Andrew Louth remarks that "this arrangement of the two collections appears to go back to Maximus himself, as in the first of the opuscula (645-6), he retracts an unfortunate monenergist phrase from what he calls 'the seventh chapter of the Difficulties in the great Gregory' (Opusc. 1:33A: this is the reading of all the Greek manuscripts)" (Maximus the Confessor, p. 78).

book⁵⁷ - however, this does not influence our enquiry. Special mention must be made concerning the *Scholia* to the Areopagite writings, which are included in the fourth volume of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*.⁵⁸ These *Scholia* were for centuries attributed to Maximus the Confessor, but modern scholarship has proven that comments by both Maximus the Confessor and primarily John of Scythopolis, a bishop of the sixth century, have been merged into a single body of *Scholia* by the 'Byzantine' copyists of the manuscripts without any note or distinction as to which *Scholia* belong to whom. Recent scholarship does in no way deny that an important part of these *Scholia* belong to Maximus the Confessor. However, there is no unequivocal consensus as to which and how many *Scholia* originated from John of Scythopolis' hand and which from Maximus'. Several attempts and proposals has been made to separate the *Scholia* according to their authorship, with von Balthasar and others arguing that the majority if the *Scholia* belong to John, but the subject can be still considered open.⁵⁹ We will comment on some of the *Scholia* where necessary, albeit noting their uncertain origin, especially in the cases where recent scholarship has attributed some of the cited *Scholia* to John of Scythopolis.⁶⁰ For this reason, we will not use any of the *Scholia* as evidence for Maximus' thought, unless supported elsewhere in his genuine writings as well.

Our study will primarily rely on Maximus' *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν* (Ambigua) – naturally so, as Maximus expounds in his most important work, in which he answers questions and difficulties arising from the study of Gregory of

⁵⁷ Stephen J. Shoemaker (transl.): *Maximus the Confessor: The Life of The Virgin*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2012, p. 7: "It is thus hoped that this translation will open the text up to broader consideration of questions concerning both its authorship and its significance. While I certainly do not consider myself qualified to judge the authenticity of this attribution, which ultimately must be decided by experts on Maximus, the matter unquestionably demands more serious consideration than it has yet received. It is indeed somewhat troubling that many Maximus scholars seem not to have even acknowledged the existence of this text in their publications".

⁵⁸ Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ τῆς οὐρανίας Ἱεραρχίας τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου: PG 4 29-113. Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν Ὄνομάτων τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου: PG 4 185-416 & Suchla's CD4.1. Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Μυστικῆς Θεολογίας τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου: PG 4 416-432. Σχόλια εἰς τὰς Ἐπιστολάς τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου: PG 4 527-576.

⁵⁹ Von Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 359-387, "The Problem of the Scholia to Pseudo-Dionysius". More recent research on the subject, apart from Beate Regina Suchla's pioneering work (*Die sogenannten Maximus-Scholien des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum*. In: Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, 1980), include Paul Rorem & John C. Lamoreaux book, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus* (New York: Oxford University Press 1998), which contains a translation of many of the Scholia it attributes to John of Scythopolis. Beate Regina Suchla recently published the first volume of her critical edition of the scholia, i.e. the scholia to the *Divine Names: Corpus Dionysiacum Band 4.1. Ioannis Scythopolitani prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagite librum 'De divinis nominibus' cum additamentis interpretum aliorum*. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter 2011.

⁶⁰ While progress has been made on this subject with Suchla's reliable critical edition and Rorem and Lamoreaux's monograph, we cannot know for certain which Scholia belong to whom, as newer research constantly attributes at times more and at times less Scholia to John of Schythopolis: for example, the second Syriac translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* has a shorter selection of Scholia, and the suggestion is that these are the ones belonging to John.

Nazianzus (the Theologian) and the Areopagite writings, his teaching and insights in full depth and clarity. All key elements of his ontology, his cosmology and his anthropology (apart from his all-present Christology) are to be recognized in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*: the motion (κίνησις) of beings, the principles of beings (λόγοι τῶν ὄντων), man and the soul's motion, the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible, deification⁶¹ etc. However, we will omit none of Maximus' works, of his treatises, of his letters, of his *Centuries*, insofar as they prove productive for the specific objectives of our study.

According to tradition, after cutting the right hand and tongue of the persecuted and exiled Maximus so that he would not be able to defend his theological positions, both his hand and tongue were miraculously regenerated by the action of divine providence. The explosion of interest among scholars in Maximus' work and the relevant publishing activity that we witness today, in the twenty-first century, indicate that the spreading of Maximus the Confessor's written work through the world does indeed continue and that his voice is indeed still being heard, long after his torture and death. The tradition's account is proven, in a unique way, accurate.

⁶¹ On the subject of deification, consult Norman Russel's important monograph *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), where special reference to Maximus' understanding of deification is made (pp. 262-295).

I.3. State of Research

Maximus the Confessor “has been the subject of extensive examination in our time”;⁶² the relevant bibliography is becoming almost unmanageable in comparison to earlier scholarship concerning him. A particularly intense and seemingly sudden publishing activity concerning Maximus (theses, articles, monographs) has been followed by a number of recent international conferences focused on his work.⁶³ Complete and extensive reports on the state of research and overviews of the secondary literature concerning Maximus have been published, constituting a ‘bibliography of bibliographies’. We will (i) present this ‘bibliography of bibliographies’, (ii) introduce the reader to the milestones of Maximian scholarship, focusing on studies approaching Maximus’ work as a philosophical one or as particularly fertile for philosophical research, and (iii) refer to the beginnings of scholarship concerning ‘Byzantine’ philosophy.

I.3.1. Overviews of the Secondary Literature

Many of the major studies on Maximus the Confessor’s heritage contain a chapter on the state of research at the time of their writing, but there are also monographs dedicated to providing complete bibliographical information or a comprehensive overview of the state of research concerning Maximian studies. A comprehensive annotated bibliography up to 1986 has been provided to us by

⁶² Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon: “Person And Nature In The Theology Of St Maximus The Confessor”, in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection – Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, October 18-21 2012*, California: Sebastian Press 2013, p. 85.

⁶³ For example, in recent years: “International Conference on St Maximus the Confessor: The Architecture of the Cosmos”, University of Helsinki and Studium Catholicum, Helsinki: 2-4 September 2013. “International Symposium on Saint Maximus the Confessor”, University of Belgrade & Fordham University, Belgrade: 18-21 October 2012. “A Saint for East and West: The Thought of Maximus Confessor in Eastern & Western Christian Theology”, XVI International Conference on Patristic Studies, University of Oxford, Oxford: 9-11 August 2011. “Simpozionul Internațional: Teologie și spiritualitate în gândirea Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorului”, University of Craiova, Craiova: 17-18 September 2008. “Neoplatonism and St Maximus the Confessor”, Norwegian Institute at Athens, University of Liverpool & the Academy of Finland. Athens: 11-13 December 2008. “The 2nd International Theological Scientific Conference dedicated to St Maximus the Confessor”, St Maximus the Confessor’s International Theological Scientific Centre, Tbilisi: 9-15 October 2007 etc. Apart from these, in September 26-28 2014 an international colloquium entitled “Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher” will take place in Berlin. This multitude of conferences specifically dedicated to Maximus the Confessor is a new phenomenon: the last major conference before the new millennium was also the first one, the 1980 Fribourg Symposium (“Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur”, Fribourg: 2 - 5 September 1980). It is also interesting to note that the newly established (2010) Amsterdam Centre for Eastern Orthodox Theology, associated with the VU University of Amsterdam, is dedicated to Maximus, naming him the Father of Byzantine Theology (http://www.aceot.nl/pages/sub/35476/_St_Maximos_the_Confessor.html, retrieved 07 April 2013).

Maria Luisa Gatti,⁶⁴ in which she categorizes Maximian bibliographical sources by the decade of their appearance, starting from the beginnings of the 20th century. Aidan Nichols, in his 1993 monograph entitled *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship*,⁶⁵ attempts to present and summarize the major monographs written in languages other than English from 1967 up to 1992.⁶⁶ He also provides us with an illuminating chapter on the overall history of Maximian scholarship and on the modern rediscovery of Maximus.⁶⁷ Before this rediscovery, Maximus was practically unknown in western Europe and merely regarded as one of the many ‘Byzantine’ Fathers of the undivided church, of the ‘Greek Fathers’ – while his theological heritage was more respected in the orthodox East, where he is considered as a precursor to Gregory Palamas. Today, after Maximus’ rediscovery, he is widely considered as the most important post-Cappadocian ‘Byzantine’ theologian. Nichols, a Roman Catholic priest, writes that Maximus “is increasingly regarded as a giant of the Greek tradition, to be compared, as the author of its classical statement, only with Thomas Aquinas in the Latin West”⁶⁸ – similar or even much more enthusiastic statements are to be found in nearly every recent monograph on Maximus.

An indispensable list for research on the Confessor has been published in 2012: a book claiming to enlist the whole of Maximian scholarship, Mikonja Knežević’s *Maximus the Confessor (580-662): Bibliography*.⁶⁹ Its 3.133 titles contain translations, critical editions, monographs and theses, articles, papers, conferences and conference proceedings up to and including 2012, divided into thematic categories. The fact that there was a dire need to publish such a book discloses much about the extent of the recent (and not-so-recent) interest in Maximus.

⁶⁴ Maria Luisa Gatti: *Massimo il Confessore. Saggio di bibliografia generale ragionata e contributi per una ricostruzione scientifica del suo pensiero metafisico e religioso*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, Pubblicazioni della Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Metafisica del Platonismo nel suo sviluppo storico e nella filosofia patristica. Studi o testi, 2) 1987.

⁶⁵ Aidan Nichols: *Byzantine Gospel. Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship*. Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark 1993.

⁶⁶ Nichols presents and summarizes the ‘Maximian’ monographs by Vittorio Croce, Pierre Piret, Michael van Esbroeck, Lars Thunberg, Alain Riou and Juan-Miguel Garrigues. Of these only Thunberg’s books have been published in English.

⁶⁷ “The Rediscovery of Maximus: A Brief History of Maximian Scholarship”, in Nichols: *Byzantine Gospel*, pp. 221-252.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. ix.

⁶⁹ Mikonja Knežević: *Maximus the Confessor (580-662): Bibliography*. Belgrade: Institute for Theological Research (Bibliographia Serbica Theologica vol. 6) 2012.

I.3.2. Main Developments in Maximian Scholarship

We will refer here to the most important monographs on Maximus the Confessor, focusing on the ones that will prove more useful in our specific endeavour.

While the presence of earlier research is not to be unnoticed, Hans Urs von Balthasar's pioneering work *Kosmische Liturgie* opened the way for Maximus' rediscovery in the West. First published in 1941 in Freiburg as *Kosmische Liturgie. Maximus der Bekenner: Höhe und Krise des griechischen Weltbilds* and subsequently republished in 1961 in Einsiedeln in a radically revised edition after taking into account Sherwood's and others' research, *Cosmic Liturgy* remains one of the most comprehensive introductions to Maximus' *Weltanschauung*.⁷⁰ While written as a primarily theological work, *Cosmic Liturgy's* insights prove to be truly illuminating for a philosophical approach to Maximus' world.

The Benedictine monk and professor of theology Polycarp Sherwood has provided us not only with translations and a date-list of Maximus' works, but also with very good introductions to the Confessor's thought.⁷¹ His books and articles reflect a deep understanding of the premises of the Confessor's thought, and his study on Maximus' refutation of Origenism remains a classic.

In 1964, the Swedish scholar Lars Thunberg would publish his monograph entitled *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*. While Thunberg's work focuses on Maximus' anthropology, through his study of humanity, soul and deification in Maximus' works he unfolds an understanding of the whole of Maximus' thought as particularly interesting for a philosophical approach to the Church Father. Thunberg's monograph is one of the best introductions to Maximus' thought available today. We note the importance of a good and comprehensive introduction repeatedly, because the fertility and diversity of Maximus' thought leads each scholar to different approaches to it and results at times in quite differing perspectives and prioritizations. Apart from his *Microcosm and Mediator* and diverse articles, Thunberg has published in 1985 a smaller book as an introduction to the Confessor's cosmic vision.⁷²

⁷⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar: *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*. Johannes Verlag: Einsiedeln 1961. Translated in English by Brian E. Daley as: *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2003.

⁷¹ Polycarp Sherwood: *The earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his refutation of origenism* (Romae: Herder 1955) and his introduction in his *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life – The Four Centuries on Charity* (Westminster: The Newman Press 1955).

⁷² Lars Thunberg: *Man and the cosmos. The vision of St Maximus the Confessor*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985.

We can speak of a *French school* in Maximian scholarship, not so much because of a consensus between French scholars but because of the vivid interest in Maximus in the francophone world. Jean-Claude Larchet, Irénée Henri Dalmais,⁷³ Alain Riou,⁷⁴ Jean-Miguel Garrigues⁷⁵ and others formed and continued a tradition of approaching Maximus as one of the most important Fathers of the Church, while advancing Maximian research as a whole. The beginnings should be traced in the Dominican monk Marie-Joseph Le Guillou's legacy:⁷⁶ his pupils' books on Maximus (Riou, Garrigues, Lethel and Piret) all carry his preface. The subject of most of their work was to illustrate Maximus as a precursor to Thomas Aquinas. More recently Antoine Lévy, also a Dominican, has also compared Maximus the Confessor to Thomas Aquinas, although in a more elaborate and qualified way.⁷⁷

Riou and Garrigues in particular have underlined the centrality and importance of the λόγος-τρόπος distinction in Maximus' thought, the distinction between the principle of being (λόγος φύσεως) and the mode of existence (τρόπος υπάρξεως). In Alain Riou's *Le monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, he expounds a soteriological cosmology in which the created world is assumed and assimilated by the church and is made complete (i.e. is saved) by its participation in the hypostasis of the *Logos*. In order to express this with precision, Maximus employs the λόγος-τρόπος distinction in a way uncommon in previous patristic literature, where the notion of the principle of being (λόγος φύσεως) was extensively developed, but not so much that of the mode of existence (τρόπος υπάρξεως), says Riou.⁷⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet⁷⁹ has written extensively on Maximus and his work is of high value, but there is a divergence of opinion between him and a significant number of other scholars concerning the exact content of the terms person and hypostasis (πρόσωπον-ύπόστασις), nature

⁷³ Irénée Henri Dalmais: *Théologie de l'église et mystère liturgique dans la Mystagogie de saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1975) and many individual articles.

⁷⁴ Alain Riou: *Le monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*. Paris: Beauchesne (Théologie historique, 22) 1973.

⁷⁵ Juan Miguel Garrigues: *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*. Paris: Beauchesne (Théologie historique, 38) 1976.

⁷⁶ Marie-Joseph Le Guillou: *Le Christ et l'Église. Théologie du mystère*. Paris: Ed. du centurion 1963. *L'expérience de l'Esprit saint en Orient et en Occident*. Saint-Maur, Les Plans-sur-Bex: Editions Parole et silence 2001.

⁷⁷ Antoine Lévy: *Le Cree Et L'incree: Maxime Le Confesseur Et Thomas D'Aquin*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin 2006.

⁷⁸ Riou: *Le monde et l'Église*, pp. 79-83.

⁷⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet: *La Divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1996. *Maxime le Confesseur, médiateur entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1998. *Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf 2003.

and substance (φύσις-οὐσία) and freedom in Maximus the Confessor's thought – a point of major disagreement with John Zizioulas.⁸⁰

In 1980, the first major international conference on Maximian scholarship made it clear that the rediscovery of Maximus the Confessor was not limited to a circle of scholars but denoted a significant shift in the focus of patristic studies as a whole.⁸¹ The reader will also note that Maximus' thought was approached not as theology *per se*, but as 'Christian thought', encompassing a greater area of scholarship. The conference's proceedings are still an important point of reference.

The first major American study on Maximus the Confessor is Paul M. Blowers *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor* in 1991, in which Blowers examines the pedagogical and exegetical models used by the Confessor in his *Questions to Thalassius*.⁸²

We hold that the substance-activities (οὐσία-ἐνέργεια, commonly translated as essence-energies) distinction is of vital importance for the understanding of St Maximus' ontology and certainly not an anachronism from the fourteenth century. This is what Vasilios Karayiannis attempts to expound in his *Maxime le confesseur. Essence et énergies de Dieu*.⁸³ In later chapters we will refer to the hypostatic realization of the substance and the energies'-activities' role for the substance-hypostasis distinction more extensively. (There is a rich bibliography on the matter of the substance-activities distinction prior to Gregory Palamas in general and in Maximus' thought in particular, and Torstein Tollefsen's second book, which we will mention shortly, is the most remarkable contribution to the matter among the most recent ones. The fact that it focuses on the philosophical terminology and not on later theological disputes makes it even more relevant to our study).

Andrew Louth's combination of an excellent introduction to Maximus the Confessor (his thought, the tradition that precedes him and the historical context of his time) and the English translation of key passages from the *Ambigua* in 1996 constitutes an ideal introduction to Maximus' thought, a very good 'en-

⁸⁰ John Zizioulas analyzes these differences in: "Person And Nature In The Theology Of St Maximus The Confessor", in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection – Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, October 18-21 2012*, California: Sebastian Press 2013, pp. 85-113.

⁸¹ Felix Heinzer & Christoph Schönborn (ed.): *Maximus Confessor, Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2 - 5 sept. 1980*. Fribourg, Suisse: Éd. Universitaires 1982.

⁸² Paul M. Blowers: *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press 1991.

⁸³ Vasilios Karayiannis: *Maxime le confesseur. Essence et énergies de Dieu*. Paris: Beauchesne (Théologie historique, 93) 1993.

trance point' to Maximian studies.⁸⁴ Nikolaos Loudovikos introduces the notion of a *Eucharistic Ontology* and sheds more light in the λόγοι theory in his dense monograph, recently translated in English.⁸⁵

Pascal Mueller-Jourdan's 2005 monograph *Typologie Spatio-Temporelle de l'Ecclesia Byzantine: La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur*⁸⁶ examines space and time in the context of the liturgy as expounded by Maximus in his *Μυσταγωγία*. While this monograph isn't quite an exposition of Maximus' hermeneutic approach to time *per se* (due to its specific focus on liturgical spatiotemporality), it is certainly the work that stands nearest to our endeavour. Another doctoral thesis in close proximity to ours is Vasileios Betsakos' *Στάσις Αεικίνητος*,⁸⁷ which approaches Maximus' theory of motion as a thorough and radical renewal of Aristotle's theory in an ecclesial context. An account of the Greek Fathers' understanding of temporality in general and a comparison to theories of time developed in the Christian West (with a special mention of Augustine and Boethius) is to be found in David Bradshaw's article "Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers".⁸⁸ Paul Plass has published a noteworthy article treating Maximus the Confessor's approach to transcendent time,⁸⁹ while Edward

⁸⁴ Andrew Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*. New York: Routledge – Taylor & Francis e-Library 2005.

⁸⁵ Nikolaos Loudovikos: *Η εὐχαριστιακὴ ὄντολογία: τὰ εὐχαριστιακὰ θεμέλια τοῦ εἶναι ὡς ἐν κοινωσίᾳ γίνεσθα, στὴν ἐσχολογικὴ ὄντολογία τοῦ ἁγίου Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητῆ*. Athens: Domos 1992. Translated by Elisabeth Theokritoff as: *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Brookline: HC Press 2010.

⁸⁶ Pascal Mueller-Jourdan: *Typologie Spatio-Temporelle de l'Ecclesia Byzantine: La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Vol. 74) 2005.

⁸⁷ Vasileios Betsakos: *Στάσις ἀεικίνητος: ἡ ἀνακαίνισις τῆς ἀριστοτελικῆς κινήσεως στὴ θεολογία Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ*. Athens: Armos 2006.

⁸⁸ David Bradshaw's "Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers", in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), pp. 311-366. Bradshaw mentions Maximus' contribution in pp. 346-52 and is one of the first to elaborate on it, providing illuminating comments. However, he has focused on the *Scholia* to the Dionysian corpus, and as a consequence we have been led in our dedicated study of Maximus' understanding of temporality to partly (but substantially) different conclusions. For example, Bradshaw speaks of the "eternity" and doesn't differentiate between the Aeon and the third mode of temporality in deification (the στάσις ἀεικίνητος), assuming in p. 351 that the Aeon is the 'eternity' of deification as well – i.e., that the 'seventh day' is identical to the 'eighth day', etc. However, as we will show, Maximus speaks of two substantially different 'eternities': he starkly differentiates between the eternity of the Aeon, which "has had a beginning" and belongs to (intelligible) creation and the different eternity of the uncreated and of the participation in the uncreated, being beyond time and timelessness and beyond motion and fixity (which is the primary reason that we have avoided to consistently translate any one of Maximus' terms as 'eternity'). To understand Maximus' αἰὼν simply as eternity, as the etymological αἰεὶ ὄν ('the one that always is') can be misleading, due to the many different shades of meaning found in Maximus. However, we must note that, in general, Bradshaw's comparison between western and eastern Christian conceptions of temporality is a truly valuable one, underlining important but often neglected differences between the two.

⁸⁹ Paul Plass: "Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor", in: *The Thomist* 44:2 (1980), pp. 259-277. See also his article: "Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa", in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980), pp. 180-192, as well as his account of Maximus' στάσις ἀεικίνητος, "'Moving Rest' in Maximus the Confessor", in: *Classica et Mediaevalia* 35 (1984): 177-190.

Epsen's article "Eternity is a Present, Time is its Unwrapping"⁹⁰ makes a number of references to Maximus.

In the first decade of the new millennium, four monographs on Maximus the Confessor have been published by Oxford University Press' *Early Christian Studies* series. Demetrios Bathrellos' *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*⁹¹ focuses on the Monothelite controversy and on Christ's human will, Adam G. Cooper rises in *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor – Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*⁹² the question concerning the body's state in deification, Melchisedec Törönen in his *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*⁹³ explores the titular subject with a philosophical perspective and Torstein Tollefsen publishes *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*.⁹⁴ It should be noted that Tollefsen, today a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo, considered his study on Maximus to be a philosophical one, submitted it in the University of Oslo's faculty of philosophy and maintains that Maximus' *Weltanschauung* is a purely cosmological one, albeit 'Christocentrically' cosmological. As such, his monograph is of crucial importance in our attempt to approach Maximus as a philosopher. Tollefsen elaborated this philosophical approach in his later monograph *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*,⁹⁵ a study of Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas in which he highlights the philosophical importance of the notion of *activities* (ἐνέργειαι).

A substantial part of Christina Kapsimalakou's doctoral thesis in philosophy entitled *Freedom and Necessity in Maximus the Confessor: Towards an Ontology of the Person*⁹⁶ (in Greek) is relevant to our work, as it verifies the Maximian grounding of Christos Yannaras' prosopocentric and critical ontology and links Maximus' use and definition of key terms to that of Yannaras, evinc-

⁹⁰ Edward Epsen: "Eternity is a Present, Time is its Unwrapping", in: *The Heythrop Journal* 52 (2010), pp. 417-429. Apart from these, Andrew Louth had presented a paper entitled "Time and Space in Maximus the Confessor" at the "Neoplatonism and St Maximus the Confessor" conference in 2008 in Athens, but this paper hasn't been published yet. It contains valuable remarks on διάστημα as distance, a notion that will play a key role in our analysis.

⁹¹ Demetrios Bathrellos: *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004.

⁹² Adam G. Cooper: *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor. Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005.

⁹³ Melchisedec Törönen: *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007.

⁹⁴ Torstein Tollefsen: *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008.

⁹⁵ Idem: *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012.

⁹⁶ Christina Kapsimalakou: *Ἐλευθερία καὶ ἀναγκαιότητα κατὰ τὸν Μάξιμο τὸν Ὁμολογητή: πρὸς μιὰ Ὀντολογία τοῦ Προσώπου*. Patras: University of Patras (Diss.) 2012, particularly pp. 38-96.

ing the latter as an organic continuation of the former in a radically different era, where philosophical thought and ecclesial testimony are articulated in a substantially different language. However, and apart from this hermeneutic viewpoint, the thesis focuses on human will and freedom in Maximus' work and as such will not be directly related to our research question.

I.3.3. 'Byzantine' Philosophy

Maximus the Confessor's works stood out as particularly philosophical even in Johannes Huber's 1859 book *Die Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, in which the author praises Maximus as the most mature thinker of the Orthodox church.⁹⁷ Since then the study of Eastern Roman ('Byzantine') philosophy has advanced, and Maximus has not lost his highly important position in it.

The first major overview of 'Byzantine' philosophy is Basile Tatakis' *La Philosophie Byzantine* in 1949.⁹⁸ The studies of Klaus Öhler⁹⁹ (1969) and Gerhard Podskalsky¹⁰⁰ (1977) followed, each presenting a different aspect of 'Byzantine' philosophy, and since then the study of 'Byzantine' philosophy has manifested considerable academic efflorescence – while there is still much to be done.

More recent research (2002) includes the volume edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou, *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*.¹⁰¹ However, for Ierodiakonou Maximus does not belong to 'Byzantine' philosophy, but rather to early 'Byzantine' philosophy, as she defines the era of 'Byzantine' philosophy between 730 and 1453.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Johannes Huber: *Die Philosophie der Kirchenväter*. München: J.G. Cotta 1859, pp. 341-358.

⁹⁸ Basile Tatakis: *La Philosophie Byzantine*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (Fascicule supplémentaire No II of Émile Bréhier's *Histoire de la Philosophie*) 1949. In English: Basil Tatakis & Nicholas J. Moutafakis (transl.): *Byzantine Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 2003. In Greek: *Ἡ Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία*. Athens: Eteria Spoudon Neoellinikou Politismou ke Genikis Paideias 1977.

⁹⁹ Klaus Öhler: *Antike Philosophie und Byzantinisches Mittelalter*. München: Beck 1969.

¹⁰⁰ Gerhard Podskalsky: *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz. Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14./15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung*. München: Beck 1977.

¹⁰¹ Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.): *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002.

¹⁰² "For the purposes of this article, Byzantine philosophy is the study and teaching of traditional subjects of philosophy in the Greek language between c. 730 and 1453. The second half of this delineation construes the attribute 'Byzantine' rather narrowly, in that it excludes the whole period between c. 330 and c. 730, which is commonly referred to by historians as 'Early Byzantine' (and also leaves out of account philosophical activity in the minority languages of the Byzantine Empire)". Katerina Ierodiakonou & Börje Bydén: "Byzantine Philosophy" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/byzantine-philosophy/>>, retrieved 07 April 2013. On the

Georgi T. Kapriev's recent (2005) monograph *Philosophie in Byzanz*¹⁰³ constitutes an interesting attempt to compose an overview of 'Byzantine' philosophy through four major points of synthesis, namely Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, Patriarch Photius of Constantinople and Gregory Palamas. Maximus the Confessor has a fair share in it¹⁰⁴ and the summary of his thought by Kapriev is an accurate and balanced one. Kapriev's understanding of *what 'Byzantine' philosophy is* differs from his predecessors' in that it productively transcends the philosophy-theology divide which, in the case of the 'Byzantine' empire, is an anachronistic construct imposed upon a society that thought, discussed, wrote and acted in quite different terms, as Kapriev expounds.¹⁰⁵ The reception of 'Byzantine' philosophy through the philosophy-theology divide as it has been developed in Western Europe has effected an unbalanced focus on lesser 'Byzantine' thinkers, which however had the advantage of not being 'theologians'. This tendency is gradually being corrected in academia, and the relevance of a given thinker to philosophical enquiry is becoming the criterion of what 'Byzantine' philosophy is – as it should have been.

While Christos Yannaras' and John Zizioulas' work is of course in no way to be categorized as 'Byzantine' philosophy, we hold that their input is particularly productive in an understanding of the philosophical thinking of the 'Byzantines' – perhaps indispensably so, as we will expound in the chapter concerning Yannaras' ontology.

In examining the subject of time, we should also mention Oscar Cullmann's classic study *Christ and Time. The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*.¹⁰⁶ However, it has not been proven of crucial importance for our task, since it examines a considerably earlier phase in the development of Christian thought.

A prerequisite for being able to focus on Maximus the Confessor's understanding of motion and temporality would be the attempt to understand his (and his church's) positions concerning ontology, cosmology and anthropology. We will attempt to do this in the following chapter, after a short examination of the alleged clash between philosophy and theology.

formation of early Christian philosophy up to the fourth century, see George Karamanolis' *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham: Acumen 2013).

¹⁰³ Georgi T. Kapriev: *Philosophie in Byzanz*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2005.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 45-104.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 13-21.

¹⁰⁶ Oscar Cullmann: *Christ and Time. The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. London: SCM Press 1967.

*PART II: An Ecclesial Weltanschauung – and a
Relational and Critical Ontology*

II.1. Early Christian/‘Byzantine’ Philosophy and Maximus the Confessor¹⁰⁷

II.1.1. Philosophy and Theology

We have repeatedly mentioned the phrases *Maximus’ philosophy*, *the philosophy of the Greek Fathers*, *early Christian* and *‘Byzantine’ philosophy*. An elucidation concerning the meaning we ascribe to those terms is appropriate. We will first remark on the distinction and relationship between theology and philosophy and subsequently explain why these remarks are *not* applicable to the Greek Fathers’ thought.

The problem of making a clear cut distinction between philosophy and theology is an old one, especially in academia.¹⁰⁸ The fact that philosophy served in the Western European Middle Ages primarily as *ancilla theologiae*, as a maidservant of theology and a provider of arguments as well as added authority or provability to theological positions, does certainly not help in today’s academic attempt to either demonstrate the futility of an absolute distinction between the two or to thoroughly and convincingly explain why such a distinction is needed. The relationship between philosophical thought and theological formulations in the West was not even merely a relationship of peaceful submission, if we take into account acts of violence and oppression during its history. There arose a need for the full liberation of philosophical thought from its allegiance to religious control, which resulted over time in establishing a pronounced and absolute distinction between the disciplines of philosophy and theology, so that philosophical thinking could be freely developed and not be at the risk of future limitations.

¹⁰⁷ In attempting a reading of early Christian philosophy along with Maximus the Confessor’s thought, we will focus on the articulation of the ecclesial testimony through the great councils of the undivided church. For an examination of Christian philosophy *from* the first century and, roughly, *up to* the council of Constantinople in 381, consult George Karamanolis’s monograph *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham: Acumen 2013).

¹⁰⁸ First of all, it should be noted that this distinction does not have the same historical roots in East and West. As David Bradshaw remarks, “in the East there were never the same divisions between philosophy and theology, or theology and mysticism, as in the West, partly because these divisions presuppose a concept of natural reason that is itself a product of the western tradition. For the historian of philosophy, this means that in studying the East one encounters a great deal that is not normally part of one’s professional territory: detailed discussions of Trinitarian theology, of prayer, of ascetic practice, of charity toward the poor, and of Scriptural exegesis, often expressed in a baroque complex vocabulary. One’s task is to disentangle the recognizably philosophical elements from their context without distorting them or evacuating them of their meaning” (*Aristotle East and West – Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. xiii-xiv). On Maximus, Hans Urs von Balthasar notes that it would be anachronistic to make a distinction between philosophy and theology in dealing with a thinker like him, for reasons he explains in *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 100f.

Nevertheless, even in the very soil of these historical developments, the relationship and interaction between philosophy and theology continued to be very strong. In acknowledging this in the deepest level, Heidegger criticizes the whole of western metaphysics as *ontotheology*.¹⁰⁹ This interrelation of ontology and theology is usually seen as problematic, as a problem that philosophy must overcome.

Without implying that any ontological statement is a theological one or that any theology necessarily constitutes ontology, we wish to remark on the arbitrary nature of an absolute and mutually exclusive distinction between the two. Here we are referring to the academic approach to theology, not to the question of the ecclesial testimony's theological reality; we will not examine how theology sees philosophy, only how philosophy sees theology – and neither will we attempt a philosophical justification of theology or a theological justification of philosophy.

One of the most fundamental definitions of theology for Western scholarship is that of Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei*: “de divinitate rationem sive sermonem”,¹¹⁰ to contemplate or to discuss about God - or the deity or the divine. However, as it is also the case with the etymological analysis of the word ‘theology’, i.e. the word about God or the divine, this definition cannot possibly exhaust the field of research that is collectively called ‘theology’; in giving some examples we may mention the history of theology, ethics, the philology of ecclesial texts, political theology and other areas that are better understood in comparison with their philosophical counterparts than through the etymological signifiers of the word ‘theology’. Theology as it is understood today is clearly not limited to the ‘word about God’. Thus, we would propose a sharp distinction between *theology in itself*, what is also termed systematic theology and what we could term *producing theology* on one hand, and the *philology of theological or*

¹⁰⁹ In essence, ontotheology means considering God as a being i.e. as one of the beings, even though a very exalted one (and not, for example, as residing *beyond* the category of beings). This term has suffered much; it originated with Immanuel Kant and became widely known through its use (with a different content) by Heidegger. Today it is usually used in a much wider sense, denoting the hardly avoidable inclusion of philosophical theology in philosophy through metaphysics (Aristotle's ‘first philosophy’), where a sharp distinction between the philosophical and theological aspects of it is extremely difficult. The problem is that by including God in the ontological enquiry, God is reified, he is made an object within existence – albeit the highest, the most perfect etc, but nonetheless one *object* within *being*. For an account of Heidegger's meaning of the term, consult Iain Thomson: “Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruction* of Metaphysics”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8:3 (2000), pp. 297-327. According to p. 323, Kant's original definition of ontotheology is “that kind of transcendental theology which (like Anselm's famous ‘ontological argument’ for the existence of God) ‘believes it can know the existence of an [original being, *Urwesen*] through mere concepts, without the help of any experience whatsoever””, in contrast to the empirically-oriented cosmotheology. In our opinion, the philosopher Jean-Luc Marion successfully attempts in his now classic monograph *God Without Being* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press 2012) to *radically transcend ontotheology* when philosophically engaging with the subject of God, thereby achieving a truly crucial contribution to philosophy.

¹¹⁰ *De Civitate Dei*, VIII. i.

ecclesial texts, as for example the history of theology or doctrine or generally the teachings that have been handed over to us on the other. In exactly the same way a distinction is to be applied to the field of philosophy, for *producing philosophy* is an entirely different action in comparison to the *philology of philosophical texts* (e.g. the history of philosophy), which in many ways is the most representative discipline of academic philosophy and invaluable in disclosing the totality of philosophical enquiry.

Generally speaking, the definition of philosophy, the etymological ‘love of wisdom’ or the pursuit of knowledge concerning existence, does not exclude theology- quite on the contrary, if we understand theology as the search for the knowledge of the first cause of existence. One could argue that sometimes theological thinking is limited to a given teaching or ‘doctrine’, within the framework and limits of which it is developed. However, if such an argument were to be accepted, then as a logical consequence other schools of philosophy ought also not to be considered philosophical. This would for example include philosophical schools and traditions like Kantian, Nietzschean or Marxist philosophy or, to return to the basics, the Aristotelian tradition, which would be excluded from philosophy due to its limitation within a given framework (i.e., the writings of Kant, Nietzsche, Marx or Aristotle respectively). The same applies if one is to claim that theology constitutes a discipline *only within the frame of an organized religion*, a claim that is factually incorrect anyway. To state that theology is only formed, articulated and propagated under the control and through the mechanisms of religious authority and power is particularly untrue in the case of the subject of our study, Maximus the Confessor. As we have seen, he was at a certain point in his life virtually the only person in the empire (along with his two pupils) to defend the Dyothelite position, and for that he suffered persecution from both the state and the church. However, this did not stop his theology from becoming widely recognized as the truly orthodox position not long after his death. Maximus’ (later triumphant) theology has not been developed within the frame of authoritative religious mechanisms that made its formulation or propagation possible: quite the contrary!

It could also be argued that the core of the philosophy, the ‘first philosophy’ i.e. ontology/metaphysics, is primarily an area of theology. The question about the existence of existence, about the nature of existing and its meaning constitutes a question that is related or sometimes identical to the question of the ‘first cause’, of God and his existence and reality or inexistence and absence. Trying to remove the question of the ‘first cause’ and of the *meaning* of existence from philosophy (and attribute it to a ‘clear’ theology) would leave philosophy without its core, without the ‘first philosophy’ – even if attempts have been made to construct philosophical theories, interpretations of the existence com-

pletely devoid of ontological positions or propositions, which, we could argue, is a fundamental contradiction, a *contradictio in terminis*.

A rather obvious example in this line of thought is the ‘theology of Aristotle’ and, to further concretize, the detailed description of the ‘prime mover’ – and of the need for a ‘prime mover’ – in Book Λ of the *Metaphysics*. The authors of *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* note that “theology acquires in Aristotle a completely new meaning: as ‘meta-physics’, as the ‘first philosophy’.”¹¹¹ In an utterly theological way, Aristotle himself points out the necessarily monotheistic character of his ‘first philosophy’ stating that “*the prime unmoved mover is one in number as well as in definition*”,¹¹² while elsewhere he refers to God in the context of his moral philosophy.¹¹³ Should we categorize these meditations of Aristotle under philosophy or under theology? If we consider them as being solely philosophical, then there is no reason for a separate science, a ‘theology’ which deals with the ‘word about God’. If we consider them as being solely theological, then the philosophy of Aristotle loses a very important and rather central and vital part, as would happen in philosophy in general if we applied the same principle and logic. Here we can already see that a strict separation of philosophy and theology would be very problematic. The nature of Maximus the Confessor’s work, i.e. the philosophical (and quite Aristotelian) reasoning that he uses and the philosophical ‘texture’ of many of his works in which this reasoning results, reveals the futility of this distinction as well.¹¹⁴

II.1.2. Ontotheology as Incompatible with Ecclesial Testimony

The above analysis omits a vital part of Christian ontology, which is different from Greek philosophy and which forbids ontotheology in the literal sense; that is, the created-uncreated distinction,¹¹⁵ the implications of *creation ex nihilo*.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Josef Höfe and Karl Rahner (eds): *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, tenth volume, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder 1965, p. 62: „[Die Theologie] gewinnt [bei Aristoteles] eine ganz neuartige Bedeutung: als ‚Meta-physik‘ bzw. ‚Erste Philosophie‘“.

¹¹² *Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*, 1074a: ἐν ἄρα καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ τὸ πρῶτον κινουὺν ἀκίνητον ὄν.

¹¹³ *Ἠθικά Εὐδήμια*, 1245b 17: οὐ γὰρ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς εὐ ἔχει, ἀλλὰ βέλτιον ἢ ὥστε ἄλλο τι νοεῖν παρ’ αὐτὸς αὐτόν.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Betsakos: *Στάσις Αἰκίνητος*, σ. 11.

¹¹⁵ See e.g. Maximus the Confessor’s *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1221 A: “the Creator and creation are not the same, as if what is attributed to the one must by necessity be attributed likewise to the other, for if this were the case the natural differences between them would no longer be evident” (transl. Constan, DOML 28, p. 375). – Ibid. 1168 B: “Since the uncreated is not naturally contained by creation, nor is the unlimited comprehended by what is limited” (transl. Louth, p. 130). There can be no middle ground between the uncreated and the created: *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πόρρου*, PG 91 341 A: ἡ κτιστὴν, ἢ ἀκτιστον λέγειν ταύτην ἀναγκασθήσεσθε· ἐπειδὴ μέσον κτιστῆς καὶ ἀκτιστου οὐδεμία ὑπάρχει τὸ σύνολον. See also Maximus’ list of cosmological divisions,

The ontotheological position is that one can know the first cause of existence (or God or existence’s meaning and sense) through concepts (i.e. through philosophy) – as it is a being, i.e. one of the beings. This is perfectly compatible with an ontology that traces the first cause of existence, or God, or existence’s meaning and sense, *in the world*, within existence. If it is one of the components of the world, its truth can be accurately thought of, spoken of, articulated, defined (within the means of language’s realism). Aristotle’s prime unmoved mover does not reside *outside* of the world, he is *within* the world. However, and in contrast with Greek ontology before Christianity, the religion of the Hebrews and the testimony of the Christians speak of a creation *ex nihilo*, of a distinction between created reality and the uncreated God, of a first cause that resides *outside* of the cosmos i.e. the *ktisis* (κτίσις), *outside* of the created world (of course, without the spatiotemporality that ‘outside’ seems to imply).

The genius of Ludwig Wittgenstein has provided us with another *language* to express this from another perspective: according to him, “the sense of the world must lie outside the world”.¹¹⁷ Wittgenstein explains: “In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists – and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world”.¹¹⁸ The question of the *sense* of the world is the question of its *cause*, the question about God. However, “the limits of my language signify the limits of my world”.¹¹⁹ To signify in language what lies *beyond* the limits of my world, the extremities of which are the limitations of createdness, would be impossible, it would be *non-sense*. One cannot truly philosophize about what lies beyond the limits of createdness, and as such of language. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”.¹²⁰ If one *has* to speak, then a truly *apophatic* stance towards knowledge and language is necessary.

Thus, the primary affirmation of ontotheology cannot be accepted by the ecclesial testimony under any circumstances. For the Fathers of the Church, phi-

influenced by Gregory of Nyssa – the first of them is the created-uncreated distinction: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1304 D: “They say that the substance of everything that has come into being is divided into five divisions. The first of these divides from the uncreated nature the universal created nature, which receives its being from becoming” (transl. Louth, p. 154).

¹¹⁶ Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 4.1.3: ἐκ τοῦ μηδενὸς τῆς τῶν ὄντων εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρήγαγεν ὑπαρξιν [ὁ Θεός]. – “From nothing he has brought into existence everything that is” (transl. Berthold p. 75).

¹¹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.41.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Tractatus* 5.6.

¹²⁰ *Tractatus* 7.

losophy was certainly not a means to *know* God, as this would not be possible, and to deem it possible would be to deny basic tenets of the ecclesial testimony.¹²¹

II.1.3. Maximus' Apophaticism: "God does not exist"

Maximus the Confessor follows Wittgenstein's advice; he does not speak of what cannot be said. Maximus speaks of God (and of everything) "according to the measure of our language (for it is not possible for us to transcend it)".¹²² In an utter respect for the realism of language, Maximus declares that God does not exist, for his existence is completely beyond everything that we call 'being' and 'existence'.¹²³ For the Confessor, this is not a mere rhetorical device: he explicitly writes that "nonbeing is properly meant with regard to [God], since he is not among beings".¹²⁴ Every designation concerning God and the sense of the world cannot but be incorrect, as it emerges from within the limits of our world. The mode of existence (τρόπος υπάρξεως) of creatures cannot be the same or comparable to the mode of existence of their source of being, to the mode of existence of the uncreated, and nothing at all can be said about it, as it resides beyond the limits of createdness. Language cannot even circumscribe truth when trying to signify the uncreated: "for since it is necessary that we understand correctly the difference between God and creatures, then the affirmation of being beyond being [ὑπερεῖναι, ὑπερούσιος] must be the negation of beings and the affirmation of beings must be the negation of being beyond being.

¹²¹ On this subject, cf. Tollefsen: *Activity and Participation*, pp. 33-46. On a side note, let us remark that in an attempt to be able to know God through concepts and to bridge the gap between the Christian God and ancient Greek conceptions of a first cause, the principle of the *analogia entis* was employed in the Christian West; however, as this cannot be traced in Maximus the Confessor or in the Eastern church both prior to Maximus and thereafter, we will not deal with it here.

¹²² *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 189 B (p. 122, fn.): τῷ μέτρῳ τῆς ἡμετέρας γλώσσης ἀκολουθῶν, (οὐ γὰρ ὑπερβῆναι ταύτην δυνατόν ἡμῖν).

¹²³ *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella, proem.109: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ μὴ εἶναι μᾶλλον, διὰ τὸ ὑπερεῖναι, ὡς οἰκειότερον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ λεγόμενον προσέμενος. - "[...] because of his being beyond being, [God] is more fittingly referred to as nonbeing".

¹²⁴ *Πεύσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 2.14.4-6: Κυρίως γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ λέγεται τὸ μὴ ὄν, ἐπειδὴ οὐδὲν ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων (transl. Prassas p. 155). In an attempt to find contemporary approaches (besides Yannaras and Zizioulas) showing a profound *understanding* of what Maximus strives to articulate, even if not explicitly basing this understanding on Maximus and his texts, we are once again led to Jean-Luc Marion's *God without Being*. It seems to us that Marion, in describing a God that *exists* but is *without* being, i.e. *beyond* being, has achieved to express in contemporary philosophical language the patristic era's apophatic testimony of a God that is *ὑπερούσιος*, i.e. *beyond* being (cf. *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ περὶ Θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 313 C, CD4.1 188 A and CD4.1 204 D). In that sense, Jean-Luc Marion's *God without Being* constitutes the answer to the question of *what apophaticism is*, if it is not merely the *via negativa* or negative theology, i.e. a delimitation through negations, but a much more crucial *stance* towards metaphysics and theology.

In fact both names, being and nonbeing, are to be reverently applied to [God] although not at all properly”.¹²⁵

We will examine in the chapter on Yannaras that apophaticism, i.e. “the refusal to exhaust truth in its formulation and to identify the understanding of the signifier with the knowledge of its signified reality”,¹²⁶ is not the *via negativa*, for it denies even negation itself as a way of true knowledge. In accordance with this, Maximus stresses the need to understand that God transcends “all affirmation and negation”:

For nothing whatsoever, whether being or nonbeing, is linked to him as a cause, no being or what is called being, no nonbeing, or what is called nonbeing, is properly close to him. He has in fact a simple existence, unknowable and inaccessible to all and altogether beyond understanding which transcends all affirmation and negation.¹²⁷

Of course, the same honesty towards knowledge and language, either explicit or implicit, is to be expected from Maximus throughout the totality of his work, not only when he speaks of the uncreated. This *stance* towards knowledge and language permeates his *Lebensanschauung* and marks his work, an epistemological realism “beyond affirmation and negation”. In highlighting our point, we can only refer to the fifth chapter of *Mystical Theology* from the Areopagite corpus, the writings that exerted so profound an influence on Maximus. This passage is very well known, but we will nonetheless quote it to stress the importance of (i) apophaticism and (ii) the created-uncreated distinction to our study.

Once more, ascending yet higher we maintain that It is not soul, or mind, or endowed with the faculty of imagination, conjecture, reason, or understanding; nor is It any act of reason or understanding; nor can It be described by the reason or perceived by the understanding, since It is not number, or order, or greatness, or littleness, or equality, or inequality, and since It is not immovable nor in motion, or at rest, and has no power, and is not power or light, and does not live, and is not life; nor is It personal essence, or eternity, or time; nor can It be grasped by the understanding since It is not knowledge or truth; nor is It kingship or wisdom; nor is It one, nor is It unity, nor is It Godhead or Goodness; nor is It a Spirit, as we understand the term, since It is not Sonship or Fa-

¹²⁵ Maximus the Confessor: *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella, proem.110-115: Δεῖ γάρ, εἴπερ ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ γινῶναι διαφορὰν Θεοῦ καὶ κτισμάτων ἐστὶν ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῖν, θέσιν εἶναι τοῦ ὑπερόντος τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀφαίρεσιν, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων θέσιν εἶναι τοῦ ὑπερόντος ἀφαίρεσιν, καὶ ἄμφοι περὶ τὸν αὐτὸν κυρίως θεωρεῖσθαι τὰς προσηγορίας, καὶ μηδεμίαν κυρίως δύνασθαι· τὸ εἶναι, φημί, καὶ <τὸ> μὴ εἶναι. (Transl. George C. Berthold: *Maximus Confessor – Selected Writings*, p. 185).

¹²⁶ Christos Yannaras: *Ἐξὶ φιλοσοφικῆς ζῶγραφίης*. Athens: Ikaros 2011, p. 32.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* proem.120-125: Ὅτι γὰρ μηδὲν τὸ σύνολον φυσικῶς κατ' αἰτίαν συνέζευκται, ἢ ὄν ἢ μὴ ὄν, τούτω οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων καὶ λεγομένων, οὐδὲ τῶν μὴ ὄντων καὶ μὴ λεγομένων, εἰκότως ἐστὶν ἐγγύς. Ἀπλῆν γὰρ καὶ ἄγνωστον καὶ πᾶσιν ἄβατον ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξίν καὶ παντελῶς ἀνερμήνευτον, καὶ πάσης καταφάσεώς τε καὶ ἀποφάσεως οὐσαν ἐπέκεινα. (Transl. Berthold, p. 186). Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1128 B, 1129 C, and *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1141 Df. – 2.39.

therhood; nor is It any other thing such as we or any other being can have knowledge of; nor does It belong to the category of non-existence or to that of existence; nor do existent beings know It as it actually is, nor does It know them as they actually are; nor can the reason attain to It to name It or to know It; nor is it darkness, nor is It light, or error, or truth; nor can any affirmation or negation apply to it; for while applying affirmations or negations to those orders of being that come next to It, we apply not unto It either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as It transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of Its simple and absolute nature-free from every limitation and beyond them all.¹²⁸

At first, philosophical discourse and a sincerely apophatic stance seem to be wholly incompatible. Philosophical analysis tries to articulate definitions that reflect the true state of this as closely as possible, while apophaticism denies that these definitions reflect the true state of things. However, the key to an apophatic philosophy is the awareness that definitions in language reflect reality *as closely as possible*, (“according to our measure” as Maximus would say)¹²⁹ and that this may not be very close at all, but it promotes the knowledge of reality insofar as it makes a fuller participation in it possible. Thus are language and philosophy very far from useless; the key is in being fully aware of their limits/limitations and of their capability to *signify* truth, but not to *exhaust* it. Maximus seems very conscious of this *caveat* in his work. Philosophy is one of the languages employed to articulate and communicate the ecclesial testimony (another one is, for example, art; a third, architecture). However, for the Fathers, it does not *substitute* the ecclesial testimony. Maximus writes that language acts as a *symbol*, which is in no way to be identified with reality itself.¹³⁰ In following this exam-

¹²⁸ Corpus Areopagiticum: *Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας*, CD II, pp.149f. (Transl. Clarence Edwin Rolt: *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. London: SPCK, 1920, p. 201f.)

¹²⁹ Maximus’ and the ecclesial tradition’s uncompromising apophatic approach prevents a clash between ecclesial cosmology and the cosmology of each age’s scientific worldview. The *symbolic* character of expressions in language, their struggle to articulate the *meaning* of reality and to answer the ‘why’ of the world, guarantees that they are not claiming to provide an answer to the ‘what’ of the world, the questions of scientific cosmology. The language employed in order to articulate answers to ontological questions “according to our measure” (e.g. the Fall, the creation of the world, man’s creation out of clay and the breath of God et al.), cannot claim a historicity pertaining to branches of knowledge substantially foreign to ontological enquiry, branches of knowledge employing a radically different kind of language (e.g. “conjectured eleven-dimensional space” etc.) in order to articulate answers to different questions. Of course, it is utterly fascinating and truly thought-provoking when formulations arising from the ontological enquiry bear a resemblance to formulations arising from the scientific enquiry and vice-versa. However, to claim the *validity* of the one’s answers for the questions of the other, to claim the validity of formulations testing the measures and the limits of our language(s) for both of these radically different branches of human enquiry, would be non-sense - in the Wittgensteinian use of the word.

¹³⁰ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.159-160: ὅτι μὴδὲν πέφυκε ταῦτὸν εἶναι τῇ φύσει τὰ σύμβολα (and in the later Maximian anthology *Κεφάλαια διάφορα*, PG 90 1253C: ἡ γλῶσσα τῆς κατὰ ψυχήν γνωστικῆς ἐνεργείας ἐστὶ σύμβολον). Note an extreme example of an apophatic formulation in *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 3.99.1-2, containing the thrice contradictory phrase τὸν ὑπεράγνωστον ὑπεραγνώτως ὑπεραγνώκως: “The perfect mind is the one that through genuine faith supremely knows (ὑπεραγνώκως) in supreme ignorance (ὑπεραγνώτως) the supremely unknowable (τὸν ὑπεράγνωστον)” (transl. Berthold p. 75).

ple, every affirmation or negation that we will articulate, especially concerning a territory by definition outside “the limits of our world” i.e. concerning the uncreated, will be only articulated for the convenience of philosophical analysis, never with the claim of an “adequation of things with the intellect”.¹³¹ But let us return to the reasons behind the extensive, creative and in many cases ingenious employment of philosophy for the articulation of the ecclesial testimony in early and ‘Byzantine’ Christianity.

II.1.4. The Testimony of the Hebrews, the Language of the Greeks

The articulation of the church’s testimony in philosophical language emerges in the context of the encounter of Hebrew tradition and Greek reasoning, whose approach to God differs substantially.

In attempting to illustrate the general approach of Greek civilization to a ‘monotheistic’ notion of God, we would not examine its religious traditions and teachings, but its philosophical enquiry, its affirmation of a first cause particularly in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, as we discussed earlier. The Greeks acknowledged the order and harmony of the *cosmos*, and a logical consequence of this order and harmony, of the fact that the world is not arbitrary, is that a first cause or principle is one of its components (one of the components and not outside of the *cosmos*, as the Greek *Weltanschauung* does not accept a distinction between the created world and an uncreated origin thereof, affirming the world and matter itself as eternal). The ‘logicality’, beauty and rationality of the cosmos dictates certain characteristics for its first cause and principle, if it is truly to be acknowledged as such, that are derived through reasoning, through reductive syllogisms. As a first cause, nothing can pre-exist it; as the starting point of motion and change, the first cause itself must be unmoved, impassive and immutable, moving and changing everything in the world both directly and indirectly. A wide range of fixed characteristics are attributed to this first cause, which are dictated by logic, by the rationality of the necessity of its presence.¹³² His existence is an assumption dictated by rationality, but not a personal knowledge; the Greeks do not *know* this God, they have no personal experience of encounter with this first cause.

This first cause is by definition impersonal and does not constitute much more than an intellectual abstraction and a theoretical principle, a mere logical

¹³¹ “veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei” (Thomas Aquinas: *De veritate*, q. 1 a. 1 co.).

¹³² Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, pp. 6-7. Yannaras’ *Elements of Faith* will prove most valuable in our overview of the ecclesial *Weltanschauung*, as it is a most philosophical, ‘Maximian’ and comprehensive exposition of Christianity, as well as introductory in nature.

necessity and consequence of the Greek worldview which does not seem to be exceedingly relevant for the life of the Greeks and as such is not mentioned in many instances; the order of the universe, or in some cases the lack thereof, is of much more profound importance for the ontological perspective of the Greeks. As we noted earlier, this order and ‘logicality’ of the *cosmos* is its primary characteristic; even ‘God’, the prime unmoved mover, is subject to this logicality and rationality. He *must* be unmoved, in order to be able to act as a first cause. He *must* be immutable, he *must* be impassive etc. The logicality of the cosmos is a power greater than its first cause and principle, greater than God.¹³³

One more point to note: we could safely say that while the ontological and metaphysical enquiry of many civilizations is to be found within their religious tradition, this is not the case with the Greeks; their religious traditions seem independent of their metaphysical enquiry, which is to be rather traced in the field of philosophy, tragedy and politics.

In tragedy, the protagonist attempts to transcend the constraints imposed by the cosmos’ logicality (in the form of divine law, human laws etc.), to acquire more freedom than that prescribed by the logicality of the cosmos and the rules and orders that are its consequence. This constitutes a ὕβρις, and the protagonist ultimately fails to transcend these boundaries. This reveals ancient tragedy not as entertainment, but as a metaphysical event, a ‘metaphysical education’ for the citizens. It also shows us that the Greeks were well aware of the limitations of their ontology and *Weltanschauung*, of the impossibility of existential freedom that is part and parcel with the invulnerable character of the cosmos’ logicality.

In politics, the objective of the πόλις was not to simply meet the needs of the people and organize their coexistence in a satisfying way; the πόλις transcends the principle of χρεία, necessity and usefulness. The objective was to imitate and reflect the true mode of the world, its order, harmony and logicality within the smaller world of the πόλις. As such, the πόλις is a metaphysical event, not merely a political and social one.

The historical experience of the Hebrews differs greatly. For them, the God that is the first cause of existence is not a theoretical necessity, the outcome of a rational enquiry or the object of reductive syllogisms. The God of the Hebrews is a personal God, “the God of our Fathers”, “the God of our ancestors”, “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. The Hebrews testify that God revealed himself to Abraham, their ancestor, and verified his divinity by fulfilling his promises, promises that require divine power in order to be fulfilled. This per-

¹³³ Ibid. See also subchapter III.1.2. of this thesis.

sonal revelation of God continued to Abraham's son, Isaac. And to Isaac's son, Jacob, and directly or indirectly to the whole of Israel.¹³⁴ The faith of the people that have not met God personally is based on the trustworthiness of their ancestors, of the ones who have encountered God "face to face, as one speaks with a friend" (Exodus 33:11). The fulfillment of God's promises by him and the faith and trust of Israel's people in him, as well as the following of God's law, constitute a Testament. This Testament is Israel's faith, an approach to God based on the personal encounter with the one who proves his claims by fulfilling his promises, not a logical necessity, a reductive syllogism, a theoretical assumption.¹³⁵

As such, the approach of the Greeks and the Hebrews to God, the first cause of existence, was fundamentally irreconcilable. For the Hebrews who trusted the revelations of God, it was natural, albeit "scandalous", to be able to accept the testimony of the ecclesial communities, their testimony that they have "heard and seen and touched"¹³⁶ God, that they constitute a continuation of a real and personal relationship with God incarnate, the son of God. However, all of this was "foolishness" to the Greeks:¹³⁷ "it is not intelligible that God, who by his nature should be infinite, unlimited, all-powerful, etc., should exist as a finite, distinct human unit subject to the limitations of space and time. Therefore for the Greeks of the time of Christ, the proclamation of the humanity of God was really 'foolishness':"¹³⁸ the hope for the resurrection of the bodies as well, and not merely of intelligible 'souls', was received as nonsensical, transcending even the basic prerequisites of rationality. The need to articulate the ecclesial testimony in philosophical language emerged, as this was a precondition in order to be able to effectively communicate with the Greeks concerning transcendental matters, and much more so in a widely Hellenized world. "The Greek mind demanded that it express the Church's truth with its own speech. This demand constituted a very sharp historical challenge as much for Hellenism as for the Church. It was a dramatic meeting of two attitudes to life essentially opposed to one another, which gave birth to the great heresies of the first centuries. But the solutions which were provoked because of these heresies, determined the possibilities for survival of Greek philosophy within the limits of life of the Christian

¹³⁴ In *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.64-92, Maximus links this experience of the leaders of Israel with the λόγιοι doctrine.

¹³⁵ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹³⁶ 1 John 1:1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word [Λόγος] of life".

¹³⁷ See 1 Corinthians 1:23: Ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον, Ἑλλήσι δὲ μωρίαν – "But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles".

¹³⁸ Cf. Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, p. 9.

world”.¹³⁹ However, it was not only the church’s interaction with the Gentiles that called for an accurate articulation of its faith in philosophical language.

II.1.5. Ecclesial Testimony and Heresy

To understand Maximus’ perseverance in attempting to correct what he recognized as errors concerning the Monothelite controversy, we must examine what ‘heresy’ and ‘truth’ mean to the Christian church. In the first three centuries of the church’s life, there was no prescribed doctrine in the way that we know it today. Certainly, the various Gospels, the epistles of the Apostles and the writings of the early bishops acted as articulations of the ecclesial testimony, but these did not provide definitions agreed upon by the whole of the church.¹⁴⁰ The church embarked upon providing detailed and precise articulations of her experience in the form of answers to the challenges put by interpretations that were not recognized as accurately reflecting the truth of the church. Councils with representatives of the ecclesial communities decided on which formulations accurately reflect their experience and testimony and on which, on the other hand, lead to substantial misunderstandings.

More often than not, the reason behind interpretations that were received as gravely problematic was the need to counterbalance the ecclesial testimony with what was understood as logical and philosophical reasoning, given that this testimony had not been articulated into concise philosophical language yet. For example, the affirmation of one absolute God, but also of the three different persons identified in the Gospels as God,¹⁴¹ the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, constituted a difficult philosophical challenge, as did the notion of the incarnation of the absolute and transcendental God as a finite human being, in a way that preserved both the divinity and the humanity of God incarnate and not in the form of some demi-god. Multiplicity and the absolute are two contradictory concepts, as is the simultaneous actualization of both divinity and humanity.¹⁴²

The first major unsuccessful attempt at schematization and at reconciling philosophical accuracy with Christian teaching was Sabellius’, a third-century priest and theologian. He proposed that God was indeed one and absolute, but that he appeared with three different ‘masks’, as God the Father in

¹³⁹ Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Ibid. pp. 20-22.

¹⁴² Cf. Ibid. p. 23.

the Old Testament, as God the Son in the New Testament and as Holy Spirit in ecclesial life.¹⁴³ In this way, both the uniqueness of the absolute God and the presence of three divine persons is affirmed. However, the majority of Christian Churches reacted strongly to Sabellius' Monarchianism and rejected it, clearly affirming three different divine persons, not merely 'masks' or 'appearances' of the same person.¹⁴⁴ Sabellius himself was excommunicated as a heretic by Pope Callistus I in 220 AD. This challenge provoked the articulation of hermeneutical counter-proposals to Sabellius' understanding of God. One of these was Arius' teaching: God the Father is the only absolute God, his Son is not of the same substance but of a similar one (ὁμοιοῦσιος instead of ὁμοούσιος) and God's creation before all ages. Arianism¹⁴⁵ challenged the Church's unity so profoundly, that the first Ecumenical Council was convened in Nicaea in 325 AD in order to accurately articulate the ecclesial body's teaching on God for the first time, resulting in the Creed of Nicaea. Other substantial challenges in the course of the church's history lead to subsequent Ecumenical Councils in order for this articulation to be refined and comprehensive: up to Maximus the Confessor's time, four other Ecumenical Councils had taken place, the First Council of Constantinople (381) completing the Creed of Nicaea with its last part, the Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the Second Council of Constantinople (553). Maximus' own teaching was to be recognized as the teaching of the Church after his death, in the Third Council of Constantinople (680), the Sixth Ecumenical Council. Particularly noteworthy for the study of Maximus' thought is the Fourth Ecumenical Council, the Council of Chalcedon, defining the relationship of the human and divine nature in Christ's person (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως).¹⁴⁶ The effect of the Chalcedonian definition on the broadest possible categories of Maximus' and other Fathers' thought has led to it being named "Chalcedonian Logic".¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ On the general gradual shift in the meaning of the word *persona* from mask to person (and from προσωπεῖον to πρόσωπον) and its philosophical and theological significance, cf. John Zizioulas' *Being as Communion*, pp. 27-49

¹⁴⁵ On the heresy of Arianism, cf. Rowan Williams' *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2002), which provides quite challenging views on what heresy is. See an example of Maximus' references to, e.g., Arianism and Apollinarianism in *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 2.14-41.

¹⁴⁶ "To be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably". The Churches that did not accept the Chalcedonian definition separated themselves and are now called Anti-Chalcedonian, Pre-Chalcedonian or Oriental Orthodox Churches (Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, and Ethiopian Christians).

¹⁴⁷ Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 47-50. Melchisedec Törönen, in his *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), argues that Maximus' logic of union and distinction, i.e. the idea that "things united remain distinct and without confusion in an inseparable union" (p. 1) is only erroneously dubbed 'Chalcedonian Logic' by von Balthasar and others. This logic and idea precedes the Council of Chalcedon's definition and has a long history that is not truly connected to the Chalcedonian definition *per se*; it is rather the Chalcedonian definition that is a result of this logic than the other way around. Andrew Louth seconds Törönen's position in his paper "St Maximus' Doctrine of the *logoi* of Creation" (in: Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards & Markus Vinzent (eds): *Papers presented at the*

However, one should not be tempted to think that these articulations and definitions provided by the Ecumenical Councils *contain* or *substitute* the truth of the ecclesial event, which is testified as being the personal encounter with God, not the understanding and affirmation of a theoretical notion. Doctrine is not *cataphatic*, it is *apophatic*: that is why the canons of the Councils were named ὅροι, i.e. limits, merely signifiers of the Church's truth, not embodiments of her signified reality. Limits and definitions of truth, limits of the experience's articulation; Christos Yannaras illustrates this understanding by giving an example:

(a) The need to precisely define the truth of something so self-evident to all like maternal love emerges when one raises claims concerning it that seem erroneous or outrageous to us (like e.g., “maternal love means wildly beating the child continuously”).

(b) We could attempt to define maternal love in order to distinguish our experience from these claims.

(c) However, this definition would not give the knowledge of what maternal love is to a child that has never known a mother due to it being an orphan, even if that child would memorize, repeat or analyze our definition.¹⁴⁸

fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007 – From the Fifth Century: Greek Writers, Latin Writers, Nachleben (Studia Patristica 48). Leuven: Peeters Publishers 2010, pp. 77-84), p. 80: “The fascination with unity-in-diversity antedates Chalcedon, even in Christian circles, and so is independent of it, and Maximus nowhere suggests that there is anything ‘Chalcedonian’ about his concern for the integrity of beings united”. To think of this typically patristic specific idea of unity-in-diversity (συναμφοτέρον: see e.g. Maximus’ use of the so-called ‘Chalcedonian terminology’ outside of the Chalcedonian context, i.e. Christology, in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1188 D-1189 A: ἄμικτος διάκρισις, ἀσύγχυτος ἔνωσις etc), which is to be encountered in all sorts of theological and philosophical texts of the time, as originating from the Chalcedonian Christological definition alone would be truly superficial and simply wrong: Törönen is right in this. However, it is very useful to refer to this mentality as ‘Chalcedonian logic’ in today’s scholarship: it provides the reader with an undisputed point of reference concerning this peculiar way of thinking and, simultaneously, a very accurate elucidation thereof with the help of the four ‘Chalcedonian adverbs’ (“inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably”). Because of this, we will refer to this way of thinking as ‘Chalcedonian logic’ or by citing the four ‘Chalcedonian adverbs’, while acknowledging that the roots of this mentality are not to be traced in the council of Chalcedon itself.

¹⁴⁸ Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, pp. 16-17: “Let us suppose that someone appears who claims that *maternal love* means relentless strictness and wild daily beating of a child. All of us who have a different experience of maternal love will protest about this distortion and will oppose to it a *definition* of our own experience: For us maternal love is affection, tenderness, care, all combined with a judicious and constructive strictness. Up to the moment when this falsification of the truth of maternal love appeared, there had existed no need to *define* our experience. Maternal love was something self-evident to us all, an experiential knowledge objectively indeterminate but also commonly understood. The need for a limit or definition is connected with the threat that maternal love may begin to be considered something other than what we all believe it to be. But the definition simply signifies or marks off the limits of our experience, it cannot replace it. A man who has never in his life known maternal love (because he is an orphan or for some other reason), can know the definition but cannot know maternal love itself. In other words, knowledge of formulas and definitions of truth is not to be identified with the knowledge of truth itself. Thus we attain the understanding of the attitude or way in which the church faces the knowledge of her truth – a stance and way which, in accord with established usage, we call the *apophaticism* of knowledge”.

The function of the Council's canons, of the doctrine of the Church, could be seen as similar to these 'definitions of maternal love'. "The formulation is necessary and required, because it *defines* (ὀρίζει) truth, it separates and distinguishes it from every distortion and falsification of it. Therefore for the members of the church the limits or dogmas are the given 'fixed points' of truth, which do not admit of changes or differentiated versions in formulating them",¹⁴⁹ however without replacing or exhausting the knowledge of the truth. Today we tend to understand the Christian notion of doctrine, of the Councils' canons, in the sense, in the context and with the hermeneutic tools of the modern and contemporary function of *ideology*. However, such an understanding of the articulations of ecclesial experience would render us incapable of understanding Maximus' mentality and *Weltanschauung*.

II.1.6. Person, Substance and Hypostasis in the Trinity and in Christ

During the centuries-long attempt to articulate the ecclesial testimony in concise philosophical language, Greek philosophical terminology was not always employed in a uniform manner. Different local churches gave different meanings to a variety of terms; e.g., the churches of Antioch and Alexandria did not attribute the same meanings to terms such as hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) or substance (οὐσία).¹⁵⁰ Terminology has more or less solidified due to the crucial contribution of the Cappadocians in the fourth century and the imprinting of it in the creeds of the Ecumenical Councils. However, problems continued to emerge: even the schism with the Anti-Chalcedonians at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 can be safely read as a problem of Christological terminology –and, as such, as equally important and crucial– rather than a problem of Christology itself, of a substantially different Christology (and the later Monothelite controversy itself can be seen as a political play with the subtleties of terminology on the part of the Roman Emperor in Constantinople, in order to keep both the Orthodox and the Monophysite-inclined populations content). And again, the problem is not terminology itself, the difference of formulations, but the philosophical (or

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ The rendering of these key terms into Latin and, subsequently, into the languages that stem from Latin has also been problematic. The Greek word οὐσία has been translated as both *essentia* and *substantia* in various contexts (English: essence and substance, German: Essenz and Substanz etc.). And while *essentia* bears a clear etymological resemblance to οὐσία, *substantia* bears an equally clear etymological resemblance to ὑπόστασις, causing much confusion concerning the translation of the οὐσία-ὑπόστασις pair, which is so fundamental for Christian doctrine. Apart from that, the English word *substance* tends to imply some form of materiality, of which οὐσία is devoid (the particular is material, the hypostasis). We have chosen to render οὐσία as *substance* in our study, as it is the most common translation in contemporary discourse. However, this translation of the terms is even today a cause of significant confusion concerning their exact meaning, as it often leads the English speaking reader to inaccurate presuppositions.

Christological or doctrinal) implications of these different uses of terms: the content and complexity of Maximus' struggle against Monothelitism bears witness to this. Seemingly small differences and a lack of conciseness in these doctrinal formulations can lead to substantially different ontologies, with the most famous example being to previously mentioned iota controversy between ὁμοούσιος and ὁμοιούσιος in the context of Arianism.

According to the common terminology after the Cappadocians and the first Ecumenical Councils, οὐσία and ὑπόστασις roughly bear the meaning of Aristotle's secondary substance (οὐσία δευτέρα) and primary substance (οὐσία πρώτη) respectively. The word 'nature' (φύσις) is used interchangeably with the word 'substance',¹⁵¹ and in the case of human beings and God the word 'person' (πρόσωπον) is used interchangeably with the word 'hypostasis'.¹⁵²

Substance, οὐσία, is the homogeneity of the particulars, the 'what' of something, the reason that it is what it is. 'Substance' denotes the way in which something participates in existence. 'Cat', 'human', 'horse' are substances; however, these cannot be encountered isolated, as pure substances/natures, but only as particular existences, in hypostases.

Hypostasis, ὑπόστασις, is the particular existence, the 'how' of something, the specific way in which it is what it is.¹⁵³ This particular human being, this particular horse, and this particular table are hypostases actualizing the substances 'human', 'horse', 'table' – they *hypostasize* (actualize) *the substance*.¹⁵⁴

We must note here that both terms (substance and hypostasis) are not to be thought of as *things*, but circumscribe the mode of the beings' existence, they are *modes*, *modes of existence* (τρόποι υπάρξεως). The substance is not a 'thing', it is the mode of homogeneity's existence, the mode of its participation in being. Nature and substance is not a question of *what* as a thing and object, but of the thing and object's *whatness* (i.e. a *mode*). Even the word hypostasis, the particular, signifies a *mode of existence* when used in conjunction with the word 'sub-

¹⁵¹ See e.g. Maximus the Confessor: *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 485 D: οὐσίας γὰρ ἦτοι φύσεως. *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 149 B: Οὐσία καὶ φύσις, ταυτόν.

¹⁵² Maximus' account of οὐσία, ὑπόστασις and related subjects can be found, among many other passages, in his first letter to the deacon Cosmas (*Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 544 D-576 B). Cf. *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 152 A: ὑπόστασις καὶ πρόσωπον, ταυτόν.

¹⁵³ Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 4.9.2-3: Πᾶσα δὲ ἡ κτίσις σύνθετος ὑπάρχει ἐξ οὐσίας καὶ συμβεβηκότος. "Every creature is a composite of substance and accident" (transl. Berthold p. 76).

¹⁵⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 260 Df.: Ὅτι οὐσία μὲν αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν φύσιν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ καθ' ἑαυτήν, δηλοῖ, ὑπόστασις δέ, τὸν τινα τῆς οὐσίας ἐμφαίνει. Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, pp. 26-28. For a fuller identification of person and hypostasis, there is a tendency among certain Church Fathers to speak of hypostases only in the case of human beings and God, i.e. only in the case of persons, not generally in the sense of particulars. However, Maximus applies the term *hypostasis* to everything that exists (*Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 549 BC).

stance'; the mode of the particular's existence. The patristic terminology does not introduce a disjunction and dualism through the use of these terms: they describe the different *modes of existence* of beings, the mode of homogeneity and general participation in being (substance) and the mode of the particular realization and actualization with all of its accidents (hypostasis). That is why it is a common patristic *topos* that there is no substance or nature not actualized in one or more hypostases, there is no 'naked' nature, there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος; Maximus the Confessor is clear on that.¹⁵⁵

Maximus is in line with the common patristic terminology: "Substance, and nature, is the common, the universal, the general. The hypostasis, and the person, is the particular and the partial".¹⁵⁶ We mentioned that of all created beings only the human being is endowed with the tendency of becoming a person,¹⁵⁷ of existing in-relation-to (man *is* a person, as his otherness is manifested and actualized in relations and communion, but simultaneously *can become* a person in the fullest sense of the world: this simultaneous co-existence without division and without confusion –the Chalcedonian συναμώτερον– of a future state wished for and of the present state that is already a reality is also a *topos* of patristic thought, due to the atemporal character of the uncreated). A more concise formulation would be that, compared to other creatures, man is a person *par excellence* due to his creation "in the image and likeness" of the triune proto-

¹⁵⁵ E.g. in *Έργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 149 B. A thorough examination of the use of these terms by Maximus is to be found in Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon's article "Person And Nature In The Theology Of St Maximus The Confessor", in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, p. 85-113.

¹⁵⁶ *Έπιστολαί*, PG 91 545 A. Cf. 549 B. For a comprehensive analysis of Maximus' notion of a human hypostasis, see Torstein Tollefsen: "St Maximus' Concept of a Human Hypostasis", in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, pp. 115-127. Tollefsen claims that his analysis of these terms differs substantially from that of Zizioulas, but we couldn't trace these substantial disagreements. Tollefsen seems to imply that to stress the inexistence of an οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, to stress that there is no 'naked' substance or nature (which has implications for the ontological importance of hypostases and persons) would necessarily entail, more or less, the inexistence of substances. But this is not Zizioulas' (or Maximus') position. In p. 118, n. 15, Tollefsen voices his doubts on the correctness of Maximus' assertion that, should all the hypostases of a universal perish, the universal is abolished as well. However, Maximus' statement is practically a rephrasing of the fact that there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος; should the hypostases perish, their substance is not hypostasized (i.e. actualized) any more and ceases to exist (in the sense of ὑφίσταται<υπόστασις). As such, I would guess that the true point of disagreement between Zizioulas and Tollefsen lies in the assertion or abolishment of the common patristic rejection of non-hypostasized (non-actualized) natures. The assertion of this rejection would lead to the positions of Zizioulas, Yannaras and the Fathers, while its abolishment would form the basis for Tollefsen's objection on the importance (or existential priority) of persons and hypostases. It must be noted here that, in examining Maximus' thought, we are not to confuse the existence of an οὐσία with the (pre)existence of its λόγος. The (pre)existence of a λόγος (i.e. a divine intention) residing beyond createdness does not necessarily entail the existence of the unhypostasized (unactualized) substance to which it would correspond were this substance hypostasized (actualized) in specific and particular realizations. This would be particularly the case if all hypostases of a given substance were to perish: the substance would perish as well, but not its λόγος.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. chapter II.2. of this thesis.

type.¹⁵⁸ It is under this light that we must understand Maximus' explicit assertion that "*person* and *hypostasis* are one and the same".¹⁵⁹ Nature is nature, and the tendency of the created (the cause of which is outside of itself) towards individual onticity (non-relation; corruption; death) is *non-prosopic*, it does not describe personhood. However, there is also the tendency towards relation, the tendency and motion towards the return to the uncreated source of createdness and towards the full communion with it, i.e. the hope for the *redemption* of creation. In this we see that the *possibility* of personhood, of existing relationally and in communion, is to be found in all created beings; all created beings are characterized by the tendency to personhood according to the uncreated λόγος of their nature (κατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς φύσεως), and all the λόγοι are recapitulated in the one person of the Λόγος (an exposition on the subject of Λόγος and λόγοι will follow in chapter II.3. of this thesis). However, this *personalization* of nature (i.e. the redemption of creation) cannot be achieved by nature alone, it is the task of the human being, the priest and mediator of creation, it is the task of *mediation*.¹⁶⁰ In that sense, and without losing the relative and apophatic character of formulations in language, we could say with Maximus that each hypostasis is also a person(-in-waiting).

The ecclesial body attempted to address the philosophical problems that seem to arise from its testimony with the use of this terminology. Do Christians have one or three Gods? The limits of createdness signify the limits of language, any 'definition' of the uncreated God cannot but be an *apophatic* formulation, and this formulation is that the divine substance is one, but it is hypostasized (actualized) in three persons.¹⁶¹ This is denoted with a language that does not define God through individual onticity, but through relation, self-transcendence, radical referentiality: God is the *Father*, a being whose definition refers to an-

¹⁵⁸ Nikolaos Loudovikos offers a more precise formulation: "Man becomes a person, then, inasmuch as he in turn is formed into the likeness of Christ, the locus and mode of communion among entities – that is to say, a personal being. [...] Thus man participates by grace in the personal mode of existence of God the Word" (*A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Brookline: HC Press 2010, p. 152).

¹⁵⁹ Maximus the Confessor: *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 152 A: ὑπόστασις καὶ πρόσωπον, ταυτόν.

¹⁶⁰ Masterly expounded by Lars Thunberg in his *Microcosm and Mediator*, particularly in the chapter "Performing the Task of Mediation", pp. 331-432 (and especially pp. 404-432). The goal of man's mediating task is the "union of everything", the transcendence of division: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1305 BC: "For this reason the human person was introduced last among beings, as a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval. In order to bring about the union of everything with God as its cause, the human person begins first of all with its own division, and then, ascending through the intermediate steps by order and rank, it reaches the end of its high ascent, which passes through all things in search of unity, to God, in whom there is no division" (transl. Louth, p. 155).

¹⁶¹ *Caveat*: this actualization does not entail temporal progression, which would be a trait of createdness.

other being, the *Son*, a name that does not define atomicity, but relation.¹⁶² God is not *God*, self-sufficient and existing as a monad, subsequently having the attribute of fatherhood. What God *is*, is that God is the *Father*; what God *is*, is that God is the *Son*; God is *Breath*, the breath of the *Father* (πνεῦμα ἅγιον). This illustrates the meaning of the word πρόσωπον, the etymological beings-towards-someone, existence-as-relation. Three persons sharing the same activity (ἐνέργεια) and will (θέλημα).¹⁶³

An even more difficult challenge for the articulation of the ecclesial testimony was its claim that God has been incarnated, both preserving his divinity in full and assuming humanity in full.¹⁶⁴ The conciseness of the articulation of this was of paramount importance, as the very notion of existential redemption for the human beings and victory over death presupposed a real bridging of the gap between the created and the uncreated through the incarnation and resurrection of Christ. In Christ, the unbridgeable chasm between creation and the uncreated is transcended: both the nature and mode of the uncreated and the nature and mode of createdness coexist in a single person, transcending the limitations of both complete othernesses. The incarnation marks the transcendence of the limitations of the uncreated, the resurrection the transcendence of the limitations of createdness; both open the way for the human person to be able to participate in the uncreated, to be able to acquire its mode of existence, as the uncreated God acquired created humanity's mode of existence. In Christ, according to the ecclesial testimony, the unbridgeable chasm between creation and the uncreated is bridged through the hypostatic union of a created and an uncreated nature,¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1265 D: “The name of ‘Father’ is neither the name of an essence [οὐσία] nor an activity [ἐνεργεία], but rather of a relation, and of the manner in which the Father is related to the Son, or the Son to the Father” (transl. Constatas, DOML 29, p. 21).

¹⁶³ Yannaras: *Relational Ontology*, 10.3.2-10.3.6 (pp. 52-55). Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 2.29.1-3: Ὅταν λέγῃ ὁ Κύριος· Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν, τὸ ταῦτόν τῆς οὐσίας σημαίνει. Ὅταν δὲ πάλιν λέγῃ· Ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ ἐν ἐμοί, τὸ ἀχώριστον δηλοῖ τῶν ὑποστάσεων. “When the Lord says, ‘The Father and I are one’, he is signifying identity of substance. And when he says again, ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me’, he indicates the inseparability of the persons” (transl. Berthold p. 50). And *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 2.29.10-12: Καὶ γὰρ «διαρῆται» μὲν, ἀλλ’ «ἀδιαρῆτως», κατὰ τὸν αὐτόν, καὶ «συνάπτεται» μὲν, «δημημένως» δέ. “God is ‘divided’ and yet ‘without division’, and ‘united’ yet ‘with distinction’” (transl. Berthold p. 50).

¹⁶⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 2.6-13: “The Λόγος of God exists as a full, complete essence (for he is God), and as an undiminished hypostasis (for he is Son). But, when he emptied himself, he became the seed of his own flesh, and when he was composed in an ineffable conception, he became the hypostasis of the very flesh that was assumed. Having truly become a whole human being, without change, in this new mystery, he was himself the hypostasis of two natures, of the uncreated and the created, of the impassible and the passible, receiving without fail all of the natural λόγοι of which he is a hypostasis” (transl. Lollar p. 52).

¹⁶⁵ Maximus, *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 60.10-26. “He is of course referring to Christ the whole mystery of Christ, which is, manifestly, the ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatic union between Christ’s divinity and humanity. This union draws his humanity into perfect identity, in every way, with his divinity, through the λόγος of the hypostasis; it is a union that realizes one person composite of both natures, inasmuch as it in no way diminishes the essential difference between those two natures. And so, to repeat, there is one hypostasis realized from the two natures and the difference between the natures remains immutable. In view of this differ-

renewing existence and enabling it to transcend its limitations.¹⁶⁶ Philosophical consistency would not allow for such a union of natures in Christ to be understood in the sense of ‘mixture’, ‘synthesis’, blending; thus the four famous adverbs of the Chalcedonian creed. We could safely say that the undivided Church saw in all the deviations from the formulations of her testimony concerning the nature of Christ this single threat: the danger of losing this ‘Christological bridge’ from createdness to the uncreated, of rendering it incomprehensible, of closing the way to it. From the controversies that led to the Nicæan Creed and up to the great Christological definition of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon and to the conciliar adoption of Maximus’ struggle against Monothelitism in the seventh century (and beyond), what was at stake was the reality and realism of the possibility of victory over death, which for the Christians presupposed the real and true unity of divinity and humanity in Christ, i.e. a unity in which the human person can truly participate. Teachings entailing (i) an absence of true divinity in Christ (Arianism et al.), (ii) an absence of true humanity in Christ (Monophysitism), (iii) Christ’s divinity consuming his humanity (Eutychianism et al.), (iv) an imperfect union of the divine and human nature in Christ (Nestorianism) or (v) the absence of a true and full humanity in Christ (Monothelitism) were gradually recognized by the Church as annulling the existential hope of the ecclesial body.

At the Council of Chalcedon, Christ was acknowledged as one single hypostasis, one single person, one single particular being, in which two natures are present, “inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly and inseparably”: divine, uncreated nature and human nature. This is commonly termed *hypostatic union* of the natures.¹⁶⁷

ence, moreover, the natures remain undiminished, and the quantity of each of the united natures is preserved, even after the union. For, whereas by the union no change or alteration at all was suffered by either of the natures, the essential λόγος of each of the united natures endured without being compromised. Indeed that essential λόγος remained inviolate even after the union, as the divine and human natures retained their integrity in every respect. Neither of the natures was denied anything at all because of the union” (transl. Blowers pp. 123-124).

¹⁶⁶ Maximus explains Christ’s incarnation in a great number of passages throughout his work; a short but thorough exposition on that and related matters can be found in his letter to Julian (*Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 579 C-584 D). Cf. *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 146 A-149 A, as well as *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 3.35-13.36: “The teacher says, ‘He has become one’ (*εἷς δὲ γέγονεν*); he did not say, ‘one thing’ (*ἄλλ’ οὐχ ἓν*), showing that, even in the identity of the one hypostasis, the natural otherness of those natures that are united remains unconfused, since the word ‘one’ (*εἷς*) is indicative of hypostasis, while the words ‘one thing’ (*ἓν*) would indicate nature” (transl. Lollar p. 55).

¹⁶⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1320 C: “Nor did he simply simulate the salvific economy in the form and appearance of the flesh, as if to fulfill it by assuming whatever else is considered to be of a subordinate existence except the subordination itself. Rather, he took on himself our human nature in deed and in truth and united it to himself hypostatically – without change, alteration, diminution, or division [*καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἀτρέπτως καὶ ἀναλλοιώτως καὶ ἀμειώτως καὶ ἀδιαρέτως*]; he maintained it inalterably, by its own essential λόγος and definition” (transl. Blowers, p. 84). And *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 4.74-90: “For in the exchange of the divine and the fleshly he clearly confirmed the natures of which he himself was the hypostasis, along with their essential activities, i.e., their movements, of which he himself was the unconfused

The challenge of articulating the ecclesial testimony concerning the person of Christ in concise philosophical language was a Herculean achievement with numerous philosophically fascinating implications that cannot be properly dealt with in a mere subchapter; however, we cannot but proceed to our next subject, namely the exposition of some aspects of Maximus' anthropology.

II.1.7. Concerning the Body/Soul Distinction in Maximus the Confessor's Thought

A unique system of philosophical anthropology is to be discerned in Maximus's works,¹⁶⁸ an anthropology that elaborates so extensively on the subjects of the human will and freedom thereof like no other thinker before him. Due to his extended involvement in the Monothelite controversy, Maximus developed an elaborate anthropology in order to base his Christological insights upon it;¹⁶⁹ the careful examination of faculties pertaining to the human person, such as the natural and gnostic will, the activities/operations (ἐνέργειαι) etc., was implemented by him in his battle against Monothelitism. The distinction between body and soul does indeed have a prominent position in the Confessor's anthropology. However, Maximus sees this distinction in a unique and truly illuminating way, the understanding of which presupposes a firm grasp of his ontological terminology. We will not focus here on the subject of human will, but on the concept of the soul in the light of the writings of Maximus the Confessor and in the light of a distinction between substance and hypostasis rather than between body and soul.¹⁷⁰

The soul was not always considered as 'something' that 'exists somewhere' or 'does not exist', i.e. in the sense that it is understood today in order to

unity, a unity which admits of no division with respect to the two natures of which he was a hypostasis, since they naturally belong to him. This is because he acts monadically, that is, in a unified form, and by means of each of the things that are predicated of him, he shows forth the power of his own divinity and the activity of his flesh at one and the same time, without separation. For he is one, and there is nothing more unified and nothing more unifying and able to save than him, or than what is proper to him. Because of this, even when suffering, he was truly God, and even while working wonders, the same one was truly man, since he was the true hypostasis of true natures according to ineffable union. Acting in them both reciprocally and naturally, he was shown truly to preserve them, preserving them unconfused for himself, since he remained both dispassionate by nature and passible, immortal and mortal, visible and intelligible, the same one being both God [by nature] and man by nature" (transl. Lollar p. 60). See also Maximus' definition of hypostatic union in *Ἐργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 152 B.

¹⁶⁸ The best account of which, so far, can be found in Lars Thunberg's *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 95-168 (and 195-230 as well, with important elucidations concerning Maximus' understanding of the *gnomic will*).

¹⁶⁹ Maximus' intention is to articulate a sound Christology, not an anthropology *as such*. However, in analyzing the aspects of Christology pertaining to Christ's human nature, Maximus is developing a thorough anthropology in the process.

¹⁷⁰ See also Yannaras' account in *Person and Eros*, pp. 46-48.

be rejected or confirmed. As is common knowledge, the Greek words for soul and spirit (ψυχή and πνεῦμα, both etymologically related to breath) were used to denote and signify the difference between a living, breathing human person and his dead body, bereft of life.¹⁷¹ This difference was deductively located in the presence or absence of the breath, i.e. the soul or spirit. Philosophical theories entailing a strict duality or even a dichotomy between body and soul such as the platonic philosophy are not a necessary corollary of speaking about the presence of a soul. But what is Maximus the Confessor’s stance on this subject?

The first thing to note is that Maximus uses the philosophical language of his time,¹⁷² what we call today ‘Neoplatonism’. However, this does not *make* him a Neoplatonist: the question is not which philosophical language he uses, but which philosophical and theological testimony he is trying to articulate and to whom it is directed. As Torstein Tollefsen puts it, “[Maximus] received a Christian intellectual heritage that could freely express itself in this kind of vocabulary, and, strictly speaking, these are not ‘Neoplatonic terms’, rather they are Greek words, used by the Fathers”.¹⁷³ For example, one of his primary concerns is not to contemplate about the soul¹⁷⁴ in general, but to counter the Origenist theory of the pre-existence of the soul,¹⁷⁵ using the same language used by the Origenists. This makes it very easy for someone to conclude from the study of some of Maximus’ works that he proposes a strict dichotomy of body and soul: for example, he speaks of the soul as a bodiless, simple, intelligible, incorruptible and immortal substance: οὐσία ἀσώματος, νοερά, ἐν σώματι πολιτευομένη, ζωῆς παραίτια,¹⁷⁶ ἀσύνθετος, ἀδιάλυτος, ἄφθαρτος, ἀθάνατος.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, p. 55.

¹⁷² On recent accounts of Maximus’ philosophical language in general, see Adrian Guiv’s paper “Christology and Philosophical Culture in Maximus the Confessor’s *Ambiguum 41*” (in Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards & Markus Vinzent (eds): *Papers presented at the fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007 – From the Fifth Century: Greek Writers, Latin Writers, Nachleben* (*Studia Patristica* 48). Leuven: Peeters Publishers 2010, pp. 111-116) and Ladislav Chvátal’s “Maxime le Confesseur et la tradition philosophique: À propos d’une définition de la *kinêsis*” (*Ibid.* pp. 117-122).

¹⁷³ Torstein Tollefsen: *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁴ On a side note: Maximus writes both about a distinction of body and soul *and* about a distinction of mind, body and soul (νοῦς, σῶμα, ψυχή). Here we will focus on the contrast of body and soul, not attempting to analyze the latter distinction, which is treated in Lars Thunberg’s *Microcosm and Mediator – The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 107-113.

¹⁷⁵ See for example *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1325 D: οὔτε προῦπαρξιν οὔτε μεθῦπαρξιν ψυχῆς ἢ σώματος, συνῦπαρξιν δὲ μᾶλλον φαμεν / “We are not speaking of an existence of the soul either before or after the existence of the body, but of their co-existence [their concurrent emergence]”. See also Polycarp Sherwood’s *The earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*.

¹⁷⁶ Maximus Confessor, *Περὶ ψυχῆς*, Cantarella 8.1-2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 4-6.

However, Maximus' concern is also to guard the oneness and wholeness of the human person, of the human hypostasis.¹⁷⁸ In understanding this, one must keep in mind that, as we have said, in the common patristic terminology there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, that we cannot speak of any substance insofar as it is not to be encountered as a hypostasis, a specific realization and manifestation. As we have noted previously, Maximus follows the common patristic terminology of his time, in which οὐσία (substance) is synonymous with φύσις (nature), and the specific realization of the substance (ὑπόστασις) is in the case of man and God synonymous with πρόσωπον (the person).¹⁷⁹ He defines the relation between the body and the soul in two radically different ways. Maximus uses the substance-hypostasis distinction with utmost versatility in order to shed light to the soul-body problem. In this, it will become apparent that Maximus thinks of the 'substance' and the 'hypostasis' as *modes*, not as *things*; otherwise, we would have to consider him as gravely inconsistent, which is not the case.

The Confessor makes *two seemingly contradicting statements* when he speaks about the soul and the body and when he constructs his Anthropology parallel to his Christology.¹⁸⁰ He states (1) that Man, in contrast to Christ, has a 'composite nature'¹⁸¹ (φύσις σύνθετος, whereas in Christ we can only speak of a composite hypostasis), and in another text (2) that Man constitutes a hypostatic union of two different substances,¹⁸² the body (as substance) and the soul (as substance), in an analogy to Christ's hypostatic union of the divine and human nature.¹⁸³ In (1), the body and the soul are two natures-substances which merge

¹⁷⁸ We must repeat here Maximus is concerned with the question of human nature and hypostasis only in relation to Christology and the Trinity – he does not *consciously* develop an anthropology *as such*. However, in treating the subjects of the hypostatic union of human and divine nature in Christ, his wills and his activities, he is indeed developing a detailed anthropology. We cannot treat his analyses concerning human nature, will and activity in their presence in Christ as distinct and different from his perception of human nature in the case of ordinary persons: the human nature of humanity and the human nature in Christ is one and the same (the latter, however, being fully “according to nature” and, as such, perfect in the case of Christ). As such, while Maximus does not refer to the human hypostasis in the way that we might have, he is developing a unique anthropology, albeit in order to apply it to the question of Christ's human and divine natures.

¹⁷⁹ See for example: *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 485 D: οὐσίας γὰρ ἦτοι φύσεως - Ibid. 545 A: Κοινὸν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ καὶ καθολικόν, ἤγουν γενικόν, κατὰ τοὺς πατέρας, ἡ οὐσία καὶ ἡ φύσις· ταυτὸν γὰρ ἀλλήλαις ταύτας ὑπάρχειν φασίν. Ἴδιον δὲ καὶ μερικόν, ἢ ὑπόστασις καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον· ταυτὸν γὰρ ἀλλήλοις κατ' αὐτοὺς τυγχάνουσιν - Ibid. 545 AB: [τάδε γράφων ὁ μέγας Βασίλειος] ὅτι ὄν ἔχει λόγον τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον, τοῦτον ἔχει ἡ οὐσία πρὸς τὴν ὑπόστασιν.[...] Οὐσία δὲ καὶ ὑπόστασις ταύτην ἔχει τὴν διαφοράν, ἢν ἔχει τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ καθέ- καστον. - Ibid. 549 B: Εἰ δὲ ταυτὸν μὲν οὐσία καὶ φύσις· ταυτὸν δὲ πρόσωπον καὶ ὑπόστασις, δῆλον ὡς τὰ ἀλλήλοις ὁμοφυῆ καὶ ὁμοούσια, πάντως ἀλλήλοις ἑτεροῦπόστατα. - Ibid. 552 A: [...] τῷ λόγῳ τῆς οὐσίας ἦτοι φύσεως διαφέρουσι· ὡς ἐπὶ ψυχῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἔχει καὶ σώματος, καὶ τὸν ὅσα καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἐσχήκασι τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα σύνθετον. Οὐ γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ὁμοούσια ταῦτα τυγχάνουσιν.

¹⁸⁰ It must be noted that this contradiction is traditional by Maximus' time; he didn't invent it.

¹⁸¹ E.g. *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 488D: ὡς ἐπὶ τε τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχει, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα συνθέτου εἶναι ἔλαχον φύσεως.

¹⁸² Ibid. 552D, *Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 152 A.

¹⁸³ On the analogy between the unity of body and soul in man and the unity of divine and human nature in Christ, on the “hypostatic union” of soul and body in man, see e.g. Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 101-104, as well as Karl-Heinz Uthemann's mention of Maximus' understanding of the unity of soul and body

into one and composite nature-substance, the ‘human’ nature-substance. Whereas in (2) the substance ‘body’ and the substance ‘soul’ co-exist in one single hypostasis, in one actual realization, retaining their distinct nature in a way similar to Christ’s hypostatic union. ‘Composite nature’ and ‘union of two natures in one hypostasis’ are two diametrically opposed formulations (and the essence of the Chalcedonian controversies, as the Monophysites argued in favor of Christ’s ‘composite nature’).¹⁸⁴ If we accept that Maximus *consciously* employs both to denote the body-soul relationship, then we need to abandon the dualistic understanding of the notions ‘body’, ‘soul’, ‘substance’ and ‘hypostasis’ in order to understand him and see his seemingly contradictory references as different languages in order to signify the totality and wholeness of the human person.

Polycarp Sherwood regards this as an inconsistency on Maximus’ part, as Thunberg remarks,¹⁸⁵ but we maintain that it is perfectly consistent not only with Maximus’ logic, but also with the *inner logic* of the terminology he uses. His (1) first exposition, that the substance of man is one composite nature, a φύσις σύνθετος, is a natural corollary of the philosophical language that Maximus uses: each human person, each human hypostasis, partakes in the common nature of being human, the common substance of all human beings, that, which makes a human being human. This human nature, each specific manifestation of which is every human being, has most certainly a dual character in the Confessor’s eyes: “each one of us is of a dual nature, both from a soul and from a body”.¹⁸⁶ Human nature is characterized by materiality, which is a nature in itself, a distinct way of partaking in existence (it is the *mode* of materiality and in a sense the λόγος of its being) but at the same time possesses qualities that are to be ascribed to an intelligible nature, beyond pure materiality, a way of partaking in existence different than that of pure materiality: a soul, a distinct λόγος of being, a distinct mode (τρόπος) of existence: “the λόγος and mode of the soul is different from that of the body”.¹⁸⁷ These two natures, these two substances,¹⁸⁸ coexist in human nature, in the common substance of all human beings.

as both a hypostatic union and a natural synthesis (“Der Mensch als Einigung von Seele und Leib ist also hypostatische Union und natürliche Synthese zugleich” – p. 230 in “Das anthropologische Modell der hypostatischen Union bei Maximus Confessor. Zur innerchalkedonischen Transformation eines Paradigmas”, of Heinzer, Felix and Christoph von Schönborn (ed.): Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2-5 Septembre, 1980, Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1982, pp. 223-233).

¹⁸⁴ However, the acceptance of this paradox is characteristic of sixth-century dyophysite Neo-Chalcedonism (e.g. Nephalius, John of Caesarea, Leontios of Jerusalem), which, in order to find a middle ground with moderate monophysites, spoke of the *synthesis* of natures in Christ -employing a word favoured by moderate monophysites- and the *hypostatic* union of the natures as opposed to their natural union in one nature.

¹⁸⁵ Thunberg: *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 101, fn. 49.

¹⁸⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1373 C: ἕκαστος ἡμῶν διπλοῦς ἐστὶ τὴν φύσιν, ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος συνεστῶς.

¹⁸⁷ PG 91 1321 C: ἄλλος ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ τρόπος τῆς ψυχῆς, ἄλλος τῷ σώματι.

However, (2) Maximus also approaches the subject from a seemingly radically different perspective (even incompatibly so), understanding Man not as one composite nature and hypostasis, but as one hypostasis in two distinct natures, as a ‘hypostatic union’ of some sort. He makes it clear: “Man is not of one nature which is constituted of body and soul”,¹⁸⁹ rejecting the definition on which we just elaborated above. Maximus compares Christ’s union of two natures in one hypostasis with Man’s union of body and soul in one hypostasis, but not in one (composite) nature: as he writes, “the one and single Christ is known by the natures from which and in which he is constituted, just as each one and single human being is known by the natures [i.e.: body and soul] from which he has been constituted and in which he exists”.¹⁹⁰ In speaking about a *hypostatic union* of soul and body in the human being, Maximus changes perspective and chooses to focus on the two natures and substances that constitute every specific human being and not on the qualities of Man’s general nature, which in the former exposition make it a composite nature. However, this is not to suggest a dichotomy, but quite the contrary: Maximus proposes it to underline the oneness and wholeness of the human person, a oneness and wholeness similar but not identical to the co-existence of Christ’s two natures in his person ‘*without confusion, without change, without division and without separation*’.¹⁹¹

And here we come to our point: in both of Maximus’ definitions on the relationship of soul and body, the hypostasis, the specific manifestation of the general substance ‘soul’ is the particular human person as a whole:

(1) In Maximus’ view of the composite human nature and substance, composed of the substance ‘body’ and the substance ‘soul’, its specific manifestation and actual existence, the realization of this composite nature, is the human person as a whole.

(2) In the Confessor’s view of a hypostatic union of these two natures and substances in man, there is again one and specific actual existence, one hypostasis: this specific human person - we could say, following Chalcedon, *without confusion of the two natures, without change in them, without division and without separation*.

Maximus does speak of a soul, of the soul as an immortal, bodiless, intelligible and simple substance.¹⁹² however, in the field of *actual existences*, the

¹⁸⁸ *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 488 A: Οὐχ ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος λόγος· ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, ὡς πᾶσιν εὐδήλον.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 488 B: Ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον μίαν φύσιν τὴν ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 488 A: ὡς ἐνὸς πυρός, αἱ περὶ αὐτὸ ποιότητες καὶ ιδιότητες, καὶ ἐνὸς Χριστοῦ, αἱ φύσεις ἐξ ὧν καὶ ἐν αἷς συνεστὼς γνωρίζεται· καὶ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου, τὰ ἐξ ὧν συνετέθη καὶ ἐν οἷς ὑπάρχων γινώσκεται.

¹⁹¹ ἄσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀχωρίστως, as the creed of the Chalcedonian Council would put it.

¹⁹² *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 357C-361 A.

whole human person is that which actually exists: *the soul in itself would be an οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος*. There is no hypostasis of the substance ‘soul’, apart from the human hypostasis as an undivided whole, the whole of the human person.¹⁹³ In thus defining the soul-body relationship, Maximus makes a critically important contribution to the subject, given the usual Christian understanding thereof.

We mentioned a union ‘without division’ and ‘without separation’. But isn’t the soul separated from the body after death? An examination of Maximus’ writings would suggest that his answer would be ‘yes *and no*’: for him, the dead body and the intelligible soul are only the parts of a whole,¹⁹⁴ they are the body *of this* human person and the soul *of that* human person, they are not to be thought of in themselves, as separated from the one human person that they constitute, i.e. they constituted and, in Maximus’ view, do still constitute and will constitute again. “The soul is not simply called ‘soul’ after death”, Maximus writes, “but this specific person’s soul. And the body is not simply called ‘body’ after death, but this specific person’s body, even if that body is subject to decay. Thus, one cannot speak of body or soul separately, as if they were irrelevant to one another.”¹⁹⁵ – “One cannot conceive of a soul without body or of a body without soul”,¹⁹⁶ he testifies. Even after death, the hypostasis, the specific manifestation and realization, continues to be the whole human person. This shifts the ontological and soteriological focus from a notion of the soul as a bodiless human to that of the whole human person, of the human person *as we know it*.

¹⁹³ See also: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1336 A: Ἦνώθη δὲ τῷ Θεῷ Λόγῳ μετὰ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα. Ἄρα μετὰ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα σωθήσεται. (“The body as well as the soul have joined the God Logos. That is, the body will also be saved along with the soul.”) - PG 91 1336 A: σαρκούται ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος ἵνα καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα σώσῃ καὶ τὴν σάρκα ἀθανάτισῃ. (“The Logos of God has been incarnated both in order to save the image/icon and to immortalize the flesh.”)

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* 1100 C-1101A.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 1101 BC: “For the soul, after the death of the body, is not simply called soul, but the soul of a human being, indeed the soul of a certain human being. Even after it has departed the body, the whole human is predicated of it as part of its species according to its condition. In the same way, although the body is by nature mortal, because of how it came to be, it is not an independent entity. For the body, after its separation from the soul, is not simply called body, but the body of a man, indeed the body of a certain man, even though it will decompose and be broken down into the elements of which it was composed. For like the soul it has the whole human being predicted of it as part of its species according to its condition. Therefore the human being is composed of soul and body, for soul and body are indissolubly understood to be parts of the whole human species [...] For that reason it is inconceivable to speak of the soul and body except in relation to each other” (transl. Paul M. Blowers: *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ – Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 73-74).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 1324 B: Καὶ τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ οὔτε σώματος χωρὶς ἢ ψυχῆ, οὔτε ψυχῆς σῶμά ποτε νοηθήσεται.

II.1.8. An ‘Immortal’ Soul? Hell and the Possibility of Inexistence

Furthermore, as Maximus speaks of the *immortal* nature of the human soul, we come to our second question, which is integrally connected to the first one: if the human person truly possesses a free will as an ontological fact,¹⁹⁷ could his soul or his hypostasis be *inevitably* eternal? The answer to God’s creative call that creates us “from non-being into being”¹⁹⁸ or into eternal being cannot but be *inevitably* affirmative? And if so, is the freedom of the person true freedom, or does God force the person to accept an existence that this person could otherwise deny?

Speaking about the answer to God’s creative call, we are not referring to an event *before our birth* or *after our death*, but to a continuous event, or to be more precise an event *outside of time* as we know and experience it. If freedom and free will allow us to prepare during our life a receptiveness to the possibility of being given existence beyond the constraints of natural life, beyond the grave, then freedom would also allow us to deny such a possibility. However, the price of such a choice would not be an eternal punishment imposed by a God who is only defined as love, but, simply, inexistence; the denial to participate in his love, which calls us ‘from non-being into being’.¹⁹⁹ The inability to revisit such a choice, as ‘there is no repentance after death’, would be, truly, hell.

Christos Yannaras, commenting on Maximus the Confessor’s passages on “our hopes hereafter”,²⁰⁰ has analyzed the possibility that “what we term in our language as ‘hell’ could refer to man’s free choice not to exist. If the foundation of existing is the relationship with God, and the ‘logical’-personal relation-

¹⁹⁷ As Maximus’ chief theological battle was against Monotheletism, there is ample bibliography on his treatment of the human will’s freedom, a subject to which Maximus’ contribution was and is crucial on both a theological and philosophical level. We would suggest Demetrios Bathrellos’ monograph *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), which examines both the historical development and the philosophical/theological importance of Maximus’ contribution, both the historical and systematic aspect, in a way that explains in depth many related subjects as well (person/hypostasis, nature etc).

¹⁹⁸ Maximus Confessor, *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1288 Df.: τὰ ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος παραγαγεῖν τε καὶ ὑποστήσασθαι. Cf. *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 5.75: “God, from whom I received being”. See also *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 3.28.9-11.

¹⁹⁹ Maximus Confessor, *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 1.70-72: καὶ κινδυνεύσει αὐτοῖς καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν μεταπεσεῖν τοῦ Θεοῦ χωριζόμενον. “So that [...] they will not run the risk of having their being separated from God to dissolve into nonbeing” (transl. Berthold p. 187). Eschatologically, the “works of sin” will either way return to inexistence, ἀνυπαρξία: *Πενήσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 159.19-20: ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι τὰ ἔργα τῆς ἁμαρτίας εἰς ἀνυπαρξίαν χωροῦσιν – “But, also, in the future age, the works of sin give way to nothingness [inexistence]” (transl. Prassas p. 122).

²⁰⁰ Christos Yannaras: “The Ontological Realism of our Hopes Hereafter: Conclusions from St. Maximus the Confessor’s Brief References”, in: Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection – Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, October 18-21 2012, California*: Sebastian Press 2013, pp. 379-386.

ship (which, to be logical-personal, must be free) constitutes the logical-personal existence, then this relationship-existence can be either accepted or even rejected, leading to nonexistence”.²⁰¹ Yannaras considers this view well founded in the texts of Church Fathers like the Confessor: “Hell, says Maximus, is the negation to participate in being, in well being and in ever being: the free self-exclusion from existence, from relation-participation in being, the negation of the relationship and as such the negation of existing, of existence. And this voluntary non-existence as a deprivation and loss of the gift of deification can perhaps only be signified symbolically in language with the image of endless torture, of the suffering and weeping. Thereby is the unbearable scandal dispelled, that a God who is love preserves his deniers eternally in existence only to see them suffer hopelessly”.²⁰² Maximus’ relevant passage is revealing: according to him, the participation or the refusal to participate in being, well being and ever being is a punishment for those who cannot participate and a bliss and delight for those who can participate.²⁰³ Of course, Maximus does not explicitly write that hell is inexistence, that the negative answer to God’s call would result in inexistence – this would be contrary to his assertion that the soul i.e. the human person is immortal.²⁰⁴ However, Maximus denotes the totality of existence with his three categories of being (εἶναι), well being (εὖ εἶναι) and ever being (ἀεὶ εἶναι): the refusal or inability to participate in *any of them* cannot but mean the refusal or inability to participate *in existence, in reality*, if we follow Maximus’ language concisely – who also mentions the possibility of φεῖ εἶναι, i.e. ill-being or being in vain. And he is right in writing that we cannot but perceive this conscious choice of inexistence (whether this inexistence will be granted to us or not) as ‘punishment’.

It is interesting to note that Maximus speaks in another context of the “irrational and absolute and substanceless *inexistence*”²⁰⁵ that results from a life in sin, i.e. a life contrary to our real nature (παρὰ φύσιν). Judging from the Confessor’s general concise use of philosophical and theological signifiers, we think that his reference to the “irrational and absolute and substanceless *inexistence*”

²⁰¹ Christos Yannaras, “The Ontological Realism of our Hopes Hereafter”, p. 385.

²⁰² Ibid. p. 385.

²⁰³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1329 B: And for those who participate or do not participate proportionately in Him who, in the truest sense, is and is well, and is forever, there is an intensification and increase of punishment for those who cannot participate, and of enjoyment for those who can participate.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 149).

²⁰⁴ Does patristic thought affirm that the human being or the human has as immortal *nature*? This would annul the created-uncreated distinction, as something created would be beyond the constraints of createdness *per se*, due to its very nature. On these and other relevant matters, cf. Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 259-269.

²⁰⁵ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῖον ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 305 B (fn. p. 309): Τῆς κατὰ φύσιν κινήσεως ἤτοι τάξεως ἀποτυγχάνοντες, φερόμεθα εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν ἄλογον, καὶ παντελεῖ καὶ ἀνοούσιον ἀνυπαρξίαν.

that results from a life that embodies a conscious refusal of God’s creative and relational call is not merely a literary or rhetorical *topos*. In such a case, hell would be a signifier (and not merely a ‘symbol’) of *inexistence*, the result of a life consistently “contrary to nature”. However, the question arises: is it possible at all for the human being’s answer to God’s creative call to be *wholly negative and rejective* (or wholly affirmative, for that matter)? Can man’s life be constituted as a continuous and absolute choice of non-relation, death, non-communion and inexistence (or of communion, relation, and life)? Or are these absolute choices extremities that cannot be truly attained in their wholeness, thereby annulling the possibility of a human person’s life truly resulting in “absolute and substanceless inexistence”? In such a case, “irrational and absolute and substanceless inexistence” would remain a potentiality/possibility (a signifier of the will’s true freedom) that cannot be truly actualized in its wholeness. The possibility that a person’s life has been a chosen rejection God’s creative call, relation, communion and life but has not ‘achieved’ the completeness of rejection that would result in inexistence (thereby being granted a participation in existence that cannot but be incomplete due to the person’s overwhelming rejection of it) illustrates an existential drama; an eternal hell.

Certain passages of the Confessor’s could lead to this conclusion. In *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.159-170, Maximus mentions the delight (ἡδονή) of those that will be united with God by his nature and grace²⁰⁶ and the pain and anguish (ὀδύνη) of those that “will be united with God by his nature but contrary to grace”.²⁰⁷ The criterion is each human person’s own “quality of disposition”,²⁰⁸ each human person’s preparedness for this union, i.e. the full and absolute union of God with each and every one at the “end of the ages”.²⁰⁹ According to the Confessor, this union with the uncreated, a union effecting the continuation of existence through life-giving relation and communion, will take place in any case due to God’s own nature. The ones whose answer to God’s continuous creative call from nonbeing into being is a negative one are bound to experience this union as pain and anguish, for it is a union contrary to their preparedness for receptiveness and communion, contrary to their quality of disposition. This reading of Maximus’, contrary to his passage concerning the “irrational and absolute and substanceless inexistence”,²¹⁰ accounts for a *tendency* of the

²⁰⁶ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.160-163: ὑπὲρ φύσιν δὲ λέγω τὴν θεϊαν καὶ ἀνενόητον ἡδονήν, ἣν ποιεῖν πέφυκεν ὁ θεὸς φύσει κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῖς ἀξίοις ἐνούμενος.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 59.163-165: παρὰ φύσιν δὲ τὴν κατὰ στέρησιν ταύτης συνισταμένην ἀνεκλάλητον ὀδύνην, ἣν ποιεῖν εἶωθεν ὁ θεός, φύσει παρὰ τὴν χάριν τοῖς ἀναξίοις ἐνούμενος.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 59.165-166: κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ἐκάστω ποιότητα τῆς διαθέσεως.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 59.168-170: ἕκαστος ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ διαπεπλασμένος πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ πάντως πᾶσιν ἐνωθησομένου κατὰ τὸ πέρασ τῶν αἰώνων.

²¹⁰ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 305 B (fn. p. 309).

disposition towards inexistence that, regrettably, cannot be truly actualized; an existential hell.²¹¹

Essentially, this is not a question of philological and exegetical conciseness but of ontological consistency, much in the vein of Maximus the Confessor's own primary concern as a Church Father. The affirmation of both a truly free will and immortality of the soul in the context of the ecclesial testimony remains, in our opinion, an unresolved philosophical *problem* in need of bold attempts at consistently addressing it.

II.1.9. Createdness and the Uncreated²¹²

Following our short examination of aspects of Maximus' anthropology and in order to understand his ontology and cosmology, we need to elaborate on the created-uncreated distinction and on its difference from ancient Greek ontology and cosmology.²¹³ According to Greek philosophy,²¹⁴ to the almost unanimous view of Greek philosophers, nothing can come out of nothing;²¹⁵ a *creatio ex nihilo* would be absurd, and matter is pre-existing and eternal (even if not in its present form and order).²¹⁶ A direct consequence of this is that the prime characteristic of existence is *necessity* (albeit a mostly harmonious and orderly necessity, as a number of philosophers would have it): existence *is what it is*, it could not have been something else. This is illustrated even in these fragments of Greek philosophical thought according to which the world has been intentionally created by a God. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the Demiurge created the world according to his free will (θελήσει).²¹⁷ However, even this cannot escape the principle of necessity, it cannot accomplish freedom: God the Creator (i) *had* to create out of pre-existing matter, (ii) *had* to conform with the ideas of Beauty and

²¹¹ The reader is here reminded of Maximus the Confessor's aforementioned explicit reference to the "the *risk* of dissolving into nonbeing" in *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 1.70-72.

²¹² On Maximus' account of *creatio ex nihilo* as "the basic gulf" between creation and the Uncreated and an accurate and comprehensive overview of Maximus' cosmology and ontology in general, see Lars Thunberg's *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 49-93.

²¹³ On the importance of this distinction, cf. Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 250-269: "'Created' and 'Uncreated': the Existential Significance of Chalcedonian Christology".

²¹⁴ However, the differences between the ancient Greek and the Hellenized early Christian and byzantine ontology and cosmology do not entail a discontinuity in Greek philosophical thought, but an evolution thereof. See Klaus Oehler: *Antike Philosophie und Byzantinisches Mittelalter*. München: Beck 1969, and particularly the chapter entitled „Die Kontinuität der Philosophie der Griechen bis zum Untergang des byzantinischen Reiches“, pp. 15-37. As the notion of πρόσωπον is of particular importance in our study, please note Oehler's comments on it in the context of the continuity of Greek philosophical thought.

²¹⁵ See e.g. Aristotle: *Φυσικά*, 191a, 23.

²¹⁶ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 15.

²¹⁷ Plato, *Τίμαιος*, 29.

Goodness, (iii) *had* to be limited to a pre-existing space (χώρα). As such, his creation according to his free will was, actually, an unfree act, an ontologically constrained act.²¹⁸ The notion of *creatio ex nihilo* is absent in Greek thought, in which matter is essentially eternal,²¹⁹ while necessity dictates even the attributes of Aristotle's prime unmoved mover.

The Judaeo-Christian notion of *creatio ex nihilo* by a personal uncreated Creator, and especially its elaboration and refinement during the patristic era, replaces the ontological precedence of necessity²²⁰ with *otherness* and *freedom*. Otherness and freedom become primary ontological characteristics of existence.

Otherness, because the absolute difference of the created and the uncreated (Maximus speaks of it as the first division)²²¹ constitutes an absolute otherness of these two, an otherness that proves to be constitutive of being and existence, an otherness on an ontological level.²²² However, otherness is known as difference, difference is manifested through comparison, and comparison presupposes relation; otherness emerges, becomes manifest through relation, "communion does not threaten otherness; it generates it".²²³ The fact that the Judaeo-Christian tradition speaks not of a creative *principle* or *power* but of a creative *person* makes *personal* otherness, *hypostatic* otherness, a primary ontological principle of existence.

And *freedom*, because the very fact that creation emerged out of nothing means that it could have also *not* emerged at all; the fact that *existence exists* is not a prescribed necessity, but the actualization of a possibility that is not devoid of alternatives. As such, creation is a *free* act, an act devoid of necessity, a *choice*, an act that transcends predeterminations and necessities.²²⁴ If we take into account that, apart from creation, God also actualizes *his own existence* through the distinction of his hypostases "atemporally and out of love" (κινήσεις

²¹⁸ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p.16.

²¹⁹ Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια περί αγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 3.28.1-2: "When the Greek philosophers affirm that the substance of beings coexisted eternally with God and that they received only their individual qualities from him, they say that there is nothing contrary to substance" (transl. Berthold p. 65).

²²⁰ According to Maximus the Confessor, it is an "utter blasphemy" to speak of *necessity* in the case of God, even of the necessity of him being good or creative: *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πόρρον*, PG 91 293 C: Εἰ γὰρ κατ' αὐτὴν τὸ φυσικὸν πάντως καὶ ἠναγκασμένον· φύσει δὲ ὁ Θεὸς Θεός, φύσει ἀγαθός, φύσει δημιουργός· ἀνάγκη ἔσται ὁ Θεὸς Θεός, καὶ ἀγαθός καὶ δημιουργός· ὅπερ καὶ ἐννοεῖν, μῆτι γὰρ λέγειν, ἐσχάτης ἐστὶ βλασφημίας. Cf. *Περί διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1332 A.

²²¹ Maximus the Confessor: *Περί διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1304 D: ὧν πρώτην μὲν φασιν εἶναι τὴν διαίρουσαν τῆς ἀκτίστου φύσεως τὴν κτιστὴν καθόλου φύσιν, καὶ διὰ γενέσεως τὸ εἶναι λαβοῦσαν. – "The first of these divides from the uncreated nature the universal created nature, which receives its being from becoming" (transl. Louth p. 154).

²²² Ibid. 1077 A: Ἐπὶ Θεοῦ δὲ καὶ πλέον, ὅσον ἀκτίστου καὶ κτιστῶν ἄπειρον τὸ μέσον ἐστὶ καὶ διάφορον.

²²³ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p.5.

²²⁴ On the correlation of the created-uncreated dialectic and existential freedom, see Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 255-256. Also note Zizioulas' comments on death as an existential event emerging from the created-uncreated dialectic in pp. 257-259.

ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀγαπητικῶς),²²⁵ this manifests freedom as nothing less than the *causal mode of creation*: creation is a result of freedom.²²⁶ However, there is also another side to a creation *ex nihilo*: the fact that existence emerged out of nothing means that it could also return to nothing (τὸ μὴ ὄν). Total, absolute inexistence (either of something, someone or the totality of existence) becomes possible, whereas in Greek philosophy it would be impossible. In actuality, a creation out of nothing is bound to perish, for if this was not the case, it would have emerged out of an imperishable something, thus not having absolute otherness and freedom.²²⁷ Atemporality and endlessness can be attained only if the participation in the mode of the uncreated were possible.

This difference between the ancient Greek and Christian thought, the created-uncreated distinction, is the very frame and foundation of their ontologies: to compare secondary characteristics of these ontologies without taking into account the profound implications of this difference would not lead to sound philosophical conclusions. If the uncreated existence signifies the possibility of existence without decay, death, time, constraints and limits, then the only hope of creatures is to participate in its *mode of existence* (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως),²²⁸ as they cannot participate in its nature.

II.1.10. The Mode of the Uncreated

The very distinction between substance, hypostasis and the activities that hypostasize (actualize) the substance, the very mention of the *difference* between the λόγος of nature-substance and the *mode* of its existence (λόγος φύσεως – τρόπος ὑπάρξεως) implies that creatures need not be mechanistically actualized (hypostasized), but that their actual existence can manifest a certain freedom from the predeterminations of their substance, lest all hypostases be identical. “The difference of natures, the difference of uncreated and created, can be transcended at the level of the common mode of existence, the mode of personal existence”.²²⁹ An extreme case is the incarnation of the Son, whose divine nature seems incompatible with his human presence. The boundless freedom of God

²²⁵ Σχόλια εἰς τὸ περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων, CD4.1 221A.

²²⁶ Yannaras: *Relational Ontology*, 10-10.3.6 (pp. 49-55).

²²⁷ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 18f.

²²⁸ On an account of Maximus’ use of the term τρόπος, as well as of πρόσωπον and ὑπόστασις, cf. Dionysis Skliris’ article “‘Hypostasis’, ‘Person’, ‘Individual’: A Comparison between the Terms that Denote Concrete Being in St Maximus’ Theology”, in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection – Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, October 18-21 2012*, California: Sebastian Press 2013, pp. 437-450.

²²⁹ Yannaras: *Elements of Faith*, p. 59.

(even the freedom to become that which he is not) is iconized in human beings; each “unique, dissimilar and unrepeatable”²³⁰ human hypostasis is constituted as a person (i.e., as an existence-in-relation that can determine its reality beyond its substance), “in the image and in the likeness” of the one who can adopt a wholly other mode of existence, of God – whose nature or substance *as such* is totally unapproachable.²³¹

We must here note that the *mode of existence*, the *τρόπος* in which things are (the ‘tropic identity’ of something) pertains directly to ontology, it is a matter of ontology. The mode, the *τρόπος* of a being “is an inseparable aspect of being, as primary ontologically as substance or nature”.²³² The question of *how* a thing exists is as important as is the question of *what* it is; the particulars’ existence cannot be downgraded when compared to their substances, as this would constitute an ontology that divorces ontological models from the world that they claim to represent.

It is not natural creation by itself, but God’s *incarnation* that bridges the abysmal gap between the creatures and the uncreated.²³³ In Maximus’ understanding, Christ’s incarnation, birth, death and resurrection *renews* the very foundations of creation and nature, as it bridges the absolute gap between creation and the uncreated, according to Maximus.²³⁴ By taking on the human nature, God has fulfilled the preconditions for man to partake in divine, uncreated reality, for man to be *deified*, saved, completed.²³⁵ As the connecting link between the created world and the uncreated, as the *sense* of the created world and the

²³⁰ Yannaras: *Relational Ontology*, 10.3.2 (p. 52).

²³¹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1288 B: Ἐκ τῶν κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, τούτεστι ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῆς, ὁ Θεὸς οὐδέποτε τι ὑπάρχον γινώσκειται. Ἀμήχανος γὰρ καὶ παντελῶς ἄβητος πάση τῇ κτίσει [...]. Πάντα δὲ τὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν οὐ τὸ τί ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τί οὐκ ἐστίν ὑποδηλοῖ, οἷον τὸ ἀγέννητον, τὸ ἄναρχον, τὸ ἄπειρον, τὸ ἄσώματον, καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν εἰσὶ, καὶ τὸ τί μὴ εἶναι, οὐχ ὅτι δὲ τὸ τί εἶναι αὐτὴν παριστώσιν – “From those things that pertain to God’s substance, that is, from the substance itself, it has never at any time been known what God is. For to have even an idea of what God might be is impossible and completely beyond the reach of all creation [...] But all the things that are “around” the substance do not disclose what the substance itself is, but what it is not, such as not being created, not having a beginning, not being finite, not being corporeal, and any other such things that are around the substance, and which indicate what it is not, but not what it is” (transl. Constanas, DOML 29, p. 65-67).

²³² Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 24-25.

²³³ Their main and definitive difference is that creation does not contain its cause within itself – as well as its purpose. See *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1072 BC: οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν γενητῶν ἑαυτοῦ τέλος ἐστίν, ἐπειδὴ οὔτε αὐταίτιον, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀγέννητον καὶ ἄναρχον καὶ ἀκίνητον. “No created being is the end and purpose of itself, as it is not the cause of itself, or else it would be unoriginated and beginningless and motionless”. A sentence later, Maximus clarifies: τέλος ἐστίν οὗ ἕνεκεν τὰ πάντα, αὐτὸ δὲ οὐδενὸς ἕνεκεν – “Purpose and end is that due to which everything exists, but that which does not owe its existence to something else”, i.e. God. τὸ αὐτοτελεὲς γὰρ πῶς καὶ ἀναίτιον – “For that which contains its purpose and end contains also its cause”.

²³⁴ For example, cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 5.73-74, 5.143-146.

²³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* 5.152-155, PG 91 1273 D-1276 D, 1280 C, 1289 D, and *Πρὸς Θεόλαστον I*, CCSG 7, 22.8-13: “The plan was for him to mingle, without change on his part, with human nature by true hypostatic union, to unite human nature to himself while remaining immutable, so that he might become a man, as he alone knew how, and so that he might deify humanity in union with himself” (transl. Blowers p. 115).

hope of its completion in full communion with the uncreated, the person of Jesus Christ is the center of Christian ontology and cosmology: Torstein Tollefsen speaks of the *Christocentric* cosmology of Maximus the Confessor, and very accurately indeed.²³⁶ Maximus asserts that the human person can be deified in every sense “except of the identity of substance”:²³⁷ the human person cannot take on the divine *substance* in place of his human substance, but is able to partake in every other way in God’s divinity, by iconizing and actualizing the existential *mode* of the uncreated, the mode of relation, self-transcendence and love, for love²³⁸ is the identity of God, not one of his attributes: “God is love”.²³⁹ However, the human person cannot attain deification by himself, it is not in his nature: it can only be granted to him, given to him as a present (χάρις, χάρισμα) by the Other of the relationship.

According to the ecclesial testimony, only the human person can attain deification, for only the human being is truly a *person*, i.e. a creature in the image and likeness of the Creator; the *return* of creation to the full communion with God, the *redemption* of creation, can only take place *through* man’s deification; this is the task of mediation.²⁴⁰ As such, man is responsible not only for his individual completion-salvation-deification, but constitutes the hope for the salvation of the whole of creation, he is the priest and mediator of creation; man is truly a *microcosm and mediator*.²⁴¹

²³⁶ Tollefsen: *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*.

²³⁷ *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 376AB: ὅλοι δι’ ὅλου γινόμεθα θεοὶ χωρὶς τῆς κατ’ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος. And *Πρὸς Θεολόγους* I, CCSG 7, 22.40-44: πάντως καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τῷ θεωθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μυστικῆς ἐνεργείας λήψεται πέρας, κατὰ πάντα τρόπον, χωρὶς μόνης δηλονότι τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν κατ’ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος, ὁμοίως εἰς αὐτῶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον – “Then God will also completely fulfill the goal of his mystical work of deifying humanity in every respect, of course, short of an identity of substance with God; and he will assimilate humanity to himself” (transl. Blowers p. 116).

²³⁸ There is a surprisingly extended tendency to understand the word love (ἀγάπη) when applied to God or Christians in a moral, ethical sense, pertaining to *behavior* (to associate it with kindness, altruism etc.). However, such a use of the word is devoid of ontological content; and the ontological content of both ἀγάπη and ἔρωσ is that of radical referentiality and existential self-transcendence instead of individual onticity and amicability. Interestingly, the author of the Areopagite corpus remarks that even as early as his time, theologians tended to treat the name of love as kindness (ἀγάπη) as equivalent to that of love as ἔρωσ; and he prefers to attribute true ἔρωσ to things divine because of the “misplaced prejudice” of the theologians, who misunderstand the meaning of ἀγάπη. *Corpus Dionysiacum: Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD I, p. 157: Ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκοῦσιν οἱ θεολόγοι κοινὸν μὲν ἡγεῖσθαι τὸ τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τοῦ ἔρωτος ὄνομα, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ τοῖς θείοις μᾶλλον ἀναθεῖναι τὸν ὄντως ἔρωτα διὰ τὴν ἄτοπον τῶν τοιοῦτων ἀνδρῶν πρόληψιν.

²³⁹ 1 John 4:8, ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν.

²⁴⁰ A shorter account by Thunberg on the “fivefold mediation of man as a perfect realization of the theandric dimension of the universe”, i.e. on the transcendence of all five major ontological, cosmological and anthropological divisions/distinctions within creation, can be found in pp. 80-91 of his *Man and the cosmos. The vision of St Maximus the Confessor*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1985.

²⁴¹ *Microcosm and Mediator* is the title of Lars Thunberg’s book on Maximus, as we mentioned earlier. It should be noted again that Thunberg’s understanding of Maximus is most profound, making his monograph one of the best studies on Maximus; among the studies of Maximus’ anthropology, it stands out as without doubt the most illuminating treatise on the subject. A different account of Maximus’ ontology and cosmology *through* his anthropology, and particularly through the notion of *sin*, can be found in Walther Völker’s

God's nature and substance remains absolutely unapproachable, but man can partake in God through God's *activities* (ἐνέργειαι).²⁴² The presence of God in all of creation through his *activities*,²⁴³ in a way similar to the presence of the painter in his painting or of the poet in his poem – and yet more real as it can lead to an encounter in all immediacy, has often been described as *panentheism*. In contrast with *pantheism*, which equates the world with the divine, and also in contrast with an understanding of God as completely absent from his creation (e.g. God as a notion or principle), *panentheism* describes a God that resides beyond createdness but is present within creation through his *activities* and, especially, his incarnation.²⁴⁴ Non-Christian understandings of panentheism often imply that the world is a part of God; however, the ecclesial testimony stresses the *absolute otherness* of God and creation. In today's language and if understood correctly, as the presence of a wholly other God in his wholly other creation due to the personal and 'logical'²⁴⁵ character of his creative activity, we hold that *panentheism* is quite an accurate word in describing the ecclesial view on the subject – although one that would not have been used by the Fathers of the Church. Maximus' λόγοι doctrine illustrates this most abundantly, as it describes a God that is indirectly present within creation through his constitutive and creative λόγοι of all beings, as we will examine.

According to the Confessor, the participation in the uncreated radically transforms the created, it *deifies* the created, as it fully restores the communion with its source of existence. Maximus describes this participation in the uncreated as follows.

Participation in supranatural divine [things] is the assimilation of those who participate to that in which they participate. The assimilation of those who participate to that in which they participate is their identity with it, actively

Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens (Wiesbaden: Steiner 1965), and particularly in pp. 23-101, i.e. up to Völker's treatment of the subject of sin as such.

²⁴² There is an ever-increasing bibliography on the substance/activities distinction in Maximus the Confessor, well before Gregory Palamas, but the only monograph dedicated to the subject remains Vasilios Karayiannis' *Maxime le Confesseur: Essence et energies de Dieu*.

²⁴³ Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1080 B: "For all things, in that they came to be from God, participate proportionally in God, whether by intellect, by λόγος, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness" (transl. Blowers, p. 55). And *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 23.8-10: "Among us they [i.e. the Greeks] would never have been called wise because they could not or would not recognize God from his works" (transl. Berthold p. 204).

²⁴⁴ The presence of God within creation through his *activities* refers to the *indirect* presence of God's otherness through and within his creatures, in roughly the same way that any artist's person and otherness is, indirectly, present in his creations (Maximus would say that God is present within creation through the λόγοι of beings, which in turn are divine activities, as we will see). This is substantially different from theologies stating that God, exactly due to his absolute otherness, is *wholly absent* from creation. However, the abysmal gap between Creator and creation is only bridged by the incarnation, for it is only then that God has a full and *hypostatic* presence within creation, i.e. not merely through the outcomes of his creative otherness (outcomes that possess their own, distinct otherness) but through the concrete presence of this otherness itself.

²⁴⁵ As we would say in Maximus the Confessor's language, i.e. pertaining to λόγοι and Λόγος.

achieved through assimilation. The identity of those who participate with that in which they participate, which can be actively achieved through assimilation, is the deification of those accounted worthy to be deified. And deification is the encompassing and ultimate end of everything that exists in time and eternity, according to the general description of all times and ages. The inclusion and ultimate end of the times and ages and everything that exists within them is the inseparable unity within those who are being saved between the absolute very beginning of things and their absolute and literal end.²⁴⁶

II.1.11. Ontological Ecclesiology

We stated earlier that for the consciousness of the undivided Christian Church, the person of Jesus Christ as the hypostatic union of human and divine, of created and uncreated nature, is the model for transcending the abysmal gap between the finite, decaying, temporal creation and the fullness of freedom, the uncreated – the hope of humanity, creatures and creation itself for the overcoming of limitations, distance, decay, death.

However, this is not to be understood as the following of an example or as an object of imitation, as these would constitute moral/behavioral terms, not existential/ontological ones. A *reproduction* of Christ's mode of existence without his real presence is unanimously excluded as a possibility. Only the *participation* in Christ and in Christ's mode of existence can actualize this change in the mode of existence. A participation in what the ecclesial testimony attests as the *body* of Christ, the church. The root of the ontological and anthropological significance of the church for Christians is precisely the fact that they recognize it as the real *body* of Christ, the realism of the possibility of participation in his mode of existence, the realism of accepting the iconizing of this mode of existence (existence-as-relation, love, ἔρωσ) as a path towards the fullness of his likeness, the fullness of communion in otherness. The fullness of communion is, simultaneously, the disclosure of absolute otherness, as we have seen. The church professes to be the body of a person, and the personal character of both the church and one's participation in it is of paramount importance, as "only a

²⁴⁶ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II, CCSG 7, 59.134-149: Μέθεξις δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θεῖον ἐστὶν ἢ πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων ὁμοίωσις· ἢ δὲ πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων ὁμοίωσις ἐστὶν ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων δι' ὁμοιότητος ἐνδεχομένη ταυτότης· ἢ δὲ τῶν μετεχόντων ἐνδεχομένη κατ' ἐνέργειαν δι' ὁμοιότητος πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον ταυτότης ἐστὶν ἢ θέωσις τῶν ἀξιουμένων θεώσεως· ἢ δὲ θέωσις ἐστὶ κατ' ὑπογραφῆς λόγον πάντων τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ τῶν ἐν χρόνῳ καὶ αἰῶνι περιοχῇ καὶ πέρασ· περιοχῇ δὲ καὶ πέρασ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν αἰώνων ἐστὶ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ τῆς ἀκραιφνοῦς καὶ κυρίως ἀρχῆς πρὸς τὸ κυρίως τέλος καὶ ἀκραιφνῆς ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις ἀδιάστατος ἐνότης· ἀδιάστατος δὲ τῆς ἀκραιφνοῦς ἀρχῆς τε καὶ τέλους ἐνότης ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις ἐστὶν ἢ κρείττων τῶν οὐσιωδῶς ἀρχῇ τε καὶ τέλει μεμετρημένων τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἔκβασις. Transl. Theokritoff: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 17.

person can manifest communion and otherness simultaneously, thanks to it being a *mode* of being, that is, an identity which, unlike substance or energy [i.e. activity], is capable of ‘modifying’ its being without losing its ontological uniqueness and otherness”.²⁴⁷ According to Zizioulas’ analysis, other ways of explaining the communion of creation and the uncreated are either non-ontological attempts (ethics, psychology, natural religiosity) or an undermining of the reality of the hypostatic union between created and uncreated being in a single person, i.e. the incarnation.²⁴⁸ If such was the case, the ecclesial event would have no place in a discussion pertaining to ontology, the basics of existence, its limitations and the possibility to be freed from these limitations, no ontological content or significance at all – but merely a behavioral, ‘moral’ role, perhaps transmuting man’s *behavior*, but without any hope of changing man’s *being*, man’s *existence*.

The hope of the church is to change the ‘*howness*’ of creatures, their mode of existence. As there is no ‘naked’ nature, no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, the hope of men, creatures and creation is that their relationship with the uncreated, with God, through Christ’s person can allow for a true and full communion of othernesses, communion with each other’s being and existence, without a change of natures, of substances, of the ‘*whatness*’ of beings. For this reason, “the relation of God to the world is not ‘ethical’ or ‘psychological’ or anything other than *ontological*”.²⁴⁹ We could say that believers see the body of Christ as ‘applied ontology’. In being *members* of this body, the partakers of the ecclesial event do not hear a teaching or shape a way of behavior, but they iconize the transmutation of the mode of the world’s existence. They use bread and wine²⁵⁰ not to nourish their individual beings, not for their individual subsistence and survival, but to share life as communion – and they trust the promise that this is not mere symbolism, but that it constitutes the answer to a call that is perpetually formulated, the uncreated God’s call to enter a direct relationship with him. In order to do this, they do not encounter the world as an aggregation of objects, but as *creation*, the outcome of a person’s creative activity and his free present to them – to which they respond with gratitude, thanksgiving, εὐχαριστία, the Eucharist. As such, the Eucharistic stance towards reality is not a behavior, but a distinct mode of contemplating/receiving the world, a distinct mode of relating with reality, a mode which is not the goal (a set behavioral objective), but the *outcome* of the transmutation of one’s way of existing, a person’s τρόπος

²⁴⁷ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 29.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 25.

²⁵⁰ Which are no mere consumable goods, but recapitulate a year’s toil in the context of the agrarian society, a year’s toil to provide subsistence to oneself and to one’s family.

ὑπάρξεως, by experiencing life as communion and not in its fragmented (‘fallen’) state.

To achieve such a transmutation of one’s mode of existence by being a member of the body of the person that is the hypostatic union of created and uncreated nature and by gradually adopting the *mode of existence* of that person, Christ, is to be *sanctified*. To *actualize* the mode of existence of the uncreated is to become *deified*, to *become God* without, of course, being able to adopt its nature or substance, as Maximus asserts.²⁵¹ The way to this is one of *adoption*, of iconizing the internal relations of the Trinity by recognizing the uncreated person of the Father as the father of your created person.

We could say, following John Zizioulas, that as the created-uncreated distinction is one of the foundations of existence for the ecclesial community, *the church is a primary ontological category*, for it embodies Christ’s union of createdness and the uncreated, the possibility and practice of a transformative communion of two wholly other modes of existence: the mode of createdness and the mode of the uncreated, the mode of decay and the mode of freedom.²⁵² As such, it constitutes a *third* reality or possibility along createdness and the uncreated – or, more precisely, a *mode* distinct from the modes of these two. The language to portray this mode is the language of *communion* and *otherness*. According to Zizioulas’ reading of Maximus, this is a “Maximian ontology, which [...] is philosophically the best and most satisfying way of working out an ontology of communion and otherness”,²⁵³ “an ontology which permits communion and otherness to coincide thanks to the intervention of personhood between God and creation”.²⁵⁴

In this chapter, we have attempted to provide an overview of the ecclesial *Weltanschauung* in which Maximus thinks, operates and writes, including fragments of his own contributions to the rich texture of this *Weltanschauung*. However, in order to proceed in a constructive manner to the deeper examination of his philosophical and theological vision – such as the λόγοι doctrine – and of his understanding of motion and temporality in particular, more elaborate herme-

²⁵¹ *Ἐπιστολαί*, PG 91 376 AB: ὅλοι δι’ ὅλου γινόμεθα θεοὶ χωρὶς τῆς κατ’ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος.

²⁵² The fact that limitations, spatiotemporality and decay are primary characteristics of created reality as we know it does not mean that the world is *bad*; on the contrary, creation is asserted as *truly good* (καλὰ λίαν, Gen: 1,31). Maximus asserts in *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 27.56-64 that the contemplation of the beings’ λόγοι leads one to acknowledge that there is nothing impure within creation: it is corruption that provides us with the illusion that there is impurity and conflict within creation. However, the *difference* of the uncreated from creation *as we know it*, the actualization of a mode of atomicity, existential individuality and death (death as non-relation) manifests these characteristics. In ecclesial language, this is termed *the Fall*.

²⁵³ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 26.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

neutic and methodological tools are required. Following an elucidation of the reasons behind our particular methodological choice, we will provide the reader with an analysis of Christos Yannaras' critical and relational ontology and of the relevant terminology that will prove to be helpful in our study of Maximus and in the exposition of our perspective towards it. This ontological proposition has been elaborated on a markedly patristic and Maximian basis and will serve as a potent contemporary hermeneutic tool and methodological aid in our attempt to approach the Confessor's more sophisticated philosophical structures.

II.2. Hermeneutic Tools in Approaching Maximus: Christos Yannaras' Ontology

II.2.1. A Note on Methodology

In the previous chapter, we have attempted to provide the reader with the minimum prerequisites for approaching Maximus the Confessor's thought and the patristic or 'Byzantine' *Weltanschauung* from a contemporary perspective, focusing on fundamental tenets of Maximian and 'Byzantine' ontology, cosmology and anthropology. Our introduction to (a) the philosophical articulation of the ecclesial testimony and its emergence, (b) the fundamental ontological and cosmological division, i.e. the created-uncreated distinction and the *modal* nature of its constitutive categories, (c) Christology and its corresponding anthropology, as well as related matters, should serve as a necessary 'toolbox' in further examining Maximus' ontology and cosmology. However, the study of Maximus' more distinct contributions, such as the λόγοι doctrine²⁵⁵ or his unique understanding of motion, space and temporality, require a more advanced 'toolbox'.

There are, roughly, two ways of acquiring this hermeneutic 'toolbox'. The first would be to take the historical/philological methodological route. Through (a) a detailed contradistinction of sources, (b) a philological analysis of the terms that Maximus uses in their historical context, (c) a consideration of Maximus' own development as a thinker and of the dating of each of his works, (d) a comparison of Maximus' ideas to related late antique theories on the same subject²⁵⁶ etc., conclusions are to be drawn at the end of the research process. The bibliographical directions mentioned in our overview of the state of research concerning Maximus, along with bibliographical material pertaining to the *foci*

²⁵⁵ The analysis of which is, in turn, crucial and indispensable for the exposition of Maximus' theory of motion, space and time. The reasons for this will become apparent as the analysis of Maximian motion and time unfolds: we could safely say that the λόγοι doctrine acts as both the essence of and the prerequisite for all other aspects of Maximus' ontology. The widespread erroneous tendency to understand this theory in Platonic or Neo-platonic terms, i.e. as a Christianized form of Platonic *ideas*, is an oversimplification that, in our opinion, has effectively clouded numerous attempts to understand Maximus' thinking. We will argue against this reception of the λόγοι doctrine in the relevant chapter.

²⁵⁶ For example, a comparison of Maximus' theory of time to that of Augustine and Boethius (or even to that of Proclus), which have been exhaustively researched in academia. While such a detailed comparison could be seen by scholars focusing on an historical/philological methodology as an expected step towards approaching the theory of time in Maximus, we will not delve into a comparative analysis that, in our opinion, would reveal more about already researched themes than about Maximus' own understanding of temporality. In search for the most potent tools in order to *understand* Maximus, we have opted for the contemporary readings by Yannaras and Zizioulas, as we will explain – and, of course, for the necessary foundation of Maximus' theory, i.e. Aristotle's theory of motion and time.

of comparison and to the historical context, would suffice for such an undertaking.

A second methodological option would be the primarily *philosophical* analysis of Maximus' texts, i.e. the focus on the contribution of his ideas and propositions to philosophical enquiry *as such*, to the central questions of philosophy and ontology apart from their particular historical context. While a number of tools deriving from a historical/philological methodology are applicable here as well, the specific focus of this second methodological approach leads us to a more contemporary perspective and to the use of contemporary sources in order to highlight the distinctiveness, importance and specific contributions of the Confessor to the question of temporality's nature. The objective of this second approach is to articulate Maximus' reconstructed theory of time in a philosophical language that can be relevant to today's philosophical enquiry. The tools for such an approach would not so much comprise of a comparison of late antique sources to Maximus' works,²⁵⁷ but of the hermeneutic approach that can be traced in original contemporary thinkers' reception of Maximus the Confessor and Greek patristic thought in general – a hermeneutic approach that could shed light on Maximus' writings from the point of view of contemporary philosophical enquiry and its distinct vocabulary, provided that a most substantial fidelity to Maximus' *Weltanschauung* is retained.

With the purpose of reconstructing Maximus' theory of time in a way that could be relevant to the questions of contemporary ontology and not exclusively to the history of philosophy, we have opted for this second methodological option, as may have been apparent from our references to Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas in the previous chapters. While our brief references and citations to these thinkers' works sufficed in the context of our introduction to Maximus' thought and his ecclesial *Weltanschauung*, the distinctiveness and complexity of Maximus' vocabulary in dealing with the *λόγοι* doctrine, motion and temporality calls for a more direct engagement with hermeneutic aids providing us with a better understanding of his philosophical vocabulary *today*. By these aids we are referring to Yannaras' critical and relational ontology, an ontology implicitly based on Maximus' vocabulary and thought, as well as to his elaboration of the *λόγος-τρόπος* distinction which is crucial for understanding the Confessor. With the hermeneutic aid of Yannaras' ontological proposal which we will present in the following subchapters, i.e. with Yannaras' 'toolbox', we will subsequently attempt to expound Maximus' theory of time as a distinct and alternative *paradigm* for understanding temporality. In doing this, we hope to pre-

²⁵⁷ However, an exposition of Aristotle's theory of motion and time, as well as a mention of Plato's 'moving image of eternity' and Gregory of Nyssa's ideas on *distance* and time, has been deemed necessary.

sent Maximus the Confessor as a thinker that is not merely of a historical/philological interest, but as a philosopher that bears a relevance reaching far beyond late antiquity and into modern times.

II.2.2. Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas as Maximian Commentators

The ‘new era’ in Greek theological and philosophical thought expressed through Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas bears the mark of Maximus the Confessor’s thought most distinctively. Christos Yannaras’ work is both explicitly and implicitly in constant dialogue with Maximus the Confessor’s writings, as can be clearly seen in his magnum opus *Person and Eros*,²⁵⁸ the German edition of which bears a subtitle that describes it most abundantly: *A Comparison of the Ontology of the Greek Fathers and the Existential Philosophy of the West*.²⁵⁹ Indeed, it is no coincidence that both Christos Yannaras’ philosophy and John Zizioulas’ theology are heavily influenced by the Confessor: with the exception of the Cappadocians, no other Church Father’s thought is so densely present and so often mentioned in their books as is Maximus’.²⁶⁰ We could maintain that it is exactly Maximus’ excellence in the philosophical recapitulation of Greek patristic thought up to his time and his aptness in formulating lucid definitions of most obscure and complicated notions that made this ‘new era’ possible and gave a solid patristic grounding to it.²⁶¹ In that sense, and from a point of view focusing on the Christian theological side of Yannaras’ work, we could read Yannaras and Zizioulas as a commentary to Maximus’ work and elucidation thereof, as has been recognized by many.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ As an example of Yannaras’ dependence on Maximus’ thought, see pp. 194-199 of *Person and Eros*: his exposition of the iconizing principle (‘iconic disclosure’) for the whole of patristic thought is almost entirely based on Maximus’ formulations, with the exception of a quote from the Areopagite writings. Yannaras finds in Maximus a most skillful recapitulator of the whole of the Greek patristic tradition in a language and thought consistently rich in philosophical value and fertility, and it is in this mindset that we are approaching Maximus as well.

²⁵⁹ Christos Yannaras: *Person und Eros: eine Gegenüberstellung der Ontologie der griechischen Kirchenväter und der Existenzphilosophie des Westens*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1982.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Norman Russell (2006): “Modern Greek Theologians and the Greek Fathers” in: *Philosophy & Theology* (18:1), p. 88: “Maximus was also one of the most philosophically informed of the church’s ascetical teachers, who has contributed much to the expositions of relation and personhood by both Zizioulas and Yannaras”.

²⁶¹ In addressing the subject of patristic grounding, see Pui Him Ip’s illuminating paper: “On the Patristic grounding of Yannaras’ ‘prosopocentric ontology’: a philosophical argument”, presented at the ‘Conference in Honour of Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture’, 2 – 5 September 2013, St Edmund’s Hall, Oxford. *Forthcoming*.

²⁶² Among others, see for Dionysios Skliris’ paper, where he seems to have adopted a similar position: “The use of the term ‘tropos’ (‘mode’) by Christos Yannaras”, presented at the ‘Conference in Honour of Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture’, 2 – 5 September 2013, St Edmund’s Hall, Oxford. *Forthcoming*. There, Skliris attempts to shed light on Yannaras’ use of the term ‘mode’ through Maximus the Confessor’s use of the same term, attesting the proximity of both philosophers’ use of a certain terminology.

For the purposes of our study, we will take the reverse route: instead of studying Maximus to understand Yannaras better, we will choose to study Yannaras in order to shed light on Maximus the Confessor's ontology not as an artifact merely pertaining to the history of philosophy, to the 'Museum of Philosophy', but as a proposed answer to the ontological problem and the question of philosophical cosmology.²⁶³ The hermeneutic tools provided by the study of an ontology that is articulated in contemporary philosophical language while based on Maximus' thought itself, i.e. Yannaras' ontology, will give us the opportunity to engage with the Confessor's ontology not in the philological manner of the history of philosophy, but with the mindset, method and goals of systematic philosophy.

In approaching Yannaras with this purpose in mind, we will first offer a general introduction to his thought. Subsequently, we will reflect on his use of philosophical terminology as it is expounded in a work with minimal references to theology, his *Propositions for a Critical Ontology*²⁶⁴ – in order to 'tune out' explicit references to the Christian tradition and focus on the raw philosophical material which will serve as our hermeneutic lens. Before embarking on the study of Maximus' specific contributions to ontology and on the primary subject of our study, i.e. time, temporality and Aeon in Maximus the Confessor's philosophy, a short summary of Aristotle's theory of motion and temporality will follow (also mentioning Plato's theory of time and Aeon in *Timaeus*), in order for the comparison and contradistinction with Maximus' thought to be possible.

II.2.3. An Introduction to Christos Yannaras' Philosophy

Christos Yannaras, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, Greece, has written extensively on ontology, epistemology, ethics, theology and politics. He is considered to be 'Greece's greatest contemporary thinker' (Olivier Clément) and 'one of the most significant Christian philosophers in Europe' (Rowan Williams),²⁶⁵ whereas Prof. Andrew Louth describes him as "without doubt the most important liv-

²⁶³ It is not the first time that such an approach is attempted at a scholarly level, as Christina Kapsimalakou's above mentioned thesis *Ελευθερία και αναγκαιότητα κατά τον Μάξιμο τον Όμολογητή: πρὸς μιὰ Όντολογία τοῦ Προσώπου* (Patras: University of Patras 2012), follows the same path, attesting the historical-philological and methodological legitimacy of such an approach, apart from its purely philosophical value.

²⁶⁴ Christos Yannaras: *Προτάσεις κριτικής όντολογίας*. Athens: Domos 1985 & Ikaros 2010.

²⁶⁵ See Rowan Williams' endorsement in the back cover of Yannaras' HC Press translations.

ing Greek Orthodox theologian”,²⁶⁶ albeit being controversial in Greece. Until recently, the English speaking reader could unfortunately acquire only a fragmentary view of Yannaras’ work, as most English translations of his works have been published in the last few years. Thus a number of books covering important aspects of Yannaras’ thought or crucial elaborations have not been translated as yet (examples of important books by him that have not been translated as yet are: *The Effable and the Ineffable: the Linguistic Limits of Metaphysics*²⁶⁷ and *Propositions for a Critical Ontology*). Fortunately, Norman Russell’s arduous work in translating the main bulk of Yannaras’ work has brought a significant number of his monographs to print, including his magnum opus *Person and Eros*.

A second difficulty for the English speaking researcher relates to the fact that most European and American academics tended to focus on the theological aspect of Yannaras’ work in the past or to consider him a pure theologian rather than a philosopher, due to the vivid interest of the theological community for his work. This has not allowed for his work to be judged as a philosophical proposal even in a strictly academic sense and classification.

For the above reasons, we consider it useful to attempt a summary of his work from a primarily philosophical point of view. A simple categorization would be to classify his main works according to the branches of philosophy to which they pertain. Thus we may classify the works *Person and Eros*, *Relational Ontology*,²⁶⁸ *Propositions for a Critical Ontology* et al. under ontology/metaphysics, the works *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, *The Effable and the Ineffable: the Linguistic Limits of Metaphysics* under epistemology, and finally *The Freedom of Morality*²⁶⁹ under ethics. Other notable contributions include treatises on social philosophy (*Rationality and Social Practice*),²⁷⁰ political economy (*The Real and the Imaginary in Political Economy*),²⁷¹ the relation between contemporary physics and philosophy (*Postmodern Metaphysics*),²⁷² philosophy of religion²⁷³ and the historical background of the clash of civilizations.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁶ In his introduction to Yannaras’ *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite* (London: T. & T. Clark International 2005), p. 1.

²⁶⁷ Christos Yannaras: *Τὸ ρητὸ καὶ τὸ ἄρητο: τὰ γλωσσικὰ ὄρια ρεαλισμοῦ τῆς μεταφυσικῆς*. Athens: Ikaros 1999.

²⁶⁸ Idem: *Relational Ontology*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2011.

²⁶⁹ Idem: *The Freedom of Morality*. Crestwood N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1984.

²⁷⁰ Idem: *Ὁρθὸς λόγος καὶ κοινωνικὴ πρακτικὴ*. Athens: Domos 2006.

²⁷¹ Idem: *Τὸ πραγματικὸ καὶ τὸ φαντασιῶδες στὴν Πολιτικὴ Οἰκονομία*. Athens: Domos 2006.

²⁷² Idem: *Postmodern Metaphysics*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2004.

²⁷³ Idem: *Against Religion: the Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2013.

²⁷⁴ Idem: *Orthodoxy and the West: Hellenic Self-Identity in the Modern Age*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2006.

Yet, Yannaras himself has provided us with a much better approach than such a categorization. In his latest book in Greek under the title *Six Philosophical Paintings*²⁷⁵ - which I would describe as a ‘philosophical autobiography’ – he introduces us to his thought in a manner that reflects the whole spectrum of his contribution to philosophy. I shall attempt to present such a prioritization here by primarily referring to that particular book as encapsulating Yannaras’ most mature and recapitulatory thought, while considering other areas of his research such as his political philosophy or his purely ecclesial writings as a corollary of this main body of ideas.

II.2.4. Apophaticism as the Epistemological Stance of the Greek Tradition

To approach Yannaras’ work we must first consider the importance and scope of the term ‘apophaticism’ for him, which is exhaustively grounded in the Greek patristic corpus in both *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *Person and Eros*. It is the Areopagite corpus and Maximus the Confessor’s works that provide Yannaras with the primary sources of the most explicit elucidations of apophaticism in the patristic tradition.

The term ‘apophaticism’ is usually understood as a method to speak about God in theology, as the ‘via negativa’, that is to say by defining God not through the characteristics that God has, but through the characteristics that God *does not* have (in-effable etc). Yannaras, however, saw in apophaticism something immensely wider in importance, namely the epistemology of the whole of the Hellenic/Greek civilisation from the time of Heraclitus (with his famous quote, “for if we are in communion with each other, we are in truth, but if we exist privately, we are in error”)²⁷⁶ to that of Gregory Palamas. As an overall *stance* and *attitude* towards the question of the nature of knowledge and truth, towards epistemology, and not as a *theory* on epistemology, explicit formulations concerning this apophatic *stance* can only be found in fragmentary form in the corpus of Greek texts and seldom as a systematic exposition. As is almost always the case with the epistemological attitude of a civilization, this attitude cannot but be *implicit*, as it is taken for granted in the context of that civilization itself.

According to Yannaras, apophaticism is the stance towards the verification of knowledge that underlines every facet of this civilisation and can be defined as “the refusal to exhaust truth in its formulations, the refusal to identify

²⁷⁵ Idem: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζωγραφίης*. Athens: Ikaros 2011.

²⁷⁶ Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Band I, pp. 148, 28-30.

the understanding of the signifier with the knowledge of the signified”.²⁷⁷ Formulations of truth can only *refer* to the signified truth or knowledge, not exhaust it. By coming to know the formulations that refer to truth, one does not *know* truth – truth can only be lived, experienced, and as such it is not static. There is a gap of crucial cognitive importance between the signifier and its signified reality, as Maximus the Confessor asserts.²⁷⁸

In an apophatic epistemology, the individual cannot conceive truth individually as a finite formulation. Truth lies in the field of experience, and more specifically shared experience because “there is no relation that does not constitute an experience and there is no experience [...] not arising from a relation or establishing a relation. Moreover, relation is the foundational mode of the human logical subject: the way in which Man exists, knows and is *known*”.²⁷⁹

Truth can only be attained through shared experience, communed experience, life in communion, and cannot be confined in finite formulations.²⁸⁰ This excludes the possibility of *a priori* truths, prescribed doctrines and axiomatic theories.²⁸¹ Yannaras writes: “Prerequisite and criterion for critical thinking (that is, thinking that strives to discern right from wrong, truth from falsehood) was the communal verification of knowledge”.²⁸² According to him, “communed experience and not the accuracy of the individual’s intellectual faculty verifies knowledge, even if proper communion of experience presupposes the accuracy of intellectual faculties.”²⁸³ The signifiers allow us “to share our common reference to reality and experience, but cannot replace the cognitive experience itself. This obvious difference can only then be understood when the criterion of the critical function is the communal verification of knowledge”.²⁸⁴

We must here note that Yannaras’ apophatic epistemology and the usual understanding of apophaticism (in the context of the study of religion and theology) as the *via negativa* that banishes knowledge to the realm of mysticism are not merely different, but can be seen as polar opposites of each other. The cata-

²⁷⁷ Yannaras: “*Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζῶγραφίας*”, p. 32. Such a stance towards knowledge is not self-evident; for example, truth for Thomas Aquinas is the adequation of the intellect’s conceived thought with reality (“*veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*”, in *De veritate*, q. 1 a. 1 co.), which Yannaras holds as the opposite of apophaticism.

²⁷⁸ In speaking about truth, Maximus the Confessor stresses the need to understand -and apply- the difference between the signifiers (τῶν λεγομένων) and their signified realities (τὰ σημαϊνόμενα), or else confusion will emerge: *Ζήησις μετὰ Πύρρον*, PG 91 292 BC: δεῖ, τὸν περὶ ἀληθείας λόγον ποιούμενον διαστέλλεσθαι τῶν λεγομένων τὰ σημαϊνόμενα, διὰ τὴν ἐκ τῆς ὁμωνυμίας πλάνην.

²⁷⁹ “*Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζῶγραφίας*”, σ. 58.

²⁸⁰ Yannaras often reminds us Democritus’ example about the “bitter honey”: Diels-Kranz, II, pp. 119, 22-26.

²⁸¹ “*Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζῶγραφίας*”, p. 26.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 27.

phatic approach (either to the understanding of God in theology or of *anything else* in general) would be to attribute characteristics to something and attest that these characteristics truly reflect the nature of their object or phenomenon. *Via negativa* is the choice of negative attributes or of non-attributes in our attempt to encircle reality and knowledge with our intellect. The *via negativa* consists in the attempt to progressively claim the knowledge of an object or phenomenon by *rejecting* certain characteristics or attributes, by defining it in terms of what it is *not*, in order to arrive at a closer intellectual understanding that excludes certain errors and misconceptions. In this context, true knowledge –and above all transcendental knowledge– can only be achieved in the realm of radical subjectivity, in the realm of ‘mysticism’, without any possibility of sharing it effectively through language and without any vital reference to the community that would exclude the transmutation of radical subjectivity into radical individualism. However, apophatic epistemology, i.e. the refusal to exhaust truth in its formulations and the refusal to identify the understanding of the signifier with the knowledge of its signified reality, lies beyond this polarization between cataphaticism and *via negativa* and beyond a choice of negations rather than affirmations: it is based on the symbolic character of every epistemic expression. Apophaticism sees language as *referring to* truth and reality, *signifying* reality and *iconizing* it,²⁸⁵ while not exhausting it. It is not *negation*, but the *signifying/semantic function* that characterizes the relationship between language and reality. As such, language is not an obstacle hindering us from achieving an individualistic ‘mystical’ knowledge, but a medium to share, to commune knowledge and truth and an attempt at a communal participation to it. This elevates the communal verification of knowledge to a criterion of knowledge itself.

So, whereas the *via negativa* is usually understood as *anti-realism*, apophaticism for Yannaras is the prerequisite for realism and realism is the goal of apophaticism. Or rather realism is the *stance and attitude* that is guaranteed by a consistent apophaticism.

Knowledge emerges from participating in experience, not from the understanding of a linguistic formulation. “And the experience is not exhausted in what is affirmed by the senses”, writes Yannaras. “Nor is it simply an intellectual fact - a coincidence of meaning with the object of thought. Nor is it even an escape into a nebulous ‘mysticism’, into individual existential ‘experiences’ beyond any social verification. By the word *experience* I mean here the totality of the multifaceted fact of *relation* of the subject with other subjects, as also the relation of the subject with the objective givens of the reality surrounding us”.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ On the iconizing function, cf. Yannaras: *Person and Eros*, pp. 184-187.

²⁸⁶ Yannaras: *Person and Eros*, pp. xiii-xiv.

For Yannaras, every ontological system or statement presupposes and is based on the epistemology on which it is built, i.e. the criteria through which knowledge is considered as valid or invalid.

That is why, he remarks, that “we conclude from history that common epistemology (incorporated in the everyday life of the people) and not common ontology constitute a common civilisation, i.e. the otherness of common way of life: it is not the content that we attribute to truth, but it is the way in which cognitive validity is confirmed that confers otherness in shaping public life, identity of civilisation, and ensures the historical continuity of that cultural otherness”.²⁸⁷ Therefore, the criterion of the communal validation of knowledge is a crucial prerequisite for the understanding of the ancient Greek ontology and the early Christian ontology as well.

This apophatic epistemology, this communal epistemology, refers the possibility of ‘existence in truth’ not in the individual level, but in the field of the relations between logical ‘othernesses’, relations that manifest the ‘other’ in these ‘othernesses’. The most suitable term for the will-to-relate not as a quality of the individual but as a way of being, a mode of existence, is ἔρωϛ. “For Plato, the fullest knowledge is love, ἔρωϛ; a relationship that attains freedom from all selfishness, that attains the offering of the self to the other”.²⁸⁸ If valid knowledge and truth can only be attained through a self-transcendent relation with existence, then the mode of truly existing is the transcendental relation, ἔρωϛ according to the Greek language and the Platonic and Areopagite writings.

II.2.5. ἔρωϛ and πρόσωπον: Person and Eros

With the word ἔρωϛ, we are introduced to the first of the two elements that constitute Yannaras’ ontology of the person (or more concisely, *prosopocentric ontology*, as it is termed in proposition 12.3.2 of *Relational Ontology*; I use this term in order to discern it from personalism),²⁸⁹ the ‘person’ (πρόσωπον)

²⁸⁷ Yannaras: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικές ζωγραφίες*, p. 45.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 26.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Zizioulas’ distinction between personalism and the ontology of personhood (*prosopocentric ontology*) in his *The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today*. Los Angeles: Sebastian Press 2010, pp. 19-24. Zizioulas regards their comparison as a “superficial association in terminology” (p. 20), noting that no substantial similarities exist between these two approaches, as the term ‘person’ bears a different semantic content in each case. As such, references to an “Orthodox personalism” remain unsubstantiated. We would say that Zizioulas’ explanation is wholly applicable to Yannaras’ works as well; the ontology of personhood (*prosopocentric ontology*) is not to be regarded as a stream of thought within (or parallel to) personalism, in which the term ‘person’ denotes an individual – instead of a being of relations and otherness.

being the second.²⁹⁰ “The replies given to the ontological question, as I have identified them in the particular philosophical tradition that I have studied, may be summarized under two basic terms: person and ἔρωϛ”, Yannaras writes. “In the Greek philosophical literature of the early Christian and medieval periods, the starting-point for approaching the fact of existence in itself is the reality of the *person*. And the mode of this approach which makes the person accessible to knowledge is ἔρωϛ”.²⁹¹

Ἐρωϛ here means exactly what it means for the Areopagite writings or for Maximus the Confessor, i.e. self-transcendence, the offering of the self to the other.²⁹² If we define the subject merely as an individual, as ἄτομον, as an undifferentiated unit of a whole that cannot be further divided,²⁹³ then by definition it cannot manifest ἔρωϛ.

In this semantic frame, only the person (πρόσωπον) can manifest ἔρωϛ, and πρόσωπον is a word with an absolutely unique semantic content. It is constituted of the words πρὸς (towards, with direction to) and ὠψι/ὠπὸς (face, eye), so that it defines someone whose face looks at, or rather is directed towards, someone or something.²⁹⁴ Someone that exists in-relation-to, only in relation and in reference to other beings, someone who refers his existence to the other, coming

²⁹⁰ After the publication of Yannaras’ breakthrough studies on the importance of the notion of πρόσωπον for philosophy through patristic thought in 1970, John Zizioulas’ “Personhood and Being” (first published in 1977 in Greek and subsequently in English in *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1985, pp. 27-65) offered a comprehensive analysis of the development, content and importance of the term from ancient Greek philosophy to patristic thought and came to be recognized as a landmark publication on this ontological proposal in the English-speaking world. Confusingly enough, this contains a long footnote (in pp. 44-46) downgrading Yannaras’ 1970 dissertation, i.e. the very source of this prosopocentric understanding of theology and philosophy of which “Personhood and Being” is such a fine specimen, as wholly subjecting patristic thought to Heidegger’s ontology, thereby alienating it from its source. In our opinion, the cited arguments bear little or no relevance to Yannaras’ actual text, and Zizioulas’ account of an ontology of personhood is in no way different from Yannaras’. In general, the attempt to find substantial and irreconcilable differences in Yannaras’ and Zizioulas’ thought, especially in theological matters, would be a true challenge.

²⁹¹ Yannaras: *Person and Eros*, p. xiii.

²⁹² Zizioulas makes an interesting remark that applies to Yannaras’ approach as well: “For *eros* to be a true expression of otherness in a personal sense, it must be not simply *ekstatic* [sic] but also and above all *hypostatic*: it must be caused by the free movement of a particular being and have as its ultimate destination another particular being. This cannot be the case either in the [purely] sexual or in the ‘platonic’ form of *eros*. In the case of [purely] sexual *eros*, the erotic movement stems from the self and is dictated by the laws of nature. It is neither caused by the Other nor is it directed ultimately towards the Other. Equally, in the case of *eros* as presented by Plato, love is attracted irresistibly by the good and the beautiful; the concrete particular is used as a means to an end, and finally sacrificed for the sake of the idea” (John D. Zizioulas: *Communion and otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: T & T Clark 2006). Zizioulas previously mentions that “[Yannaras’ exposition of the ecstatic character of *eros* in *Person and Eros* is] different from my own approach in many ways” (Ibid. p. 70, fn. 160). Having studied both Yannaras and Zizioulas, we have failed to trace substantial differences in their approaches in regard to this particular subject. We could add that the very nature of *eros* as a whole is to be *hypostatic* and *personal* in character; a failure to be thus realized leaves *eros* as a mere *possibility* or *ability*, essentially deprived of its τέλος.

²⁹³ See Yannaras: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζωγραφιᾶς*, p. 61.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 63.

out of his existential individuality; someone who exists only by participating in relations and relationships.²⁹⁵ So, πρόσωπον is not merely defined as reference and relation but it defines a reference and relation itself.²⁹⁶ This entails that personhood is the only possible relationship with beings, as beings are ‘things-set-opposite’, ‘ἀντι-κείμενα’ in Greek, ‘Gegen-stände’ in German etc. Being is manifested only in relation to the person, and as such beings emerge as phenomena, they appear/are disclosed in the horizon of personal relation.²⁹⁷ Yannaras adds in a Heideggerian tone that “beings are (εἶναι) only as phenomena, only insofar as they become accessible to a referential relation or disclosure. We cannot speak of the *being-in-itself* of beings; we can speak only of being-there or being-present (παρ-εἶναι), of co-existence with the possibility of their disclosure. We know beings as presence (παρ-ουσία), not as substance (οὐσία)”.²⁹⁸

From early Christian times the word person, πρόσωπον, was very wisely identified with the word hypostasis, meaning actual existence. “The fact that the identification of the terms person and hypostasis was originally used to logically clarify meta-physical references of the ecclesial experience does not restrict this identification from being used in the field of anthropology. However, a prerequisite for that would be to retain the communed experience of relations as the criterion of the formulations in language.”²⁹⁹ These pairs of terms, person/hypostasis (πρόσωπον/ὑπόστασις) and substance/nature (οὐσία/φύσις) were first defined and at some point agreed upon and elaborated (as there were many different schools of terminology before the Cappadocians) in relation to God and Christology. This, however, only reflects the way in which the philosophers and Church Fathers articulated their understanding of the world in language: these terms cannot be reserved exclusively for Christology, the terms reflect their approach to ontology as well.

Yannaras observes that “self-transcendent love, ἔρωσ, was recognized in the philosophical language of the Christianized Hellenic and Byzantine civilisation as the highest existential attainment (or fullness and causal principle) of freedom”.³⁰⁰ Freedom, because self-transcendence is really self-transcendence when the subject can be freed even from the necessities and prerequisites of his own substance (οὐσία). This can only happen if the hypostasis of the subject, the actual and specific manifestation of its substance, has an ontological priority

²⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 103.

²⁹⁶ Yannaras: *Person and Eros*, p. 5.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 6.

²⁹⁸ Ibid. This first chapter of *Person and Eros* provides a thorough analysis of the signifier πρόσωπον and its implications for philosophy.

²⁹⁹ Yannaras: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικές ζωγραφίες*, p. 104.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 60.

over its substance and is not restricted to the constraints and prerequisites of its substance.

According to the patristic corpus, the testimony of the ecclesial experience identifies such a priority in the case of God, a trinity of persons/hypostases with common substance. It is being testified in the case of Jesus Christ, who transcends the necessities/prerequisites of his divine substance/nature ('logical' necessities of being outside the boundaries of time, space, the cycle of life and death) without losing it or impairing it by being incarnated as a human being, a crying baby in the manger, in a very specific time and place, and by dying on the cross. And he transcends the necessities/prerequisites of his acquired human substance/nature through the resurrection. Ecclesial experience testifies man as being made "in the image of God" and in the image of this triune existence-as-*πρόσωπον*, establishing man's capability to transcend by grace the necessities/prerequisites of his substance and nature through its hypostatic manifestation.³⁰¹

With the coordinates of person, *ἕρως* and otherness, Yannaras builds a 'relational ontology'. He states that "otherness is realized and known in-relation-to-the-other, always relationally. It is an outcome and an experience of relation and relationship. Through this perspective, we can speak (with logical consistency) of a relational ontology".³⁰² Relation and relationship is never granted or finite, but a dynamic event which is continually found or lost, a fact which can be traced in our human experience. Given the apophatic nature of the epistemology on which we base "propositions for an ontological interpretation of existence and reality that are subject to critical verification or refutation,"³⁰³ Yannaras concludes that a relational ontology can only be a 'critical ontology'.³⁰⁴ He defines 'critical ontology' as follows:

We term onto-logy the theoretical investigation of existence (*τὸν λόγον περὶ τοῦ ὄντος*), the logical propositions for the interpretation of reality. We try, with our rational faculties, to interpret reality and existence as to the fact that it is real and that it exists. We try to interpret the meaning of existence, the cause and purpose of existence.

With the word 'critical' we term the process of evaluating ontological propositions, evaluating the logical accuracy of these propositions on the grounds of *κοινὸς λόγος* (i.e. common sense, word, rationality, language and

³⁰¹ See *Ibid.* p. 74.

³⁰² *Ibid.* p. 58.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 54.

³⁰⁴ As such, we will use these terms interchangeably, as synonyms. However, to be precise, a relational ontology is the outcome of a consistently critical stance towards ontology.

understanding), evaluating the capability of the ontological propositions to be empirically verified through shared, communed experience accessible to all.³⁰⁵

Propositions of a critical ontology are never finite, granted, or ‘closed’: they are always subject to communal verification or refutation, to the communal criterion of truth, due to the fact that there is no way of individually “securing the truth” of said propositions.

According to Yannaras, every attempt to continue the philosophical tradition of the ancient Greek or Christianized Hellenic and Byzantine civilization without the fundamental prerequisite of apophaticism is inherently dysfunctional. He writes that “despite the post-roman West’s boasting of inheriting and continuing the ancient Greek tradition of philosophy and science, the refutation of the fundamental characteristics of Hellenism, i.e. apophaticism and the communal criterion, leaves no room for the validity of such a claim”.³⁰⁶ Based on this, Yannaras argues that the reception of classical and Christian thought in the West was crucially undermined by the reversal of its epistemological preconditions and their replacement with epistemological criteria that are entirely based on the individual’s capacity to think rationally (*facultas racionis*), a criterion that the West ascribes to the philosophical legacy of Aristotle.

We will come to the philosophical importance of the activities³⁰⁷ (ἐνέργειαι) and their relation to the hypostatic manifestation of the substance in the following chapter. But we must stress here that Yannaras regards the activities as absolutely important for a coherent ontological terminology. He remarks that “an ontology which (out of conviction or ignorance) denies to discern the substance/nature and the hypostasis from the activities of substance/nature which are hypostatically manifested is condemned to an irreversible deficit of realism; it is trapped in the separation and dissociation of thinking (νοεῖν) and existence (εἶναι).”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 51.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 35.

³⁰⁷ We have chosen to translate ἐνέργειαι as ‘activities’ throughout our study for a variety of reasons. The obvious translation of the patristic term ἐνέργεια as ‘energy’ leads the English speaking researcher to gravely misunderstand its meaning, as the word loses its crucially important polysemy and it is often understood as some sort of ‘magical agent’ (i.e. in the same way that some theologians understand χάρις, grace). For example, in the context of the Monothelite controversy, Maximus speaks of the two ‘energies’ of Jesus Christ, but the meaning of this is better conveyed in English with the word ‘activities’. Andrew Louth, Torstein Tollefsen, Melchisedek Törönen and others have preferred ‘activities’ over ‘energies’ as the translation of ἐνέργειαι, and we will here follow their example. However, the word ‘activity’ has a major disadvantage: ἐνέργεια is primarily an attribute of the substance, οὐσία (we will come to this in the following chapter), and ‘activity’ can never be an attribute of the substance. For this reason and to prevent further misunderstanding due to the use of the improved translation of ἐνέργεια as activity, we will attempt to mention the Greek original word ἐνέργεια side by side with its translation as ‘activity’ as often as possible in this book. However, we explicitly state that ‘activity’ is still an incomplete translation of ἐνέργεια with inherent semantic problems and that we are still in search for a better translation.

³⁰⁸ Christos Yannaras: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικὲς ζωγραφίες*, p. 101.

II.2.6. Studying Yannaras' Philosophical Terminology through his Critical (and Relational) Ontology

It is interesting to note that *Propositions for a Critical Ontology*³⁰⁹ is one of the few philosophical books by Yannaras which does not mention the church, the trinity, the person of Christ or the Eucharist *at all* – it seems to emphasize the fact that it is meant as a *philosophical proposition* in the most strict sense, with no trait of what we term and categorize under ‘theology’ – despite the fact that Yannaras does certainly not believe in the exclusion of the ecclesial body’s ontological testimony from the field of philosophy. The fact that the *structure* of the book follows the pattern of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and the *method* of the book is reminiscent of Karl Popper’s philosophy (the principle of falsifiability, although here employed in a different context) does also suggest this. One could perhaps explain that by saying that the book is also directed towards people who *do* believe in such a contrast between theology and philosophy, but we would have to disagree: *Propositions for a Critical Ontology* attempts to trace the *pre-conditions* for an ontological enquiry that would be free from philosophical dead ends and contradictions arising from traditions of thought that are, in Yannaras’ view, characterized by arbitrary apriorisms and axiomatic certainties (which would be the case of not only e.g. idealism or monism, but also of empiricism or materialism) – to ‘clear the ontological path’, so to speak. His proposal for the *content*, not merely the preconditions, of an ontology freed from problematic starting points, of a truly *critical* ontology, is to be found in the book’s sister volume published twenty years later, Yannaras’ *Relational Ontology* – or, for that matter, in *Person and Eros*,³¹⁰ where the patristic literature is studied and employed much more extensively.

This later book, *Relational Ontology*, opens with a phrase from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (1930): “Every proposition that I write always means the whole, and is thus the same thing over and over again. It is as if they are only views of a single object seen from various angles”.³¹¹ The same could be said of *Propositions for a Critical Ontology*: Yannaras applies here certain very specific criteria to a multitude of categories (ontology, epistemology, even society) and arrives at an ontological proposition that calls for communal empirical verification and validation.

³⁰⁹ Idem: *Προτάσεις κριτικής όντολογίας*.

³¹⁰ Idem: *Person and Eros*. Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2007.

³¹¹ The phrase is here taken from Yannaras’ *Relational Ontology* (Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2011), p. v. The Greek original, *Όντολογία της σχέσης*, has been published in 2004 in Athens by Ikaros Publishing.

II.2.7. Preconditions for a Critical and Relational Ontology: λόγος, Relation, Consciousness

According to Yannaras, we can name *critical ontology* the answer to the ontological question that is subject to critical evaluation and verification, subject to the principle of the falsifiability of knowledge (2nd proposition).³¹² Answers to the ontological question can only then be subject to critical and empirical verification or refutation, “if we affirm the cognitive access to the existential event as an experience of *relation*”. “A *critical ontology* is possible, if we affirm the experience of the subject’s consciousness of self as a starting point for the interpretation of the existential event” (7.3).

This experience of the self’s consciousness of self is the only cognitive event that is truly, universally verified by all human persons – and “this experience is only constituted through *relation*, which means that the experience of relation and its *referential widening* (i.e. the communal verification of the relation) constitutes the prerequisite for the cognitive access to the existential event”. Knowledge is the experiencing of relation, and the nexus of shared experiences validates and verifies knowledge (7.3). The criterion thereof is the communal verification of knowledge, which can never be finite or taken for granted. This verification is an ‘attainment’ (κατόρθωμα), and by ‘attainment’ we mean that it is always open to a fuller, a more complete communal verification, excluding the possibility of certainties or apriorisms (2.1). Linguistic and semantic formulations “signify the experience of relation without being able to exhaust it, as a relation is actualized [ἐνεργεῖται] as the manifestation and unveiling of the subject’s existential otherness” (2.11).

Consciousness of self is a prerequisite for this. The subject’s consciousness, the consciousness of the fact that it exists, is the first and only certainty. The reality of consciousness precedes every assertion concerning reality (1.41). The existence of consciousness, of the Self, can be the only constant of a critical epistemology and ontology, as it is a cognitive event that precedes any epistemological stance, method, or assertion, even a *critical* stance. Consciousness of the self, the consciousness of one’s existence and otherness, cannot but be *the only certainty* of a critical ontology (1.42). However, this does not lead us to forms of

³¹² For practical reasons, in this chapter we will not cite the book’s pages in footnotes, but its propositions in brackets, which are hierarchically numbered statements in the style of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. An elaboration of each point we make can be found in the book’s cited proposition, which is also the case with the quotes mentioned.

solipsism, as it is the relation to other realities that reveals our consciousness of Self.

The semantic function, not only in its linguistic meaning but in every relation of signifier and signified, is a cornerstone of the actuality of relations. The word that Yannaras uses to denote all facets of the semantic function is the word λόγος with all of its multiple meanings (and, sadly, any translation of the word in English would annihilate this polysemy). Λόγος is the manifestation of a signifier, which in turn signifies a presence. To be signified is to be manifested as a presence, and this referential function of λόγος turns him into the first precondition and manifestation of *relation*. A relation is *logical* as it pertains to λόγος (1.3). Each manifestation of something in the horizon of consciousness is a λόγος, a revealing of the other to the subject, to the subject's consciousness. A referential revealing; a relational revealing (1.31). For Yannaras, "λόγος is the subject's ability to *relate*, to manifest a perceptual relation to existence. The subject perceives existence as a revealing, as a manifestation which signifies the *otherness* of each phenomenon" (1.33).

We are not referring to abstract conceptions of relation. The physical impression constitutes a relation, as it functions as a signifier representing something for someone. Λόγος is the term we use for each and every semantic function: it effects the distinction between the two constituents of the relation, and in doing so constitutes the relation (1.332).

To perceive a λόγος (whether visual or auditory, sensible or intelligible etc) and to experience a relation to and connection with something or someone is to become conscious of one's individuality, as one perceives the other part of the relation as an otherness. Consciousness of the self is the consciousness of a difference, of an otherness, which is revealed in the relation. But the *fact* of consciousness precedes this: the *event* of consciousness is the prerequisite for every relation, it is manifested through relation but it precedes it, thus making it possible (1.341).

Yannaras maintains that the word λόγος signifies every referential activity which manifests the subject's otherness. (A similar definition of λόγος often employed by him is that λόγος is the mode in which everything that *exists* is *manifested*, becomes *known*).³¹³ In different contexts, λόγος can mean a word, a meaning, "an image, a sound, a visual representation, form, shape, a musical melody, a painting etc. The polysemy of λόγος allows us to say that the mode in which λόγος informs us of the subject's otherness is the mode of λόγος (ὁ τρόπος τοῦ λόγου) – that the subject itself is actualized (ἐνεργεῖται) as λόγος". This

³¹³ Cf. Yannaras: *Σχεδιάσμα εισαγωγῆς στη φιλοσοφία*. Athens: Domos 1988, p. 20: τὸν λόγο τοῦ κόσμου, τὸν τρόπο μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο ὅ,τι εἶναι γίνεται φανερό, φαίνεται.

would mean that λόγος is the *mode of relation*. “The *mode of relation* in the subject’s ability to make the participation in its otherness possible, as well as the *mode of relation* in the subject’s ability to participate in the activities that manifest the other subjects’ othernesses” (6.13).

II.2.8. Ontological Categories: Substance, Particulars, Activities

What would be the meaning of *truth* in a critical ontology? The notion of truth as a static and finite formulation, either known or unknown, would be surely excluded, together with the notion of truth as stemming solely from the individual’s rational faculty. For a critical ontology, truth is not an *object*, but an event in which we participate: truth is *the mode of reality*. For Yannaras, it is the fullness of the subject’s participation in existence that is the criterion of truth (2.3). It is an empirical truth, the knowledge of which can never be finite and consists of the nurturing of the subject’s relationship with reality. However, the subjective experience of the individual is not enough: the cognitive event of individual experience is to be validated intersubjectively. The fullness of this communal verification is also a criterion of truth (2.31). For Yannaras, if truth is the mode of reality, then every true knowledge has a sound ontological starting point: he excludes the possibility of relativism or skepticism concerning the existence of truth itself (2.32).

It is in recognizing truth as the mode of reality and reality as manifested through relation that we are led to an anti-essentialist notion of substance (οὐσία). Yannaras traces in the Greek word οὐσία, in its etymological implications, a relational conception thereof. Stemming from the feminine participle of the verb *to be* (εἶμι - οὐσα),³¹⁴ it signifies the event of *participating in being*. It defines existence *as the mode of participating in being*, which is even more the case when the word οὐσία is used to specify a specific substance, the qualities that manifest something as different from something else. Something is different from something else (in this context, a stone from a horse, not this horse from that horse), because it has a different *mode of participating in being*, and this is what defines its substance. In this, the *substance* (οὐσία) is the *mode of participating in being* – the substance not as a *what*, but as a *how* (4.13).³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Cf. Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῶν Ὀνομάτων, CD4.1 313 C: ἀπὸ γὰρ τοῦ εἶναι τὸ ὄνομα παρῆκται τῆς οὐσίας.

³¹⁵ Yannaras also illustrates notions such as the body and soul as *modes* and not as *entities*, *modes* that are revealed and manifested as relations through the activities. To conceive of these sums of actualized relations in a perpetual becoming as *things*, as some sort of material or immaterial *objects*, would be a grave misunderstanding, he writes (2.372-3.1).

This understanding of substance (οὐσία) as the mode of existence dictates a corresponding understanding of the *particular existence*. Excluding an understanding of substance as an entity in itself, we have cognitive access to the substance only through its particular actualizations and manifestations – through the mode in which they are different, through the mode in which they manifest otherness. “Every particular actualization of the substance recapitulates the substance in its universality without exhausting it. A piece of stone embodies the universal truth of ‘stone’, by coming to know this particular piece we come to know *what stone is*, but the reality of ‘stone’ is not limited to that particular piece. That piece of stone manifests the totality of the mode in which something is a stone, it manifests the *substance* (οὐσία) of stone. However, this mode has also other, possibly infinite, manifestations”. We can only know the substance through its particular manifestations (4.131).

The Greek word for ‘mode’ (τρόπος, from the verb τρέπω, i.e. to turn, to turn in a certain direction, to alter, to change) does also have a dynamic meaning: it presupposes action/activity (ἐνέργεια) and an actualized relation. Substance (οὐσία), *the mode of participating in being*, is an event of perpetual becoming (it is interesting to note the patristic identification of οὐσία with φύσις, nature, which stems from φύεσθαι, i.e. to grow, to become). And it is known to us through the subject’s perceptive activity (ἐνέργεια). The substance as the mode of participating in being *is* and *is manifested* as a whole of activities and realized relations (4.133).³¹⁶

II.2.9. The Activities (ἐνέργεια) as a Primary Ontological Category

The activities (ἐνέργεια), it follows, are to be ascribed to the substance, to the mode of existence – they constitute each hypostasis, each particular existence, and manifest its substance. For Yannaras, “the activities constitute an *ontological category* – the third ontological category together with the *substance* and the particular existence (καθέκαστον)”, what we more commonly term as the hypostasis (4.2).³¹⁷

The notion of *activities* (ἐνέργεια) emerges as a key term in Yannaras’ propositions for a critical ontology, a criterion for the existential realism of said

³¹⁶ On a comparison with some of Maximus the Confessor’s definitions, see *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 149 B, 152 A, 260 Df., *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 4.9.2-3: Πᾶσα δὲ ἡ κτίσις σύνθετος ὑπάρχει ἐξ οὐσίας καὶ συμβεβηκότος. “Every creature is a composite of substance and accident” (transl. Berthold p. 76).

³¹⁷ On an account of the philosophical importance of the *activities* (ἐνέργεια) in patristic thought and related matters, see also *Person and Eros*, pp. 43-70 (in which ἐνέργεια is rendered as *energies*). The reader would do well to consult this chapter in relation to Maximus’ understanding of the activities as well.

propositions. For Yannaras, the *activities* are not just a ‘third term’, an elucidation of previous terminology, but another way of perceiving and analyzing reality. By approaching the existential event through the relations of (a) substance and activities, (b) substance and the particular (i.e. the hypostasis) and (c) the particular and the activities, our terminology acquires the prerequisites for a realism which is not to be found in the common distinction of substance and hypostasis.³¹⁸ As Yannaras writes,

(a) We acquire cognitive access to the *substance* through its *activities* as its common mode of participating in being, as the sameness of the particulars’ nature.

(b) We come to know each *particular*, each hypostasis, as a manifestation of its *substance*, while the substance itself is known through its particular existential realizations.

(c) We come to know the *activities* as the *modes* that signify the *substance*, but also as the othernesses which constitute the particular as particular (4.21).

“The *substance* is distinct from both the activities *and* the particular, as it is *through the activities* that the substance’s sameness of nature and the otherness of the particular is manifested, and as it is *through the particular* that the substance is recapitulated and manifested but not exhausted.” To mention an example, *smiling, to smile, or laughing, to laugh*, is an activity of the human substance and nature, it is to be found in every human being, in every particular manifestation of ‘humanity’.³¹⁹ But *each human person* manifests smiling or laughing, i.e. *smiles and laughs*, in a completely unique way, in a way that actualizes (not merely *reveals*, but *actualizes*) his substance as a hypostasis, in a way that *actualizes complete otherness*. The activities, being distinct from both the substance itself *and* the hypostasis itself, *belong to the substance but actualize the hypostasis*. The activities (ἐνέργειαι) are *hypostatically manifested activities of the substance* (4.211).

³¹⁸ As Maximus the Confessor is accounted with noting in *Ἐξήγησις τῆς κινήσεως, Documents from Exile* pp. 62-63: “No being exists without natural activity. [...] It is impossible for any nature at all to exist or be recognized apart from its essential activity.” - οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ὄντων χωρὶς ἐνεργείας φυσικῆς ὑφέστηκεν [...] μῆτε εἶναι μῆτε γινώσκεισθαι χωρὶς τῆς οὐσιώδους αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας τὴν οἰανδήποτε φύσιν.

³¹⁹ Note, in comparison, how Maximus the Confessor names various human *activities* in order to stress Jesus Christ’s incarnation and his human nature in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 5.85-92: “For the Λόγος beyond being came into the realm of being as human once and for all, and possessed as his own undiminished property, along with the things characteristic of human being, the movement of being which properly characterizes him as human. This was formally constituted by everything that he did [ἐνῆργει φυσικῶς, which stems from ἐνέργειαι] naturally as human, since indeed he truly became human: breathing, talking, walking, moving his hands, naturally making use of the senses for the apprehension of sensible realities, hungering, thirsting, eating, sleeping, growing weary, weeping, struggling” (transl. Lollar p. 65).

These *signifiers*, together with their signified realities, cannot function as apriorisms, as axiomatic statements and certainties, because their definitions emerge from their intertwined relations, relations which “signify the realized manifestation of the existential event”. That is why the notion of activities as an ontological category is a precondition and a necessity for the articulation of a critical ontology, if that is to be truly critical (4.212).

It is the interference of the notion of *activities* that subjects this ontology to the critical (intersubjective and communal) validation or rejection of its empirical testimony. For it is the notion of *activities* that demonstrates the contradictory character of a perception of either the substance or of the particular as existences-in-themselves, thereby transcending ontological categories such as the *phenomena* or the *noumena*, materialism and idealism etc. (4.213).

II.2.10. Otherness (ἑτερότητα) and Artistic Expression

The absolute otherness of each human person and its indeterminacy in language is not an abstract concept. Even the physical form of each particular person is impossible to be exhaustively described by language – and by physical form we are referring to “the way (τρόπος) in which [each person’s] bodily otherness is actualized (ἐνεργεῖται) – from the fingerprints and the exact shape of the body to his gaze, his smile, his hand gestures”. Even an exhaustive description of a person cannot but correspond to more than one human hypostases, as the function of each separate specification is to objectify the specified for it to be understood by more people – whereas shared, common experience affirms that each human being constitutes a whole of absolutely unique and unprecedented mental and physical activities and actualizations (ἐνέργειαι), “an absolute existential otherness” (6.11).

We come to *know* this otherness, we have cognitive access to it, but we cannot *define* it, exhaust its reality in formulations of language. And we come to know each otherness through the manifestation of its activities (ἐνέργειαι), of the mode in which they are actualized. To directly experience a personal otherness is to participate in the activities and actualizations (ἐνέργειαι) that manifest it, in the way in which this otherness becomes *known*. “And that is why the recognition of another subject’s otherness is a *relational* event, a *relational experience*” (6.12). *Descriptions*, however exhaustive, cannot contain, manifest or reveal a person’s otherness. However, the participation (μετοχή-μέθεξις) to the λόγος of a person’s creations can and does reveal it. A painting, a musical symphony, a po-

em or a sculpture *can* and *do* reveal the otherness of their creators³²⁰ – “only the creation’s λόγος can ‘signify’ the reality of the subject, i.e. its otherness” (6.321).

It is in artistic creations that we can more clearly discern this reality, but every act, creative activity and creation (πρᾶγμα, πεπραγμένο) has the subject’s otherness imprinted in it and is manifesting it – however evidently or subtly.³²¹ Human *action* is not merely contrasted to *theory*, but it manifests and preserves the personal otherness’ λόγος, the personal otherness’ reality. And as such, “every human action is a relational event, a communal event” (6.322). Yannaras mentions the example of man’s ability to discern the otherness of the poet in his poetry, or of the musician in his music – to be able to recognize Baudelaire’s poetry and to distinguish it from Eliot’s poetry, to be able to recognize the otherness of Mozart in his music and to be able to discern it from Bach’s music. The fact that man is led from the information gathered by the senses to the “empirical recognition of the otherness of the artist’s creative λόγος is a cognitive event that is valid and true while annulling the ‘objectivity’ of perceptible information”, as it cannot really be demonstrated scientifically or formulated linguistically in its fullness, but can be only experienced and never defined, only inadequately signified through language, science or by other means. In the communal validation of experience, experiences of different persons *do* overlap, but this does *not* constitute ‘objectivity’, “as the affirmation of the difference between Bach’s music and Mozart’s music is not adequate to transmit the knowledge of this difference” (7.2201).³²²

³²⁰ Applied to creation and its relationship with its Creator, Maximus follows a similar train of thought in order to describe the path from contemplating the λόγοι of beings to knowing (the otherness of) God, their Creator, as follows: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1216 AB: “Who, through the mediating power of λόγος, conducts the forms and figures perceived by the senses toward their manifold inner λόγοι, and concentrates the manifold diversity of the λόγοι that are in beings (discovered through the power of λόγος) into a uniform, simple, and undifferentiated intuition, in which that knowledge, which is called indivisible, nonquantitative, and unitary, consists—such a person, I say, through the medium of visible things and their good order, has acquired a true impression (as much as is humanly possible) of their Creator, sustainer, and originator, and has come to know God, not in His substance and subsistence (for this is impossible and beyond our grasp), but only with respect to the simple fact that He exists” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, pp. 363-365).

³²¹ Cf. Maximus the Confessor’s *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1265 D-1268 B: “They say that among beings there exist two general kinds of activities. The first of these enables beings naturally to bring forth from themselves other beings identical in form and substance and absolutely identical to them [...] The second kind of activity is said to produce things that are external to the essence, as when a person actively engages something extrinsic and substantially different, and from it produces something foreign to his own substance, having constructed it from some other source of already existing matter. They say that this kind of activity is a scientific characteristic of the arts.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 23).

³²² Art, usually not a subject directly pertaining to ontology, gives us the opportunity to comment on ontology’s relation to *society*: there are ontological preconditions, whether clearly articulated and widely known or not, behind each collective approach to the *meaning* of reality, each approach to organizing society, each choice in living collectively. A particular interpretation or reality, a particular ontological approach is to be discerned even in facets of life or in disciplines where one would not suspect the direct presence of ontology – perhaps due to the absence of articulated ontological reasoning (8.11). Yannaras discusses Karl Marx’s insights on several occasions in his *Propositions for a Critical Ontology* (mostly in 6.2-6.613): in these pages, Yannaras

II.2.11. Axiomatic Dichotomies and Problematic Ontologies

A critical ontology is an attempt to transcend philosophical apriorisms and dichotomies of the past, which were based on a lack of realism. Philosophical contemplation has at times identified the *abstract* with the *non-existent*, or the *abstract* with the *truly existing*. However, both theses overlook the fact that every abstract formulation functions as a signifier and every signifier constitutes a relation. This relation is an empirical reality in cases of both sensible signified realities and abstract/intelligible notions. For Yannaras, the question is not if the signified is sensible or abstract/intelligible, but if the relation between the subject and the signified is genuine or false, real or imaginary – and this is to be verified communally, not individually, it is to be judged from the wholeness of relations (2.35). To equate the abstract with the non-existent or with the truly existing is to impose apriorisms and axiomatic certainties to reality, giving birth to dichotomies such as materialism and idealism, whereas the basis of a critical ontology would be the realism of relation (2.351).

In a critical ontology, both the reality of sensible and abstract/mental signifiers and manifestations is subject to intersubjective, communal experience, to the ‘cognitive widening’ of experience (2.36). “Knowledge can neither be solely objective (independent of the subject) nor solely subjective (irrelevant of the object). The contradistinction of objectivity and subjectivity divorces and contrasts the object from the subject, it ceases to accept them as partners and constituents of a cognitive relation” (2.361).

It is not only philosophy as an isolated ‘discipline’ that gives birth to the need for a critical ontology. Yannaras maintains that the profound changes in the scientific worldview during the twentieth century and up to our days cannot but change the way we see philosophy. Our perception of reality cannot be the same as the one offered to us by Newtonian physics, Euclidian geometry and the Cartesian ‘*cogito*’. Yannaras discerns in science’s recent developments that our perception of reality as a sum of separate entities of a given structure cannot but be substituted with a perception of reality as a sum of relations and relationships which cannot be understood and explained in a singular and given way. “Relation emerges as both the *mode* of reality and the *mode* of *knowing* reality”, of having cognitive access to it (4). In this it is *physics* that trace new paths for *metaphysics*.

does not only demonstrate Marx’s vital and radically new ideas concerning the core of western philosophy’s dead ends, but also the inner contradictions of Marx’s own system – contradictions which pertain to its implied or explicit ontological basis.

For Yannaras, the sharp distinction between physics and metaphysics that is taken for granted and self-evident in mainstream philosophy seems to be the corollary of a specific understanding of λόγος as individual *ratio*, as *facultas ratiōis*. The cognitive access to reality is thus limited, as he analyses, to the formulations stemming from method, ideology and proof, giving birth to dualisms such as matter and spirit, dualism and monism, physics and metaphysics, science and ontology (7-7.023). However, the antithetical distinction between physics and metaphysics (ontology) seems to exclude the possibility of a *critical* access to the ontological question, the possibility of a critical ontology. For this contradistinction to exist, “every anti-thesis presupposes a definitive thesis, a thesis not subject to critical evaluation. In terms of the distinction between physics and metaphysics, the position (thesis) that is not critically examined and evaluated is the assumed axiom of either matter, or mind, or both. Because of that, the contrast between physics and metaphysics is always subjecting ontological reflection to the dogmatic apriorism of either dualism or monism“ (7.1).

The focus of critical ontology on experience and consciousness does not lead to empiricism or mysticism. The experience of (self-)consciousness transcends the information gathered by the senses. Consciousness of the self “is not the only cognitive event that arises from experience without being limited to the information that is gathered by the senses.” Yannaras maintains that “every relational experience, every experience of relation is a cognitive event which may arise from the information of the senses, but the relation as a cognitive event is not limited to this information” and transcends it (7.22).

II.2.12. Different Accesses to Reality: a Personal Causal Principle and the Fullness of Participation

Every subject is participating in reality, the question is to which extent one does participate in the fullness of reality.³²³ Yannaras illustrates how a different stance towards reality produces seemingly equally valid conclusions in their inner logic, which are however radically different from one another. For example, while contemplating a painting by Van Gogh, a strict positivist would acknowledge the reality of it as a sum of canvas and oil paint. A different access to the reality of the painting would be to recognise the image that it depicts. A third possibility would be to define the painting by its subjective aesthetic integrity, mastery of technique etc. A fourth and different type of access to the reality of the painting would be “to recognize in the painting the visual λόγος of the

³²³ Maximus the Confessor makes a similar distinction in *Πρὸς Θεολόγους* I, CCSG 7, 49.311-314.

person that created it, the otherness of the creative activity (ἐνέργεια) of this particular artist, whom we today have never met as a tangible presence, but the existential otherness of whom is ‘defined’ by the reality of his painting. Neither of these four interpretations is false concerning the description of the painting’s reality, but the description and definition of reality differs according to the fullness of the subject’s relation to it”, which is actualized by the degree of the subject’s participation in the observed reality (7.4101).³²⁴

Yannaras applies the same approach to the subject’s perception of reality as a whole. There are approaches to reality as a whole which only recognize the constituents of reality, matter and energy, or even the beauty of the cosmos. However, another approach to accessing reality –an approach signified by the fullness of one’s personal participation in the world, to reality as a whole– would be “to recognize in cosmic reality the otherness of a personal creative activity (ἐνέργεια), the ‘bearer’ of which we have never encountered as a sensible presence, but whose personal existence is signified by the world’s reality“. The fullness of one’s personal participation in the aforementioned painting or to reality as a whole is that which distinguishes these different paths to accessing reality, none of which is false in itself, even if they represent different degrees of personal participation in the fullness of reality (7.411).³²⁵

If it is the experience of relation that constitutes the cognitive event, if reality is known and is manifested and revealed through relation and the dynamics of relation, the question about its fullness (7.42), then “the hermeneutic access to the [philosophical] problem of the *causal principle* of reality can be freed from the dualism and contrast between physics and metaphysics”, between science and ontology (7.43). The dynamics of each person’s (and humanity’s) relation to reality is an actual event “which cannot be subjugated to neither the natural ‘objectivity’ of the sensible”, to the natural sciences, “nor to the abstract (mental, reductive) nature of metaphysical enquiry” (7.4202). This is in no way to be understood as a “proof of God’s existence” or even “proof of God’s inexistence” or anything of the sort: the very notion of a critical ontology is constituted against ‘proofs’ as compulsorily convincing constructs of the logical facul-

³²⁴ According to Maximus the Confessor, this participation in reality that becomes a participation in the personal otherness of its Creator, a relationship with him, is the very purpose of creation. For him, creation has not been brought into existence out of any necessity, but with the purpose of the creatures’ participation in their Creator: *Κεφάλαια περι αγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 3.46.1-2: “God who is beyond fullness did not bring creatures into being out of any need of his, but that he might enjoy their proportionate participation in him” (transl. Berthold p. 67). And, in *Κεφάλαια περι αγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 4.11.1: “God is participated only; creation both participates and communicates” (transl. Berthold p. 76).

³²⁵ Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Περίσεις και ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 44.9-15: “For to those who recognize the Creator from the beauty of the created things and through these are led up to their cause, there is knowledge of good; but to those who remain in the sense-perception alone and, being tricked by the superficiality of perceptible things, have turned every appetite of the soul toward matter, there is the knowledge of evil”(transl. Prassas p. 68).

ty. However, it recognises the communal affirmation of the presence of the relationship's Other – of the wholly Other of each person's relationship with reality, God. The personal discovery of a personal creative activity (ἐνέργεια) beyond physical reality, which constitutes physical reality, “is a hermeneutic access to reality that cannot be confined or subjugated to the ‘extra-subjective’ (objective) certainties of science and metaphysics. It remains a hermeneutic proposal that differs from other hermeneutic proposals in the fullness of the personal relation to [and participation in] the cosmic reality that it actualizes”. (7.43) The fullness and realism of the subjective, personal cognitive participation in reality is to be judged by “the wide referentiality of relation, i.e. its *communal* validation”. (7.44) There is also a very real and practical difference in that, i.e. the *meaning* that each person's participation in reality grants to his life, the *meaning* that each society's or community's collective participation in reality grants to each facet of human coexistence (7.45).

The recognition of a personal causal principle of the world in the field of ontology has direct implications for our human coexistence. If the universe in its infinite complexity and vastness is not a product of randomness but the outcome of a personal activity (ἐνέργεια), if the world is a manifestation of God's activity (ἐνέργεια), then “the principle of conscious experience (consciousness), freedom and creativity is not an inexplicable exception pertaining only to the human subject, but the causal principle of existence” – the causal principle of existence as the existential otherness arising from consciousness and freedom. If that it the case, freedom and otherness must be recognized as “real (and not evaluative, i.e. arbitrary) criteria for the genuineness of history and society: dependence, subjugation and oppression are to be recognized as very real forms of existential corruption”, not merely as the corruption of social relations. (5.22)

Ultimately, the question of a critical ontology is a question of meaning, a question of truth. And this question is not limited to the world of philosophy, but extends to the world of human coexistence, of civilization and history. “Philosophical *ontology* is a proposal concerning the *meaning* of man's existence and its relations – a proposal of meaning concerning the mode of existence. And *critical* ontology builds its proposal on the subject's existential self-awareness as an experience of freedom and otherness. Freedom and otherness become accessible to us as a cognitive and empirical event through relation and the dynamic indeterminacy of relation. The criterion of reality is the experience of relation to reality and the verification of the relation's genuineness through its collective widening – i.e., the equally indeterminable dynamics of the social event that constitutes history and civilisation” (8.21).

Yannaras completes his *Propositions for a Critical Ontology* with proposition number 9: “For a critical ontology, truth is relation. And relation -i.e., truth- is never taken for granted. It is an attainment” (9). If Ludwig Wittgenstein has completed his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with the famous phrase “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, we could say that Yannaras’ answer would be: *Whereof one cannot speak, therein one must participate.*

II.2.13. Employing Yannaras’ Thought as a Hermeneutic Tool

We have attempted to expound Christos Yannaras’ philosophical terminology through his perhaps most densely philosophical book, i.e. *Propositions for a Critical Ontology*, without presenting the monographs of his that explicitly reflect on ecclesial ontology, history and practice; that is, by consciously overlooking the fact that in many of his other works he engages directly with the ecclesial event’s history, the patristic tradition and the thought of Church Fathers such as the Cappadocians or Maximus the Confessor. We have chosen to do so in order to first present Yannaras as a philosopher and not as a commentator or exegete, which would be a grave misunderstanding of the nature of his philosophical work and would deprive us of *hermeneutic tools*, supplying us with *helpful comments* instead. (The same misunderstanding would be effected if we were to approach Maximus the Confessor merely as a commentator or exegete – regardless of the fact that he might very well have considered himself as one.) We aimed at studying Yannaras’ primary contributions to philosophy and, specifically, ontology. However, it is exactly his scholarly engagement (and the monographs that are its fruits) with Maximus the Confessor, the Church Fathers and the ecclesial tradition, history and practice that makes Yannaras’ work so valuable in shedding light on Maximus the Confessor’s dense and difficult (while at the same time immensely illuminating) formulations and definitions, Maximus’ comprehensive *Weltanschauung*.

The definitions of a great many Greek terms provided in the previous pages will prove valuable in the course of our study. Yannaras provides us with definitions and elucidations of key notions for the Greek Fathers and Maximus the Confessor such as λόγος, substance (οὐσία), hypostasis (ὑπόστασις), nature (φύσις), person (πρόσωπον), activity (ἐνέργεια) etc. in a manner that is not lacking in patristic grounding and in a way that is more illuminating than a signifi-

cant number of philological treatises and articles on the historical development of these terms' meaning, at least in the context of our systematic endeavour.³²⁶

The same can be said of John Zizioulas' work, which however is dedicatedly theological in nature and, like Yannaras', markedly Maximian in perspective and approach. We will not present John Zizioulas' work in a dedicated chapter, as this has been already done by many.³²⁷ However, the approach, perspective and terminology of Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas will be cited and implemented throughout our study, both in chapters dealing with the early Christian/Patristic context of Maximus' philosophy like the previous one and in chapters expounding the basic tenets of Maximus the Confessor's unique ontology. It is to this perspective of Yannaras' that we will refer to as 'relational'.

With this perspective in mind, we can now proceed to the examination of Maximus' λόγοι doctrine, i.e. the ontological *stance* that functions as the background for the whole of Maximian ontology, cosmology and thought in general. The importance and relevance of Maximus' λόγοι doctrine for the study of his understanding of motion and temporality, of his notion of time, will become clear as the following chapters unfold.

³²⁶ As mentioned above, see Kapsimalakou's 2012 thesis (and particularly pp. 38-96) on the proximity of Maximus' and Yannaras' use of key terms and on the Maximian grounding of Yannaras' approach.

³²⁷ See e.g. Douglas H. Knight (ed.): *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*. Hampshire: Ashgate 2007, which also includes a comprehensive bibliography up to 2007. Apart from this particular book, a great number of doctoral theses and master's theses on Zizioulas' work have been written and published worldwide.

II.3. Maximus' 'Logical' Ontology: the λόγοι of Beings

II.3.1. The Semantic Frame of the Philosophical Notion of λόγος

A comprehensive overview of the philosophical use of the term λόγος (plural: λόγοι) up to Maximus the Confessor's time, both in the context of ancient Greek thought, the early Church and Neoplatonism, would be outside the scope of our study.³²⁸ We will shortly examine what λόγος means *as a word* and subsequently turn to Maximus' unique contribution: his modification of the notion of the λόγοι is one of the most distinct characteristics of his philosophical thought.³²⁹

The polysemy of the word λόγος in the Greek language is vertiginously staggering.³³⁰ As such, we cannot attempt to grasp its meaning by merely focusing on a number of its particular uses; we have to approach its general meaning, or more concisely the principle behind its polysemy, in a deductive manner. We have noted in previous chapters that Yannaras has formulated a definition of λόγος that succeeds in capturing the principle behind the polysemy of λόγος, a definition which we will repeat here: λόγος is the mode by which everything that is becomes *manifest*, becomes *known*.³³¹ The word λόγος signifies every referential

³²⁸ There is ample bibliography on the matter, but a good introduction (for our intends and purposes) is to be found in the relevant chapters of Tollefsen's monographs, *Activity and Participation* and *The Christocentric Cosmology* (pp. 64-137). An account of the λόγος doctrine in Maximus and up to Maximus, as well as of the λόγος φύσεως-τρόπος υπάρξεως (λόγος of nature-mode of existence) distinction, is to be found in Polycarp Sherwood's *The earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, pp. 155-180, as well as in Andrew Louth's paper "St Maximos' Doctrine of the *logoi* of Creation" (*Studia Patristica* 48, pp. 77-84).

³²⁹ On Lars Thunberg's approach to Maximus' λόγοι cosmology and ontology, see *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 72-79.

³³⁰ According to the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* and Geoffrey Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon*, the word λόγος can bear the following meanings, among others: relation, correspondence, proportion, ratio, analogy, rule, explanation, plea, pretext, ground, case, statement of a theory, argument, law, thesis, hypothesis, reason, definition, inward debate of the soul, reflection, deliberation, creative reason, speech, verbal expression, common talk, report, tradition, rumor, mention, notice, description, good report, praise, honor, discussion, debate, section, branch, oracle, proverb, maxim, saying, assertion, word of command, behest, intelligent utterance, sentence, spoken expression, word, statement, command, promise, conversation, discourse, report, tale, treatise, sermon, passage of scripture, form of words, manner of speaking, substance of what is said, teaching, opinion, knowledge, language, immanent rationality, understanding, motive, principle, ground of cosmic order, formative and regulative law of being, principle or rule embodying the result of λογισμός, reckoning, computation, account, account of money handled, banking account, public accounts, measure, tale, sum, total of expenditure, consideration, value, matter, fact, regard, esteem, concern, interest, cause, manner, arrangement, condition, limitation, function, the second person of the Trinity, the Word or Wisdom of God, the source of man's rationality and of his communion with God *et alia*. The verb λέγω, of which λόγος is the verbal noun, initially meant both to pick up, to gather for oneself, to choose for oneself, to pick out, and to say, to tell, to speak, to mean, to count. See Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott & Henry S. Jones (eds): *A Greek-English Lexicon – with a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996) and Geoffrey W. H. Lampe (ed.): *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1961).

³³¹ Yannaras: *Σχεδιάσμα εισαγωγής στη φιλοσοφία*, p. 20.

activity that manifests an otherness: as such, a primary meaning of λόγος is *disclosure*.³³²

This applies to almost all meanings of λόγος:

(a) Speech, word, language, is the *manifestation* and *disclosure* of a person's thought. Without this disclosure and manifestation, thought would not be *known* by any other person.

(b) In mathematical relations, λόγος as mathematical ratio and proportion discloses the truth of the relation of the given two terms. When we state that the number *two* is the λόγος or ratio of the division of six by three, we mean that *two* is the *disclosure* of the relation of six to three in that division, we mean that *two* *manifests* and *discloses* the truth of that division. This applies to all meanings of λόγος as proportion.

(c) According to Christian theology, the uncreated God *speaks* (λέγει, aor. εἶπεν) and thereby *creates*: his λόγοι, his utterances, manifest and disclose his will to create, thereby creating. Creatures, as λόγοι, are the disclosure and manifestation of God's will and activity.³³³ In the case of God, λόγος and ἔργον are identical, the λόγοι in God are God's activities (ἐνέργειαι).³³⁴

(d) God the Son is the *disclosure* of God the Father: it is through God the Son that the Father *is known*. It would be erroneous to understand this under a Sabellianist light, annulling the reality of the difference of the hypostases: the mere fact that the Son is testified as being the Λόγος of the Father means that the Son is also the disclosure of the Father, the *signifier* of the Father, the revelation of the Father – while being a distinct hypostasis, a distinct actualization of God's being.³³⁵

II.3.2. 'Logical' Existence and the God as Λόγος

Λόγος is also an inherently relational concept: the λόγος of an object *speaks* to us (λέγω), i.e. informs us of its identity, of its *what-it-is*, of its substance or nature (and of its *how-it-is* as well, of its particular actualization, of its hypostasis). The λόγος of something is its *mode* of communicating its existence and nature to us, the *mode* of its disclosure. Existence manifests itself as 'logi-

³³² Cf. Yannaras: *Person and Eros*, pp. 159-172: "The Logos as Disclosure of the Person", on both the etymological and semantic content of λόγος and its meaning as disclosure.

³³³ In the first chapter of *Genesis*, God's utterance is a creative action in itself, God creates everything in the world by speaking – with the sole exception of the human person, which is crafted by God "in God's image".

³³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa: *Εἰς τὴν ἐξάμηρον*, PG 44, 73A: Ἐπὶ γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ [...] τὸ ἔργον λόγος ἐστί.

³³⁵ John 14: 7-9: "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him. [...] he that has seen me has seen the Father".

cal' when its identity becomes a personal disclosure to a subject bearing the consciousness and personhood needed to actualize the relationality of this disclosure.

In this sense, the Λόγος of God,³³⁶ the person of Christ, is the disclosure of God and the mode of God's disclosure, one of God's hypostases, i.e. actual realizations. The Λόγος of God informs us about God's identity as a Trinity of radical relationality and opens up the possibility of direct *participation* in the uncreated God's mode of existence.

Maximus states that the λόγοι of beings are uncreated, preexistent in God:

[The Λόγος] held the λόγοι of all things which subsisted before the ages, and by his gracious will brought the visible and the invisible creation into existence out of nothing in accordance with these λόγοι; by word (λόγος) and wisdom he made, and continues to make, all things at the proper time, universals as well as particulars.³³⁷

The λόγοι of beings *define* the beings to which they correspond.³³⁸ The λόγοι are not 'things' or 'thoughts': they can be seen as God's wills, *intentions*, intentions to create any given creature and being in the way that it would be created. The difference between *wills/intentions* of God and *ideas* of God is crucial, as to locate the blueprint of the cosmos in the *free wills and choices* of God and not in his 'ideas' is to cite freedom and not necessity as the foundational mode of existence's creation. Thus, the Platonic *Ideas* and their Neoplatonic echoes bear resemblances to the Maximian λόγοι only on the surface of the matter; they circumscribe substantially different concepts. Apart from that, the λόγοι are in no way to be identified with the καθόλου of Greek philosophy, for, according to Maximus, both the universals and the particulars (τὰ καθόλου τε καὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον) have been created, and are being created, "at the right moment" (κατὰ

³³⁶ John 1.1-3: "In the beginning was the Λόγος, and the Λόγος was with God, and the Λόγος was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made".

³³⁷ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1080 A: τοὺς γὰρ λόγους τῶν γεγονότων ἔχων πρὸ τῶν αἰῶνων ὑφ' ἑστώτας βουλήσει ἀγαθῇ κατ' αὐτοὺς τὴν τε ὀρατὴν καὶ ἀόρατον ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὑπεστήσατο κτίσιν, λόγῳ καὶ σοφίᾳ τὰ πάντα κατὰ τὸν δέοντα χρόνον ποιήσας τε καὶ ποιῶν, τὰ καθόλου τε καὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον (transl. Theokritoff, p. 58).

³³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 1081 B: "For all created things are defined, in their substance and in their way of developing, by their own λόγοι and by the λόγοι of the beings that provide their external context." (transl. Blowers, p. 57), and *Ibid.* 1136 A: "just as from the beginning the fashioner determined and established that it was to be, what it was to be, and how and how much it was to be" (transl. Louth, p. 110). See also *Ibid.* PG 91 1329 AB: "The λόγοι of all the beings that exist essentially—whether they exist now or will exist in the future, whether they have come to be or will come to be, or have appeared or will appear—preexist and are immovably fixed in God, and it is according to these that all things are, and have come to be, and remain always drawing closer to their own predetermined λόγοι through natural motion, and ever more closely approximated to being by their particular kinds and degrees of motion and inclination of choice" (transl. Constan, DOML 29, p. 149). The λόγοι disclose the divine *purpose* of every creature (*Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 13.6-13).

τὸν δέοντα χρόνον) according to their λόγοι.³³⁹ The λόγοι are “the personal destiny of every created thing, the plan of God and in God for each thing created”.³⁴⁰ The λόγοι τῶν ὄντων are responsible “for the substance, nature, form, shape, composition, and power of things, for their activity and what they undergo, as well as for their differentiation as individuals in terms of quantity, quality, relationship, place, time, position, movement and habitual state”.³⁴¹ The λόγοι also incorporate the end and purpose (τέλος) of beings: “they are responsible for the beginning, middle, and end of things; that is to say, for the λόγος or principle that makes the connection between the beginning of each thing and its end point, by way of its intermediate term”.³⁴² As *intentions*, they are not created (an intention is not a creative action, it exists ‘in the mind’ of God, however relative that phrase may be) and they are (pre)existent in God; as they reside in the uncreated, they are not subject to temporality, they are not only *in* God, but *preexistent in* God (more concisely: they are preexistent in God *because* they are in God). As uncreated, God’s intentions do not emerge in time, in temporality. Therefore, while substances and natures are attested as most certainly created, their λόγοι, God’s intention for their creation, are to be recognized as uncreated, without any conflict emerging between these two realities: God’s intentions for creating a creature, the λόγοι, are not identical with the mode with which creatures participate in being, the substances or natures. Maximus is clear in his distinction between (a) the λόγοι, (b) the Λόγος of God and (c) the things that God created “in accordance with the λόγοι”.³⁴³ Both the λόγοι and the outcomes of God’s creative action can be seen as activities (ἐνέργειαι): the former as uncreated activities, the latter as ‘created activities’ or more precisely as outcomes of activities (ἐνέργημα), i.e. creations, creatures.³⁴⁴ The question remains: are the uncreated λόγοι to be traced in creation and traced back to the uncreated God? Are the λόγοι a pathway for the participation of the human person in the uncreated and in the communion with God?

The λόγοι are also a disclosure of the uncreated God in creation. Any piece of art is a λόγος of its artist and the contemplation of this λόγος can reveal

³³⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1080 A: τοὺς γὰρ λόγους τῶν γεγνηκότων ἔχων πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων ὑφεισπῶτας βουλήσει ἀγαθῆ κατ’ αὐτοὺς τὴν τε ὀρατὴν καὶ ἀόρατον ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὑπεστήσατο κτίσιν, λόγῳ καὶ σοφίᾳ τὰ πάντα κατὰ τὸν δέοντα χρόνον ποιήσας τε καὶ ποιῶν, τὰ καθόλου τε καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον.

³⁴⁰ Alain Riou: *Le monde et l’Eglise selon Maxime le Confesseur*, p. 56. Cited and translated in Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 55.

³⁴¹ Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 57.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1228 A-D.

³⁴³ Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 59f.

³⁴⁴ Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1265 D-1268 B. On the relationship of the (uncreated) λόγοι and the uncreated activities in God, cf. Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, pp. 97-101: “The Place of the Theology of the Logoi in Interpreting the Uncreated Energies of God”. Tollefsen’s earlier account of the divine activities in Maximus can be found in pp. 160-189 of *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*.

this artist's otherness and manifest the piece of art as the presence of its artist (a presence *in absence*), as a relationship with him. To contemplate the λόγος of a painting not as a piece of canvas but as the artist's creation is to trace the artist in the painting, to trace his person in the outcome of his ἐνέργεια, in the outcome of his activity encapsulating his otherness. In the case of God, the various λόγοι are also God's ἐνέργεια, as God is described by the ecclesial testimony as creating by speaking. As such, the λόγος of everything in creation can disclose God if it is contemplated as such (a distinct type of *pan-en-theism*, as we remarked earlier), the λόγος of anything can be a starting point for a relationship with God, as it is God's creation. Maximus states that "everything that has its being from God participates in God proportionately".³⁴⁵

II.3.3. 'λόγος of Nature', Nature-as-such and 'According to Nature'

As such, the λόγοι of everything in creation are not merely their own λόγοι, the disclosure of their own identity. The λόγοι are also the λόγοι proceeding from God, the outcome of God's creative utterance - this goes back to the first chapter of *Genesis* as well. The attempt to contemplate the λόγος of something is the attempt to discover it not as an *object*, but as *God's creation*, and, as such, as the actualization or disclosure of one's relationship with God.

But creatures in themselves (nature and human nature apart from its capability to be deified) are finite and bound to perish due to their createdness, they cannot exist forever, they cannot participate in ever-being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) by themselves.³⁴⁶ How real is the disclosure of the uncreated through the λόγοι of created beings, beings subject to the constraints and limitations of createdness? According to Maximus the Confessor, due to this relation of the λόγοι to God who spoke/created them, the λόγοι of nature correspond to the state of nature as seen from the perspective of the uncreated, 'before the Fall' as the ecclesial language would formulate it. When speaking of λόγος φύσεως, Maximus refers to the state of nature *as it should be*, in full communion with the uncreated. That is why "Maximus speaks of being 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν) as the highest form of existence, and of deviation from nature (παρὰ φύσιν) as synonymous with the Fall".³⁴⁷ In Maximus' writings, λόγος of nature refers not to nature as it is and as we know and experience it, but to nature "according to its aim (σκοπὸς) or end (τέλος), that is, to nature as it exists in the hypostasis of the divine

³⁴⁵ Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1080 AB: πάντα γὰρ μετέχει διὰ τὸ ἐκ Θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι. (transl. Loudonikovs, p. 59).

³⁴⁶ E.g. Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 47.70-71.

³⁴⁷ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 64.

Λόγος”.³⁴⁸ As such, the κατὰ φύσιν (according to nature) does not mean according to nature *as we know it*, according to ‘fallen’ nature, but “according to the λόγος of nature (κατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς φύσεως), and this in turn means to exist in the way that God *intended* nature to be incorporated in the hypostasis of the Λόγος”.³⁴⁹

II.3.4. The Many, the One and the Contemplation of the λόγοι

Here we come to a very important point, the recapitulation of all the λόγοι in the person of the Λόγος (which is also the reason for the *preexistence* of the λόγοι in God, as they belong to the Λόγος of God).³⁵⁰ Maximus writes:

Who can approach the infinite variety of things created out of nothing with the contemplative and questing power of the soul, and not recognize the one Λόγος as a multiplicity of λόγοι, because he is to be discerned with and in the difference-without-division of things, through their individuality which is without confusion in relation both to each other and to themselves. And again he will recognize that the many λόγοι are one, because everything refers back to the one who in himself exists without confusion, the essential and hypostatically existent God the Λόγος of God the Father.³⁵¹

Shortly thereafter, the Confessor adds:

the one Λόγος is the many λόγοι, and the many λόγοι are one [εἷς - not ἓν - i.e., a person]: with regard to the creative and sustaining procession of the One, the One is many; while with regard to the providential return of the many to the One [...] who will gather everything, the many are One [εἷς].³⁵²

According to Maximus’ approach, in the sum of the λόγοι of everything, the Λόγος himself is to be seen, as God intended that the whole of his creation be recapitulated in the person of his Son, in the *disclosure* of God to the world, in God’s

³⁴⁸ Ibid. Zizioulas cites Maximus’ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1080 B-C and 1084 B.

³⁴⁹ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 64.

³⁵⁰ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1081 B: “We are speechless before the sublime teaching about the Λόγος, for he cannot be expressed in words or conceived in thought. Although he is beyond being and nothing can participate in him [i.e. in his substance] in any way, nor is he any of the totality of things that can be known in relation to other things, nevertheless we affirm that the one Λόγος is many λόγοι and that the many λόγοι are One” (transl. Blowers, p. 57).

³⁵¹ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1077 C (transl. Theokritoff, p. 58).

³⁵² Ibid. 1081 C: πολλοὶ λόγοι ὁ εἷς λόγος ἐστὶ, καὶ εἷς οἱ πολλοί: κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἀγαθοπρεπῆ εἰς τὰ ὄντα τοῦ ἐνός ποιητικὴν τε καὶ συνεκτικὴν πρόοδον πολλοὶ ὁ εἷς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς τὸν ἓνα τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιστρεπτικὴν τε καὶ χειραγωγικὴν ἀναφορὰν τε καὶ πρόνοιαν, [...] εἷς οἱ πολλοί. (Transl. Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 65 n. 148). Again, note also John 1:3: “Through him [the Λόγος] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”.

hypostasis of the Son.³⁵³ In the course of the creative procession, Maximus discerns the origin of the many λόγοι in the one Λόγος, and in the returning motion of the creation to God Maximus discerns the gathering of the many λόγοι in the one Λόγος: Loudovikos remarks that Maximus “provides the primary ontological basis for the λόγοι: their multiplicity constantly evokes the one Word [Λόγος] to whom they owe their distribution”.³⁵⁴ This recapitulation of all the λόγοι in the person of Christ can be seen as both an existing reality and an ongoing process (as is the case with many, many elements of the ecclesial testimony): the process of redemption as the incorporation and recapitulation of the various λόγοι in the one Λόγος, in the person of Christ, can be seen as a process of ‘personalizing’ existence, thereby redeeming it. For the ecclesial testimony, life is relation and communion and death is the absence of relations: to restore the radical relationality of the created world, to fully restore its relation to and communion with the uncreated God, to make it a *person* out of an *object*, is to *redeem* the world, the totality of created existence. Redemption is the “restoration of [nature’s] very being as personal dialogue”.³⁵⁵ And this *authentic* existence, existence in communion with God through God the Λόγος, is the κατὰ φύσιν, as we mentioned earlier. For the ecclesial testimony, to exist authentically is to exist ‘in Christ’, in the person of Christ, “to exist in the hypostasis of the Λόγος. There is no escape from personhood in Christian cosmology”.³⁵⁶ Maximus describes the conjunction of the Λόγος and the λόγοι and the realism of participation in both the λόγοι and the Λόγος as follows:

When the superessential Λόγος and creator of all existent things wanted to enter into being [as we know it], he brought with him [in his incarnation] the natural λόγοι of all that is, all things sensible and intelligible as well as the incomprehensible concepts of his own divinity. Of these, we say that the λόγοι of things intelligible are the blood of the Λόγος; those of things sensible are the visible flesh of the Λόγος. Therefore because the Λόγος is the teacher of the spiritual λόγοι in both sensible and intelligible things, it is fitting and reasonable that he should give those who are worthy the knowledge contained in things visible to eat, as flesh, and the knowledge contained in things intelligible to drink, as blood. It is these that Wisdom mystically prepared long ago with her cup and her victims, speaking of this in Proverbs. But the bones, which are the λόγοι concerning the deity and surpass understanding, he does not give, as they are infinitely beyond every created nature in the same measure. For the nature of beings lacks the power to have any relationship with those λόγοι. [...] Again, perhaps the flesh of the Λόγος is the complete return and restoration of our nature

³⁵³ Cf. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1084 D: “For the Λόγος of God and God wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment” (transl. Blowers, p. 60).

³⁵⁴ Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 58.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 201.

³⁵⁶ Zizioulas: *Communion and Otherness*, p. 66.

to itself through virtue and knowledge; the blood is the deification which will direct our nature, by grace, to eternal well-being; and the bones are the unknown power which draws our nature to eternal well-being through deification.³⁵⁷

The return to God is a question of the “restoration of nature”, not of transcending it: the ἀποκατάστασις of nature refers to its original state, as God intended it to be, not to ‘fallen’ nature, nature according to its tendency towards individual onticity, non-relation to its source of existence, death. Note that, according to Maximus, the sum of all the λόγοι as we can know and experience them do not constitute the one Λόγος, they do not suffice for that. In Maximus’ allegory, there are also the bones, “the λόγοι concerning the deity” which “surpass understanding”, as they are completely beyond createdness, “as they are infinitely beyond every created nature in the same measure. For the nature of beings lacks the power to have any relationship with those λόγοι”.³⁵⁸ So, even the totality of the uncreated λόγοι of created existence are not enough to circumscribe the uncreated Creator.

If the λόγοι φύσεως of everything are a doorway to direct communion with God, why isn’t this communion perceived as the everyday experience of all human persons, why is it an *attainment* and a *gift*? One of Maximus’ famous triads³⁵⁹ is the triad of the human person’s attainment and asceticism: practical philosophy (πρακτική φιλοσοφία), natural contemplation (φυσική θεωρία) and theological mystagogy (θεολογική μυσταγωγία),³⁶⁰ corresponding to being (εἶναι), well-being (εὖ εἶναι) and ever-being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) respectively. Practical philosophy is the first step, the preparation, the purification and the overcoming of the “carnal mind”. The next step, natural contemplation, consists in achieving to discern the λόγοι of the being’s natures, the inner principles of beings.³⁶¹ And theological mystagogy is identified with deification and στάσις ἀεικίνητος, it is the communion of man with God,³⁶² becoming “similar and equal to God”. Ac-

³⁵⁷ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον, CCSG 7, 35.7-44 (transl. Theokritoff, pp. 42-44).

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ For an overview of them, see Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, pp. 76-84. Loudovikos lists eleven triads.

³⁶⁰ On this triad and especially φυσική θεωρία, cf. Betsakos: *Στάσις Αεικίνητος*, pp. 152-176. In *Πεῦσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 58.6-7, Maximus mentions this triad as a philosophical triad: κατορθώση δεόντως πρακτικὴν καὶ φυσικὴν καὶ θεολογικὴν φιλοσοφίαν. “[...] he might accomplish successfully the practical, natural and theological philosophy” (transl. Prassas p. 75).

³⁶¹ Which has its prototype in the experience of Christ’s students during his transfiguration at Mount Tabor: *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1128 A, “Then, having both their bodily and the spiritual senses purified, they [Peter, John and Jacob] were taught the spiritual meanings [λόγοι] of the mysteries that were shown to them” (transl. Louth, p. 106). The contemplation of the λόγοι leads to the knowledge of their divine cause (*Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 13.32-35): the λόγοι *declare* their Creator, so that man can find and meet him (*Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 51. 7-17).

³⁶² Cf. Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, p. 79f.

According to Maximus, as we can see, it is possible to discern the λόγοι of beings and their relationship with God as part of the φυσική θεωρία, i.e. as part of a certain level of attainment.³⁶³ This needs training, ἄσκησις, asceticism and can be granted to a person, in the context of the person's relationship with God, not individually achieved. The discernment of the λόγοι comes after a certain step on the path to deification: our addiction to death, our addiction to non-relation, does not allow us to discern the λόγοι freely. We still perceive the world as an aggregate of objects, not as a manifestation of God's will to create and as a relationship with him.

II.3.5. An Ontology of Dialogical Reciprocity

There is also another aspect when taking into account the usual meaning of λόγος as speech, articulation, discourse in examining the λόγοι doctrine. According to that, the fact that everything is permeated and actualized through the λόγοι of God means that creation is a dialogue: God does not engage in a monologue through these λόγοι, God's creative action through λόγοι means that God converses with the human person and, as such, the interaction and participation in this dialogue is a primary characteristic of existence, an ontological category. The fact that God's λόγοι do not constitute a monologue but call for a dialogue discloses existence as a *dialogical reciprocity*³⁶⁴ between creation and the uncreated God through the human person. And man's (and through man, creation's) participation in this dialogical reciprocity can either be a positive answer, an affirmation of God's creative love, or a negative answer, an refutation of existence-as-dialogue with the uncreated source of creation (a choice of individual onticity), a continuous refutation of God's creative call from non-being into being (or a total indifference for this dialogue).

But which would be man's affirmative answer? To receive the world not as something that necessarily exists and that can be taken for granted but as a gift by a person that creates it out of love is to have a stance of gratitude towards existence, to perceive the world in a *Eucharistic* manner, to answer to the uncreated God's continuous creative call with continuous thanksgiving – that is, to iconize the divine mode of existence, the mode of the one who extends the crea-

³⁶³ Maximus sums it up as follows: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1241 C: “The task of practical philosophy is to purge the intellect of all impassioned images, while that of natural contemplation is to show forth the intellect as understanding the science of beings in light of the cause that created them, while the aim of the theological mystagogy is to establish one by grace in a state of being like God and equal to God, as much as this is possible, so that by virtue of this transcendence he will no longer give any thought to anything after God” (transl. Constat, DOML 28, 419).

³⁶⁴ Cf. Loudovikos: *A Eucharistic Ontology*, especially pp. 201-206.

tive call. For man, this Eucharistic stance is a motion towards the uncreated, an “ek-static” motion: “just as God, who is by nature unmovable, goes outside himself in creating a personal relationship of love with his creature, so man’s movement is in its ultimate essence a response of ἔρωσ to the ek-stasis of God in his goodness and love, as a ‘sober madness’ of personal ek-stasis of nature in favor of this dialogue between man and God”.³⁶⁵ As we have remarked before, this is not one of the *accidents* of reality or a matter of *behavior*; it is a question of how is existence *as such* and being *as such* understood, it is a primary ontological question. Therefore, Nikolaos Loudovikos’ denotation of Maximian ontology as a *Eucharistic ontology* is an accurate one – as is his remark that a Eucharistic ontology is an ontology of dialogical reciprocity that places its consummation in an eschatological future.³⁶⁶

This Eucharistic ontology takes as its starting point Maximus’ idea that being is not only fulfilled in well-being, but even exists ‘eschatologically’, i.e. for the sake of well-being, for the boundless divine vitality which as ‘fixed motion-in-sameness’ is offered to personal beings and through them to the entire created order; and it reveals to us that every movement of things and every action of persons is ontologically justified inasmuch as it is directed towards the ἔσχατον, the eternal well-being which is perfect incorporation into the risen Body of Christ. Here we have a revealed ontology outside-the-created, the only true ontology of the personal mode of being.³⁶⁷

As a stance towards the question of existence and being *as such*, the Eucharist, i.e. existential gratitude as the communion with the uncreated source of an existence that need not have necessarily been, constitutes an ontology of dialogical reciprocity and a distinct ontological category. The λόγοι are the key concept for this dialogical reciprocity, as they in themselves are uncreated, (pre)existent in the uncreated God and the initiative of God for the call to relation and communion – and most of them can be participated in through creation, through the beings of which these λόγοι are λόγοι φύσεως. The fact that the λόγοι (through the Λόγος) open up a pathway of communion between creation and the uncreated is what grants them their ontological importance. Another aspect of this possibility of communion is Maximus’ understanding of *motion* (κίνησις). Before embarking on its examination, we will first introduce the reader to Aristotle’s theory of *motion* and *time*. As we will see, understanding Aristotle’s theory of motion and time is a prerequisite for approaching Maximus’ *renewal* thereof.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 202.

³⁶⁶ The fact that Maximus gives an ontological content to the notion of τρόπος (*mode*, which entails a becoming, which in turn entails temporality) and that he positions the true, κατὰ φύσιν state of beings in an eschatological *future* effects the inclusion of eschatology into ontology proper in the context of his thought.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 204.

*PART III: Maximus the Confessor's
Understanding of Motion and Temporality*

III.1. Motion and Time in Aristotle's *Physics* as a Precursor to Maximus' Definition of Time

III.1.1. Aristotle's Theory of Motion (κίνησις)

Aristotle's theory of *motion* (κίνησις) is mainly exposed in the *Φυσικά*, and more specifically in books III-VIII. References regarding the theory of motion, which is a central theory of Aristotle pertaining to the examination of nature,³⁶⁸ are also to be found in other works by the philosopher (for example, in the *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*), but we will rely mainly on the *Φυσικά*, where the main body of the exposition of his theory of motion is to be found.

In some instances, Aristotle differentiates³⁶⁹ between *motion* and *change*, κίνησις and μεταβολή, but in other instances and earlier in the *Φυσικά* he identifies them,³⁷⁰ so following the example of other scholars, and given the succinct character of this presentation, we will not insist on differentiating them.

For Aristotle, *motion* is one of the fundamental principles of nature, one of the basic attributes of the world: "nature is (the cause and) the beginning of motion and change".³⁷¹ With the term motion³⁷² (κίνησις) and change (μεταβολή) he signifies every kind of change, transformation, transition and mo-

³⁶⁸ See also: David Bostock: *Space, Time, Matter, and Form. Essays on Aristotle's Physics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ See also, as an example: *Φυσικά*, 225a 34-b2: ἐπει δὲ πᾶσα κίνησις μεταβολή τις, μεταβολαὶ δὲ τρεῖς αἰ εἰρημέναι, τούτων δὲ αἰ κατὰ γένεσιν καὶ φθορὰν οὐ κινήσεις, αὐταὶ δ' εἰσὶν αἰ κατ' ἀντίφασιν, ἀνάγκη τὴν ἐξ ὑποκειμένου εἰς ὑποκειμένον μεταβολὴν κίνησιν εἶναι μόνην - "Since, then, every movement is a transition, and two of the three forms of transition, viz. genesis and perishing (which are transits to and from contradictory opposites) are not movements, it remains that the only transition that is a movement is that from positive to positive". As well as *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 991a11: οὔτε γὰρ κινήσεως οὔτε μεταβολῆς οὐδεμιᾶς ἐστὶν αἴτια αὐτοῖς. "For they are not the cause of any motion or change in them". The translation of all quotes from the *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά* used in these chapters is derived from Aristotle: *Physics, Books I-IV, with an English translation by Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1957, volume I and II, unless otherwise noted.

³⁷⁰ See for example *Φυσικά*, 218b 20: μηδὲν δὲ διαφερέτω λέγειν ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ παρόντι κίνησιν ἢ μεταβολήν. "At the moment, we do not need to distinguish between movement and other kinds of change". While Aristotle identifies the two in the third book of his *Φυσικά*, he proceeds to clearly differentiate between them in the fifth chapter.

³⁷¹ *Φυσικά*, 200b 12: ἡ φύσις μὲν ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ κινήσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς.

³⁷² The classic definition of motion derives from the third book of the *Φυσικά* (201a 10f): ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἣ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστὶν - "motion is the actuality of what exists potentially, as such". On Aristotle's notion of κίνησις and its problems, see Aryeh L. Kosman's article "Aristotle's Definition of Motion" (in: *Phronesis* 14 (1969), pp. 40-62), Daniel W. Graham's "Aristotle's Definition of Motion" (in: *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1988), pp. 209-15), Rémi Brague's "Aristotle's Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications" (in: *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13:2 (1990), pp. 1-22) and Friedrich Kaulbach's monograph *Der philosophische Begriff der Bewegung. Studien zu Aristoteles, Leibniz und Kant* (Köln: Böhlau 1965), pp. 1-29. See also the habilitation thesis by Alexander Aichele: *Ontologie des Nicht-Seienden. Aristoteles' Metaphysik der Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009) and the analysis of the definition itself in chapter B.II.2., "Die Definition der Bewegung", pp. 191-222.

tion (not only physical motion or some limited understanding of the term) and in it he sees the *manifestation* of nature and the world. He notes:

Since nature is a source (ἀρχή) of motion (κίνησις) and change (μεταβολή), and the source of our enquiry concerns nature, we must not neglect the question of what motion (or change) is, since if we are ignorant about what this is so too are we ignorant about nature. Once we have determined what motion is, we must endeavor to tackle in like manner what follows in its appropriate order. Change seems to be continuous, and the first thing manifested in the continuous is the infinite. This is why it so often falls to those defining the continuous to attempt an account of the infinite: being continuous is being divisible into infinity. In addition to these matters, change is impossible without place, void, and time. It is clear, then, because of these relations, and also because of their being common and universal to all, that we must inquire into each of these, arranging them in advance, since a study of more specific topics is posterior to a study of the more common topics. But first, as we have said, our enquiry is into motion.

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In Aristotle's stressing of the importance of the concept of motion as constitutive of the understanding of reality, he does not omit to mention the realities that are directly related to the motion, i.e. space (τόπος), void (κενόν), infinite (ἄπειρον) and time (χρόνος).³⁷⁴ It is crucial for us to understand that motion does not exist by itself, independently from the existing beings and things, but is a trait of the existing beings and is manifested through them. Motion does not exist without specific manifestations, but only when it is realized in its specific manifestations:

Apart from things being changed, there is no change. For what changes always changes either in substance or quantity or quality or in place and we claim that it is not possible to identify anything common to these, which is neither a particular thing nor a quantity nor a quality nor any of the other things categorized. Consequently, there is no motion or change apart from the things mentioned, since there is in fact nothing beyond the things mentioned. In each of these cases everything is in one of two ways. So, for example, in the case of a particular thing, it has either a form or a privation; in the case of quality, the light or the dark; in the case of quantity, the complete or the incomplete. Similarly, in the case of local motion we have up or down, or light or heavy. Consequently, the kinds of motion and change are as many as the kinds of being.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ *Φυσικά*, 200b 12-25 (Transl. Christopher John Shields: *Aristotle*. London: Routledge 2007, p. 198).

³⁷⁴ See also: *Φυσικά*, 200b20-21: ἄνευ τόπου καὶ κενοῦ καὶ χρόνου κίνησιν ἀδύνατον εἶναι - "Movement cannot occur except in relation to place, void, and time". On the relation between time and space in Aristotle, see the doctoral thesis by Barbara Sattler: *The emergence of the concept of motion. Aristotle's notion of kinesis as a reaction to Zeno's paradoxes and Plato's Timaeus*. Berlin 2006, and especially the chapter "The homogeneous measure of movement: The relation of time and space", pp. 121-130.

³⁷⁵ *Φυσικά*, 200b 32-201a 9. (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 199).

To underline the breadth of the philosophical category of motion, we quote the basic definition of it by Aristotle and the types of movement that he recognizes in principle:

The fulfillment of what exists potentially (ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια), in so far as it exists potentially, is motion; namely, of what is alterable in so far as it is alterable, alteration; of what can be increased and in opposition of what can be decreased (for there is no common name for both), increase and decrease; of what can be created and what can deteriorate, creation and corruption: of what can be carried along, locomotion.³⁷⁶

We detect in these definitive assertions a much broader perception and understanding of motion than the current sense of the word, i.e. spatial movement, which is here restricted to the subcategory of locomotion (φορά) – that is why the Aristotelian concept of motion is often translated simply as change, which in turn is the accurate translation of μεταβολή, creating much confusion. “There are as many kinds of change as there are categories of existence”.³⁷⁷ For Aristotle, apart from spatial movement, “the term includes also change in quality, alteration (ἀλλοίωσις), quantitative change (αὔξησις-φθίσις), and substantial change or transition from inexistence to existence and vice versa (γένεσις-φθορά)”³⁷⁸ – although Aristotle does not recognize a complete transition from inexistence to existence, from non-being to being. Ultimately and by definition, motion is the general transition from what exists potentially (δυνάμει ὄν) to the fulfillment and realization thereof (ἐντελέχεια), from that which is not fully realized to its realization and perfection, and any such motion-movement-change constitutes the *motion* that manifests *nature*.³⁷⁹ Aristotle explains: “Motion is the fulfillment of what is potential, when it is already fulfilled and operates not as itself but as something movable”.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Ibid. 201a 10-15. (Transl. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye).

³⁷⁷ Ibid. 201a 8-9. In *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικὰ* (1068a 9-10), Aristotle defines three categories of κίνησις: “There must be three kinds of motion, in respect to quality (ποιοῦ), quantity (ποσοῦ) and place (τόπου).”

³⁷⁸ Vasileios Betsakos: *Στάσις Αεικίνητος*, p. 39. (We will refer Betsakos’ analysis extensively, as he attempted a systematic study of the relation of the Aristotelian κίνησις with similar notions in Maximus the Confessor’s work). See also Tony Roark’s *Aristotle on time. A study of the physics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011, pp. 63-64.

³⁷⁹ Let it be noted that φύσις in Greek, otherwise a blank term, does not etymologically denote a static, unchanging reality, but a dynamic event, the eternal becoming of a φύεσθαι: φύσις “acquires a dynamic meaning, manifests not primarily a *being*, but a *becoming*” (Betsakos, *Στάσις Αεικίνητος*, p. 36 fn. 29, where also Heidegger’s similar perspective is noted).

³⁸⁰ *Φυσικά*, 201a 27-29: ἡ δὲ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ὅταν ἐντελεχθεῖ ὄν ἐνεργῆ οὐκ ἢ αὐτὸ ἀλλ’ ἢ κινητόν, κίνησις ἐστίν.

III.1.2. The prime unmoved mover (πρῶτον κινουὺν ἀκίνητον)

We will refrain on further expanding on these introductory remarks concerning Aristotle's notion of motion. However, before we proceed to his theory of time, we should refer to his prime unmoved mover³⁸¹ (πρῶτον κινουὺν ἀκίνητον), the first cause of motion and, as a consequence, of the world according to the philosopher.

For Aristotle, every motion (in all its forms and aspects, as stressed) is a part of the general, overall sequence of motions, of the totality of motion: everything that is "in motion" is moved by something else (another factor causes its motion, the setting of it in motion), which in turn is moved by something else etc.: "Everything that is in motion must be moved by something."³⁸² Aristotle's logical inference is that, if such is the case, the whole sequence of motion needs to begin from something that *moves*, causes the motion, *without being moved*, i.e. without being preceded by other factors causing motion. "Tracing back the sequence of *moved* and *mover thereof* leads us to the necessity of a first principle of motion, of a prime unmoved mover. The motion that exists in the world is caused by a first source of activity which must be unmoved in itself, in stillness and repose. The prime unmoved mover must be one and eternal, outside of any change"³⁸³ Is this unmoved mover Aristotle's 'God'? Several elements of Aristotle's philosophy - and essentially the "first philosophy", i.e. ontology (a much later word) or, more accurately, theology- have been characterized as 'theology', especially Book Λ of the 'Metaphysics'. According to the study of Leo Elders, "The central doctrine of the Book is the conception of an unmoved mover, who is unchangeable and eternal; his being is subsistent thinking; he is the final cause of all movement and the God desired by the cosmos"³⁸⁴ Elders goes on to men-

³⁸¹ This subject has been extensively researched. As an example, we cite Klaus Oehler's study: *Der Unbewegte Bewegter des Aristoteles*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1984, as well as Bernd Manuwald: *Studien zum Unbewegten Bewegter in der Naturphilosophie des Aristoteles*. Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur 1989. The reader would do well to consult David Bradshaw's *Aristotle East and West – Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), pp. 24-44, as well.

³⁸² *Φυσικά*, 256a 13-14: ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ κινούμενον ὑπὸ τινός τε κινεῖσθαι.. See also *Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* 1073a 23-28, 32-34: "The first principle and primary reality is immovable, both essentially and accidentally, but it excites the primary form of motion, which is one and eternal. Now since that which is moved must be moved by something and the prime mover must be essentially immovable, and eternal motion must be excited by something eternal, and one motion by some one thing; [...] then each of these spatial motions must also be excited by a substance which is essentially immovable and eternal".

³⁸³ Betsakos: *Στάσις ἀεικίνητος*, p. 64. See also *Φυσικά*, 258a 5-258b 9.

³⁸⁴ Leo Elders: *Aristotle's Theology: A Commentary on Book Λ of the Metaphysics*. Assen: Von Gorcum 1972, p. 1: "The central doctrine of the Book is the conception of an unmoved mover, who is unchangeable and eternal; his being is subsistent thinking; he is the final cause of all movement and the God desired by the cosmos". See also: Konrad Elser: *Die Lehre des Aristoteles über das Wirken Gottes*. Münster: Aschendorff 1893. On whether this 'Aristotelian God' is monotheistic, see the chapter "Λ8 and the Problem of Aristotle's Monotheism" in Elders: *Aristotle's Theology*, pp. 57-68, whereby it is concluded that we can speak of an 'Aristotelian

tion Paul Natorp's view that for Aristotle "God is part of the subject of the πρώτη φιλοσοφία".³⁸⁵ There seems to be a consensus that, referring to Aristotle's prime unmoved mover, we can speak about Aristotle's God.

However, such a conception of God is, as we will show later in our study, radically different from Maximus the Confessor's perspective: in the Aristotelian theology of the 'Prime Unmoved Moved', the first cause and principle of existence is ultimately *subject to existence and subject to the cycle of motion*, it is a part of it,³⁸⁶ it is subjugated to its conditions of functionality. Betsakos observes:

[Aristotle] treats his prime unmoved mover as one of the beings that, like all the others, 'serves' from a supreme position the necessity of a motion that precedes everything existentially. It is notable that Aristotle's highest proof of the Prime Mover's existence resides in the principle of necessity, in the fact that 'it is necessary' (ἀνάγκη δὴ στήναι) [Cf. *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 1070a 4 and *Φυσικά*, 242b 71-72]. The Aristotelian (cosmological, ontological) proof of the prime unmoved mover's existence is ultimately reduced to a logical necessity: the Prime Mover is presented as a necessary concept, a logical principle to explain the notion of motion.³⁸⁷

For Aristotle, the prime unmoved mover is seen as a final cause that explains motion, a priority that is necessary for the understanding of the overall motion – without it being understood as a relative notion. In this sense, the *logical need* that dictates the existence of a prime unmoved mover, so that motion as a cosmological and ontological principle can function, *seems to have a priority over the prime unmoved mover himself*. If we consider the prime unmoved mover as the Aristotelian 'God', then his *necessity in existing* as well as the cycle of motion itself is, in a sense, *a power and principle superior to God*, which constraints him to its necessities and preconditions. Maximus the Confessor's perspective is, as we have analyzed, radically different.

monotheism'. Other researchers like Werner Jaeger or Olof Gigon have underlined the "theological" nature of earlier Greek philosophers (in Werner Jaeger: *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, Oxford 1947, and Olof Gigon: "Die Theologie der Vorsokratiker" in Herbert Jennings Rose (ed.): *La notion du divin depuis Homer jusqu'à Platon Platon: Entretiens sur l' Antiquité Classique*. Genève: Vandoeuvres 1952, pp. 127-155).

³⁸⁵ Elders: *Aristotle's Theology*, p. 1.

³⁸⁶ Quite naturally, as there is no created-uncreated distinction.

³⁸⁷ Betsakos: *Στάσις ἀεικίνητος*, pp. 65-66.

III.1.3. The Aristotelian theory of time

For Aristotle, time is rooted in the motion.³⁸⁸ He defines time through the notion of motion as follows: “time is a number of motion with respect to the before and after”.³⁸⁹ For him, time is not motion in itself, but *a number, a measurement* of motion in respect to the before and after, to the transition from past to future.³⁹⁰ He explicitly states that while with the term ‘number’ (ἀριθμός) two realities could be understood, both the object that is numbered/measured and the measuring tool or unit itself, time is what is numbered/measured – not the measuring tool or merely the unit.³⁹¹ In the same way that Aristotle excludes the identification of time with movement itself, he also excludes the possibility of the existence of time or of any sort of temporality without motion, movement, change: he finds that this is obvious (φανερὸν), self-evident.³⁹² The perception of motion is inevitably linked to the perception of time: the one implies the other.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ Wolfgang Breidert: *Das aristotelische Kontinuum in der Scholastik*. Munster: Aschendorff (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters : Neue Folge, 1) 1970, p. 20. The Aristotelian theory of time has also been extensively researched, here we will attempt a very short summary. Apart from Paul F. Conen’s classic doctoral thesis: *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles*, München: Beck (Zetemata, 35) 1964, we note here the following studies: Ursula Coope: *Time for Aristotle. Physics IV. 10-14*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005. Pekka Leiss: *Die aristotelische Lehre von der Zeit. Ihre Aporien und deren Auflösung*. Trier: Wiss. Verl (AKAN-Einzelschriften, 5) 2004. Udo Marquardt: *Die Einheit der Zeit bei Aristoteles*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1993. Enno Rudolph: *Zeit, Bewegung, Handlung. Studien zur Zeitabhandlung des Aristoteles*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta (Evangelische Studiengemeinschaft: Forschungen und Berichte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft, 42) 1988. David Bostock: *Space, Time, Matter, and Form. Essays on Aristotle’s Physics*, chapter on “Aristotle’s account of time (1980)”, pp.135-157. Tony Roark: *Aristotle on time. A study of the physics*. Christopher John Shields: *Aristotle*. London: Routledge 2007, chapter on “Time”, pp. 206-215. Michael F. Wagner: *The enigmatic reality of time. Aristotle, Plotinus, and today*. Leiden: Brill (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the platonic tradition, 7) 2008, see “Part II. Aristotle’s real account of time”, pp. 149-271.

³⁸⁹ *Φυσικά*, 219b 1-2: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον - “For this is just what time is, the number (calculable measure or dimension) of motion with respect to before-and-afterness”. Aristotle analyses his understanding of time mainly in *Φυσικά*, 217b-224a. More on the Aristotelian definition of time itself in Conen: *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles*, pp. 30-61.

³⁹⁰ See also Bostock: *Space, time, matter and form*, p. 137: “Time is defined as a quantity of motion either (i) in respect of the before and after *in time* (i.e. in respect of temporal instants), or (ii) in respect of the before and after *in movement* (i.e. in respect of the momentary status of moving bodies), or finally (iii) in respect of the before and after *in place*.”

³⁹¹ *Φυσικά*, 219b 5-8: “But now, since ‘number’ has two meanings (for we speak of the ‘numbers’ that are counted in the things in question, and also of the ‘numbers’ by which we count them and in which we calculate), we are to note that time is the countable thing that we are counting, not the numbers we count in – which two things are different”.

³⁹² *Ibid.* 219a 1-2: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε κίνησις οὔτ’ ἄνευ κινήσεως ὁ χρόνος ἐστί, φανερόν. *Φυσικά*, 218b 33-219a 1: φανερόν ὅτι οὐκ ἐστὶν ἄνευ κινήσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς χρόνος. “Plainly, then, time is neither identical with movement nor capable of being separated from it.”

³⁹³ *Ibid.* 219a 3-4: ἅμα γὰρ κινήσεως αἰσθανόμεθα καὶ χρόνου – “For when we are aware of movement we are thereby aware of time”.

However, before pondering on the nature of time, Aristotle wonders if time exists, whether it is to be counted among the existing realities or not³⁹⁴ – and warns us about his unusual conclusions.³⁹⁵ The parts of time, of any sort of temporality according to Aristotle, are the ‘before’ (πρότερον) and the ‘after’ (ὑστερον), past and future. The boundary between them, the ‘now’ (νῦν) is not a part of time, as we will explain. The past (the “before”, the πρότερον) and the future (the ‘after’, the ὑστερον) do not exist now, they do not exist in the present – the past has ceased to exist, and the future does not exist yet. So, when something is constituted by parts that do not exist,³⁹⁶ can we really claim that it exists, that it is part of the existing realities? Does time exist?

No part of time exists. The moment of transition from ‘before’ to ‘after’, the νῦν, cannot be considered a part of time itself: the parts of something are added or multiplied to constitute its totality, but a sum of ‘many nows’, if such an expression can be used,³⁹⁷ does not constitute an interval of time.³⁹⁸ We cannot accurately speak of ‘many nows’, of a multitude of νῦν, as this would require the ‘nows’ to have a duration that would either place them in the past (which does not exist any more) or in the future (which does not exist yet), nullifying

³⁹⁴ Ibid. 217b 29: πότερον τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν ἢ τῶν μὴ ὄντων, εἶτα τίς ἡ φύσις αὐτοῦ. “First, is time among the things which exist or not? Then, what is its nature?” (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 207). The Aristotelian “aporias” on time are analysed in Conen: *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles*, pp. 17-21.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 217b 32-34: ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἢ ὅλος οὐκ ἐστὶν ἢ μῶλις καὶ ἀμυδρῶς, ἐκ τῶνδὲ τις ἂν ὑποπτεύσειεν – “The following considerations might incline one to suspect that time does not exist, or that it exists faintly and obscurely”. (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 207).

³⁹⁶ Ibid. 217b 33-218a 3: τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ γέγονε καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶν, τὸ δὲ μέλλει καὶ οὐπω ἐστὶν. ἐκ δὲ τούτων καὶ ὁ ἄπειρος καὶ ὁ ἀεὶ λαμβανόμενος χρόνος συγκείται. τὸ δ’ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων συγκείμενον ἀδύνατον ἂν εἶναι δόξειε μετέγειν οὐσίας – “Part of time has been and is not, while another is going to be and is not yet. But time regarded either as infinite or in terms of any segment selected is composed of these. Yet it would seem impossible for something composed of what is not to have any share of being”. (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 207-8).

³⁹⁷ Aristotle uses it: in *Φυσικά*, 231b 9-10 (στιγμῶν δ’ αἰεὶ τὸ μεταξύ γραμμῆ, καὶ τῶν νῦν χρόνος), he notes that between two points there is a line, as between two ‘nows’ there is time. (See also Pekka Leiss: *Die aristotelische Lehre von der Zeit*, p. 145: “Wie bereits erwähnt, ist das Jetzt für Aristoteles nicht ausschließlich der gegenwärtige Zeitpunkt, der dem mathematischen Punkt strukturell und funktionell entspricht.”) However, the notion of two or more ‘nows’ is problematic and slightly abusing, as for a ‘now’ to really be a ‘now’, a point that manifests the present time in an absolute and explicit way, it must be dimensionless. A calculable ‘now’ would imply a ‘motion in respect to the before and after’, a dimension in time, and as such would not really be a ‘now’. This constrains the dimensionless “now” in being each time unique, and as far as it literally is a ‘now’, one in number.

³⁹⁸ *Φυσικά*, 218a 3-8: πρὸς δὲ τούτοις παντὸς μεριστοῦ, ἄνπερ ἦ, ἀνάγκη, ὅτε ἐστὶν, ἥτοι πάντα τὰ μέρη εἶναι ἢ εἶνα: τοῦ δὲ χρόνου τὰ μὲν γέγονε τὰ δὲ μέλλει, ἐστὶ δ’ οὐδέν, ὄντος μεριστοῦ. τὸ δὲ νῦν οὐ μέρος· μετρεῖ τε γὰρ τὸ μέρος, καὶ συγκείσθαι δεῖ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν· ὁ δὲ χρόνος οὐ δοκεῖ συγκείσθαι ἐκ τῶν νῦν. – “Moreover, if something has parts, then whenever it is, so too must its parts be, presumably all of them or at least some of them. Yet time has parts, and some have been and others are going to be, but none is. For the now is not a part, for the part is a measure of the whole, which must be composed of parts; and time does not seem to be composed of nows”. (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 208). However, exactly as the “sum of many ‘nows’” does not constitute time, so can there be no existence of time without the “now”. See also Marquardt: *Die Einheit der Zeit bei Aristoteles*, pp. 41-43. A synopsis of the ‘aporias’ is articulated by Edward Hussey (Ed.): *Aristoteles: Aristotle’s physics. Books III and IV*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1983, p. 138: “(1) (217b33-218a3) and (2) (218a3-8) present the same idea in different forms and may be taken together. (1) claims that time is made up of past time and future time, neither of which exists; (2) fills the gap by claiming that there can be no present part of time: whatever the present is, it is not a part of time”.

the nature of now as a dimensionless present, without any duration at all. Dimensionless, because any understanding of the $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ as having duration would place it either in the future or in the past, in the ‘before’ or in the ‘after’ thereby forming an interval in time, while the $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ is precisely the boundary between them. Any perception of it as having a duration would presuppose a transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’, from past to future. It is exactly the dimensionless nature of $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$, of the present, that constitutes it as an existing reality, as it has neither passed to the past nor is it not existing yet, but *is now, exists now*. However, this existence of it does not realize time as a whole by including it in the existing realities, as the $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ cannot be considered as one of time’s parts.³⁹⁹

Aristotle wonders about the dimensionless present, about the $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$, if it always remains the same or if is differentiated each time. He notes the difficulty of this question precisely because it requires to conceive a ‘multitude of nows’, as if the ‘presents’ were more than one, namely this specific and particular one that denotes the present now, without turning into past or future. Both possibilities, that the $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ is different each time or that it is one and the same each time, arrive at a dead end, while the philosopher highlights the nature of $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ as a boundary (between past and future) and not as a unit: that is, as a dimensionless present.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ See also: Hartmut Kuhlmann: “‘Jetzt’? Zur Konzeption des $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ in der Zeitabhandlung des Aristoteles (Physik IV 10-14)“, in Enno Rudolph (ed.): *Zeit, Bewegung, Handlung. Studien zur Zeitabhandlung des Aristoteles*, pp. 63-96. In p. 95, he notes: „Das $\nu\acute{\nu}\nu$ ändert in seiner scheinbaren „Jetzt“-Funktion als $\acute{\omicron}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ von Vergangenheit und Zukunft seinen Charakter als operative Phasenbegrenzung nicht. Vergangenheit, Zukunft und Gegenwart –sofern sie überhaupt thematisiert werden- erscheinen ausschließlich als Präzisionen der relationalen $\pi\rho\acute{\omicron}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ - $\acute{\omicron}\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ -Struktur der Zeit als $\acute{\alpha}\rho\theta\mu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ $\kappa\iota\nu\eta\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$.“ See also “Kapitel III: Das Jetzt” in Conen: *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles*, pp. 62-116, and Niko Strobach: „Jetzt – Stationen einer Geschichte“ in Thomas Müller (ed.): *Philosophie der Zeit: neue analytische Ansätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 2007, pp. 50-54 (i.e. the chapter „Aristoteles: zum Jetzt und zu Zeitpunkten“). This seems to be the standard understanding of these passages. For an overview of Heidegger’s similar account of the Aristotelian ‘now’, see Roger McLure: *The Philosophy of Time: Time Before Times*. London: Routledge 2005, pp. 182-189. Apart from that, cf. Klaus Mainzer: *Zeit: von der Urzeit zur Computerzeit*. München: Beck 1996, pp. 22-23: „Die Zeit, so sagt [Aristoteles], hängt im Jetzt stetig zusammen. Der Zeit kommt aber kein eigenes Dasein zu. Wirklich sind nur die Bewegungen der Natur. Das Jetzt eines Augenblicks ist ein Schnitt im Kontinuum der Bewegung. Da man potentiell unbegrenzt viele Schnitte im Kontinuum vornehmen kann, ergeben sich abzählbar viele Augenblicke, ohne das Kontinuum je ausschöpfen zu können“. This book by Mainzer is noteworthy, as it compares the time theories of the philosophical tradition with the insights on temporality provided to use by modern physics, Quantum mechanics, biology etc. A similarly interesting contribution can be found in Christopher Ray’s *Time, Space and Philosophy*. London: Routledge 1991. A more philosophical account can be found in Herbert Hörz’s: *Philosophie der Zeit: Zeitverständnis in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften 1989.

⁴⁰⁰ *Φυσικά*, 218a 8-30: “Further, regarding the now: it seems to divide the past and future and yet it is difficult to see whether it (i) remains always one and the same, or (ii) is on one occasion one thing and on another occasion something else. For (ii) if we have different nows on different occasions, and one part of time is never simultaneous with another (unless one includes one time surrounding another which is surrounded, as a shorter time is surrounded by a longer), and if what is not now though previously was must have perished at some point, then the nows will not be simultaneous with one another and it will always be the case that the previous nows have perished. Yet the prior now could not have perished in its own instant, since it was then; nor could a previous now perish in a later now. Let it further be agreed that nows cannot be next to one another, just as one point cannot be next to another point. If, then, a previous now has not perished in the next now but in some

All of this makes the assertion that time exists a very difficult assertion to make, if not an impossible one. Aristotle does not theorize further on the existence or non-existence of time, does not revise or repeat his assessment that time “either does not exist at all or barely exists”.⁴⁰¹ We could say that *for Aristotle, time is the measurement of an existing reality, i.e. motion, and therefore as real as the reality that it measures – albeit not having an existence of its own.*⁴⁰² It counts,⁴⁰³ it measures something real, something existing, but it is not real in itself, in the full sense of the word.

However, as we have stated, it is not time that counts and measures motion: the subject, the observer, is the one who counts, numbers and measures the continuous motion and transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’ as time.

For Aristotle, time and the subject that measures it, the consciousness that ascertains its passing, that experiences motion as a transition and numbers it, are clearly connected: “For it is when we are aware of the measuring of motion by a prior and posterior limit that we may say time has passed”.⁴⁰⁴ Not just when there *is* a motion with respect to the before and after, but when the subject realizes this transition: “when we are aware”. This perception, this awareness includes what we would term today subconscious or unconscious awareness (but in any case, awareness): even if one does not see or feel, writes Aristotle, but the motion takes place “in his soul”, then time is numbered and measured.⁴⁰⁵

For Aristotle, time and the subject that measures it, the consciousness that ascertains its passing, are clearly connected: he does not articulate a definitive formulation or clarification on the matter of time that is independent of the observer. However, we must not conclude that the existence of time, the measur-

later now, it will be simultaneous with those nows in between, which are infinite in number; but that is impossible. Yet (i) nor can the now remain always the same. For it is not the case that there is just one limit for whatever is divided and finite, whether it is continuous in one dimension or more than one. But the now is a limit, and one can grasp the notion of a limited segment of time. Further, if being simultaneous in time means being neither before nor after, but rather being in one and the same now, and earlier and later things are in some one now [since all nows are the same], then what happened ten thousand years ago is simultaneous with what is happening today and nothing is ever before or after anything else”. (Transl. Shields: *Aristotle*, p. 208-9). It would be outside the limits of the present study to analyse the reception of the Aristotelian *nūn* as *nunc stans* in the western European Middle Ages.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. 217b 32-33: ἡ ὄλως οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ μόλις καὶ ἀμυδρῶς.

⁴⁰² See also Jürgen Sarnowsky: *Die aristotelisch-scholastische Theorie der Bewegung. Studien zum Kommentar Alberts von Sachsen zur Physik des Aristoteles*. Münster: Aschendorff 1989, p. 235: „Die Existenz der Zeit folgt aber auf jeden Fall aus der auch subjektiv erfahrbaren Existenz des *presens*, und ihre Realität folgt – obwohl sie als *numerus* nur in der Seele existieren kann – aus der Realität der Bewegung.“

⁴⁰³ I.e. it is the *soul* that counts, as Aristotle notes.

⁴⁰⁴ *Φυσικά*, 219a 23-25: καὶ τότε φαμὲν γεγονέναι χρόνον, ὅταν τοῦ προτέρου καὶ ὑστέρου ἐν τῇ κινήσει αἴσθησιν λάβωμεν.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. 219a 4-6: καὶ γὰρ εἴαν ἦ σκότος καὶ μηδὲν διὰ τοῦ σώματος πάσχωμεν, κινήσεις δέ τις ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐνῆ, εὐθὺς ἅμα δοκεῖ τις γεγονέναι καὶ χρόνος. – “If it were dark and we were conscious of no bodily sensations, but something were ‘going on’ in our minds, we should, from that very experience, recognize the passage of time”.

ing or time – the measuring of motion, is *subjective* in a sense that could be misinterpreted as meaning *unreal* or *solipsistic*. Aristotle’s perspective, thought and writings do not form a basis for such an understanding of it.⁴⁰⁶

The following judgement by Aristotle is crucial for its comparison with Maximus’ understanding of time, as Maximus differs greatly: Aristotle makes clear that if we perceive and experience $\nu\upsilon\nu$ simply as present and as one, without any conception of motion or transition with respect to the before and after, then we cannot speak of neither time nor movement.⁴⁰⁷ Aristotle excludes the possibility of experiencing time as a dimensionless present, he thinks of it as merely a mistake that shows that there is no motion or time. Even if man, the subject, is the one who measures and numbers motion as time, man is wholly subject to the sequence of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ and to the corresponding motion: if the perception of said sequence, transition and motion ceases, this can only indicate the absence of motion – and, as a result, the absence of time. The very perception of $\nu\upsilon\nu$ on behalf of the subject turns $\nu\upsilon\nu$ into past, as it follows $\nu\upsilon\nu$ in time, making it essentially inexperienceable. By trying to reach out and grasp the $\nu\upsilon\nu$, we are already in the future-‘after’ while $\nu\upsilon\nu$ has hidden in the past-‘before’. Maximus the Confessor’s perspective on the subject of time and $\nu\upsilon\nu$ differs greatly from that of Aristotle, as we will see.

III.1.4. Time and Corruption

Having just examined what it means for someone or something to be ‘in time’,⁴⁰⁸ Aristotle remarks (or, to be more precise, consents to the general assertion) that time is directly related to ‘φθορά’, that is decay, corruption of life and the path to inexistence; that time is the cause of corruption, and as such that time *measures* corruption. “Everything grows old under the power of time and is for-

⁴⁰⁶ On the relation between the measuring subject and the measuring of the motion as time, see the chapter “Time and the Soul” in Coope: *Time for Aristotle*, pp. 159-172.

⁴⁰⁷ *Φυσικά*, 219a 30-33: ὅταν μὲν οὖν ὡς ἐν τὸ νῦν αἰσθανώμεθα, καὶ μὴ ἦτοι ὡς πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἐν τῇ κινήσει ἢ ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ μὲν πρότερον δὲ καὶ ὕστερον τινός, οὐ δοκεῖ χρόνος γεγονέναι οὐδεὶς, ὅτι οὐδὲ κίνησις. ὅταν δὲ τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον, τότε λέγομεν χρόνον – “Accordingly, when we perceive a ‘now’ in isolation, that is to say not as one of two, an initial and a final one in the motion, nor yet as being a final ‘now’ of one period and at the same time the initial ‘now’ of a succeeding period, then no time seems to have elapsed, for neither has there been any corresponding motion. But when we perceive a distinct before and after, then we speak of time”.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 221a 26-30: ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐστὶν ὡς ἐν ἀριθμῷ τὸ ἐν χρόνῳ, ληφθήσεται τις πλείων χρόνος παντὸς τοῦ ἐν χρόνῳ ὄντος· διὸ ἀνάγκη πάντα τὰ ἐν χρόνῳ ὄντα περιέχεσθαι ὑπὸ χρόνου, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰλλα ὅσα ἐν τινὶ ἐστίν, οἷον τὰ ἐν τόπῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ τόπου – “And since what exists in time exists in it as number (that is to say, as countable), you can take a time longer than anything that exists in time. So we must add that for things to exist in time they must be embraced by time, just as with other cases of being ‘in’ something; for instance, things that are in places are embraced by place”.

gotten through the lapse of time [...] Time is the cause of corruption”.⁴⁰⁹ Every transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’, every present that passes into inexistence by becoming past, measures our corruption, the decay of our lives, old age and our march towards death and nothingness. Time *consumes* everything, and the truth of that matter is revealed, Aristotle remarks, in the fact that no one ever claims the opposite, i.e. that time makes persons or objects younger or more beautiful. Our course in time is, for Aristotle, a path towards nothingness and, in the case of mortal human beings, death; a course that is measured through old age, corruption and oblivion.

A path to nothingness, because for Aristotle everything that has a beginning (like human beings and lives) has inevitably an end, a finite duration. Time measures the increasing approach of this end, and it measures it as corruption. The only alternative is the eternal existence without beginning and end; if there is a starting point in one’s existence, there is no way in which this existence may have no end.⁴¹⁰ However, eternal existences are not only excluded from decay, corruption and old age. As a consequence of the above, Aristotle expels and excludes eternal existences from time and temporality, he does not only exclude the ones that never existed. Everything that exists eternally, and due to the fact that it exists eternally, does not reside *in time*, is outside of any temporality.⁴¹¹ With the reversal of this position by Maximus through the implementation of his conception of the *Aeon* (αἰών), the Confessor introduces a fruitful objection, as we will examine.

The interdependence of the existence (or the measuring) of time by the subject and of the subject’s corruption by time constitutes an interesting nexus that naturally occurs from Aristotle’s thought, which is particularly tragic in nature. The subject measures motion as time, and thus in a sense gives time its ex-

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. 221a 30-221b 3: καὶ πάσχει δὴ τι ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου, καθάπερ καὶ λέγειν εἰώθαμεν ὅτι κατατρίκει ὁ χρόνος, καὶ γηράσκει πάνθ’ ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου, καὶ ἐπιλανθάνεται διὰ τὸν χρόνον, ἀλλ’ οὐ μεμάθηκεν, οὐδὲ νέον γέγονεν οὐδὲ καλόν· φθορᾶς γὰρ αἴτιος καθ’ ἑαυτὸν μᾶλλον ὁ χρόνος· ἀριθμὸς γὰρ κινήσεως, ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἐξίστησιν τὸ ὑπάρχον – “And it will follow that they are in some respect affected by time, just as we are wont to say that time crumbles things, and that everything grows old under the power of time and is forgotten through the lapse of time. But we do not say that we have learnt, or that anything is made new or beautiful, by the mere lapse of time; for we regard time in itself as destroying rather than producing, for what is counted in time is movement, and movement dislodges whatever it affects from its present state”.

⁴¹⁰ Coope: *Time for Aristotle*, p. 154, fn. 26: “Aristotle’s discussion of being in time assumes that anything that exists must either have a finite duration or last forever without beginning or end. He is assuming, then, that it is impossible for anything to have come to be but never cease to be, or conversely, to cease to be without ever having come to be”.

⁴¹¹ Φυσικά, 221b 3-8: ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι τὰ αἰεὶ ὄντα, ἢ αἰεὶ ὄντα, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν χρόνῳ· οὐ γὰρ περιέχεται ὑπὸ χρόνου, οὐδὲ μετρεῖται τὸ εἶναι αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου ὅτι οὐδὲ πάσχει οὐδὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου ὡς οὐκ ὄντα ἐν χρόνῳ – “From all this it is clear that things which exist eternally, as such, are not in time; for they are not embraced by time, nor is their duration measured by time. This is indicated by their not suffering anything under the action of time as though they were within its scope”. See also Coope: *Time for Aristotle*, pp. 143-145, 150-153.

istence; however, the subject being *in time*, measured time relentlessly measures the decay and corruption of the measuring subject, which is subjugated to time, and ultimately its inevitable path to nothingness and inexistence.⁴¹²

Of course, Aristotle's theory of time is a much broader subject, with a vast philological and philosophical literature, compared to the present brief presentation thereof. We have attempted to summarize and underline the main points that will prove useful in our examination of Maximus the Confessor's approach to the subject of time and temporality. However, we must also acquire a brief overview of Plato's concept of *Aeon* as it appears in *Timaeus*.

III.1.5. The Aeon in Plato's *Timaeus*: Time as a "Moving Image of Eternity"

As we mentioned earlier, our main point of reference in our study of Maximus' notion of temporality will be Aristotle's theory of time. However, we deem it necessary to mention Plato's concept of Aeon as it appears in his dialogue *Timaeus* as well⁴¹³ (and especially *Tim.* 37d), yet without embarking on the exposition of further details concerning Platonic ontology and cosmology. It is highly probable that Maximus had this concept of Aeon in mind when forming his own definition, but his modifications and overall context result in a substantially different approach, as is to be expected, given their radically different ontologies and cosmologies. A similarity in certain formulations or an influence in their articulation does not necessarily entail a substantial similarity in philosophical and ontological content.

Plato's theory of time has been extensively studied⁴¹⁴ and as such we will not fare beyond the examination of the passage in *Timaeus* concerning the

⁴¹² Coope writes that Aristotle sees the relation between time and corruption as causal, i.e. that time is *the cause* of corruption (chapter "Time as a cause" in Coope: *Time for Aristotle*, pp. 154-158): *Φυσικά*, 221b: φθορᾶς γὰρ αἴτιος καθ' ἑαυτὸν μᾶλλον ὁ χρόνος. However, we will prefer to also state that time *measures* corruption, or even that the numbering of time discloses existence as a gradual corruption, for the purposes of contrasting it with Maximus the Confessor's perspective. For it is the *motion* that primarily causes decay, that "dislodges whatever it affects from its present state" (*Φυσικά*, 221b: ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἐξίστησιν τὸ ὑπάρχον), and it is *time* that is the numbering of this motion that ultimately causes decay (*Ibid.*: ἀριθμὸς γὰρ κινήσεως). As such, time is both the cause of corruption and the numbering of the motion that causes the changes that result in corruption: apart from *causing* decay, time *measures* decay as well.

⁴¹³ Here we would like to once more remind the reader of the fact that today's sharp distinction between Plato and Aristotle was not present in Maximus' time. Maximus the Confessor, as one would expect from a philosopher in late antiquity, seems to regard Aristotle's theory, language and terminology as refinements of a fundamentally Platonic understanding of time and eternity. However, this does not mean that his approach is, in the end, more Platonic than Aristotelian: Maximus' own theory, language and terminology gives witness to that.

⁴¹⁴ As a minimum example of the rich bibliography, see Ernst A. Schmidt: *Platons Zeittheorie: Kosmos, Seele, Zahl und Ewigkeit im „Timaios“*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 2012; „Platon über Zeit als Abbild der Ewigkeit“ in Walter Mesch: *Reflektierte Gegenwart: eine Studie über Zeit und Ewigkeit bei Platon, Aristoteles, Plotin und Augustinus*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 2003, pp. 133-194; „Platons Zeitlehre im Timaios“, in

Aeon. In discussing the creation of the universe by the Demiurge -“the father”- and the temporality of eternity, the following is remarked in Plato’s text:

Now so it was that the nature of the ideal was eternal. But to bestow this attribute altogether upon a created thing was impossible; so he bethought him to make a moving image of eternity [αἰών], and while he was ordering the universe he made of eternity that abides in unity an eternal image moving according to number, even that which we have named time.⁴¹⁵

In Plato’s cosmology, eternity and eternal life cannot be the mode of temporality of created beings (γεννητά). So God, the Demiurge,⁴¹⁶ devised another mode of temporality besides the already existing Aeon: *a moving image of the Aeon, an eternal image moving according to number, which we have named time*. That is to mean that time, as it is perceived by us humans, is merely an image, an icon and reflection, of an eternal temporality that is not ‘moving’, that is not characterized by motion.⁴¹⁷ Eternity, the Aeon, is motionless; time is in accordance with the motion, and as such it is merely an *image* of its eternal condition. The need for (the creation of) time appears due to the emergence of motion and is actualized at the emergence of motion, not being able to be identified with the Aeon, but still *iconizing* the Aeon, constituting “a moving image” thereof. The relationship between time and Aeon is one pertaining at the same time to motion and the iconizing function (εἰκόν).

It is interesting to note that the word αἰών did not explicitly mean ‘eternity’ before Plato. Its primary meanings were lifetime, life, a long time, age, generation etc.;⁴¹⁸ αἰώνιος was not synonymous with ἄϊδιος. Here, Plato defines the Aeon not as *prolonged time* or even as *time without ending*, but introduces a

Gernot Böhme: *Zeit und Zahl: Studien zur Zeittheorie bei Platon, Aristoteles, Leibniz und Kant*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1974, pp. 17-158; Barbara Sattler: *The emergence of the concept of motion: Aristotle’s notion of kinesis as a reaction to Zeno’s paradoxes and Plato’s Timaeus*. Berlin 2006, pp. 56-84; Alfred E. Taylor: *A commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1928, pp. 186-187; Francis Macdonald Cornford: *Plato’s cosmology: the “Timaeus” of Plato translated with a running commentary*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1956, pp. 97-104 et al.

⁴¹⁵ Translation: R. D. Archer-Hind (ed.): *The Timaeus of Plato. With introduction and notes*. Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer 1988, pp. 119-121. The Greek original: ἡ μὲν οὖν τοῦ ζῶον φύσις ἐτύγγαθεν οὐσα αἰώνιος, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ τῷ γεννητῷ παντελῶς προσάπτειν οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν· εἰκὼ δ’ ἐπένοει κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ’ ἀριθμὸν ἰούσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον δὲν δὴ χρόνον ὀνομάκαμεν.

⁴¹⁶ The reader should be aware that we are here using the word ‘God’ in the Platonic context of the Creator-God i.e. the Demiurge, not in the Christian context, and it is used without further elucidations in order to preserve the brevity of our summary.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Alfred E. Taylor: *A commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, p. 187: “Time, which is *measured* duration, may be said to be, in virtue of its character as measurable, an image of eternity. It is to eternity as the series of integers (the ἀριθμοί) are, on the *Pythagorean theory of number*, to the unit or number 1”.

⁴¹⁸ See Barbara Sattler: *The emergence of the concept of motion: Aristotle’s notion of kinesis as a reaction to Zeno’s paradoxes and Plato’s Timaeus*, p. 64, where more sources on these multiple meanings are cited.

mode of temporality beyond duration, of which normal temporality, time, is but an ‘image’, an incomplete reflection in motion.⁴¹⁹

The importance of this Platonic concept of αἰὼν for Maximus’ own distinct ontology and cosmology will be apparent as soon as we arrive at the analysis of the Confessor’s ‘double’ and interconnected definition of Aeon and time and the role of motion in it; there is an interesting similarity of specific formulations in the context of two irreconcilably different ontologies and cosmologies, meaning that the semantic content of similar terms is different as well.

⁴¹⁹As Wolfgang Scheffel remarks, an eternity without any kind of temporality, an eternity deprived of temporality, is conceivable in the context of Plato’s *Timaeus*: “Der vorkosmische Zustand einer chaotischen Chora umschreibt eine Art Ewigkeit, in der es kein Früher und Später gab, da irreguläre richtungslose Bewegungen keine Zeit definieren können: Zeit ist immer meßbare Zeit. Wenn es aber keine meßbaren Bewegungen gibt, die sich kontinuierlich wiederholen, gibt es auch keine Zeit” (Wolfgang Scheffel: *Aspekte der platonischen Kosmologie: Untersuchungen zum Dialog „Timaios“*. Leiden: Brill 1976, p. 141). Cf. *Ibid.* p. 41: “Da aber die Zeit ein ‘ewiges Bild’ ist, so muß man hier einen modifizierten Begriff von ewig (αἰώνιος) annehmen, während αἰδιος auf den absoluten Aion zugewandt ist. [...] Während αἰδιος also im strengen Sinn ‘ewig’ heißt, beschreibt das Prädikat αἰώνιος eine Partizipation am αἰὼν im Sinne eines Bildes der Ewigkeit”. The reader is asked to keep these remarks in mind when we will approach Maximus’ understanding of αἰδιότης.

III.2. Maximus' Philosophy of Motion

III.2.1. Origination – Motion – Fixity

The *theory of motion* is very prominent in Maximus the Confessor's thought.⁴²⁰ Following Aristotle,⁴²¹ Maximus interprets existence as a perpetual becoming (γίγνεσθαι), an aggregate of continuous changes that are recapitulated in the word 'motion' (κίνησις). Following Aristotle, Maximus discerns several different type of motion: *locomotion* (φορά, μετάστασις ἐκ τόπου εἰς τόπον), *change and alteration* (ἀλλοίωσις), *corruption/decay* (φθορά), *origination* (γένεσις), *return* (ἐπιστροφή), *change into something else* (ἐτεροίωσις); growth, *increase* (αὔξησις), *decrease* (φθίσις); *spiral movement* (ἐλικοειδής), *cyclical movement* (κυκλική),⁴²² etc. – in short, every conceivable type of change or movement.

For Maximus' philosophy of motion,⁴²³ to exist *is* to be in motion: “according to Maximus, the created character of things entails their being in motion”.⁴²⁴ Everything in creation is in motion,⁴²⁵ nothing can be described as mo-

⁴²⁰ On various aspects of Maximus' theory of motion, see T. Tollefsen's paper “Causality and Movement in St. Maximus' *Ambiguum* 7” (in Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards & Markus Vinzent (eds): *Papers presented at the fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2007 – From the Fifth Century: Greek Writers, Latin Writers, Nachleben* (Studia Patristica 48). Leuven: Peeters Publishers 2010, pp. 85-93) and Vladimir Cvetkovic's “St Maximus on Πάθος and Κίνησις in *Ambiguum* 7” (Ibid. pp. 95-104).

⁴²¹ We must once again remark here that Maximus does not see himself as a commentator of Aristotle or Plato or anything similar; Maximus does not write *about* the Aristotelian philosophical language, but his writings *echo* this language – without necessarily repeating its original contents. Betsakos, in his comparative study of Aristotle and Maximus, writes that Maximus is integrated into the Aristotelian tradition of thought (into the Aristotelian philosophical language) in the way that native speakers are integrated into their mother tongue: they appropriate it, without it belonging to them; they are speaking it, not *about* it; they use it to articulate formulations concerning truth, but truth always remains beyond language; they use language as a means for their expression, not as an agent imposing limitations in content. Maximus uses the Aristotelian *language* in order to denote a truth other than that of Aristotle's (cf. Betsakos: *Στάσις Αεικίνητος*, pp. 261f.). As we have remarked previously, we cannot know for certain if Maximus has studied the writings of Aristotle and the ancient Greek philosophers in their original form or if his thorough familiarization with them is a result of the study of *florilegia* and, generally, channels of transmission of the ancient Greek thought incorporated into Christian education.

⁴²² E.g. *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῖων Ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 257A-D, 381B-D.

⁴²³ The phrase is Sherwood's: *The Ascetic Life*, p. 49.

⁴²⁴ Loudovikos, p. 165.

⁴²⁵ Note Hans Urs von Balthasar's remarks: “Maximus took up Gregory of Nyssa's axiom that finite being is essentially characterized by *spatial intervals* (διάστημα) and, therefore, by *motion*” (*Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 138). – “Time and space are, for Maximus and Gregory of Nyssa, the expression of finitude itself; they are pure limitation. Space is not fundamentally a physical or astronomical reality but an ontological category: ‘the limitation of the world through itself’” (p. 139). – “The ontology of created being is a study of motion. More precisely, it is the study of the relationship between rest and motion, whose balance is what defines the essence of finite being” (p. 154). We must here remark that, while Maximus draws from diverse sources in order to achieve his unique synthesis and considers himself a natural continuator of the patristic tradition, Gregory of Nyssa must have been a particularly strong influence on his thought, especially on matters concerning motion and time.

tionless, beyond movement, change and alteration: “nothing that has come into being is motionless, not even something inanimate and tangible”.⁴²⁶ For Maximus, this motion “does not have to do with the mutability or change or corruption of things, but is an ontological property belonging to them”.⁴²⁷ This motion is not opposing the true nature of things, it is not to be interpreted as a ‘consequence of the Fall’, as the ecclesial language would formulate it. The source and cause of this motion resides beyond createdness: “[God is] the principle of the becoming of things that move, the author of their existence”.⁴²⁸ “Everything that comes from God and is subsequent to him undergoes motion, inasmuch as these things are not in themselves motion or power. So they do not move in opposition [to their nature], as it has been said, but through the λόγος creatively placed within them by the cause which framed the universe”.⁴²⁹

Motion, an ontological property of beings, is a result of *relation*. “All beings are absolutely stable and motionless according to the λόγος by which they were given subsistence and by which they exist”.⁴³⁰ However, it is from the beings’ *relation* to one another that their motion emerges – which, in turn, signifies the presence of God’s dispensation (οικονομία) for the universe: “by virtue of the λόγος of what is contemplated around them, they [the beings] are all in motion and unstable, and it is on this level that God’s dispensation of the uni-

Maximus’ explicit and implicit use of the notion of spatial, temporal and generally ontological *distance* (διάστημα, often translated as interval or extension), which among other things is a key difference between creation (which possesses it and which is defined by it) and the uncreated (where there is no *distance*), is based on Gregory of Nyssa’s conception thereof. And it is on this notion that a great number of interconnected Maximian concepts depend, as we will see in the next chapters. While there are a number of paradoxical phrases concerning motion prior to Maximus’ στάσις ἀεκίνητος (such as Proclus’ κίνησις ἀκίνητος: cf. Stephen E. Gersh: *Κίνησις Ἀκίνητος – A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*. Leiden: Brill 1973), it is also on this matter that Gregory’s influence (whom Maximus had certainly read) must have been most decisive. For Gregory of Nyssa’s eschatological identification of eternal movement with fixity (“This is the most marvelous thing of all: how the same thing is both a standing still [στάσις] and a moving [κίνησις]”), which must have served as a predecessor and influence for Maximus’ ‘ever-moving repose’, see Paul M. Blower’s article “Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of ‘Perpetual Progress’” (in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), pp. 151-171), pp. 157-165, where this is demonstrated. On Gregory of Nyssa’s thought on distance, time and the Aeon, see also Paul Plass’ “Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa” (in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980), pp. 180-192) and his “Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor” (in: *The Thomist* 44:2 (1980), pp. 259-277), as well as David Bradshaw’s “Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers” (in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), pp. 311-366), pp. 335-342. See also Paul Plass’ account of the Maximian στάσις ἀεκίνητος in his “‘Moving Rest’ in Maximus the Confessor”, in: *Classica et Mediaevalia* 35 (1984): 177-190. It would be outside the scope of our study to provide an exhaustive comparison of Gregory and Maximus on *distance*, motion, time and the Aeon, but we must nevertheless note that Gregory’s influence on Maximus on these matters is much, much more discernible in comparison to that of other Church Fathers prior to the Confessor.

⁴²⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1072 B: οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν γενομένων ἐστὶ [...] ἀκίνητον, οὐδ’ αὐτῶν τῶν ἀνύχων καὶ αἰσθητῶν.

⁴²⁷ Loudovikos, p. 166.

⁴²⁸ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1217C. Transl. Theokritoff, p. 166.

⁴²⁹ *Ζήτησις μετὰ Πύρρον*, PG 91 352AB. Transl. Theokritoff, p. 165.

⁴³⁰ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1217 AB: Καὶ ἀπλῶς ἵνα συνελὼν εἶπω, πάντα τὰ ὄντα καθ’ ὄν μὲν ὑπέστησαν τε καὶ εἰσι λόγον, στάσιμά τε παντελῶς εἰσι καὶ ἀκίνητα (transl. Conostas, *DOML* 28, p. 367).

verse wisely unfolds and is played out to the end”.⁴³¹ The *relationality* of beings is a prerequisite for the emergence of motion, this most fundamental ontological property of theirs: without this relationality, they are “stable” and “motionless”, they do not participate in being. Motion is the signifier of a being’s existence, and this signifier emerges in the beings’ relationship to other beings, to “the λόγος of what is contemplated around them”, as has been actively willed by God. As we have examined, the very notion of λόγος contains this relationality.

Maximus reverses the order of the Origenist triad of *fixity – motion – generation* (στάσις – κίνησις – γένεσις) into *origination – motion – fixity* (γένεσις – κίνησις – στάσις), which he sees as the “uniquely possible order”.⁴³² The Confessor explains this by stating that “movement is naturally preceded by becoming, and movement is naturally prior to fixity; hence it is clear that becoming and fixity cannot possibly exist at the same time, because between them there is the middle term of motion which naturally keeps them apart”.⁴³³ According to this substantial revision, which changes the Origenist triad completely, (a) birth and origination also mean the setting-in-motion, the beginning of motion, (b) the whole of existence and life, as well as each particular existence, is characterized by motion from the moment it exists up to its definitive end, and (c) everything moves towards an end, the motion of everything aspires towards its end and repose. We must here note that the Greek word τέλος denotes both the temporal end and the causal end, the purpose and consummation – while ἀρχή can mean both temporal beginning and source as well as origin and cause.⁴³⁴ (With this semantic frame, God cannot but be described as both the cause, the purpose, the beginning, the end and the middle ground of all). Motion is an ontological property that “applies to all created beings without exception and not only to rational beings”.⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ Ibid.: Τῷ δὲ τῶν περὶ αὐτὰ θεωρουμένων λόγῳ, καθ’ ὃν ἡ τοῦ παντὸς τούτου σαφῶς οἰκονομία συνέστηκε τε καὶ διεξάγεται, πάντα κινεῖται δηλονότι καὶ ἀστατεῖ (transl. Constan, DOML 28, p. 367).

⁴³² See Sherwood: *The Ascetic Life*, p. 47ff, where this particular subject is treated. However, Sherwood has erroneously cited the Origenist triad as having the following order: generation – fixity – motion (γένεσις – στάσις – κίνησις), something which also seems to be the case in Andrew Louth’s treatment of the subject in *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 64. Andrew Louth has recently pointed out to me that the Origenist position is an explanation of γένεσις, according to which the λογικοὶ originally existed eternally in a state of rest (στάσις) – their ‘beginning’ is not to be traced in their becoming, but in them being at contemplative rest. In *moving from* this state of rest (i.e. in proceeding from στάσις to κίνησις) and initiating the realm of becoming, which they came to occupy, they initiate γένεσις. As such, the correct Origenist triad is *fixity – motion – generation* (στάσις – κίνησις – γένεσις), the order of which is reversed by Maximus.

⁴³³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1217D: Εἰ οὖν κινήσεως προεπινοεῖται κατὰ φύσιν ἢ γένεσις, κινήσεως δὲ μετεπινοεῖται κατὰ φύσιν ἢ στάσις, γένεσις δηλονότι καὶ στάσις εἶναι τῶν ἅμα κατὰ τὴν ὑπαρξίν ἀμήχανον, ἀλλήλων αὐτὰς φυσικῶς διείργουσαν ἔχουσαι κατὰ τὸ μέσον τὴν κίνησιν. Transl. Theokritoff, p. 185 n. 29.

⁴³⁴ As well as principle, power, authority, element, sovereignty, empire, realm etc., according to the LSJ and Lampe’s Patristic Lexicon.

⁴³⁵ Loudovikos, p. 165.

III.2.2. Motion κατὰ φύσιν, Returning Motion, Motion παρὰ φύσιν

However, motion is not only and always of the aforementioned type. Motion has two ‘directions’ or ‘tendencies’,⁴³⁶ one “according to nature” (κατὰ φύσιν) and, secondly, its deviation and failure, i.e. motion “contrary to nature” (παρὰ φύσιν).⁴³⁷ Note that the word ‘nature’ is here used with the meaning it bears in the context of the λόγοι τῶν ὄντων: “according to nature” means according to the end and purpose (τέλος) of nature and in God, according to ‘pre-fallen’ nature, and “contrary to nature” means contrary to this end and purpose, according to the mode of existence of nature in its ‘fallen’ state.⁴³⁸ Motion “according to nature” is motion towards the fuller communion with the uncreated person of God, the *returning motion*⁴³⁹ to the Creator and the source of creation: “for the whole world [the] cause is God, in relation to whom it naturally moves”.⁴⁴⁰ Motion has the tendency to “be directed toward the unmoved, uncreated God, who is unmoved in the sense that he is not subject to precisely the passivity characteristic of creaturehood’s motion, because there is nothing higher than himself toward which he could move”.⁴⁴¹ This *returning motion* is not de-

⁴³⁶ We are not referring here to the three motions of the soul in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1112 D-1117 A, but to a distinction of a different type.

⁴³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.* 1104 A, on the movement towards passions, corruption and death – 1112 AB: “Every human mind has gone astray and lost its natural motion, so that its motion is determined by passion and sense and things perceived by the senses, and it cannot be moved anywhere else as its natural motion towards God has completely atrophied” – 1112 C: “the soul, when it is moved contrary to nature through the means of flesh towards matter, is clothed in an earthly form, but when, in contrast, it is moved naturally by means of the soul towards God [...]” (Transl. Louth, p. 96f). Note that these two tendencies/directions of motion correspond to man’s two wills, his natural will (θέλημα φυσικόν) towards motion according to nature and his gnomic will (θέλημα γνωμικόν) towards motion contrary to nature: *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 153 A: Θέλημα φυσικόν ἐστίν, οὐσιώδης τῶν κατὰ φύσιν συστατικῶν ἔφεσις. Θέλημα γνωμικόν ἐστίν ἢ ἐφ’ ἑκάτερα τοῦ λογισμοῦ αὐθαίρετος ὀρμή τε καὶ κίνησις. Cf. *Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 192 BC.

⁴³⁸ I.e., “according to nature” means “according to the λόγος of nature”, according to God’s *intention* for his creature. See *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1329 AB: “It is according to these [the λόγοι] that all things are, and have come to be, and remain always drawing closer to their own predetermined λόγοι through natural motion, and ever more closely approximated to being by their particular kinds and degrees of motion and inclination of choice. They receive well-being through virtue and through their direct progress toward the λόγος according to which they exist; or they receive ill-being through vice and their movement contrary to the λόγος by which they exist. To put it concisely, they move in accordance with their possession or privation of the potential they have naturally to participate in Him who is by nature absolutely imparticipable, and who offers Himself wholly and simply to all –worthy and unworthy– by grace through His infinite goodness, and who endows each with the permanence of eternal being, corresponding to the way that each disposes himself and is. And for those who participate or do not participate proportionately in Him who, in the truest sense, is and is well, and is forever, there is an intensification and increase of punishment for those who cannot participate, and of enjoyment for those who can participate.” (transl. Constan, DOML 29, p. 149).

⁴³⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1188C: εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα ἐπιστρέφεσθαι, καθάπερ εἰς οἰκεῖον ἕκαστα πέρας – “Everything will return to [God], as each to its own goal” (transl. Louth, p. 141). Note that the Neoplatonic notion of return/conversion (ἐπιστροφή) is substantially different to Maximus’ ἐπιστρεπτική ἀναφορά: cf. Vladimir Cvetkovic’s “St Maximus on Πάθος and Κίνησις in *Ambiguum* 7”, p. 99f.

⁴⁴⁰ Von Balthasar: *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 138.

⁴⁴¹ Loudovikos, p. 167.

scribed as an automatically actualized tendency, but as an intense longing for communion with the Creator, as an ἔρωσ for him that must be affirmed freely and willingly – an ἔρωσ that constitutes the answer to God’s ἔρωσ for the world, the answer to God’s call for communion.⁴⁴² For Maximus, to *know* God is to be *in communion* with God and vice versa; knowledge signifies a personal encounter, not a transmission of information; knowledge equals participation⁴⁴³ – and relationship and communion grants and constitutes the *knowledge* of the Other’s otherness. This *returning motion* to God is described as the fullness of hope and the created beings’ driving force for striving forward.⁴⁴⁴ Fragmented reality, the many, are summoned back to the one, and this union with the one, this communion-in-otherness, this participation in the cause, constitutes the true and primary knowledge.

The deviation from “motion according to nature” is the tendency of created beings to exist for themselves and in themselves, without the communion with the source of their existence that gives them life and being, without the communion with the absolute otherness that manifests and actualizes them as othernesses and hypostases. It is a motion that aspires to actualize non-relation as a mode of existence, and as such it is a motion towards death. This tendency of creation and created beings towards individual onticity, non-relation, corruption, decay and death is a motion “contrary to nature”,⁴⁴⁵ it does not reflect the

⁴⁴² *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 11.2-4: τὴν ἐμφαντικὴν δηλοῦν ἔφρασκε τῶν θεῶν ἡδονὴν ἀγαθῶν, πρὸς μὲν τὸν ἀκίηρατον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ μακάριον ἀνακινουῦσαν ἔρωτα – “The delight (ἡδονή) that discloses the divine blessings moves [the souls] towards the clear and blessed ἔρωσ of God”. Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 54.154-163.

⁴⁴³ This knowledge-through-participation is a standard theme in Maximus’ mentions of a cognitive becoming. E.g., *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1077 B: γνώσεως... μόνης καὶ μετεχομένης (“knowledge... singular and subject to participation”). Cf. Loudovikos, p. 176.

⁴⁴⁴ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 49.48-51: ἐρμηνεύεται ἐπιστροφή, σαφῶς μηνύουσα δι’ ἐαυτῆς τὸν πληρέστατον τῆς θείας ἐλπίδος λόγον, οὗ χωρὶς οὐδαμῶς οὐδενὶ καθοτιοῦν πρὸς θεὸν ἐπιστροφή γίνεσθαι πέφυκεν.

⁴⁴⁵ As this motion “contrary to nature” is, according to Maximus, a result of man’s *Fall*, of man’s inability to exist in communion with his Creator, God’s incarnation –and as such, the renewal of nature through the bridging of the gap between createdness and the uncreated- has been necessary in order to remedy this and to enable man’s return to the motion “according to nature”. Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1308 CD: “Since then [since the Fall] the human person is not moved naturally, as it was fashioned to do, around the unmoved, that is its own beginning (I mean God), but contrary to nature is voluntarily moved in ignorance around those things that are beneath it, to which it has been divinely subjected, and since it has abused the natural power of uniting what is divided, that was given to it at its generation, so as to separate what is united, therefore ‘natures have been instituted afresh’, and in a paradoxical way beyond nature that which is completely unmoved by nature is moved immovably around that which by nature is moved, and God becomes a human being, in order to save lost humanity. Through himself he has, in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of the all, manifesting the universal λόγος that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes about, and thus he fulfils the great purpose of God the Father, to recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself (Eph. 1:10), in whom everything has been created (Col. 1:16)” (transl. Louth, p. 156f.). The focal point of this *renewal* is, of course, corruption: *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 42.18-20: “Therefore our Lord and God, rectifying this reciprocal corruption and alteration of our human nature by taking on the whole of our nature” (transl. Blowers p. 119).

true nature of createdness. In the case of the human person, motion contrary to nature is manifested through the ‘passions’⁴⁴⁶ and, eventually, evil.⁴⁴⁷

To conceive of evil and of the ‘passions’ in such a way is to transfer these concerns from the moral level (the level of ethical *behavior* or lack thereof) to the ontological level, the level of the question concerning the existence (and, by extension, man’s existence) *as such*. For Maximus, it is not a matter of *behavior*, but a matter of *motion*, a matter of one of the primary ontological properties, paving the way for an ‘ontological ethics’, not one based on authority or convention.⁴⁴⁸ As Nikolaos Loudovikos remarks regarding these two types of motion,

Maximus distinguishes sharply between the “irrational impetus towards non-being” which he calls “unstable behavior and a terrible disordering of soul and body” and again “deliberate inclination towards the worse” [*Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1084 D]; and on the other hand “positive movement” as a property of the inner principle of the creature’s nature. The latter is the creature’s “ascent and restoration” (due precisely to the natural operation and power of things consequent upon their essential principle) to its “divine goal” [*Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1080 C]. And precisely by reason of the supreme goal of this movement, “nothing originate has ever halted in its motion, nor has it attained the lot appointed to it according to the divine purpose” [*Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1089 A].⁴⁴⁹

As a consequence, man’s striving is an ontological one: it is not only to restore his motion as *motion according to nature*, but to freely answer God’s call to himself and to the whole of creation. It is not to be content with the returning motion of createdness (next to its deviation, motion-as-corruption) but to actualize this return and strive for the repose⁴⁵⁰ (στάσις) and the ever-moving repose in God (στάσις ἀεκίνητος) that is the “ever well being” (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι), the fullness of the communion with the wholly Other.

⁴⁴⁶ *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 2.16.1: Πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις ψυχῆς παρὰ φύσιν. – “Passion is a movement of the soul contrary to nature”.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Betsakos, pp. 177-186. *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 4.14: Οὐ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν γεγονότων τὸ κακὸν θεωρεῖται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐσφαλμένην καὶ ἀλόγιστον κίνησιν. – “Evil is not to be regarded as in the substance of creatures but in its mistaken and irrational movement” (transl. Berthold p. 77). According to Maximus, evil is the result of motion contrary to nature, and more precisely an ἀλόγιστος κίνησις (*Πρὸς Θεολάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, epist.220-223).

⁴⁴⁸ On a discussion concerning this matter in relation to the whole of the patristic era and not exclusively to Maximus, cf. Yannaras’ *The Freedom of Morality*.

⁴⁴⁹ Loudovikos, p. 166.

⁴⁵⁰ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1069 B: οὐδὲν ἄρα κινούμενον ἔστη, ὡς τοῦ ἐσχάτου μήπω τυχόν ὀρεκτοῦ. “Nothing that is in motion has stopped before arriving at its object of desire”.

III.2.3. The Motion of the Uncreated

Maximus' uncompromisingly apophatic stance is apparent when he is treating the subject of God's motion. According to Maximus, God is both motionless/immovable,⁴⁵¹ moving *and* beyond movement and fixity (διὰ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν εἶναι κίνησιν τε καὶ στάσιν).⁴⁵² Locomotion requires space and change manifests in time, and as a consequence to speak of motion in the case of the uncreated, of God, would be illogical: the uncreated is by definition beyond categories entailing spatiotemporality. However, under different perspectives and contexts we can describe God as both motionless and being in motion, if we remain conscious of language's unavoidably relative and apophatic character – especially in signifying the uncreated (which, residing “beyond the limits of our world”, is “beyond the limits of our language”). Even if we do employ concepts such as motion or fixity in relation to God, Maximus warns us that we cannot think of them in terms of the motion of created beings.⁴⁵³

To ask whether God *is moved*, whether he *suffers* motion or change, would be irrational. God is motionless and infinite, he is by definition beyond change and beyond motion,⁴⁵⁴ beyond beginning and end, beyond substance, activity or potency.⁴⁵⁵ As God's intentions (pre)existing in him, the λόγοι of beings are motionless as well, in contrast to the beings of which they are the λόγοι.⁴⁵⁶ Therefore, the *potentiality* and *capability* to arrive at a repose and to attain fixity is innate in the λόγος of each being and manifests itself as a tenden-

⁴⁵¹ Everything that is created has a cause and is in motion, but God has not been created and has no cause but is himself the cause of everything; as a consequence, God is motionless. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1260 A: “Now if every being which is moved (which also means that it has been created) exists and is in motion and has been created in consequence of a cause, then whatever does not exist in consequence of a cause is obviously neither created nor moved. For that which does not have a cause of being is not moved at all. If, then, the uncaused is necessarily also unmoved, it follows that the Divine is unmoved, insofar as it does not owe its being to a cause, being itself the cause of all beings. How, then, someone perhaps might ask, does this marvelous teacher, in the passage cited above, introduce a Divinity in motion?” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 5).

⁴⁵² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1221 AB: “And if someone should ask, ‘How can rest be attributed to God without it having been preceded by motion?’, I would answer first by saying that the Creator and creation are not the same, as if what is attributed to the one must by necessity be attributed likewise to the other, for if this were the case the natural differences between them would no longer be evident. I would, in the second place, state the principal objection: strictly speaking, God neither moves nor is stationary (for these are properties of naturally finite beings, which have a beginning and an end); He effects absolutely nothing, nor does He suffer any of those things which are conceived or said of Him among ourselves, since by virtue of His nature He is beyond all motion and rest, and in no way is subject to our modes of existence” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 375-376).

⁴⁵³ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῶν Ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 381 B: Ἀκούων κινεῖσθαι τὸν Θεόν, μηδέποτε νοήσης κίνησιν τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν κτιστῶν νοουμένην καὶ μάλιστα τῶν αἰσθητῶν.

⁴⁵⁴ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1069 B: εἰ γὰρ τὸ θεῖον ἀκίνητον, ὡς πάντων πληρωτικόν, πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων τὸ εἶναι λαβὸν καὶ κινήτῶν, ὡς πρὸς τινα πάντως φερόμενον αἰτίαν. – *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῶν Ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 252 CD. – *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1084 A – 1.2.

⁴⁵⁵ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1084 BC – 1.4.

⁴⁵⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1217AB.

cy and longing to achieve this fixity, to arrive at this repose. This is clearly stated by Maximus: God attracts his creations and moves them towards a spiritual union of ἔρωσ with him in order to be longed for and loved by them; he is the cause of motion in that he moves his creations through their λόγος in order to return to him.⁴⁵⁷ Our tendency towards the divine person(s) is foremostly a tendency of radical self-transcendence and full communion, an erotic motion (ἐρωτική κίνησις) without beginning or end.⁴⁵⁸ It is this ἐρωτική κίνησις that can restore the human person's full communion with the divine persons: "love is the ek-stasis which makes the rational creature a person, i.e. deifies it, according to Maximus, identifying it in the perfection of its movement with the 'divinely perfect λόγος according to which it is and has come into being' [*Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1249B], a λόγος or principle that by nature goes outside itself so as to be deified".⁴⁵⁹ God is the prototype, projector and generator of ἀγάπη and ἔρωσ; these permeate existence and constitute its link to its cause, making God also the *object* of ἀγάπη and ἔρωσ, to whom the motion is directed – according to each human person's access to reality and longing for ever well being.

While God is by his 'substance' motionless, Maximus testifies him as being in motion: "the divine, which is altogether unmoved in its substance and nature, being infinite, boundless and limitless, is said to be in motion, like some innate intelligent principle in the substances of things, when by his providence he moves each thing that exists according to the λόγος whereby it naturally moves".⁴⁶⁰ We could say that, as God's relationship with creation and created beings is a relationship of activity (ἐνέργεια) and not of substance (οὐσία), God's motion is merely acknowledged from our perspective, not in actual reality. However, Maximus' texts would not encourage such a purely relativistic approach: God's existence as a Trinity of persons and hypostases is testified as a motion, as a perpetual movement; Maximus writes that God "has moved atemporally and out of love in order to arrive at the distinction of hypostases".⁴⁶¹ While the 'substance' of God is described as motionless, the Trinity of his hy-

⁴⁵⁷ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 265 D (fn. p. 253): Προσαγωγικὸν καὶ κινητικὸν πρὸς ἐρωτικὴν συνάφειαν τὴν ἐν πνεύματι τὸν Θεὸν εἶναι μοι νόει, τουτέστι μεσίτην ταύτης, καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν συναρμοστήν τοῦ ἐρᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτοῦ ποιημάτων καὶ ἀγαπᾶσθαι. Κινητικὸν δέ φησιν ὡς κινουντα ἕκαστα κατὰ τὸν οἰκείον λόγον πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιστρέφεσθαι.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 268 B (fn. p. 253): Ἡ ἐρωτικὴ κίνησις, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προϋπάρχουσα, ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀπλή καὶ ἀκίνητος οὐσα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προϊούσα αὐθις ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐπιστρέφει ἀτελεύτητος καὶ ἄναρχος οὐσα, ὅπερ δηλοῖ τὴν ἡμῶν ἔφεσιν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον.

⁴⁵⁹ Loudonikos, p. 175f.

⁴⁶⁰ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1260 B. Transl. Theokritoff, p. 172.

⁴⁶¹ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*: CD4.1 221A: ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ, κινήθεις ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀγαθοπρεπῶς καὶ ἀγαπητικῶς προήλθεν εἰς διάκρισιν ὑποστάσεων.

postases (actual existences) is described as being but in perpetual interpenetration.⁴⁶²

If we are to employ the concept of motion to denote God's relationship with creation, we can only say that he *moves*, not that he *is moved* (not that he 'receives the motion').⁴⁶³ To say that God is moved would only make sense in the context that he is thirsty for being the object of thirst, that he longs to be the object of longing, that he loves being the recipient of love: "Being love and ἔρωσ, the divine is in motion, while being the object of love and longing it draws towards itself everything that is receptive to love and ἔρωσ".⁴⁶⁴ According to Maximus, *we*, and not God, receive the motion (πάθος κινήσεως, πάσχειν τὴν κίνησιν). And the motion of God is his disclosure to us (or, vice versa: God's disclosure to us is his motion). We are moved in order to know God:⁴⁶⁵ God's motion constitutes the knowledge of God's existence and God's mode of existence (τὸν τοῦ πῶς αὐτὴν ὑφεστάναι τρόπον) *for those that are receptive to this knowledge*.⁴⁶⁶ To discern God's personal activity (ἐνέργεια) in creation, to acknowledge creation as a motion originating from God, is a *choice*. One must be *receptive* to encountering existence as the mediation of a personal relationship – as it is a *choice* to acknowledge a painting as a λόγος of its artist that founds a relationship with his otherness and not as mere sum of paint and canvas, as we have noted in our exposition of the prerequisites for a critical ontology. As a consequence, the human person's motion back to God is also a matter of *choice* and *freedom*, a motion according to man's free will: "man's movement

⁴⁶² Σχόλια εἰς τὸ *Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας*: PG 4 425A: Φησὶν οὖν ὅτι καὶ ἐν μονῇ ἀκινήτῳ αἰεὶ οὐσα ἢ θεία φύσις, δοκεῖ κινεῖσθαι ἐν τῇ ἀλλήλοις χωρήσει.

⁴⁶³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1381 CD: οἷς κινήθεντα τὸν Θεόν, τὸ εἶναι τε δοῦναι τοῖς οὐσί, καὶ τὸ εἶναι χαρίσασθαι, ἐπεδύσησαν· εἴπερ κίνησιν ἐπὶ Θεοῦ τοῦ μόνου ἀκινήτου θέμις εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ μὴ μᾶλλον βούλησιν, τὴν πάντα κινουσάν τε, καὶ εἰς τὸ εἶναι παράγουσαν καὶ συνέχουσαν, κινουμένην δὲ οὐδαμῶς οὐδέποτε. (Note that the generation and motion of beings emerges from the will, βούλησιν, and activity of God, not from his 'substance').

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 1260 C: Ὡς μὲν ἔρωσ ὑπάρχον τὸ Θεῖον καὶ ἀγάπη κινεῖται, ὡς δὲ ἔραστὸν καὶ ἀγαπητὸν κινεῖ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ πάντα τὰ ἔρωτος καὶ ἀγάπης δεκτικά· καὶ τρανότερον αὐθις φάναι· Κινεῖται μὲν ὡς σχέσιν ἐμποιοῦν ἐνδιάθετον ἔρωτος καὶ ἀγάπης τοῖς τούτων δεκτικοῖς, κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐλκτικὸν φύσει τῆς τῶν ἐπ' αὐτὸ κινουμένων ἐφέσεως· καὶ πάλιν· Κινεῖ καὶ κινεῖται, ὡς διψῶν τὸ διψᾶσθαι, καὶ ἐρῶν τὸ ἐρᾶσθαι, καὶ ἀγαπῶν τὸ ἀγαπᾶσθαι. Cf. Betsakos, p. 97.

⁴⁶⁵ *Πεύσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 105.12-19: τῆς ἀγίας θεότητος κινούσης ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἑαυτῆς [...]. Λέγεται οὖν κινεῖσθαι ἢ δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἐπ' αὐτὴν κινουμένους ἢ ὡς αἰτία τῆς ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῆς κινήσεως. Ἐκίνησεν οὖν ἑαυτὴν ἐν ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸ γνῶναι ὅτι ἐστὶν τις αἰτία τῶν ὅλων· ὅπερ ἐστὶν μονάδος κινήσεως. "The holy divinity itself moves us into an acknowledgement of itself [...] And so, it is said to be set in motion either because of us, who are set in motion towards it [the Trinity], or as the cause of our movement toward the knowledge of it. It moved itself in us toward the knowledge that some cause of all things exists. That is 'the Monad having been moved' (transl. Prassas p. 99).

⁴⁶⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 1.32-38: "But if, having heard the word 'movement', you wonder how the divinity that is beyond eternity is moved, understand that the passivity belongs not to the divinity, but to us, who first are illuminated with respect to the λόγος of its being, and thus are enlightened with respect to the mode of its existence, for it is obvious that being is observed before the mode of being. And so, movement of divinity, which comes about through the elucidation concerning its being and its mode of existence, is established, for those who are able to receive it, as knowledge" (transl. Lollar p. 51). Cf. Betsakos, p. 95.

toward spiritual communion with God is the expression of this freedom and consciousness of his: as Maximus says, it is a ‘movement of free will’, and the capacity of free will [αὐτεξούσιον] is identified in his writings with man’s will”.⁴⁶⁷

III.2.4. Ever-moving Repose, Stationary Movement

When using the language of *motion* and *fixity* to describe God, we must bear in mind that we are describing a relation and communion *par excellence*, as the divine hypostases exist as *persons*, i.e. insofar as they are in communion with each other: the person of the *Father* is an existential and ontological reference to the person of the *Son*, not an individual onticity, the person of the *Breath/Spirit of God* is the breath of the *Father*, etc.: “The name of ‘Father’ is neither the name of an essence nor an activity, but rather of a relation, and of the manner in which the Father is related to the Son, or the Son to the Father”.⁴⁶⁸

So, the question arises: is *motion* or *fixity* a more accurate term in order to describe such an existence-in-communion? The fact that relation is a dynamic event, not a static one, the fact that it constitutes a perpetual becoming and not a coordinated given, would advocate for the word *motion* as a more accurate term. However, *motion* implies *distance*, a *distance* that has not been covered as of yet. (Once again: these words suggest a spatiotemporality that is not characteristic of the uncreated; but they are the only *words* we have, for they emerge from the only *world* we have – and they are to be understood apophatically). And *distance* implies that a *fuller* relation and communion would be possible, for it measures *nonrelation*: distance measures the degree and extent to which the immediacy of relation has not yet been achieved, it measures how *far away* you are from something or someone. The fullness of communion and of existing-in-communion (of which the Trinity is the prototype) would not allow for any distance to be covered (through motion), as the existence of that distance would indicate that the fullness of relation and communion has not yet been achieved. This makes *motion* an unfit word.

However, *fixity* or *repose* is an equally unfit word to denote the ‘state’ of God. A God whose hypostases, whose uncreated actualizations are described as being in perpetual interpenetration cannot be accurately described as a being in fixity and repose. The notion of a constant dynamic communion and an actualization in relation and radical referentiality is contrary to the notion of fixity, of

⁴⁶⁷ Loudovikos, p. 168. Cf. Ζήτησις μετὰ Πύρρον, PG 91 301 A-C.

⁴⁶⁸ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1265 D: οὔτε οὐσίας εἶναι τὸ πατήρ ὄνομα, οὔτε ἐνεργείας, ἀλλὰ σχέσεως, καὶ τοῦ πῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὸν Υἱὸν ὁ Πατήρ, ἢ ὁ Υἱὸς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα (transl. Constan, DOML 29, p. 21).

repose, of being static and motionless. Interestingly, Maximus employs the notion of the absence of *distance* in order to declare motion as never-ending, not as inexistent: “For God is the truth toward which the mind moves continuously and enduringly, and it can never cease its motion: since it cannot find any distance (διάστημα) there, no cessation of motion can take place”.⁴⁶⁹

Maximus transcends these limitations of language by writing about the “ever-moving repose” (στάσις ἀεικίνητος) and the “stationary movement” (στάσιμος ταυτοκινήσια) that characterizes the communion with God.⁴⁷⁰ It is to be noted that this paradoxical phrase is not merely a rhetorical device or a standard phrase denoting apophaticism: it is an attempt at a *most accurate* use of language. If we are to speak about *motion* or *fixity* concerning God, concerning the “motionless” God and the “perpetually interpenetrating” Trinity of divine persons, we have to acknowledge that it is both *the fullness of motion* and *the fullness of fixity*, an understanding that transcends even the designation of being ‘beyond motion’. Maximus’ genius formulates this in language by speaking of the “ever-moving repose” and the “stationary movement” of those that have restored the fullness of the communion with God.

III.2.5. Creative Motion

As we have noted, the existence of creatures denotes simultaneously their being in motion and their birth and origination is the beginning of this motion. Apart from God’s ‘internal motion’, i.e. the interpenetration of the divine hypostases, God’s creative activity is his ‘external motion’: the creation of the world can be described as God’s motion, and it is this motion that grants life and existence. Maximus does not describe this as a movement that occurs once, at the generation of the world or of each being: God’s motion to the world is a continuous one, and to be separated from this motion, from this perpetual becoming, is to risk to return to the state of non-being, to risk perfect inexistence.⁴⁷¹ Beings exist insofar as they are moved by God;⁴⁷² nothing moves on its own, everything

⁴⁶⁹ *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 5.100-102.

⁴⁷⁰ According to Maximus, nature restored in its full communion with God will arrive at an “ever-moving repose”, in perpetual motion around God; *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.544-547: ἐν δὲ τῷ θεῷ γινομένη [...] στάσιν ἀεικίνητον ἔξει καὶ στάσιμον ταυτοκινήσιαν, περὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἐν καὶ μόνον αἰδίως γινομένη. This notion will be analyzed in depth later, in the chapters concerning temporality.

⁴⁷¹ *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 1.67-72.

⁴⁷² And this motion constitutes a relation, meaning that beings exist insofar as they are in relation with God. To say that God is the source of motion (that the origin of motion lies beyond createdness) and that everything that exists is in motion (and, of course, that everything that is in motion *exists*, participates in being) is to define existing as being in some sort of relation, either a fuller relation or an inadequate one, with God, with the

receives the movement from God.⁴⁷³ *Being* and *being in motion* are identical; the cause of being is also the cause of motion. Everything that exists and is in motion has a cause for moving and existing, a cause that is inherent in its origination and which is also its purpose and end.⁴⁷⁴ God is the beginning, end, origination and motion of created beings;⁴⁷⁵ they are in motion due to him and thanks to him, and it is in him that they will be in repose. “The end and purpose of the activities according to nature is the repose at the cause of the created beings’ motion”.⁴⁷⁶

III.2.6. Fixity and Repose: στάσις

The fact that the beginning and cause of created beings is their origination in motion entails that their end and purpose is their repose and fixity. Maximus elucidates this by stating that nothing is in motion without a reason and a cause; the beginning of natural motion (κίνησις φυσική) is generation (γένεσις), and the beginning and cause of the generation of beings in motion is God. The end and purpose is also God; and this end and purpose entails the attainment of fixity and repose (στάσις), the annihilation of “any spatial or temporal dis-

person(s) that is the uncreated source of being. Therefore, to sever this relationship completely is to cease to exist.

⁴⁷³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1073 B: πάντα γὰρ ὅσα γέγονε πάσχει τὸ κινεῖσθαι, ὡς μὴ ὄντα αὐτοκίνησις ἢ αὐτοδύναμις.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 1257 CD: “Everything which is moved according to nature is necessarily moved in consequence of a cause, and everything moved in consequence of a cause necessarily also exists in consequence of a cause; and everything that exists and is moved in consequence of a cause necessarily has as the beginning of its being the cause in consequence of which it exists and from which it was initially brought into being; likewise, the end of its being moved is the same cause in consequence of which it is moved and toward which it hastens. Now everything which exists and is moved in consequence of a cause is necessarily also created, and if the end of whatever is moved is the cause in consequence of which it is in motion, this cause is necessarily the same cause in consequence of which it was created and exists. From this it follows that the cause of whatever exists and is moved, in any way at all according to nature, is one single cause encompassing both the beginning and the end, to which everything that exists and is moved owes its existence and motion” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 3).

⁴⁷⁵ For example, see the interrelationship of cause, end, motion, repose and God in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1217 B-D: “For no being is completely self-actualized, since it is not self-caused, and whatever is not self-caused is necessarily moved by a cause, which is to say that it is actualized by being naturally set in motion by its cause, for which and to which it continues in motion. For nothing that moves does so in any way independently of a cause. But the beginning of every natural motion is the origin (γένεσις) of the things that are moved, and the beginning of the origin of whatever has been originated is God, for He is the author of origination.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, pp. 369).

⁴⁷⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1220A: “For it was for activity that created things were brought into being, and every activity exists in relation to a particular goal, otherwise it is incomplete. For whatever does not have a goal of its natural activities is not complete, but the goal of natural activities is the repose of creaturely motion in relation to its cause. So that from one example we might understand the form of motion that obtains among all beings, take, for instance, the soul, which is an intellectual and rational substance, which thinks and reasons. Its potentiality is the intellect, its motion is the process of thinking, and its actuality is thought” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 371). See also 1073 C: Τέλος γὰρ τῆς τῶν κινουμένων κινήσεως αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν τῷ αἰεῖ εἶ ἔστιν.

tance”⁴⁷⁷ (διάστημα) - i.e., the immediacy of relation and communion. According to nature, generation precedes motion and motion precedes repose. However, repose is not a natural activity of beings in motion, stemming from the fact that they have been generated; it is their purpose and end, which remains a mere potentiality until it is finally achieved.⁴⁷⁸ We gather that there are two different ways of understanding fixity: (a) when motion, i.e. being, consummates in repose, i.e. ever being, in man’s approach to God (and in ever-moving repose, i.e. ever well being, in the full communion with God), and (b) its deviation, when a creature is separated from God’s life-giving motion and risks slipping into non-being. Instead of coming to be κατὰ φύσιν, repose is achieved only κατὰ γνώμην, only as a free choice; the striving towards ever being (εὔ εἶναι) and ever well being (ἀεὶ εὔ εἶναι), towards God, can only be a deliberate path, an act of freedom.⁴⁷⁹

Deification is the consummation of motion in repose, but this repose is described as an “ever-moving repose” (στάσις ἀεικίνητος), as we have seen and as we will further examine. In deification, the divine state of motion is iconized, as man’s and God’s activity (ἐνέργεια) are united, are as one: “[then at last there is] only one ἐνέργεια [activity] operating through all things, that of God and those who are worthy of God – or rather, that of God alone, because in accordance with his goodness he has wholly interpenetrated all those who are worthy”.⁴⁸⁰ Deification circumscribes an eradication of the differentiation between human and divine activity, as man is “acting in accordance with the λόγοι”.⁴⁸¹ However, this eradication of the activities’ differentiation does not entail an eradication of man’s (or existence’s) otherness, quite the contrary: in perfect

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. 1217C: “The end of the natural motion of whatever has been originated is rest (στάσις), which, after the passage beyond finite things, is produced completely by infinity, for in the absence of any spatial or temporal interval [*distance*, διάστημα], every motion of whatever is naturally moved ceases, henceforth having nowhere, and no means whereby, and nothing to which it could be moved, since it has attained its goal and cause, which is God, who is Himself the limit of the infinite horizon that limits all motion” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 369).

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. 1217D: “Thus the beginning and end of every origin and motion of beings is God, for it is from Him that they have come into being, and by Him that they are moved, and it is in Him that they will achieve rest. But every natural motion of beings logically presupposes their origin, just as every condition of rest logically presupposes natural motion. [...] For rest is not a natural activity inherent within the origin of creatures, but is rather the end of their potentiality or activity, or whatever one might wish to call it” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 369-371).

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. 1073C: “If then rational beings come into being, surely they are also moved, since they move from a natural beginning in ‘being’ (εἶναι) toward a voluntary end in ‘well-being’ (εὔ εἶναι). For the end of the movement of those who are moved is ‘eternal well-being’ (ἀεὶ εὔ εἶναι) itself, just as its beginning is being itself which is God who is the giver of being as well as of well-being. For God is the beginning and end. From him come both our moving in whatever way from a beginning and our moving in a certain way toward him as an end” (transl. Blowers pp. 50-51).

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. 1076C: ὥστε εἶναι μίαν καὶ μόνην διὰ πάντων ἐνέργειαν, τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀξίων Θεοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ μόνου Θεοῦ, ὡς ὅλον ὅλοις τοῖς ἀξίοις ἀγαθοπρεπῶς περιχωρήσαντος. Transl. Theokritoff, p. 174f.

⁴⁸¹ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1084C.

communion, the perfect otherness of the beings-in-communion emerge. *Inconfusedly*, as they remain distinct othernesses and partners in communion and are not ‘swallowed up’ by the divine. *Unchangeably*, as deification is not a change in nature or substance, but in mode of existence: man is deified in every sense “except of the identity of substance”,⁴⁸² as we have remarked. *Indivisibly* and *inseparably*: once attained, this new mode of existence is not to be abandoned and this fullness of communion is not to be ceased; the “ever-moving repose” will not lapse into ordinary motion any more.

III.2.7. Motion in Maximus and Aristotle

According to Betsakos, the philosophy of motion is, for both Maximus the Confessor and Aristotle, a potent tool for examining reality: both philosophers discern a comprehensive overview of existence in it, as motion is seen as one of the definitive components of the world, one of the modes of its existence. For both Aristotle and Maximus alike, φύσις denotes a *becoming*, not a static reality: this does not only apply to φύσις as a whole, but to the particular beings’ nature as well, which is led to its end and purpose (τέλος), to its consummation. Both philosophers distinguish *potentialities* from *actualities*, the δυνάμει from the ἐνεργεία, and thoroughly employ this distinction in order to interpret reality.⁴⁸³ Beings exist *in relation* to other beings, and the categories of time and space are components of motion; the existence of motion is seen as their *precondition*, while they act as the *dimensions* of that motion.

To recapitulate the crucial difference of Maximus’ theory of motion to that of Aristotle’s would be to highlight the fact that motion, according to Maximus, is primarily a *returning* motion,⁴⁸⁴ a motion of creation and created beings back to their Creator, back to their source. Elements of the *returning* character of motion (albeit of a mechanistic, automatic and inanimate nature) can be found in Aristotle as well, but in Maximus the returning motion is the dimension (the ‘horizon’) of a relationship between persons, a longing for communion, an ἔρωσ for the annulling of the distance (διάστημα) between the persons. Man’s returning motion to God circumscribes the consummation of this relationship, and through the human person as a cosmic mediator, the whole of createdness, the whole of the κτίσις aspires to full communion with the divine person(s) in the

⁴⁸² Ἐπιστολαί, PG 91 376AB – Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 22.40-44.

⁴⁸³ As Betsakos remarks (p. 105), the Aristotelian distinction of potentiality and actuality (δυνάμει-ἐνεργεία) is also employed by Maximus: the κατὰ δυνάμιν motion is included in the substance of beings, but it is the πρὸς ἐνεργεῖαν κίνησις that gives actuality to this potential motion. Cf. *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1084B.

⁴⁸⁴ A thorough overview of the *returning* motion with a focus on its anthropological side is to be found in Betsakos, pp. 143-209, “Ἡ ἀνθρωπολογικὴ-γνωστικὴ κίνησις τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς”.

manner of personhood, in the manner of existence-as-relation. Maximus' substantial difference from Aristotle is that, according to his writings, motion itself has an end and purpose (τέλος) beyond createdness: creation's returning motion towards its uncreated Creator (himself beyond motion and motionlessness) transcends the cycle of motion and is the end and purpose (τέλος) of motion itself, not only of beings-in-motion. Motion does not only lead beings towards their consummation, towards their end and purpose (τέλος), but motion *itself* has an end and purpose to be attained, namely the full communion of creation and Creator.⁴⁸⁵

As such, motion is a central aspect of Maximus the Confessor's cosmology, as it circumscribes the mode in which existence has been generated and exists. And the *end* and *purpose* of motion and beings-in-motion is a central aspect of the Church Father's ontology, as it discloses the meaning and true nature of beings and reality. The fact that the ontological integrity of being and beings is disclosed through their origin and cause but is consummated at their end and purpose frames the subject in question in a context of temporality, as the ontological integrity of being and beings seemingly resides in their *future*, not in their past or present. To articulate it more concisely, the atemporality of the fullness of repose for both being and beings is *to come*, integrating the element of eschatology into ontology itself.

⁴⁸⁵ See Betsakos: *Στάσις Λεικίνητος*, pp. 282-283.

III.3. Introducing Maximus' Conception of Time

In studying the Maximian *corpus*, we will prefer to discern three 'levels' of temporality, three distinct types of time: time as χρόνος, time as αἰὼν (the Aeon) and the implicit temporality of στάσις ἀεικίνητος. These are roughly analogous to Maximus' triad of 'being' (εἶναι), 'ever being' (ἀεὶ εἶναι) and 'ever well being' (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) – however, an oversimplification of these notions would be misleading. We will examine each of these in detail, but before embarking on these individual analyses we will provide the reader with an introduction to these terms and a summary of Maximus' understanding of them, a 'preview' of these three levels of temporality.

III.3.1. Time for Maximus the Confessor and Aristotle

Maximus defines time, χρόνος, as the numbering of motion: "time, measuring the motion, is circumscribed by number".⁴⁸⁶ Time is nothing more and nothing less than numbered, 'described' motion.⁴⁸⁷ Maximus' primary definition of time is essentially identical to Aristotle's definition: "time is a number of motion in respect of the before and after".⁴⁸⁸ The Confessor is surely conscious of that and initiates a dialogical relation between his own conception of temporality and the classic definition of Aristotle, a dialogical relation that does not aim at repeating or continuing Aristotle's theory, but at renewing it fundamentally, as we will see.⁴⁸⁹ Maximus adopts Aristotle's definition as a starting point, but the philosophy of time that emerges from the overview of his writings (e.g. the nature of fixity, the reality of Aeon and its participable nature, the temporality of στάσις ἀεικίνητος etc.) differs substantially, constituting a *renewal* of Aristotle's theory in the context of the ecclesial event's ontology. We could say that the Confessor is asking the same questions Aristotle asks,⁴⁹⁰ but goes on to provide substantially different answers.

⁴⁸⁶ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A, 1.5: ὁ μὲν γὰρ χρόνος, μετρουμένην ἔχων τὴν κίνησιν, ἀριθμῷ περιγράφεται.

⁴⁸⁷ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.533-534: ὁ δὲ χρόνος, περιγραφομένη καθέστηκε κίνησις.

⁴⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Φυσικά*, 219b 1: τοῦτο γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ χρόνος, ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον.

⁴⁸⁹ On the transition from Aristotle to Maximus and the Greek Fathers in general concerning the subjects of motion, space and time/Aeon, cf. Christos Yannaras' *Σχεδιάσμα εἰσαγωγῆς στὴ φιλοσοφία* (Athens: Domos 1988), pp. 322-327 and pp. 350-355. On time and the Aeon, see also his *Person and Eros*, pp. 131-138.

⁴⁹⁰ It is truly interesting to witness how the subtleties of Aristotle's definition(s) are present in 'Byzantine' analyses. For example, in *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῶν Ὀνομάτων* CD4.1 316 AB (be it a comment by Maximus or John of Scythopolis), the commentator hastens to clarify that time is not *motion itself*, but merely the *measurement* of motion– as would Aristotle do. And that the measuring instrument is not identical to the measured reality.

III.3.2. Space-Time Continuum

For Maximus, time and space are completely interconnected; one cannot conceive of the one without including the other. Time and space form a space-time continuum, a coherent spatiotemporality.⁴⁹¹ In the Confessor’s words, “space cannot be thought of, separate from and deprived of time (for they go together and one cannot be without the other)”.⁴⁹² Nothing that is not in space and in time, that has not a ‘where’ (τὸ ποῦ) and also a ‘when’ (τὸ πότε), that does not possess ‘whereness’ and ‘whenness’ can exist at all: “neither substance, nor quantity, nor quality, nor relation, nor action, nor passion, nor motion, nor habit”.⁴⁹³ Each created being, be it sensible or intelligible, is necessarily located in a place/position and time/temporality, “in a concomitant way”.⁴⁹⁴ Even the substances of beings (οὐσίαι), being created and having been originated, possess a spatiotemporal status – in contrast to God’s uncreated intentions and wills, the being’s λόγοι. Pascal Mueller-Jourdan asserts that “such a status conferred on ‘being-when’ and ‘being-where’ is extremely rare in the Judeo-Christian tradition”.⁴⁹⁵

III.3.3. ‘Whereness’ and ‘Whenness’

Everything created that is in motion has a beginning: this is the first element of the *generation – motion – fixity* triad (γένεσις – κίνησις – στάσις). And everything that has a beginning has also an end:⁴⁹⁶ after its origination and be-

⁴⁹¹ It would be most tempting and truly fascinating to compare these assertions of Maximus’ with the worldview of contemporary physics. However, such a comparison would be a major undertaking by itself and resides outside the scope of our study. Recent attempts at systematically comparing the patristic worldview to the modern scientific worldview in general include Alexei Nesteruk’s *The Universe as Communion. Towards a Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Theology and Science* (London: T & T Clark 2008), as well as Christos Yannaras’ *Postmodern Metaphysics* (Brookline Mass.: HC Press 2004). On contemporary views on temporality from the viewpoint of both physics and philosophy in general, see Tim Maudlin’s *Philosophy of Physics – Space and Time* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press 2012) and Craig Callender’s (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), which, however, requires an education in physics and mathematics in order to be studied.

⁴⁹² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 B (transl. Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 136).

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* 1181 B.

⁴⁹⁴ Pascal Mueller-Jourdan: “Where and When as Metaphysical Prerequisites for Creation in Ambiguum 10”, in: Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, p. 289. Our use of the terms ‘whereness’ and ‘whenness’ as translations of τὸ ποῦ and τὸ πότε respectively derives from Jourdan’s article.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ However, according to Maximus this may not be the case for the intelligible creation and the human soul, which are at times referred to as imperishable “according to nature” and at times as imperishable “by grace”. We have examined the question of the soul’s imperishability in subchapters II.1.7.-8. of this thesis: on the question concerning the imperishability of intelligible creation, see subchapter III.5.3.

fore its end or its repose,⁴⁹⁷ a being's primary ontological characteristic is that it is in motion. Beginning, middle and end are characteristics of beings in time⁴⁹⁸ – and, as such, of beings in space. As everything created has a beginning and is in motion, everything created is also in time and space,⁴⁹⁹ possesses 'whereness' and 'whenness' – intelligible beings as well (for example: *substances*), not just sensible creatures.⁵⁰⁰ In strong contrast to the Neoplatonists, Maximus ascribes a principle/beginning/generation to intelligible realities;⁵⁰¹ they are generated, they are in motion and they are in time – or, to be more precise, in some sort of temporality that is not wholly comparable to our own.

Motion 'gives birth' to time and space by the fact that it exists. *Space* is, essentially, the assertion of the spatial distance that is generated by motion, the assertion of the διάστημα⁵⁰² that has come into being due to the totality of motion(s).⁵⁰³ And, as we have seen, time is but the measuring and numbering of motion,⁵⁰⁴ motion circumscribed by number. Being a *measurement* of something existing, motion, and not something existing in itself, Aristotle concludes that time does not exist, or that it exists faintly and obscurely.⁵⁰⁵ It would not be arbitrary to suggest that Maximus follows Aristotle also concerning this specific consequence of their shared definition of time. If motion exists and time is its measurement, its number, then time exists insofar motion exists and only in relation to motion; it does not exist as an independent reality, it does not exist *in it-*

⁴⁹⁷ As can be discerned in the totality of Maximus' writings, the end of motion in fixity can either mean the exit from existence, death or the return to non-being, or the freedom from the cycle of motion in full communion with God, if the στάσις is to culminate into στάσις ἀεκίνητος.

⁴⁹⁸ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5: "Beginning, middle, and end are characteristics of beings distinguished by time and it can be truly stated that they are also characteristics of beings comprehended in the Aeon. And if time and the Aeon are not without beginning, so much less are those things which are contained in them" (transl. Berthold pp. 12-130).

⁴⁹⁹ The *mode* of spatiality in Maximus' intelligible creation is a more complex subject, as we will examine.

⁵⁰⁰ However, as we will see, time (χρόνος) has also a radically different actualization, the Aeon (αἰών); as such, there is indeed a difference in the spatiotemporality of sensible and intelligible beings. Even the Aeon, commonly translated as 'eternity', has a beginning – and, as such, an end. (*Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5: "Indeed time, which is measuring movement, is circumscribed by number, and the Aeon, which includes in its existence the category of when, admits of a separation [πάσχει διάστασιν] insofar as it began to be" (transl. Berthold pp. 12-130).

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Pascal Mueller-Jourdan: "Where and When as Metaphysical Prerequisites for Creation in Ambiguum 10", in: Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, p. 293.

⁵⁰² Lars Thunberg offers a concise and short account of the Maximian understanding of διάστημα and διάστασις in *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 57-60. Von Balthasar explains the relationship between διάστημα, motion and ontological identity in speaking of "a fundamental nonidentity of the existing thing within its own being, in an extension [διάστημα, διάστασις] that finds its expression is momentum [φορά], and more specifically in the triad of coming to be, movement and coming to rest [γένεσις, κίνησις, στάσις]" (*Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 137).

⁵⁰³ Note Gregory of Nyssa's remark that creation is to be viewed in an extension of distances: τῆς δὲ κτίσεως ἐν παρατάσει τινὶ διαστηματικῇ θεωρουμένης (Κατὰ Εὐνομίου, I.1.361) – Cf.: ὅστε πάντως ἢ ἐν διαστηματικῇ τινὶ παρατάσει θεωρεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ἢ τοπικοῦ χωρήματος παρέχειν τὴν ἔννοιαν (Κατὰ Εὐνομίου, 2.1.578)

⁵⁰⁴ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.533-534 – *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. *Φυσικά*, 217b 32-34.

self.⁵⁰⁶ It is interesting that while Maximus relates the position and spatiality of beings with the “natural limit of their λόγοι”, their temporality is simply determined by their origination and beginning: “beings possess being in a certain way, and not simply, so that where they are is determined by their position and the natural limit of the λόγοι that are in them, and when they are [is determined] from their beginning”.⁵⁰⁷

This interrelation of motion, space and time does not only apply to motion in our given reality and beings in general, but to the coming-to-be of this reality as well, to the creation of existence, of being itself.⁵⁰⁸ We could say that, in creating the world, God generates motion (as the creative motion is the first motion), which in turn discloses time and space as its dimensions and coordinates; not vice versa. Creative motion does not *take place in a space*; it is the motion that reveals space as a reality, it is motion that actualizes distance, which is the ‘unit’ of space. Creative motion has not *a duration in time*; it is the motion that generates ‘temporal distance’, the difference of the ‘before’ from the ‘after’, and this distance/difference is measured and numbered as time. Time and space emerge as coordinates of motion, which has an ontological priority over them.

Of course, space and time *preexist* (προεπινοεῖται) each particular being; “Every kind of being whatever, apart from the divine and unique being, which properly speaking exists beyond being itself, is already thought of as being somewhere, and that, together with this, it is necessarily thought of as certainly existing at some time”.⁵⁰⁹ The fact that beings are integrated in time and space does not mean that spatiotemporality has an ontological priority over beings, that it acts as an *a priori* transcendental reality. Rather than that, it is “the hypostases of beings that offer the existential basis for time and space to preexist them”,⁵¹⁰ as time and space cannot be thought of as independent from the beings and their motion. For Maximus, it is not nature that is integrated in spatiotemporality; rather than that, it is the beings that are integrated into a continuum of nature, time and space⁵¹¹ – “everything [i.e. every created thing] exists in space and time”.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁶ However, there are uncreated λόγοι of time: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 B: οἱ λόγοι τοῦ χρόνου ἐν τῷ Θεῷ διαμένουσιν.

⁵⁰⁷ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 D-1181 A: Εἰ δὲ πῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἀπλῶς, ἔχει τὰ ὄντα τὸ εἶναι, ὡσπερ ὑπὸ τοῦ ποῦ εἶναι διὰ τὴν θέσιν καὶ τὸ πέρασ τῶν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς κατὰ φύσιν λόγων, καὶ ὑπὸ τὸ ποτὲ πάντως εἶναι διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐπιδέξεται (Transl. Louth, p. 137).

⁵⁰⁸ In Maximus’ terminology, ‘being’ does not include God, for he is beyond being. God exists but is not part of being, as he is not one of the beings: “being is derived from him but he is not being. For he is beyond being itself, and beyond anything that is said or conceived of him, whether simply or in a certain way” – *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180D. Transl. Louth, p. 137.

⁵⁰⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 B. (transl. Louth, p. 136).

⁵¹⁰ Betsakos, p. 109.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

III.3.4. The Definition of αἰών, the Aeon

Maximus is not content with the temporality of χρόνος, i.e. time as the number of motion: his ontology and cosmology require another form of temporality as well, the Aeon (αἰών). The Confessor's definitive formulation for both χρόνος and αἰών is one and the same, a joint definition for both terms: "Aeon is time, when its motion ceases, and time is the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion. So the Aeon, to formulate a definition, is time deprived of motion, and time is the Aeon when it is measured while in motion".⁵¹³

Continuing Aristotle, Maximus relates time (and Aeon) with motion: however, in contrast with the Stagirite, time in Maximus is not merely the measuring of a given motion ("a number of motion, a measuring of movement") but "the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion" (while Aeon has no motion, as it is "time without motion"). *The Aeon*, a reality that is otherwise foreign to the sequence of the 'before' and 'after', constitutes *time* when it is integrated in these constrains, when it is "dislocated by motion" in the world that we know. Time is "the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion" – it is the Aeon when it unfolds in the sequence of motion. The Aeon is Maximus' understanding of the eternity, but an understanding of it as infinite linear time is completely excluded by him.

Maximus reiterates Aristotle's assertions that time is the numbering/delimiting/'circumscribing' of motion, as well as that time measures deterioration, alteration and corruption:⁵¹⁴ "Time is circumscribed motion, and as a consequence the motion through one's life is altering everything in it".⁵¹⁵

Conversely, the Aeon is not defined and described separately, as an aspect of time or timelessness of a world that differs from the one we know: it is time itself when "time's motion ceases", when the sequence of the 'before' and 'after' and the transition from the past to the future ceases. The Aeon is "time deprived of motion".

⁵¹² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 Bff.: Ἀπόδειξις τοῦ, Πᾶν ὀτιοῦν ἄνευ Θεοῦ πάντως ἐν τόπῳ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ, καὶ ὅτι τὸ ἐν τόπῳ πάντως κατὰ χρόνον καὶ ἤρκται τοῦ εἶναι.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* 1164 BC: Αἰὼν γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ὅταν στή τῆς κινήσεως, καὶ χρόνος ἐστὶν ὁ αἰὼν, ὅταν μετρητὰ κινήσει φερόμενος, ὡς εἶναι τὸν μὲν αἰῶνα, ἵνα ὡς ἐν ὄρφ περιλαβὼν εἴπω, χρόνον ἐστερημένον κινήσεως, τὸν δὲ χρόνον αἰῶνα κινήσει μετροῦμενον. Note the similarity especially with Plato's *Τίμαιος* 37d, i.e. time as a "moving image of eternity".

⁵¹⁴ The measuring of ἀλλοίωσις within creation is also the measuring of corruption and decay. Cf. Völker: *Maximus Confessor*, p. 29: "Das Charakteristikum der Welt ist die gegenseitige Vernichtung ihrer Wesen, überall herrschen φθορὰ und ἀλλοίωσις, und es gilt der Grundsatz: τὸν μὲν διὰ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων γενέσεως ἢ φθορὰ ἐπιγίνεται [*Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1169 BC]. Ja, man kann geradezu sagen: εὐρήσει...ἐκ φθορᾶς καὶ εἰς τὴν φθορὰν τὴν γένεσιν ἀρχομένην καὶ λήγουσαν [*Εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν τοῦ Πάτερ Ἡμῶν*, CCSG 23 406-407]".

⁵¹⁵ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.533-535: Ὁ δὲ χρόνος, περιγραφομένη καθέστηκε κίνησις, ὅθεν καὶ ἀλλοιωτικὴ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ καθέστηκεν ἢ κατὰ τὴν ζῶν κίνησις.

Unlike Aristotle, Maximus does not seem to question the very existence of time and Aeon or to deny it, to rule that it is invalid: he confirms the existence of both realities, reminding through the interconnectedness and interdependence of their definitions that they exist, to quote the Council of Chalcedon's formulations on Christological matters, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly and inseparably* from each other.

III.3.5. Beyond Time: The 'Temporality' of στάσις ἀεκίνητος

The formulation of seemingly contradictory definitions in the aforementioned excerpt PG 91, 1164 BC and essentially the absence of independent definitions (since the premises of each definition refer to the other and depend on it, thereby creating a relational cycle of semi-definitions) echoes and reflects Maximus' apophatic stance. However, „apophaticism is not a nebulous vagueness of meaning, but our coming together in a common understanding of the signifiers with the knowledge of their cognitive distance from the experience of the signified”.⁵¹⁶ It is not the detached, independent linguistic recapitulation and understanding of the Aeon that is attempted through the definition of the Aeon, which is foreign to the direct experience of non-deified persons, but a call to the human person to enter the Aeon, to liberate one's person from the constraints of time as a sequence of motion, of the 'before' and 'after', of corruption, deterioration, necessity, death, inexistence. A starting point for this liberation is the assurance that the Aeon is not something wholly foreign, distant and strange, but simply “time deprived of motion” – the world and time as we know it, but liberated from predeterminations, necessities, corruption, distance, and Fall.

A pair of similar seemingly contradictory formulations is the στάσις ἀεκίνητος (“ever-moving repose”) and the στάσιμος ταυτοκίνησις (“stationary movement”),⁵¹⁷ which are also not merely rhetorical devices void of meaning and substance, but signify a reality crucial for Maximus, i.e. the possibility of participating in a fullness that is never fulfilled, in the ἀτέλεστος τελειότης⁵¹⁸ that is deification: θέωσις. Maximus writes that the nature/substance, when it resides in God acquires “an ever-moving repose and a stationary movement”,⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ Christos Yannaras: *Ἐξί φιλοσοφικῆς ζωγραφίης*, pp. 126.

⁵¹⁷ We have already remarked on the easily discernible influence of Gregory of Nyssa on Maximus concerning the 'ever-moving repose', but let us once again refer to Paul M. Blower's "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'", pp. 157-165.

⁵¹⁸ John of Climacus: *Κλίμαξ*, PG 88 1148 C.

⁵¹⁹ Maximus the Confessor: *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.544-546: ἐν τῷ θεῷ γινομένη, [...] στάσιν ἀεκίνητον ἔξει καὶ στάσιμον ταυτοκίνησιαν, περὶ τὸ ταῦτον καὶ ἐν καὶ μόνον ἀϊδίως γινομένην.

eternally moving around God and God only. What are the implications of the *στάσις ἀεικίνητος* for the distinction between time and the Aeon?

We have already noted that the Aeon is time itself when it is “deprived of motion”, when the motion ceases, when the sequence of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ and the transition from past to future ceases and is no more, making the present, the ‘now’ of that transition, dimensionless and not participating in any numbering of motion – albeit experienceable as Aeon. Maximus testifies the entrance of the human person into the ‘temporality’ of a dimensionless ‘now’, the dimensionless present that constitutes the Aeon, as attainable by the human person when it accepts the reality of deification. The immediacy of the relationship between the uncreated divine person and the created human person *nullifies space*, as the *distance* that constitutes space is being abolished, i.e. the *distance* that makes things and persons known as *objects* (ἀντι-κείμενο, Gegen-stand) standing opposite of the subject, thereby *creating space* or *making space known*. In the same way, this relationship nullifies *time* and *temporality* by transforming them into *Aeon*, *time without motion*, *time deprived of motion*, as any and every motion or transition between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ is nullified in the directness of the relationship (“it will be joined with the Providence in all directness”).⁵²⁰

However, *the absence of motion, transition or change* in the fullness of the relationship’s immediacy, in the interpenetration of deification, cannot be characterized as stillness: deification is not a blissful repose, and the encounter of God with his beloved human person is not to be signified as an eternal pause and stillness, but more as a restlessness (ἀεικίνησία), a present in a perpetual becoming. Exiting temporality does not need to imply entering stillness and stagnation in the same way that it does not need to imply the nullification of one’s existence, but rather the possibility of its fullness and completeness. The limitations of language are exhausted in the effort to signify such possibilities, but Maximus attempts it with *στάσις ἀεικίνητος* and *στάσιμος ταυτοκίνησία*: the *repose* that is implied by the nullification of time and space (that is, of the distance that is contrary to the fullness of immediacy) is *ever-moving*, thereby signifying a reality beyond motion and repose, movement and stillness as we know them empirically. In the case of time, this describes the possibility that time must not measure our procession towards corruption and deterioration, but that temporality can be liberated by entering the Aeon, i.e. “a time deprived of motion, a time without motion”. To be more precise, motion and time are not nullified, but *transformed, transmuted into a stationary movement*.

The fact that even the Aeon, commonly translated as ‘eternity’, has a beginning and, as such, an end, generates the question: is there a temporality

⁵²⁰ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II, CCSG 22, 65.538-539: ἀμέσως συναφθῆ τῆ προνοία.

without beginning or end, a true ‘eternity’? We have seen that *infinity* is a property that cannot be attributed to anything else than God. God’s ‘temporality’⁵²¹ cannot be the Aeon, as the Aeon has a beginning and, consequently, an end, whereas God, the uncreated, has no beginning or end. Here we would risk to say that in some instances, Maximus employs the words *αἰδιος*, *αἰδιον*, *αἰδιότης*, in order to denote such a ‘temporality’, the ‘temporality of the uncreated’ (as always, a welcome *contradictio in terminis*). However, in other contexts, Maximus uses these words and *αἰών* interchangeably (either as nouns or as epithets), leading us to the conclusion that he does not adopt a systematized distinction of *χρόνος* – *αἰών* – *αἰδιότης*.⁵²² It would be interesting and very helpful to ponder such a hypothesis, but the Confessor’s texts do not provide us with sufficient basis for that.

We will examine each of these three ‘levels of temporality’ in the following chapters.

⁵²¹ As always, in the relative and apophatic sense of such designations when attributed to the uncreated.

⁵²² For example, Maximus attributes *αἰδιότης* to the *λόγοι*, something which, seeing that the *λόγοι* are uncreated and reside in God, makes up a good case for our argument (Cf. *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 1.100, 2.27). However, in other instances and while attributing *αἰδιότης* and infinity to the divine substance, the Confessor writes that *αἰδιότης* can be granted to other substances (Cf. Ibid. 3.28: Ἡμεῖς δὲ μόνην λέγομεν τὴν θεϊαν οὐσίαν μὴ ἔχειν τι ἐναντίον, ὡς αἰδιόν τε οὐσαν καὶ ἄπειρον καὶ αἰδιότητος ταῖς ἄλλαις χαριστικῆν).

III.4. The Fundamentals of Temporality, Spatiality and Motion: Sections 35-40 from the Tenth ‘Difficulty’

We have offered an introductory overview of Maximus’ understanding of time (χρόνος) as the numbering of motion and the similarity of his definition to that of Aristotle’s, but we will have to delve deeper into Maximus’ line of thought and examine his understanding of temporality.⁵²³ In the *Book of Difficulties* (Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν), in the context of the tenth and longest ‘Difficulty’ of the book (PG 91 1105C-1205C)⁵²⁴ and more specifically in sections 35 to 40,⁵²⁵ Maximus offers an in-depth analysis of time, space, infinity and motion which we will examine thoroughly in the following pages, focusing on its direct and indirect significance for Maximus’ understanding of temporality.⁵²⁶ We have already cited and quoted crucial passages of these sections in the previous, introductory pages, but to understand Maximus’ mind we have to closely follow his train of thought through the flow of the tenth Difficulty’s text itself. As Andrew Louth writes, in the tenth Difficulty “we get a glimpse [...] of how Maximus’ mind worked. The movement of his mind is that of one who ponders and meditates, patiently drawing together all sorts of apparently diverse concerns. [...] His mind does not move straight ahead in conformity to a linear, logical argument, rather it moves sideways, and gathers together a collection of considera-

⁵²³ While we will focus on sections from the tenth Difficulty of the *Book of Difficulties* (Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν), it is true that Maximus’ *Μυσταγωγία* also contains many passages illustrating the Confessor’s understanding of time and space – primarily as the space of the church and the time of the liturgy. In analyzing Maximus’ theory of time, will not focus on the *Μυσταγωγία* for two reasons: (a) Pascal Mueller-Jourdan has already analyzed Maximus’ ideas on spatiotemporality in the *Mystagogia* in his monograph *Typologie spatio-temporelle* comprehensively, offering interesting comparisons with the Aristotelian commentators, and (b) the *Μυσταγωγία* focuses on the church building and the liturgy, offering insights on temporality mainly in this liturgical context, while we will focus on Maximus’ understanding of time (and, inevitably, space as well) in the context of his ontology and cosmology.

⁵²⁴ Which, in the distinction between the two books on Difficulties, belongs to the earlier and longer *Ambigua ad Johannem*.

⁵²⁵ As numbered by Andrew Louth in his *Maximus the Confessor*, following Eriugena’s index from his Latin translation of the book (and his shorter section titles). These sections are located in PG 91 1176 D-1188 C, and their translation in pp. 134-139 of Louth’s *Maximus the Confessor*. In this chapter, we will quote and refer to this translation of sections 35-40 without further mention of specific page numbers. A general introduction to the tenth Difficulty is offered in pp. 91-93 of Louth’s *Maximus the Confessor*.

⁵²⁶ While Pascal Mueller-Jourdan’s *Typologie spatio-temporelle* focuses primarily on the *Μυσταγωγία*, the author has employed these and other parts of the tenth Difficulty as a basis in order to expound Maximus’ understanding of spatiotemporality; a synopsis of his conclusions are to be found in his paper “Where and When as Metaphysical Prerequisites for Creation in Ambiguum 10”. Our analysis of the tenth Difficulty will not depend on Mueller-Jourdan’s approach as such (as it has different starting points), and a point-by-point juxtaposition of each element of Mueller-Jourdan’s train of thought to ours concerning these specific sections would be most impractical. Instead, the reader should keep in mind throughout this chapter that Mueller-Jourdan discusses the status of spatiotemporality as discerned in the tenth *Difficulty* mainly in pp. 39-71 of his *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, often arriving at similar conclusions in the analysis of said passages.

tions that are gradually made to converge”.⁵²⁷ Maximus’ understanding of the nature of time emerges out of these “apparently diverse concerns”.

III.4.1. Section 35:⁵²⁸ Creation’s εὐκοσμία as Disclosing its Originator

In this section, Maximus offers valuable elucidations concerning the nature of the relationship between created existence and the uncreated Creator. While time measures corruption and decay, i.e. the march of creation towards destruction and death –or, more concisely, while corruption and death manifest in the passage of time, in the ‘horizon’ of time–, time itself is affirmed as very good (just like the totality of creation). Time contributes to the order of creation, to the beauty of the *cosmos* (εὐκοσμία) and manifests it while participating in it.

The ‘Saints’ are the ones who have attained (i.e. who were granted with) the capability to discern and behold what is already there to be beheld: the nature of creation as being in relation to its source of existence (i.e. a source outside of creation), not as being definitively subject to the incompleteness that results in death and inexistence.⁵²⁹ This true nature of existence is manifested as the fine order of the world (εὐκοσμία) and as the interconnectedness of everything (τὴν ἀναλογίαν καὶ τὴν χρείαν, ἣν ἕκαστον παρέχεται τῷ παντί). The capability to behold these traits of existence (and existence as being in constant relation with its source) emerges when one is not confined to only discerning created beings as such, i.e. beings in themselves, but discerns the λόγοι according to which they have been fashioned (καθ’ ὃν δεδημιούργηται λόγον δεδημιουργημένα). This discloses beings not merely as objects or things, but simultaneously as intentions and utterances of their Creator and as a channel to the restoration of communion with him.

Maximus asserts that “what has come to be is found to be not otherwise than good beside what now is”, that creation needs no “addition or subtraction” in order to be good. Not being the cause of itself, creation is not complete in the

⁵²⁷ Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 91.

⁵²⁸ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1176 BC. Θεωρία φυσική, δι’ ἧς τὸν Θεὸν ἐκ τῶν κτισμάτων οἱ ἅγιοι ἐδιδάσκοντο.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.* 1176 B: “So therefore when the Saints behold the creation, and its fine order and proportion and the need that each part has of the whole, and how all the perfect parts have been fashioned wisely and with providence in accordance with the λόγος of their fashioning, and how what has come to be is found to be not otherwise than good beside what now is, and is in need of no addition or subtraction in order to be otherwise good, they are taught from the things he has made that there is One who fashioned them”. Louth (p. 134) translates “καθ’ ὃν δεδημιούργηται λόγον δεδημιουργημένα” as “in accordance with reason that fashioned them”, but we deem it necessary to stress that Maximus employs the word λόγος here, referring to both one of the everyday meanings of λόγος καθ’ ὃν δεδημιούργηται, “the reason for which they have been fashioned”, and the philosophy of the λόγοι.

sense that God is complete. However, this incompleteness does not constitute a deficit that makes creation ‘evil’ or contrary to the will of its Creator. The motion of the created towards its beginning and end, its source and purpose (a motion that can be clearly discerned by those who can contemplate the λόγοι of beings) amplifies the fact that creation is ‘good’, as it tends to the attainment of completeness.

Through permanence⁵³⁰ (διαμονή), order (τάξις), position (θέσις) and the ‘manner of being’ (διεξαγωγή), the tendency of the created towards its restored nature (i.e. in communion with its uncreated source) is disclosed.⁵³¹ The reign of corruption and death and the absolutization of createdness’ tendency towards nonrelation and inexistence would reveal a world that is devoid of these traits. However, and while the mutability that results to corruption, death and inexistence is painfully present in the world,⁵³² creation’s laws, its order, its spatiality and its διαμονή reveal createdness as eager to attain its completeness, not as eager to slip towards inexistence. The εὐκοσμία of the universe, “the course of the stars proceeding in the same way”, is a perpetual reminder of this aspect of creation.

The importance of temporality in the context of creation’s εὐκοσμία is apparent in this culmination of Maximus’ argument.⁵³³ The “circle of the year” (κύκλος τοῦ ἑνιαυτοῦ) as stemming from the order and motion of the universe, the motion of the heavenly bodies, also discloses the created world to the ones contemplating the λόγοι (i.e. the Saints) as being in constant relationship with its Creator and as revealing his providence. The fact that they, the Saints, recognize God as provident (προνοητὴν ἠπίστασαν εἶναι τῶν ὄντων) signifies his being in constant relationship with creation (him as being *in* creation *through* created beings *while* being wholly Other), a relationship that grants creation with fine order and beauty. The use of the word προνοητὴν does not entail binding the created to necessity as in *predetermination*. Maximus’ most famous contribution to the development of the ecclesial testimony is the philosophical fortification of the concept of freedom, and human freedom in particular (the will); in Maximus’

⁵³⁰ ‘Permanence’ in this sense does not mean, of course, eternal existence/existence without end, but a certain and visible stability in the context of creation’s duration in time.

⁵³¹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1176 C: “So, too, when they see the permanence, the order and position of what has come to be, and its manner of being, in accordance with which each being, according to its proper form, is preserved unconfused and without any disorder; and the course of the stars proceeding in the same way, with no alteration of any kind”. (Transl. Louth, as is the case for the whole of this chapter.)

⁵³² I.e. not the motion according to nature, but the deviation from this natural motion.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*: “and the circle of the year proceeding in an orderly manner according to the periodic return of the [heavenly bodies] from and to their own place, and the equal yearly proportion of the nights and days, with their mutual increase and decrease, taking place according to a measure that is neither too small nor too great, they understand that behind everything there is providence, and this they acknowledge as God, the fashioner of all”.

thinking, *providence* means *care*, *reference* and *relation*, not *predetermination* eliminating the possibility of freedom. We come to acknowledge this providence-signifying-presence by beholding the order of the universe in the “equal proportion of the nights and days (with their mutual increase and decrease)”, in the orderly passage of time, in the numbering of motion as time (χρόνος).

We have seen in Aristotle’s theory of time that it is the human being (the ‘soul’) that numbers motion. It is through human consciousness that motion is manifested as time, that the overall motion is understood and manifested as the transition from past to future, from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’. Without human consciousness, without the ‘soul’, there is no numbering of the motion that takes place; there is no time. We have no ground to accept that Maximus’ thought differs in this aspect from that of Aristotle’s: Maximus does never imply that this ‘measuring’ of motion, the ‘number’ by which motion is circumscribed that is time,⁵³⁴ takes place by itself; a measuring requires the one who measures. In this sense, the human person does not only *behold* the divine order of the universe that is disclosed through the equal distribution of time, but he also *actualizes* it: once again, the human person acts as a *mediator* between createdness and the Creator, as the field in which the vital relationship of these takes place and is realized.

III.4.2. Section 36:⁵³⁵ Creation’s Temporal Beginning

As we have examined in chapter II.1., the ancient Greek worldview did not include a definitive beginning of the world; matter itself (although not necessarily in its current form) was thought to be infinite, and a *creatio ex nihilo* would be considered a folly, thus eliminating the possibility of a created-uncreated distinction. However, notions of a beginningless world have resurfaced in the Christian world at various points, and Maximus devotes this section to annulling that idea. In doing so, he expounds his insights on the relationship of temporal beginning and cause (ἀρχή), end and purpose (τέλος), on motion as characteristic of everything that is created and on the extent up to which the God of ecclesial testimony can be described as the ‘unmoved mover’.

There are two points in the first passage of this section⁵³⁶ that are of interest to us. First, there is an “understanding” of the uncreated’s traces in crea-

⁵³⁴ *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 91 1085 A, 1.5.

⁵³⁵ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1176 D-1177 B. Θεωρία φυσικὴ περὶ τοῦ ἀρχὴν ἔχειν τὸν κόσμον καὶ γένεσιν, καὶ πᾶν ἄλλο μετὰ Θεόν.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.* 1176 D: “For who, seeing the beauty and greatness of God’s creatures, does not immediately understand that He has brought all this into being, as the beginning and source of beings and their maker? In his

tion through the “mind”, but this cannot possibly be enough. This ‘intellectual’ reference to the Creator (πρὸς αὐτὸν μόνον ἀναδραμεῖται τῇ διανοίᾳ), however powerful it might be, *must* be left behind (ταῦτα ἀφείξ κάτω), because it cannot suffice for the “transition” that is longed for (ὅτι μὴδὲ πέφυκε τῆς διανοίας χωρεῖν τὴν ὅλην διάβασιν); the contemplation of the world in its true nature through the λόγοι produces a yearning, a passion, a strong desire for the personal and direct encounter and relationship (λαβεῖν ποθῶν ἀμέσως) with the one who is traced through these λόγοι, with the person(s) of God. One’s tracing of the creative person in his creations constitutes an indirect encounter, which nonetheless gives birth to an intense yearning for a real personal encounter in all directness and immediacy (ἀμέσως) with the object of his desire, an encounter that cannot be compromised with intellectual ‘understanding’ (i.e. the grasping of a concept, however profound it might be). This is the second point to be stressed: that, according to Maximus, the absolute otherness of God can be known *through his creations and actions*, through the mediation of its effects (ὄν διὰ μέσων τῶν ἔργων ἐγνώρισε), i.e. through divine activities.⁵³⁷ The unapproachable substance of the divine person(s) is, of course, completely different from that of created beings (just like the οὐσία of a painter is radically different from the οὐσία of his painting). However, the hypostatic actualization of this unapproachable substance and nature can be encountered “through the mediation of its effects”. If by ‘mysticism’ we are to understand radically subjective and ‘ecstatic’ experiences of the individual, then this relationship that Maximus describes has not much to do with ‘mysticism’: it is a distinct approach to the world, a distinct mode for the access to reality pertaining to the primary questions of ontology.

Apart from these points, we should note that, according to Maximus, it is not only creation-as-a-whole that has its “beginning and source” in the uncreated God (meaning that individual beings exist and survive independently inside a self-sufficient and self-sustained creation which, in turn, is their individual “beginning and source”), but each and every *individual being* has its “beginning and source” in the uncreated person(s)⁵³⁸ – and consequently, as Maximus will go on to say, its end and purpose. As such, the strive for the restoration of full communion with the source of existence does not merely characterize the impersonal ‘totality of creation’ as one whole with possibly different internal relations, but

understanding he returns to Him alone, leaving behind all these things. For though he cannot accomplish the complete transition with his mind, or receive without intermediary the object of his desires which he knows through the mediation of its effects [...].”

⁵³⁷ Note that, while God’s substance is single and simple, Maximus explicitly affirms the presence of many and different activities (ἐνέργειαι), seeing a substance-activities distinction as obvious. Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1257 A: οἷς ἀπίροις ἐνθεορῶν ἐνεργείας Θεοῦ [...] τῶν ὧν ἀντιλαμβάνεται θεῖον ἐνεργεῖων διαφοράς.

⁵³⁸ τῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ κτισμάτων [...] ὡς ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν τῶν ὅλων καὶ ποιητήν. God is not merely the cause and the beginning of κτίσις-as-such, but of all the κτίσματα themselves.

each and every individual being. Therefore, the human person's mediating cosmological function refers to each and every individual being, each and every separate otherness that is to be restored as a perfect otherness in perfect communion, and not merely to the aggregate-otherness that is 'creation' in comparison and reference to the otherness of the uncreated.

Writing on the erroneous notion that the world could be without beginning, the Confessor analyzes important aspects of his philosophy of motion. Referring to the person that contemplates these subjects, Maximus says that:

he can readily put away the error that the world is without beginning, as he reasons truly that everything that moves must certainly begin to move. No motion is without beginning, since it is not without cause. For motion has a beginning, and a cause from which it is called and an end to which it is drawn. If the beginning of the movement of every moving thing is its motion, and its end the cause to which what is moved is borne (for nothing is moved without cause), then none of the beings is unmoved, except that which moves first (for that which moves first is completely unmoved, because it is without beginning), and none of the beings then is without beginning, because none is unmoved.⁵³⁹

Maximus states that (a) everything that is in motion has started being in motion at a certain point (*πᾶν κινούμενον πάντως καὶ ἤρξατο τῆς κινήσεως*), for there is a first cause for every motion, and the presence of a cause also means that there is also a temporal beginning (*πᾶσα δὲ κίνησις οὐκ ἄναρχος, ἐπειδὴ οὐδὲ ἀναίτιος*). Note the correlation between temporal beginning and cause: this is not a special theory of the Confessor but a direct implication of the use of the Greek language for philosophical thinking (i.e. the semantic frame of that enquiry), for, as we have noted, *ἀρχή* means both temporal beginning and first cause, i.e. *αἰτία*. An *ἀρχή* (temporal beginning) without an *ἀρχή* (first cause) would be inconceivable for Greek thought, it would be outside the limits of its world because of it being outside the limits of its language.⁵⁴⁰

The Church Father then proceeds to clarify that (b) the beginning and first cause of the beings in motion is the one who has set them to motion (*ἀρχὴν γὰρ ἔχει τὸ κινούων*). This first cause is also the beings' end and purpose: it calls and draws them to it (*αἰτίαν ἔχει τὸ καλοῦν τε καὶ ἔλκων*), and their motion is directed towards it, it being their end and purpose (*πρὸς ὃ καὶ κινεῖται τέλος*). What has a beginning does also have an end, what has a cause does also have a purpose (*ἀρχὴ-τέλος*). Therefore, (c) the end *is* also the cause, for beings in mo-

⁵³⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177 A. Transl. Louth, as is the case with every quote from *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν* in this chapter.

⁵⁴⁰ Note also Maximus' identification of beginning/cause and end/purpose as well, in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1084 A: καὶ ταυτὸν δεῖξας [ὁ Θεὸς] τῇ ἀρχῇ τὸ τέλος, καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῷ τέλει, μᾶλλον δὲ ταυτὸν ἀρχὴν οὐσαν καὶ τέλος.

tion move towards their own cause (τέλος ἢ πρὸς ἣν φέρεται τὸ κινούμενον αἰτία).

Provided that the beginning and cause of the motion of everything that is in motion is that which initiates this motion (εἰ δὲ πάσης κινήσεως παντὸς κινουμένου τὸ κινοῦν ἐστὶν ἀρχή), and seeing that nothing moves without a cause and a beginning (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀναιτίως κινεῖται) and that no being at all is without motion (οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἀκίνητον – i.e. change, alteration, locomotion, origination, corruption, in short *existence*), Maximus concludes that (d) no being is without beginning, as no being is without motion: οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἀκίνητον.

However, there is an exception⁵⁴¹ to this, which of course is the one who initiates the first motion in the first place (εἰ μὴ τὸ πρότως κινοῦν). This prime mover is unmoved and motionless, for he has no temporal beginning and no external cause, being the cause of himself (τὸ γὰρ πρότως κινοῦν πάντως ἀκίνητον, ὅτι καὶ ἄναρχον).⁵⁴² If he had an external cause prior to him or a temporal beginning denoting the starting point of his motion, he would by definition not be the prime unmoved mover and the initiator of the first motion. Of course, this syllogism of Maximus' is purely Aristotelian in nature, alluding to Aristotle's prime unmoved mover.⁵⁴³ A point of interest is Maximus' insistence on correlating this subject to the subject of temporality. For example, while Aristotle writes that everything that is in motion is moved by something/someone,⁵⁴⁴ Maximus prefers to focus on the starting point of this motion, on the fact that it has had a beginning⁵⁴⁵ – in his attempt to expound that the world as a whole has a beginning, that the world is an outcome of *creatio ex nihilo*.

If everything that has a beginning has also an end, then there can be no eternity in the sense of unlimited duration. Time measures motion, and motion has always a beginning: therefore, it must also have an end, excluding the possibility of temporal infinity (the existence of infinity *as such* is excluded, as we will see in section 39). Eternity in the sense of unlimited duration cannot be as-

⁵⁴¹ 'Exception' is not an accurate choice of words, as for Maximus God is not 'one of the beings', for he is beyond being (ὑπερεῖναι). Again, this is not merely a rhetorical or literary device to denote the greatness of the Godhead, but a concise formulation on Maximus' part, respecting and underlining the ontological difference between creation and the uncreated. The implications of the concept of κτίσις instead of, merely, κόσμος are not always apparent, but they are nonetheless vital for the consistence and coherence of ontological enquiry in that context.

⁵⁴² As we have seen, this logical necessity of the Aristotelian God being motionless and unmoved is transcended in Maximus' worldview involving the possibility of ontological freedom, as the Confessor's God is simultaneously ever-moving and in motion, his distinct actualizations being in constant and perpetual interpenetration (περιχώρησις – cf. Törönen pp. 121-124 for this term).

⁵⁴³ As Andrew Louth remarks as well (*Maximus the Confessor*, p. 207 n. 96), the preconditions for Maximus' train of thought are located in Aristotle's *Φυσικά*, book VIII chapter 5, and *Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*, 1073a 23-28, 32-34 et al.

⁵⁴⁴ *Φυσικά*, 256a 13-14: ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ κινούμενον ὑπὸ τινός τε κινεῖσθαι.

⁵⁴⁵ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177 A: πᾶν κινούμενον πάντως καὶ ἤρξατο τῆς κινήσεως

cribed to the uncreated either (in this sense, the uncreated is *not* eternal): this unending duration would also be the measure/number of a certain motion, but no motion of this sort is to be ascribed to the uncreated.⁵⁴⁶ Ever-being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) and ever-well-being (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) are used to describe man's and creation's *redemption* from the cycle of motion that leads to corruption (i.e., they are employed relatively, only in comparison to the current state of temporality), and they are similarly ascribed to the uncreated in the context of an apophatic stance, merely from the viewpoint of humanity. What the Confessor acknowledges as non-sensible realities are created and in motion as well, possessing a distinct type of temporality.⁵⁴⁷ Every kind of being is moved⁵⁴⁸ (while God is not 'one of the beings'), but intelligible beings⁵⁴⁹ are moved "in accordance with knowledge and understanding",⁵⁵⁰ in accordance with their constituent powers (συστατικαὶ δυνάμεις), i.e. mind (νοῦς) and reason (λόγος).

III.4.3. Section 37:⁵⁵¹ The Motion of Substance, Quantity and Quality

This section of Maximus' tenth 'Difficulty' explains why the expansion and contraction of substance (οὐσία), as well as quantity and quality, must necessarily have a beginning and cause (ἄναρχοι εἶναι οὐ δύνανται). Maximus understands the expansion and contraction of substance as a downward and upward motion on an implicit Porphyrian tree,⁵⁵² on a scale of the universals, from the most general to the most specific.⁵⁵³ We have stated that, as there is no οὐσία

⁵⁴⁶ Again, this ever-moving 'perpetual interpenetration' stresses that to describe the uncreated as motionless still ascribes characteristics and criteria of createdness to the uncreated. *Beyond* motion would be a more accurate way to formulate this.

⁵⁴⁷ We will analyze Maximus' concept of the Aeon in the next chapter.

⁵⁴⁸ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177 A: πάντα γὰρ κινεῖται τὰ ὁπωσοῦν ὄντα.

⁵⁴⁹ A detailed analysis of the ontological status of Maximus' sensible/intelligible distinction and of what he means by intelligible realities in the context of philosophical consistency is outside the scope of our study: when encountering these terms, we will be content in integrating them into our train of thought and in proceeding onwards. However, we will attempt to approach them as *modes* later in our study.

⁵⁵⁰ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177 AB: "For every kind of being is moved, except for the sole cause which is unmoved and transcends all things, those beings that are intelligent and rational in a way in accordance with knowledge and understanding, because they are not knowledge itself or understanding itself. For neither is their knowledge or understanding their being, but something they acquire as they consider their being with correct judgment in accordance with mind and reason (what I call their constituent powers)."

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1177 B-1180 A. Θεωρία περὶ συστολῆς καὶ διαστολῆς οὐσίας, ποιότητός τε καὶ ποσότητος, καθ' ἣν ἄναρχοι εἶναι οὐ δύνανται.

⁵⁵² Cf. Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 207 n. 98. The concept of the Porphyrian tree (Tree of Porphyry or Arbor Porphyriana) derives from Porphyry's (third century AD) introduction (Εἰσαγωγή) to Aristotle's Categories and is a 'scale of being', a division of each substance into *genus* and *differentiae* until no further division is possible.

⁵⁵³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177C: "For it is moved from the most universal kind through the more universal kinds to the forms, by which and in which everything is naturally divided, proceeding as far as the most specific forms, by a process of expansion [διαστολή], circumscribing its being towards what is below,

ἀνυπόστατος, substance is not understood as being a *thing*, ‘something’ residing ‘somewhere’, which excludes a conception of its movement as spatial locomotion in the way that this is experienced by the hypostatic actualization of the substance.⁵⁵⁴ However, and as Maximus affirms that every created being has a beginning, a cause and a substance and is in motion, he traces the motion of even the most abstract and general of substances in their ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’ on the scale of the universals.⁵⁵⁵ This motion of the substance, this ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’ of the substance has “both a beginning and an end”, it is “not at all capable of being defined by limitlessness”.⁵⁵⁶ Were the ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’ of the substances without a beginning and end, i.e. limitless and infinite, both time (the numbering of that expanding and contracting motion) and its cosmological partner, space, would be infinite as well. As we will see in later sections, Maximus excludes the possibility of infinity from creation.

Maximus studiously ascribes (a) temporal beginning, (b) generation, (c) beginning of motion, (d) cause, (e) end, (f) purpose and of course (g) motion to everything created, and the *substances* of everything created, however general and abstract, could not have escaped this attribution, leaving the semantic circumscription devoid of philosophical realism. He proceeds to argue that even general and at times abstract categories like ‘substance’, ‘quantity’ and ‘quality’ are subject to all the fundamental characteristics of createdness. Expansion and contraction are both a λόγος and a τρόπος,⁵⁵⁷ a (pre)existent ‘intention’ and tendency *and* the distinct mode of its actual realization. It is not only the substance that is characterized by the motion of ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’, but *quantity* and *quality* as well: “every kind” of quantity can be expanded, without of course attaining infinity, and again contracted, without losing its natural/substantial form, i.e. the συμφυῆς εἶδος (which would mean that it would stop belonging to same substance any more, as there is a strong correlation between οὐσία/φύσις and εἶδος).⁵⁵⁸ The same is true of quality, of *every kind* of quality: the motion of

and again it is gathered together from the most specific forms, retreating through the more universal, up to the most universal kind, by a process of contraction [συστολή], defining its being towards what is above.”

⁵⁵⁴ We should reiterate here that the substance and the hypostasis are not to be understood as two different ‘things’, but as two different *modes*, the *mode of existence* of homogeneity the *mode of existence* of the particular.

⁵⁵⁵ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1177 B: “But that which is simply called being itself (ἡ ἀπλῶς λεγόμενη οὐσία) is not only the being (οὐσία) of those things subject to change and corruption, moved in accordance with change and corruption, but also the being of all beings whatever that have been moved and are moved in accordance with the reason and mode of expansion and contraction”.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 1177 C: ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος ἔχουσα δεικνύται, τὸν τῆς ἀπειρίας οὐδ’ ὅλως ἐπιδέξασθαι δυναμένη λόγον. “Thus it can be described either way, either from above or from below, and is shown as possessing both beginning and end, not at all capable of being defined by limitlessness”.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 1177 B: τῷ κατὰ τὴν διαστολὴν καὶ συστολὴν λόγῳ τε καὶ τρόπῳ.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 1177 CD: “So it has quantity, not just the quantity of those things subject to change and corruption which are perceived to increase and decrease in every way naturally, but also every kind of quantity that can be circumscribed when it is moved by tightening and loosening and given form according to expansion by partial

‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’ is not only present in cases where such a thing would be obvious and expected, but in all created things that are subject to the laws of createdness, τῷ τρεπτῷ τὲ καὶ σκεδαστῷ.⁵⁵⁹ Maximus insists on ascribing the motion of ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’ to *any* substance, quantity and quality in order to illustrate that motion is the primary characteristic of createdness even in the cases where this is not obvious and expected, even in substances that are not visibly subject to change, motion, origination, corruption. For the Confessor, to be in motion is to have been originated, to have a cause and to have a temporal beginning (and also to have a spatial status, an end and a purpose).

That is exactly his point and his argument: (a) if substances, qualities and quantities are subject to ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’, then they cannot be unmoved and motionless, they are by definition in motion (as this ‘expanding’ and ‘contracting’ is a motion in itself). The presence of motion signifies that there has been a beginning to that motion, and everything that has had a beginning in its motion has been generated at some point in time. Everything that is in motion has “received” its motion and its being (τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὸ κινεῖσθαι λαβόν), the implication being that this motion and being has been received from the one that is ingenerate and unmoved, i.e. uncreated (ἐκ τοῦ μόνου καὶ ἐνὸς ἀγενήτου τε καὶ ἀκινήτου). Maximus concludes this section with a wordplay denoting the necessary correlation between (temporal) beginning and cause: he writes that everything that has had a beginning in its existence (τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ εἶναι γένεσιν ἠργμένον, ‘ἠργμένον’ being the participle perfect of ἄρχω/ἄρχομαι, i.e. ἀρχή) cannot possibly be without a cause (οὐδαμῶς ἀναρχον εἶναι δύναται, ‘ἄν-αρχον’ meaning ‘without an ἀρχή’).⁵⁶⁰ Essentially, he writes that everything that has had an ἀρχή must also have ἀρχή, a tautology that we mentioned earlier and one that illustrates how language *dictates* philosophy (or,

differences, without however flowing out into limitlessness, and again gathered together as it retreats in accordance with its kind, without however losing its natural form”.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. 1177 D: “Similarly with quality which is not just that moved by change in beings subject to change and corruption, but every kind of quality, moved according to difference in what is changeable and soluble, and receptive of expansion and contraction”.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. 1180 A: “For no-one can say that anything that can naturally be scattered and gathered together again either by reason or force can reasonably be thought to be completely unmoved. If it is not unmoved, it is not without beginning. If it is not without beginning, then clearly it is not ingenerate, but just as everyone knows that the motion of what is moved must have had a beginning, so anything that has come into being must have begun to come into being, receiving its being and movement from the sole One who has not come into being and is unmoved. That which has begun to come into being could not in any way be without beginning”. As the reader can witness, Andrew Louth translates οὐδαμῶς ἀναρχον εἶναι δύναται as “could not in any way be without beginning”, but given that the previous sentence mentioned the origination of being and motion from God, I think that ἀναρχος here should be translated as “without cause”. The sentence “That which has begun to come into being could not in any way be without beginning” would be too much of a tautology, even for Maximus.

adversely, one that illustrates the innate philosophical conciseness of language).⁵⁶¹

III.4.4. Section 38:⁵⁶² Maximus' Space-Time Continuum

In this most interesting section, the Confessor expounds his theory on the correlation of space and time, a view that is far from being taken for granted on the part of his contemporaries: according to him, everything that possesses a spatial status also possesses a temporal one and vice versa, spatiality and temporality being the dimensions of the motion.⁵⁶³ As the motion of created beings and creation is a continuous one (its cessation causing a collapse into inexistence – with the exception of deification, the *στάσις ἀεικίνητος*), we would be accurate in describing Maximus' view on spatiotemporality as the space-time continuum of motion. The section's purpose is to prove that “everything apart from God exists in a place and, therefore, necessarily also in time, as well as that that which exists in a place has necessarily had a temporal beginning”.⁵⁶⁴

The Confessor writes that the ‘being’ of beings itself exists “in a certain way and not simply” (καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων, τὸ πῶς ἔχον, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἀπλῶς), that every being possesses ‘howness’ in order to exist, it possesses the otherness of its particularity, of its actual realization (i.e., the substance's hypostatization). This is another way of saying that there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, that every substance (οὐσία) exists insofar as it is to be encountered in particular actualizations (ὑπόστασις). Maximus categorically excludes any other possibility: he accepts the reality of substance and employs it as an ontological category, but explicitly states that the substance does not exist “simply”, without the ‘howness’ of an actual realization, of the particular. Without the particular, i.e. the “certain way” of the substance's existence, the substance is but a mere abstraction. This, the particular, is the “first form of the substance's description”, and it reveals that the origination of beings entails a temporal beginning in the case of their substances as well (ἤρχθαι κατ’ οὐσίαν καὶ γένεσιν τὰ ὄντα).⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Maximus' treatment of ἀρχὴ and τέλος in relation to motion in *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.268-283.

⁵⁶² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 B-1181 A.

⁵⁶³ However, this is only true of the *sensible* creation, as Maximus attributes another form of temporality to intelligible beings, but not exactly spatiality: this is substituted by other forms of ontological *distance*, which we will examine in later chapters.

⁵⁶⁴ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 B: Ἀπόδειξις τοῦ, Πᾶν ὅτιοῦν ἄνευ Θεοῦ πάντως ἐν τόπῳ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ, καὶ ὅτι τὸ ἐν τόπῳ πάντως κατὰ χρόνον καὶ ἤρκειται τοῦ εἶναι.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 1180 B: “I should say, too, that the fact that beings exist in a certain way and not simply—that this, indeed, is the first form of circumscription—is a powerful factor in proving that beings have a beginning in respect of being and generation”.

Maximus means that (a) the fact that the substances exist insofar as their actual realizations (the particulars) exist and (b) that these particulars have been originated in time and possess a temporal beginning entails (c) that the substances themselves have originated in time, that they have had a temporal beginning and exist in time (ἐν χρόνῳ, as the title of the section puts it).

Maximus is eager to add that each and every being⁵⁶⁶ (except from “the one divine being” who, as the Confessor writes, is not ‘one of the beings’, for it exists beyond being itself, i.e. creation, the mode of createdness and creation’s inescapable terminology) is in all cases thought of as being somewhere, which is always and necessarily bound to being at a certain point in time.⁵⁶⁷ Maximus does not merely offer an observation; his use of words underlines his insistence on the projected fact. In one short sentence, he repeats four times the inescapable character of the correlation of every kind of existence with a spatial and a temporal status: “every kind of being whatever”, “in every case” and “certainly”, “necessarily” (παντὸς τοῦ ὅποσοῦν ὄντος – πάντη τε καὶ πάντως – ἐξ ἀνάγκης). Spatiality is a precondition of beings, it does not take place *after* the emergence of beings but is included in their emergence itself, it is “already thought of as being somewhere” (προεπινοεῖται τὸ ποῦ). Something does not first exist and *then, apart from that* it is (being thought as being) located somewhere: the fact of its existence itself necessarily entails its τὸ ποῦ, its ‘whereness’. The same is inescapably and necessarily true of τὸ πότε, every being’s temporal status: the existence of every being whatsoever entails it being in time, it possessing ‘whenness’ (πάντη τε καὶ πάντως ἐξ ἀνάγκης συνεπινοεῖται τὸ πότε), which is not merely one of the attributes of existing, but an inseparable characteristic thereof. As we can see, the event of existing is itself bound to a continuum of spatiotemporality, a conjunction of spatial and temporal status through which the event of existing is actualized, manifested and disclosed: without this spatiotemporal continuum of each being, there is “no kind of being whatever”, to paraphrase the Confessor.

The reader should note that in the original Greek text, Maximus generally tends to refrain from using the words *space* (τόπος) and *time* (χρόνος) in this section, preferring the use of ‘*the where*’ (τὸ ποῦ) and ‘*the when*’ (τὸ πότε)⁵⁶⁸ instead. We would be more accurate in speaking about the ‘whereness’ and ‘whenness’⁵⁶⁹ in Maximus, not about ‘space’ and ‘time’. His choice is in line

⁵⁶⁶ Παντὸς τοῦ ὅποσοῦν ὄντος, i.e. each and every being that exists *in a certain way*.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. 1180 B: “Who is ignorant of the fact that every kind of being whatever, apart from the divine and unique being, which properly speaking exists beyond being itself, is already thought of as being somewhere, and that, together with this, it is necessarily thought of as certainly existing at some time?”

⁵⁶⁸ Erroneously transcribed as ποτέ in the PG, meaning ‘never’ instead of ‘when’.

⁵⁶⁹ Pascal Mueller-Jourdan and others have also employed the terms ‘whenness’ and ‘whereness’ to describe the notions of ποῦ and πότε in the tenth Difficulty.

with his general commitment to write on the *mode* of things, on their ‘howness’, and not to theorize about abstract *objects*. The nouns ‘space’ and ‘time’, in their philosophical context, are mere abstractions; the question concerning the *where?* and *when?* of beings is a much more concrete question, contributing to the realism of Maximus’ enquiry and acting as its precondition. Interestingly enough, the Confessor links in his line of thought the ‘wheness’ and ‘whereness’ of beings with their ‘howness’ (τὸ πῶς, τοῦ ὁπωσοῦν ὄντος), he handles these questions as dimensions of the ‘howness’ of things, further intensifying his focus on the *mode of existence*, and not the ‘whatness’ of beings, as the *locus* of ontological enquiry.

Maximus clarifies that the conjunction of spatiality and temporality, of ‘the where’ and ‘the when’, is not just a matter of coexistence; the one *is* a precondition for the other.⁵⁷⁰ These are ‘simultaneous’ (ἅμα) dimensions of reality, which would not be conceivable without them; spatiotemporality is necessary for reality (τῶν οὐκ ἄνευ τυγγάνουσιν). It is the very nature of spatiality and temporality to coexist (συνεπινοεῖσθαι πέφυκεν) and it would not be possible to separate them or to deprive the one of the other (οὐδαμῶς διώρισται κατὰ στέρησιν).

It is interesting that Maximus’ wording consistently subjects these ontological/cosmological axioms and observations to the limitations of human understanding: he speaks of how things are “thought of/already thought of/simultaneously thought of to be” etc. (ἐπινοεῖται, προεπινοεῖται, συνεπινοεῖται), not of how things *are*. Maximus’ texts do not allow us to presume that he juxtaposes how people *think* things are with how things *really* are, which he would explain elsewhere if this were the case. Instead, his insistence on this wording seems to echo, once again, his apophatic stance. Human persons can understand the world in the measure of their capabilities, “in the measure of their language”,⁵⁷¹ but this understanding will always be unable to exhaust the truth of how things *really are*. However, *this is the only measure we possess*, and the only way of understanding we have: language, thinking and understanding do truly reflect and ‘circumscribe’ the truth of reality – in their measure, according to the limitations of the semantic function’s capabilities, which however *do* ‘iconize’ truth.⁵⁷² The fact that Maximus insists on this wording does not mean

⁵⁷⁰ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 BC: “For space cannot be thought of, separate from and deprived of time (for they go together and one cannot be without the other), nor can time be separated from and deprived of space, for they are naturally thought of together”.

⁵⁷¹ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 189 B (p. 122, fn.): τῷ μέτρῳ τῆς ἡμετέρας γλώσσας ἀκολουθῶν, (οὐ γὰρ ὑπερβῆναι ταύτην δυνατόν ἡμῖν).

⁵⁷² The reader can find an interesting recent contribution to Maximus’ understanding of the notion of truth in Georgi Kapriev’s article „Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Maximus Confessor” (in: Alia Mensching-Estakhr & Michael Städtler (eds): *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Die gebrochene Tradition metaphysischen Denkens. Festschrift*).

that knowledge is impossible or that our knowledge is false: he simply reminds us to be mindful of this fundamental distinction, to never lose sight of it, and therefore to never abandon the ontological enquiry's prerequisites for realism.

The Confessor proceeds to discuss some definitions of space and time, of 'the where' and of 'the when'. Everything is manifested and disclosed (πάντα δέικνυται) as being subject to spatiality, to 'the where' (ὕπὸ τὸ ποῦ), for every created thing exists in space (ὡς ἐν τόπῳ ὄντα). Everything is 'in space', because the totality of everything cannot be greater than the whole of the universe, i.e. the sum of beings cannot exceed the universe itself.⁵⁷³ As a consequence, no created thing could be *beyond* the universe and not be circumscribed by space. The universe (τὸ πᾶν) cannot but contain everything (τὸ πᾶν); it would be both irrational and impossible to presume that the sum of everything (τὸ πᾶν) is greater than the universe (τὸ πᾶν), that τὸ πᾶν τοῦ παντός could be beyond τὸ πᾶν. This is, once more, a clever wordplay expounding philosophical accuracy through semantic/linguistic accuracy.⁵⁷⁴ The universe is contained in itself and does not extend beyond itself,⁵⁷⁵ the universe "has its circumscription *from* itself and *in* itself". This is the 'edge of the universe', the 'limit of the universe' (τὸ πέρασ ἐαυτοῦ), seen *from the inside*. The notion of the 'limit of the universe' *from the outside* (a welcome *contradictio in terminis*), τὸ πέρασ ἐαυτοῦ τὸ ἐξώτερον, can only be a reference to what 'exists' *beyond* the created, "the infinite power that is the cause of all".⁵⁷⁶ The fact that the created universe cannot be infinite and

schrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Günther Mensching. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2012, pp. 137-151), especially in the second part dealing with the *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*. Kapriev is right in discerning Maximus' threefold approach to truth through his terms: σκιά, εἰκόν, ἀλήθεια (shadow, image/icon, truth – p. 144f.). The *referring* function of σκιά and εἰκόν (they *point* to truth, but they are not truth in themselves) illustrate Maximus' elaborate understanding of the relationship –and, most importantly, the difference– between a *signifier* and its signified *reality*, between an εἰκόν and its ἀλήθεια. On an accurate account of Greek patristic thought on the subject, see Zizioulas' *Being as Communion*, pp. 67-122.

⁵⁷³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 C: "By space, we mean that everything is shown as being in a place. For the totality of everything is not beyond the universe (for it is irrational and impossible to conceive of the universe itself as being beyond everything that it is)".

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: οὐ γὰρ ὑπὲρ τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ τὸ πᾶν τοῦ παντός (τοῦτο γὰρ πως καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἀδύνατον αὐτὸ τὸ πᾶν ὑπὲρ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πᾶν εἶναι θεσπιζεῖν).

⁵⁷⁵ We cannot adequately stress the independence of philosophical cosmology from physical cosmology and vice versa. The one may inspire the other or reveal aspects of the other as having a relevance or importance not hitherto discerned, but the one may not *substitute* the other: these disciplines attempt to answer different questions and employ different tools and methods in doing so. To mention an example, the theory of the possibility of multiple and parallel universes (multiverse or meta-universe) in the context of physical cosmology would not be counter-argument for this position of Maximus': in this context, τὸ πᾶν ('everything', 'the universe') would be the sum of all multiple universes, the sum of creation and not merely our 'individual universe'.

⁵⁷⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 C: "[...] but being circumscribed from itself and in itself, in accordance with the infinite power of the cause of all that circumscribes everything, the limit itself is outside itself". Note that Maximus links in another passage the subject of the 'limit of the universe' to *time*, and more specifically to the *future*: *Ibid.* 1172A: "[...] the limit of the universe, which is wholly in the future, in which there will no longer be among beings anything bearing or anything borne, nor any kind of motion at all in the ineffable stability which defines the range and motion of what is borne and moved" (transl. Louth, p. 132).

limitless (as we will analyze in section 39) entails that it has a limit, and the notion of the “outer side” of that limit refers the limitations of creation to the created-uncreated distinction, establishing the relationship between the created and the uncreated, creation and its Creator, as the epicenter of existence and as a vital part in the ‘circumscription’ and understanding of existence.

Maximus asserts that this is what space, i.e. the space of the whole universe (τόπος τοῦ παντός) is, and confirmingly quotes a definition of space as “what surrounds the universe, either the position that is outside the universe, or the limit of the container in which what is contained is contained”.⁵⁷⁷ This is a definition of space that ultimately derives from Aristotle through Nemesius, as Andrew Louth notes.⁵⁷⁸ This could have been a mere philological borrowing, but the attentive reader will have noticed Maximus’ ‘twist’ of it. Aristotle’s concern is to provide a definition of space (in the context of a cosmology and ontology excluding a created-uncreated distinction), but Maximus attributes this “*limit* of the universe” and this “*outside* of the universe” that “*surrounds* the universe” not to the universe itself, not to creation (albeit it being creation’s extreme limit) but to “the infinite power that is the cause of all”, to God (an uncreated God beyond motion, spatiality and temporality). This entails that, for Maximus, space is the *locus* of the relationship between the created and the uncreated, between creation and the Creator. The very definition of space-as-a-whole includes its relation to the divine person(s) and is determined by it. Space signifies a spatial interval and extension, a *distance*, and space-as-a-whole signifies the *distance* between creation and Creator (a distance that is in this case ontological and not spatial) – while simultaneously embodying the hope for the annihilation of this distance.

The Confessor subsequently proceeds to a further discussion of time. It is his previous line of thought on space that similarly and simultaneously proves (συναποδειχθήσεται) that every created thing possesses a temporal status and is subject to ‘the when’ (ὑπὸ τὸ πότε), that everything without exception is ‘in time’ (ἐν χρόνῳ πάντως ὄντα). Maximus links this with modality again, with the *mode of existence*: he repeats that nothing apart from the uncreated exists ‘simply’, without possessing a certain and distinct mode of its existence, without possessing τὸ πῶς εἶναι, its certain ‘howness’. And this ‘howness’ entails that beings have a temporal beginning (and a cause), for the hypostatization (actualization) of the substance *in a certain way* entails its emergence *at a certain point in*

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. 1180 C: “And this is the place of the universe, just as certain people define space, saying that space is what surrounds the universe, either the position that is outside the universe, or the limit of the container in which what is contained is contained”. The definition as quoted by Maximus is difficult to translate in English, so we will also include the original Greek: Τόπος ἐστὶν ἢ ἔξω τοῦ παντός περιφέρεια, ἢ ἢ ἔξω τοῦ παντός θέσις, ἢ τὸ πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος ἐν ᾧ περιέχεται τὸ περιεχόμενον.

⁵⁷⁸ *Φυσικά*, Book IV, chapter 4. See Louth, p. 207f, n. 100.

time. If it is possible to speak about the ‘how’ of something, Maximus writes, then even if that thing exists now, it is certain that it didn’t always exist (οὐκ ἦν),⁵⁷⁹ that there was a time in which it didn’t exist.⁵⁸⁰ This has to do with the specific ‘howness’ signifying a difference and a distance from mere ‘whatness’ (e.g. the differences of a specific human person in comparison to ‘humanity’ or ‘human nature’), the *mode of existence* of something manifesting an otherness not found in its *genus*; the motion/change/transition(/origination) from mere nature to the otherness and difference of a being’s actual existence cannot but have taken place in the *past*, i.e. in *time*.

In what way does Maximus say that the uncreated does not possess ‘howness’ and which are the implications for the uncreated’s temporality, insofar as we can use such a term? In the case of the uncreated and divine, it would be absurd to speak of a ‘difference’ and a ‘distance’ of God’s ‘howness’ (τὸ πῶς) and God’s ‘whatness’ (τὸ τί), these being categories of createdness. Even the use of the notions of ‘howness’ and ‘whatness’ itself is abusing the relative character of language when trying to describe the uncreated with semantic tools forged within createdness. In Maximus’ worldview, the three divine persons *are* God’s singular ‘being’ and ‘substance’, they are not *different* from it, they do not manifest a *distance* and *difference* from what God *is*: the uncreated’s ‘howness’ *is* the uncreated’s ‘whatness’. For Maximus and the ecclesial testimony, the three hypostases of God *are* God’s one and single ‘substance’. It is not that God’s actualization as three persons in otherness and communion *is something different* from God’s ‘being’. To say that God’s single ‘substance’ is ‘what’ God is and that God’s three hypostases are ‘how’ God is does articulate and relatively describe (‘circumscribe’) the testimony of the ecclesial community’s relationship with him, but it cannot exhaust the truth of the uncreated *as such*, a truth that is by definition ‘beyond words’, i.e. words forged to signify beings-in-createdness.⁵⁸¹ This closer examination of the uncreated’s freedom from the mode of existence that results in a spatiotemporal status is most relevant to our examination of Maximus’ views on time, for it defines and designates the *difference* of created existence from its external and uncreated cause, revealing crucial aspects of this nature.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ Andrew Louth (Maximus the Confessor, p. 208 n. 101) notes here that the use of ἦν (third person singular imperfect of ‘to be’) does not merely denote a past tense, but it is used in an absolute sense meaning eternal existence. Louth explains that this is not a Neoplatonic usage, but a Christian one going back to John 1:1.

⁵⁸⁰ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 CD: “And by time, it is indicated that everything is certainly in time, since everything that possesses existence after God possesses this existence in a certain way and not simply. And therefore they are not without beginning. For if we know how something is, we may know that it is, but not that it [always] was”.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. *Corpus Areopagiticum: Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας*, p.149f.

⁵⁸² We must here provide a general remark, that such an ontological enquiry attempting to include a created-uncreated distinction (and as such, God/the uncreated) in its line of thought without *reifying* God, without

We defined ‘substance’ as the mode of participation in being, but God does not ‘participate in being’, for he is not ‘one of the beings’. As a consequence, when we say that God *is* (τὸ θεῖον λέγοντες εἶναι) we are not speaking of *how* God is (οὐ τὸ πῶς εἶναι λέγομεν), which eliminates the need to think of the uncreated as ‘becoming somehow in time’. This reveals the extreme relativity of saying that God ‘is’ or ‘was’, which are both correct and at the same time insufficient, inaccurate. Both can be said “simply, boundlessly and absolutely”, but only if the limitations of signifying the uncreated with the means of the created are respected, as the uncreated cannot be confined into any reason, utterance, meaning or thought (ἀνεπίδεκτον παντὸς λόγου καὶ νοήματος).⁵⁸³ ‘Being’ does originate from God, but it is exactly the created-uncreated distinction that does not include God into ‘being’: while he creates ‘being’, he himself is not ‘being’. This independence of the uncreated from either existing “simply” or “in a certain way” further stresses the possession of ‘howness’, of existing “in a certain way” and possessing *a mode of existence* on the part of created beings, as Maximus insists (εἰ δὲ πῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἀπλῶς, ἔχει τὰ ὄντα τὸ εἶναι). He repeats that this ‘howness’ of beings always and in every way (πάντως) entails their ‘whereness’, i.e. their position and limit according to their λόγοι of substance and nature (ὑπὸ τὸ ποῦ διὰ τὴν θέσιν καὶ τὸ πέρασ τῶν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς κατὰ φύσιν λόγων), and their ‘whenness’ stemming from the fact that they have had a temporal beginning and cause (ὑπὸ τὸ πότε εἶναι διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐπιδέξεται). It is the inescapable *modality* of created existence that binds it to *spatiotemporality*.⁵⁸⁴

III.4.5. Section 39:⁵⁸⁵ Createdness Excludes the Possibility of Spatiotemporal Infinity

This section of the Confessor’s tenth ‘Difficulty’ is devoted to arguing that there can be no infinity (both spatial, temporal or otherwise) and

including him within ‘being’ and slipping into the premises of ontotheology is on verge of being possible at all. However, this is exactly the ontological enquiry of the whole of ‘byzantine’ civilization (a sweeping but nonetheless accurate generalization) and Maximus the Confessor in particular. In order for such an ontological enquiry to be possible, it is evident that the apophatic epistemological stance is to be employed most emphatically.

⁵⁸³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1180 D: “Thus when we say that the divine is, we do not say how it is. And therefore we say of him that ‘he is’ and ‘he was’ simply and boundlessly and absolutely. For the divine cannot be grasped by any reason or thought, nor do we grasp his being when we say that he is”.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 1180 D-1181 A. “For being is derived from him but he is not being. For he is beyond being itself, and beyond anything that is said or conceived of him, whether simply or in a certain way. But beings possess being in a certain way, and not simply, so that where they are is determined by their position and the natural limit of the λόγοι that are in them, and when they are [is determined] from their beginning”.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 1181 A-1184 A. Ἀπόδειξις τοῦ μὴ δύνασθαι ἄπειρον εἶναι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὔτε ἄναρχον πᾶν, εἴ τι κατὰ τὴν ἐν πλήθει ποσότητα ἔχει τὸ εἶναι.

beginninglessness/causelessness within creation; the absence of finiteness and of an origination or an originator, i.e. a prior cause, is to be attributed only to the uncreated God. Maximus treats the finiteness of created existence as an implication of it having a beginning and cause, being in motion and possessing modality, spatiality and temporality (‘howness’, ‘whereness’, ‘whenness’).

The word that Maximus uses to denote finiteness is ‘circumscription’ or ‘delimitation’ (περιγραφῆ) and the ability of something to be ‘circumscribed’, i.e. having given limits. He explains that both the substances and the hypostases are finite and not limitless. The substance and being of everything cannot be infinite, for its limit is the very sum of everything, a quantity that can be circumscribed. The fact that the substance and being of everything is not infinite and not unbounded stems from both the λόγος of being itself and the λόγος of being’s *mode of existence*, of its ‘howness’⁵⁸⁶ and actualization. Consequently the hypostasis, the actual realization of each being, is also subject to circumscription.⁵⁸⁷ The hypostases are circumscribed in relation to each other, and this circumscription is effected through *number* and *substance* in accordance with the λόγος⁵⁸⁸ – a notion of λόγος that reflects both being and modality, both substance/nature and ‘howness’.⁵⁸⁹

Arriving at the conclusion that nothing is free from circumscription, from being finite, specific and particular (i.e., from possessing finiteness, limits, boundaries), the Confessor links this universal subjection to circumscription to spatiotemporality. He writes that everything, according to its measure, “has received” a spatial and a temporal status, a ‘whereness’ and a ‘howness’. These are reiterated as being absolute prerequisites of existing in creation: without a spatiotemporal limit, nothing can exist, nothing can possess substance (οὐσία), quantity (ποσότης), quality (ποιότης), relation (σχέσις), action (ποίησις), passion/receptiveness (πάθος), motion (κίνησις) and habit (ἔξις). These are the attributes “with which those who know about these things delimit the universe”. In Maximus’ thought, the whole spectrum of the characteristics of existing depends on the possession of a given spatiotemporal status, a status that is itself linked with the specificity and otherness of beings, i.e. their ‘howness’.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. 1181 A: τόν τε τοῦ εἶναι καί τοῦ πῶς εἶναι λόγον.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid. 1181 B: Οὐδέ ἡ τοῦ καθ’ ἕκαστον δῆλον ὑπόστασις ἔσται δίχα περιγραφῆς.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.: ἀλλήλαις τῷ ἀριθμῷ καί τῇ οὐσίᾳ κατὰ λόγον περιγεγραμμένα.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. 1181 AB: “And again the being of all the many beings that are in the universe cannot be infinite (for there is a limit to all these things in their multitudinous quantity which circumscribes the λόγος of their being and manner of being, for the being of the universe is not unbounded), nor can the substance of any of them be without circumscription, for they are mutually circumscribed in accordance with their λόγος by number and being”.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid. 1181 B: “If none of the beings is free from circumscription, all the beings clearly receive in proportion to themselves both when and where they are. Apart from these, nothing at all can be, neither being, nor quanti-

According to Maximus' argument, due to reason (a reason/λόγος reflecting the principles/λόγοι) the subjection to circumscription and modality dictates a temporal beginning and, in the dual meaning of ἀρχή, a cause – as there is always something that precedes (προεπινοεῖσθαι) each being, both causally and temporally. This means that there was a time when each given being did not exist, thus signifying the beings' generation.⁵⁹¹ Maximus arrives at his core argument concerning infinity: *existing infinitely* (spatially, temporally or otherwise) and *becoming* without change or alteration cannot coexist.⁵⁹² For if something has been generated, then it has been changed into what it has become after its origination and into what it was not before its origination. And everything that can be changed or altered or lacks form has not achieved completeness, it cannot have its end and purpose in itself (αὐτοτελής).⁵⁹³ This completeness can be achieved or granted only in relation to something that is complete and whole and has its cause and purpose in itself. However, this granted completeness is not the same with perfection, for completeness has been achieved by participation (i.e. through relation and communion), not by its nature. Maximus concludes that if something needs to be in relation and communion with something else in order to achieve completeness, then this is much more so the case concerning its being, its participation in existence.

The Confessor proceeds with one more argument against the notion of the possibility of beginninglessness for created beings (and against the notion of uncreated matter), and specifically an argument concerning substance and form. The notion of *form* contains in itself the realities of generation, change, alteration and other actualizations of motion. To conceive of a beginningless being (i.e. apart from God) that is only substance, without form, would be absurd. If

ty, nor quality, nor relation, nor action, nor passion, nor movement, nor habit, nor any other of those attributes with which those who know about these things delimit the universe”.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.: “Therefore no being is without beginning, if something else can be thought of before it, or uncircumscribed, if something else can be thought of alongside it. If no being is without beginning or uncircumscribed, as follows naturally from the λόγος of the beings, then there was certainly a time when each of the beings was not. And if it was not, it certainly came into being, since [otherwise] it would not be”.

⁵⁹² Ibid. 1181 C: “For it cannot receive being and becoming apart from change and alteration. For if it was and [then] became, it changed, going over to what it was not by a process of becoming, or it was altered, receiving an addition to its beauty that it lacked. Nothing that has changed, or altered, or lacked form, can be complete in itself. What is not complete in itself certainly lacks some other thing that will allow it wholeness, and then it is whole, but not complete in itself, since it has wholeness not by nature but by participation. That which needs another for wholeness stands in much greater need when it comes to being itself”.

⁵⁹³ This observation does not clash with the content of section 35 (1176 B: “what has come to be is found to be not otherwise than good beside what now is, and is in need of no addition or subtraction in order to be otherwise good”). To be “in need of no addition or subtraction” does not entail containing one's own cause: created beings can be ‘very good’ without this meaning that creation's cause (and purpose) is not outside of itself. We must note here that when Maximus refers to beings according to the λόγος of nature, either explicitly or implicitly, he refers to the state in which they are in perfect communion with the Creator – to their ‘pre-fallen’ or ‘redeemed’ state. The incompleteness of not containing one's cause of existence, of not being αὐτοτελής, fades in the restored full communion with this cause. However, this does not reflect the current state of beings.

substance is superior to form, as was a common affirmation in Maximus' time, then it would not make sense for a being to have achieved the 'superior' but to be deprived of the 'inferior'.⁵⁹⁴ Maximus excludes the possibility of the possession of substance or matter without the possession of form, thus binding every created being (possessing substance and form) to spatiotemporality (and, as such, to the possession of a beginning and cause). This is one more variation of the basic affirmation that there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, an affirmation that acts as a guarantee for the realism of Maximus' ontological thinking. The Confessor hastens to remark that all of this reveals once again that to possess "being itself" (ἀπλῶς εἶναι), i.e. without particularity and modality ('howness'), would be impossible – for substance and matter alike.⁵⁹⁵ The cycle of the generation and beginning of substance, being and form must have its starting point beyond the beings that are subject to generation and beginning themselves (and to substance, being and form, for that matter). This could have simply been a 'prime unmoved mover' logic on the Confessor's part, but his choice of words reveals his insistence on seeing the act of creation not as a mechanical necessity, but as a free act of love, relation, communion: the existence of created beings reveals that every substance, being and form has been "granted as a gift" (δεδώρηται) from God, establishing the world as a continuous relationship with its Creator, as the *locus* of a relationship that is measured by the primary characteristic of created existence: motion. We could safely say that according to Maximus, to accept the reality of God means accepting creation as spatiotemporally finite, with a given temporal beginning, a spatial limit and, consequently, a coming end, a *cause* and a *purpose* – and vice versa.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. 1181 CD: "For if, as they say, being is established as better than form, any particular being can either grant itself this or possess it simply, as they want to say, but why is it not strong enough to possess simply or grant itself what is worse, that is the form? And if any particular being is not strong enough to grant itself what is worse, or possess it simply, whether those who dare to regard as without beginning beings that are after God and derived from him want to call it being or matter (for they make no distinction), why cannot it possess either simply or from itself what is better, by which I mean being, when it cannot possess what is worse?"

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid. 1184 A: "If matter can in no way possess, either from itself, or simply, what is worse, still less can it possess being itself simply, or from itself. How then can what is too weak to possess, as has been shown, what is worse -that is form- or what is better -that is being- ever possess anything?". It would be interesting to compare Maximus' rejection of the possibility of amorphous matter (in this context, ὄλη without εἶδος) with various ancient Greek views on the subject; however, this would be far beyond the scope of this study.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid. 1184 A: "If this is so, then being and form must be given to beings by God, for they exist. If then all being and matter and every form is from God, no-one who is not completely deprived of any sane thought could maintain that matter is without beginning and ungenerate, since he knows that God is the maker and fashioner of the beings".

III.4.6. Section 40:⁵⁹⁷ Further Elucidations on the Impossibility of Creation's Infinity

Once again, Maximus contradicts here the notion of matter's beginninglessness and the possibility of uncreated matter. If matter is eternal and has always been,⁵⁹⁸ then it follows that it has not been generated, that it is uncreated. If it has not been generated, then it is not in motion and did not begin its being at a certain point in time. If that is the case, then it has no beginning or cause, and it is infinite. Being infinite, it is necessarily motionless, for having achieved infinity and being boundless, there is no space to move into, there is no given greater territory in which its motion could take place. In such a case, there would be two beginningless, infinite and motionless beings: the uncreated God and uncreated matter.⁵⁹⁹ However, this is a *contradictio in terminis*, which Maximus explains by employing the notions of the dyad and the monad. The dyad (infinite/uncreated God and infinite/uncreated matter) cannot possess infinity, beginninglessness and motionlessness and it cannot be the *cause* of anything,⁶⁰⁰ because its mode is the mode of either *union* or *division* – it is circumscribed within this specific territory of these two ‘functions’. *Union*, because the dyad's existence *refers* to the reunion and composition of the two monads from which it is constituted and into which it is disclosed.⁶⁰¹ *Division*, because it is “moved by number”: the *division* into a dyad is a *distinction* of the two monads, a distinction described by number, a number signifying division.⁶⁰²

Relation is one of the criteria cited by Maximus as signifying the impossibility of ‘two infinities’. The Confessor remarks that nothing that can be divid-

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid. 1184 BC. Ἀποδείξις ὅτι πᾶν κινούμενον, ἢ ἄλλω διαφόρῳ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἐξ ἀδίου συνθεωρούμενον, ἄπειρον εἶναι οὐ δύναται, καὶ ὅτι ἡ δυὰς οὔτε ἀρχὴ ἐστίν, οὔτε ἄναρχος, καὶ ὅτι ἡ μονὰς μόνη κυρίως ἀρχὴ καὶ ἄναρχος.

⁵⁹⁸ The past tense ἦν that is used here signifies eternal/absolute existence, not existence in the past, as we have mentioned earlier. Louth also repeats his previous observation in p. 208, n. 104 of his *Maximus the Confessor* (the translations in which have been used for the present chapter, as has been noted).

⁵⁹⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1184 B: “And again, if matter was [absolutely], as some say, then it clearly did not come into being; if it did not come into being, it was not moved; if it was not moved, it did not begin to be; if it did not begin to be, then it is without beginning of any kind; if it is without beginning, then it is infinite; if it is infinite, then it is certainly unmoved (for the infinite is certainly unmoved, for what is not limited can have no place in which to be moved); and if this is the case, then there are assuredly two infinities, unmoved and without beginning, God and matter, which is inconceivable”.

⁶⁰⁰ Maximus uses the word ἀρχὴ here twice in order to stress that he is referring to both beginning and cause: οὔτε ἄναρχος [...] οὔτε μὴν ἀρχὴ καθόλου τινὸς εἶναι δυνήσεται

⁶⁰¹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1184 BC: “For the dyad could be neither infinite, nor without beginning, nor unmoved, nor the beginning of anything at all, for it is circumscribed in accordance with unity and division. It is circumscribed by unity since it has existence as the composition of monads, which it contains as parts, and into which it can be divided as parts”.

⁶⁰² Ibid. 1184 CD: “It [the dyad] is circumscribed by division, since it is moved by number, from which it begins and in which it is contained, since it does not possess being by nature and free from any relationship”.

ed or can effect division and nothing that can be compounded or can effect composition, either by its nature or by its position/arrangement or anything else (i.e. either according to its ‘whatness’ or to its ‘howness’) could ever be infinite. Even division and composition themselves, in the ‘simple’ (i.e. devoid of particularity and modality, ‘naked’) and abstract sense, cannot be infinite. And these cannot be infinite because they are not beyond *relation*: they exist relationally, in relationship to each other. For example, beings under division or composition are in relation to each other by the very fact that they are under division or composition, divided or united, or dividing and composing beings with which they are in relationship (σχέσις). However, the infinite is by definition unrelated to anything,⁶⁰³ for if it were bound by any relationship to anything, then it would not be infinite.⁶⁰⁴ A dyad of infinities would be impossible, because this would require being *by nature* beyond relationship⁶⁰⁵ – a notion contrary to life and existence as relation and communion and death and corruption as the cessation of relation and communion. Maximus goes on to argue about the dyad and the monad, but we will refrain from proceeding with our analysis of consecutive sections from the *Book of Difficulties*.

III.4.7. Conclusions and Remarks

The reader will have noticed that Andrew Louth’s aforementioned remark⁶⁰⁶ on Maximus’ thinking as not linear and systematic but “patiently drawing together all sorts of apparently diverse concerns”, moving sideways and “gathering together a collection of considerations that are gradually made to converge”⁶⁰⁷ could not have been more accurate. In articulating his understanding of existence, Maximus often repeats his line of thought, digresses and turns to secondary subjects in order to return to his main argument later, after a ‘circle’ of thought etc. His thinking is *spiral*, in that it progresses through the retracing of circles. However, it is this unusual thinking that reveals his prioritizations, the interconnectedness of the hermeneutic elements of his thought and the pre-

⁶⁰³ τὸ δὲ ἄπειρον ἄσχετον – οὐ γὰρ ἔχει τι κατὰ σχέσιν συνημμένον παντάπασι.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid. 1184 C: “for nothing that is infinite could be divisible or divided, or composite or compounded, by nature or arrangement or in any other way, nor could it simply be division or composition itself, because it is neither sole and simple, nor numerable, nor numbered, nor co-numbered, nor simply free from any kind of relationship; for all these things are beheld in relationship one to another, but the infinite is unrelated, for it cannot be held in any kind of relationship at all.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid. 1184 CD: οὐ φύσει τὸ εἶναι καὶ ἄσχετον ἔχει. According to the PG, this is not the ending point of section 40. Andrew Louth (p. 208, n. 106) employs this division from Eriugena’s version, which also marks the end of the section we have examined.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited in our introduction to III.4.

⁶⁰⁷ Louth: *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 91.

ponderance of specific elements in his ontological proposal – or rather, testimony.

In order to proceed to examine Maximus' conception of the Aeon (αἰὼν) in the following chapter, we will sum up our conclusions from sections 35-40 concerning time, space and motion:

- (i) Maximus' definition of time as "the numbering of motion"⁶⁰⁸ remains our primary reference on the nature of time, even if it was not cited in these particular sections of the tenth Difficulty. Time *measures* motion and is delimited by number.
- (ii) However, "as a consequence, the motion through one's life is altering everything in it (ἀλλοιωτικὴ κίνησις)":⁶⁰⁹ it follows that time also measures corruption, decay, the march towards annihilation and death – just like in Aristotle's theory of time.
- (iii) Motion is the primary characteristic of existence. Everything created is in motion. Everything: substances, particulars, qualities, quantities, sensible and intelligible (e.g. substance, 'quality' etc.) things alike, are in motion. The creation and sustaining of existence is the first motion, the uncreated's creative motion, and creation's motion has by nature the tendency to be a returning motion towards its uncreated cause and source, a motion towards the fullness of communion signifying completeness.
- (iv) Every motion has a beginning and a cause. (Motion emerges from its cause and is drawn to it). Nothing is beginningless and causeless within creation. Creation itself has had a temporal beginning.
- (v) Temporality characterizes everything within creation.⁶¹⁰ In the sensible world, space and time form a space-time continuum: the one presupposes the other, and everything is in space and time. A more realistic formulation is that everything possesses a 'whereness' and a 'whenness', a spatiotemporal status.
- (vi) Without a spatiotemporal limit, nothing can exist, nothing can possess substance (οὐσία), quantity (ποσότης), quality (ποιότης), relation (σχέσις), action (ποίησις), passion/receptiveness

⁶⁰⁸ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A, 1.5 – *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.533-534.

⁶⁰⁹ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.534-535.

⁶¹⁰ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1397 AB: "For everything that is in motion and has been created is subject to a beginning, and for this reason is absolutely subject to time, even if it is a form of time not measurable by motion. For every created thing has a beginning of its being, since there was a time when it began to exist, and it is subject to extension in time, from the moment when it began to exist. If, then, every created thing exists and is in motion, then it is absolutely subject to nature and time: to the one on account of its existence, and to the other on account of its motion" (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 389-391).

(πάθος), motion (κίνησις), habit (ἔξις). To sum up: everything created possesses (a) temporal beginning, (b) generation, (c) beginning of motion, (d) cause, (e) end, (f) purpose and (g) motion.

- (vii) Everything created possesses a ‘howness’, a distinct mode of existence. This ‘howness’ is closely related with (and a prerequisite of) ‘whenness’ and ‘whereness’.
- (viii) There can be no infinity within existence. Everything has a beginning, a spatiotemporal status and a mode of existence (signifying *becoming*, γίνεσθαι, not merely *being*), which exclude the possibility of infinity, of escaping circumscription and delimitation. Matter, creation, the universe, everything is finite.
- (ix) The fact that there can be no infinity within creation excludes the possibility of eternity in the sense of an unlimited duration of time. Such an understanding of eternity is excluded.
- (x) The orderly passage of time is an aspect of εὐκοσμία, referring to God. The totality of space, τὸ πᾶν, space-as-a-whole, is referring to God by virtue of its ‘outer limit’.
- (xi) The synopsis of the above points concerning time: Maximus speaks of time as the ‘numbering’ of something truly existing (i.e. the motion) or as the ‘whenness’ (τὸ πότε) of something, a mere dimension of existing beings; while he does employ the word χρόνος, he is not very fond of speaking about time as an absolute and independent reality. We are led to the conclusion that the Confessor does not consider time as ‘something’, as an independent reality, but only as a dimension of the motion, a measurement of it by the ones who measure, a status signifying ‘whenness’, i.e. in a quite relative way. It exists by virtue of motion’s existence and insofar as motion exists – time does not exist on its own. At the same time and contrary to this observation, time is of paramount importance for creation, for *everything* must necessarily be ‘in time’ (and ‘in space’) in order to exist and every created thing –and creation itself– has had a temporal beginning, a beginning ‘in time’. While time itself exists *relatively*, everything (and creation as a whole itself) is *subject* to time. As the ‘measuring’ of motion, time is also most important and necessary in creation’s *overall* motion, i.e. history and creation’s progression either towards completeness and redemption or towards annihilation; this overall motion of creation is measured *in time*, and it is measured by humanity, the mediator be-

tween creation and the uncreated. Time also measures the change, and consequently also the corruption and decay caused by the motion within creation (ἀλλοιωτική κίνησις); it *numbers* the march towards either death or completeness.

The above are the points found in Maximus' text itself. However, we would also like to provide some conclusions of our own based on Maximus' line of thought and stemming from his syllogisms. As space and time "are naturally thought of together" (συνεπινοεῖσθαι πέφυκεν), we could attempt a paraphrase of Maximus' definition of time in other treatises⁶¹¹ as "the numbering of motion" and "the circumscription of motion" in the case of space. If (a) motion is the primary and definitive characteristic of created existence, if (b) time is merely the numbering of motion and (c) if time and space form a continuum that characterizes all created beings while being a dimension of motion themselves, then (d) we could not be far from Maximus' thinking by saying that space is also a "numbering of motion", the numbering of the *distance* that is created by the motion, the actualization of motion as *distance*⁶¹² – even in the cases where 'motion' means change, alteration, corruption, increase, decrease etc. and not merely spatial locomotion. In this sense, space, spatiality, also emerges *as a dimension of the motion*, instead of motion 'taking place' in 'space'. Motion has an ontological priority over space (and time), as space is one of the motion's dimensions, instead of motion emerging within a preexistent space (and at a given time). It is motion that realizes spatiotemporality, motion that is 'measured' and 'circumscribed' as *distance*, i.e. as space and time. Space would not then be the numbering of motion with respect to the 'before' and 'after', but with respect to the 'here' and 'there'. It will become clearer in the course of our study if such a view could find a legitimate basis in the Confessor's works.

Space and time alike, constituting an undivided whole (a space-time continuum), emerge as the dimensions of motion, which in all its forms is the primary existential event within creation. A relational existential event, for it is simultaneously realizing and disclosing creation's relationship with its uncreated

⁶¹¹ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περί θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A, 1.5 – *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.533-534.

⁶¹² 'Distance' and 'extension' in Greek is usually διάστασις or διάστημα. Note that διάστημα, a word not used by Maximus in this section, means both spatial and temporal *interval*, both spatial and temporal *distance* (Cf. διάστημα in Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon*, p. 359f, as well as LSJ). Gregory of Nyssa often employs the word with a temporal meaning (Κατὰ Εὐνομίου I.1.171: μηδενὸς διαστήματος χρονικοῦ, I.1.342: διάστημα χρονικόν), and this dual meaning of διάστημα-distance as both spatial and temporal distance gives further hints concerning the possibility of defining space as *the numbering of motion in spatial distance*. Distance need not be exclusively *sensible*, but *intelligible* as well – as is the 'expansion' and 'contraction' of the substance on the Porphyrian tree. On Maximus' use of διάστημα in a temporal sense, see e.g. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1157 A: τοῦ χρονικοῦ τούτου διαστήματος, or *Κεφάλαια Σ' περί θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085A: ὁ αἰὼν...πάσχει διάστασιν.

source, as the totality of motion is either God’s creative motion from the uncreated towards (creating and sustaining) creation or creation’s returning motion to its source, cause, purpose, beginning and end⁶¹³ – it discloses existing as being-in-relation. Furthermore, and recalling Aristotle’s reservations concerning the autonomous existence and reality of time⁶¹⁴ in which he concludes that time does not exist, or that it exists faintly and obscurely,⁶¹⁵ one might wonder if Maximus is in line with these conclusions. It is clear that both philosophers acknowledge motion (both the overall motion of existence and each individual motion) as a primary reality. Time is for both of them merely “the numbering of motion”, “the circumscription of motion” – something that exists insofar as motion exists, as a numbering and dimension thereof. And while Aristotle separates his doubts concerning time from his acknowledgement of space as an autonomous reality, Maximus’ insistence on the absolute and inescapable interrelationship and interdependence of space and time (of ‘the where’ and ‘the when’) would not allow us to presume that he accepts the existence of space as independent of time and motion, as an autonomous reality. It is at least arguable that, in the Confessor’s line of thought, both time and space exist only insofar motion exists, them being motion’s dimensions, and do not possess a reality of their own.

If the above syllogisms are true to Maximus’ way of thinking, then we could add the following points to the above conclusions:

- (xii) The human person is the one who *numbers* time: it is he who actualizes motion as time. The fact that the human person *actualizes* (motion as) time is one aspect of humanity’s mediating function.
- (xiii) Space is a “numbering of motion” as well; it is the disclosure of the *distance* actualized by motion as *space*.
- (xiv) Both time and space exist insofar motion exists; they do not possess an autonomous existence of their own, independently from the motion they are measuring and numbering.
- (xv) Spatiotemporality emerges as the dual dimension of motion: both of the dimensions of this ‘space-time continuum’, i.e. spatiality and temporality, are the *numbering* of motion, but the numbering of motion with respect to different types of *distance*.
- (xvi) Motion measures a *relation* (σχέσις), both generally within creation and in terms of the created-uncreated distinction. This relation can either end up in the relation’s consummation (i.e. full-

⁶¹³ Or creation’s motion *contrary to nature*, towards nonrelation, annihilation, inexistence.

⁶¹⁴ It should be noted that Aristotle does not have the same reservations concerning the existence and reality of space, as is apparent in his main treatment of the subject in *Φυσικά*, 208a27-213a10.

⁶¹⁵ *Φυσικά*, 217b 32-34.

ness of communion-in-otherness) or in the relation's cessation (nonrelation) – both are measured as distance, the annihilation and absolutization of distance respectively.

Sections 35-40 have offered a deep insight into Maximus' understanding of spatiotemporality as τὸ ποῦ and τὸ πότε, as χρόνος and τόπος. Now we will proceed to examine his notion of the Aeon (αἰὼν) as a distinct form of temporality, equally important to time as χρόνος – if not more.

III.5. Inverted Temporality: the Aeon

While Maximus' notion of the Aeon (αἰών)⁶¹⁶ as a distinct, second form of temporality is clearly expounded in specific passages of his work, the reader is faced with the problem of Maximus' different usage of the term αἰών in different contexts throughout the Maximian corpus.⁶¹⁷ Apart from the meaning illustrated in the dual definition of χρόνος and αἰών in *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν* (PG 91 1164 BC), which we hold as the primary definition of the Aeon, Maximus also uses the term in different contexts in order to signify eternity as unlimited duration,⁶¹⁸ or a great amount of time/a century,⁶¹⁹ or history, or God's temporality in contrast to our own⁶²⁰ etc. This becomes quite pronounced in instances where Maximus uses the word *Aeon* meaning eternity in the sense of unlimited time by employing the word in its plural form αἰῶνες, i.e. the ages.⁶²¹ Maximus differentiates between the singular, αἰών, and the plural, αἰῶνες, in a way suggestive of this by employing both forms in the same sentence with different meanings⁶²² – but again, this is not characteristic of the whole of his work and cannot be systematized in such a way. When speaking of the 'temporality' of God in contrast to our own, Maximus sometimes refers to it as Aeon or aeonic

⁶¹⁶ A problem with many scholarly accounts of Maximus' understanding of the Aeon is the lack of differentiation between the 'eternity' of the Aeon and the 'eternity' of the ever-moving repose, resulting in an erroneous and incomplete reading of the Confessor. However, Paul Plass' article "Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor" (in: *The Thomist* 44:2 (1980), pp. 259-277) is a valuable contribution. Note Plass' mention of the Maximian and Cappadocian notion of διάστημα (distance, interval, extension) and its relation to temporality in p. 260, as this plays a major role in our treatment of the subject. Plass' article "Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa" (in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980), pp. 180-192) is a good introduction to these concepts prior to Maximus' renewal of them: in both articles, Plass' contradistinction of the Neoplatonic understanding of eternity and return to the biblical and patristic one is particularly noteworthy.

⁶¹⁷ Which, to different degrees, is also the case with almost any important term Maximus employs, making it exceedingly difficult for the reader to squarely systematize the Confessor's understanding of core notions such as λόγοι, τρόπος (mode) etc. Throughout the secondary literature concerning Maximus, an abundance of attempts at systematizing Maximian terminology can be found (instead, for example, of accepting the fact that only *approaches* to Maximus' thought can be attempted, without claims of definitive answers), often yielding unsatisfactory results and leading to misunderstandings of the Confessor's teachings – a tendency that is gradually being corrected.

⁶¹⁸ E.g. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 38.52: πέρας οὐκ ἔχοντος [...] αἰῶνος.

⁶¹⁹ E.g. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 56.140-142: θεῶ, τῷ πάντας τοὺς ἀπείρους τοὺς τε προγενομένους καὶ ὄντας καὶ ἐσομένους αἰῶνας προεγνωκότι.

⁶²⁰ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91, 1188B: "But it has been shown that from God, who eternally is [τοῦ αἰεὶ ὄντος] [...]" – *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ Θεῶν Ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 229 A-C: Μέτρον ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων, ἐπειδὴ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ πεπερασται, καὶ αἰὼν μάλιστα δικαίως ἂν λέγοιτο· εἰ γὰρ αἰὼν λέγεται, οἷον αἰεὶ ὢν, αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ αἰεὶ ὢν. [...] Ποιητὴς δὲ αἰῶνων, ἅτε τῶν ἀγγέλων ποιητὴς ὢν, ἀθανασία, παράτασις, ἀειζωία, αἰὼν, ἀλλ' οὐ χρόνος, ἀτελεύτητος καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενος λέγεται. Quite logically, due to the numerous different commentators that authored the *Σχόλια*, the differences in the use of the terms αἰὼν and αἰῶνες throughout the *Σχόλια* can be profound, often offering contradictory illustrations thereof.

⁶²¹ E.g. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1252 B: φοβερὰν ἐπ' αἰῶσιν ἀπείροις λαβοῦσα κατάκρισιν

⁶²² *Ibid.* 1389 D: Σημαίνει γὰρ καὶ χρόνον, καὶ αἰῶνα, καὶ αἰῶνας.

and sometimes as *αἰδίος*, *αἰδίον*, *αἰδιότης*,⁶²³ in order to contrast God’s ‘temporality’ to the Aeon as well⁶²⁴ – however, as we have noted earlier, the Confessor does not adopt a systematized distinction of *χρόνος/αιών/αἰδιότης*, whereas he often clarifies that no kind of temporality whatsoever can be applicable to God. And (to make things worse) there are passages in which Maximus refers to *αἰδιότης* simply as eternity without change and alteration,⁶²⁵ practically equating it with the Aeon (as the state of temporality of intelligible realities and “time without motion”) and eradicating any hope of a solid *χρόνος/αιών/αἰδιότης* distinction.

However, and apart from this variety in the use of terms, Maximus *does* propose a second form of temporality beyond normal time (*χρόνος*) and its extensions in duration (extensions that reach up to the ‘ages of the ages’). A form of temporality that is *inverted time*, as it is time without motion – whereas the main characteristic of time is that it is the numbering of motion.

III.5.1. The Aeon: Time Deprived of Motion

As noted in our general introduction to Maximus’ conception of temporality, the Confessor formulates a ‘dual’ definition for both time and the Aeon, intertwining their meanings with each other and constituting the one necessary for defining the other: “The Aeon is time, when its motion ceases, and time is the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion. So the Aeon, to formulate a definition, is time deprived of motion, and time is the Aeon when it is measured while in motion”.⁶²⁶

⁶²³ E.g. *Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 2.27.3, as well as 4.3.1: ἐξ αἰδίου δημιουργὸς ὑπάρχων ὁ Θεός. As mentioned earlier, Maximus attributes *αἰδιότης* to the uncreated *λόγοι* (*Κεφάλαια περὶ ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 1.100, 2.27), thus differentiating *αἰδιότης* from the Aeon, the beings in whom had had a beginning and a generation, while the *λόγοι* had not.

⁶²⁴ In *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1086 B – 1.6, we find a clear example of the *αἰδίον* attributed to God and the Aeon attributed to the creatures that are not under time: Οὐκοῦν οὐδὲν αὐτῷ τὸ παράπαν ἐξ αἰδίου συνθεορεῖται κατ' οὐσίαν διάφορον οὐκ αἰών, οὐ χρόνος, οὐδὲ τι τῶν τούτοις ἐνδαιτωμένων, “Absolutely nothing that is different from [God] by substance is seen together with him from all eternity [ἐξ αἰδίου]: neither the Aeon, nor time, nor anything dwelling in them” (transl. Berthold p. 130). And: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1188 B: “[God] is the maker and fashioner of all Aeon and time and of everything that exists in the Aeon and time, not that they are in any way conceived together with him from eternity [ἐξ αἰδίου], for it is known that none of the beings that exist alongside one another from eternity [ἐξ αἰδίου] could be creative of any other” (transl. Louth, p. 141).

⁶²⁵ E.g. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1169 D: “Nor can it be rightly thought that what does not possess eternity [τὸ μὴ ὠσαύτως ἔχον αἰεί] should appear to any rational understanding as eternal [αἰδίον], separate from change and alteration, and not rather scattered and changing in a myriad of ways” (transl. Louth, p. 132).

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.* 1164 BC: Αἰών γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ὅταν στῆ τῆς κινήσεως, καὶ χρόνος ἐστὶν ὁ αἰών, ὅταν μετρηθῆται κινήσει φερόμενος, ὡς εἶναι τὸν μὲν αἰῶνα, ἵνα ὡς ἐν ὄρω περιλαβὼν εἴπω, χρόνον ἐστερημένον κινήσεως, τὸν δὲ χρόνον αἰῶνα κινήσει μετροῦμενον. Predecessors to this distinction between *αἰών* and *χρόνος* are to be

In our opinion, this is not a definition mentioned by Maximus in passing, merely rhetorically or as a philosophical loan from Plato in order to elaborate on other matters. It is rather in this definition that the uniqueness of Maximus' conception of temporality is expounded and the prerequisite for understanding the Confessor's notion of the Aeon is provided. The inattentive reader might assume that Maximus' scattered references on temporality are but a patchwork of diverse influences: a definition of time from Aristotle's philosophy, a definition of the Aeon from Plato's dialogues, and so on. However, to arrive at such a conclusion is to refuse to 'connect the dots' of Maximus' ontology: his scattered references are unified in his cosmic vision incorporating elements such as his *returning* motion, deification and the στάσις ἀεικίνητος, mediation and repose in the ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι, communion between the absolute othernesses of creation and the uncreated.

It is natural for a 'Byzantine' thinker incorporated into the ecclesial tradition to have no claims of radical originality, but of merely formulating a given testimony anew, using 'tried and tested' semantic tools. However, in the case of ingenious minds like Maximus the Confessor's, this can result in the originality of a philosophical synthesis that transcends the content of its individual constitutive parts. In order to articulate his own philosophical language, Maximus naturally utilizes the languages of others; these are employed as *means* to the *end* of expounding his own cosmic vision, as stepping-stones for the articulation of a Maximian ontology of dialogical reciprocity between createdness and the uncreated. For the ecclesial community, the promised transcendence of the abysmal gap between creation and the uncreated through the hypostasis of Christ is a testimony; to attempt to articulate this testimony and this possibility in a concise philosophical language is to attempt to turn *mystery* into *ontology* – and, notwithstanding the limitations of a consistently apophatic stance, we could say that this is the essence of Maximus' overall exposition when approached through the perspective of philosophy. The study of temporality's nature is a vital part of this undertaking and, in this context, a *renewal* of pre-Christian (or 'inadequately Christian')⁶²⁷ notions thereof is required. We will expound in the following pages how Maximus attempts such a *renewal* through his understanding of the Aeon

located in Plato's *Τίμαιος* (37d), Plotinus' *Ἐννεάδεις* (3.7.2) and the Areopagite corpus' *Περὶ Θεϊῶν Ὀνομάτων* (CD I, p. 215 - 10.3), as Andrew Louth remarks in *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 207 n. 85.

⁶²⁷ With this I am referring to early Christian conceptions of various philosophical issues which, when examined closely, prove not to have taken into full account (a) the implications of the created-uncreated distinction or (b) the reality –according to (post-Chalcedonian) Christians- of the full hypostatic union of uncreated and created/human natures/substances in the person of Christ (*inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*, which is a contradiction to (a), and rightly so in the context of Chalcedon: a "foolishness" and "scandal" – 1 Cor. 1:23). A number of Neoplatonic Christian syntheses would fall under this category. We could perhaps say that, in Chalcedonian Christianity, it is primarily these two criteria that judge whether a given teaching is to be considered a part of the *corpus* of the articulation of the church's testimony or merely a teaching *influenced* by the Christian *Weltanschauung*, if not explicitly non-Chalcedonian.

and, most importantly, through his notion of the ever-moving repose (στάσις ἀεικίνητος).

The first thought that strikes the reader of this definitive formulation is the interdependence and interconnectedness of χρόνος and αἰών: none of these two terms can be defined without taking into account the other one, and we could say that *by defining the one, Maximus is voiding the other*. They describe philosophical terms and realities in a way that they cannot be conceived individually, but only in relation of the one to the other. Χρόνος presupposes αἰών and vice versa, thereby voiding them of individual meaning that is independent from one another. And either in the context of a contradistinction between νοητὰ (sensible) and αἰσθητὰ (intelligible) or between κτιστὸν (created) and ἄκτιστον (uncreated), this conjoined distinction between χρόνος and αἰών implies the interdependence of the broader realities in which they are integrated.

Thus, time is defined as ‘inverted Aeon’ (“the Aeon, when measured in its movement”) and the Aeon is defined as ‘inverted time’, the definition of the one referring to the definition of the other – and inverting it. But why does the need arise to incorporate the definition of the Aeon, “time deprived of motion, time without movement”, in the definition of time, making it an essential part of the definition of time itself?

Again, the absence of the created-uncreated distinction in pre-Christian Greek worldviews plays an important part here. For Aristotle, the fact that time is the numbering of motion meant that without motion, there is no time, no form of temporality whatsoever. The motion from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’ –from the past to the future– actualizes time, time is but its numbering; no motion means no time, and the νῦν, the ‘now’ of the transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’, exists only in the context of that transition and does not possess autonomous existence or measurable dimension. A νῦν that is not part of a temporal motion and transition but exists in itself is inconceivable. Aristotle excludes the possibility of experiencing time as a dimensionless present, of isolating the νῦν from this transition, from the flow of time. As we have previously noted, according to Aristotle the very perception of νῦν on behalf of the subject turns νῦν into past (as it follows νῦν in time) and makes it practically inexperienceable; by trying to grasp/experience the νῦν, we are already in the future/‘after’ while νῦν has hidden in the past/‘before’, making it nonexistent. However, in the world of Maximus, the absence or cessation of motion does not necessarily signify inexistence.

While God i.e. the uncreated is beyond any motion of fixity,⁶²⁸ the ontological antithetical contradistinction between createdness –perceived as entailing

⁶²⁸ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1221 A: “God neither moves nor is stationary (for these are properties of naturally finite beings, which have a beginning and an end); He effects absolutely nothing, nor does He suffer

the motion of everything that exists and disclosing being in motion as the prerequisite of existing— and the uncreated leads us to acknowledge God i.e. the uncreated as being in perfect rest, repose, fixity, as being completely unmoved, an ‘unmoved mover’.⁶²⁹ While acknowledging (being in) motion as the criterion of (being in) existence, thereby equating motionlessness to inexistence, Maximus also acknowledges *another* kind of being motionless, in repose and fixity: that which *iconizes* the motionlessness of the uncreated, that which transcends the necessities, predeterminations and limitations of createdness (i.e. motion), that which is the attainment of “perfection” or achieving the purpose (τέλος→τελείωσις)⁶³⁰ and the first step towards the transcendence of the ontological gap between creation and the uncreated (further steps being only granted, given, gifts of grace and not attainments of the creature itself). We could say that the cessation of motion that leads to inexistence is the *παρὰ φύσιν* cessation of motion, while the one that leads to perfection is the *κατὰ φύσιν* development,⁶³¹ which could lead to the *ὑπὲρ φύσιν* ever-moving repose, the gift of deification, of hypostasizing one’s otherness through uncreated activities (ἐνέργειαι) on the basis of a created human nature/substance – possibilities of repose spanning from the *φεῦ εἶναι* (ill-being, being in vain)⁶³² up to the *ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι* (ever well-being).

This means that for Maximus, in contrast to the Aristotelian worldview, the absence or cessation of motion does not necessarily entail inexistence; it could also signify the attainment of perfection, of freedom from the cycle of mo-

any of those things which are conceived or said of Him among ourselves, since by virtue of His nature He is beyond all motion and rest, and in no way is subject to our modes of existence.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, pp. 375-377).

⁶²⁹ Simultaneously, it is the same relativity of the language of createdness when attempting to signify, ‘circumscribe’ and ‘delimit’ the uncreated that allows us to speak of God’s creative motion, of the internal motion of the divine hypostases’ perpetual interpenetration, of God as a lover who is in fierce motion towards the human person, the object of his desire etc. Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1260 A: “[God] providentially draws the things that are in motion back to the limit that it has established for them” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 5). – Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1260 C: Being love and ἔρωσ, the divine is in motion, while being the object of love and longing it draws towards itself everything that is receptive to love and ἔρωσ.

⁶³⁰ *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1096 C – 1.35: “Ὅσα μὲν ἐν χρόνῳ καὶ χρόνον δημιουργεῖται, τελειωθέντα ἴσταται, λήγοντα τῆς κατὰ φύσιν αὐξήσεως. – “All things created in time and according to time become perfect when they cease their natural growth” (transl. Berthold p. 134). Αὐξήσις is but one of the aspects of motion. By writing about the things “created in time and according to time”, Maximus refers to sensible realities, the intelligible ones being *created in the Aeon and according to the Aeon* – possessing a temporal beginning/generation and a kind of temporality, but the distinct temporality of the Aeon.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.* The reader is reminded that, in Maximus, *κατὰ φύσιν* means according to *pre-Fallen* nature, according to a createdness that retains its full communion with its source of existence. In our known and current state of affairs, the *κατὰ φύσιν* motion is the *returning* motion.

⁶³² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1932 C: Ὡς ἂν οὖν ἡ κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἐνέργεια χρῆσται τῇ δυνάμει τῆς φύσεως, εἴτε κατὰ φύσιν, εἴτε παρὰ φύσιν, τὸ εὖ ἢ τὸ φεῦ εἶναι τὸ πέρασ αὐτὴν ἔχουσιν ὑποδέξεται, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι, ἐν ᾧ σαββατίζουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, πάσης λαβοῦσαι παῦλαν κινήσεως. “If, then, voluntary activity makes use of the potential of nature, either according to nature or against nature, it will receive nature’s limit of either well-being or ill-being— and this is eternal being, in which the souls celebrate their Sabbath, receiving cessation from all motion” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 279).

tion, as we will examine. However, according to Maximus, this is not merely a privilege of the Aristotelian ‘prime unmoved mover’ but a possibility granted to creation, to beings that did have a temporal beginning and a generation and exist within temporality, such as humans. In their case, the cessation of motion *κατὰ φύσιν* does not mean exiting temporality as such: it means entering a distinct form of temporality, the Aeon, “time deprived of motion”, temporality without motion.

We cannot conclude that Maximus’ Aeon is *the temporality of the uncreated*⁶³³ or something similar: the Aeon “has a beginning”, Maximus says, it is “not *ἄναρχος*, not without a beginning” as well as everything “included in it” – however, it cannot be “circumscribed by a number”.⁶³⁴ Despite the lack of identification of the Aeon with the uncreated, or of the Aeon *in* the uncreated, the very distinction between time and Aeon as Maximus formulates it stems from and is implied in the contradistinction between the created and the uncreated, a contradistinction that is not to be found in Aristotle’s ontology and generally in Greek philosophy.⁶³⁵ This explains why the Aristotelian definition of time could not have been merely repeated by Maximus in the context of his ecclesial ontology without change, but only with the inclusion of the Aeon, a temporality deprived of motion.

The fact that the end and purpose of the *κατὰ φύσιν* motion is the cessation of motion (the completion of the returning motion) accounts for the second part of the Confessor’s definition: “Time is the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion”.⁶³⁶ It is not only the cessation of motion that turns time into the Aeon, into a distinct form of temporality: it is time itself that is an actualization of the Aeon in radically different circumstances, when extended in the world of motion and measured within the cycle of motion. The sensible world’s motion, and the numbering thereof that is time, are also a faint *icon* of a world without motion and without the distance (*διάστημα/διάστασις*) that presupposes it, of a world with no impediments to the fullness of communion between othernesses – and between the absolute othernesses that are creation and the uncreated. The sensi-

⁶³³ There is no temporality of the uncreated whatsoever: *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1084 A – 1.1: “God is one, without beginning, incomprehensible, possessing in his totality the full power of being, fully excluding the notion of time and quality [of whenness and howness]” (transl. Berthold p. 129).

⁶³⁴ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5.

⁶³⁵ The Aristotelian ‘prime unmoved mover’ (*πρῶτον κινῶν ἀκίνητον*) could be erroneously understood as ‘uncreated’ if we equate the notions of ‘moved’ (*κινήτων*) and ‘born/existing’ (*γενητῶν*) to the notion of ‘createdness’, and as a result understand the ‘unmoved’ Mover as ‘uncreated’. However this would not be accurate. The Aristotelian ‘prime unmoved mover’ does not necessarily reside *outside of the world*, he is *within being/existence* and should not be confused with the Christian notion of uncreatedness, which presupposes a *creatio ex nihilo*.

⁶³⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 BC: Χρόνος ἐστὶν ὁ αἰὼν, ὅταν μετρηται κινήσει φερόμενος, [...] τὸν δὲ χρόνον αἰῶνα κινήσει μετρούμενον.

ble world, its motion and its temporality embody an existential *reference* to that world without existential incompleteness, without corruption and death and with the fullness of communion (i.e., without *the Fall*), a reference “through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). This reference, iconizing function and allusion is articulated in the distinction of two different, in a sense antithetical but simultaneously interconnected types of temporality. If the Aeon were in motion, it would be time: the Aeon’s analogous temporal reality in the plane of our sensible world is χρόνος, “time is the Aeon, when it is measured in its motion”. In this context, time indeed is, as Plato would say, “a moving *image* of the Aeon”.

III.5.2. The Aeon of the νοητά, the Time of the αἰσθητά

While the dimension of spatiality itself, as it is to be encountered within sensible creation, is not a trait of the *intelligible* (νοητά, νοητὴ κτίσις), the intelligible are bound by a form of temporality as well. Not time, not temporality “measured by motion”, but another mode of temporality,⁶³⁷ the Aeon. Everything that is created, both sensible and intelligible, is subject to *nature* and *temporality*: “to the one on account of its existence, and to the other on account of its motion”.⁶³⁸

Apart from being “time without motion”, the Aeon signifies also the temporality of the intelligible plane (νοητά) –the world of substances, qualities etc.– in contrast to the created sensible world (αἰσθητά), i.e. creation as perceived solely through the senses.⁶³⁹ While that which is sensible has been made ‘in time’, in the temporality of the motion’s numbering, that which is intelligible has not “received the beginning of its being” within the cycle of numbered motion but in the Aeon and “is eternal” in the sense of Aeonic, αἰώνια.⁶⁴⁰ Maximus clarifies that both the sensible and the intelligible realm are different sides of the same created reality and that they are related to each other “through an indissoluble power”: they embody *different accesses to the same created reality*, one

⁶³⁷ Ibid. 1397 AB.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Ibid. 1153 A: Εἰ γὰρ πᾶσα ἡ τῶν ὄντων φύσις εἰς τὰ νοητά καὶ τὰ αἰσθητά διήρηται, καὶ τὰ μὲν λέγεται καὶ ἔστιν αἰώνια, ὡς ἐν αἰῶνι τοῦ εἶναι λαβόντων ἀρχὴν, τὰ δὲ χρονικά, ὡς ἐν χρόνῳ πεποιημένα, καὶ τὰ μὲν ὑποπίπτει νοήσει, τὰ δὲ αἰσθήσει, διὰ τὴν ταῦτα ἀλλήλοις ἐπισφίγγουσαν τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν σχετικοῦ ιδιώματος ἄλλοτον δύναμιν. – “For the whole nature of reality is divided into the intelligible and the sensible. There is that which is said to be and is Aeonic [αἰώνια], since it receives the beginning of its being in the Aeon, and that which is temporal, since it is made in time; there is that which is subject to intellection, and that which is subject to the power of sense-perception. The entities on each side of this division are naturally related to each other through an indissoluble power that binds them together” (transl. Louth, p. 121).

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

access defined by sense-perception and the other by the intellect,⁶⁴¹ i.e. the human person's ability to gather the individual stimuli into a *consciousness* that transcends them and to access reality with a fullness beyond the mere perception of individual stimuli and reaction to them.⁶⁴²

The intelligible world, creation as perceived beyond the individual stimuli gathered through sense-perception, is also created and finite. It did have a beginning, and it will have an end – as well as everything in it.⁶⁴³ The presence of beginning, middle and end signifies the subjection of creatures to temporality – and by temporality we mean both time *and* the Aeon. Created beings, be they “distinguished by time” or “comprehended in the Aeon”, possess these definitive marks, which act as criteria for createdness: beginning, middle and end.⁶⁴⁴ To recapitulate, everything that is created does also have a beginning and is subject to temporality⁶⁴⁵ – the Aeon being the temporality of the intelligible and time the temporality of the sensible.

While the Aeon is certainly not the temporality of the uncreated but rather the temporality of the created intelligible plane in contrast to the created sensible world, at the same time the reference to the Aeon is also an allusion to the uncreated, to a world without incompleteness. There are several grades of completeness, the highest of which is the full communion between createdness and the uncreated – and of incompleteness, the most existentially grave of which is having lost one's communion to the source and cause of one's existence, risking inexistence. For Maximus, the incompleteness of the sensible world in comparison to the intelligible world is an icon, a reference and a reminder of the incompleteness of the whole of creation in comparison to the uncreated – and the superiority of the Aeon (time without motion) to time (the Aeon in motion) is an icon, a reference and a reminder of the superiority of being granted existence beyond any kind of temporality in comparison to the temporality of both the sensible and the intelligible world, to both time and the Aeon.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² This grants the human person with the ability to become a *creator of otherness* apart from embodying his own otherness, an ability that, among others, differentiates man from the animal kingdom.

⁶⁴³ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5: Ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ μεσότης καὶ τὸ τέλος, τῶν χρόνων διαιρετῶν εἰσι γνωρίσματα: εἴποι δ' ἂν τις ἀληθεύων, καὶ τῶν ἐν αἰῶνι συνορωμένων. “Beginning, middle, and end are characteristics of beings distinguished by time and it can be truly stated that they are also characteristics of beings comprehended in the Aeon” (transl. Berthold pp. 129).

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid. Note that this beginning, middle and end of beings does not only signify the *difference* from the uncreated, but also God's indirect *presence* in them by virtue of being their Creator: *Κεφάλαια Σ' περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1086 Df. – 1.10: “God is the beginning, middle, and end of beings in that he is active and not passive, as are all others which we so name. For he is beginning as Creator, middle as provider, and end as goal” (transl. Berthold p. 130).

⁶⁴⁵ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1141 B: Καὶ ὡς πάντα τὰ ὑπὸ χρόνον καὶ αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν γνῶσιν παρελθόν, ὧν τὸ εἶναι χρονικῶς τῆς γενέσεως ἤρξατο τὸ πότε εἶναι οὐκ ἡρνημένης. – “[...] transcending everything that is subject to time and the Aeon. For it is not denied that such temporal beings began through generation” (transl. Louth, p. 114).

To be more concise: while not constituting the (inexistent) temporality of the uncreated, but of beings that had had a beginning and generation, the Aeon does in fact function as the equivalent of the uncreated in temporality; it does *iconize* uncreatedness in the field of temporality. The Aeon is described as “time deprived of motion” and as the temporality of existing and created but intelligible realities. However, in Maximus’ understanding *everything* that exists within creation is *in motion*, sensible and intelligible realities alike – for example, substances or qualities, which are in motion as we examined in sections 35-40 of the tenth ‘Difficulty’. How are we to understand such an apparent inconsistency on the Confessor’s part? If that which is “comprehended in the Aeon” is in motion, then how can the Aeon be “time deprived of motion”?

The apparent contradiction is solved when one understands the mindset of thinkers like Maximus, thinkers immersed in a tradition that implicitly holds apophaticism and participation as foundational criteria of knowledge. In speaking of any two given extremities or polar opposites (in this case, perfect motionlessness and constant motion), in making this very distinction, Maximus implicitly emphasizes the middle ground, the region between these two extremities and one’s exact position in it – as in a perpetual tug of war, without ending. When a given extremity is not attained or achieved (yet), it can still be *iconized*, in the process of reaching the extremity, a state ‘in the image of’ the extremity can be achieved or granted. However, this does not compromise the *reality* of the extremities, or the reality of the change when one progresses from the one to the other. In Maximian thought, antithetical elements can be united without losing their distinct individuality and otherness, in a markedly Chalcedonian mentality. For a thinker immersed in ‘Chalcedonian logic’,⁶⁴⁶ the incompatibility of polar opposites is transcended in Christ’s hypostasis, which transcends the incompatibility of the absolute othernesses, i.e. createdness and the uncreated. The prime example of this Maximian train of thought is to be discerned in the discourse concerning deification, the human person’s capability to be granted this very transcendence.⁶⁴⁷ Another example is the “perfect inexistence”⁶⁴⁸ and the “disso-

⁶⁴⁶ Which however precedes the Council of Chalcedon, as we have noted and as Melchisedek Törönen has argued in his *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*. We are referring to this mindset of union-in-distinction (συναμφότερον) as ‘Chalcedonian logic’ for purely practical reasons.

⁶⁴⁷ As we can see e.g. in *Πρὸς Θεολόγους I*, CCSG 7, 22.43-44, humanity can be truly deified in every respect, *except* of an identity of substance with God. This exception does not undermine the *reality* of deification: for Maximus, man *becomes* the uncreated God and his nature is hypostasized (actualized) through activities of the uncreated, it is truly a deification *in every respect* – which, in turn, does not annul the *difference* of the fully and truly deified human person’s created nature to the uncreated nature. This is not merely a corollary of the difference between substance and hypostasis, in which the hypostasis’ mode of existence is changed radically and in contrast to the substance’s λόγος of nature. This apparently complex peculiarity of ‘Byzantine’ thought is integrally linked to the distinction between the substance and the *activities* (ἐνέργειαι) of the substance, of the *difference* that ‘Byzantine’ thought allows to be discerned between these two. It is the possible *difference* between the substance and the activities (ἐνέργειαι) thereof that gives philosophical conciseness to the possibility of a real difference between the substance and its hypostatization/particular actualization, i.e.

lution into nonbeing”⁶⁴⁹ which *may or may not be literal*, without however ceasing to be *real*, as we observed in our discussion of hell and the soul. As it seems, the “fullness that is never fulfilled”⁶⁵⁰ and similar formulations are not merely patristic rhetorical *topoi* of apophaticism, but indicative of a pronounced and distinct mentality permeating the totality of *patristic conciseness*. There formulations are not meant to inspire awe in their apparent contradictory vagueness, but to function as concise signifiers of syntheses that are, by their very nature, beyond the coordinates of language. In the context of this semantic extremity, these formulations succeed in *signifying* their signified reality, the price of which is the emptying of the signifier itself from any literal meaning.⁶⁵¹

In line with these patterns, the Aeon is indicative of true motionlessness and yet, at the same time, absolute motionlessness is reserved solely for the uncreated – without contradicting the former proposition. Created beings can achieve a motionlessness *beyond nature*, but not *natural* motionlessness, for they are not uncreated by nature. In Maximus’ mindset (and the patristic mindset in general), *this does not undermine the reality of the achieved motionlessness* – but neither does it undermine the reality of the distinction between natural, ‘uncreated motionlessness’ and the achievable motionlessness attributed to created beings.

The Confessor provides us with another hint in this direction. He attests that the intelligible creation has had a generation and beginning, as it has passed from nonbeing to being. However, this beginning and generation of the intelligible creation *is not manifest to human beings* (οὔτε ἀρχὴν γενέσεως ἀνθρώποις κατάδηλον ἔχουσα): from the perspective of humanity (the only perspective that we can have), the intelligible creation *seems* beginningless⁶⁵² – and, as such, motionless. This *seeming* beginninglessness and motionlessness is not merely a relative phenomenon, but has a certain reality as well: the intelligible world, it

between the substance’s *λόγος φύσεως* and the hypostasis’ *τρόπος ὑπάρξεως*, which emerges through the activities, through the manifestation of nature’s common activities in the particular actualization thereof by the person. Without this substance→activities→hypostasis distinction, the very idea of deification cannot but be, philosophically, non-sense.

⁶⁴⁸ *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων*, CD4.1 305 B (fn. p. 309).

⁶⁴⁹ *Μυσταγωγία*, Cantarella 1.67-72.

⁶⁵⁰ E.g. John of Climacus: *Κλίμαξ*, PG 88 1148 C: ἀτέλεστος τελειότης.

⁶⁵¹ Which is often also the case with the distinct language of poetry; in order for it to *function* as poetry, the emptying of the signifier’s literal meaning can be a prerequisite.

⁶⁵² *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1165 A: Τοιοῦτον γὰρ καὶ ἡ νοητὴ κτίσις, οὔτε ἀρχὴν γενέσεως ἀνθρώποις κατάδηλον ἔχουσα, κἂν εἰ γεγένηται καὶ ἤρκεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρήκται, οὔτε τέλος τοῦ εἶναι διὰ φθορᾶς ὠρισμένον ἐκδέχεται. Τὸ γὰρ ἀνώλεθρον φυσικῶς ἔχει λαβοῦσα παρὰ Θεοῦ, τοῦ οὕτως αὐτὴν δημιουργῆσαι θελήσαντος. – “For the intelligible creation is such as to have no beginning of its coming to be that is manifest to human beings, and if it comes to be and commences and passes from non-being to being, it does not await an end of its existence defined by corruption. For it is naturally imperishable, having received this from God who willed to create it such” (transl. Louth, p. 128f.).

seems, does not “await an end of its existence defined by corruption”, it has been gifted with “imperishability by nature”.⁶⁵³ Of course, every created reality is finite, will come to an end and is by nature bound to perish, this is an axiom of Maximus’: however, some of the intelligible beings have been granted with a partial but direct *participation* in the uncreated, and it is this that accounts for Maximus’ reference to an imperishability ‘by nature’ – for only the uncreated can possess imperishability ‘by nature’.

From the sense-perception’s perspective, or from the perspective of a person that bases his perception of creation on sense-perception alone, the intelligible world –substances, qualities etc.– is deprived of motion. From the perspective of the sensible, substances are not in motion, qualities are not expanding and contracting, etc. In this, the intelligible *iconizes* the motionlessness of the uncreated without embodying it, *by participation*. Maximus asserts that intelligible realities are in motion, a motion however that is quite stationary in comparison to motion as experienced through sense-perception. The human person’s aspiration toward the κατὰ φύσιν and, ultimately, deification is a process of the gradual deprivation of motion, of the gradual annihilation of the distance (διάστημα/διάστασις) that presupposes it. The deprivation of motion and time cannot but also be a deprivation of corruption, φθορά, for it is motion that causes corruption.

With this ‘imperishability’ of certain intelligible things,⁶⁵⁴ we do not propose the annulment of previous positions: Maximus is clear on the fact that “the Aeon includes in its existence the category of ‘when’ and admits of a διάστασις insofar as it began to be: time and the Aeon are not without beginning, so much less are those things which are contained in them”⁶⁵⁵ – while both sensible and intelligible beings, both the ones ‘in time’ and the ones ‘in the Aeon’, possess a beginning and an end.⁶⁵⁶ It is *participation* that adds a new element to this perspective, and *participation* is directly related to the differentiation between

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ For example: the *substance* of beings is not imperishable, should all hypostases of a substance perish, the substance/nature perishes with them. However, the λόγος φύσεως, the λόγος of said substance/nature, cannot perish. The λόγοι are acknowledged by Maximus as truly eternal and imperishable, but they are also uncreated, being the uncreated’s *intentions* and *wills*, not the created outcome of activities. At the same time, they are also acknowledged as *intelligible* in the context of the sensible-intelligible distinction. The problem is that Maximus writes about things that have had a beginning, although not a manifest one, and possess imperishability ‘by nature’. It is not the λόγοι that are meant here, for they have not had a beginning.

⁶⁵⁵ Κεφάλαια Σ’ περί θεολογίας, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5: ‘Ὁ μὲν γὰρ χρόνος, μετρομένην ἔχων τὴν κίνησιν, ἀριθμῶ περιγράφεται· ὁ αἰὼν δὲ συνεπινοουμένην ἔχων τῇ ὑπάρξει τὴν πότε κατηγορίαν, πάσχει διάστασιν, ὡς ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι λαβόν. Εἰ δὲ χρόνος καὶ αἰὼν οὐκ ἀναρχα, πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὰ ἐν τούτοις περιεχόμενα. (transl. Berthold pp. 129-130).

⁶⁵⁶ Both the sensible and the intelligible, both the ἐν χρόνῳ διαιετὰ and the ἐν αἰῶνι συνορώμενα, have beginning, middle and end. Cf. Κεφάλαια Σ’ περί θεολογίας, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5.

time and the Aeon i.e. between the beings that have been made in time and the beings that have had their beginning in the Aeon.⁶⁵⁷ To cite a relevant passage:

All beings that participate [τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα] are works of God that had their beginning in time [χρονικῶς ἡργμένα] – like, for example, the substances of beings. For they have nonbeing before being, as there was a time when the beings that participate did not exist. And there are some works of God which did not have their beginning in time: the participable beings [τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά], in which the participating beings participate by grace. For example, goodness [ἡ ἀγαθότης] and everything that is included in the λόγος of goodness.⁶⁵⁸

Beings that are not χρονικῶς ἡργμένα “have had their beginning in the Aeon”, and it is the participation to them (by grace, κατὰ χάριν, and not by nature, κατὰ φύσιν) that grants some of their attributes to the beings that participate in them. Maximus mentions goodness as an example.⁶⁵⁹ However, any imperishability can only be granted directly by the (imperishable by nature) uncreated and the uncreated’s freedom to transcend its own limitations of *being-according-to-uncreatedness*, i.e. by *will* and *intention*: imperishability is “received from God who willed to create [it] such”.⁶⁶⁰ This entails that even this imperishability and endlessness of intelligible realities that is “natural” insofar as it is actualized by *participation* could be ceased, should God –an acting person, i.e. a communion of three persons with shared *will* and *activity*– intend otherwise; creation would be “terrified” by a choice of God to “hide his face”,⁶⁶¹ risking its inexistence. Even the existence of the uncreated and truly eternal λόγοι, i.e. God’s *intentions*, could be threatened by God’s *intentions* (a tautology). In this sense (and taking into account that the intelligible *qualities* are ‘logical’, not ‘things’) we would not take Maximus’ reference to “*naturally* imperishable”⁶⁶² intelligible realities literally, in the sense that we would understand the natural imperishability of the uncreated: were we to do so, this would contradict other Maximian passages in the same book, the second and earlier *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*.

⁶⁵⁷ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1153 A.

⁶⁵⁸ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1100 CD – 1.48: Ἔργα μὲν Θεοῦ χρονικῶς ἡργμένα τοῦ εἶναι ἐστί πάντα τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα: οἷον αἱ διαφοροὶ τῶν ὄντων οὐσίαι. Τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὄν, ἔχουσι αὐτῶν τοῦ εἶναι πρεσβύτερον. Ἦν γὰρ ποτε, ὅτε τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα οὐκ ἦν. Θεοῦ δὲ ἔργα τυχὸν οὐκ ἡργμένα τοῦ εἶναι χρονικῶς, τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά, ὧν κατὰ χάριν μετέχουσι τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα: οἷον, ἡ ἀγαθότης, καὶ πᾶν εἰ τι ἀγαθότητος ἐμπεριέχεται λόγῳ.

⁶⁵⁹ Here, goodness is not, as opposed e.g. to Plato, a quality that is wholly identical to God: in another passage Maximus subjugates goodness to truth, inverting a Platonic topos. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 30.19.19-20: διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειάν ἐστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἀλλ' οὐ διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἡ ἀλήθεια.

⁶⁶⁰ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1165 A.

⁶⁶¹ This should have been quite a *topos* in Maximus’ Christian education. Cf. Psalm 104, 28-29: “when you open your hand, [all creatures] are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified”. (Septuagint: ἀνοίξαντος δὲ σου τὴν χεῖρα, τὰ σύμπαντα πλησθήσονται χρηστότητος, ἀποστρέψαντος δὲ σου τὸ πρόσωπον, ταραχθήσονται).

⁶⁶² *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1165 A, τὸ γὰρ ἀνώλεθρον φυσικῶς ἔχει λαβοῦσα παρὰ Θεοῦ.

III.5.3. A Necessary Digression: Is the Intelligible Creation Imperishable or Corruptible?

We need to digress and address this matter further, for we are witnessing an apparent inconsistency. In passages like the aforementioned PG 91 1165 A, the “natural imperishability” of intelligible beings is introduced as a reconciliation of the *creatio ex nihilo* with the attested immortality/incorruptibility/imperishability of certain created intelligible beings. However, and while a number of Maximian passages indicate this, the problem is that Maximus still has other passages which directly indicate otherwise.⁶⁶³ Apart from PG 91 1177 B-1180 A, where created intelligible beings (substances, qualities) move *according to corruption* (excluding natural incorruptibility), we read in other passages that, “to speak truthfully”,⁶⁶⁴ beings comprehended in the Aeon as well, not only beings distinguished by time (i.e. intelligible beings as well, not only sensible ones) are characterized by beginning, middle *and end*. Intelligible beings having “an end” is clearly opposed to Maximus’ own assertion in PG 91 1165 A that the intelligible creation is incorruptible and imperishable: “it does not await an end of its existence defined by corruption, for it is naturally imperishable”. Of course, *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας* and the *Ambigua to John* are different books written in different dates and for different purposes, and one could argue that Maximus simply changed his views in the meantime, or that he lacked in preciseness in either of the passages. However, the problem persists. It could simply be an intrinsic inconsistency on Maximus’ part, but it is not one of the subjects that the Confessor would treat lightly.

We propose that Maximus uses the term νοητὴ κτίσις with two different meanings, depending on the point of view and the context in which he is using it. According to the first meaning, he refers to the intelligible creation in general, of it as having an end and being able to perish, as populated by beings that “have an end” (PG 90 1085 A), that “move according to corruption” (PG 91 1177 B-1180 A) etc. – e.g. qualities, substances. In this, the term νοητὴ κτίσις has a literal meaning, for it is referring to a part of κτίσις, creation: created beings. According to the second meaning, he is referring to the νοητὴ κτίσις as populated by uncreated λόγοι as well (λόγοι of substances, but also λόγοι of qualities, in short λόγοι of anything – the λόγοι being intelligible in the sense of not being

⁶⁶³ This apparent inconsistency is not to be encountered in the case of the sensible creation, which according to Maximus has both a beginning and an end by corruption. Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 Df.: “For the sensible creation is such as to have a beginning known in coming to be, and to look for an end determined by destruction [διαφθορὰ]” (transl. Louth, p. 128).

⁶⁶⁴ *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5: Ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ μεσότης καὶ τὸ τέλος, τῶν χρόνων διαιρετῶν εἰσι γνωρίσματα· εἶποι δ’ ἄν τις ἀληθεύων, καὶ τῶν ἐν αἰῶνι συννωμένων.

sensible), which would make it possessing “natural imperishability”⁶⁶⁵ insofar as the uncreated activities are concerned. The uncreated λόγοι, God’s wills and intentions as well as the rest of divine uncreated activities are not exactly a part of the intelligible world, as they reside ‘in God’, in the uncreated. However, (a) in the context of a sensible/intelligible distinction they are obviously not to be counted among the sensible beings and (b) while they themselves are uncreated, in their interaction with created realities they emerge, being in relation to them, in the horizon of createdness. For example, while the λόγος of something’s substance is uncreated but the substance itself created and intelligible, the λόγος – exactly by being a λόγος οὐσίας and directly related to the substance– *seems* as being attached to the intelligible created substance and can be erroneously perceived as co-emerging with it. In the uncreated λόγος (divine will, intention and utterance) being contemplated *through* the created intelligible substance, it can *seem* as residing in the intelligible realm, it can *seem* as being a part or principle of the substance and as such of the νοητὴ κτίσις. Seen that way, imperishability by nature is indeed characteristic of a part of the intelligible creation, i.e. of the uncreated λόγοι that animate it. Apophatic formulations allow for such seeming inconsistencies: the λόγοι can be characterized as ‘intelligible’, without truly being ‘intelligible’ but beyond these categories, in the same sense that God can be characterized as soul, intellect, intelligible, great, powerful, eternal, good, Father, Son, Spirit – without being anything of these, for all of these are designations that emerge and are articulated according to the divisions and distinctions of createdness.⁶⁶⁶ These belong to a language, the limits of which are the limits of the created world.

Thus, the first approach to the νοητὴ κτίσις acknowledges the corruptibility and “end” of the νοητά, while the second one sees it as naturally imperishable in recognizing the imperishability of the uncreated λόγοι that are intelligible in the sense of not being sensible. Both approaches coexist without truly manifesting an intrinsic inconsistency, if approached this way. In essence, this distinction is already there: should all hypostases of a substance cease to be, their intelligible substance ceases to be as well (as there is no οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος) – but not the uncreated intelligible λόγος of that substance, i.e. the intention, will and utterance of God concerning it that is the blueprint thereof, which continues to exist ‘intelligibly’. To put it simply: if we count the uncreated λόγοι together with the intelligible beings, by virtue of the λόγοι not being sensible, then the implicit core of the intelligible realm (i.e. the λόγοι) is indeed “imperishable by nature”. If, however, we do not count the uncreated λόγοι together with the intel-

⁶⁶⁵ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1165 A.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. *Corpus Areopagiticum, Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας*, CD II, pp.149f.

ligible beings, by virtue of the λόγοι being uncreated and the intelligible beings created, then the νοητὴ κτίσις is corruptible and, having had a beginning, it will also have an end. Both approaches can be traced in different Maximian passages. However, the second distinction is a more precise one, for the uncreated nature of the λόγοι as wills, intentions and utterances of God is a characteristic of them that has a priority in significance over them being intelligible, i.e. not sensible.

In order to return to the motionlessness of the Aeon, the temporality of the moving and created intelligible realm, we need to refer to humanity's ability to *participate* in the Aeon. The human person's gradually fuller participation in the intelligible realm and in a fuller, deeper perception of creation is also a gradual entering into the temporality of the Aeon. In this context, entering the temporality of the Aeon would signify having achieved a significant but not final step in the *gradual* restoration of the fullness of communion, the *gradual* cessation of motion, the *gradual* annihilation of distance – having progressed from the *practical philosophy* to the *natural contemplation* of the λόγοι to the paving the way for the ultimate step in Maximus' triad, i.e. the *theological mystagogy* or *theological philosophy*.⁶⁶⁷ A passage from the Confessor is suggestive of this gradualness: according to it, time does not suffice to serve as the temporality of “those whom it is accustomed to escort to the divine life”, time is “not overtaking or accompanying them in their motion”.⁶⁶⁸ On their way to “the divine life”, their temporality becomes the temporality of the Aeon, an Aeon which is a distinct form of temporality but which seems to reside in the future due to it being attainable, but not yet attained.⁶⁶⁹ If that is the case, we are to understand the Aeon not only as “time deprived of motion”, but also as one's (gradual) “deprivation of motion” (and distance), the temporality of one's gradual liberation from the limitations and necessities of createdness.

⁶⁶⁷ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1296 D: “Therefore the first five modes, through the multiform contemplation to which they are subject, are gathered together into practical, natural, and theological philosophy, and these three are further gathered into the modes of present and future, that is, type and truth. Present and future, in turn, are gathered up in the beginning, that is, in the Λόγος who is in the beginning, who enables the worthy to experience and see him” (transl. Constan, DOML 29, p. 85). The goal is the transcendence of *both* present and future (type and truth) in the Λόγος.

⁶⁶⁸ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 B: τοιοῦτον γὰρ ἔχει ὁ χρόνος, οὐ φθάνων ἢ συνερχόμενος κατὰ τὴν κίνησιν ἐκεῖνοις οὐς πρὸς τὴν θεῖαν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος ζωὴν πέφυκε παραπέμπειν. – “For such is time, not overtaking or accompanying in movement those whom it is accustomed to escort to the divine life of the Aeon to come” (transl. Louth, p. 128). Ἰησοῦν γὰρ ἔχει τὸν παντὸς ὄντα καὶ χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος διάδοχον· κἄν εἰ ἄλλως οἱ λόγοι τοῦ χρόνου ἐν τῷ Θεῷ διαμένωσιν [...] – “For it has Jesus as the universal successor of time and the Aeon. And if otherwise the λόγοι of time abide in God [...]”.

⁶⁶⁹ I.e., this “divine life of the Aeon to come” is not to be exclusively understood as a common cosmic eschatological future, but as the temporality of one's way towards deification as well.

III.5.4. Temporality as Disclosure: καιρός, Maximus' νῦν

In our understanding of Maximus' *Weltanschauung*, it is not temporality (be it χρόνος or the Aeon) that functions as the horizon of either being or beings. Relation, the *knowledge* of beings by the person is disclosed as motion,⁶⁷⁰ and the *numbering* of motion is time – an icon of the possibility of knowledge and communion without motion and distance, an icon of the Aeon, “time without movement”.

However, Maximus (along with a number of other Greek Church Fathers and based on the text of the gospels) has a name for this ‘now’ that acts as a disclosure, especially for the disclosure and emergence of truly eternal realities (i.e. the λόγοι) *in time*: it is καιρός, or at least one of the meanings of this word.⁶⁷¹ We will briefly examine an indicative passage:

God not only knows before the ages [πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων] the things that exist, since they exist in him, in the truth itself, and if all these same things, both the things that are and the things that shall be, did not receive simultaneously being known and actual being on their own, but each thing [receives being] at the proper time [τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ] – for it is impossible for the infinite to exist simultaneously with things finite – nevertheless also the goal of the disposition of each thing [occurs] according to movement [τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐκάστου κατὰ τὴν κίνησιν διαθέσεως]. For there is neither time nor Aeon separating this [movement] from God. For nothing in him is recent, but the future things are as the present. And if the times and the ages indicate the things that are in God, they do this not for God but for us. For we also must not think that, when God acts, it is then that his knowledge of a thing begins.⁶⁷²

The existence of created beings is synonymous of them being known by God (being in a relationship with God, a relationship signified by the word *knowledge*). To exist is to be known by God, i.e. to retain this vital link to the

⁶⁷⁰ And not vice versa. Motion does not merely *take place*, and within it events *happen*; motion is not external and autonomous. *It is the fact that events take place that discloses and actualizes motion as motion*. The act of creation is a motion (is disclosed as a motion), generation is a motion, alteration is a motion: it is not the motion that is disclosed as creation, generation, alteration etc. *Events have an ontological priority over motion*. We are referring to *knowledge/relation* as analogous to a horizon of being due to the dialectics of communion and otherness: otherness emerges in communion, otherness is realized in the face of the other. In choosing communion and otherness as the foundational *events* of existence, we are accepting *relation* and *knowledge* as their horizon. According to the ecclesial testimony, the human person is not the primary subject of this *knowledge* or the initiator of relation: cf. Galatians 4:9, “now that you know God – or rather are known by God” (νῦν δὲ γινόντες Θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ Θεοῦ). Knowledge discloses *any* motion as motion, not only the motion applying to interpersonal relations, for motion is always and by definition a *relational event*.

⁶⁷¹ Lampe's Patristic Greek Lexicon is not particularly illuminating concerning the philosophically relevant side καιρός. It gives us the following meanings of the word in p. 697: apart from *season* and *time*, it also means *fit time*, *opportunity* and can refer to the present age or the age to come, ages of history, time compared with eternity etc. The meaning of ‘fit time’ stands closer to Maximus' understanding thereof.

⁶⁷² Πεύσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις, CCSG 10, 121.3-14 (transl. Prassas p. 106).

uncreated, to the cause and source of existence. All beings, as their λόγοι, (pre)exist in God atemporally and are *being known* atemporally, beyond any notion of temporal transition. However, there is a distinction between them being known by God (γνωσθῆναι) and acquiring actual being, actualizing their existence (καθ' αὐτὰ εἶναι); this does not happen “simultaneously” (ἅμα), for while the beings' knowledge by God is atemporal, their coming to be takes place within temporality, either in time or in the Aeon: beings, being created, are generated and possess a temporal beginning. They receive their actual being at the right καιρός, at the proper time (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ), which is chosen and defined by God. Καιρός is not merely the temporal point of generation, it does not simply signify the beginning: καιρός is the unique temporality of disclosure, the dimensionless temporal point that manifests potential being as actual being, the dimensionless temporal point in which the actualization of beings and the realization of their λόγοι as beings participating in created reality takes place.

Καιρός is not a third kind of temporality along with time and the Aeon, for it is truly dimensionless⁶⁷³ (while even the Aeon has had a beginning). Καιρός takes place *in time* or *in the Aeon*,⁶⁷⁴ but it is not time or Aeon itself. Καιρός cannot be conceived as having a reality that is independent from the flow of time or the existence of the Aeon, while time and the Aeon themselves are indirectly defined by it: time is the numbering of motion, of beings in motion that came to be in actuality ἐν καιρῷ, while the Aeon signifies the ἐν καιρῷ actualized beings' deprivation of motion (and, of course, the temporality of intelligible beings). In that sense, the Maximian καιρός is understood as a *renewal* of the Aristotelian νῦν, as analogous to the νῦν in Maximus' world. These, however, are not identical, καιρός is a *renewal* of the νῦν but not the νῦν itself, for καιρός has a much broader meaning. The fact that καιρός is a *choice* made by God emphasizes the created-uncreated communion that is intertwined in every

⁶⁷³ John Panteleimon Manoussakis offers an interesting account of καιρός' dimensionlessness in Greek patristic tradition: “Against this concept of time as χρόνος (the passing of time) stands a different understanding of temporality as καιρός. If chronological time is seen in a horizontal way, that is, as sequence and duration, καιρός could be represented as vertical and discontinuous. If χρόνος is measured in seconds, minutes, hours, and years, καιρός cannot be measured at all, since it occurs only in the Moment. What is called here ‘the Moment’—that is, as we will see, the *Augenblick* or the ἐξαιφνης— is characterized by this dis-continuity through which, according to Heidegger, the world is dis-closed and *Dasein* is faced with his or her de-cision. For even if it were possible to put all the kairological moments together, that still would not give us any measurable sense of καιρός, since each moment of καιρός (contrary to different units of time) is, in a unique way, always the same in the sense that it recurs in repetition” (*God After Metaphysics. A Theological Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2007, p.59). A comparison with the Aristotelian νῦν is inescapable, but their many and substantial differences are to be duly noted.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1328 C: “I am of the opinion that those of pious mind should not think that God knows particular things, the λόγοι of which are eternally contained in His foreknowledge and infinite power, only when they are created and brought into being. For time and the Aeon [alternative translation: the ages and the years] disclose each thing to us as being wisely created at the proper, predetermined moment [κατὰ τὸν προωρισμένον καὶ τὸν εὔθετον ἐκάστου καιρὸν], at which point it is brought into being” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 147).

facet of temporality: one of the channels that sustains the created world into existence, that retains its vital relationship to the uncreated cause that grants it with existence and prevents it from slipping into nonbeing, is this *καιρός*, i.e. the fact that each dimensionless point in time, each *νῦν* that marks the actualization of beings, is a divine *will, intension* and *presence*. The fact that “the times and the ages [the Aeons] indicate the things that are in God” stresses *καιρός* not only as a disclosure of the individual beings, but seeing that these beings “are in God”, *καιρός* reveals the presence of God *through* temporality and *within* temporality.

It is not only the beings’ actuality that is given “at the proper time”; it is also the end and goal (*τέλος*) of each being that is attained at a *καιρός*, not only according to God’s intention but also according to the being’s own movement, to its *disposition* according to its motion.⁶⁷⁵ In this, the *καιρός* of attaining the goal, end and purpose is also the temporal equivalent of the goal itself: attaining the right *καιρός* *becomes the goal*. And seeing that *καιρός* is dimensionless and as such its attainment embodies the annihilation of all distance (*διάστημα/διάστασις*), it is the fulfillment of the Aeon, for it points to the complete cessation of motion by its very dimensionlessness. There is another peculiarity in the concept of *καιρός*: while it in itself does not possess any dimension, motion or temporal distance within it, it simultaneously *signifies* a radical motion, be it a being’s motion from nonbeing into being (its generation and actualization mentioned above) or a being’s motion from being to perfection, the aforementioned *τέλος* according to its disposition. These profound motions and changes are effected through the *καιρός*, a unit without any motion, distance or dimension in itself. There is a great similarity of this to the human person’s task of mediation and, ultimately, deification: being in time, man strives to attain the cessation of motion, a motionlessness that is to culminate in ever-moving repose, as we will examine in the next chapter. However, this goal of motionlessness is to be achieved through profound changes, through the radical motions implied in both the cosmic mediation and the deification. The gradualness of the deprivation of motion and of the transition from the contemplation of the *λόγοι* to an ever fuller participation is not opposed to the momentary character of the *καιρός*, for the latter is the fulfillment of the former.

The reign of *καιρός* is also manifest in the absence of a functional linear progression of time in Scripture.⁶⁷⁶ Apart from that, it seems as if the Christian *practices* this *καιρός*-perception of temporality, in resistance to the linear progression of time, within the ‘Byzantine’ church’s liturgical cycle in order to

⁶⁷⁵ *Πεύσεις και ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 121.8: τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐκάστου κατὰ τὴν κίνησιν διαθέσεως.

⁶⁷⁶ Maximus notes that the tenses used in Scripture are often entangled, with past tenses being used in place of future tenses and vice versa (*Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 7.5-9, see also *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1293 C).

‘learn’ the temporality of καιρός and to be ready for his or her own true καιρός – and for the common and collective καιρός of the eschatological τέλος. Everything in this liturgical cycle happens *today* and *now*: the commemorated events are referred to as taking place σήμερον, today, and the present tense is used.⁶⁷⁷ The ‘texture’ of liturgical time⁶⁷⁸ does not merely exert an influence on Maximus’ thought: along with the totality of ecclesial life, it is the very frame in which Maximus develops his multifaceted testimony and must be taken into account in order to understand the Confessor’s thought.

We have repeatedly stated that the human person’s goal is to *transcend* time, to abandon the temporality of χρόνος (which is defined by motion) and to enter the Aeon, to aspire for the dimensionlessness of the καιρός. Is there enough basis in Maximus’ work for time to be considered as an enemy to man, or at the very least as an obstacle to be overcome? Is temporality so prevalent within creation that its transcendence is to be considered a primary goal?

III.5.5. Temporality as Slavery

Temporality is not merely one of the characteristics of creation; it is intertwined with the very act of creation’s creation and is a vital aspect thereof, either as a *difference* from the uncreated (in that it is an aspect of being generated and divided, i.e. manifesting *distance*) or as a *link* to it (in that it manifests God as cause and maker, as beginning and end): “everything that is after God and has come into being from God, i.e. the nature of beings and time, these appear together, so far as is possible, with God who appears as cause and maker”.⁶⁷⁹ Time is “cyclical”⁶⁸⁰ and, along with all that is in motion, of a “floating, unstable nature” which is to be overcome in order to be able to “receive the di-

⁶⁷⁷ Manoussakis proposes that this liturgical presentness, which he links to the καιρός, is –in the long run of the repetition of numerous liturgical yearly cycles– a repetition that is, in essence, futural and points to a temporality of the promised and the expected, a temporality of the ‘to come’: “This is evident in how the liturgy presents events of the past (such as the birth of Christ, his crucifixion, etc.) as always taking place ‘today’ – a survey of the hymns used in the church will show that the liturgy knows of no other temporal category than this ‘today’. Repetition has become a key philosophical term thanks to the acute analysis of Kierkegaard, who devotes an entire treatise to it. Kierkegaard is right to see in repetition a new temporal category – that is, to be juxtaposed over and against Platonic recollection. Recollection, he writes, allows us to ‘enter the eternal backwards’, while repetition is decisively futural and in its futural character pushes us to ‘enter eternity forwards’. Two different senses of eternity are here contrasted: (a) a preexisting, anterior eternity, what we could call *cosmological* eternity, and (b) an eternity that lies ahead of us and keeps reaching us in the present, what we could call an *eschatological* eternity” (*God After Metaphysics*, p. 59).

⁶⁷⁸ In mentioning the liturgical cycle, I must here once more refer to Mueller-Jourdan’s study of the understanding of spatiotemporality in Maximus’ *Μυσταγωγία* concerning the space and time of the church, a monograph dedicated to the subject (*Typologie spatio-temporelle de l’Ecclesia byzantine*).

⁶⁷⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 A (transl. Louth, p. 128).

⁶⁸⁰ *Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 16 D.

vine mysteries”.⁶⁸¹ The introduction of temporality marks the emergence of divisions that did not exist ‘before it’,⁶⁸² including the division between creation and Creator (and, along with it, the division of limit and limitlessness, measure and immeasurability, finitude and infinity, fixity and motion etc).⁶⁸³ This division is to be overcome at the “end of time”, in which created beings, being by nature in motion (τὰ κατὰ φύσιν κινούμενα) will be able to cease and abandon all motion (τῆς πρὸς τε ἑαυτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα παντελῶς ἐκβεβηκότα κινήσεως) and truly know the motionless God by experience, transcending corruption.⁶⁸⁴ However, temporality is not merely to be overcome in the process of the cessation of motion: it is seen as an *obstacle* and an *enemy*.

According to Maximus, man “is enslaved by time and nature”.⁶⁸⁵ it would be impossible for humanity to be harmed and damaged without those things “that are under the reign of time and nature”.⁶⁸⁶ Death reigns through temporality by devouring humanity:⁶⁸⁷ temporality is not merely one of the characteristics of createdness that are to be overcome along with all other divisions at the completion of the cosmic mediating function of humanity, but the very tool for humanity’s enslavement, the enabler of corruption and death – for, being the numbering of motion and every alteration, time is also the numbering of corruption; it is through time that corruption is actualized and disclosed. The aspiration for liberation from corruption is the aspiration for liberation from time.⁶⁸⁸ and while the path towards this freedom is the participation in the person that is the hypostatic union of createdness and the uncreated, Christ “the successor of all

⁶⁸¹ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1120 A.

⁶⁸² The phrase “before the emergence of temporality” cannot signify a temporal priority but rather an ontological one.

⁶⁸³ Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 60.49-54: “Because of Christ –or rather, the whole mystery of Christ– all the ages [the Aeons] and the beings within those ages have received their beginning and end in Christ. For the union between a limit of the ages and limitlessness, between measure and immeasurability, between finitude and infinity, between Creator and creation, between rest and motion, was conceived before the ages” (transl. Blowers pp. 125).

⁶⁸⁴ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 60.54-62: “This union has been manifested in Christ at the end of time, and in itself brings God’s foreknowledge to fulfillment, in order that naturally mobile creatures might secure themselves around God’s total and essential immobility, desisting altogether from their movement toward themselves and toward each other. The union has been manifested so that they might also acquire, by experience, an active knowledge of him in whom they were made worthy to find their stability and to have abiding unchangeably in them the enjoyment of this knowledge” (transl. Blowers pp. 125-126).

⁶⁸⁵ *Ἐρμηνεία εἰς τὸν νδ’ ψαλμόν*, CCSG 23, 44-49: τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ τῇ φύσει δουλώσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἄνευ γὰρ τῶν ὑπὸ φύσιν καὶ χρόνον μάχεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παντελῶς οὐ δύναται.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1157 A: “Death is living on this through the whole of this temporal period, making us his food, and we no longer live, but are eternally eaten up by him through corruption” (transl. Louth, p. 124).

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1109 A – 1.70: “The whole world is limited by its own λόγοι and we attribute place and the Aeon to whatever it contains. [...] The one who is saved will be above all worlds, ages/Aeons, and places in which he was once nurtured as a child, and will reach his end in God” (transl. Berthold p. 140).

time and Aeon”,⁶⁸⁹ the “conqueror of the world and perfecter of the Aeon”,⁶⁹⁰ Maximus does also mention an example of a human being that attained this freedom. The fact that this person lived *before the incarnation of the Λόγος* makes this example even more noteworthy.⁶⁹¹ For Maximus, the biblical Melchizedek⁶⁹² “no longer bears within himself temporal life and its motions”.⁶⁹³ such a person “has no experience of what is present to it”, for “he has become “beginningless” (ἀναρχος) and “without end” (ἀτελεύτητος), he possesses “the sole divine and eternal life of the indwelling Λόγος, a life unbounded by death”.⁶⁹⁴ It is interesting to note that, according to this passage, a person that has been born at a certain καιρὸς in time can become not merely imperishable and without end, but even “beginningless” – beginninglessness can be attained by created and originated human beings, fully inverting the coordinates of temporality in cancelling them by their very foundations and not merely from a point onwards. In *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν* (1137 C-1140 D), Maximus uses the example of Melchizedek to stress that it is possible for *any* human being⁶⁹⁵ to be granted a state of being without beginning nor end, beyond time, beyond the Aeon, beyond nature.⁶⁹⁶ (As Maximus insists that this takes place “in every respect” but without a change in human nature/substance,⁶⁹⁷ meaning that only the hypostasis is deified, we are to conclude that he refers to the possibility of the hypostatization (actualization) of a created substance/nature through uncreated activities: the ‘Byzantine’ toolbox of terminology does not leave us with many other choices). In the case of Melchizedek, it is “through *knowledge* that the movement of the mind stepped without defilement over properties of time and the Aeon”.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁸⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 B: Ἰησοῦν γὰρ ἔχει τὸν παντὸς ὄντα καὶ χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος διάδοχον.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 1120 B: μυστικῶς ἐνέφανεν ὡς νικητὴν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ συντελεστήν τοῦ αἰῶνος.

⁶⁹¹ Maximus usually notes that deification is possible only *after* the incarnation of Christ. Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.31-33: “The other ages –those which are to come about for the realization of the mystical and ineffable deification of humanity– must follow henceforth (i.e. after the incarnation of God)” (transl. Blowers p. 116).

⁶⁹² King and priest mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. In *Hebrews* 5:6, Christ is identified as “a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”.

⁶⁹³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1144 C (transl. Louth, p. 116).

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 1140 B: “In accordance with such love the dignity of sonship, the divinely-fitting gift of continual converse with God in his presence, is granted, exhibiting the divine likeness to any who begs for it” (transl. Louth, p. 113).

⁶⁹⁶ C.f. PG 91 1140 A: “For virtue naturally fights against nature, and true contemplation against time and the Aeon”.

⁶⁹⁷ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.40-44.

⁶⁹⁸ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1140 BC: “Thus I take it that it is probably not from time and nature (μηὶ διὰ χρόνου καὶ φύσεως), subject to which the great Melchizedek reached his natural end, that it should be said of those who have already transcended life and reason, that the divine Λόγος justified him, but from and through those things –I mean, virtue and knowledge– he deliberately changed what he is called. Thus the deliberation nobly struggles through the virtues against the law of nature, that is so difficult to fight against,

For Maximus, man's ascension through the λόγοι, in which he approaches the Λόγος, is a process of knowledge in which time gradually retreats.⁶⁹⁹ Man's acquired (i.e. granted) ability to contemplate and *know* reality *as it is*, beyond its constant change in its motion (that is: to gradually come to know the Λόγος through the λόγοι of beings) effects the gradual subsidence of time, "the numbering and delimitation of motion". Only the one who transcends time and ordinary perception and "discontinues the relationship of his soul to these" can be freed from their "confusion" and ascend.⁷⁰⁰ Through this knowledge, the mind "restricts the motion of all time and Aeon".⁷⁰¹ Liberation from time and the Aeon⁷⁰² is not merely a byproduct of one's contemplation (and knowledge) of reality *as it truly is* and one's ascension towards deification, but a prerequisite for it; liberation from temporality emerges as the very *way* for achieving this. As man's *liberation* from temporality is stressed as the way to his τελείωσις, so is God's absolute *freedom* from all temporality repeatedly stressed: not only is he "beyond present, past and future",⁷⁰³ i.e. the *divisions* of time, but "the very nature of time cannot approach him".⁷⁰⁴ While every being is "bound to the categories of time, Aeon and space, by which the universe is enclosed", man's task, iconizing his Creator, is to "transcend everything sensible and intelligible and all time and Aeon and space"⁷⁰⁵ – not merely to make the transition from time to the

and through knowledge the movement of the mind steps without defilement over properties of time and the Aeon (τὴν χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος ιδιότητα). With these it is not right to regard as characteristic the property of what is abandoned, but rather the magnificence of what is assumed, from which and in which alone they are and are known" (transl. Louth, p. 113). On what *knowledge* as a transformative power means, see the above subchapter on καιρός and its footnotes: knowledge signifies a *relation*. Note that even Melchizedec "reached his natural end under time and nature", a point to which we shall return in the next chapter on the ever-moving repose and deification.

⁶⁹⁹ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 47.222-224: ἐπιλείπει τὸν θεωρητικὸν νοῦν ὁ χρόνος τὰς θείας ἀναβάσεις τοῦ λόγου γνωστικῶς ποιούμενον.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid. 55.115-120: μόνος ὁ γενόμενος ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν καὶ χρόνον [...] καὶ τὴν πρὸς ταῦτα τῆς ψυχῆς διακόψας σχέσιν ἐκβαίνει τῆς αὐτῶν συγχύσεως, πρὸς τὴν ἄνω πόλιν ἐπειγόμενος.

⁷⁰¹ Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά, PG 91 9 A: νῶ δε, τῆς ἀπλανοῦς ἐνώσεως [γνώσεως] σύστασιν παντὸς αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου περιορίζων τὴν κίνησιν.

⁷⁰² The liberation from time and Aeon does not mean the *escape* from time, but rather *traversing the totality thereof* and arriving at the *end of the ages*: Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 22.74-77: "Existing here and now, we arrive at the end of the ages as active agents and reach the end of the exertion of our power and activity" (transl. Blowers p. 117).

⁷⁰³ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1296 C: "For the Λόγος, who created all things, and who is in all things according to the relation of present to the future, is comprehended both in type and in truth, in which He is present both in being and manifestation, and yet He is manifested in absolutely nothing, for inasmuch as He transcends the present and the future, He transcends both type and truth, for He contains nothing that might be considered contrary to Him" (transl. Constan, DOML 29, p. 85).

⁷⁰⁴ Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας, PG 90 1165 B – 2.86.

⁷⁰⁵ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1153 BC: "God is simply and indefinitely beyond all beings, both what circumscribes and what is circumscribed and the nature of those [categories] without which none of these could be, I mean, time and Aeon and space, by which the universe is enclosed, He is completely unrelated to anything. Since all this is so, the one who discerns with sagacity how he ought to love God, the transcendent nature, that is beyond reason and knowledge and any kind of relationship whatever, passes without relation through everything sensible and intelligible and all time and Aeon and space" (transl. Louth, p. 122). Andrew

Aeon and from the sensible to the intelligible, but to transcend all of these categories, without remaining in relation to them. The Aeon does not suffice – man must transcend this exalted form of temporality as well.

III.5.6. Conclusions and Remarks

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Maximus uses the word αἰὼν with different meanings in different contexts – most notably, he often employs its plural αἰῶνες meaning ‘the ages’, a very long duration in time, history. However, the Aeon as a second mode of temporality beyond time (χρόνος) is clearly to be discerned in Maximus’ work and certain characteristics thereof emerge in the Confessor’s passages.

- (i) The Aeon is “time deprived of motion”, in a dual and intertwined definition of temporality in which time is “the Aeon, when measured in its motion”.⁷⁰⁶ This definition does not merely provide us with an understanding of the Aeon through our more familiar notion of time; rather than that, the interrelation of the Aeon and time establishes both of them as dependent on one another, as two irreplaceable sides of the same reality.
- (ii) The Aeon is also defined as constituting the temporality of the intelligible realm, the temporality of intelligible beings. All beings are divided into sensible and intelligible beings, and while time constitutes the temporality of the sensible, the Aeon corresponds to the intelligible. Here, again, both of these (sensible and intelligible, time and the Aeon) are vitally interrelated and interconnected: “The entities on each side of this division are naturally related to each other through an indissoluble power that binds them together”.⁷⁰⁷
- (iii) As expounded in previous chapters, to be created is to have a beginning and to be in temporality. Both the sensible and the intelligible are generated, but the sensible have been generated and have their beginning “in time”, while the intelligible “in the

Louth notes in p. 206 n. 57 that in this passage “the Greek word ψυχή (translated here ‘soul’) can equally mean ‘life’, as Maximus’ comments indicate”, which is applicable to a great number of other references to ψυχή as well. This is an important point, because this Maximian vocabulary of the ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ (νοῦς) that ‘knows’ is not to be understood as referring to some ‘incorporeal humanity’ – notwithstanding that it certainly introduces a distinction between a person’s everyday ‘bodily’ life and the experiences indicated by this vocabulary.

⁷⁰⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1164 BC.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 1153 A.

Aeon”. Those that are contemplated “in the Aeon”, i.e. intelligible beings, possess beginning, middle, and end as well. To be created is to possess temporality: this elevates temporality to one of the primary criteria and characteristics of createdness,⁷⁰⁸ a status that does not fully apply to spatiality as such, which is only a characteristic of the sensible world.

- (iv) The Aeon cannot be described as the temporality of the uncreated, for it has had a beginning, as well as everything in it.⁷⁰⁹ However, from humanity’s and the sensible creation’s point of view, the Aeon *iconizes* the absolute timelessness of the uncreated and *refers* to it. The apparent changelessness of the intelligible –from the perspective of the sensible– reflects the absolute motionlessness of the uncreated. And the temporality of the apparently changeless intelligible world, the Aeon, reflects the absolute timelessness of the uncreated. The human person’s ever fuller participation in the Aeon and in the intelligible realm is the first step towards the cessation of motion and deification, due to their function as imperfect icons of the uncreated.
- (v) The Aeon is “time deprived of motion” and constitutes the temporality of the intelligible, which, however, are in some sorts of motion. While intelligible beings are in motion (‘expansion’, ‘contraction’ etc.), the Aeon itself –their mode of temporality– is not susceptible to change. Intelligible beings are beings in motion that is generated and situated within a stable form of temporality, the Aeon. The Aeon is stable in that it cannot be “circumscribed by a number”.⁷¹⁰ This is a trait of the Aeon that is in contrast to time’s floating and unstable nature.⁷¹¹
- (vi) In the previous chapter, we stressed the interrelation of time and space, time and spatiality. This is a major difference of time and the sensible to the Aeon and the intelligible, for there is no spatiality, no dimension of space (e.g. in the emergence of ‘qualities’, in the distinction of ‘substances’ etc.) in what Maximus distinguishes as ‘the intelligible’⁷¹² – which accordingly modi-

⁷⁰⁸ *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1085 A – 1.5.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹¹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1120 A : τὴν ῥέουσιν τοῦ χρόνου φύσιν.

⁷¹² We must here repeat that the sensible/intelligible distinction is a philosophical distinction that does not abscond its delimited realities but “binds them together through an indissoluble power”. The intelligible is very far from being ‘another world’ as understood in mystical or esoteric contexts. With the word ‘intelligible’, Maximus denotes all beings and all of reality that are not perceived through sense-perception, while “the entities on each side of this division are naturally related to each other”. For example, in the distinction of

fies what motion can mean when applied to intelligible beings. While the sensible move and change in space and time, the absence of the dimension of space accounts for the intelligible moving and changing against the background of the changeless Aeon.

- (vii) If we were to trace a Maximian equivalent to the Aristotelian $\nu\upsilon\nu$, it would be the notion of $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$. While $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ has a much wider semantic content in comparison to $\nu\upsilon\nu$, it does also function as the dimensionless unit of temporality in Maximus' thought, like $\nu\upsilon\nu$ does in Aristotle's.
- (viii) $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ is the 'now' that acts as disclosure, the disclosure of God's will and intention to creation in the horizon of temporality. While the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ of a being is beyond temporality, its being receives actuality (its existence is actualized) *at the proper time* ($\tau\tilde{\omega}$ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ). As such, $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ impregnates the temporality of the created with the indirect presence of the uncreated and gives *meaning* to time.
- (ix) It is not only the *beginning* and *generation* of something that is marked and actualized in $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$, but its end, goal, purpose and perfection as well. In the case of human persons, possessors of free will, this does not take place exclusively according to God's will, but also according to the person's own motion, to its individual *disposition*.⁷¹³ The $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$, being dimensionless, embodies the annihilation of *distance*.
- (x) Temporality, while being a $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}$ φύσιν characteristic of createdness, is also an obstacle to be overcome, along with all other divisions and 'distances'. This applies to both time and the Aeon. Even the Aeon must be transcended by humanity in humanity's task as a mediator.

The participation in the atemporality of the uncreated is beyond time and the Aeon, beyond any conception of temporality, which is in itself a delimitation of createdness. However, in speaking about deification Maximus introduces the

substance and hypostasis, i.e. of homogeneity and the particular, it is only the particular that is sensible, that is accessible through the sense – not the homogeneity of the particulars itself, which is merely deducted from the hypostases (or, for those that attain to a fuller access to reality, contemplated as its $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ οὐσία). Here, the 'substance' is, of course, 'intelligible' – without this making it less real, merely hypothetical or simply imaginary. The homogeneity of the particulars is neither unreal nor hypothetical nor imaginary: it is as real as the particulars of which it is the substance. However, neither 'homogeneities' nor 'qualities' (e.g. to be cold, to be new, to be colored, to be moist) occupy spaces. The intelligible is deprived of spatiality.

⁷¹³ Cf. *Πεύσεις και ἀποκρίσεις*, CCSG 10, 121.8.

notion of the *ever-moving repose* (στάσις ἀεικίνητος) which, being the end and perfection of motion beyond motionlessness itself, will be expounded in the following chapter as the *third* mode of temporality, i.e. the transcendence and annihilation of *any* temporality.

III.6. Ever-Moving Repose

III.6.1. The Motion of Deification

According to our analysis so far, temporality is a primary characteristic of createdness and is actualized in two different modes, time (χρόνος) and the Aeon (αἰών). Time is the numbering and delimitation of motion, temporality as perceived within sensible creation – as well as the reflection of the Aeon in the world of motion *as we know and perceive it*. The Aeon is time deprived of motion, and the temporality of the intelligible side of creation’s delimitation. The uncreated is not merely atemporal in the sense of not being either in time or in the Aeon, but is beyond any conception of temporality and createdness whatsoever – the very notion of a ‘temporality of the uncreated’ is considered as a contradiction in itself.

However, while there is no temporality of the uncreated, we can speak of the temporality of deification, or at least pose the question concerning it. The ecclesial community and Maximus the Confessor as a potent articulator thereof testify that it is possible for the human person to be *deified*,⁷¹⁴ that it is possible

⁷¹⁴ The subject of deification in general and the notion of deification in Maximus the Confessor in particular is too big of a subject to be exhaustively examined and analyzed here. Even a comprehensive introduction to it would be a major digression and outside the scope of this study. An excellent monograph on the subject is Norman Russel’s *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), which dedicates a chapter to Maximus the Confessor’s understanding of deification (pp. 262-295) – while more or less every major scholar engaged with Maximus has contributed to the subject as well. See also Jean-Claude Larchet’s *La Divinisation de l’homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1996) and Lars Thunberg’s *Microcosm and Mediator*, pp. 427-432. The general idea is that while participation in the divine and uncreated *substance* is absolutely impossible, a participation in the uncreated *activities* of that substance is indeed attainable (and always, of course, in its created activities i.e. created beings as well). This participation can result in the (still created) nature of a human person being hypostasized (actualized) through uncreated activities and thus (conjoining a λόγος of created being with a mode of uncreated existence) being granted uncreatedness, liberation from the constraints and limitations of createdness by participation in the hypostasis of Christ, where a coexistence of created and uncreated nature in one hypostasis has been made possible. This cannot be an achievement of the created human being, but a gift of God, granted by his grace and ἔρωσ for the human person. In Maximus’ own voice: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1076 C: “[the human image of God] rather becomes God by deification” – Ibid. 1084 C: “By this blessed inversion, man is made God by deification and God is made man by hominization” – Ibid. 1088 C: “Hence the whole man, as the object of divine action, is deified by being made God by the grace of God who became man. He remains wholly man in soul and body by nature, and becomes wholly God in body and soul by grace and the unparalleled divine radiance of blessed glory appropriate to him. Nothing can be imagined more splendid and lofty than this” (transl. Blowers, p. 63). – *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.35f.: “[God] having completely realized this deification in those who are worthy” (transl. Blowers p. 116). Deification does not reflect the restoration of the κατὰ φύσιν, it is not man’s restored and perfected nature but is *beyond nature*, ὑπὲρ φύσιν: cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1237 AB: “For the grace of deification is completely unconditioned, because it finds no faculty or capacity of any sort within nature that could receive it, for if it did, it would no longer be grace but the manifestation of a natural activity latent within the potentiality of nature. And thus, again, what takes place would no longer be marvelous if deification occurred simply in accordance with the receptive capacity of nature. Indeed it would rightly be a work of nature, and not a gift of God, and a person so divinized would be God by nature and would have to be called so in the proper sense. For natural potential in each and every being

for created human beings to actualize in themselves (to hypostasize) the *mode* of the uncreated, the *mode* of freedom from every and any limitation of createdness.⁷¹⁵ Man's nature –the λόγος of his substance– remains unchanged in deification, i.e. remains created and human, but his actual realization and hypostasis, his person –the τρόπος (mode) of his existence– is deified, actualized in the mode of the uncreated *in every respect*: “Then God will also completely fulfill the goal of his mystical work of deifying humanity in every respect, of course, short of an identity of substance with God; and he will assimilate humanity to himself”.⁷¹⁶ So, while we cannot enquire on the inexistent ‘temporality of the uncreated’, we have to ask: *what happens to temporality in deification*, what is the state of temporality in θέωσις? The Aeon is certainly not the ‘temporality of deification’: it signifies the deprivation of motion, the cessation of movement, the endurance and seeming changelessness of the intelligible – not the hypostatization (actualization) of a created nature in uncreated activities, not the direct participation of the created in the uncreated. The human person does not merely ‘enter the Aeon’ in deification; deification indicates the transcendence of motionlessness and the Aeon, both of which are categories stemming from the perspective of createdness.

Maximus the Confessor does not formulate an elaborate doctrine on the ever-moving repose, nor does he designate the στάσις ἀεικίνητος as the state of motion in deification in the context of a systematic analysis or concise exposition of these matters. However, in searching the Maximian *corpus* for scattered indications on the state of motion and temporality in deification, his references to the “ever-moving repose” and “stationary movement” of the deified human being are most illuminating and characteristic of his perspective on the matter.

A word of caution on the linguistic aspect of our enquiry: as stated repeatedly, Maximus' philosophical language is inherently apophatic (both in cases of negation and affirmation). Formulations and signifiers do not claim to be identical with their signified realities and to exhaust them, language can only *point* to truth, it is not truth itself. However, this is even more the case when Maximus refers to deification and to the uncreated. In referring to them, Maximus attempts to signify something *beyond* the limits of our world, beyond the limits of createdness – and as such, *beyond* the limits of language. The fact that we can only look “through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12) prompts the

is nothing other than the unalterable movement of nature toward complete actuality. How, then, deification could make the divinized person go out of himself, I fail to see, if it was something that lay within the bounds of his nature.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, pp. 409-411).

⁷¹⁵ The *mode* of the uncreated being relation, self-transcendence, ἔρωσ, love (where “God is love” [1 John 4:8] is taken as an ontological definition), a ‘being’ that is defined in-relation-to (the *Father* to the *Son* etc.), and the *mode* of (‘fallen’) createdness being individual atomicity, nonrelation, death.

⁷¹⁶ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 22.40-44 (transl. Blowers p. 116).

Confessor to use a markedly poetic language in order to ‘circumscribe’ and ‘delimit’ the merging of created nature and substance with the mode of the uncreated. In this language, contradictory phrases like “ever-moving repose” or “stationary movement” are not mere rhetorical devices, but an attempt to signify a reality beyond the divisions, dualities and dichotomies of createdness (in this case: beyond motion and fixity alike). Before examining these passages, a clarification of deification being a renewal of the mode of existence but not of the λόγος of nature is needed.

III.6.2. Renewing the τρόπος, Retaining the λόγος

Maximus and the patristic tradition insist that θέωσις is a *real* deification of man’s hypostasis and actual existence (not an either symbolic or incomplete ‘elevation’ of man to a very high state within createdness), the actualization of a human person through uncreated activities *in every respect* – without, however, an identification *in substance and nature*; man’s substance and nature remains created and human,⁷¹⁷ but the human person is hypostasized (actualized) according to the *mode* of the uncreated. In explaining this, the Confessor analyzes the profound change –and distance from substantial/natural predeterminations– that can be effected in the actual existence and hypostasis, in the mode of existence (arriving at the ‘beyond nature’, τὸ ὑπὲρ φύσιν)⁷¹⁸ without changing the unchangeable λόγος of substance/nature. This is not a theory that has been elaborated by Maximus in order to explain deification *per se*; it is rather his general view of the λόγος-τρόπος distinction, one application of which is his explication of the state of deification.

According to the Confessor, the renewal or innovation of a being that constitutes a real difference and distance from its nature (from the predeterminations of its substance) is not only possible, but also capable of reaching beyond

⁷¹⁷ Note how in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1308 BC, Maximus stresses that the deified human person “becomes completely whatever God is, save at the level of an identity in substance” (simultaneously deifying creation by assimilating it in God, in whom it will be “wholly interpenetrated”) by thrice using words signifying wholeness, completeness and totality in a row, i.e. ὅλος, ὅλω and ὀλικῶς: ὅλος ὅλω περιχωρήσας ὀλικῶς τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ γενόμενος πᾶν εἴ τί πέρ ἐστιν ὁ Θεός, χωρὶς τῆς κατ’ οὐσίαν ταυτότητος.

⁷¹⁸ Maximus repeatedly clarifies that deification is not our return to the ‘pre-Fallen’ κατὰ φύσιν, but something *beyond* nature. Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.90-92: “We shall become that which in no way results from our ability according to nature, since our human nature has no faculty for grasping what transcends nature (τοῦ ὑπὲρ φύσιν ἢ φύσις καταληπτικὴν οὐ κέκτηται δυνάμιν)” (transl. Blowers p. 118). This attainment *beyond nature* cannot be an achievement of the created human person, but only a gift from the uncreated God, for nature cannot reach to what resides beyond itself: *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.94-98: “Intrinsically it is only by the grace of God that deification is bestowed proportionately on created beings. Grace alone illuminates human nature with supernatural light, and, by the superiority of its glory, elevates our nature above its proper limits in excess of glory” (transl. Blowers p. 118).

the limits of its substance/nature itself.⁷¹⁹ This renewal and innovation according to the *mode of existence* is more of a common occurrence than an exception within existence: it is this *mode of existence* that manifests the difference of the hypostasis from its substance as a real difference and not as a superficial phenomenon.⁷²⁰ Maximus writes:

Every innovation, generally speaking, takes place in relation to the mode of whatever is being innovated [περὶ τὸν τρόπον τοῦ καινοτομουμένου πράγματος], not in relation to its λόγος of nature, because when a λόγος is innovated it effectively results in the destruction of nature, since the nature in question no longer possesses inviolate the λόγος according to which it exists. When, however, the mode is innovated –so that the λόγος of nature is preserved inviolate– it manifests a wondrous power, for it displays nature being acted on and acting outside the limits of its own laws [ὡς τὴν φύσιν ἐνεργουμένην τε καὶ ἐνεργοῦσαν ὑπὲρ τὸν ἑαυτῆς ἀποδεικνὺς δηλονότι θεσμόν].⁷²¹

The mode is innovated by the very existence of the being of which it is a mode of existence,⁷²² for it is actualized in otherness; the question that remains is how far-reaching this innovation is in any given case. Maximus asserts that this innovation/actualization can even “display nature being acted on and acting outside the limits of its own laws”, thereby manifesting “wondrous power”. However, even in that case, the λόγος of nature and nature itself remain intact,⁷²³ for the subsistence of nature and of its inviolate λόγος is a prerequisite for the existence of a being *as itself*, for the existence of a being as participating in a given mode of natural homogeneity. This general principle applies to deification as well, the

⁷¹⁹ Maximus’ understanding of the innovation through the *mode of existence*, transcending the substance while leaving it intact, reminds us of existentialism’s distinction between *being* and *existing*.

⁷²⁰ For example, in the case of humanity we term *mode* the way in which the common human nature is actualized (ἐνεργεῖται) into a specific human person, manifesting change and otherness without modifying nature itself: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1341 D: “Now the λόγος of human nature is that it consists of soul and body, and this nature consists of a rational soul and body, whereas its mode is the order whereby it naturally acts and is acted upon (τρόπος δὲ ἢ ἐν τῷ ἐνεργεῖν καὶ ἐνεργεῖσθαι φυσικῶς τάξις ἐστίν), frequently alternating and changing, without however in any way changing nature along with it” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, p. 173).

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*

⁷²² Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, CCSG 48, 5.117-119: “We know that the λόγος of being (ὁ τοῦ εἶναι λόγος) is one thing, and the mode of existence (ὁ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι τρόπος) is another; the λόγος is confirmed with respect to nature, while the τρόπος is confirmed with respect to the economy”.

⁷²³ The λόγοι cannot change, for they are motionless, being uncreated and beyond temporality as intentions and wills of God. However, they are perceived as being in motion in their disclosure through the beings of which they are the λόγοι, created beings which are of course in motion. In relation to the actualization of their corresponding creatures in motion, they emerge as being in motion themselves. Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1228 BC: “What human being, as I have said, can know the intelligible λόγοι of beings as they are in themselves, and how they are distinct from each other? Who can grasp how they have an immovable, natural rest, and a natural movement that prevents them from being transformed into one another? Or how they have rest in motion, and –what is even more paradoxical– their motion in rest?” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 389).

difference being that it is the existence of the hypostasis of Christ (the actualization of created and uncreated natures in one person and hypostasis) that enables such a far-reaching innovation of the *mode* to take place.

This, the λόγος-τρόπος distinction, is the hermeneutic basis of Maximus' explication of deification: the τρόπος is granted divine uncreatedness, the λόγος remains created and human. To be more precise: the *mode* of the uncreated is actualized (ἐνεργεῖται) on the basis of a created and human nature. However, the reader would do well to resist the temptation of reifying either the λόγος or the τρόπος. A contradistinction of these two is only conceivable in the case of λόγος οὐσίας and τρόπος ὑπάρξεως, i.e. principle/λόγος of substance and mode of existence, pertaining to the substance and the hypostasis respectively. Apart from this specific context, and given that Maximus utilizes these terms with differences in meaning that are not always subtle, we could even say that the concept of the τρόπος in general is a λόγος of relations: an outcome of relations like the λόγος/ratio of a mathematical division. And that each λόγος⁷²⁴ is also a τρόπος: a mode of existing as a divine utterance and intention. Both the λόγος and the τρόπος are equally indispensable, equally vital in disclosing truth, and the importance of neither of them is to be underestimated.⁷²⁵ The substance and the hypostasis, their λόγος and τρόπος as well as the crucial role of created and uncreated activities (ἐνέργειαι) alike provide the semantic frame in which the possibility of deification is ontologically described. However, this does not suffice to provide us with the necessary explanation concerning the state of motion and temporality in deification: we must examine the notion of στάσις ἀεικίνητος, the 'ever-moving repose'.

III.6.3. A Third Mode of Motion and Temporality: στάσις ἀεικίνητος

The notion of στάσις ἀεικίνητος emerges primarily in two questions of Maximus' *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον*,⁷²⁶ in passages concerning deification or the process

⁷²⁴ The λόγοι are not only λόγοι of natures/substances, but λόγοι of everything: Ibid. 1228 D: "What, in turn, is the λόγος that underlies each particular substance, nature, species, form, compound, potential, actuality, and passivity?" (transl. Constan, DOML 28, p. 391).

⁷²⁵ Cf. Ibid. 1136 BC: "Thence they are taught the divinely-perfect and saving meaning concerning the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to which they are hiddenly illuminated that the meaning of the cause is not simply that of being but are reverently initiated about the mode of existence" (transl. Louth, p. 111).

⁷²⁶ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.122-159 and 65.509-553. It is also mentioned in *Ἔργα θεολογικά και πολεμικά*, PG 91 185 A, as the state following the motionlessness resulting from the *completion of yearning*, a state in which death is conquered: πόθου τε πλήρωσιν εἰληφός, τὴν ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ τοῦ ποθομένου τελείαν ἐκίνησιν, καὶ παύλαν κινήσεως τὴν ἀεικίνητον στάσιν, καθ' ἣν ὁ πάλαι τῆς φύσεως κρατήσας ἐξαφανίζεται θάνατος, οὐχ ἡττωμένης τούτῳ διὰ παραβάσεως.

towards deification. In both cases, it is explicitly related not only to motion, but to temporality as well.

Maximus' reasoning unfolds with the assertion that motion is changing the beings that are in motion, and that this change is a fundamental trait of createdness. However, when nature will be conjoined with the Λόγος in motionlessness, this change will cease along with the motion that is causing it.⁷²⁷ The relative and finite repose that signifies the completion of the beings' motion is to take place within the "presence of the boundless fixity" signifying the uncreated; it is within this fixity that the beings' repose naturally occurs.⁷²⁸ The difference between the motionlessness of creatures and the motionlessness of the uncreated is that creatures, i.e. beings that are finite by nature, possess a motion that changes what they are, and it is the cessation of that motion that results in their kind of motionlessness – while we cannot know any changing motion in the uncreated (for it is not finite), resulting in an 'absolute' motionlessness or rather a kind of motionlessness beyond the mere cessation of motion.⁷²⁹ It is in this context that Maximus formulates his definition of time, according to which creation is "a finite space and a circumscribed fixity, while time is the circumscription of motion: as a consequence, life's motion changes the beings that are subjected to it"⁷³⁰ – linking life, motion and time to *change*, which can either be the change of corruption or the change of transformation. Up to this point, Maximus describes the state of motion and time within creation and as subjected to createdness; however, he goes on to describe the ὑπὲρ φύσιν state and the transformation that it effects on motion and temporality.

Maximus writes that when nature transcends space (τόπον) and time (χρόνον), i.e. the dimensions of createdness comprized of the finite motion and repose *by activity* (κατ' ἐνέργειαν), it will be joined with divinity ("the Providence") in all immediacy and directness (ἀμέσως συναφθῆ τῆ προνοίᾳ). In doing so, divinity (the πρόνοια, Providence) will be encountered and disclosed as a naturally simple, single and motionless λόγος, completely devoid of any circumscription and motion.⁷³¹ The first thing to be noted here is that the absolute immediacy and directness of the described union, as well as the disclosure of divinity as devoid of any motion and delimitation whatsoever, point to the annihilation of *distance*.⁷³² The absence of *any* delimitation whatsoever and the absence

⁷²⁷ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II, CCSG 22, 65.522-524.

⁷²⁸ Ibid. 65.525-528.

⁷²⁹ Ibid. 65.528-532.

⁷³⁰ Ibid. 65.532-535.

⁷³¹ Ibid. 65.535-541.

⁷³² The annihilation of *distance* is described by Maximus as follows: *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1165 B – 2.86: "It is the fulfillment of those who are moved by a longing for the ultimate object of desire. When they reach it they receive a special kind of repose from all movement, *because they will require no further time*

of motion beyond its mere cessation do not merely signify an annulment of *distance*, but an existential annihilation thereof, *transforming* both motion and temporality. Neither motionless nor the Aeon are applicable signifiers for this state, for it transcends their constitutive definitions and delimitations.

Maximus proceeds to make this distinction himself: “Because of that, as long as nature exists *in time* (ὕπαρχουσα χρονικῶς) within creation, it possesses a motion capable of effecting change due to the finite fixity of creation and the corruption that is caused by the passage of time”.⁷³³ However, “when nature arrives at God, because of the natural singularity of the One in whom it was created, *it will acquire an ever-moving repose and a stationary movement* eternally actualized in conjunction with the One and Single and Same. This ever-moving repose and stationary movement is known by the Λόγος as a direct and permanent firmness around the first cause of everything that has been created by the first cause”⁷³⁴ – the use of πεποιημένων⁷³⁵ indicating a *personal* first cause, a person that creates. Maximus clarifies this notion of the infinity *around* God in a passage from *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, in which he notes that “infinity is around God, but it is not God himself, for he incomparably transcends even this”.⁷³⁶ Describing the ones united with God as being *around* God can be understood as describing their non-dissolution in divinity, i.e. the fact that they retain their otherness even when enjoying the fullness of communion with divinity. Back in *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον*, the Confessor goes on to clarify that in this union of created nature with the Λόγος and divine Providence *in all immediacy and directness* “there is nothing at all that manifests generation and time”.⁷³⁷ The beings that are conjoined with the uncreated and thereby transformed are not merely liberated from time, but also from something that has already happened, i.e. their genera-

or period to go through (ὡς μηκέτι χρόνου τινός ὄντος αὐτῶν ἢ αἰῶνος τοῦ διαβαθῆναι ὀφείλοντος) since at the completion of these they arrive at God who is before all Aeons and whom the very nature of time cannot approach” (transl. Berthold p. 166).

⁷³³ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 65.541-544: Διόπερ ἐν μὲν τῷ κόσμῳ ὑπάρχουσα χρονικῶς ἡ φύσις ἀλλοιωτὴν ἔχει τὴν κίνησιν διὰ τὴν τοῦ κόσμου πεπερασμένην στάσιν καὶ τὴν καθ’ ἑτεροίωσιν τοῦ χρόνου φοράν.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.* 65.544-549: ἐν δὲ τῷ θεῷ γινομένη διὰ τὴν φυσικὴν τοῦ ἐν ᾧ γέγονε μονάδα, στάσιν ἀεικίνητον ἔξει καὶ στάσιμον ταυτοκινήσιαν, περὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἐν καὶ μόνον ἀίδιως γινομένην, ἣν οἶδεν ὁ λόγος ἄμεσον εἶναι περὶ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πεποιημένων μόνιμον ἴδρυσιν. Note the use of ἀίδιως, not αἰωνίως.

⁷³⁵ Participle stemming the verb ποιέω-ποιῶ, “I create”.

⁷³⁶ *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1220 C: “[which is known only to] the One who grants this ineffable grace to the worthy, that is, it is known only to God, and to those who in the future will come to experience it, when all things will be free from all change and alteration, when the endless, multiform movement of beings around particular objects will come to an end in the infinity that is around God, in which all things that are in motion will come to rest. For infinity is around God, but it is not God Himself, for He incomparably transcends even this.” (transl. Conostas, DOML 28, p. 373).

⁷³⁷ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22., 65.549-553, and particularly: καθ’ ἣν οὐδεμία τὸ παράπαν ἐστὶ χρόνου καὶ γενέσεως ἔμφρασις.

tion: while retaining their otherness and not dissolving into divinity, they become liberated even from the fact that they have had a generation.⁷³⁸

Maximus chooses to construct a terminology pertaining to motion when describing deification and union with God and when writing about the *ever-moving repose* and the *stationary movement* of the ones that will be joined with divinity in all immediacy and directness. It is this terminology that describes the created-uncreated communion as an event *beyond* motion (or even beyond the cessation/negation of motion) and *beyond* temporality in both its modes as time and the Aeon. As every definition of the Maximian modes of temporality has motion (or the absence of motion) as its component, it follows that the concept of the ever-moving repose is to be considered as the distinct mode of both motion and temporality in deification. If time is “the numbering of motion”, “the Aeon, when measured in its movement” and the Aeon is “time deprived of motion”, then the ever-moving repose and stationary movement around God is the “immediacy and directness” of their communion, the annihilation of *distance* – and not merely its cessation. Describing this state as a “direct and permanent firmness” around God entails that it is not a fleeting event or a temporary phenomenon, but an existential possibility that is a vital component of the ontological totality of existence as encompassing both created reality and its uncreated source and cause.

Furthermore, Maximus repeatedly locates this transformation in the *future*,⁷³⁹ stressing the implicit transcendental temporality of this state, both when referring to the possibility of the person’s deification and when referring to the common eschatological ‘end of the ages’. Truth, both as the arrival at the *κατὰ φύσιν* and its transcendence towards the *ὑπὲρ φύσιν*, resides in the *future*, not in the present or past. We will examine what this entails in the subchapter concerning the ‘eighth day’, as the very notion of *future* is relevant and applicable only in one of the three modes of temporality, i.e. time (*χρόνος*); neither in the Aeon nor in the utterly transcendental ever-moving repose.

III.6.4. The Ever-Moving Repose of Acquiring Uncreatedness by Participation

In another passage,⁷⁴⁰ Maximus attempts to describe this transformation beyond the limits of language with a torrent of descriptions and definitions

⁷³⁸ Reminding us of Maximus’ reference to Melchizedek.

⁷³⁹ For example, see the above mentioned passage *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1220 C: “to those who in the future will come to experience it [...]”.

⁷⁴⁰ *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II*, CCSG 22, 59.122-159.

which he equates with one another, literally trying to ‘circumscribe’ and point towards what cannot be *defined*. In doing this, the interrelation of his descriptions and definitions is truly revealing, with the concept of the ever-moving repose and stationary movement providing the basis of an understanding of deification in the context of motion as a primary characteristic of existence. Maximus begins by writing that the salvation and fulfillment (σωτηρία) of the souls is the end, goal and completion of faith, which in turn is the true disclosure of the object of faith.⁷⁴¹ The true disclosure of the object of faith is the ineffable interpenetration of the believer by the object of faith, according to the measure of the believer’s faith.⁷⁴² This interpenetration is the return of the believer to his cause and beginning at the end and goal of his journey⁷⁴³ – which, in turn, is described as the fulfillment of desire.⁷⁴⁴ *And the fulfillment of desire is the ever-moving repose of those that desire around the object of desire.*⁷⁴⁵ This ever-moving repose is the perpetual, eternal, dimensionless (and, as such, devoid of distance) enjoyment of the object of desire, which in turn is *the participation in divinity beyond nature.*⁷⁴⁶ This participation constitutes the likeness of the ones that participate to the one that is participated, i.e. the attainable identification of the ones that participate with the one that is participated *through the activities* (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν) due to this likeness.⁷⁴⁷ This is the *deification* of those that are worthy thereof.⁷⁴⁸ Maximus hastens to link this to temporality: he goes on to say that deification is, “and let me stress my words”, the completion of all ‘times’ and all ‘Aeons’, of all years and all ages (πάντων τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν αἰώνων) and of everything that is included in them.⁷⁴⁹ This completion of all χρόνοι and αἰῶνες and of everything that is included in them constitutes the unceasing and dimensionless (i.e. devoid of *distance*) unity of the true cause and beginning of those that are saved, completed, fulfilled and deified, with their purpose and end.⁷⁵⁰ And so on – concluding that this union of the uncreated God with the created

⁷⁴¹ Ibid. 59.122-124.

⁷⁴² Ibid. 59.124-126.

⁷⁴³ Which in itself has connotations concerning temporality, as it signifies the liberation from the flow and progression of time and from the flow and progression of events as well.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid. 59.126-130.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid. 59.130-131: ἐφέσεως δὲ πλήρωσις ἐστὶν ἡ περὶ τὸ ἐφετὸν τῶν ἐφιεμένων ἀεικίνητος στάσις·

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. 59.131-134: ἀεικίνητος δὲ στάσις ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ ἐφετοῦ διηνεκῆς τε καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἀπόλουσις· ἀπόλουσις δὲ διηνεκῆς καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἡ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θείων καθέστηκε μέθεξις·

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid. 59.134-138: ἡ δὲ πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων ὁμοίωσις ἐστὶν ἡ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μετεχόμενον τῶν μετεχόντων δι’ ὁμοιότητος ἐνδεχομένη ταυτότης·

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid. 59.138-141: ἡ δὲ τῶν μετεχόντων ἐνδεχομένη κατ’ ἐνέργειαν δι’ ὁμοιότητος πρὸς τὸ μετεχόμενον ταυτότης ἐστὶν ἡ θέωσις τῶν ἀξιουμένων θεώσεως·

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid. 59.141-143: ἡ δὲ θέωσις ἐστὶ καθ’ ὑπογραφῆς λόγον πάντων τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ τῶν ἐν χρόνῳ καὶ αἰῶνι περιοχῇ καὶ πέρασις·

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid. CCSG 22, 59.143-146.

human nature by far transcends any conceivable thought or formulation that can be arrived at within createdness.⁷⁵¹

The third and ultimate mode of motion and temporality is the very transcendence and completion thereof. This ever-moving repose in deification is described as the completion of every possible mode of motion and temporality, “completing time and the Aeon and everything that is included in them”. The whole of creation is recapitulated in the deified person that embodies the completion of communion; the totality of existence is returned to its uncreated source, completing, recapitulating and transcending the fundamental components of createdness: beginning, end, motion and temporality. Humanity’s mediating task is to annihilate all existential divisions (*distances*) and to restore communion “so that they all may be one”.⁷⁵² Maximus notes that “the human person is to make the whole of creation perceived through the senses one with itself and undivided [ταυτότητα μίαν ποιήσειεν ἀδιαίρετον], not dividing it spatially by intervals [τοῖς διαστήμασι] in any way”.⁷⁵³

The Confessor does not describe this as a subjective and mystical event that is contained and exhausted in the individual, but as a distinct possibility for reality’s mode of existence apart from the mode of the uncreated and the mode of createdness. The possibility of created nature’s hypostatization (actualization) in the mode of the uncreated (*without natural confusion, change, division or separation*) is not merely a ‘merging’ of existential modalities, but a third, distinct mode of being. By its very definition, it does not take place within time i.e. at a certain time, for it *transforms* time: as such, both the ‘individual’ ever-moving repose of the deified person and the ‘collective’ ever-moving repose of creation itself are not wholly different,⁷⁵⁴ but nonetheless seemingly situated in a distant and eschatological future⁷⁵⁵ – for such a mode of temporality cannot be perceived as time’s ‘now’ by those who do not participate in it. For all intents and purposes, it takes place *at the end of time itself* – i.e., beyond temporality. However, to encounter a deified person⁷⁵⁶ is to participate in the presence of this ‘future’ in the present – and to suspect that this ‘future’ is the expected dimen-

⁷⁵¹ Ibid. 59.156-159.

⁷⁵² Cf. John 17:21: ἵνα πάντες ἕν ὄσιν.

⁷⁵³ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1305 Df. (transl. Louth, p. 155).

⁷⁵⁴ Maximus notes in *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1368 C-1369 A that human persons are actualized in three different states: the present life, the state after death and the future age to come. The difference is that in this last state “we will partake without any mediation of the most sublime Λόγος of Wisdom, and being transformed in accordance with Him, we will become Gods by grace”. Each of these states can be seen as an icon of the other and a referral to it: εἰκονισθῆναι τῶν εἰρημένων τῶν ἰδιότητων.

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. Paul Plass’ “Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor”, p. 268: “In the incarnation of the timeless Λόγος the perfecting of human nature which lies in the future is also present. [...] But ‘future’ also means the cessation of time, and Maximus can also see the future as the divine plan complete and present as a whole”.

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. III.6.5. on a possible limitation to encountering a living person that has undergone complete deification.

sionless present that, in absence of an existential *distance* between the related othernesses in communion, actualizes the *vōv* as the hidden reality of temporality by annihilating the transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’.⁷⁵⁷ (By definition, these explication can be as concise as phrases like ‘stationary movement’ and ‘ever-moving repose’, for they are attempts at signifying that which cannot be delimited, residing outside the limits of our world and language. They can only function as hints and indications).

Our conclusion is that in the light of the ever-moving repose, the world’s overall motion is disclosed not as an impersonal cosmological process and function, but as a relationship (between the uncreated and creation in all its ‘logical’ manifestations) that can be either affirmed as returning motion or rejected in a deviation thereof. Temporality *measures* this relationship, the completion of which is the transformation of temporality into an ever-moving repose (the fullness of communion) and the refutation of which is measured as gradual corruption leading to death and inexistence. The complete affirmation of the returning motion, the full actualization of motion as *κατὰ φύσιν*, cannot be understood as resulting in a static motionlessness: this does not describe our experiences of its faint reflections accurately. The fullness of communion⁷⁵⁸ and the proximity of the related ‘logical’ othernesses, while presupposing the annihilation of distance and, as such, the ceasing of motion, catapults motion beyond nature and nature beyond motion, *ὑπὲρ φύσιν*: this can only be circumscribed in language as a motion beyond fixity and a fixity beyond motion, as an ‘ever-moving repose’ and a ‘stationary movement’. The deified person is accounted as being “beyond the

⁷⁵⁷ Note also Maximus’ reference to the whole of time and history as “God’s year”, as a singular temporal unit which is only actualized in its completion: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1357 AB: “The year acceptable to the Lord (as Scripture calls it), when understood allegorically, is the entire extension of the ages, beginning from the moment when God was pleased to give substance to beings, and existence to what did not exist” (transl. Constas, DOML 29, p. 203) up to the “completion of the ages”, the “end of the *λόγος* of everything that is in motion” and the granting of the promised deification, as Maximus goes on to say. In *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 9.8-12, Maximus notes -referring to John the Evangelist- that we do not know the exact *mode* of this future deification (τὸν τρόπον τῆς μελλούσης θεώσεως ἠγνοηκέναι λέγει). However, even this distant future, this *completion of all ages* is already present, simultaneously *expected* and *already here* (a typical Christian notion on eschatological time, as Oscar Cullmann has demonstrated in his *Christ and Time*): Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.60-65: “Or rather, since our Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning [*ἀρχή*], middle [*μεσότης*] and the end [*τέλος*] of all ages, past and future, [it would be fair to say that] *the end of the ages*—specifically that end which will actually come about by grace for the deification of those who are worthy— *has come upon us* in potency through faith” (transl. Blowers p. 117).

⁷⁵⁸ Maximus employs a language of *ἔρως* when describing this union: *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1073 C-1076 A: “If it [the *νοῦς*, i.e. the human person beyond its mere perception of the sensible] loves, it certainly experiences ecstasy [*ἔκστασις*] over what is loved. If it experiences ecstasy, it presses on eagerly, and if it presses on eagerly it intensifies its motion; if its motion is intensified, it does not come to rest until it is embraced wholly by the object of its desire. It no longer wants anything from itself, for it knows itself to be wholly embraced, and intentionally and by choice it wholly receives the lifegiving delimitation. When it is wholly embraced it no longer wishes to be embraced at all by itself but is suffused by that which embraces it. In the same way air is illuminated by light and iron is wholly inflamed by fire, as is the case with other things of this sort” (transl. Blowers, p. 51). Cf. *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 10.92-95 and 54.145-149.

Aeon, time, and space, having God as his space”.⁷⁵⁹ We have noted that motion is the primary ontological characteristic of creatures together with their createdness. However, motion is manifested as a component of *relation* and *distance*, and it is motion that counts/discloses/actualizes this *relation* and *distance*, time being the *number, numbering, circumscription and delimitation* thereof. Time *measures* either communion or distance, which are disclosed as motion: but the consummation of communion cannot be described as mere timelessness or motionlessness, for it cannot but be, in a sense, *active*. An *ever-moving repose* that is a *stationary movement*. The dimensionless present of the fullness of communion: a radically transformed *vũv*, eternal by the very fact that it does not possess duration, i.e. temporal *distance*.

III.6.5. Death and Relation

We have repeatedly referred to relationality and self-transcending love as the mode of life and the mode of the uncreated, and to nonrelation and individual onticity as the mode of death, the mode of ‘fallen’ createdness. It must be stressed that this is not an *a posteriori* analysis imposed by our hermeneutical approach: it is Maximus himself who makes that distinction. According to the Confessor’s definitive formulation, “Death is, primarily, separation from God”⁷⁶⁰ – and, consequently, from everything that God is, from everything created in which God is present through its *λόγος*: death is defined as the choice of nonrelation, and primarily as the refusal to be in communion with the *person* behind creation. Maximus continues: “and life is, primarily, the one who says, *I am the life*”:⁷⁶¹ life is defined as a *person* (the person of the *Λόγος*), and participation in life is the participation in that person, the relationship with that person – a relationship that is also forged through the relationship with the ones who are made ‘in the image and likeness’ of that God, i.e. human persons (and the whole of creation in its ‘logical’ quality), a relationship manifested by *actualizing* the uncreated’s mode of existence, the mode of relationality, self-transcendence, *ἔρωσ*, love. Humanity’s mediating function, i.e. the personalization of creation, is also an actualization of this mode. To actualize this mode of existence is to

⁷⁵⁹ *Κεφάλαια Σ’ περι θεολογίας*, PG 90 1108 C – 1.68: “The Aeon, time, and place belong in the category of the relative [τῶν πρὸς τι]. Without them nothing of what is included in them exists. God is not of the category of the relative because he does not have anything at all included in him. If, then, the inheritance of those who are worthy is God himself, the one who is rendered worthy of this grace will be above the Aeon, time and place. He will have God himself as a place” (transl. Berthold p. 140).

⁷⁶⁰ *Κεφάλαια περι ἀγάπης*, Ceresa-Gastaldo 2.93.1: Θάνατος μὲν ἐστὶ κυρίως ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ χωρισμός.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.* 2.93.4: Ζωὴ δὲ κυρίως ἐστὶν ὁ εἰπῶν· Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ζωὴ.

possess God: “the one who possesses love possesses God himself, since *God is love*”.⁷⁶²

However, there is a limit to how fully a human person can actualize this mode of existence while he himself is actualized through created activities inevitably dictating a distinct individual atomicity (and not merely an otherness) – for example, the natural atomicity of the human body. As long as this individual atomicity is preserved, the fullness of relationality, self-transcendence and communion cannot be achieved. According to Maximus,

so long as one is in the present time of this life even if he be perfect in his earthly state both in action and in contemplation, he still has knowledge, prophecy, and the pledge of the Holy Spirit only in part, but not in their fullness. He has yet to come at the end of the ages to the perfect rest which reveals face to face to those who are worthy the truth as it is in itself. Then one will possess not just a part of the fullness but rather acquire through participation the entire fullness of grace.⁷⁶³

We suspect that what Maximus implies is that if life is communion and death is nonrelation, then biological death need not necessarily be the severance of the created basis for the actualization of the person, but perhaps also the severance of our ultimate *resistance* to the fullness of communion and life, the annihilation of the ultimate frontier of individual atomicity preventing the fullness of relation and otherness: matter, the body.⁷⁶⁴ The hope that the Confessor articulates is that if man’s whole life constitutes an affirmative answer to God’s continuous call from nonbeing into being, then the *Other* of that relationship could grant the uncreated hypostatization (actualization) of the person to those who are receptive to it:

For I do not think that the limit of this present life is rightly called death, but rather release from death, separation from corruption, freedom from slavery, cessation of trouble, the taking away of wars, passage beyond confusion, the receding of darkness, rest from labors, silence from confused buzzing, quiet from excitement, a veiling of shame, flight from the passions, the vanishing of sin, and, to speak briefly, the termination of evils. By achieving these things through voluntary mortification, the Saints commend themselves as strangers and exiles from this life.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² Ibid. 4.100.5-6. Ὁ οὖν κτησάμενος τὴν ἀγάπην, αὐτὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἐκτίσαστο, ἐπειδὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. (transl. Berthold p. 87).

⁷⁶³ Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας, PG 90 1165 BC – 2.87 (transl. Berthold p. 166).

⁷⁶⁴ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I, CCSG 7, 42.26-28: τὸ τέλος τοῦ παθητοῦ τῆς φύσεως, φημι δὲ τὸν θάνατον, τῆς κατὰ φύσιν πρὸς ἀφθαρσίαν μεταποιήσεως ἀρχὴν ποιησάμενος. – “[he] turned the end of our nature’s passibility – which is death – into the beginning of our natural transformation to incorruption” (transl. Blowers p. 120).

⁷⁶⁵ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1157 CD (transl. Louth, p. 124f.).

Man's *receptiveness* to this divine, uncreated life and grace that constitutes the person even without its created and natural activities (i.e. matter) is of paramount importance to Maximus: "each partakes according to his ability",⁷⁶⁶ it is the "quality of disposition [ποιότητα τῆς διαθέσεως] found in each one"⁷⁶⁷ that prepares the person –or leaves him unprepared– for the ultimate unification and communion. This is promised to take place "at the end of the ages" (κατὰ τὸ πέρασ τῶν αἰώνων). However, what could this mean, given that we are referring to uncreated existence, i.e. existence beyond any conception of temporality? How could that reside in the 'future' in a context where the category of time is not applicable at all? This leads us to Maximus' passages concerning the biblical 'eighth day', the promised ultimate eschatological 'future'.

III.6.6. The Eighth Day

A common or at least closely related vocabulary is used for both the deification of a human person and the common completion/salvation and deification of a part of humanity *at the end of the ages*, the future described in theology with the term *eschatology*. However, to say that this eschatological transformation will take place *in the future, in a future time* seems to be contrary to the fact that the described reality is clearly beyond the realm of temporality as χρόνος, i.e. the mode of temporality in which the very notion of *future* has a semantic content and sense. Future and past, the 'before' and the 'after', characterize time as the numbering of motion: they are neither applicable to the Aeon of intelligible creation nor to the implicit temporality of deification, i.e. the ever-moving repose. As such, we can understand the notion of 'future' concerning the 'age to come' and the 'eighth day' only in the general and relative sense of *what has not yet become a reality*, of the coming, of the expected, the hoped-for and the soon-to-be. It is a 'future' insofar as it does not reside in humanity's perceived present or its past, but our understanding thereof would be erroneous if we would constrain it in the semantic context of 'past' and 'future': in the Maximian worldview, 'the age to come' is not merely another occurrence in a

⁷⁶⁶ Πεύσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις, CCSG 10, 102.5-14: "Rather, it is necessary to suppose this: that just as we have optical, auditory and respiratory ability, and these things do not receive all the air or the light or the voice – since there will then be no partaking of these things left for anyone else – but in proportion to the power that is present in each, each partakes according to their ability; thus, also the mercy of God grants both forgiveness and grace according to the quality of the underlying disposition of each one, e.g., when someone repented completely, he is also forgiven completely. One who repented partially is also forgiven partially. And the same thing also holds true for the one who loves" (transl. Prassas p. 97).

⁷⁶⁷ Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον II, CCSG 22, 59.165-170: Κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ἐκάστω ποιότητα τῆς διαθέσεως ὁ θεός, τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐνούμενος ὡς οἶδεν αὐτός, τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐκάστω παρέχεται καθὼς ἐστὶν ἕκαστος ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ διαπεπλασμένος πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ πάντως πᾶσιν ἐνωθησομένου κατὰ τὸ πέρασ τῶν αἰώνων.

linear progression of time – although it is expected to be the end and completion of all occurrences in the linear progression of time, ‘the end of history’.

Maximus differentiates between a human person’s deification and the ‘age to come’, he does not consider them as being the same;⁷⁶⁸ as we examined in the previous subchapter, there is a substantial difference between the completion that can be achieved in human life and the completion that requires the completion of human life itself. However, the Confessor often blurs the lines between these different states himself, suggesting that these are not to be understood as states that follow one another in a linear progression. For example, he refers to the eschatological ‘eighth day’ of Christian theology both in terms of a person’s deification and of the ‘collective’ end of the ages, the end of time itself. The ‘*eighth day*’ is both the expected historical event of the end of history, the transformation of creation, *and* the person’s deification and completion.⁷⁶⁹ In attempting to understand how these are both different and essentially the same,⁷⁷⁰ the reader should bear in mind that both events take place beyond the realm of χρόνος. As such, we cannot say that the first takes place ‘at some point’, while the second ‘at some other point’: their difference, priority and sequence is an ontological one, not a temporal one. Apart from that, in the context of the human person’s mediating function, his own ὑπὲρ φύσιν completion and participation in the uncreated *is* the mediation for the cosmos’ completion and participation in the uncreated.

Maximus treats the ‘sixth’, ‘seventh’ and ‘eighth day’ as states and modes of existence, not as ‘days’ or as events bearing a primarily temporal con-

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1368 C-1369 A. A substantial difference is also the expectation of the common *resurrection of the dead*, which is expected as *one, singular, common* event innovating creation and not merely as an occurrence in the person’s path to deification.

⁷⁶⁹ Maximus does consistently position deification in the *future*, in the *age to come*, at the *end of the ages*: e.g., *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον I*, CCSG 7, 22.77-82: “But in the ages to come we shall undergo by grace the transformation unto deification and no longer be active but passive; and for this reason we shall not cease from being deified. At that point our passion will be supernatural, and there will be no principle restrictive of the divine activity in infinitely deifying those who are passive to it” (transl. Blowers p. 117). However, this future is *beyond* motion and, as a consequence, distance: see *Πρὸς Θεόπεμπτον σχολαστικόν*, PG 90, 1393 A, where deification (ἢ μετὰ χάριν ἐκθέωσις) follows the “delimitation of motion by fixity”. In fact, Maximus explicitly links the deification of humanity (a possibility founded by Christ’s self-abasement) with the “limits of all history”: *Εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν τοῦ Πάτερ Ἡμῶν*, CCSG 23 42-44: “[...] the mysterious self-abasement of the only-begotten Son with a view to the deification of our nature, a self-abasement in which he holds enclosed the limits of all history [πάντων τῶν αἰῶνων τὸ πέρασ περιγραφόμενον]” (transl. Berthold p. 102). The deification and salvation of humanity is, by divine purpose, the end of all ages itself and a purpose conceived before all ages (*Ἔργα θεολογικά καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91 25 A: ἡ σωτηρία τῶν σωζομένων· σκοπὸς ὑπάρχουσα θεῖος, ὡς τέλος πάντων προεπινοηθέν τῶν αἰῶνων).

⁷⁷⁰ Paul Plass notes in “Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor”, p. 271: “The ‘Lord’s Day’ need not be simply the specific date on which the present world will come to an end; it can be any point of time that is shaped by (i.e., both anticipates and participates in) the divine purpose embracing the whole of history. [...] In eschatological perspective the end of time penetrates the whole of time; since there is a pattern of history, events separate in time are drawn together and superimposed on each other to make up a series all of whose moments coexist simultaneously”.

notation. He compares and parallels this triad to a number of his other triads, but the main idea underlining his conception thereof is that the number seven “signifies time, the Aeon, ages, motion, place/containment, measure, limit and providence”,⁷⁷¹ and as such the ‘eighth day’ is the transcendence of all these. “According to Scripture, the sixth day brings in the completion of beings subject to nature. The seventh limits the movement of temporal distinctiveness. The eighth indicates the mode of existence above nature and time”.⁷⁷² These ‘days’ signify the progression towards eternal well-being (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) as well: “The sixth day reveals the λόγος of the being of beings, the seventh indicates the manner of the well-being of things, the eighth communicates the ineffable mystery of the eternal well-being of things”.⁷⁷³ Apart from that, the progression from the sixth to the ‘eighth day’ signifies the transition from the completion of natural activities (κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργειῶν) to the deification of those, to whom deification can be granted: “The sixth day is the full accomplishment of the natural activities of those who practice virtue. The seventh is the fulfillment and rest of the natural activities of those who are worthy. The eighth is the promotion and transition to deification of those who are worthy”.⁷⁷⁴

The ‘eighth day’ does not merely signify the being’s rest and cessation of motion (which is described as the Sabbath, the ‘seventh day’), but the state beyond that, i.e. the ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’, *true* immobility beyond the duality of motion and motionlessness (exactly what Maximus terms *ever-moving repose* and *stationary movement* in other passages). For this, a language pertaining to ἔρωσ and self-transcendence is employed: κατ’ ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν.⁷⁷⁵ After an

⁷⁷¹ Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν, PG 91 1389 D: “According to sacred Scripture, the number seven, when taken simply as a number, by its nature contains within itself a wealth of mystical contemplation for those who love to labor for divine things. For it signifies time, the Aeon, ages, motion, as well as containment, measure, limit, and providence [χρόνον, καὶ αἰῶνα, καὶ αἰῶνας, κίνησιν τε καὶ περιοχὴν καὶ μέτρον, καὶ ὄρον καὶ πρόνοιαν], and many other things when it is properly contemplated according to the λόγος of each” (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, pp. 277).

⁷⁷² Κεφάλαια Σ’ περὶ θεολογίας, PG 90 1101 C – 1.51 (transl. Berthold p. 137).

⁷⁷³ Ibid. 1104 C – 1.56: Ἡ ἕκτη ἡμέρα, τὸν τοῦ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων λόγον ὑποδηλοῖ· ἡ δὲ ἑβδόμη, τὸν τοῦ εὖ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων τρόπον ὑποσημαίνει· ἡ δὲ ὀγδόη, τὸ τοῦ ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων ἀρρήτων μυστήριον ὑπαγορεύει. (transl. Berthold p. 138).

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid. 1104 BC – 1.55. According to the rest of the passage, “the Lord has perhaps never allowed a more mystical glance at these seventh and eighth days than in referring to them as the day and the hour of fulfillment, since it encloses the mysteries and the λόγοι of all things. Absolutely no heavenly or earthly power can know these days before experiencing the passion, only the blessed divinity which created them” (transl. Berthold p. 138). Here, Maximus expresses what we have termed (in a Wittgensteinian way) the inability to accurately articulate in language realities residing beyond the limits of our world, for they simultaneously reside beyond the limits of our language: as the described realities pertain to the uncreated as well, “absolutely no heavenly or earthly power can know these days before experiencing the passion, only the blessed divinity which created them”.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid. 1097 C – 1.39: “Sabbaths of Sabbaths (Σάββατα Σαββάτων) are the spiritual peace of the rational soul which, having withdrawn the mind even from all the more divine λόγοι which are in beings, dwells entirely in God alone in a loving ecstasy (κατ’ ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν), and has rendered itself by mystical theology totally immobile (παντελῶς ἀκίνητον) in God” (transl. Berthold p. 135).

analysis of the being/well-being/ever-being triad,⁷⁷⁶ the Confessor writes that eternal being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) is

the mystically blessed Sabbath, the great day of rest from divine works, which, according to the account of the world's creation in Scripture, appears to have neither beginning, nor end, nor created origin, since it is the manifestation of realities beyond limit and measure, sequent to the motion of whatever is limited by measure, and the infinite identity of realities that are uncontained and uncircumscribed, sequent to the quantity of things contained and circumscribed.⁷⁷⁷

The Sabbath, the 'seventh day', is also the completion of the *returning motion*, the restoration of the beings' κατὰ φύσιν. "The Sabbath of God is the full return to him of all creatures whereby he rests from his own natural activity toward them, his very divine activity which acts in an ineffable way".⁷⁷⁸ However, this is not enough; there is a state, a mode of existence beyond that, the 'eighth day' or ever well-being (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι). It is

the eighth and the first, or rather, the one and perpetual day, is the unalloyed, all-shining presence of God, which comes about after things in motion have come to rest; and, throughout the whole being of those who by their free choice have used the λόγος of being according to nature, the whole God suitably abides, bestowing on them eternal well-being by giving them a share in himself, because he alone, properly speaking, is, and is good, and is eternal.⁷⁷⁹

To have completed the 'sixth day' (to have accomplished its mode of existence) is to proceed to the 'seventh day', the 'Sabbath', i.e. beyond "the existence of what is subject to nature and to time", in the contemplation of eternity.⁷⁸⁰ Further, to be granted the 'eighth day' is to be granted deification and resurrection from the dead – the dead being "what is less than God".⁷⁸¹ Again, the uncre-

⁷⁷⁶ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1392 AB.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 1392 C (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, pp. 279).

⁷⁷⁸ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1100 BC – 1.47 (transl. Berthold p. 136). This return is a matter of activities, ἐνέργεια. Maximus continues: "For God rests from his natural activity in each being by which each of them moves naturally. He rests when each being, having obtained the divine energy in due measure, will determine its own natural activity with respect to God". As it is God's natural activity that causes the natural, returning motion of beings, the completion of their returning motion in achieving their return is also God's *rest* from this activity.

⁷⁷⁹ *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1392 CD (transl. Conostas, DOML 29, pp. 279-281). The passage continues with an analysis of the 'ever ill-being' (ἀεὶ φεῖν εἶναι): "but to those who have willfully used the principle of their being contrary to nature, he rightly renders not well-being but eternal ill-being, since well-being is no longer accessible to those who have placed themselves in opposition to it, and they have absolutely no motion after the manifestation of what was sought, by which what is sought is naturally revealed to those who seek it".

⁷⁸⁰ *Κεφάλαια Σ' περὶ θεολογίας*, PG 90 1104 AB – 1.54: "The one who has divinely accomplished in himself the sixth day by appropriate works and thoughts, and who has with God nobly brought his works to an end, has crossed by comprehension all the ground of what is subject to nature and to time. He is transported to the mystical contemplation of the immortal ages, and in an unknowable manner he makes Sabbath in his mind in leaving behind and totally surpassing beings (transl. Berthold pp. 137-138).

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*: "The one who has become worthy of the eighth day is risen from the dead, that is, from what is less than God: sensible and intelligible things, words, and thoughts; and he lives the blessed life of God, who alone

ated is defined as *proper, true* life, everything beyond that being essentially “dead”, i.e. confined to the mode of death, the mode of nonrelation.

III.6.7. Conclusions and Remarks

According to our examination of Maximus’ passages, we have come to the following conclusions:

- (i) There is no motion or temporality of the uncreated, for the uncreated is by definition beyond these categories and divisions. To say that God is ‘motionless’ or ‘timeless/eternal’ bears meaning only in a relative manner, in contradistinction and comparison to the motion and temporality of creation.
- (ii) However (and while there is no motion or temporality of the uncreated), the state of motion and temporality in the complete participation of created nature in the uncreated, in deification, constitutes a third and distinct mode of motion and temporality; a mode beyond motion and motionlessness, beyond time and Aeon, beyond the division of sensible and intelligible. According to the Confessor, this third mode of motion and temporality is testified as being experienceable by human beings, which has been made possible by the incarnation and resurrection of the Λόγος, the existence of the person and hypostasis of Christ.
- (iii) The most fitting, although apophatic, characterization of this third mode of motion and temporality in deification is its description as the *ever-moving repose* (στάσις ἀεκίνητος) and *stationary movement* (στάσιμος ταυτοκινησία) around God, in a union in all directness and immediacy (ἀμέσως συναφθῆ τῆ προνοίᾳ).
- (iv) By deification, we are referring to the human person being granted *real* identity with God in every respect except of an identity in substance/nature. According to Maximus, in deification the hypostasis of the human person is divine and uncreated, but his substance remains human and created: the mode of existence (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως) is fundamentally changed and innovated, but the λόγος of substance and nature, along with substance/nature itself, remains unchanged. This is described with

is said to be and is in very truth the Life, in such a way that he becomes himself God by deification [γενόμενος τῆ θεώσει θεός]” (transl. Berthold pp. 137-138).

the language of *activities* (ἐνέργειαι), the hypostatically manifested activities of the substance. In deification, the human person's nature is granted to be actualized through divine, uncreated activities, actualizing an uncreated, divine hypostasis. These descriptions are, by definition, *at the edge of language*.

- (v) Deification fulfills humanity's mediation task of restoring the union of everything, so that they all may be one. This is achieved by annihilating all divisions, including the created-uncreated division, the full communion of which it restores. To annihilate divisions is to annihilate *distance* – ontological distance, temporal, spatial or otherwise.⁷⁸² Again: this cannot be an individual achievement of the natural person alone, but a fruit of communion, a *gift*; it must be granted to the person (i.e., 'by grace') by the one who possesses it.
- (vi) Apart from the ever-moving repose, Maximus also refers to the 'eighth day' in describing deification: while the transcendence of the *natural* 'sixth day', i.e. the 'seventh day'/Sabbath, is already a state where the returning motion has been completed and motionlessness has been achieved, the human person aspires to the 'eighth day', the Sabbath of Sabbaths, where all divisions and distinctions will have ceased (a motionlessness beyond the cessation of motion and related formulations signifying uncreatedness). In signifying both the human person's deification and the end of history itself, the eschatological end of the ages and the renewal of creation, the Confessor stresses the interconnectedness of these two events.
- (vii) The ever-moving repose describes a radical *transformation* of temporality by the annihilation of its constitutive parts, i.e. by the annihilation of *distance*.
- (viii) In doing this, the ever-moving repose is disclosed as the dimensionless 'now' of a relationship, in which the related persons are in so complete a communion that they manifest their *otherness* without actualizing *distance*.
- (ix) This completes the reconstruction of Maximus' implicit vision concerning temporality: the primary characteristic of creation is its *motion*, which can either be the *returning* motion towards the full communion with its uncreated source and cause, or a deviation from this returning motion, i.e. a motion resulting in

⁷⁸² The use of the term ἀδιάστατος in Maximus' passages denotes exactly what its etymological information conveys, i.e. a state without διάστασις: dimension, distance etc.

nonrelation, individual onticity, corruption, death. Time *measures* this motion, and as such time *measures* this relationship. When this relationship is fulfilled and consummated in the actualization of existence as communion, i.e. in the mode of the uncreated, there is no *distance* to be measured by time or to be manifested in the Aeon⁷⁸³ - and temporality is transformed into an *ever-moving repose* and a *stationary movement*.

⁷⁸³ The Aeon does not measure a motion, but the motion (and distance) of intelligible creation takes place against the background of the temporality of the Aeon.

Concluding Remarks: Reconstructing Maximus the Confessor's Theory of Time

Maximus the Confessor's theory of time, as it has been reconstructed in this study, constitutes a conception of temporality that is beyond the usual contradiction between presentism, possibilism and eternalism⁷⁸⁴ and substantially different from other theories of time that have been developed in late antiquity, e.g. Augustine's or Boethius'⁷⁸⁵ – notwithstanding, of course, the presence of similarities, which however do not lead to an identical or similar vision of temporality.

To sum up Maximus' theory of time, we must first stress that at the background of his *Gedankenwelt* stands a foundational narration concerning ontology and cosmology, namely the existence of *divisions*, *dualities* and *distances* that are to be overcome through the mediation of humanity – a mediation that has been made possible by the hypostasis of Christ. Maximus' vision of the human person as a cosmic mediator is not solely a matter of philosophical anthropology or, even less, of mystical experience, but a vital part of his ontology: of his understanding of being and existence *as such*. The *purpose* of existence is the *truth* of existence, and this purpose is the transcendence of divisions and distances by the mediation of humanity and through the grace of God, “so that it may all be one” in the restoration of communion – a communion that does not engulf otherness, but one that brings it to light and discloses its reality. The divisions that are most relevant to our enquiry are (a) the created-uncreated distinction, separating God from creation and (b) the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁴ Eternalism holds that the past, present and future are all real, possibilism holds that the past and the present is real, but not the future, and presentism is the belief that only the present is real. See Craig Callender (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013, p. 3. Were we compelled to include Maximus' theory in one of these categories, we would categorize it under presentism and not eternalism, since only the 'now' of dimensionless presence measures the reality of communion. However, such a categorization would be a misreception of the Confessor's thought, as Maximus' understanding of temporality is quite different from that and does not constitute an answer to the question that would categorize time theories under eternalism, possibilism and presentism – it derives from a distinct *Gedankenwelt*, where temporality measures the reality of *relation*.

⁷⁸⁵ For a comparison between Eastern Christian and Western theories of time, see David Bradshaw's article “Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers”, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), pp. 311-366. While a similarity between notions such as *nunc stans* or *semper praesens aeternitas* and some of Maximus' formulations is to be observed, the substantial difference lies exactly in temporality's function as a *measurement of relation/communion* in Maximus' case, which changes the semantic frame of otherwise seemingly comparable notions and expounds their differing foundations. For an overview of Augustine's theory of time, see Karen Gloy's *Philosophiegeschichte der Zeit* (Paderborn: Fink 2008), pp. 97-122.

⁷⁸⁶ Maximus presents five cosmological divisions (influenced by Gregory of Nyssa), the first two of which are of vital importance for our study (in contrast to the last three): *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91 1304 Dff.:

The primary ontological characteristic of creation is *motion* (which, in part, is what we commonly name *change*). Creation has come to be through God's creative motion, and motion is the manner in which creation is actualized. Creation, as well as everything in it, has had a beginning; and everything that has had a beginning is in motion. There are two general modes of motion, two ways in which each and every motion can be actualized:⁷⁸⁷ motion 'according to nature', which is the *returning* motion of creation towards its Creator, beginning, cause, purpose and end, i.e. creation's attempt to restore the life-giving communion. And motion 'contrary to nature', which is every deviation from the above mentioned *returning* motion, i.e., a motion yearning to achieve individual onticity, nonrelation, death, a tendency towards inexistence.

This discloses the world's motion as the manifestation of a relationship: God's call to his creatures can either be freely⁷⁸⁸ affirmed or freely rejected. The actualization of motion as *returning* motion manifests the affirmative response to God's call for communion; the deviation thereof manifests the refusal to enter this relation and especially humanity's striving for individual onticity, deprived of the life-giving Other's fellowship.

Time (*χρόνος*), in Maximus as well as in Aristotle, is the numbering, circumscription and delimitation of motion. It is motion that exists, and time is the numbering of this existing reality: time exists insofar as motion exists. Being a manifestation of motion, time is conjoined with space (which also emerges from the reality of motion) in a coherent spatiotemporality within the sensible world, i.e. within the world as it can be perceived by the senses. Given creation's failure to actualize its overall motion as a solely *returning* motion, time measures and actualizes *corruption* as well. Our (i.e. creation's and humanity's) motion 'contrary to nature', our deviation from the yearning of communion is actualized and manifested as *corruption*. Time *measures* this corruptive motion as well: time *measures* corruption as our existential failure.

The Aeon (*αἰὼν*) is "time, when it is deprived of motion", as well as the temporality of sensible creation, of the world as perceived by the mind: the realm of substances, qualities etc. These are in motion as well, although not in a

"They say that the substance of everything that has come into being is divided into five divisions. The first of these divides from the uncreated nature the universal created nature [τὴν διαίρουσαν τῆς ἀκτίστου φύσεως τὴν κτιστὴν καθόλου φύσιν], which receives its being from becoming [...]. The second division is that in accordance with which the whole nature that receives being from creation is divided by God into that which is perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses [διαίρεται εἰς νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητὰ]" (transl. Louth, p. 154).

⁷⁸⁷ These are not two irreconcilable extremities, but *modes* that are encountered as intertwined with one another within creation.

⁷⁸⁸ This freedom primarily characterizes those that have freedom of choice and a free will, i.e. human beings, and *through them* nature and creation as a whole, which is thereby 'personalized': it is exactly this that is humanity's function and task of *mediation*.

motion entailing spatiality in any way. This motion takes place in the temporal background of the Aeon, which *seems* motionless and eternal; however, it has had a beginning – along with everything in it.⁷⁸⁹ The Aeon is a distinct *mode* of temporality which is not merely defined in contradistinction to time, but *defines* time as well: time is “the Aeon, when measured in its movement”. Ordinary time, the temporality of the sensible, is (as Plato would say) a moving icon of the Aeon; the seemingly eternal and unchanging temporality of the Aeon is reflected, and simultaneously distorted, in our sensible world as time. Time is eternity in motion, eternity subjected to the transition from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’, to the constant flow from the past to the future, casting the present moment to inexistence. The purpose of beings in motion is described as an arrival at their rest and repose: the Aeon iconizes the temporality of this repose as a “time without motion”.

The human person has been granted with the ability to pierce the veil of createdness by iconizing Christ’s mode of existence, by existentially participating in a hypostasis that actualizes both created (human) and uncreated (divine) natures in one person, the hypostasis of Christ. The human person can participate in uncreatedness and restore the fullness of his communion with the person(s) of God. Man’s affirmative response to God’s erotic call can be granted to result in a divine-human communion that actualizes man’s created nature through uncreated activities, thereby *deifying* him, transforming him into an uncreated God *in every respect* except of an identity in nature/substance – for the mode of existence (τρόπος υπάρξεως) can be radically innovated, but not the λόγος of nature (λόγος οὐσίας/φύσεως) and nature itself. This deification fundamentally transforms motion and temporality. The uncreated God is not merely ‘motionless’ (an Aristotelian ‘prime unmoved mover’), in a contradistinction with creation’s ‘motion’, for both of these are merely categories stemming from createdness. (That is why God can be signified as being in perpetual motion and interpenetration as well.) The uncreated is *beyond* the categories of motion and motionlessness, time and timelessness etc. As a consequence, the mode of existence in deification⁷⁹⁰ cannot be merely signified through a language describing the end of motion in repose or the end of temporality in its cessation: it is beyond that. Maximus uses the terms ‘ever-moving repose’ (στάσις ἀεικίνητος) and ‘stationary movement’ (στάσιμος ταυτοκινήσις) to denote this third state of motion beyond movement and fixity and temporality beyond time and the Aeon.

⁷⁸⁹ Unless, of course, if we imprecisely take the λόγοι as residing in the intelligible creation (in contrast to creation as perceived by our senses) as well, and not solely beyond createdness.

⁷⁹⁰ I.e., a possible mode of existence for, indirectly, the whole of creation through man’s mediation. Therefore, this mode of existence is not merely a matter concerning humanity – a matter of philosophical anthropology or mystical experience –, but a matter of *ontology*, of existence and reality’s mode of existence *as such*.

The ‘ever-moving repose’ describes a reality without ontological, spatial or temporal *distance*: it describes the fullness of communion-in-otherness. Both man’s deification and the overall transformation of creation in an expected and promised *future* without corruption and death are signified by a phrase bearing an obvious temporal connotation, the ‘eighth day’.

This threefold exposition of temporality (as χρόνος, αἰὼν and στάσις ἀεικίνητος) completes our understanding of reality’s motion as the manifestation of a *relationship*. Time *measures* this relationship: it measures it either as existential failure, refusal and *distance*, i.e. as corruption, death and inexistence, or as communion, nearness and immediacy. In annihilating all *distances* in a “union with the Providence in all directness and immediacy”, in liberating temporality from its transition from the past to the future, deification discloses temporality as the dimensionless present of the fullness of communion, as the transcendence of division and dualities, as the completion of a relationship that actualizes otherness as communion and not difference as division. This is not merely described by Maximus as our return to the κατὰ φύσιν, but as our attainment of the ὑπὲρ φύσιν – and it cannot be delimited as an idle rest and fixity, but as a vibrant ever-moving repose. Temporality is not annihilated; it is *transformed* and liberated from its predeterminations and necessities. It does not measure a *distance* any more, a distance from the ‘before’ to the ‘after’, but discloses the dimensionlessness of a presence, the reality of a communion, the consummation of a relationship.

It would be fascinating to explore the implications of such an understanding of temporality in a comparative manner, not only within the framework of philosophy but beyond, e.g. in a comparison with today’s natural sciences, psychology and other contemporary approaches to the nature of time. However, such an endeavour is to be reserved for a study dedicated to the examination of that particular subject. In exploring Maximus the Confessor’s understanding of time, we have examined only one of the aspects of his rich philosophical personality. We express here the hope that Maximus’ work will continue to be researched as a *corpus* of high *philosophical* significance, and that Maximus the Confessor will find his place in the *European history of philosophy*, in the shared philosophical legacy of the European continent.

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List of Publications Currently Deriving from this Doctoral Thesis

(Liste der aus dieser Dissertation hervorgegangenen Vorveröffentlichungen)

Up to 05.05.2014, the following publications have been based on elements of this doctoral thesis:

1. Mitralaxis, Sotiris: “A Note on the Definition of χρόνος and αἰὼν in St. Maximus the Confessor through Aristotle”, in: Maxim Vasiljević (ed.): *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection – Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, October 18-21 2012*, California: Sebastian Press 2013, pp. 419-426.
2. Mitralaxis, Sotiris: “Person, Eros, Critical Ontology: An Attempt to Recapitulate Christos Yannaras’ Philosophy”, in: *Sobornost* 34:1 (2012), pp. 33-40.
3. Mitralaxis, Sotiris: “Aspekte der philosophischen Anthropologie Maximus' des Bekenners: Seele und Hypostase” – to be published in: Michael Stork & Vasileios E. Pantazis (eds): *Ὁμμασιν ἄλλοις: Festschrift für Professor Ioannis E. Theodoropoulos zum 65. Geburtstag*. Berlin: Logos Verlag 2014.

Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorgelegte Arbeit selbständig verfasst habe. Andere als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel habe ich nicht verwendet. Die Arbeit ist in keinem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder abgelehnt worden.

Berlin, den 05.05.2014

Sotiris Mitralaxis