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Revolution in the Microcosm: Love and Virtue in the Cosmological Ethics of St Maximus the Confessor

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Revolution in the Microcosm:
Love and Virtue in the Cosmological Ethics of
St Maximus the Confessor

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Abstract ❧

<p style="text-align: center;">REVOLUTION IN THE MICROCOSM: LOVE AND VIRTUE IN THE
COSMOLOGICAL ETHICS OF ST MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR</p>

I explore virtue and love in Maximus the Confessor's theology with an aim to drawing an ethics from it relevant to the present day. I use a meta-ethical framework derived from contemporary virtue ethics and look at virtue as an instance of love within the context of Maximus' cosmic theology. Virtue becomes a path that leads us towards love – who is God Himself. Virtue is thus about movement towards *theosis.* I describe virtue as a relationship between humans and God, brought about through the mutual practice of a life of *ascesis* from humans and grace from God. I look at the mediatoral role of humans as microcosms gathering up the universe in an image of Christ's activity. In particular I analyse the way that human activity is simultaneously cosmic and ascetic; personal and communal. The ethic of virtue that we pursue is always caught up in a conversation about what creation gathered in love looks like. Using a number of tools derived from Maximus' thought, I suggest that this ethics will necessarily transform our current communities and personal practices. Recognising the cosmic dimension of personal behaviour means that our communities must be scrutinised as extensions of our actions. As an example, I critique the state as an inadequate form of loving relationship, illustrating its systemic reliance on violence and ideologies of alienation and hatred. I give examples of alternative ways of human organising drawn from anarchist thought that might better enable us to love and, more importantly, enable us to call to account failures to love. I conclude that to seek *theosis* after the manner Maximus describes involves recognising our personal and communal failures to love. His holistic understanding of human purpose can help us see the cosmic dimension to personal ascetic practice and consequently set our sights on a more cosmic vision of love here in the present world.

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Statement of Copyright

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❧Acknowledgements☙

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Dedicated to

Geoffrey Davies

18th September 1930 - 2nd February 2015

and

Gyp

23rd February 2000 - 26th January 2015

~

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

(1 Cor. 13:1-8)

Man has bought brains, but all the millions in the world have failed to buy love. Man has subdued bodies, but all the power on earth has been unable to subdue love. Man has conquered whole nations, but all his armies could not conquer love. Man has chained and fettered the spirit, but he has been utterly helpless before love. High on a throne, with all the splendor and pomp his gold can command, man is yet poor and desolate, if love passes him by. And if it stays, the poorest hovel is radiant with warmth, with life and color. Thus love has the magic power to make of a beggar a king. Yes, love is free; it can dwell in no other atmosphere. In freedom it gives itself unreservedly, abundantly, completely. All the laws on the statutes, all the courts in the universe, cannot tear it from the soil, once love has taken root.

Emma Goldman

~

~ Introduction ~

A. Revolution in the Microcosm

In this thesis I aim to derive an ethics from the thought of Maximus the Confessor (580-662AD).

I am particularly interested in the way that such an ethics might extend to our communal as well as personal life. For Maximus, there is not a separate domain of personal life that is isolated from communal consideration, or vice versa. How we act affects those around us, not just immediately, but also our communities, our environments, and the entire cosmos. It makes sense to me therefore, that when looking at the relevance of his thought for ethics today, we ask not just how one ought to act, but also how this might require us to turn a critical eye on the communities we are a part of and consider that those, too, ought to be paradigms of Christ's love. If virtue, love, and the way of Christ are about how we interact with others, then this will necessarily shape the communities in which we live.

For Maximus, to reorientate ourselves towards love is to be gathered to an end that is natural and always intended for us, but to the rest of human society, I argue, this is a revolutionary proposition. There are all sorts of instances where the loving thing to do starts usurping the structures of a status quo. Whilst it might be acceptable to give £1 to a homeless person on my street corner, it is generally unacceptable for me to invite them into my home and give them dinner. Whilst it is acceptable for me to buy a Fairtrade product in my local supermarket, it is unacceptable for me wish to opt out of an entire capitalist economic system that is built on wage-slavery, exploitation and oppression of workers elsewhere. To be an upstanding citizen in a liberal Western democracy, we are encouraged to take part in a kind of 'virtue ethics lite', where so long as our desire to do good does not upset a status quo, it is permissible. We have a society littered with a casual interest in virtue ethics. When it becomes appropriate, undefined and unqualified use of virtue enters political

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discourse. Words like justice, courage, and hope hold meaning within already established political paradigms, that are rarely discussed but certainly have very set limits on the acceptability of more subversive virtues like love and mercy. The ethics we derive from Maximus, I argue, upturns the safe paradigms we have come to recognise in present society.

One of the things I seek to do in this thesis is identify the systems that are in place whenever we start talking about virtue. Are all virtues equal? How do we define virtue? And do they not also always require us to have an ideal person or society in mind that we wish to aim for? When looking at Maximus, I identify the end or '*telos*' that qualifies his understanding of virtue to be *theosis* – the communion of the cosmos, transfigured through Christ into the divine image. I also describe the way that Maximus follows St Paul in believing love to bind together all other virtues, being their summit but also the totality of all other virtue. I spend some time thinking about how this might make it easier to define virtues within practical settings. One of the reasons it might be preferable to consider love rather than multiple virtues to be a better means of making ethical decisions is that it can inform the way we understand those virtues, tempering them and allowing us to deal more effectively with complex situations.

As an example, we could think about the bishop in *Les Misérables*.[1] An ex-convict whom the bishop sheltered the night before has stolen some of the bishop's silverware. A police inspector has caught the ex-convict and brought him to the bishop in order to verify an unlikely story. The ex-convict is claiming that he didn't steal the silverware, the bishop gave it to him. The bishop at this point could choose to tell the truth to the policeman, which perhaps would be the honest and just thing to do, or he could, as he does in Victor Hugo's story, lie. The bishop chooses to tell the policeman that he did indeed give the ex-convict the silverware, and that in fact the ex-convict left some silver candlesticks behind. These he also gives to the ex-convict. The ex-convict sees Christ in this action, sees the error of his ways and uses the silverware to start a business in which he goes on to care for others who are also fallen on hard times. In this example, the bishop has deemed honesty and justice, and the law of the land itself, to be subservient to the virtues of compassion and mercy,

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[1]   V. Hugo, *Les Misérables.* C.E. Wilbour (trans.) (New York: Carleton, 1862), 64-6.

and we can see the repercussions of this act in the life of the one affected by this action.

In my mind this is a prime example of the way in which Maximus' answer to the monk at the beginning of *the Ascetic Life* makes sense. How can we live in accordance with so many virtues? How can anyone hope to remember them all? Learn to love, says Maximus, this *is* all the virtues.[2] And more than that, it grants us perspective on what those virtues really are. They are defined in relation to this love. The bishop in Hugo's story has deemed, like St Isaac the Syrian,[3] that the business of a Christian is not to exemplify the greatest degree of justice, or the greatest degree of honesty, but to exemplify the love of Christ. The virtues are only ever a means to understanding what that love is, and sometimes that love supersedes what we might conventionally believe those virtues to be.

Within this thesis then, I talk about the structure of virtue ethics and the way virtues are defined in relation to the aim they point towards. I define Maximus' aim of *theosis* in more detail, then define virtue for Maximus, elaborating especially on the above point where we can consider love to be the substance of all other virtues. I then discuss the practical, ascetic ways in which we might try to be virtuous people, and contextualise this within Maximus' cosmic theology. For Maximus the human person is originally intended to be a mediator of divine love to all creatures, serving to gather all creation back to God through the gift of free will. The human is thus considered to be a microcosm – one who contains the cosmos within them – one whose choices to love or hate heal or break apart the cosmos. Given the simultaneity of our ethics as both personal and cosmic, I ask what happens when we start treating virtue as something that transfigures communal relationships. If we allow our personal actions to be directed first and foremost toward *theosis* then how acceptable are many of our traditional social structures by these standards? What is the point in tailoring our personal actions into a virtue ethics that is acceptable to institutions that perpetuate inequity and suffering, and entrench the supremacy of power, exploitation and greed? In what ways and to what extent are institutions like the state premised upon social structures that are incompatible with the love we are aiming for in *theosis*? And what

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[2]   Maximus, *LA* TCr. Ch. 3.
[3]   Isaac the Syrian, 'Homily 51' in *Ascetical Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian.* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011), 379.

might happen if we instead envision society as arising from, and grounded in, these particular personal relations of love? In the final part of this thesis I draw on existing practical political ideas that might help us better articulate a community founded in interpersonal love.

B. Union and Distinction

Maximus' theology contains an interweaving and complementary understanding of communal and personal existence in love. This means that his theology allows for a vision of human communities co-existing in love, but at the same time vehemently defends the freedom of every person to choose that love and that way of life. Berthold believes that it is this defence of human freedom that made Maximus especially well suited to dealing with the theological controversy that dominated his own day.[4] Maximus' famous defence of the wills of Christ, ultimately came down to preserving the ability of humans to receive the divine *voluntarily*. Love, for Maximus, must always be a relationship voluntarily entered into. It must always be relational *and* chosen by the free will of a person.

Maximus' ethics is a *cosmological* ethics that concerns not just us now, but all things for all time. Human choices bind or break the universe, enabling or destroying the relationships between all creation and our end in God. But at no point in Maximus' vision of the unity of the cosmos is there a moment when the particular personhood of any creature is eliminated or jeopardised in its identity. This balance between the massive and the minute is very particular to Maximus' thought and is the same idea that enables him to conceive of the simultaneity of one and many that will be explored in relation to virtue. In Maximus scholarship over the last fifty years, the idea of 'one and many' has been expressed in a number of different ways and with varying emphases on how systematically it should be treated. Melchisedec Törönen has been one of the strongest voices in suggesting a formal method. He calls this a theme of 'union and distinction' that runs through all Maximus' thought.[5] Törönen

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[4] G. Berthold, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings.* (London: SPCK, 1985), 121, note 30.
[5] M. Törönen, *Union an Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

offered this idea in response to what he considered to be a strengthening trend in Maximian scholarship to instead identify 'Chalcedonian Logic' as the linchpin of Maximus' thought.[6] Törönen's theme of union and distinction was a means of describing the way that much of Maximus' thought contains many separate things being brought together as one, and yet remaining distinct even in this unity. Törönen's main argument for not calling this Chalcedonian Logic, was that these ideas pre-date Chalcedon and that the name is therefore misleading.

We first see reference to Maximus' use of the Chalcedonian formula as a kind of logic in Hans urs von Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy* in 1941. In a passage from the revised edition of 1961 discussing the importance of the Chalcedonian formula, he writes that "everyone recognises that his [Maximus'] ontology and cosmology are extensions of his Christology, in that the synthesis of Christ's concrete person is not only God's final thought for the world but also his original plan".[7] This line of thinking was further developed by Lars Thunberg, who wrote "In our conviction Maximus' theology reveals rather a natural and logical development on the basis of a general Chalcedonian conviction, which is never seriously doubted or shaken".[8] Thus, von Balthasar and Thunberg proposed that the formula put forward at the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD could be understood as a kind of key underpinning the rest of Maximus' work. The Chalcedonian formula stated that Christ is one person in two natures:

> one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures being recognized
> without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the
> difference of the natures in no way having been taken away because of the union, but
> rather the individual character of each nature being preserved and running together
> into one person and one hypostasis, not being parted or divided into two persons...[9]

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[6]   In later personal communication, Törönen has suggested that he put forth this thesis a little too forcefully and that his own idea of 'union and distinction' needn't be as systematic in Maximus as he made it out to be in his introduction.

[7]   H. U. Von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie: Maximus der Bekenner.* (Frieburg: Herder, 1941), 193. This translation H. U. Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy.* B. Daley, (trans.) (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 207.

[8]   L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator.* (Copenhagen:C.W.K. Gleerup Lund, 1965), 9.

[9]   'The Symbol of Chalcedon' in *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical notes. Volume II. The History of Creeds.* P. Schaff (ed.). (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 62-3. [Chalcedonian Definition, P. Parvis, (trans.). (Unpublished)].

The way in which the union of natures takes place – perfect and yet unconfused – was identified as a main idea underlying Maximus' cosmic theology. Christ himself and the specific union described in Chalcedon was not only the mirror for all other relationships of the one and many, but precisely how they came about. In Torstein Tollefsen's words, this was a 'Christocentric cosmology'[10] in which all things were brought together through Christ's union of natures.

In this thesis, I take the argument over whether 'union and distinction' or 'Chalcedonian Logic' is more suitable to be largely unimportant since the terms are not mutually exclusive. As Törönen noted, union and distinction as an idea has been important prior to Chalcedon and there are plenty of people Maximus draws on who use it. This does not conflict however with the Council of Chalcedon being the latest conduit for this idea, nor with Christ as one in two natures being the central element binding together the cosmos for Maximus.[11] For the purposes of this thesis I will refer to this idea as union and distinction, since it more aptly describes the relationship in question. I will return to union and distinction as the relationship between the one and the many when discussing cosmic movement and the *telos* of creation, as well as when talking of the relationship between the virtues and love.

The tension Maximus holds between communal and personal, one and many, union and distinction is one that we can see occurring again and again in his thought. Regardless of what we term it, we can see a continual attempt to hold in tension a paradoxical relationship between what is one and yet composed of many distinct elements that retain their personal identity and freedom. We can also see this tension running through the heart of much contemporary political philosophy. We are forever asking about the balance of limitations and allowances between society and the individual. Maximus' thought, then, might be a good place to look to in order to see, not the battle between society and the individual, but a different way of conceiving of community as simultaneous union and distinction that is born out of persons voluntarily entering into communal relationships.

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[10] T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[11] This view is also shared by Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology,* 10: "I do not object to this [Törönen's argument], but I still think that the 'Chalcedonian logic' could be seen as an expression of a first concern with union and distinction. The end result will not differ in any important respect."

C. A Virtue Ethics Approach

A question one might ask is: *why virtue*? While virtue is an important part of Maximus' theological thought, it is not especially more important than any other area of his thought. One could just as easily have approached his ethics from an entirely different angle, such as a survey of his *Centuries on Love* and the way that his aphorisms build up a picture of the kind of life one ought to lead. One could have considered Maximus' writings from within an ascetic genre following Evagrios of Pontos, and the importance of the stages of prayer as a personal and cosmic journey toward knowledge of the divine. One could have demonstrated his ethics by starting with his cosmic understanding of the human and the trajectory of creation toward final eschatological communion. All of these are ways into talking about ethics in Maximus, but a complete surveillance of his thought will come full circle and touch on all of these things.

There are a number of reasons why I have selected virtue as a method of entry. The first is that, unlike the methods I just suggested above, it gives one a good way to immediately focus on the cosmic *and* ascetic dimension of Maximus' writings, which I believe is essential to do justice to Maximus' ethics. The second is that, regardless of what particular subject one chooses to focus on in Maximus, if the study is thorough enough, I think all attempts to give an account of Maximus' ethics will end up painting the same picture. This is because Maximus has such an interweaving nexus of thought across all his work and such an enormous cosmological picture of how things fit together, that whether one starts with basic ascetic principles, prayer, the virtues, or any other point, one will end up discussing the same thing eventually.

My two other reasons for choosing virtue are practical ones. The twentieth century revival of virtue ethics[12] means that starting from a similar place in Maximus will enable broader communication across disciplinary fields. Maximus' ethics can be characterised as a kind of virtue ethics. This looks very different to modern virtue ethics, or any reconstruction of Thomas Aquinas' or Aristotle's virtue ethics, but this

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[12]   Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001) is credited as being one of the key philosophers advocating a return to an Aristotelian language of virtue, character and flourishing, paving the way for a modern day revival of virtue ethics. Cf. N. Athanassoulis, 'Virtue Ethics' in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. IEP:* http://www.iep.utm.edu/virtue/#SH1b (Accessed 02.09.17).

is not necessarily problematic. So long as we can understand the similarities Maximus shares with other strands of virtue ethics, we can see his ideas as a variation (or innovation) on a theme, rather than utterly alien to previous ideas the field has had contact with. As I go on to demonstrate, the current framework in which virtue ethics is conducted does not adequately allow for different modes of thought from philosophers from different times, places, world views, and faiths. I suggest that unless we implement some changes into the current trend in the way virtues are thought of, then we cannot compare different ideas from different philosophical traditions. I offer some suggested changes to virtue ethics that might let us integrate Maximus' understanding of virtue into it. It is my hope that discussion of virtue in Maximus might consequently also be accessible to one coming from a background in philosophical virtue ethics.

The last reason I have chosen virtue, is that this practice has already been established. The adoption of virtue ethics as a route to discussing Maximus and contemporary ethics is a very new phenomena, but its presence in academic circles came to the fore in summer 2013, in volume 26, issue 3 of *Studies in Christian Ethics*. Aristotle Papanikolaou with Perry Hamalis, Paul Blowers, and Andrew Louth all contributed articles on Maximus the Confessor and Virtue Ethics. I relate these in more detail and contextualise my own work in response to them below.

Whilst these papers provide a groundwork for future research, there is at present a deficit of work on the precise relation of virtue, love and ethics in Maximus' thought and how this might serve as a resource for ethics today. Whilst it is generally accepted that, as Blowers writes, "this mystery of love is, in the long run, Maximus's signature legacy in Eastern Orthodox ethics",[13] there is presently little that applies Maximus' understanding of virtue to contemporary ethical challenges. In response to and alongside these papers, virtue ethics and Maximus has become the topic of doctoral study for Demetrios Harper and myself.[14]

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[13] P. Blowers, 'Aligning and Reorienting the Passible Self: Maximus the Confessor's Virtue Ethics'. *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26:3 (2013): 350.

[14] A number of conference talks based on our respective theses have also been given, including E. Brown Dewhurst, 'The Ontology of Virtue as Participation in Divine Love in the Works of St Maximus the Confessor' in *Forum Philosophicum* 20:2 (2015), 157-169.; and *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher: International Colloquium* (Freie Universität, Berlin), 26th-28th September 2014; and Harper's paper 'The Ontological Ethics of St. Maximus the Confessor and the Concept of Shame' delivered to *International Conference on Patristic Studies.* (Examination

I have chosen virtue as my topic then, because it is a useful way to frame Maximus' cosmic and ascetic thought, it serves a practical purpose in appealing to a wider interdisciplinary field of philosophy, and the beginnings of a field of Maximus and virtue ethics are already in evidence, making it easier to interact with this new work by adopting the same virtue ethics terminology.

D. Maximus and Contemporary Ethics So Far

In this thesis I aim to present an in-depth study of virtue in Maximus and to demonstrate some of the practicalities we could draw from his thought for contemporary ethics. In this respect, the work is the first of its kind as an analysis of virtue in Maximus and an example of how we might use it as a tool to critique present circumstances and form an ethical basis for future communities. The thesis arises in response to the work that has gone before it particularly by the aforementioned papers by Hamalis and Papanikolaou, Louth, and Blowers, and fills a gap that was identified, amongst other places, in the conclusion to Tollefsen's book *Christocentric Cosmology*.[15] Throughout the writing of this thesis the field of Maximus and contemporary ethics (both with and without reference to virtue) has continued to grow. I give here a brief overview of the recent work on Maximus and ethics.

In the paper that opens the special edition of *Studies in Christian Ethics*, Hamalis and Papanikolaou set out to contextualise Eastern Orthodoxy and virtue as a counterpoint to the Western tradition of virtue ethics, especially in light of the works of Lossky. They explain that in Eastern Orthodox thought a division between 'mystical' and 'theological' cannot be maintained, and that ascetic and liturgical contributions are also important 'theologically'. Whilst an important introductory article to an understanding of virtue in the Christian Greek-speaking world, I do not dwell on these arguments, since a division between mystical and theological does not exist in Maximus' works and neither does it arise in any literature I interact with in this thesis. I do distinguish between 'cosmic' and 'ascetic' thought, using 'cosmic'

Schools, University of Oxford), 10th- 14th August 2015.
[15]   Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology,* 227-9.

roughly to refer to those more metaphysical discussions of the trajectory of the cosmos, and 'ascetic' to refer to those texts in which Maximus has a more explicitly monastic audience in mind. Even when distinguishing between these terms however, there is no sense in which they map on to a mystical/theological divide since the terms I am using merely represent different topics or approaches within Maximus' theology. As I mentioned earlier, all Maximus' thought is interweaving and leads one to every other area of this thought anyway, so even if one began with a cosmic approach to his virtue, one would very soon be drawing on Maximus' ascetic theology. Nevertheless, Papanikolaou and Hamalis provide a good overview of the place of Byzantine thought in relation to contemporary ethics, and I pick up many of the themes they identify as essential, especially the centrality of *theosis* as *telos* (Chapter 2), and "the elevation of love as the virtue of all virtues. For Maximus, all virtues lead to love and are manifestations of love"[16] (Chapter 3), and the way that virtues are not acquired for Maximus but are "manifestations of God's love"[17] (Chapter 4).

Another of the articles in the special edition of *Studies in Christian Ethics* was by Andrew Louth. Louth lays out a comparison between the positions of Thomas Aquinas and Maximus the Confessor on virtue. He situates his discussion in a recent history of virtue ethics and also within the ancient Greek account of virtue. Louth notes that for Plato, different strata of society are assigned a different virtue which they must work at in order for society to function well. While this hierarchical aportioning of virtue according to political rank and status does not feature in Maximus, deliberation on how virtue relates to our life in community in Maximus is something I spend a lot of time on later. In Chapter 6, I discuss how we can extend a personal search for virtue into a vision for communal life – basing society on those personal relations, rather than, as we might argue Plato is doing, virtues themselves being assigned rightful places in a preconceived structure of political life.

Louth indicates some important differences between Hellenic and Christian understandings of virtue: "The principal problem is that the notion of virtue could suggest that by our own efforts we could become good or virtuous, which goes counter to the Christian conviction that humankind has fallen away from its original

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[16]   P. T. Hamalis and A. Papanikolaou, 'Toward a Godly Mode of Being: Virtue as Embodied Deification' *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26:3 (2013): 276.
[17]   Hamalis and Papanikolaou, 'Godly Mode of Being', 277.

condition and needs grace...".[18] The difficulty Louth identifies also applies to contemporary virtue ethics – I primarily rely on the framework for a revised virtue ethics outlined in Chapter 1 to deal with this disparity. Louth identifies the Christian preoccupation with virtue as a concern "with what human beings are, rather than how they make moral choices".[19] It is thus a teleological concern with who we wish to become that dominates Christian ethical thought, rather than the mechanism of our moral choices. In an early Christian context, Louth characterises this as a shift from a moral system based on the commandments to a focus on virtue. In contemporary terms, we might term this as a distinction between deontological ethics and virtue ethics.

Most noticeable in Louth's comparison of Aquinas to Maximus is the consideration of natural virtues. Louth explains that for Maximus, virtues are natural, and sets this in a cosmic paradigm of seeking eternal well-being and divine likeness. He uses this to introduce Maximus' triad of well-being and the ascetic observation that according to Maximus we can learn how to love. Louth compares this to Aquinas' Aristotelian approach and the belief that virtue is not natural, but instead is the result of habit. Louth also characterises similarities and differences relating to cardinal and theological virtues as arising from a distinction between grace and nature that is much less strong in Maximus. I rely more heavily on Louth's account of Maximian virtue, which I explore in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this thesis. I broadly use Louth's approach to Maximus on virtue as the starting point of my research, though I arrive at the topics he discusses in a different order.

In the article Blowers contributed to the special edition, he lays out the start of a synthesis between Maximus' thought on virtue and contemporary virtue ethics. He begins by identifying the cosmic significance of *oikonomia* and Maximus' corrective to Origenist ideas in *Ambiguum 7*. Although I prefer the term 'cosmic movement' to talk about this overarching framework of creaturely trajectory towards God, the importance of this concept is reflected in my own approach. When talking about Maximus' recapitulation of Origen's understanding of this movement, I term it the triad of cosmic movement (2.1.2). I follow Blowers in situating virtue in this cosmic

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[18]   A. Louth, 'Virtue Ethics: St Maximos the Confessor and Aquinas Compared'. *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26:3 (2013): 353.
[19]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 354.

paradigm, allowing emphasis on virtue as simultaneously cosmic as well ascetic: "putting the inner house in order, which always entails, simultaneously, the healthy realignment of moral relations with other created beings".[20] Whenever we talk about virtue we are talking about personal action and its cosmic impact, or vice versa – the way in which the cosmos is transfigured through personal loving activity.[21] This becomes an essential consideration when I move from discussing personal practice to communal consequences.

Blowers outlines several other key tenets in Maximus' understanding of virtue. He discusses the way that, by ascetically disciplining our actions, we willingly turn our attention away from distraction and instead turn mind and body toward virtue. He also considers the importance of the will in Maximus and its relation to virtue, and notes some important differences between virtues in Greco-Roman thought and Maximus, especially the virtues of hope and mercy. Although I pick up many of these ideas, my discussion of will in Maximus is largely expressed through the relationship between person and nature, and *tropos* and *logos* (Chapter 4), while my analysis of acquiring virtue in Maximus focuses more on grace and ascetic discipline as a relationship between the divine and the human. My discussion of differences between Maximus and other traditions of virtue is found instead in Chapter 1, where I identify the vast differences (especially those Blowers identifies like mercy) as being problematic in our definition of virtue and as possibly jeopardising the common terminology between Maximian thought and contemporary virtue ethics. While I cover almost all the points that Blowers raises in his paper, I do so in quite a different way in this thesis for the sake of following the coherence of my own argument.

As well as the journal special issue, in late 2014 Demetrios Harper submitted his thesis entitled *The Analogy of Love: The Virtue Ethic of St Maximus the Confessor.* Harper more formally grounds Maximus' thought as fully-fledged virtue ethic, with particular emphasis on Maximus' philosophical roots in Aristotelianism and Stoicism.

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[20]   Blowers, 'Aligning', 339.

[21]   This was also a key theme in an article Kallistos Ware wrote on environmental ethics that drew on Maximus the Confessor. He describes the crisis out there as rather a reflection of crisis in human persons and our failure to live in right relation with the each other and the rest of the world. K. Ware 'Through Creation to Creator' in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation.* Chryssavgis, J. & Foltz, B.V. (eds.), (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.) (First published 1997).

He develops a comprehensive understanding of virtue and love in Maximus, before going on to compare such an approach with Kantian deontological ethics. While I agree with Harper on most points there are a number of ideas he touches on that I approach quite differently. Most noticeably, I focus heavily on the cosmological character of the relationship between love and the virtues, since a large part of my argument concerns the microcosmic mirroring of creation in the activity Christ restores to the human and the way in which all creation moves towards its *telos.* I also take this as a departure point from which to explore Maximus' metaphysical understanding of universals and particulars, which I believe are very important for this discussion. Whilst this is not in contradiction with Harper's ideas, it does make for a very different kind of enquiry that often runs parallel to, rather than directly building on his work. Whilst Harper spends considerable time tracing the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian influences on Maximus' work, I work almost exclusively from the premise that Maximus is citing Paul in his lists of virtues, and use the context of the virtues in Paul to ground Maximus' understanding of virtue. Whilst Harper's work has a strong historical and philosophical flavour, my own inquiry is much more focused on the internal theological consistency and explanations found within Maximus' corpus itself. For the most part my questions about what virtue is for Maximus follow his own explanations into the circles he draws us into. I look at what he means when he says that the virtues lead us to our *telos,* that the virtues are love, that the virtues are natural – and spend effectively a chapter on each of these, since they represent an ethical paradigm, the cosmic paradigm, and the ascetic paradigm that we might wish to inquire into in order to understand what virtue is for Maximus. Furthermore, the contemporary ethical interaction Harper has chosen consists of a defence of Maximus' virtue ethics in the face of a deontological critique. The way I have chosen to demonstrate Maximus' ethical potential is to critique the contemporary institution of the state and claim that it has no place within a teleological ethics that embodies and reaches for love. I demonstrate the full radical implications of Maximus' theological ethics of love by suggesting that stateless ideas of mutual aid might better reflect the communal relationships we are trying to build here on earth. My interest then is in trying to think about how we can start critiquing the present day and working for love here and now, rather than necessarily building a theoretical ethical paradigm

with the same rigour Harper does.

While virtue ethics is a significant direction in which Maximus' works have recently been taken, it is by no means the only way in which his ethics has been expressed. Since the early 90s there has been a growing field of Maximus the Confessor's theology as a resource for environmental ethics.[22] This has been tied in particular to Maximus' *logoi* theology, where the *logoi* have been characterised as affirming the divine providential care and plan for every aspect of creation – human and non-human. This has been developed further to include contemplation of the *logoi,* and therefore human relationship with non-human creation, as an essential part of prayer and human relation to God.[23] There has also been an expansion of ethical interests drawn straight out of Maximus' theological writings. For example in 2016 in the panel 'Byzantine Philosophy and Maximus the Confessor' at the *23ʳᵈ International Congress of Byzantine Studies,* Sotiris Mitralexis delivered a paper entitled 'Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in Ambiguum 41'.[24] The paper considered Maximus' understanding of male and female as a division that is overcome in Christ, and suggested the relevance of this thought for gender studies and ethics. Likewise, Dionysios Skliris delivered a paper at the same panel on 'The Notions of ἐπικράτεια and ἐγκράτεια in Maximus the Confessor'[25] which looked at Maximus' dyothelete writings as a way to overcome cycles of power and domination.

Aristotle Papanikolaou has also done much work on Maximus and virtue,

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[22] Eg. E. Theokritoff, *Living in Gods Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology.* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 50-90; T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 225-30; A. Keselopoulos, *Man and the Environment: A Study of St Symeon the New Theologian.* E. Theokritoff (trans.). (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001); R. Bordeianu, 'Maximus and Ecology: The Relevance of Maximus the Confessor's Theology of Creation for the Present Ecological Crisis'. *The Downside Review* 127 (2009); D. Munteanu, 'Cosmic Liturgy: The Theological Dignity of Creation as a Basis of an Orthodox Ecotheology'. *International Journal of Public Theology.* 4, 3 (2010); E. Brown Dewhurst, 'The Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor as a Basis for Ecological and Humanitarian Ethics' in *Teologikon* 3 (2014). See also numerous papers in the collection *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation.* J. Chryssavgis & B.V. Foltz (eds.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). I discuss the way in which I draw on environmental ethics and Maximus the Confessor in 6.0.2.

[23] On contemplation of the *logoi* in Maximus the Confessor as a resource for environmental ethics see especially: D. Bradshaw, 'The *Logoi* of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought' in *Toward an Ecology*; A. Louth, 'Man and Cosmos in St Maximus the Confessor', in *Toward an Ecology*.

[24] S. Mitralexis, 'Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in Ambiguum 41' *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 2:1 (2017).

[25] D. Skliris, 'From Domination to Impassibility: Overcoming the Dialectic Between Dominator and Dominated according to the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor' *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 2:1 (2017).

including a chapter looking at much more reconciliatory ideas between Aquinas, Augustine and Maximus and love.[26] His largest contribution however is his book *The Mystical as Political* in which considers the ethical implications of Maximus' thought. He uses this to nominally support a human rights approach and an ecclesial community existing within a liberal democracy. Ultimately he concludes that we must make a distinction between political and ecclesial communities.[27] While political communities are not places that enable *theosis*, they are spaces that, with the help of enforced human rights, allow for the flourishing of ecclesial communities.[28] The coercion of the state is in the political rather than the ecclesial domain then, but there is a certain kind of necessity to it if we wish to exist in an ecclesial community where food and water are provided and basic human rights are preserved.[29] The stakes are too high, Papanikolaou claims, for us to object to the minimal coercion of a liberal state that upholds human rights when we have so many more oppressive state structures that condone torture and deny basic human rights.[30]

Whilst I do not directly respond to Papanikolaou's claims, as I have chosen to build my argument in a very different way, his book raised certain conclusions that I set out to offer alternatives to. Papanikolaou's concern that without the coercion of the state we risk having no safe spaces for basic human needs or mutual respect falls into an almost Hobbesian view of human society that requires the state for respect to be maintained across a broader political community.[31] This has long been a position contested by anarchist thought, which maintains that it is entirely possible to construct communities of mutual aid and respect without the coercive power of the state.[32] Additionally, whilst Papanikolaou makes a valid point that we are much better off with the often fairly minimal coercive structures of a liberal state rather than the tyranny of a state that fails to implement human rights, like that of the Russian

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[26]   A. Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love: Saint Maximus on Virtue" in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor.* M. Vasiljević, (ed.) (Alhambra: Sebastian Press & The Faculty of Orthodox Theology, 2013).

[27]   A. Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy.* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 200. Panapnikolaou's position put forward here was also clarified by personal e-mail communication (18.06.13).

[28]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 130.

[29]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 127.

[30]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 127-8.

[31]   I critique Hobbes and Mill on this point in Chapter 6.

[32]   I come to this in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Federation,[33] he fails to note that it is only for a select few that a state like the USA is a safer and better community to exist in. He mentions atrocities like the absence of human rights and the use of torture in some states that a liberal state shields us from, when in actual fact the coercive power and ability of a state such as the USA is such that they may remove any person at any moment from just such protection, and that many ethnic minorities face such discrimination on a daily basis. Furthermore, such a state cannot be divorced from its foreign policies and the clear abandonment of rights and allowance of torture where its own citizens are not concerned.

My methodology is such that I draw suggestions for how we ought to live from a Maximian theology of cosmicly-orientated *ascesis* and right human relation. I see no such division between ecclesial and political in Maximus' work, in the sense that there is not one set of ethical parameters that define how we treat one another in one sphere and not the other. It seems to me an easy way out to claim that we can benefit from the 'safety' and luxuries afforded to us by a coercive state, and yet claim that the state itself is 'political' and not 'ecclesial' thus rendering ourselves unaccountable for the coercive cost of such an institution. Given that we are called to identify with the whole human race, and the whole cosmos even, and to suffer with them and on their behalf, I cannot understand how as Christians we could comfortably go about our lives without at least trying to challenge the 'liberal state' which by nature of its very structure oppresses and exploits fellow human beings.

I am thus indebted to the book *Mystical as Political* for drawing together the thought of Maximus the Confessor and approaches to contemporary ethics, and it is as a consequence of many of its conclusions that I am writing the present thesis. Whilst methodologically it is beyond the scope of this thesis to respond to the book, my conclusions are presented as an alternative to it, and I claim that as Christians we must strive for a political space that is not maintained through coercion. I present this as a theological derivative to how Maximus understands love, and discuss the way that the modern 'liberal state' of the UK fails in these dimensions, before using the anarchist thought as a basis for alternative visions on how to better build communities that enable love.

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[33]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 128.

E. Chronology and Context

Maximus the Confessor was born in about 580AD and died in 662AD. He was born and grew up either in Constantinople with ties to the civil service and the imperial court, or, depending on what sources we use, in Palestine to a relatively poor family where he had strong ties to the Palestinian monastic movement.[34] At some point, possibly around 626,[35] he abandoned all this and went off to become a monk in a monastery in North Africa. He was heavily influenced by a famous theologian and monk, Sophronius, whose lead Maximus would eventually follow in taking a stand in Empire-wide theological controversies. Maximus appears to have remained a monk his whole life, never being made a priest or bishop. Despite this, lay, monastic, and clerical figures from all over the empire wrote letters to him asking for his philosophical, theological, and spiritual advice on various matters. In Maximus' later life he famously wrote on the two wills of Christ, taking a theological stand during a time when political unity rather than theological orthodoxy was foremost on the imperial agenda.[36] He was tried for heresy and treason and eventually his right hand and tongue were cut off (these being the tools by which he spread his heresy), and he was exiled to what is now modern day Georgia, where he died later that year on 13th August 662.[37] His theology on the two wills later became the groundwork for the sixth Ecumenical Council and he is now venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran traditions.

Maximus' theology draws heavily on the previous Greek-speaking Christian

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[34] Andrew Louth argues that Maximus' familiarity with court and imperial proceedings along with his extensive education suggest that it is more likely that Maximus was born and raised in Constantinople (A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor.* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5). Along with Brock's earlier observation that Palestine would place Maximus close to his friend Sophronius, (see Louth, *Maximus*, 6-7), Pauline Allen argues that Maximus' theology retains a distinctly Palestinian ascetic flavour such as his response to Origenism and awareness of Neoplatonism that would be made sense of if Maximus was Palestinian born. cf. P. Allen, "The Life and Times of Maximus the Confessor", *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor.* P. Allen & B. Neil (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9-14. The controversy over Maximus' early life comes from two competing biographies of his life – an earlier Syriac one that hates him and a later Greek life that extols him.

[35] All dates from the tentative timeline reconstructed by Allen, "Life and Times"*,* 14.

[36] For further background see Louth, *Maximus*, 7-16.

[37] His first trial was in 655 after which he was exiled to Bizya/Thrace. His second trial was in 662 after which he was exiled to Lazica/Georgia. Cf. Allen, "Life and Times"*,* 14-15; Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 16-18; Berthold, *Maximus,* 31, note 32.

theological tradition, especially that of the Cappadocian Fathers,[38] but also thinkers like Dionysios the Areopagite who used Neoplatonic imagery and language to articulate Christian theological conundrums and metaphysics,[39] and Origen, whose work Maximus rethought to bring it more in line with the theological orthodoxy of his own day.[40] A lot of work has been done previously on Maximus' Neoplatonic influences.[41] My own enquiry follows much more closely in the footsteps of Blowers, who focusses especially on the importance of Scriptural sources for Maximus the Confessor and the meaning that this imparts to Maximus' thought.[42]

For the sake of clarification in this thesis, there are also a few naming conventions that should be addressed. Maximus makes many references to works that, since his time, have had the authenticity of their authorship called into question. Unless it is pertinent to an argument that is being made, I leave these as they appear in the original and do not contest them, since my only interest in these texts is the context in which Maximus uses them. For example, I use the name 'Dionysios the Areopagite' to refer to the anonymous source often called 'Pseudo-Dionysios'.

As when bringing any source from the past to present day circumstances, it is important to locate it in its original context and acknowledge the limitations of its utility. In this thesis I locate virtue within Maximus' corpus and within his wider theology. The alterations I suggest to a contemporary framework of virtue ethics are made in order to allow for a contextualised account of Maximus' virtue. My interest is not so much in lifting a Maximian account of the world and transplanting it into the present day, but in deriving an ethics that acknowledges the relevance his theology still has for today. I discuss my method for bringing Maximus' theology to contemporary ethics in Chapter 5 where I follow Andrew Louth and previous work

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[38] Many of the *Ambigua* concern passages of Gregory of Nazianzus that Maximus explores and explains for others.

[39] Cf. Y. De Andia, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor" in *Oxford Handbook.* 177-193

[40] Cf. P. Sherwood, 'The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism' in *Studia Anselmiana XXXVI.* (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1955).

[41] eg. D. Harper, *The Analogy of Love: The Virtue Ethic of St Maximus the Confessor*. (PhD diss., University of Winchester, 2014).

[42] P. Blowers, 'The World in the Mirror of Holy Scripture: Maximus the Confessor's Short Hermeneutical Treatise in Ambiguum ad Joannem 37' in *In Dominico Eloquio: In Lordly Eloquence.* P. Blowers, A. Christman, D. Hunter, & R. Young, (eds.), 408-426. (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).; Blowers, "Exegesis of Scripture" in *Oxford Handbook*. 253-273.

done on Maximus and environmental ethics to shape my own approach. Although Maximus conceived of the universe as a much smaller place, Louth suggests that the holistic, cosmic worldview present in Maximus' theology may be particularly relevant to us now. He writes that we can see this in the trends in modern fashions that seek a return to such coherence of things – like New Age religions, paganism, alternative medicines etc.[43] The solipsistic orientation of consumer capitalism might give us reason to agree with this assessment. In an economic climate that seems to thrive on fragmentation, loneliness and unlimited purchasing for purchasing's sake, what Peter Kropotkin called "morality drawn from account books", "debt and credit philosophy" and "mine and yours institutions",[44] Maximus' holistic theology seems not just timely but prescient. As I explain when it becomes relevant in Chapter 5, I am interested in taking Maximus' theology as a basis for constructing a contemporary ethics. As well as a personal ethic, it is my hope that we can also use his thought to critique our political communities where they fail to stand up to the communal ethic required by a Maximian understanding of love and *theosis*. It is the logic of his theology that I use, rather than determining say, Maximus' political opinion on his own context and circumstances. I do not wish to replicate Maximus' Byzantine ethics in the twenty-first century, I wish to use his theological genius to inform an ethics for today that can aid us to make personal and communal decisions that look towards hope for *theosis*.

F. Shape of the Argument

The thesis moves from a definition and contextualisation of virtue in Maximus, to a practical vision of its implementation. The practical ethics I later outline is an example of the way that we might use Maximus' thought in contemporary ethics, rather than an exhaustive one. When enquiring about a communal dimension to virtue ethics, the state leant itself as an obvious object of critique, given its monopoly on human social organisation in the present day. I develop this justification further in the introduction to Chapter 5.

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[43]   Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 68-71. Cf. Section 6.0.2 later in this thesis.
[44]   P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread.* (Milton Keynes: Dodo Press, 2010 (First published 1892)), 156.

In each chapter I introduce a claim that I break down and prove within the chapter. Together, these claims lead one through the overall thesis argument that begins by locating Maximus within the field of virtue ethics and ends with a statement about the kind of community we can build with Maximus' virtue ethics. The claims I prove are as follows: virtues need to be defined within the context of a *telos* (Chapter 1), the cosmos moves towards its perfect end in the gift of *theosis* (Chapter 2), virtues are activities that participate in divine love (Chapter 3), it is in human nature to gather the cosmos in love (Chapter 4), the means of the state conflict with Maximian virtues and *telos* (Chapter 5), our communities must always be rooted in and striving towards love (Chapter 6). These claims have been chosen to try and reflect the key elements of Maximus' thought when it comes to explaining human conduct and purpose. I also try to keep the structure of the work familiar to one coming from a background in virtue ethics – moving from a discussion of *telos*, to one of virtue, to one about trying to lay hold of virtue, followed by practical examples. I explore the idea of a reciprocal ethics that retains its personal, ascetic dimension when in a cosmic, communal context, and suggest that we need to challenge our communities to be extensions of this personal ethic of love. The title of the thesis reflects this idea, with change or revolution in our communal relations beginning in a microcosmic expression of love. This idea was a key element in early work done on Maximus and environmental ethics, expounded especially by Kallistos Ware. His paper *Through Creator to Creator* claimed that there was not an 'environmental crisis' but a crisis within the human, where the real problem was human attitudes towards one another and the rest of creation.[45] I essentially extend this argument, and suggest that we also need to acknowledge our harmful actions even when they are more indirect. It is only the casual participation of many people that allows insidious institutional operations to maintain power. The revolution, if we like, is in seeing the link between microcosm and macrocosm – that there is no place that our personal actions do not touch, and that we cannot isolate our actions to consist of what is immediate and obvious, but must consider their global impact and their importance in a cosmic trajectory toward *theosis*.

Chapter 1: I situate Maximus within the field of virtue ethics. I explore the way we might consider Maximus' thought to be a kind of virtue ethics in light of two

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[45]   Ware, 'Through Creation to Creator'*, 24.

difficulties. These are (1) the difficulty of deciding what things are virtues, and (2) what role does *telos* play in guiding virtuous activities. I identify problems with the way these two difficulties have often been resolved in virtue ethics, and demonstrate that, as it stands, the field of contemporary virtue ethics seems to be too exclusive to incorporate Maximus' account of virtue. I point out some of the more universalist claims made in virtue discourse that do not hold for Maximus and suggest some revisions to the field that would allow Maximus' contribution to be considered within it.

Chapter 2: I use the revised virtue ethics language suggested in Chapter 1 to contextualise Maximian virtue. I discuss *theosis* as the *telos* of humankind and all creation. I outline the cosmic dimension that directs Maximus' concern with human well-being and purpose. This cosmic dimension is necessary in order to understand why virtue is worth pursuing, what virtue is, and what is happening when it becomes manifest. I discuss the liturgy as an icon of *theosis* that simultaneously belongs to the present and the eschaton, and suggest that a cosmic liturgy requires us to love in all areas of life.

Chapter 3: I describe what virtue is for Maximus. I characterise the virtues and love as an instance of union and distinction. This mirrors the creaturely cosmic movement of the previous chapter, where virtues are the path or *logoi* intended for us by God, and love is the *telos* that simultaneously incorporates these *logoi.* I conclude by explaining that this is not just a mirror, but an actual description of what is happening within creaturely cosmic movement, since the virtues are chosen by creatures and love is the *telos* of all creation – God Himself.

Chapter 4: I consider how we can participate in virtue and what happens when we do so. I discuss metaphysical questions such as how the physical world can be altered by ethical activity. I explore the language of universals and particulars and how Maximus' ethics of unity and distinction interacts with material creation. Particularly important in this chapter is the claim that virtues are natural to humans, and the link between this personal choice to learn to love, and the cosmic consequences of such a choice.

Chapter 5: I point out that some of the ways that our contemporary structures in society fall drastically short of the ethics that has been outlined thus far. I challenge

the idea that opposing monolith structures like the state is an absurdity, and suggest that we construct our ethics from a theological orientation toward *theosis*, rather than the convenience of the current status quo. I suggest that if Maximus' ethics are really simultaneously ascetic and cosmic, then our personal ethics will inform our communal coexistence. I claim that we are responsible for institutions that we partake in like the state. I suggest that a state structure fails by definition to be an adequate outworking of personal and communal love and conclude that alternatives to it as a form of society must be considered.

Chapter 6: I offer a more positive account of communal living that we can derive from Maximian ethics. I suggest that an ethics derived from Maximus will (1) be rooted in love – emphasising attempts to live with others that enables personal choices to be made freely and to be respected by others – and (2) be striving towards love – emphasising a continual reflection on how we are falling short of love and how we might perpetually reorientate ourselves toward love. I demonstrate the practical possibilities of such hopes by drawing on existing ideas and practices in the anarchist tradition. I offer these examples as a way of opening up imaginative dialogue on how we might live out a Maximian ethics of love.

I conclude by noting that this is an ethics that requires the restructuring of *ourselves* in order to work. It's not going to slot neatly into our current lives or fit within the priorities of a modern day Capitalist state. This is because teleologically orientated ethics already has an aim and that this aim has nothing to do with power and wealth. The revolutionary element of this ethics is that we ought to love one another in our personal lives, and that when truly considering the extent of such a love, it will have a communal and cosmic impact on everything about us. Such a love cannot be constrained by the political, economic, social and geographic borders epitomised in the state, and necessarily challenges our ideas of what is demanded for community on earth. Humans are microcosms whose love is not contained by borders, but unites all divisions through Christ, breaking apart the idea that there can ever be a kind of suffering or oppression or love that does not have a cosmic impact.

~ Chapter 1: Virtues of a Telos ~

'Virtues need to be defined within the context of a *telos*.'

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I argue that *virtues need to be defined within the context of a telos*. I make this argument for two reasons. One, is to establish a meta-ethical framework that Maximus' ethics shares with modern virtue ethics studies. The second is to demonstrate that Maximus' thought may be of use to modern virtue ethics as it pushes the boundaries of current meta-ethical frameworks and offers a very different perspective on virtue.

As outlined in the Introduction, there are multiple reasons for choosing virtue ethics as mediator between Maximus' thought and contemporary political thought. I explained that most of these ideas really come from the convenience that this framework gives us, rather than any deep identity that Maximus' ethics shares with contemporary virtue ethics. The arguments I gave were that, theologically speaking, focussing on virtue is a good way into the ascetic and cosmic dimensions of Maximus' ethics, and that starting points in Maximus' work can be fairly fluid, since the large network of his ideas will have to be broached regardless of where one starts. Also, from a more practical, meta-ethical perspective, virtue ethics as a field already draws on a multitude of philosophers from all times and places and has a tradition of contextualising past writers and drawing them into dialogue with the present. Finally, some headway has already been made into establishing Maximian thought within the contemporary virtue ethics field, and following in these footsteps makes for a much easier inquiry into the use of Maximus' ethics for today.

In this chapter I present the meta-ethical framework I am using to harmonise the terminology that Maximus and contemporary virtue ethicists use. I do this by looking at two words: virtue (1.2) and *telos* (1.3). In particular I am concerned with the questions (1) how does one decide what things are virtues, and (2) what role does *telos*

play in guiding virtuous activities. The overall answer to these questions can be summarised in the main argument of this chapter, that 'virtues need to be defined within the context of a *telos'*. I primarily work with MacIntyre's definitions of virtue and explore his meta-ethical framework. I explain my choice to use MacIntyre below, along with a brief discussion of the use of primary sources in virtue ethics.

1.1 Method for Meta-ethics

1.1.1 A Chronological Conundrum

One of the reasons I am using virtue ethics to communicate Maximus' ideas is that this field has a long tradition of drawing on philosophers from very different traditions to our own. Whenever we refer to anyone's work we must consider the time, context, location and culture of our source. Whenever there is a great period of time and geographical distance elapsed between the present and one's source, one must be particularly careful, especially in the field of ethics. We must be specific about the task we are doing and the way that we are doing it. Are we representing our sources truthfully within their original context? Is that our primary aim? If not, how are we distinguishing between material that is being faithfully represented and places where our opinions as ethicists diverge from source material. What grounds are we giving for dismissing some aspects of our sources that we do not care for, or feel to be irrelevant?

Virtue Ethicists have long treated with Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and others, making comparative studies, supporting some aspects of thought, and ditching others. The line between truthful historical enquiry and relevant contemporary ethics has never been one that is particularly problematic for virtue ethicists. Rosalind Hursthouse, for example, represents Aristotle's thought within his own context and times. She agrees with lots of his ideas and methods but dismisses other areas of his thought as irrelevant to her. She has no time for any chauvinism or the assumption that wealth is required for a certain level of virtuousness in Aristotle's 'magnanimous man'.[46] It is not a particularly contentious idea to delve into several thousand year old

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[46]   R. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

philosophies and say that some of it is useful and some of it is not. Of course there are always risks of misconstruing the past for a modern agenda, but that is no less a risk in any other area of thought.

Virtue ethicists that draw on philosophers past and present have a methodology that respects the context of their sources. However, this does not undermine their readiness to engage, criticise and learn from such sources. The amount of time that passes does not alter how worthy a conversation partner one has. The worth is in the philosophy itself. The distinction between history and ethics is very well represented in virtue ethics and one I make use of throughout this thesis. While presenting Maximus' ideas in the theological and historical context of his time, I will reflect and try to draw out nuances in his thought that I believe still remain true to his time and context. However, I am also looking to bring this theology into dialogue with the present day. Like Hursthouse, this involves engaging, criticising and learning from sources. She sorts out what of Aristotle's virtue theory is desirable and what is not, effectively 'updating' Aristotle for the modern day. My main aim is not to update Maximus however, because I think his requirements of human behaviour are more radical and challenging than many predominant modes of human operation that occupy us today. His ideas flatten any notion that consumerism, privatisation and free market liberalism have anything useful to contribute to human relationships and, when put up against the sorts of values grounding most of our political institutions, show that they are not at all watertight under his understanding of the requirement of love.[47] I talk about Maximus' challenging these things, but the ethical force placed in these observations is not Maximus', but my own position. I would like to think that this is vindicated in so far as it is true to Maximus' theology and the application agreeable, but it also stands that one may just disagree with Maximus' and therefore my own position.

In the course of this chapter I introduce the necessity of having an ethical paradigm that is tied to the *telos* of one's virtues. I distinguish this from an overall meta-ethical methodology. The meta-ethical methodology is what I hope to share with other virtue ethicists. This includes the historical methodology discussed here and the general use of virtue and *telos* to be discussed below. The 'ethical paradigm' by

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[47]   As will be shown in Chapter 5.

contrast, is the bit that people may just disagree with. What I get into below is that in order to subscribe to a certain set of virtues, one has to place at least some faith in the wider metaphysics and teleology in which those virtues take place. As discussed in the introduction, there are several reasons why Maximus might be a good candidate for one to be interested in ethically and spiritually. But there are also perfectly good reasons why one may have no interest in subscribing to his metaphysics.[48] Even given these things however, I think stating Maximus' theological ethics in the context of virtue ethics will be of some utility to the field even if it is only in a technical[49] or anthropological[50] sense.

1.1.2 MacIntyre

I build on and critique the virtue theory of Alasdair MacIntyre in this chapter. There are a number of reasons for doing this, but the first is that when looking to share a meta-ethical framework and methodology with other virtue ethicists, it seems prudent to draw a basis from prior work done in this field. In this chapter, I present the basic definitions MacIntyre provides of his virtue theory, and look at what seems acceptable and applicable in the context in which I am about to use them. In doing so the general structural statements MacIntyre makes fall under scrutiny. Some of these stand up, and for others I suggest amendments that I believe will make them more universally applicable tools.

MacIntyre's work has been extremely important in the fields of virtue ethics and communitarian politics.[51] He has worked extensively on Aristotelian accounts of agency and virtue, identifies as a Thomist,[52] and recognises the importance of the historical context in which virtue theories are written.[53] He highlights the dangers of cultural appropriation and is wary taking the 'virtues' of our predecessors out of the

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[48] If one wasn't a Christian, for example.
[49] I argue below that Maximus' ethics stretches current virtue ethics language and paradigms beyond their limits.
[50] By this I mean, as an observational study of Byzantine virtue theory, which has not had much focus in modern times despite its breadth and influence both then and now.
[51] C.S. Luts, 'Alisdair Chalmers MacIntyre' in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ISSN 2161-0002: http://www.iep.utm.edu/mac-over/, (Accessed 10.12.15).
[52] Luts, 'Alisdair Chalmers MacIntyre' in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy:* http://www.iep.utm.edu/mac-over/, (Accessed 10.12.15).
[53] See A. MacIntyre, "Chapter 13: Medieval Aspects and Occasions" in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory.*(London: Gerald Duckword & Co. Ltd., 1985 (first Published, 1981)).

teleological paradigm of their day.[54] I think these are extremely important points and that their inclusion in a meta-ethical framework of virtue ethics is paramount. I explain some of the dangers of not doing so in the rest of this chapter. MacIntyre's book *After Virtue* contributes a solid and searching critique of virtue theory thus far, and focusses on systemic,[55] or what I am calling 'meta-ethical', issues. His dissection of virtue ethics terminology provides an ideal starting point and enables one to study the methodological differences that might be encountered if one immediately tried to reconcile Maximus' thought with most contemporary virtue ethics. Because of this strong meta-ethical basis, I personally believe that MacIntyre's work is a very successful example of virtue theory. I share his belief in the importance of the relationship between virtue and *telos*, and largely critique him only on his consistency and commitment to his own ideas. I mostly draw on MacIntyre's book, *After Virtue,* where most of his meta-ethical discussion is focussed. In this chapter I look at the relationship he proposes between virtue and *telos*, and use this as a basis for my own position and the introduction of Maximus' ethics that follows in the chapters after this.

1.2 Whose Virtues?

What are virtues, and who's list of virtues should we go with? These questions reveal a lot about the philosophical underpinning of virtue theory. They also reveal the limitations and assumptions present in a theory. The question 'who's list of virtues should we choose?' is a particularly contentious area, as everyone writing on this topic has their own list in mind. Those who defend their choices have to be extremely careful that they do not simply appeal to cultural dominance or their own personal familiarity with certain virtues as an assumed starting point. Alistair MacIntyre is particularly wary of this problem, although as will be seen, even he seems to fall foul of this. I begin this section by looking at MacIntyre's definition of a virtue (1.2.1), which I believe is one of the most successful definitions. I then look at some

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[54]   See MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 181-3.
[55]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 260.

difficulties with this definition, namely MacIntyre's choice to define virtues as 'amoral' and to define their morality in relation to *telos*, rather than virtues themselves (1.2.2). This amounts to less a critique of MacIntyre and more an alternative to his idea of virtue, since he remains consistent and this position a useful one. I argue that Maximus offers a very different concept of virtue that is both successful and does not fit this model at all. It therefore requires serious attention as an alternate, conflicting idea of what things should be considered virtues. This feeds into the final part of this section on virtues (1.2.3). Because MacIntyre's choice of what things are virtues does not follow through for Maximus, neither can the more generic conclusions that MacIntyre makes when he expresses that some virtues are found universally in many cultures. Whereas in 1.2.2 Maximus' idea of virtue was an alternative to MacIntyre, MacIntyre's claim to universality in 1.2.3 means that Maximus' virtues *conflict* with MacIntyre's theses. They are worthy of attention in this regard also.

1.2.1 What is a Virtue?

In order to define 'virtue', MacIntyre looks at consistency in how the word is used in different cultures, times and contexts. He asks what commonalities are there in the way that people use the word virtue that mean the term can be used interchangeably. MacIntyre notes that wherever one is on the globe, there are very different ideas about what things should be considered virtues:

> If we were to consider later Western writers on the virtues, the list of differences and incompatibilities would be enlarged still further; and if we extended our enquiry to Japanese, say, or American Indian cultures, the differences would become greater still.[56]

In a Western context alone there are many different lists of virtues, not to mention extending this to include other cultures. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre describes this socio-historical context as a "paradigm of human excellence".[57] He notes for instance, that "For Homer the paradigm of human excellence is the warrior; for Aristotle it is

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[56]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 181.
[57]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 182.

the Athenian gentleman".[58] What he means by this is that different times and places have different ideal pictures of what it means to be a good person, and that consequently any list of virtues compiled will reflect these respective images. MacIntyre's 'paradigm of human excellence' is the sum picture that a philosopher like Aristotle or Homer is working with. It is a picture that also assumes their readership will have some familiarity with and agree is worthwhile working towards. Often this 'paradigm of human excellence' will therefore reflect a popularly construed good way to go about conducting oneself from a particular time and place. To be Aristotle's excellent Athenian gentleman, for example, one must adhere to courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity et*cetera.*[59] Whereas for Homer, as MacIntyre recalls, the virtues extolled are "those which enable a man to excel in combat and games" and consequently, "It follows that we cannot identify the Homeric virtues until we have first identified the key social roles in Homeric society and the requirements of each of them".[60] In other words, we understand virtues to be those things that contribute to a 'paradigm of human excellence'. I might strongly disagree with Aristotle's calling 'magnanimity' a virtue, or Homer's calling 'strength' a virtue, but I can comprehend what is meant by this, because of the socio-historical paradigm of human excellence in which these philosophers are writing. This gives a consistency to what is meant by the term virtue, even though it is still contingent upon the contextual idea of what it is to be a good person. MacIntyre notes that "without an overriding conception of the *telos* of a whole human life, conceived as a unity, our conception of certain individual virtues has to remain partial and incomplete".[61]

So a virtue, thus far, has been defined as something that allows one to excel towards a specific end. But what if my specific end is something less grandiose than the Athenian gentleman? What if my aim in life is to be a good trumpet player, or a master chef, a gardener, soldier, or totalitarian dictator? Are the things that take me on that path still to be considered virtues? Does the *telos* of a life have to be more widely shared in order to be considered a valid one? MacIntyre addresses this problem by distinguishing between becoming good so that we can get stuff, and becoming good so

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[58]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 182.
[59]   Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics.* Ross, D. (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49-79.
[60]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 184.
[61]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 202.

that something inside us changes for the better. He called these 'external' and 'internal' goods. His idea meant that if we want to be a good chef and all we want is fame, wealth, prestige and tasty cakes, then we desire 'external goods'.[62] If however we want to be a good chef because we want to hone our own discipline in making to recipes, diligence in being attentive to our work, patience in not rushing the procedure, then we are pursuing 'internal' goods. For 'internal' goods the specific practice itself becomes less important because we have a picture of the *sort of person we want to be* which we are working towards. I can learn the same self-discipline, diligence and patience that I learned in cookery by practising trumpet, watercolour painting, martial arts or learning Greek grammar. External and internal goods instead become a distinction between goods that rely on material objects and goods that are somewhat more metaphysical and tied to choices and character.[63] It is the latter that MacIntyre wishes to call a virtue. Hence he defines virtue like this:

> A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.[64]

An important point to note here, is that practices (the term we are using for cookery, trumpet playing, painting etc.) do not define virtues. There is something above and beyond the goods we have located in these practises that means they are considered virtues. There is *telos* of human life which allows us to identify a set of characteristics, and it is these which we are locating in these practices. I believe MacIntyre overemphasises Aristotle from whom he is drawing at this point in *After Virtue*, and that he ends up implying that there is some kind of excellence in a task that is valuable regardless of whether its internal goods are determined by a *telos*.[65] However,

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[62]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.
[63]   I come back to the excellences of practices in section 1.2.2, as this becomes an important way in which *what* virtues are is decided, and relies heavily on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.*
[64]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.
[65]   In MacIntyre's examples of the chessplayer and the artist there is an implied goodness in these acts that he does not link up to *telos.* His argument would be stronger here I think if he re-emphasised that it is the goods we see in chess and painting that are good, and being a good human does not have to equate to being good at a specific task. This would not imply that the tasks are irrelevant or meaningless, but it would take them out of a moral paradigm and leave all moral choices dependent on *telos*.

I do not think this is MacIntyre's intention to imply this, and rather think that he provides us with a suitable framework for understanding the example I used above where I said, what if we wish to become adept totalitarian dictators. According to MacIntyre's definition of virtues – this practice could only have anything to do with living a suitable life if we could locate internal goods (virtues) within such a practice. He also noted that these virtues are informed by a particular *telos* that we are subscribing to. If, for example, we followed a code that taught us that the purpose of human life was to learn peace, knowledge, serenity and harmony, it would be unlikely that one could ever claim as virtuous an intention to become a totalitarian dictator. We are therefore able to leave the morality of an action to be defined by the *telos* we are aiming for, and to further break down the components of a practice into those things which are helpful and should be maximised and those things we wish to avoid.

So long as one works with McIntyre's definition of virtue above, and adds the following,

> ... unless there is a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life, the good of human life conceived as a unity, it will *both* be the case that a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade the moral life *and* that we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately.[66]

then we can explain Maximus' virtue ethics within this context. MacIntyre has tied the definition of virtues to their *telos* and the larger moral paradigm in which they are situated. Within this thesis I follow the framework as we see it here. There is a consistency and a continuity in the way Maximus is being presented that describes the teleological paradigm in which he is working (Chapter 2) and describes what he believes virtue to be in light of it (Chapter 3). The considerations that follow this represent difficulties that arise when synthesising Maximus' virtue ethics onto other structural comments made concerning the meta-ethics of virtue.

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[66]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 203.

1.2.2 Amoral Virtues

In the previous section I gave an account of what MacIntyre believes virtues to be. I noted that it is *telos* that confers the moral paradigms onto the goods that are in practices. Curiously, however, rather than conferring the term virtue to these goods after one has determined that they are morally good, MacIntyre uses the word virtue to refer to any internal good.

I can understand why he wishes to do this, it is because this stays true to the generic use of the word virtue. It makes sense of why even things we personally believe are not virtues, can still be explained as such. It is a much neater definition than trying to convey that a virtue is a virtue to anyone who believes this internal good adheres to the *telos* they follow. By doing this however, MacIntyre isolates the word 'virtue' from the moral paradigm and makes it instead identical to his term 'internal good'. This means that virtues are *amoral* until they are situated in relation to a *telos.* Whilst this made sense when we were talking about amoral goods that could be got out of a practice (where good was purely a term for accumulating more of something regardless of its effect on us or others), it means that virtue also means this but concerns non-material acquisitions. This means that not everything that begins as a virtue ends up being moral or right.[67] Thus: "It certainly is not the case that my account entails *either* that we ought to excuse or condone such evils *or* that whatever flows from a virtue is right."[68] He then says "That the virtues – as the objection itself presupposed – *are* defined not in terms of good and right practices, but of practices, does not entail or imply that practices as actually carried through at particular times and places do not stand in need or moral criticism" and "a morality of virtues requires as its counterpart a conception of moral law."[69]

MacIntyre's choice to define a virtue in this way tells us something very important about the relationship of virtue to *telos* in his account. It is that while virtues are dependant on *telos* for morality and desirability, they are not dependant on *telos* for definition. They exist (so to speak) independently of direction and end, and rather become harnessed as morally good once a *telos* has been pointed out. This is not a problem for MacIntyre, and is entirely consistent with his account so far, but it

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[67]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 200.
[68]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 200.
[69]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 200.

becomes difficult to make sense of Maximus' account of virtues with this allowance in place. MacIntyre's explanation of virtues allows for one to begin an inquiry into virtue ethics by talking about which virtues one thinks contribute to a *telos*. By the time one gets to this stage, it becomes virtually impossible to reconcile Maximus' understanding of virtue to this picture. Given Maximus' very different and, I argue, valuable contribution, I suggest that this conception of virtue is unhelpful and poses meta-ethical problems to facilitating communication between non-Western conceptions of virtue and morality. MacIntyre's definition of virtue does not lose much by instead conferring the term virtue only to those internal goods that make up the moral paradigm of one's *telos.*[70] This choice will change the focus of how one approaches virtue ethics. There will be less cause for delineating a list of virtues that fit an end, and, I think, more of a focus on the end itself and the way of living it evokes from us. Virtue will be less tied to any traditional word list we recognise as 'virtues' and what is good will be defined instead by the ends we wish to achieve. These may or may not fit some of the traditional words and terms we have used for virtues, or they may be actions, sentences, feelings – or anything else useful for conveying what is needed in order to become what we wish to be.

So far this is a minor alternative to MacIntyre's definition of a virtue. In the next section, I demonstrate the route that MacIntyre's position goes in and how this very minor change becomes very important. Taken to its next logical steps, as MacIntyre does, his treatment of virtue becomes more and more alien to the Byzantine contribution to the topic. The difference is not problematic, since it is diversity on the treatment of virtue that is one of the most useful things about Maximus' ideas. The problem is that at this stage we are still largely working on a meta-ethical level, and under MacIntyre's current definition, Maximus' ideas are nonsensical. The kind of discussions and conclusions MacIntyre starts drawing come to be in direct opposition to Maximus, and instead of providing a meta-ethical framework of conversation we end up with moral differences pulling apart what was meant to still be a terminological distinction.

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[70]   *i.e.* That our definition of virtue should depend on what one believes the *telos* of human life to be.

1.2.3 Universal Virtues

This difficulty seems to be especially apparent when it comes to explaining who virtues are *for*. Do we really want to say that a *telos* depends on what *one* person considers the purpose of human life to be – and that therefore the goodness of virtues is relative to every person's conception of *telos*? This question troubles MacIntyre in particular because, as he rightly notes, practices are not done by an isolated person but by a person in a community. They necessarily affect other people.

In order for a practice of any kind to be considered well done, MacIntyre says, we have to subject ourselves to the scrutiny and expertise of previous practitioners.[71] We have to accept the following three things:

> We have to learn to recognise what is due to whom; we have to be prepared to take whatever self-endangering risks are demanded along the way; and we have to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts.[72]

What we have here is a list of requirements outwith the previous framework discussed. We can see just what MacIntyre is trying to say by this in the statement that follows, which corresponds to the three requirements above:

> In other words we have to accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellences the virtues of justice, courage and honesty. For not to accept these, to be willing to cheat as our imagined child was willing to cheat in his or her early days at chess, so far bars us from achieving the standards of excellence or the goods internal to the practice that it renders the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods.[73]

MacIntyre is saying that there are some virtues that are just necessary. In other words, that there are some virtues that *regardless of the telos*, will always be found to be morally useful, and therefore morally good virtues. MacIntyre gives two examples justifying this proposition, the more convincing of which concerns the relationship

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[71]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.
[72]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.
[73]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

between three people and the expectation of fair treatment in order for relationships to work.[74] Regardless of whether one agrees with MacIntyre on the specifics of this statement, it is a proposition that would appear unusual if it were being made after a definition that placed the definition of virtue as dependent on *telos.* This proposition would come under a category of speculative but interesting general trends of virtue categorisation identified within different cultures. But under MacIntyre's current definition it does not seem all that unreasonable to start saying there are some virtues which almost everyone is going to count as morally good. The problem is even greater than this however, as MacIntyre seems to actually go so far as to say *everyone believes these virtues are good,* additionally, though he does not say this latter element directly, he implies that these virtues must be *objectively* good, since they are indisputable and everywhere. MacIntyre does provide some qualifications whilst saying this, and at one point notes that (italics added) "Just as, *so long as we share the standards and purposes characteristic of practices*, we define our relationship to each other, whether we acknowledge it or not, by reference to standards of truthfulness and trust, so we define them too by reference to standards of justice or courage."[75] In the italicised clause, we might still read that all this is still dependant on a *telos* that acts as a moral paradigm, but this nuance becomes extraordinarily lost in light of this later paragraph:

> I take it then that from the standpoint of those types of relationship without which practices cannot be sustained truthfulness, justice and courage – and perhaps some others – are genuine excellences, are virtues in light of which we have to characterise ourselves and others, whatever our private moral standpoint or our society's particular codes may be. For this recognition that we cannot escape the definition of our relationships in terms of such goods is perfectly compatible with the acknowledgement that different societies have and have had different codes of truthfulness, justice and courage.[76]

I can only assume that our previously all-important and morality-determining paradigm of *telos* is what is being referred to in the above quotation as a "private

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74   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 192.
75   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 192.
76   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 192.

moral standpoint". And that because MacIntyre has identified for us what an objectively good relationship looks like, we can assume as always desirable the virtues of truthfulness, justice and courage. We have now strayed so far from the idea that the aim of human activity is to bring about the *telos* of human life, that it is impossible to situate Maximus' virtues within this paradigm. This is especially the case if we take as a moot point MacIntyre's addendum that everyone agrees with truthfulness, justice and courage. Let us consider this in more detail.

In defence of his above statement, MacIntyre goes on to cite three examples. He mentions the Lutheran child brought up to value truth, the Bantu child brought up to value truth, and the British child who likewise has some similar values. After this less than convincing cross-section of empirical evidence (for which no footnotes are provided), he concludes that "each of these codes embodies an acknowledgement of the virtue of truthfulness. So it is also with varying codes of justice and courage."[77] MacIntyre seems to want to say that, certain features of virtuous behaviour recur in different cultures and that the frequency of this recurrence gives them privy status as 'genuine excellences'. To give a charitable interpretation of this: some virtues seem to be accepted as good, in enough situations, that we might go so far as to consider them essentially universal. There are some problems with this position, not the least of which is that MacIntyre seems to be proposing a much more hard-line universality than I've here attributed to him, and also because we have nothing other than speculation to pose this as a serious account of cross-cultural treatment of virtue anyway. But more importantly, because it undermines his own attempt to be culturally sensitive in defining virtues, undermines his own attempt to emphasise the importance of *telos* in relation to virtue, and finally, because we are still at the meta-ethical definition of virtue at this point in his work, it isolates communication with cultures that cannot assimilate his assumptions.

I will try and illustrate the dangers of all three of these problems in the following example. The example is not from Maximus, but a theologian who lived shortly after him and drew his thought from some of the same monastic sources as Maximus[78]:

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77   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 192.
78   Evagrios of Pontos was an influence on both Maximus and Isaac. See J. Konstantinovsky, "Evagrius Ponticus and Maximus the Confessor: The Building of the Self in Praxis and Contemplation" in

> Mercy and justice in one soul is like a man who worships God and the idols in one house. Mercy is opposed to justice. Justice is the equality of the even scale, for it gives to each as he deserves; and when it makes recompense, it does not incline to one side or show respect of persons. Mercy, on the other hand, is a sorrow and pity stirred up by goodness, and it compassionately inclines a man in the direction of all; it does not requite a man who is deserving of evil, and to him who is deserving of good it gives a double portion.[79]

This is from one of the sermons of St Isaac of Nineveh, one of the great ascetic theologians and venerated as a saint in every apostolic Church in the Christian East, written some time in the late 7th century. Unlike Lutheran, Bantu and British children, Isaac does not think that justice is a virtue. He thinks mercy is, and that mercy is incompatible with justice. Regardless of whether one agrees with Isaac, his is an ancient and influential position that poses a serious challenge to the assumption that 'justice' is incontestable virtue constantly present in all human societies everywhere.

Isaac, in his Homily 51, firmly believes that justice has nothing to do with Christ and therefore nothing to do with the Christian life. One cannot be both merciful and just, he maintains. In a passage very reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa's Sermon 5 on the beatitude of mercy,[80] Isaac describes mercy as that unconditional giving to the other and perpetual compassion. This is an inclination that has no comprehension of judgement, since "The man who corrects his companions while his soul is infirm is like a blind man who shows others the way".[81] Isaac's position may well cause us to question the supreme and often uncontested role that justice holds in our societies and our concepts of good relations. Gregory of Nyssa calls mercy the most "stable security for life", since "just as the harsh and cruel man makes enemies of those who have come to experience his savagery; so also, contrariwise, we become all friendly with the merciful man, since mercy naturally engenders love in those who

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Evagrius and His Legacy. J. Kalvesmaki & R. D. Young (eds.) 128-153 (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016) and C. Stewart, "Evagrius beyond Byzantium: The Latin and Syriac Receptions" in *Evagrius.* Kalvesmaki & Young (eds.) 206-235.

[79]   Isaac the Syrian, 'Homily 51', 379.
[80]   Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1252B.
[81]   Isaac the Syrian, Homily 51, 379.

share it."[82] These are compelling statements that can have no place in an ethical discussion that has allowed for some virtues to be treated as universal, and not subject to *telos*.

Claims to the universality of some virtues end up being unhelpful on many levels. Quite apart from being large, difficult to verify statements that require extensive anthropological research to back them up, these claims lend themselves to appearing as if they are beyond dispute. As in the above example provided in Isaac's homily, this can end up prematurely cutting off stimulating debate on the *telos* of our societies, but also it risks projecting a particularly dominant socio-cultural norm onto a minority. Even though MacIntyre makes some allowance for "different codes of truthfulness, justice and courage", and even though he himself has spent a long time saying that virtues are as multitudinous as cultures, the underlying attitude in this suggestion is one that slips very easily into assuming that all values everywhere look like those of our own culture. This is doubly problematic for that large number of academics who find themselves belonging to ex-colonial powers or countries with recent and even ongoing imperialist policies. For those of us to whom this applies in particular, I think it extremely important that we do not assume the 'virtues' of our culture, to be the virtues of everyone else's.

MacIntyre's argument that I put forward in 1.1.1 was about how we can find a common definition of virtue that works across cultures. He did this by saying that paradigms may be different, but all these different things people call virtues contribute to their idea of a perfect person. They are all the internal, non-material things that come out of what we do, and that we have decided are worthwhile, because they fit into an end vision of what is good. Even regardless of the difference I raised in 1.1.2, MacIntyre still holds that the moral dimension of the virtues is conferred by the *telos* to which they point. In order to still be consistent with this earlier position, MacIntyre must believe that every *telos* confers moral virtuousness to the concepts of truth, courage and justice. The alternative is that he thinks these three ideas are an objective or 'natural' unquestionable phenomenon, and this is inconsistent with his understanding of *telos*.[83] If MacIntyre holds the former position, then the genuineness

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[82]   Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1253B [H.C. Graef, "Sermon 5" in *The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes*. New York: Paulist Press, 1954), 134].
[83]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 203.

of his attempt to define virtues in terms of culturally specific paradigms, and to acknowledge true diversity (and particularly the existence of non-'Western' virtues) becomes highly suspect. As has already been demonstrated above, there are examples of ethical thought that do not share MacIntyre's belief that these virtues are essential in any way.[84]

1.2.4 Defining Virtues through Telos

I therefore wish to use MacIntyre's definition of virtues from *After Virtue*, but with two specific caveats. The first is that that 'virtue' is instead the term we use to refer to internal goods that are *within* the paradigm of a *telos,* and not amoral until selected. In this way virtues are only virtues once internal goods are located within a teleological paradigm. And second, that there are no exceptions to this. There aren't some virtues that are objective or so special that they are left out of this framework. The framework that has been suggested here is one that is accessible, I believe (certainly it is a lot more accessible than that proposed at the end of MacIntyre's chapter on *The Nature of the Virtues* that I have been discussing here). This framework, which I am calling meta-ethical since it still concerns the way in which we set up the playing field before diving into the ethics, is currently amoral. It currently says nothing about culture, history, values or morality. Like a good formula, it is waiting for us to input the result (in this case the *telos*), before any calculations defining which things are virtues happen. All we are saying is that there are consequences that are more than purely material that arise when we act, and that when we think about the end vision of the people or society we wish to be, we are able to determine which of those consequences are desirable, and also what actions are desirable.

Under this definition, which I do not think is too great an allowance for a virtue ethicist to make, Maximus can be situated as a conversation partner. His theology of virtue and *telos* as simultaneous participation and perfection correspond to this framework, and in fact start to make sense of how a *telos* can both be a sum total of all virtues, a potential perfection of all virtues and also a virtue in itself. I come on to all this in Chapter 3, but this synthesis of definition is essential I think, if we

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[84]   My example was in particular concerning 'justice', but the principal of the argument extends to all three virtues that MacIntyre proposes.

ever wish Maximus to be intelligible to contemporary virtue ethics, and also if contemporary virtue ethicists wish to extend their definitions of virtue beyond those with which they have been traditionally comfortable and so far associated.

1.3 WHY TELOS?

So far we have talked about the dependence of virtue on *telos*. There have been some tentative definitions of *telos* given above, but in the following section I wish to explore in more detail what I mean when I use the term. The necessity for this clarification arises from the complex history of the word, but also in particular the controversy that has recently surrounded it. I predominantly follow MacIntyre in both the definition and use of *telos,* but I wish to explain its importance in my own terms here as this still seems to be a contentious and much misunderstood term. I do this by illustrating the dangers of *not* talking about *telos* whenever we are talking about any means or purposeful choice. I do this firstly by talking about obfuscating ends, where talking across purposes occurs because two parties are unaware of the paradigm that the other is operating within. Secondly, I talk about assuming ends, which, much like the universal virtue problem above, assumes that there is an objective and/or obvious end which everyone wishes, so discussing *telos* is pointless/outdated/philosophically incoherent.

In this section, I propose that in order to decide what virtues are and which things are virtues, they must be defined within the context of a *telos*. Without this *telos* all we can do is give an overarching general sense of what the word virtue entails for all times and places (as MacIntyre does very successfully above, but ultimately will always fall short of a convincing universal argument). To form this argument I first deal with the word *telos* and some recent historical concerns with the word (1.3.1). Additionally, I outline how I am using the word *telos,* and how this both leads on from and differs from MacIntyre's understanding of virtues being dependent on their socio-historical context. I suggest that in explaining how virtues exist in relation to (and because of) a *telos,* we delineate the metaphysical paradigm in which we are working. The example of this in practice will be Maximus, whose *telos* I state in Chapter 2, and

who's virtues I define in relation to this *telos* in Chapter 3. To further support this claim however, I offer the following two difficulties that arise when we do not define virtues in the context of their *telos*. The first is not talking of *telos* at all and talking cross-purposes with a-teleological virtues (1.3.2), and the second is assuming a universal *telos* (1.3.3).

1.3.1 The Bombardment of Telos

The 'paradigm' in which virtues can be described is largely defined by their *telos*. By this I mean, we cannot be more specific about what virtues are, unless we have defined the metaphysical paradigm in which we are working. Describing the *telos* of a list of virtues goes a long way to defining this paradigm. I firstly argue that a *telos* is present whenever we come across a list of virtues, since this is not a given in virtue ethics. I briefly touch on some problems that come of not describing or acknowledging that one's virtues have a *telos*.

The term *telos* is commonly found in virtue ethics literature. It is used by Aristotle, Aquinas and Maximus, to refer to roughly an idea of 'purposeful end' towards which virtues are being employed.[85] This usually amounts to someone's understanding of what a good life or a good person looks like. The virtues are the means for achieving this end aim of a good something. The importance of *telos* in constructing a list of virtues is likewise identified as important by MacIntyre,[86] and its formation is subject to the socio-historical context previously discussed. *Telos* is the reason *why* a particular list has been constructed. Acknowledging the existence of *telos* in one's list of virtues is part of a recognition that there is a reason *why* you have chosen the virtues you have, and an acknowledgement that you have a subjective picture in mind that your selected virtues conform to and help create. It is believed by some virtue ethicists that one may have a list of virtues without a *telos*.[87] As I intend to demonstrate however, I believe that in practice this only amounts to not

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[85]   Wilken argues that Maximus makes direct use of Aristotle's definition of *telos:* P. Blowers & R. Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ.* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 48-9 note 10; On Aquinas use of Aristotle's eudaimonism see S. Floyd, "Thomas Aquinas: Moral Philosophy" *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy:* http://www.iep.utm.edu/aq-moral/ (Accessed: 11.06.17).

[86]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 184.

[87]   Eg. S. Darwall, "Introduction" in *Virtue Ethics.* S. Darwall (ed.), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 2.

acknowledging the aim one has in mind when constructing a list of virtues.

Firstly, I wish to clarify how I am using the word *telos.* I use it to refer to the ideal picture that an ethicist has in mind when they select a list of virtues. I do not mean that an ethicist is choosing to frame all their ethics as growth toward some inevitable perfection and end, and I am aware that many consider this to be the meaning of *telos.* In Israel Scheffler's *Of Human Potential*, he suggests that the idea of a *telos* being present in our comprehension of human growth and development implies that there is a sort of inevitable destiny of humanity which removes the moral and responsible dimension from choices we make. He described the danger of "the myth of fixed potentials, the myth of harmonious potentials, and the myth of uniformly valuable potentials" and sought to deconstruct and "demythologize" "the inescapability of choice and responsibility for evaluation".[88] This is a danger that arises when we understand *telos* to be 'destiny' and the inevitable end towards which we are taken regardless of our actions. It implies an absence of responsibility or freedom of choice and is consequently used to evade the complexity of decisions. The *telos* I am talking of is that ideal we have decided to set as worthwhile working towards in life. We choose our actions because we would like them to conform to an end vision we have set our sights on. It is part of the construction process of our ethics. Mary Hayden likewise notes that whenever our choice of ethical obligation looks toward achieving an end of some kind, including classical utilitarianism and Kant's categorical imperative, these ideas are "necessarily teleological", since they construct an ethics with an aim to bringing about some kind of a preferred mode of living.[89] She too denies that a recognition of an end implies an "obligatory end".[90] It is, she goes on to say, the recognition of an end that allows us to construct statements about what it is we 'ought' to do.[91] I maintain that collecting of a list of virtues also happens in this way. Virtues are the steps, the 'oughts', that reveal a picture of a character or a lifestyle that is aspired to. This picture is the ideal end desired, even if there is no metaphysics in place that claims this is some 'fixed potential' or inevitable direction of life. In so far as one believes that more than one virtue can be attained at once, and

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[88]   I. Scheffler, *Of Human Potential: An Essay in the Philosophy of Education.* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010 (1st ed. 1985)), 92.
[89]   M. Hayden, 'Rediscovering Eudaimonistic Teleology'. *The Monist* 75:1 (1992): 71.
[90]   Hayden, 'Eudaimonistic Teleology', 72.
[91]   Hayden, 'Eudaimonistic Teleology', 72.

that attaining more than one virtue is preferable to attaining just one, there must be a picture of a preferred state made up of multiple virtues that is being employed. It is this preferred state that I am referring to as the *telos* of any given virtues.

1.3.2 A-teleological Virtues

The necessity of discussing the *telos* of any set of virtues is best demonstrated I think, when we look at an example of its absence. MacIntyre demonstrates the place and purpose of *telos* in the example of two people who share apparently rival political views. The example MacIntyre uses is that of person A, who has a more traditionally Libertarian view on just reward being given to those who have earned it, and person B, who follows a more traditionally state sanctioned socialist position where just distribution should be given to those who need it.[92] MacIntyre notes that though these two people would vote for different parties and debate angrily with each other, they actually have a lot in common, and it is only a particular political set up that positions them against one another. The point of their commonality is in their commitment to some notion (and therefore virtue) of justice, which they wish to see enacted in their society. Their differences and incompatibility however, is that "The type of concept in terms of which each frames his claim is so different from that of the other that the question of how and whether the dispute between them may be rationally settled begins to pose difficulties",[93] and that in other words, "...our pluralist culture possess no method of weighing, no rational criterion for deciding between claims based on legitimate entitlement against claims based on need. Thus these two types of claim are indeed, as I suggested, incommensurable, and the metaphor of 'weighing' moral claims is not just inappropriate but misleading".[94] MacIntyre maintains that the political stage is dominated by language that is cross-purposes, much like person A and B both arguing that they want justice. He notes that "disorder arises from the prevailing cultural power of an idiom in which ill-assorted conceptual fragments from various parts of our past are deployed together in private and public debates which are notable chiefly for the unsettlable character of the controversies thus carried on and the

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[92]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 244-6.
[93]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 246.
[94]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 246.

apparent arbitrariness of each of the contending parties."[95]

I think what MacIntyre is getting at here is that modern political discourse is bound up with a rhetoric that fails to talk plainly of *telos*. The conflicting statements and way in which justice is being used exist because there is a further, broader vision of human existence that we are aiming at which has not been reconciled or even brought up in discussion. Person A and B might shove their own versions of justice down each others throats with varying emotional appeals, but unless there is a systematic evaluation of what they meant by justice, and what they are trying to do by suggesting that such a form of justice is desirable, this debate will never evolve from a posturing shouting match. It may be that persons A and B can fundamentally never reconcile their views because they both have wildly diverging claims as to what a good human society should consist of. Alternatively, a situation like that envisioned by MacIntyre and that I discuss in 1.3.3 might arise, where because there are common components of a debate, people may recognise the differing *telos* of another's vision and still find discussion on the virtues useful. I maintain that the latter is only ever going to result in frustration rather than understanding if the *telos* of each tradition is not disclosed.

As MacIntyre himself explains, his main task is to take a step back from moral philosophy and to try and tackle its systemic issues.[96] In suggesting a return to teleological virtue ethics, he proposes a method of deconstructing how we think about moral arguments. I think this is particularly important given that the 'cultural power of an idiom' that MacIntyre identifies is often wielded by those with the power to convey information and sway others. I am thinking in particular of the media and political rhetoric, but wherever language obscures true moral dimensions of a debate and especially when it favours those already in powerful positions, it becomes not just browbeating of contrary opinions, but manipulative language that has nothing to do with ethical debate. As I write this, just today the British government has voted to begin air strikes on Syria. Prime Minister David Cameron said that those who vote against the air strikes should be considered 'terrorist sympathisers'.[97] Sound bites like

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[95]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 256.
[96]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue.* 260.
[97]   BBC News, "Syria Vote: Cameron and Corbyn clash over air strikes" *BBC,* 2nd Dec. 2015. *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34980504 (Accessed 02.12.15).

"keep British people safe"[98], "confront the evil"[99] and rhetoric such as: "Do we work with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat and do we go after these terrorists in their heartlands from where they are plotting to kill British people, or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us?"[100] obscure an ethical question in sore need of rigorous, rational, ethical debate. The severity of the situation is apparent from the need for Jeremy Corbyn to make the following statement: "It must be treated with the utmost seriousness, and respect given to those who make a different judgement about the right course of action to take."[101] That, on the matter of violating the sovereign territory of another country, against the directive of the UN, the British Parliament had to be reminded by the leader of the opposition that an alternative should be considered seriously, seems to add a reality to MacIntyre's comments in 1981 so poignant as to be almost a pastiche.

The proposition to situate the language of virtue that so readily permeates political and media rhetoric[102] in the framework of a *telos* towards which virtues are orientated, forces ethical discussion to return to a dialogue of what we believe to be important and how we get there. Just like MacIntyre's theoretical people, A and B, we cannot throw around terms like justice and expect anyone to know what we mean or be brought over to our argument. Without a teleological grounding that defines justice, then the word is meaningless at best and obscures the course of dangerously necessary ethical debate at worst. This I think, is the danger of a language of ateleological virtue. It is a trap not just for a virtue ethicist but for a society that still latently draws on the cultural ideas of virtue,[103] but does not situate them in a moral paradigm in which the *point* of them is considered. The following comment by Shadow

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[98]   David Cameron on the necessity of air strikes into Syria during Parliament. *BBC,* "Syria Vote". *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34980504 (Accessed 02.12.15).

[99]   Hilary Benn on the necessity of air strikes into Syria during Parliament. *BBC*, "UK's Syria debate: Key quotes and clips" *BBC*. 3rd Dec. 2015. *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34986757 (Accessed 03.12.15).

[100] David Cameron on the necessity of air strikes into Syria during Parliament. *BBC*. "Syria Vote". *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34980504 (Accessed 02.12.15).

[101] Jeremy Corbyn during Parliament. *BBC*, "Syria Vote". *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34980504 (Accessed 02.12.15).

[102] Consider Hillary Benn's above claim to justice. Or statement by MP Margaret Beckett countering that the injustice of killing innocents is already being committed, thereby implicitly justifying civilian bombing by the UK (*BBC*, "UK's Syria Debate". *BBC News:* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34986757 (Accessed 03.12.15)).

[103] MacIntyre discusses this cultural hangover of late medieval and residue Greek philosophical ethical attachment to virtue which is found in much Western culture: MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 251-2.

Chancellor John McDonnell on the parliamentary Syrian air-strike debate seems an apt place to leave this section:

> I thought Hilary, his oratory was great. It reminded me of Tony Blair's speech taking us into the Iraq war and I'm always anxious about the greatest oratory is going to lead us to the greatest mistakes as well.[104]

1.3.3 Assuming a Universal Telos

The problem of assuming that everyone agrees on the same *telos* is similar in many ways to the assumption of universal virtues (1.2.3) and the idea of a-teleological virtues (1.3.2). In the problem of universal virtues, we had the example of assuming that some virtues are accepted by everyone everywhere and can therefore be considered objectively virtuous. In the problem of a-teleological virtues, we had the problem of people sharing a dedication to a virtue, but having opposing definitions of that virtue, because they never situated their understanding of virtue within a greater picture. This last difficulty is slightly different, and it concerns instances where *telos* still is not talked about, as in 1.3.2, but because one believes all people to have a common idea of a good end. The difference between this and the previous problem is important to point out, because it stunts conversation in a different way, and also because it potentially manipulates others in an even more dangerous way.

Where there is a difference in power and where those with a greater degree of power orientate conversation toward their own perceived version of *telos*, it becomes extremely difficult for others to express dissidence. In assuming a *telos* and not providing an opportunity to question or discuss its existence, the tools used to express dissidence have been taken away. This could be seen as an instance of the philosophical problem called 'hermeneutical injustice'. Hermeneutical injustice is a form of epistemic injustice and refers to instances where language insufficiently describes the experiences of a victim, and where language instead favours those in a more powerful position.[105] Miranda Fricker, originator of the term 'hermeneutical

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[104] John McDonnell, quoted in P. Wintour, "David Cameron warns of lengthy Syria campaign" *The Guardian.* 3rd Dec. 2015. *The Guardian:* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/03/first-uk-airstrikes-syria-deal-real-blow-isis-michael-fallon (Accessed 03.12.15).

[105] M. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

injustice' cites Nancy Hartsock's feminist historical materialism as the source of her structural critique of language. The premise from which these observations arise[106] is that "The dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes—purposes that at the very least are not our own and that are in various degrees inimical to our development and even existence".[107] Leaving aside that the term 'hermeneutical injustice' ironically implies some kind of a-teleological virtue, the problem being articulated suits the one we have here. Where a situation is structured to favour one person's purposes, it becomes very difficult to articulate oneself within such a framework. Within the context of hermeneutical injustice, the 'injustice' aspect of the term has to do with an imbalance in power relationships (hermeneutical disadvantage) and to be considered an 'injustice', Fricker writes, it must be morally wrong.[108] Even if neither of these things were the case however, we still have a meta-ethical problem. So long as we assume that the *telos* we are working with is shared by everyone else, then we are structuring a hermeneutical paradigm towards our own purposes, and we are not enabling anyone to call into question the basis of that assumption.

For example, Rosalind Hursthouse proposes that there is an objective *telos* of human kind, which is a kind of rationality. She describes her account as a kind of 'ethical naturalism', and whilst she does not wish to go so far as to call this *a priori* scientific objectivity, she does call it "a kind of objectivity appropriate to the subject matter".[109] Hursthouse gives a detailed and nuanced defence of this position, but eventually writes that, though it has not yet been fully discovered so we must still be modifying how we precisely define this good, we can say that 'good' is equatable to a mode of going about life that is natural and preferable for our species. In this way, "Our characteristic way of going on", as humans, "is the rational way".[110] Regardless of the defence that Hursthouse gives for the way she decides on virtues, she identifies the *telos* of humans as rationality. So long as Hursthouse maintains that her belief in an objective human *telos* is a subjective one, meta-ethically speaking, then there is still

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[106]   Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 147.
[107]   N. Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays*. (Colorad:. Westview Press, 1998), 241.
[108]   Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 152. Fricker's use of injustice here actually falls into a similar fallacy to that described in (1.3.2), however the hermeneutic critique she proposes still serves our purposes here.
[109]   Hursthouse, *Virtue Ethics*, 240.
[110]   Hursthouse, *Virtue Ethics*, 222.

a conversation to be had, where one might suggest that rationality is perhaps an inadequate *telos*. If however, Hursthouse believes that everyone *must* subscribe to this idea as the only true one, and that ethical discussion is rather about discovering a list of virtues that most adequately suits this end, then we have a problem.[111] We have a systemic problem where communication is either not possible or extremely difficult because a hermeneutic paradigm has been set up and it is assumed that all people are working within it. It would be extremely difficult, say, to propose that Maximus' understanding of virtue made any sense or had anything to contribute to the world, if one had to work within a paradigm that assumed the good mode of human existence was to aim towards rationality, however one might define that word.

Not only does the appeal to a universal *telos* run afoul of a hermeneutical 'injustice', but it also runs the risk of being metaethically imperialist. Jesse Couenhoven uses the term 'metaethical imperialism' to describe a position that seeks "complete solitary domination of the ethical domain".[112] Couenhoven uses this term in the context of finding common ground between deontological ethics and virtue ethics, but I think the point being made is entirely applicable here – it has to do with the need to see one's own understanding of ethics as the only true or real way. Couenhoven's point is that one's ethical perspective does not need to lay claim to this in order to still be a valuable position, and that, in fact, compatibility between ethical stances is perfectly acceptable and even preferable.[113] This is also reminiscent of MacIntyre's point that the incompatibility of rivalling ideas may not be so extreme if we have the technical framework in place to illuminate the nuances of the argument.[114]

An example of this problem in practice would be, if one did believe that all ethics must commit to rationality being the *telos* or ultimate good mode of being for humans, those societies who have more traditionally been committed to rationality as a favourable ideal might see eye to eye with this suggestion, but those which have no historical commitment to this ideal will see it only as a cultural imposition. In fact, the language of rationality as an ultimate ideal was upheld all through Victorian society in

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[111]   It is strongly implied that Hursthouse does believe this latter proposition. See Hursthouse, *Virtue Ethics*. 240.
[112]   J. Couenhoven, 'Against Metaethical Imperialism: Several Arguments for Equal Partnerships between the Deontic and Aretaic' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 38:3 (2010): 521.
[113]   Couenhoven, *Metaethical Imperialism*, 523, 541.
[114]   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. 246.

Britain, the Industrial Revolution, the colonial expansion of the Empire, and justified many atrocities, including laying the foundation stone for socio-political ideas like Social Darwinism. This is not to say that the ideal of rationality has not led to a great many advances, benefits and liberties, but it is to say that it would be foolish to assume that the concept would not be regarded as further imperialist cultural expansion and oppression elsewhere on the globe were one to suggest that it is objectively the goal of all human existence. In this theoretical example, we can see the way that the idea of a universal *telos* ties into the power structures of language, and, like any idea that tries to strong-arm itself into universality, risks becoming more a tool of oppression than enlightenment.

It is important to point out, that this is not an argument being made against or for subjectivity or objectivity in virtue ethics. It is about the impossibility of claiming objectivity within meta-ethics. When delineating the tools of our arguments, we can no more claim our idea of *telos* to be universal than we can our ideas of virtues. The moment we do so, we are no longer in an environment of ethical debate but are rather preaching a creed. We cannot expect philosophical discussion to take place if we structure a philosophical paradigm to favour our own position and eliminate others by taking away the hermeneutic tools of their engagement. If ones own ethical position really does have a claim to objectivity, then it surely can stand up to rigorous philosophical critique set within a common meta-ethical framework.

In identifying the above two problems of ateleological virtues and universal *telos*, I hope to have demonstrated the importance of *telos* as a paradigm of discussion. As the end and purpose towards which our habits and actions are orientated, talking about *telos* is to spell out the ethical dimension in which we are working. Meta-ethically speaking, it clarifies how we are using words like virtue, and lays clear the motives and beliefs we are working towards. It removes us from the sphere of rhetoric and deception and better places us to engage in useful discussion with other rival ethics. It is therefore necessary to dedicate some time to outlining what *telos* one subscribes to, but also to acknowledge that in describing such a *telos* we have moved from talking about meta-ethics to ethics. It is my hope that there is a degree of objectivity and commonality in the meta-ethical structures that we agree to use, and that in better defining these, we are better placed to begin describing our respective

ethical positions.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that in order for ethical debate to be constructive we need a meta-ethical framework that can be agreed upon. This involves a definition of terminology broad enough that it can be subscribed to regardless of the ethics involved, but with enough content for ethicists to see the commonality between the components of one another's arguments. The meta-ethical proposition of this chapter is that *virtues need to be defined within the context of a telos*. Using Alistair MacIntyre's reworking of the virtue ethics system, I have suggested a version of his definition of virtue be used in this framework. I hold loosely to MacIntyre's definition that "a virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods",[115] and hold strongly to the addition that a virtue is defined by and *within* the paradigm of a *telos*.

  I have demonstrated some of the shortfalls of straying one way or another into defining virtue or *telos* more concisely than this, which results in filling out meta-ethical tools with one's ethical commitments. While I do not think it was ever the intention of a virtue ethicist to do such a thing, I suspect that the relatively limited attempts to reconcile less traditionally 'western' virtue ethics with such frameworks may have inhibited the effectiveness of virtue ethics so far. As demonstrated with the example of Isaac the Syrian and as will become clear later when I describe the virtue ethics of Maximus the Confessor, the idea of virtue is very different in mid-Byzantine theology and the thought it influenced. It is my hope that pointing out some of the difficulties that have arisen when considering Maximus' understanding of virtue may lead to a more solid meta-ethical foundation for virtue ethics.

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[115] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

~ Chapter 2: A Telos of Theosis ~

'The cosmos moves towards its perfect end in the gift of *theosis*'

2.0 INTRODUCTION

It has been established that in order to understand the location and purpose of virtues within any ethics, we need to understand the *telos* towards which they aim. For Maximus, the *telos* of virtues is set within a distinctly Christian paradigm. What virtues are for him has to do with what creatures are and what they are envisioned to be. We can not make sense of what virtue is (Chapter 3) or how we can go about attaining it (Chapter 4), unless we first understand what *telos* is for Maximus. The short answer to this, is that the *telos* of all things is *theosis*, or deification. This is a well established idea in Maximus' literature,[116] however the focus of this chapter is to explore Maximus' understanding of *theosis* specifically within the context of cosmic, creaturely movement towards rest. This brings the notion of *theosis* as close as possible to the familiar way in which *telos* is used in virtue ethics as an end vision towards which we decide to aim.

In the first half of this chapter I look at creaturely movement. Maximus understands *telos* to be the completion of what was started in Genesis. To understand what the end is for Maximus, we have to understand where it fits into a picture that has a beginning and a middle. There are two sets of triads that Maximus uses to describe this story. These are: creation – movement – rest, and being – well-being – eternal well being. I shall briefly discuss the role of ethics, or human choice, within this paradigm, but this topic in particular will become a major theme in later chapters. The first and last states in these triads (*i.e.* our beginning and our end) are given to all creatures by the grace of God and are beyond human control. The central state however, that of movement and well-being, is up to humans to determine. This is

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[116]   See for example N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 293.

where we may choose to receive the gifts God wishes to share with us. Included within this is the hoped for direction of all creatures, but also the inability to reach this end because of the Fall. Maximus uses this pattern of cosmic movement to describe what was meant to be, what has been lost to us, and what we may aim for again when we partake of Christ. The focus of the first half of this chapter will be on describing how *the cosmos moves towards its perfect end.* This will include describing cosmic movement in more detail, describing how such a movement has been stalled by human sin and how this movement is restored to us in Christ, and explaining the relationship between humans and the rest of the created order that makes this whole process cosmic and not just human.

In the second half of the chapter I will look at the promised *perfect end in the gift of theosis. Theosis* for Maximus is the promised salvation of God's children – the adoption and sanctification talked of in Scripture. Despite the eschatological dimension of this doctrine, it is also something present with us here and now because the Spirit is with us now. Maximus gives a particularly concise window into *theosis* in his spiritual commentary on the liturgy, the *Mystagogia.* I look at how we can use the *Mystagogia* as a microcosm of cosmic movement, and use it to help us understand *theosis.* Drawing on this, I look at the concept of unity and distinction in relation to nature and person in *theosis.* In particular I look at the way that unity with the rest of creation and with God never compromises the unique identity of the individual. I finish this section by looking at the idea of *theosis* as still to come and not yet complete.

The purpose of this chapter is both to contextualise and explain the *telos* towards which all things move for Maximus. This will allow me to go onto explain in Chapter 3 what virtue is in light of this, and what we as humans in this state of movement need to do in order to attain virtues and their *telos* – God Himself.

2.1 The Cosmic Trajectory of Creatures

2.1.1 Microcosm and Mediator
In order to understand what *telos* is for Maximus, we must look at who it is *for.* In Maximus' understanding, *telos* is never purely about humans. This is because

humanity does not exist in isolation, but as a part of creation, *all* of which has been made by God. Humanity is not extracted from this cosmos, but, by merit of the gifts given to its nature, is the centrepiece and mediator of all creation. This means that the metaphysics of Maximus' ethics is cosmic in scope. The purpose of humanity is not isolated from the purpose of the rest of creation, and in fact, the purpose of humanity is to bring the rest of creation into fulfilment of purpose – into perfection – *telos*. In order to understand what the *telos* of human ethical conduct is for Maximus, it is first necessary to explain the relationship between human nature and the rest of the cosmos.

In his *Ambiguum 41,* Maximus describes what he believes human nature to be. Drawing on Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios the Areopagite, Maximus describes the purpose of humanity through the functions restored in Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. In this *ambiguum,* Maximus makes frequent use of Paul's letters and Luke. The Biblical passages he dwells on bring the cosmic to the microscopic, the impossibility of God to humanity, and perfection to creation.[117] Maximus identifies the human as the crucible in which divinity is brought to the rest of creation. He says that humanity is the "laboratory in which everything is concentrated and in itself naturally mediates between the extremities of each division".[118] Adam and Eve's failure to choose God on behalf of creation causes human nature to fall. We can no longer move toward God unless we choose to live in renewed human nature that has been reinstituted by Christ. It is because humans are mediators, that our failure is the fall of *all* creation, and Christ's renewal is the renewal of all creation. Creation moves toward God, who is its end, its rest that is ever-moving. We will return to this, but first we must note that it is through human mediation that the rest of creation can anticipate its *telos*:

> For humanity clearly has the power of naturally uniting at the mean point of each
> division since it is related to the extremities of each division in its own parts. Through
> that capacity it can come to be the way of fulfilment of what is divided and be openly
> instituted in itself as the great mystery of the divine purpose. It proceeds
> harmoniously to each of the extremities in the things that are, from what is close at

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[117]   Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:16, Gal. 3:28, Luke 23:43, Heb. 9:24, Col. 1:20.
[118]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305AB. [Louth, *Maximus*, 157].

> hand to what is remote, from what is worse to what is better, lifting up to God and
> fully accomplishing union. 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.[119]

The human person shares aspects of its nature with many extremities in creation, such
as the sensibility of non-rational creatures and the rationality of the immaterial
angels.[120] Maximus believes that the rationality humans have, that the choices we
make, and that the love we are capable of, is ours as mediators. Our rationality,
choices and love, become the rationality, choice and love of the cosmos. We are like
little worlds – microcosms – in whose choices the universe is bound up[121]. We are the
voice of the silent world, the priests in the cosmic liturgy. Our choices have the
potential to unite the cosmos with God. As Louth points out in his article on Maximus
and the environment however,[122] when humans do not choose love, and instead choose
the nothingness of sin, they shatter the relationships in the cosmos. This is so of the
Fall, and also in every choice humans make subsequently. As Maximus writes:

> Since then 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...[123]

In the phrase "but contrary to nature is voluntarily moved in ignorance" (παρὰ φύσιν
ἑκὼν ἀνοήτως κεκίνηται), Maximus emphasises the impact of human sin which is
both against our nature (παρὰ φύσιν) and undertaken voluntarily (ἑκὼν) by humans.
This causes us to fall into ignorance (ἀνοήτως) and to break apart (διαίρεσιν) those
things which it was intended we unite (ἡνωμένων). Likewise 'to which it has been

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[119] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305BC, [Louth, *Maximus*, 157].
[120] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305D-1308A.
[121] See Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1312A-B [Louth, *Maximus,* 160].
[122] Louth, *Man and Cosmos*, 68.
[123] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308C [Louth, *Maximus*, 158].

divinely subjected' recalls the curse of creation from Gen. 3 17-19 in which humans were subjected to the rest of creation and vice versa, reminding us that relation has also been disrupted between all the rest of creation and God. All of creation continues to groan with waiting in Rom.8:22, because although Christ restores human nature and all the cosmos, a human choice still exists. As already hinted at by Maximus' choice of language, human sin and obliteration of mediation requires the renewal of human nature in Christ. Maximus twice in the above section uses language found in the Chalcedonian Formula: separate (διῃρημένων /διαίρεσιν) and union (ἔνωσιν/ ἡνωμένων). In the passage directly following this he uses the same language to describe the incarnation of Christ as one person in two natures:

> Indeed being in himself the universal union (ἑνώσεως) of all, he has started with our division (διαιρέσεως) and become the perfect human being, having from us, on our account, and in accordance with our nature, everything that we are and lacking nothing, apart from sin...[124]

I do not think it is an accident that Maximus echoes the Chalcedonian Formula here given the subject matter. Maximus' understanding of human nature as mediator makes sense of why Christ becomes a human. Christ comes as a human because it is humans who, as mediators between the extremes of the cosmos, have torn it apart with their choice to fall back into nothing. Christ restores this mediating ability that was lost when human nature chose nothingness,[125] and now offers a renewed human nature that may again choose the path it was first invited to – that of love:

> ... 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 *logoi* that have come forth for

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[124] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308D-1309A [Louth, *Maximus*, 159].
[125] The terms I use here are found in Athanasius of Alexandria, 'De Incarnatione Verbi Dei' in *SCh. 199* C. Kannengiesser, (ed.) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1973) §4, though a similar understanding of sin being a choice of separation and void from God is found in Maximus, *Ad Thal. 42* CCSG7 289 [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic*, 122]. See also section 3.2.2 below.

> 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).[126]

The recapitulation of heaven and earth within Himself is a literal restoration and reinstitution of the natural power that was lost to humanity. Likeness with God is returned to humanity by its reforged nature within the person of Christ. In choosing to partake in this renewed nature, it becomes possible again that humans may bring all creation to rest in God. I shall come on to this participation and choice in later chapters, but for now it is enough to note that Christ's restoration enables humans to partake in a purpose for which we were always created. In Christ we can become mediators that allow the cosmos to move toward *theosis*.

2.1.2 The Triad of Cosmic Movement

So humans enable movement. When we follow in human nature reinstituted by Christ, we enable the cosmos to move towards *theosis*. Human ethical choices affect the capacity of the created order to move toward a complex but perfect rest in God. In this section, I will explain briefly what Maximus believes cosmic movement to be.

Maximus uses a triad to explain three stages of a creature's existence. These stages are that of creation; life as we know and choose to live it; and life in God which is the promise to come. Maximus chooses to characterise these stages using language familiar to him from the works of Origin. In 1955, Sherwood noted that Maximus' triad of cosmic movement is a direct inversion of and challenge to Origen's triad of cosmic movement. Sherwood wrote that Origen's formula of rest – movement – creation (*stasis – kinesis – genesis*), where we exist in perfection in God, fall and move towards becoming again what we were, is reversed in Maximus whilst deliberately retaining Origenist language to highlight the reversal.[127] Maximus' formula of creation – movement – rest (*genesis – kinesis – stasis*) rejects the pre-existence of creation as rest in perfection in God and instead shows that creation is brought into being when the *logoi* become instantiated in material creation, making matter an essential part of creation. As Louth points out, in Maximus' cosmology it is the incarnate Word that is

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[126]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308D [Louth, *Maximus,* 158-9].
[127]   Sherwood, 'The Earlier Ambigua', 92-3.

central rather than Origen's metaphysical transcendence of the soul and rejection of matter.[128] Maximus explains his position on this in *Ambiguum 15:*

> Thus I think that whoever teaches the preexistence of souls, and promulgates the existence of a wholly motionless 'unity' (ἑνάδα) of rational beings, is rightly deserving of condemnation, for after the manner of the Greeks he has mixed together the immiscible, and asserts that the origin (γενέσει) of rational beings is simultaneous in existence with their rest (στάσιν). For it is irreconcilable with true thinking that origin should be conceived of as anterior to rest, since rest by nature is devoid of motion (ἀκινήτου)[129] ... Simply put, to speak concisely, rest (στάσις) is a relative concept, which is not relative to origin (γένεσιν) but to motion (κίνησιν)...[130]

Maximus' point is that we cannot, philosophically speaking, call something that is originating 'at rest' because rest only makes sense in the context of movement. Theologically, the point he is making is that 'movement' is necessary to who we are, and not a failing of our nature. We are created with the capacity to move toward rest, which makes the freedom of human choice essential to our perfection as opposed to suggesting that we may never truly gain the perfection that existed in the moment of our inception. This latter position that Maximus is combating, implicitly harks back to the perfection of the soul prior to its being marred by matter. Maximus condemns this in the first line of the above quotation, and it is this that Sherwood identified as a polemic against Origen.

Maximus' triad of movement is set in a wider cosmic picture in *Ambiguum 7*, where he emphasises more the theological purpose of beings contained within the triad:

> The movement that is tending toward its proper end is called a natural power, or passion, or movement passing from one thing to another and having impassibility as its end. It is also called an irrepressible activity that has its end in perfect fulfilment.

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[128]   Louth, *Maximus,* 66.
[129]   Although Maximus clarifies elsewhere that since creatures rest in a God who is never fully knowable, even this perfect rest is one in which creatures continue to grow. I come on to this later.
[130]   Maximus, *Amb. 15* PG91 1220C-D [N. Constas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua.* (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 373-4].

But nothing that comes into being is its own end, since it is not self-caused.[131] Maximus explains that motion is always directed to an end, and that the end of creatures is always external to themselves. This is because creatures are "not self-caused". What Maximus is about to introduce here is that everything that has and ever will come into being, is directed naturally toward rest in God. According to Wilken in his notes to *Ambiguum 7*, Maximus' definition of end (τέλος) as "the end is that for the sake of which all things exist, it, however, is for the sake of nothing"[132] is Aristotelian in its origins.[133] In order to make his point about the end of all things being in God however, and the perfection that is to come, Maximus draws from the Old and New Testaments:

> The saints Moses and David and Paul as well as Christ the Lord bear witness to the true understanding of these things. Speaking of the first parents, Moses wrote. *You shall not eat of the tree of life* (Gen. 2:9, 17). And elsewhere he said: *For you have not as yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you* (Deut. 12:9). And David: *Crying out I will be satisfied when your glory appears* (Ps. 16:15). And: My soul thirsts for the strong and living God (Ps. 42:2). And St Paul writes: *That if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own* (Phil. 3:11). And to the Hebrews he writes: *For whoever enters into God's rest also ceases from his labours as God did from his* (Heb. 4:10). And again in the same epistle he affirms that no one *received what was promised* (Heb 11:39). Also Christ says: *Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest* (Matt 11:28).[134]

Maximus uses these Biblical passages to equate rest with that eschatological promise of perfection in God. Moving towards rest in God is a Scriptural idea, and, like the day of rest at the end of creation, is the completion and culmination of all movement. Maximus also begins here to express what final rest is. We see it characterised as

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[131]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1072B-C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 48].

[132]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1072C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 48].

[133]   Wilken notes though that this is not a direct quotation of Aristotle. He also notes that Sherwood believes "Maximus may be quoting an aphorism of Evagrius preserved in Syriac". (Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua*, 100). Wilken himself believes that Maximus is aware that he is quoting Aristotle, since this passage is preceded by the phrase "Hence the definition is correct even though it was spoken by an outsider:" (Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 48-9, note 10).

[134]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1072D-1073A [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 49-50].

inheritance in Deuteronomy, as the glory of God and the living God in the Psalms, as resurrection and rest from all labour in Paul's letters, and as Christ Himself in Matthew. This collection of promises goes a long way to introduce what Maximus believes *theosis* to be. Of particular interest, I think, are the two Psalm quotations included, which talk both of an anticipation of the glory of God, and of the living God Himself. Maximus' understanding of participation and *theosis* is encapsulated in both the distinctness and unity of this anticipation of God's glory and of God Himself.[135]

Maximus concludes this long list of Scriptural references with the following statement:

> Therefore no creature has ever ceased using the inherent power that directs it towards its end, nor has it ceased the natural activity that impels it towards its end, nor harvested what it has anticipated. For I am referring of course to being impassible and unmoved. For it belongs to God alone to be the end and the completion and the impassible. God is unmoved and complete and impassible. It belongs to creatures to be moved toward that end which is without beginning, and to come to rest in the perfect end that is without end, and to experience that which is without definition, but not to *be* such or to *become* such in essence.[136]

The movement of everything that has come into being is a movement that is completed in God. What this means precisely will be the topic of section 2.2, but as is already hinted in the last line of this passage, it means that creatures never become God by *nature*. In other words they never stop being themselves, and being creatures.

2.1.3 The Triad of Well-being

In this section I explain the ethical dimension of Maximus' triad of cosmic movement. This is caught up in the role of the human as mediator since it concerns the way that human choices impact the movement of all other things.

In *Ambiguum 7*, Maximus refers to a triad of well-being, where the movement of human being is dependent on the choices we make. These three stages map onto the stages of cosmic movement. In the triad of well-being, there is *being – well-being –*

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[135]   I return to this in 2.2.
[136]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1073B [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 50].

eternal well-being.[137] We are created with being, we choose to move toward well-being, and we are given rest in eternal well-being:

> Everything that comes into existence is subject to movement, since it is not self-moved or self-powered. If then rational beings come into being, surely they are also moved, since they move from a natural beginning in 'being' (τὸ εἶναι) toward a voluntary end in 'well-being' (τὸ εὖ εἶναι). For the end of the movement of those who are moved is 'eternal well-being' (τὸ ἀεὶ εὖ 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 the 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.[138]

Movement of creatures in Ambiguum 7
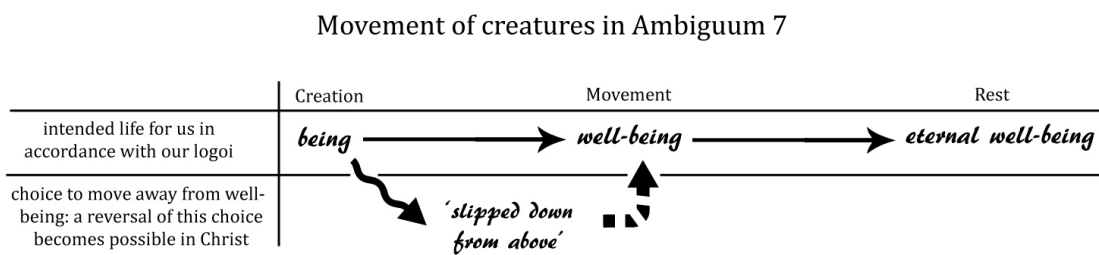
Fig. 1 Movement of creatures in Amb. 7

This means that the three stages map like so onto the triad of cosmic movement:
In the above diagram I have also included a reference to the *logoi* in *Ambiguum 7* and a reference to the Nazianzan phrase 'slipped down from above'. The *logoi* and their role in cosmic movement will be introduced more fully in Chapter 3, but they are included here to demonstrate that the stages of *being – well-being – eternal well-being* are the *intended, natural* movement of creatures that God desires for them.[139] The phrase 'slipped down from above' is the term Maximus is clarifying in *Ambiguum 7* and refers to human choice to turn away from God. In the language of *Ambiguum 41*, this is the human choice to create divisions in the cosmos rather than loving and

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[137]   Russell identifies a number of other triads in Maximian terminology that also illustrate the movement of creatures. He for example also talks of 'the moral life, the intellectual life, and the divine life' and 'faith, hope, and love'. (Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 294).

[138]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1073C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 50-1].

[139]   This will be opposed later on to our *tropos* of movement, which is the actual way in which we decide to move. To be in harmony with God's will is to bring our *tropos* in line with our *logos*, and so to realise God's plan for us.

uniting creatures. The dotted arrow represents the choice that is only open to humans because they may choose to participate in renewed human nature. Fallen human nature has 'slipped down from above' and has no access to *well-being* and *eternal well-being* except through Christ. This will be discussed in more detail later, but it is worth noting that for this reason in the above quotation, Maximus calls 'well-being' both a 'voluntary end' *and* that which is given by God. Far from being a contradiction, this concerns the reciprocal way in which well-being is established within humans. I explain this in Chapter 3 when looking at the formation of virtue within humans. For now however, the point of articulating this additional triad found in *Ambiguum 7* is to introduce the central role of human choice.

Human choice and acceptance is necessary in order for *being* to be transformed into *well-being*, and thereafter *eternal well-being* may be gifted. All things are created and have God-given movement, but if the human choice to love does not occur, creation cannot be gathered to a state of well-being, and consequently cannot find its rest in God. When humans 'slip down from above', a chasm forms between Creator and creation. Final rest in God is the *telos* that all creation hopes for. It is the perfect completion intended for creation, but the process of getting there is dependent on human complicity. In the next section I will look more closely at what Maximus understood *theosis* as the *telos* of creation to be. The following passage from *Ambiguum 15* provides us with a good bridging point between this and the next section. In it Maximus describes the end as the moment

> ... 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 is not God Himself, for He incomparably transcends even this.[140]

Here we can see the way that cosmic movement ends in God but does not compromise the integrity of creatureliness. The questions this passage raises, such as what it means to come to rest in infinity *around* God and how this relates to Maximus' earlier

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[140]   Maximus, *Amb. 15* PG91 1220C [Constas, *Difficulties,* 373].

passages where we come to rest *in* God, and how we can be with God if he transcends even the rest that we come to – these questions relate to Maximus' doctrine of *theosis* and what is going on within the process of deification. It is to these difficulties that I turn next.

2.2 THE TELOS OF ALL THINGS

In the latter half of this chapter, I look specifically at what the final promise, or *telos* of the cosmos is within Maximus' thought. I have explained where this fits in relation to the rest of creaturely movement, and have also begun to explore what precisely this is. The *telos* of all things is *theosis* through the mediating power of the human.

Prior to Maximus, the doctrine of *theosis* has a rich theological history. Jules Gross wrote in the introduction to his book *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers*: "Is not all our theology of sanctifying grace, nearly to the word, a doctrine of deification?".[141] Gross's book traces deification as a concept through Hellenic philosophy and Scriptural interpretation and then through the Greek theologians of the early centuries. His book concludes by looking at Dionysios the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. Gross notes the lasting influence of Dionysios on Maximus' understanding of deification, writing that "[...] despite numerous differences of detail, Dionysios and Maximus agree in seeing deification through the mystical union with God as the goal of creation and of the incarnation, as well as of the moral activity of human kind."[142] The influence of Dionysios on Maximus' work is clear, but the implication that Dionysios holds pride of place is a little misleading.[143] Berthold places more weight on Scripture as the primary source for Maximus' understanding of deification. He notes that though deification is to be found everywhere in Christian theology, for Maximus ultimately

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[141] J. Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers.* P.A. Onica (trans.), (California: A&C Press, 2002 (first published 1938)), 2; Sherwood also makes this point, noting that for Maximus deification and salvation are one and the same, P. Sherwood, *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life & The Four Centuries on Charity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1955), 71-2.

[142] Gross, *Divinization*, 254.

[143] Gross does not exclude other sources and neither does he exclude the Bible, but the focus of his chapter is on the strong relation between Dionysios and Maximus and the inherited ideas of *theosis.*

deification is the promise of New Testament.[144] Maximus is clearly indebted to Dionysios, Evagrios, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus and many more theological forerunners in developing the doctrine of *theosis*, but it is especially important to take note of Berthold's point: *theosis* for Maximus is a Scriptural phenomenon that has to do with the restoration of human nature through Christ and in the Holy Spirit.[145]

Another important overview of Maximus' doctrine of deification was undertaken by Norman Russell. He provided a comprehensive survey of deification in the Greek Patristic tradition, he cites Maximus' principle guide on the topic of deification to be Gregory of Nazianzus.[146] He also provides a list of all the Greek terms that Maximus uses to convey this doctrine,[147] but notes that "None of these terms seems to differ significantly from any other in meaning. They all refer to the same process by which human beings are penetrated and transformed by the divine".[148] Russell's choice to structure an inquiry into Maximus and *theosis* by going through each of his works allows a comprehensive overview covering all instances of the term in Maximus' thought, although this approach is not necessarily the best one for trying to describe Maximus' overall cosmic paradigm where *theosis* is the *telos* of movement. Russell also loses out on opportunities to elucidate areas of Maximus' thought by cross-referencing with his other works. For example, Russell gives an excellent summary of the process of deification in Maximus' *On the Lord's Prayer*, going through Maximus' points as they appear in the text. Where "the fifth mystery" on "the unification of human nature"[149] arises however the text exhibits very little of the complexity and centrality that this theme takes on in *Ambiguum 41*. While Russell does deal with the *Ambiguum* later on in his chapter, there is no synthesis of this with earlier mentions from *On the Lord's Prayer*. This ends up implying a vast and haphazard shape to Maximus' work – an unfair suggestion given that at least some of Maximus' ideas overlap enough to give us a cosmic structure and movement to his paradigm of thought. In my exposition I attempt to order Maximus' thought in a way

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144 Berthold, *Maximus*, 10. Berthold notes in particular 1 Jn 3:2; 2 Pt 1:4.
145 As we have seen in 2.1.2 and will see further especially in 2.2.3.
146 Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 263.
147 θεόω, θέωσις, ἐκθέωσις, ἐκθεωτικός, θεοποιέω, θεοποιός, θεοποιητικός, ἀποθεόω, συνθεόω, θεωτικός. Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 264.
148 Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 264.
149 Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 268.

that demonstrates the overall shape of this cosmic movement, and situates *theosis* as the complex end of this movement. The unification of human nature, as we will see, is key to understanding the purpose of the human in relation to the whole of creation.

The end movement of the cosmos, made possible in restored human nature which Christ has renewed within himself, is the sanctification of all creation. In the deification of the microcosm, the human who contains the extremes of the universe, all of creation is united to God. But what is deification, and if it is at the end of all movement, how can we have any notion of what it is now? Maximus' understanding of the liturgy mirrors his understanding of cosmic movement. His exploration of sanctification during the Eucharist gives us an insight into the *theosis* of the universe. In 2.2.1 I look at what we can learn about *theosis* from Maximus' *Mystagogia* (commentary on the mystery of the liturgy). In 2.2.2. I look at what Maximus means to be united to God, and the importance of unity through grace and personal distinction. In section 2.2.3 I look at *theosis* as an eschatological idea, and its being a promise as yet unfulfilled, and as something both immanent and present.

Throughout this section there are paradoxes pertaining to the relationship of the created and the divine. How can we be united to God and one another and yet distinct, how can *theosis* be within this lifetime and yet also at the end of it, how can God be the end of all things and yet with all things. These paradoxes, as I will explain as they arise, are brought together within the mystery of Christ's person. The mystery of the relationship between the created and the uncreated is brought into harmony within Christ's one person and two natures. The communion of the created and uncreated is within Christ and may be participated in by all of creation. It is worth bearing in mind this Christological underpinning as we explore Maximus' understanding of *theosis*.

2.2.1 The Liturgy as Microcosm

According to Maximus, unity with God is not just something confined to an eschatological epoch after the end of human history. It is something that is always in process as we strive in this life for closeness with God.[150] There are instances in life where we can even have a foretaste of the *theosis* that is to come. This is especially so

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[150]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.7.

of the divine liturgy for Maximus. We can understand what may be possible in final rest by treating the liturgy as a window into that which is to come. Maximus writes that this is possible "...because of the grace of the Holy Spirit which is always invisibly present, but in a special way at the time of the holy synaxis. This grace transforms and changes each person who is found there and in fact leads him to what is revealed through the mysteries which are celebrated..."[151] We can read Maximus' *Mystagogia* as a microcosm of the sanctification of all creation, as his commentary on the liturgy mirrors the process of creaturely movement leading to deification. Russell even goes so far as to suggest that it is here in the *Mystagogia* that we can truly see Maximus himself overawed and perhaps even filled with the grace of *theosis*.[152] In the *Mystagogia,* Maximus emphasises that the Holy Spirit transforms each person by grace in proportion to what is more divine within them,[153] but also notes that even those young in their faith are mysteriously transfigured by grace and grow in understanding.[154] The process of transfiguration is one that a person comes to of their own volition, must be receptive to, and indeed rewards the faith and love of each person, but ultimately is mysterious, incomprehensible and a place beyond human control. The transformation process itself is by the Holy Spirit and through grace.[155]

In the *Mystagogia*, Maximus provides an analysis of the physical actions that occur during the liturgy and their spiritual significance. After this though, he provides an account of the movement of the soul and its elevation in the course of the liturgy. One particularly potent image of *theosis* that Maximus gives us is from Dionysios, and is that of the human becoming a mirror:

> ... in having God through prayer as its mystical and only Father by grace, the soul will center on the oneness of his hidden being by a distraction from all things, and it will experience or rather know divine things all the more as it does not want to be its own nor be able to be recognised from or by itself or anyone else's but only all of God's who takes it up becomingly and fittingly as only he can, penetrating it completely without passion and deifying all of it and transforming it unchangeably to himself.

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151   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 206].
152   Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 295.
153   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24.
154   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24.
155   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.21.

> Thus, as says the very holy Dionysios the Areopagite, it becomes the image and
> appearance 'of the invisible light, an accurate mirror, very transparent, without flaw,
> undefiled, unstained, receiving in itself, if we are allowed to say this, the splendour of
> the divine model and purely illuminating in himself, as far as possible, the goodness of
> the silence of the inner recesses.'[156]

The deified person is one who is so illuminated and filled with God's presence, that they become a vessel that reflects back the glory of God. This image of God illuminated within us, is us become like God, by adoption by the Holy Spirit.[157] Importantly, this adoption and likeness comes from beyond our nature and is effected by God.[158] As implied above when Maximus and Dionysios talk of the human mirror receiving the image of God within themselves, there is a place for human activity in this reciprocal relationship, but this will be discussed in the following chapters. Another image of this mirror-like reciprocity can be found in *Ambiguum 10,* where Maximus writes:

> For they say that God and man are paradigms of one another, that as much as God is
> humanised to man through love for mankind, so much has man been able to be deified
> to God through love, and that as much as man is caught up by God to what is known
> in his mind, so much does man manifest God, who is invisible by nature, through
> virtues.[159]

The likeness of one has been deified through love to the other. The place of virtues mentioned here is one that will become important in Chapter 3, but we can see also here the central importance of love in this outpouring of grace. In a number of other places, we see Maximus calling this deification through love a self-emptying of the Son. For example in *On the Lords Prayer* Maximus writes

> When we pray, let our aim be this mystery of deification (θεώσεως), which shows us
> what we were once like and what the self-emptying (κένωσις) of the only-begotten

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[156]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.23 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 206].
[157]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24.
[158]   Maximus, *Opusc. 1* PG91 33A-36A.
[159]   Maximus *Ambiguum 10* PG91 1113B-C [Louth, *Maximus,* 101].

Son through the flesh has now made us...[160]

and

> Perhaps the counsel of God the Father to which David here refers is the unfathomable
> self-emptying (κένωσιν) of the only-begotten Son which He brought about for the
> deification (ἐπὶ θεώσει) of our nature, and by which He has set a limit to the ages.[161]

Like the reciprocal mirror from earlier, this self-emptying of the son is something that
is mimicked by those who wish to receive deification through this self-emptying love:
"Moreover, by emptying (κενώσει) themselves of the passions they lay hold of the
divine to the same degree as that to which, deliberately emptying (κενώσας) Himself
of His own sublime glory, the Logos of God truly became man".[162] This self-emptying
love is essential to what is going on in the reciprocal relationship between God and
humans and is essential to what *theosis* is. In the next chapter, I look at love in relation
to the rest of the virtues, and it will become especially important that love exists in
this mutual self-emptying by both the giver and receiver, and that in this moment is
the *telos* of all creation.

　　We have seen that the microcosm of the liturgy enables sanctification through
the Holy Spirit. This is not just a model representing what is to come however. As
Sherwood notes, the deification of the person, for Maximus, does not occur in
isolation but in the community of the Church and in the sacraments.[163] Maximus'
Mystagogia is filled with microcosmic imagery that relates what happens at a small
level to what happens at a massive level. Just like Christ's incarnation where the
universe was sanctified within the person of Christ, who brought together the divine
and the human inside Himself, so do we find "...God's holy Church as a figure and
image of the entire world composed of visible and invisible essences because like it, it
contains both unity and diversity"[164] and that the "holy Church is like a man because

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[160] Maximus *Or. Dom.* PG90 905D-908A [Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, *The Philokalia Volume Two.* G. Palmer, P. Sherrard, & K. Ware, (eds.) (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1981), 304].
[161] Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG90 873C-D [Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, *Philokalia,* 286].
[162] Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG90 877A [Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, *Philokalia,* 287].
[163] Sherwood, *Maximus*, 71.
[164] Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.2 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 188].

for the soul it has the sanctuary, for mind it has the divine altar, and for body it has the nave"[165] and "that the whole world, made up of visible and invisible things, is man and conversely that man made up of body and soul is a world".[166] Everywhere, what relates to the small relates to the large, and vice versa. And everywhere we have also these distinctions that are in harmony and unity, following but also epitomised in Christ. We shall leave *how* one can achieve *theosis* to Chapter 4, but it is important that we not forget that the liturgy is not just an example of what *theosis* might look like, but a present reality here among us. It is both the promise of what is to come and a continuous reality here amongst us, simultaneously present and yet to come, by merit of the Holy Spirit.

Within the liturgy, Maximus talks in particular about the Divine Eucharist as being a moment where *theosis* is present on Earth:

> By holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from man to become God. For we believe that in this present life we already have a share in these gifts of the Holy Spirit through love that is in faith, and in the future age after we have kept the commandments to the best of our ability we believe that we shall have a share in them in very truth in their concrete reality according to the steadfast hope of our faith and the solid unchangeable promise to which God has committed himself.[167]

Seamlessly moving between discussion of the Eucharist and eschatological *theosis*, Maximus depicts the Eucharist as fellowship (κοινωνία), identity (ταὐτότης) and participation (μετέχω) in likeness (ὁμοιότης), that as yet does not have the eschatological character which we will come to know according to 'very truth in their concrete reality' (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἀνυποστάτως).[168] It is *theosis* in the present that anticipates *theosis* to come. When Maximus tells us that the whole world is the Church,[169] he describes the material world as the nave, and the spiritual realm as the

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165 Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.4 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 189-90].
166 Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.7 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 196].
167 Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24, [Berthold, *Maximus,* 207].
168 "κατὰ μέθεξιν ἐνδεχομένην δι' ὁμοιότητος κοινωνίαν τε καὶ ταὐτότητα, δι' ἧς γενέσθαι θεὸς" (Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24).
169 Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.2.

sanctuary and that they are one despite these distinctions. As the liturgy progresses, the nave is sanctified by merit of being one with the sanctuary in which holy communion takes place.[170] The Church is also every person, with their physical body as the nave, the soul as the sanctuary, and the mind as the altar.[171] As well as telling us about the united yet distinct spiritual and material elements of all the cosmos, Maximus also seems to be telling us something about where the Divine Liturgy takes place. The Eucharist of the Church is cosmic in scope, happening at once here and everywhere, now and to come, uniting nave and sanctuary, mind and body, earth and heaven.

Maximus immediately moves from talking about the divine mysteries of the Eucharist, to talking about the way that the spiritual world can be seen through those ascetics who practice natural contemplation[172]:

> For the whole spiritual world seems mystically imprinted on the whole sensible world in symbolic forms, for those who are capable of seeing this, and conversely the whole sensible world is spiritually explained in the mind in the principles which it contains.[173]

In doing so he extends the cosmic sanctification happening in the Eucharist to the goal of ascetic striving. Thus, through striving we can move towards well-being and participate in this moment when we receive grace and are gifted a glimpse of eternal well-being:

> Conversely, man is a mystical church, because through the nave which is his body he brightens by virtue the ascetic force of the soul by the observance of the commandments in moral wisdom. Through the sanctuary of his soul he conveys to God in natural contemplation through reason the principles of sense purely in spirit cut off from matter. Finally through the altar of the mind he summons the silence abounding in song in the innermost recesses of the unseen and unknown utterance of divinity by another silence, rich in speech and tone. And as far as man is capable, he

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[170]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.3.
[171]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.4.
[172]   Natural Contemplation and its relation to the ascetic life and the *logoi* is discussed in Chapter 4.1.3.
[173]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.2, [Berthold, *Maximus,* 189].

dwells familiarly within mystical theology and becomes such as is fitting for one made worthy of his indwelling and he is marked with his dazzling splendour.[174]

Maximus' series of parallels between the Church, the world, the human, Scripture and so on, seem to be describing what we are to look forward to and where it is to be found. Maximus vividly portrays the impossibility and yet attainability of participation through the Eucharist in a serious of paradoxical images – the silence abounding in song; the unseen and unknown that are rich in speech and tone. The cosmic trajectory of the world looks like the Divine Liturgy, in which heaven and earth are brought together and sanctified at the alter, consummating all and bringing it to oneness with God. Von Balthasar describes this similarly, writing that the liturgy is more than a symbol for Maximus; it is "an effective transformation of the world into transfigured, divinised existence".[175] This allows Von Balthalsar to famously refer to Maximus' work as "cosmic liturgy": "a way of drawing the entire world into the hypostatic union, because both world and liturgy share a christological foundation".[176] This position is developed further by Loudovikos, who argues in *Eucharistic Ontology,* "For this passage [*Myst.* Ch.1] is, inter alia, a small but conspicuous and clear reminder of the fact that the divine economy is summed up in the Divine Eucharist".[177] Loudovikos goes on to explain that for this reason we can see that Maximus grounds the ontology of creatures in the Eucharist, which is itself grounded in the providence of God and his economy in Christ. This, he says, is a tradition inherited from the early Church and exegetical passages like that of John 6:51-58.[178] Loudovikos writes that

> This passage is tacitly assumed by the Confessor in those texts of his eucharistic theology which present Christ as 'the living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:51) and essentially identify the Eucharist with the totality of the [sic.] God's given activity in history, the working out of the divine economy.[179]

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[174]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.4, [Berthold, *Maximus,* 190].
[175]   Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 322.
[176]   Von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 322.
[177]   N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. E. Theokritoff (trans.) (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 25.
[178]   As seen in passages like Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG 90: 905CD.
[179]   Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 26.

In his analysis of Maximus' eucharistic theology, Loudovikos concludes that "there is a very clear link between being and movement and the (communal) event of living, and the final fulfilment of all of these in our eucharistic incorporation into Christ...".[180] The ascetic struggle of human life that seeks to move toward God is mirrored in the progress of the Divine Liturgy. He traces this not only in the providential language of the *Mystagogia*, but also in the eucharistic language of ascetic and eschatological themes in Maximus.[181] For example, in *On the Lord's Prayer*, we read:

> I think, in fact 'this day' means in present history. Thus to understand this passage of the prayer in its clearest meaning we should say, 'Our bread', which you prepared in the beginning for the immortality of nature, 'give us this day', to us who belong to the mortal condition of the present life, so that nourishment by the bread of life and knowledge triumph over the death of sin. The transgression of the divine commandment did not allow the first man to become a sharer in this bread. For if he had satisfied himself with this heavenly food, he would not have fallen prey to the death brought in by sin.[182]

In this passage, Maximus talks about the trajectory of the cosmos in the terms of the Eucharist. Christ is the eternal bread who humanity rejected in the Garden of Eden. In transgressing the divine commandment we turn from the offered communion – Eucharist – with God, and fall into sin and death. Thus Maximus says we pray in the Lord's Prayer every day for Christ as the bread of life, that we may be nourished and have a share in Him – *theosis.*

In Maximus' eucharistic understanding of creaturely movement and *telos*, we can see the way that ascetic practice takes on a central role. In the present life we prepare ourselves for a final communion with God, so that our lives are part of a cosmic liturgy, gathering up the world for the final consummation. In this way, the ascetic demand to 'pray without ceasing'[183] in all we do, brings the mystery of the liturgy into all aspects of life. The domain of the Church and the Divine Liturgy are

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180   Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 26.
181   Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 26-7.
182   Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG 90: 896D-897A [Berthold, *Maximus,* 113].
183   1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; For Maximus' commentary on this see Maximus, *LA* TCr. Chs.24-26.

not reserved only for within the walls of the Church, but are imminent ('give us this day') whilst ultimately anticipating a *telos* and final Eucharist yet to come. The ethics of the everyday is not separate from prayer, and not separate from the activity of the Church.[184] As the Church in the world, our personal ascetic practice is of vital importance. Like the call to pray without ceasing, there is also a call to practice the ascetic life in all we do and enable the liturgy to become a cosmic event.

Following Maximus' understanding here of the way that personal human choices are a cosmic affair, I start asking what this means for the communities we live in now. If our prayer is without ceasing, and the whole Church is a symbol of the world – and in turn the whole world is a Church, then surely our communities too, will necessarily be shaped by a call to love that is at once personal and cosmic. When I later critique the state as a mode of human living, it is in lieu of an understanding of cosmic liturgy as not just eschatological but a daily unceasing prayer in which we strive always for communion with God – and thus, as we will see, communion with one another.[185] Prayerful living then is not confined to weekly liturgy, but is also located in every aspect of our lives. This does not diminish the special and unique event taking place in the Divine Liturgy itself, but rather the reflection of this mystery is something we hope carries over from the microcosm of the Church building into the macrocosm of the world. In a mystical commentary where the liturgy concerns all the cosmos and all times, Maximus invites us to think about what prayer and worship looks like in all that we do, at all times. The hint we are offered by Maximus' ascetic texts is that the liturgy continues, and that the human ethical life, like a service, anticipates the Eucharist to come, and that our relations must always and everywhere be loving. The liturgy becomes borderless, it becomes cosmic. Thus to talk of personal practices that strive toward virtue and a *telos* of *theosis* is not to move away from talking about the Church, but rather to talk of how manifesting love sanctifies the

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[184] This is also expressed by Loudovikos, who writes "What stands out prominently here is the primacy of ontology in relation to ethics (askesis), and above all the eucharistic ontological foundation of the latter. This eucharistic grounding is the way Christian asceticism is rooted in truth, which thus becomes a longing to be given personal eucharistic universality, because it is divine knowledge that is truth." Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 29.

[185] I take Loudovikos' conclusions further here than he may be comfortable with, but he is certainly in agreement with the communal character that this eucharistic orientation lends Christian asceticism: "This is why Christian asceticism is profoundly communal, because there cannot be any orthopraxy in the ecclesial body that is not assumed, taken up in the Eucharist." Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology,* 35.

world, transfiguring the world itself into a kind of Church.[186]

2.2.2 To Be United Yet Distinct

Continuing to use the *Mystagogia* as a source for understanding *theosis*, let us look at unity and distinction. When talking either of the unity of creation or the deification of creatures, Maximus always maintains a balance of unity and distinction. Deification never implies the loss of distinct persons, or identity with God's essence.

Firstly, let us look at the unity of creatures. We saw in *Ambiguum 41, Ambiguum 7* and the *Mystagogia* that creatures are gathered together in unity. Concerning this, Maximus writes:

> In conformity with this law there is engendered the principle of the unifying force which does not permit that the substantial identity uniting these things be ignored because of their difference in nature, nor that their particular characteristics which limit each of these things to itself appear more pronounced because of their separation and division than the kinship in love mystically inspired in them for union. It is by this kinship that the universal and unique mode of the invisible and unknowable presence in all things renders them unmixed and undivided in themselves and in relation to each other. And it shows that they exist by the relationship which unites them to each other rather than to themselves.[187]

In this passage Maximus writes that when creatures are united, they do not lose their identity, either as creatures or as being unique in themselves. Whatever unity means, it does not mean the obliteration of the person and who we are. Maximus goes further

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[186]   This becomes particularly important in Chapter 5, where I argue that various functions of the State are incompatible with the means and ends sought by those who wish to aim for *theosis*. In a logical extension of Maximus' ideas, I effectively argue that resistance to State-sanctioned hatred and discrimination may be the only acceptable response for one who wishes to gather the world in love. Combined with an awareness of the eucharistic orientation of creation, one could go so far as to argue that resistance to the State in this way is a continuation of the command to pray without ceasing, placing love for one another above the limitations made of us by human political powers. One interpretation of Mark 12:17 ('Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's) might be that all the world and everything in it belongs to God, while that which belongs to Caesar is only the constructs of law and exchange, which the Christian finds no value in and is outside of since the heart is cosmicly orientated. (This argument is developed further by J. Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*, Bromiley, G.W. (trans.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 59-61; and also in A. Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel.* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), 158-160.)
[187]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 7 [Berthold, *Maximus,*197].

than this however, and asks why is it that we think a creature is somehow more unique and its characteristics more pronounced when it is alone, separated and divided? Part of the concept of the unity that Maximus is talking about is that it is natural and *meant to be.* A creature is not suffocated or lost in unity, but is more fully brought to perfection and more fully becomes themselves. They are themselves *because* of their relation to others. Who they are becomes more pronounced in light of love. In his notes to this translation, Berthold writes "Maximus here sees this as a corrective to the Evagarian error of a proportioned fall from an original henad. The identity, he affirms, must come not on the level of nature but on the level of love."[188] What Berthold seems to be getting at here is that previously identity has been situated in nature, and defined by those categories. Universals like our nature however need not merely be about delineating a thing according to its differences from other things – a system that might lead one into thinking that the more differentiated a description of a thing, the more we have identified what it truly is. Instead, as Maximus' universals end up implying in *Ambiguum 41*, we can have a comprehension of universals as being a way of talking about how all things relate to each other.[189] In this way, as things are united and brought into a closer bond of love, so are they more fully brought into perfection. They retain identity as being "unmixed and undivided in themselves and in relation to each other" and become more perfectly what it was intended they be.

Maximus' doctrine of *theosis* is one that emphasises both the alienness and otherness of God, since He always remains essentially distinct and completely beyond comprehension, and yet at the same time hinges the entire concept of *theosis* on it being *natural* for creatures to rest in Him. It is a gift given to us by grace that completes us. It is beyond our ability to lay hold of it and to complete ourselves, and yet if we do not reach for it and desire to achieve it, we will never attain it. So *telos* for Maximus is simultaneously something we are destined for *and* something we must choose. It is both personal choice and naturally intended. As I will explain in later chapters, this is a distinction that Maximus situates in his concepts of *logos* and *tropos*

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[188]   Berthold, *Maximus,* 220, note 69.

[189]   Eg. T. Tollefsen, 'The Concept of the Universal in the Philosophy of St Maximus' paper presented to *The Architecture of the Cosmos: Studium Catholicum International Conference on St Maximus the Confessor.* Helsinki, 2-4th Sept. 2013.

– the potential things intended for us verses the reality we choose to make happen. These *logoi* are in Christ, who is and contains our renewed nature.[190] When living in accord with such *logoi*, we live in Him and, through the Spirit, share in God.[191] As this occurs, not only is our identity retained, but we also are elevated and completed, perfected and granted the *telos* that was always intended for us.[192] We do not simply keep hold of our identity, but reach the *summit* of identity:

> Jesus my God and Saviour, who is completed by me who am saved, brings me back to himself who is always filled to overflowing with plenitude and who can never be exhausted. He restores me in a marvellous way to myself, or rather to God from whom I received being and toward whom I am directed, long desirous of attaining happiness.[193]

And consequently,

> Hence the whole man, as the object of divine action, is divinised by being made God by the grace of God who became man. He remains wholly man in soul (ψυχὴν) and body (σῶμα) by nature (φύσιν), and becomes wholly God in body and soul by grace (χάριν) and the unparalleled divine radiance of blessed glory appropriate to him.[194]

To understand how it is not purely paradoxical to say that we become more fully human when we become God by grace – we must, as in all instances of paradox that Maximus lays before us, have an understanding of perpetual relation (providence), that exists between Creator and creation. The triads of cosmic movement along with the *logoi* of creatures concern the continual maintenance of creation by God and the way that free will fits into this picture. The theological controversy that Maximus is most famous for arguing against concerns the wills of Christ. That topic as well as his cosmic theology are about the relationship of divine love to human free will. Maximus is very precise about the way that God freely limits Himself in order to enable

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[190]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1077C.
[191]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1084B.
[192]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1080C.
[193]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 5 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 192].
[194]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1088C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 63].

humanity to choose on behalf of all creation. We are free to choose God, but God is simultaneously integral to our being. This is aptly illustrated in the doctrine of the *logoi*, which come from and are in God, and which, when we stray from them cause us to fall into sin. This is also very well illustrated by Athanasius in his summary of the relation of 'being' to God:

> For if, out of a former normal state of non-existence, they were called into being by the Presence and loving-kindness of the Word, it followed naturally that when men were bereft of the knowledge of God and were turned back to what was not (for what is evil is not, but what is good is), they should, since they derive their being from God who *is*, be everlastingly bereft even of being...[195]

God is integral to who we are – not just in the moment of creation, but perpetually and in every instant and moment-to-moment of our existence. As Athanasius identifies, in the above passage, and as Maximus tells us when noting the first stage of our triad in 2.1.3: *being* belongs to God. This does not just mean that it is a one-off gift, but that to turn away from God is to turn away from existence itself. This is why creation, which *is*, becomes more fully what it *can be*, in God. It is very different to God, and yet He is in it and it cannot exist without Him. Maximus' paradox of unity and distinction in relation to *theosis* then, is actually not really a paradox at all, but an intricate simultaneous statement about the absolute divide between creation and Creator, and the absolute necessity of God for the existence of creation past, present and future.

2.2.3 New Heaven and Earth

Lastly, it is important to consider *theosis* as the end of all things. As has already been discussed, there are foretastes of *theosis* in this life that look forward to the final end and enables us to participate in the promise that is to come.[196] Eschatological hope of tomorrow is never separate from action today – but rest in God is still a reality to be aimed for. There are two points that I wish to make regarding this. The first is the idea

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[195]   Athanasius, 'De Incarnatione Verbi Dei', §4, [A. Robertson, *Athansasius: Select Works and Letters.* P. Schaff (ed.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892), 19].

[196]   Russell notes that this is a theme found in *Quaestiones and Dubia*, which quotes Matthew's Gospel and emphasises the eschatological dimension of deification: Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 266.

of continual movement, even in rest. Related to this is a second point, concerning *telos* being not just an end, but also the promise of a transfigured new beginning.

Firstly, our rest in God is one that still searches to know Him better, since God is always greater than what can be grasped by a human mind. This is so of our ethical movement in this life and also of the promised rest that follows. In the *Mystagogia* Maximus writes*:*

> For God is the truth toward which the mind moves continuously and enduringly, and it
> can never cease its movement since it does not find any discontinuity (διάστημα) there.
> For the wonderful grandeur of God's infinity is without quantity or parts, and completely
> without dimension, and offers no grip to take hold of it and to know what is in its
> essence.[197]

Using similar language to Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus understands that we are always reaching to know God more fully and are constantly straining toward God.[198] Russell likewise notes Maximus' similarity with Gregory of Nyssa in presenting a concept of journey toward God without end. In which "successively higher levels of unity and ever greater intimacy with God"[199]. On this eschatological dimension, Russell writes that "In a sense it is therefore also a return to our origins. The divine likeness lost in Adam was restored to humanity in Christ, and is acquired by believers in a personal way through their seeking their destiny in Christ".[200] This latter quotation strikes me as odd for a couple of reasons – firstly, the 'acquired by believers in a personal way' term of phrase encourages a very abstracted approach to Maximus' cosmic theology. It does not really do justice to cosmic place of the human who moves toward God by loving, uniting and bringing to God all those around them. Likewise, talking of deification as "a return to our origins" causes some difficulties, not least of which is that it sounds a little too like the Origenist language Maximus was trying to invert and counter. Whilst it is clear that Russell want 'origins' to refer rather to Edenic humanity (rather than our origin in nothing, or Origin's pre-existence of souls)

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[197]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 5 [Berthold, *Maximus*, 192].
[198]   Maximus describes movement according to one's *logos* as constant straining in *Amb. 7* PG91
        1080C, and uses language very similar to Gregory of Nyssa in the *Life of Moses* (Gregory of Nyssa,
        De v.M. SCh.1.225). I discuss this in greater detail in 4.3.
[199]   Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 270.
[200]   Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 270.

making wider reference to Maximus' theology would reveal more useful terminology for clarifying this. For example, referring to our *logos* which is again made possible for our *tropos,* keeps the dynamic aspect of movement and ever-deepening understanding in our relationship with God (just talked about in Russell's preceding paragraph) even in Adam's case.[201] I bring up these points to support my case for best understanding *telos* in Maximus through the cosmic scope of his theology. By setting any aspect of Maximus' thought in light of the way that humans were originally meant to interact with creation and Creator much more depth and understanding can be acquired.

The dynamism of rest in God and the complexity of this perpetual relationship can be seen elsewhere in Maximus' thought. We can see that when creatures are in full communion with God they arrive in a rest that is also moving. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* Maximus calls this ἀεικίνητος στάσις – ever-moving rest[202] and στάσιμον ταυτοκινησίαν – stationary movement. In his analysis of this section of *Ad Thalassium*, Sotiris Mitralexis noted that Maximus' use of this paradoxical phrase is not merely rhetorical or one of standard apophaticism, but that "If we are to speak about *motion* or *fixity* concerning God, concerning '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'".[203] Mitralexis points out that far from being puzzled by such an idea as movement and rest being simultaneous we should instead consider this the best possible way to use human language when contemplating a God who is beyond and outside time and yet possesses all motion and stillness. In the context of the quotation from the *Mystagogia*, even creatures who have become god by grace are distinct from God's essence, and therefore continue to seek greater knowledge of Him whilst being in Him.

Maximus also talks of *theosis* as being the transfiguration of creation. The promise of Scripture is not that all things will stop but that there will be renewal.[204]

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[201] Russell does talk about the *logoi* but reserves this discussion for a different section on Ambiguum 7 (Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 274.)

[202] Maximus, *Ad Thal. 59,* CCSG22 line131.

[203] S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose: The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology.* (Berlin: Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienstes, 2014), 149.

[204] Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1.

Maximus writes that:

> ... until such a time as pleases the one who bound them together to separate them in view of a greater and more mystical arrangement in the time of the expected universal consummation, when the world, as man, will die to its life of appearances and rise again renewed of its oldness in the resurrection expected presently. At this time the man who is ourselves will rise with the world as a part with the whole and the small with the large, having obtained the power of not being subject to further corruption. Then the body will become like the soul and sensible things like intelligible things in dignity and glory, for the unique divine power will manifest itself in all things in a vivid and active presence proportioned to each one, and will by itself preserve unbroken for endless ages the bond of unity.[205]

Maximus' description of the world to come is one that envisions the transfiguration and consummation of the universe. "Divine power will manifest itself in all things" - not belong to all things, but God will be in all in a way that is "vivid and active". Body and sensibility will still exist, but will possess the dignity and glory of the soul and intelligible things that are not tempted to material desires over love for God. *Theosis* then is not static, but is life in God – life that is an ever-moving rest[206] and a stationary movement. It is not an abandonment of the physical but a new kind of living that upturns our understanding of time and brings all creation into God's presence, where it participates and shares in Him, and seeks continually to know Him more intimately.

In order to understand what virtues are in Maximus' ethics, we must understand the way in which *telos* is simultaneously the promise for all of creation tomorrow, and the beginning of this transfiguration today. God is perpetually with all of his creation and icons such as the divine liturgy become microcosms of *theosis* to come and the consummation of the universe.

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[205]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 7 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 196].
[206]   Maximus, *Ad Thal. 59* CCSG7 line131.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The *telos* of all creation is perfection, participation and rest in God. Humans shattered this possibility when they sinned. Human nature is renewed in Christ, who brings together all divisions inside Himself, forging anew human nature and its ability to mediate. This means that when humans choose to participate in Christ and take on His renewed human nature, they are again able to unite the divisions in creation and mediate between heaven and earth. The perfection we may choose to participate in is God. This is never a participation in God's essence, but is participation through grace and the Holy Spirit. We become more fully our own person when united in a distinct way to one another and to God. This *theosis* to which we look forward happens in miniature in the liturgy where we catch a glimpse of the unity of creation through the Eucharist. Final rest in God however is the promise yet to come when the universe will be transfigured through the actions, here and now, of humans – the mediators of the universe who choose to receive God within themselves and therefore within the entirety of creation.

Therefore we can say that *the cosmos moves towards its perfect end in the gift of theosis.* In this statement we also understand that this perfect end is the completion of creation and most fully realises the personal potential of every creature. In understanding the word 'movement' we have looked at the freedom that is given to humans to determine whether or not to love or to turn from God. Contained within this enormous work of cosmic creation, movement and rest toward God, is this fractional moment that causes all to hinge upon human choice. To study this moment, I think, is to study ethics. The virtues and what is to be done fit in this fraction, but have no sense or importance unless they can be understood within this picture that is cosmic in scope, and that hopes for nothing less than the consummation and renewal of the universe through Christ in the Holy Spirit.[207] Maximus' understanding of the virtues continually makes reference to this framework and draws on it to make sense of our task, since there is no choice that does not involve the rest of the created order and its movement either toward or away from its Creator.

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[207] See 3.3.4 on the Spirit as bringer of grace that instils virtue in humans.

~ Chapter 3: Virtue in the Cosmos of St Maximus ~

'Virtues are activities that participate in divine love'

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the question *what is virtue for St Maximus the Confessor?* The claim I wish to make is that, for Maximus, *virtues are activities that participate in divine love.* I will break down this chapter into three sections, all of which will build upon one another to substantiate this claim. St Maximus has varying lists of things he is willing to call virtues. *What* a virtue is for him, however, seems to be something more consistent. Virtues have something in common that makes them virtues. I claim that, for Maximus, the ontological status of virtues is reliant on their participation in love.

In the previous chapter I looked at what the *telos* of creation is for Maximus. In doing so I outlined both the specific end that Maximus believes all things aim for, and also the overarching paradigm and metaphysics that correspond to this *telos*. The *telos* that all the cosmos looks forward to is *theosis*, a sanctification by the Spirit in the self-emptying love of Christ. In this chapter I look in particular at the role of this love and the way that Maximus talks about virtue in relation to it. As will become clear later in this chapter, Christ is love – the aim and *theosis* of all things, and the same love that is discussed as the start and completion of all virtue.

The particular importance of love in relation to the virtues in Maximus' thought has already been identified and discussed in relation to virtue ethics by Aristotle Papanikolaou,[208] Andrew Louth,[209] and Paul Blowers.[210] Papanikolaou believes it is precisely the relationship of love to virtue that can be useful for contemporary ethics. He writes: "It is in the interrelation between practices, virtues (St Maximus doesn't restrict himself to the cardinal virtues), and the manifestation of the virtue of

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[208]   Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love", 241.
[209]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 356.
[210]   Blowers 'Aligning', 346, 347.

love as the *telos* of the human that St Maximus can offer a substantive contribution to current discussions in virtue ethics".[211] Papanikolaou uses the paradigm of virtue as cosmic movement toward love, who is God, as a basis for the ethics he goes on to discuss (in the case of the above article – just war theories). We see this especially in his summary of virtue: "In the writings of St Maximus the Confessor, communion with God, which is an embodied presencing of the divine, is simultaneous with the acquisition of virtue: Virtue is embodied deification… And this love is simultaneously a uniting oneself with God, since God is love".[212] Likewise, in his paper on virtue ethics and Maximus, Louth characterises ascetic struggle as that primary cosmic movement that the human partakes of in their search to know God. He writes that "The ultimate purpose of this is to learn how to love".[213] Louth goes on to use the opening chapters of the *Centuries on Love* to discuss how the virtues are "a way that leads to love".[214] He expresses the cosmic position of love in Maximus as "It is love that makes things change and move, and the ultimate source of love is God… The story of the Fall is, for Maximos and the rest of the Fathers, a story about man's failure to move in love towards God". Virtue, in Louth's article becomes synonymous with a discussion of human cosmic movement towards love, which is God. In Louth's work we already see that virtues are identified as activities that lead toward love. The predominance of love is also highlighted by Blowers,[215] who chooses to use Maximus' *Letter 2: On Love* as his primary source for the virtues in Maximus: "The Christian virtues that Maximus sees comprehended under the supreme virtue of love—hope, humility, meekness, self-mastery, patience, longsuffering, kindness, peace, joy".[216] My purpose in citing these examples is firstly by way of justification for my choice to focus primarily on the *Four Hundred Chapters On Love* and *Letter 2: On Love* for most material in this chapter pertaining to love and the virtues. The second reason is to demonstrate that the claim that love is primary and particularly special in relation to the virtues for Maximus is not new. Neither is it new to place this relationship within Maximus' cosmic paradigm

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[211]   Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love", 241.
[212]   Papanikolaou, "Learning How to Love", 241.
[213]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 355.
[214]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 356.
[215]   As well as the below quotation Blowers also references love in this way in Blowers, 'Aligning', 346, 347.
[216]   Blowers, 'Aligning'*,* 342. Blowers cites *Ep.* 2 (PG91 393C-396B) as his source for the virtues listed here.

of creaturely movement towards God, and hence to discuss virtue as *activity* through which there is participation in love. By integrating these ideas with Maximus' understanding of the *logoi,* I hope to further develop our understanding of Maximus' position.

In the first part of this chapter, I explore the possible origins of Maximus' understanding of love as first among virtues as well as the cause and perfect end of all virtues. I suggest that he mainly draws on Paul's epistles for his treatment of love, since many of his passages on love and the virtues are almost exact quotations. Contained in the idea of love as cause and end of all virtues is the start of a statement about what virtue is. My second section concerns the term *activities.* I have chosen this term to convey the movement and action that Maximus ascribes to virtues. In this section I describe virtue as an activity and how it fits into Maximus' understanding of cosmic movement, as well as discussing *whose* activity virtue is. My final section concerns the term *participate* and what is meant by it in terms of love and virtue for Maximus. I explain the way Maximus understands virtue to partake in love, through his description of the Logos and *logoi.* Maximus' theology of the Logos and *logoi* is a broad field that has had a lot of attention in recent academic study. I posit that the relationship of virtue to love can be understood as an instance of the relationship of that between the *logoi* and the Logos, and that in making this claim we can make radical and more clear statements about what virtue is for Maximus and what is meant by its participation in love. Not least of the claims we can then make of love and virtue, is the relevance of the image of the circle and radii analogy that is applied to the Logos and *logoi.* Vladimir Cvetković has developed cosmological implications of this analogy which can thus also be applied to virtue and love, as I demonstrate later.[217] This chapter then is made up of three claims, (1) that the root of Maximus' description of love as the perfection of the virtues comes from Scriptural passages found in Paul's epistles, (2) that virtues are activities, (3) that the way that virtues participate in love is an instance of the relationship Maximus posits between the *logoi* and the Logos. These three claims support the overall claim that *virtues are activities that participate in divine love.*

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[217] V. Cvetković, 'Predeterminations and providence in Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor' in *Dionysius the Areopagite between Orthodoxy and Heresy.* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 146.

In all, the inquiry will make a statement about the ontological status of virtue as something inextricably linked to love, and something that requires us to talk of an activity that is always in the context of human struggle and movement towards love. This will allow for the next chapter to begin dealing with the topic of how virtue is achievable and the inquiry will turn from a focus on Maximus' cosmology to his more ascetic writings.

3.1 The Origins of Love and Virtue

3.1.1 Letters from Paul

In the works of Maximus, love is recognised as particularly important in relation to the virtues. In this section I build on this and claim that virtues are actually dependent on love for their reality. It is in this context that the term virtue makes any sense to us and is given any degree of consistency. I begin by comparing and contrasting references to Paul's epistles in Maximus' passages on love and virtue, which, given the prominence of Pauline quotations in these passages, would seem to be the origin of Maximus' usage. I look at the similarities and differences of Maximus' passages to Paul, and then some ways in which Maximus goes beyond the Pauline quotations.

One way in which Maximus describes love in relation to virtue, is as 'the bond of perfection'. In the *Mystagogia* Chapter 24 Maximus writes that when the Holy Spirit and Christ perfect us, a virtuous way of life becomes possible:

> ...having clothed ourselves with heartfelt compassion (οἰκτιρμοῦ), with kindness (χρηστότητα), humility (ταπεινοφροσύνην), meekness (πραΰτητα), and patience (μακροθυμίαν), bearing (ἀνεχόμενοι) with one another in love and forgiving (χαριζόμενοι) one another if one has a complaint against the other just as Christ has forgiven us, and over all these let us clothe ourselves with love and peace (τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν εἰρήνην), the bond of perfection (τὸν σύνδεσμον τελειότητος), to which we have been called in one body...[218]

The virtues are brought to completion in "love and peace, the bond of perfection".

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[218]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.24 [G. Berthold, *Maximus*, 211].

Maximus' choice to list these specific virtues as well as his choice to describe love as the 'bond of perfection', seem be derived from Paul's letter to the Colossians. Indeed, the Colossians passage actually gives us more reason to believe that love, in particular, even above peace, is really the central 'bond of perfection' amidst the virtues:

> As God's chosen ones, holy (ἅγιοι) and beloved (ἠγαπημένοι), clothe yourselves with compassion (οἰκτιρμοῦ), kindness (χρηστότητα), humility (ταπεινοφροσύνην), meekness (πρᾳότητα), and patience (μακροθυμίαν). Bear with (ἀνεχόμενοι) one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive (χαριζόμενοι) each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love (ἀγάπην), which binds everything together in perfect harmony (σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος). And let the peace (εἰρήνη) of Christ rule your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. [Colossians 3:12-15]

Implicit in the choice of word for perfection (τελειότης) is also a purposeful end in which virtues are bound together. This sense of end in Paul's description of love is imitated by Maximus and becomes particularly important in the way Maximus describes virtues as moving towards love, as will be discussed later. Maximus also quotes Paul in his *Letter 2: On Love,* where he describes love as *being* the other virtues:

> For *love* (ἀγάπη), says the divine Apostle, or rather Christ, speaking these things through him, *is long-suffering* (μακροθυμεῖ) *and kind* (χρηστεύεται)*, not jealous* (οὐ ζηλοῖ) *or boastful* (οὐ περπερεύεται)*, is not puffed up* (οὐ φυσιοῦται) *or rude* (οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ)*, and does not insist on its own way* (οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς)*, is not irritable* (οὐ παροξύνεται)*, does not think evil* (οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν)*, nor rejoice in injustice* (οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ)*, but rejoices in truth* (συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ)*. Love endures* (στέγει) *all things, believes* (πιστεύει) *all things, hopes* (ἐλπίζει) *all things, and endures* (ὑπομένει) *all things. Love never fails* (οὐδέποτε πίπτει)*, since it possesses God who is alone unfailing* (ἀδιάπτωτον) *and unalterable* (ἀναλλοίωτον).[219]

The quotation italicised by Louth in the above passage corresponds to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Maximus draws attention to love as somehow *being* these virtues, and

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[219]   Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 405A-B [Louth, *Maximus*, 92].

ultimately being unfailing or unending (ἐκπίπτω) because God Himself is love. Maximus has just previously identified God as love in this passage,[220] and in the above quotation identifies Paul's properties of love with God – love endures all things/God is unalterable, love never fails/God who is alone unfailing. Interestingly, Paul, whilst also identifying love as *being* all of the virtues he lists, seems to be referring to love in this passage as something that the human must have before they can even possess virtue. Love is not just the end of virtue but also the *start:*

> If I speak in tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love (ἀγάπην), I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient (μακροθυμεῖ); love is kind (χρηστεύεται); love is not envious (οὐ ζηλοῖ) or boastful (οὐ περπερεύεται) or arrogant (οὐ φυσιοῦται) or rude (οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ). It does not insist on its own way (οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς); it is not irritable (οὐ παροξύνεται) or resentful (οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν); it does not rejoice in wrongdoing (οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ), but rejoices in the truth (συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ). It bears (στέγει) all things, believes (πιστεύει) all things, hopes (ἐλπίζει) all things, endures (ὑπομένει) all things. Love never ends. [1 Cor13:1-8]

We also find this in the last verse of this chapter:

> And now faith (πίστις), hope (ἐλπίς), and love (ἀγάπη) abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.[1 Cor 13:13]

The focus in Paul's passage seems to be that, without love, there is no sense or reality to any other virtue. They are worthless to us without love, which is immeasurably greater than all else. Love seems to be something we need to acquire before all else. For Maximus the focus rather seems to be about the *divine* quality of love, which is all virtue and most importantly is God Himself. Within the wider context of the section in Maximus' *Letter 2* from which this passage comes however, we read that it is not

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[220]   Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 404C; in which Maximus quotes 1 John 4:8.

just about the divine quality of love, but how one is *led to* divine love, and therefore deified.[221] We can see the root of Maximus' discussion of movement through virtues to love in Paul's expression of the human needing to have love in order to make sense of virtue. So far I have mentioned the virtues *leading* to love in Maximus, yet the evidence from Paul seems to suggest that we rather need love *before* we can have virtue. This is a difference in the two passages, but not one that is left unaccounted for by Maximus, as will become clear later in the chapter.

3.1.2 Christ in Every Word

It should also be mentioned that Maximus, in referring to Paul's epistles, believes he is doing more than appealing to Paul's authority. As quoted earlier, Maximus precedes one of his passages by noting that "For love, says the divine Apostle, or rather Christ, speaking these things through him, is long suffering…".[222] For Maximus these are not just the words of Paul but the words of Christ, upon whom Paul meditates and whose words he mediates. Indeed, we may extend this to say that, in drawing quotations from Scripture, Maximus believes that one draws from the text as a whole, which exists both as separate words (*logoi*) and as one book (*logos*), so that passages simultaneously point to the meaning of the whole of Scripture and bear witness to *the* Logos, Christ Himself.[223] Scripture in this way is something that is both one and many, both testifying to a material reality and pointing to a spiritual dimension of truth beyond the letters on the page.[224] The unification of material and spiritual is explored at length by Maximus in the *Mystagogia* where he treats with the divine liturgy. This union makes sense in light of the incarnation, where the material becomes a vessel for the divine and Christ brings two worlds together within Himself.[225] This consequently brings about a different way of comprehending the world, liturgy and scripture for Maximus. As Blowers puts it in his study of Maximus and exegesis; "For Maximus, real vision is granted only to those who delve into the ever thickening plot of the Theo-Drama, who join in the dense cosmic and scriptural 'cloud of witness' - heavenly and

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[221]   Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 405A.
[222]   Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 405A [Louth, *Maximus*, 92].
[223]   See Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.6: for Maximus on the cosmic *logoi* of scripture. See also Blowers discussion of the cosmos in Maximian exegesis in Blowers, 'The World in the Mirror', 409, 413, 416, 426.
[224]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.6.
[225]   See for example Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch.1.

earthly beings, animate and inanimate things – in pressing to unveil the fullness of the mystery of Jesus Christ".[226] Maximus' thought on material scripture and spiritual truth is extensive and complex, however in this brief summary it will hopefully become apparent how it, like much of his other cosmic theology, ties into a larger cosmological paradigm that shares pervasive ideas of the one and the many; multiplicity and unity, brought together in Christ. This theme of the one and the many brought to unity through Christ is one that will become especially important when we turn to look at participation as relation between love and virtue and identify it with the Logos and *logoi.*

In 3.1 we have thus seen that Paul is clearly an important figure for Maximus when it comes to defining the relationship between love and virtue. Maximus uses the same virtues Paul does and, like Paul, chooses to call love 'the bond of perfection' that unites virtues. He also, following Paul, *identifies* love with all of the virtues, but believes it to be the greatest of them all, implying that love itself is still a virtue. Paul at once calls love both the end/perfection and harmony of the virtues, but also describes love as being *all* the virtues and also the beginning of all virtue. As such, it is not immediately clear whether love is a virtue, or is something more than a virtue, especially given that without love, there cannot begin to be anything else of worth that we posses. The difference in Maximus (or perhaps more accurately, as we will see, the elaboration of Paul present in Maximus' writings) is the setting of these different (and seemingly contradictory) accounts of love within the context of activity and cosmic movement. This seems to be in keeping with Paul's intended description of love in relation to virtue, as something which the human must possess and aspire to have and also as something virtues move from and towards. The contradictory nature of the descriptions of love and virtue in Paul's epistles seem to fuel a more in-depth cosmic account of this relation in Maximus. As expressed in the previous chapter, the use of paradox especially in relation to Christ's recapitulation of the world in Himself is a recurring theme in Maximus. Unsurprisingly, it is Christ's relation to creation in this way that will make sense of these seemingly contradictory accounts of love when we turn to them later. As well as originating in Paul's epistles then, Maximus' description of love and the virtues is also an exploration and development of the

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[226] Blowers, 'The World in the Mirror', 426.

difficulties in Paul's passages.

3.2 Virtue as Activity

3.2.1 Defining Activity

In this section I clarify what I mean by *virtues are activities* in the context of their relationship with love. The need to talk of virtues as activities arises from the relation we have seen developing between virtue and love. If Paul's virtues start in love and are perfected in love then some degree of movement is implied. This movement is also present in Maximus' understanding of the virtues in love. I refer back to some of Maximus' wider cosmology in this section since the movement I am talking about will concern the way in which we may choose to move toward God, *i.e.* movement in potential that when taken leads us closer to our *telos*. When I talk of 'virtues moving', Maximus' wider cosmology allows us to understand 'human activity in potential'. Activity is never devoid of agents, so it remains important when talking of virtues to situate them within a relationship between humans and God.

I tentatively distinguish the term movement from activity. By 'movement 'I am referring just to a continuous process that is set in motion. By 'activity' I am always referring to something that is being done and being set in motion by an agent. When I call virtue an activity, I am ascribing agency to its existence. For a human, virtue is a potential activity which we have the capacity to partake in. However, virtue starts and originates and is in God, and so is always divine activity. This means that I am ascribing agency both to humans and to God when calling virtue an activity. The reasons why this is not contradictory and what I mean by this will become clear throughout this section and the next.

I will briefly explain here what I mean by divine activity, since this term is not consistently present in Maximus. Tollefsen dedicates a significant part of his book on Maximus' cosmology to discuss this topic. He makes a case for a distinction in Maximus' corpus between God's essence and that economic activity belonging to God which creatures may participate in. He traces this distinction, if not systematically then informally, in the Cappadocian Fathers and then in Maximus' work. I am inclined to agree that this distinction does exist, though, like Tollefsen, am very keen not to

construe this, in either the Cappadocians or Maximus, as a developed Palamite doctrine.[227] With this in mind, Tollefsen notes several different terms Maximus uses to refer to that which is not God's essence but which is still 'around' and 'about' Him and may be participated in by creatures. These include ἔργα/works,[228] ἐνέργεια/activity,[229] ὄντα/beings,[230] πρόοδοι/processions,[231] μεθεκτά/those that are participated,[232] ἰδιώματα/properties.[233] It is worth also quoting Tollefsen's descriptions of these activities which helps clarify what they are and how they can be both God's and shared with creation:

> Being without beginning, these divine works are, of course, not created. In the same way, being without beginning, they are not by nature bound to the institution of creatures. They have their reality independent of God's 'relation' to creatures, even if they play an important part in the institution, preservation and perfection of the created cosmos. The divine works without beginning could be seen as God's eternal manifestation of Himself to Himself *ad intra.* The divine essence itself remains unknowable and the activity of this essence is a mystery. But this divine activity of the essence, as activity out of the essence, according to Maximus, becomes participated (μεθεκτόν) at the appointed 'time', because it is by this power that God gives Himself 'economically' to that which He creates.[234]

These activities (or activity – Tollefsen notes that God's activity only appears prismatic in economic relation to creatures, but in itself is whole and one)[235] are properly God, being without beginning. However, in the sense that we cannot identify any particular activity with God's essence, nor indeed say anything of the mystery of God in Godself, these activities are other than God's essence. I think it would be a misunderstanding to consider these activities to be 'solid beings'[236] as, if there is one

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[227] To read Palamas' doctrine of Divine Energies into Maximus or the Cappadocians would be anachronistic and unhelpful at this stage and unrepresentative of their thought.
[228] I here reference Tollefsen's translation and use of Maximus' Greek, Tollefsen, *Christocentric*, 160.
[229] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 161.
[230] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 162.
[231] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 163.
[232] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 166.
[233] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 166.
[234] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 161.
[235] Tollefsen, *Christocentric,* 169.
[236] As perhaps might be thought when Maximus uses the term ὄντα.

thing that is certain, it is that Maximus is not implying the existence of subsidiary divinities. It is better to think of these activities as capacities which God does not have to manifest, but chooses to, so he is these things eternally, and he also chooses to share these with his creation, hence we can participate in them.[237] Maximus writes that every nature has the potential to exercise activity. He argues in his dialogue with Pyrrhus that, "If he[Christ] has two natures (φύσεις), then He surely must have two wills (θελήματα), the wills and essential operations (ἐνέργειαι) being equal in number to the natures".[238] The logic is that if something has a nature but no will and no operation of its own, that thing has no way of expressing itself or existing in accordance with that nature, and therefore has no real existence. God's operations or activities, whatever we wish to call them, are a very real manifestation of Himself (and hence why we may use such terms as *theosis*/deification and participation), but ultimately are representative of a capacity to act that is freely exercised. In a series of tables, Tollefsen identifies the sorts of things being referred to by Maximus in this general category of 'activities of God we can participate in'. These include immortality, life, holiness, virtue, goodness and being.[239] It is in this sense that virtue is here being expressed as an activity. When now returning to look at the wider cosmological implications of virtue and movement in Maximus' work, we can begin to understand why virtues are considered to be moving, how this relates to God Himself and is caused by God, and what this activity has to do with humanity. As part of this consideration the question 'whose activities are virtues?' will be asked, and the associated difficulties in answering this question will be outlined. The solution to this difficulty will be dealt with in the last section on participation.

3.2.2 Virtues and the Triad of Cosmic Movement

I begin by looking at passages in Maximus on the movement of the virtues towards love. One of the most noticeable sections in which Maximus lists virtues bound together in love, is in the passage alluded to earlier by Blowers. In *Letter 2: On Love*,

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[237]   Cf. Bradshaw on Aristotle's use of *energeia* meaning precisely this. D. Bradshaw, 'The Concept of the Divine Energies' paper presented to Purdue University & University of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania, Autumn 2006. *David Bradshaw Homepage:* www.uky.edu/~dbradsh/papers/Concept %20of%20the%20Divine%20Energies.doc (Accessed: 22.10.14)), 3.

[238]   Maximus, *Pyrrh.*, PG91 289A-B [J. Farrel, *Disputation with Pyrrhus.* (Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990), *C*h.13, 4].

[239]   Tollefsen, *Christocentric*, 164.

Maximus lists the virtues: love (ἀγάπη), faith (πίστις), hope (ἐλπίς), humility (ταπεινός), meekness (πραότης), gentleness (πραυπαθής), mercy (ἔλεος), self-control (ἐγκράτεια), patience (ὑπομονή), long-suffering (μακρόθυμος), kindness (χρηστότης), peace (εἰρήνη), and joy (χαρά).[240] After this, Maximus writes:

> Love is the fulfilment (συμπλήρωσις) of these [virtues], wholly embraced as the final desire (ὀρεκτὸν), and furnishes them rest from their movement (κινήσεως στάσιν παρεχομένη). For love gives faith the reality of what it believes and hope the presence of what it hopes for, and the enjoyment of what is present. Love alone, properly speaking proves that the human person is in the image of the Creator by making his self-determination (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) submit to reason (λόγῳ), not bending reason (λόγον) under it, and persuading the inclination (γνώμην) to follow nature (φύσιν) and not in any way to be at variance with the *logos* of nature.[241]

Firstly, we notice the movement of virtues towards love. 'Fulfilment' and 'desire' both suggest that love is something more than just another virtue, and, like Maximus' use of the Pauline perfection (τελειότης), these words imply that love is the perfect completion of virtue and the aim towards which virtues reach. Both words indicate that virtues, or, more accurately, one who possesses them, move *towards love.* Indeed, the fact that love is fulfilment, final desire and the rest towards which all moves, implies that love itself is the *cause* and reason virtues started moving in the first place. Things only move because they have this perfection to aim towards. This makes sense especially if we bear in mind that God is love, and also if we consider this in light of some of Maximus' wider cosmology. In the previous chapter (2.1.2), the triad of cosmic movement was introduced, where Maximus describes all creatures as being made in creation, moving in their lives, and finally finding rest in God. The triad: creation (γένεσις) – movement (κίνησις) – rest (στάσις) is found in the sentence from above: "κινήσεως στάσιν παρεχομένη" (furnishes them rest from their movement). We are caused to move *by* love, that is, by God, *towards* love, that is, towards God. The above description of movement seems highly consistent with the triad of cosmic movement

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[240]   From Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 393C-396C [Louth, *Maximus,* 86].
[241]   Maximus, *Ep. 2*, PG91 396C [Louth, *Maximus,* 86].

that Maximus' expounds in *Ambiguum 7*.[242] Louth believes that understanding love in the context of cosmic movement is key to understanding Maximus' cosmology. He writes that; "It is love that makes things change and move, and the ultimate source of love is God, the unmoved mover, who causes movement by being loved: κινεῖ ὡς ἐρώμενον. The story of the Fall is, for Maximos and the rest of the Fathers, a story about man's failing to move in love towards God…".[243]

Virtue, then, has something to do with movement and is an activity in which humans can partake. The cause of this movement, and the aim of human activity, is love. But if love belongs to God, and movement only occurs because of this love, then we might ask how human freedom fits in. How can we choose to do anything when even our movement (the one part of the triad given over to human choice and change) is directed. If God causes our love and virtue and in doing so human beings are moved towards Him, then there would seem to be no way for humans to reject God or truly choose to move towards Him of their own volition. However, in *Letter 2* where we see this problem manifest: "Love alone, properly speaking proves that the human person is in the image of the Creator by making his self-determination (τὸ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν) submit to reason",[244] Louth provides an alternative translation where 'self-determination' can be understood as "that which is within our power".[245] This translation also allows for a more liberal reading of the passage that has much more space for human activity: 'Love alone, properly speaking proves that the human person is in the image of the Creator by making that which is within our power submit to reason'. This sentence tells us that we know what love looks like in a person, because they have brought their own actions into alignment with reason. Reason here is the same word as the later word Louth chooses to leave untranslated as *logos.* The English translation "submit to reason" , does not quite convey this, but in the Greek that 'reason' is also God's will and God's intended path of perfection for us, and Christ Himself. Love is present when we choose to bring those things that are in our power into alignment with God's will and hope for us. It is clear that virtue and love involve activity to some

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[242]   This is especially so given that the triad is initially used by Maximus to describe movement of the *logoi* towards God. Maximus believes that the virtues themselves are *logoi,* and hence fall into this description of movement. See 3.3.5.

[243]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 357, on Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308C-D.

[244]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 396C [Louth, *Maximus,* 86]. Also quoted above.

[245]   Louth, *Maximus,* 204, note 4.

extent involving the human, and to some degree involving God, who is love. Further discussion on how an act of virtue can be both human and divine necessitates further discussion on the roll of free will in Maximus, which we will return to as we look further at the way virtue as activity fits into Maximus' cosmology, and also when we discuss the use of paradox and participation in Maximus' theology.

3.2.3 Virtues and the Divisions of Nature
Continuing to look at the wider cosmological implications of virtue and movement in Maximus' work, we read in *Letter 2* that:

> All the forms of virtue (ἀρετής) are introduced, fulfilling (συμπληροῦντα) the power (δύναμιν) of love, which gathers together (συνάγουσαν) what has been separated (μεμερισμένα), once again fashioning the human being in accordance with a single meaning (λόγον) and mode (τρόπον).[246]

Virtues are described as fulfilling (συμπληρόω) the power of love, the same word that was used in the previous quotation (3.2.2) to describe love as the fulfilment (συμπλήρωσις) of the virtues. The virtues are somehow love made manifest; they are demonstrative of the power (δύναμις) of love, which in itself is described as that which "gathers together what has been separated (τὴν τὰ μεμερισμένα συνάγουσαν)". Virtues thus have a roll in gathering separated things together in love. This language recalls Maximus' cosmic divisions of nature as explored in his *Ambiguum 41* in the previous chapter (2.1.1). In *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus describes how the human is the bond of the cosmos, with the ability to mediate between all extremes.[247] Having failed in this regard, it is Christ who comes to restore this ability to the human by uniting heaven and earth in becoming one person in two natures. In doing so Christ also restores the ability to unite what is divided to humanity. At the climax of *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus writes:

> Thus he [Christ] divinely recapitulates (ἀνεκεφαλαιώσατο) the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists (ὑπάρχουσαν) as one, like another human

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[246]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 400A [Louth, *Maximus,* 88].
[247]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1305B-C.

being, completed (συμπληρουμένην) by the gathering together (συνόδῳ) of its parts (μερῶν) one with another in itself, and inclined towards itself by the whole of its existence, in accordance with the one, simple, undifferentiated and indifferent idea of production from nothing, in accordance with which the whole of creation admits of one and the same undiscriminated *logos*, as having not been before it is.[248]

Creation becomes complete because its many parts are gathered together into one whole. Creation is recapitulated (Maximus draws on Paul – Ephesians 1:10) and restored to its intended fullness by the drawing together of its separate fragments, so that all is in accord with their *logoi*. The cosmic paradigm of universal restoration from works like *Ambiguum 41* is reflected in our passage on love and the virtues. The gathering together (συνάγω) of the virtues in love resembles the way Christ gathers together (σύνοδος) the fragments of creation. Indeed, this is especially important as it is the love demonstrated in Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection that precisely defines the parameters of what love is. The love that gathers the virtues is the *divine* love that overcomes the cosmic divisions in nature. As will be discussed in the next section, this is also the same love that the human becomes able to participate in. The completion (συμπληρόω) of the virtues in love likewise resembles the completion (συμπληρόω) of creation as its many parts are united in harmony. The dimension *Ambiguum 41* grants to our understanding of virtue, is an awareness that the human capability to unite creation in love, is one that we have failed in and hence an ability that must be restored to us. Virtues too then also fall into this category of human capabilities we have fallen short of, and are only restored to us in Christ. It is Christ who works love in us and restores us. Virtue then, is in fact *Christ's* activity, but in doing so he also restores this capacity to humanity. We can join in Christ's activity. Maximus is intent on virtuous activity being necessary for the human person and part of what we were always meant to become,[249] and yet, in lieu of the fall, it is always with a passive participle (συνάγουσαν) that virtue *is* gathered to Christ. It is always the universe that *is* completed (συμπληρουμένην) by Christ. This also begins to shed light on the difficulty of the previous section (3.2.2.1), where the practice of virtue needed to be a human choice and yet was an activity somehow beyond human

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[248]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1312A-B [Louth, *Maximus,* 160].
[249]   I discuss the virtues as natural to humans in 4.1.

capacity, and that needed God. We will return to this issue in the next section in order to discuss precisely how we can have a share in Christ's activity.

3.2.4 Virtues and the Logos/Tropos Distinction

Maximus' wider cosmological vision is further alluded to in the earlier quotation from *Letter 2* when he writes that in the act of "fulfilling the power of love", human nature is made whole, since we operate "in accordance with a single meaning and mode".[250] These terms, *logos* and *tropos*, are particularly important in Maximus' cosmological understanding of human life. When humanity fell, it ceased to move in accordance with God's intention and meaning (*logos*) for it. Fallen humanity diverged from its intended *logos* in God. Only by partaking in renewed human nature in Christ is it possible to follow again the *logos* intended for us. Part of that intended *logos* for humans involves the perception of meanings (*logoi*) in all other things, the gathering of them together in love and the commending of them to God.[251] Our task then is to bring our mode of living (*tropos*) into line with the way of living that God hopes we will take and has created us to take (*logos*). To seek to actualise virtue is thus to bring our *tropos* into line with our *logos* – to bring our mode of living into line with God's intended meaning for us.[252] *Logoi* theology will be explained in depth in the next section, but we can see here that the latter part of the (*Letter 2*) quotation above is a concise rendition of the cosmological purpose of the human. Virtue is a key part of a process in which the human moves in accordance with God's will towards the restoration and unity of the universe and the perfection of the human being – deification.

3.2.5 Virtues and Deification

We have so far discussed the movement of virtues towards love and noted that, when set within some of the broader cosmological themes in Maximus' works, virtues are activities that draw the human closer to perfect love. This leads us into a direct discussion of the cosmic role of virtue in deification. Maximus explicitly links virtuous action with the distilling of love and the leading of the human to deification. He writes

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[250]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1312A-B [Louth, *Maximus,* 160].
[251]   See 3.3.2.
[252]   This is explored further in 4.1.2.

that:

> I mean: love of humankind, brotherly and sisterly love, hospitality, love of the poor, compassion, mercy, humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, freedom from anger, longsuffering, perseverance, kindness, forbearance, goodwill, peace towards all. Out of these and through these the grace of love is fashioned, which leads one to God who deifies the human being that he himself fashioned (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἄγει θεουργηθέντα τὸν δημιουργήσαντα ἄνθρωπον).[253]

In this passage, the very existence of virtue implies love and leads one towards God. As we saw earlier in the comparative passages between Paul and Maximus, the virtues seem to both lead one into love, and to be love in different forms. Other activities have joined the list above, and these no longer just include Paul's virtues but also love of humankind (φιλανθρωπίας), brotherly and sisterly love (φιλαδελφίας) and others more besides. These additions, I think, are especially important as they reveal something about the nature of what Maximus is willing to perceive as activity through which love is made manifest. These are activities which demonstrate some kind of loving attitude, or, in Maximus' own words, "Out of these and through these the grace of love is fashioned". At this stage it seems apparent that virtue is a kind or version of love; an instance in which love is manifest. The virtues both lead one into love, and seem to be love in different forms. When one practices a virtue, it is derived from love, which is its source, and leads one to love, which is its end. Love is the τέλος and αἴτιον of all virtue. We could not call virtue the totality of love, or representative of all love, but it is still undoubtedly an activity that somehow[254] partakes of love and causes love to be present. The way in which the human can cultivate and partake of virtue as part of the ascetic life and the spiritual journey of the human towards God will be discussed in Chapter 4. However, to demonstrate the way in which this cosmological position on love and virtue might be understood in practical terms as an activity that both is love and is a kind of love, let us return to the example above. Love of humankind (φιλανθρωπίας), which we might describe as a very generic care for those encompassed by human nature, and perhaps a care for what becomes of human nature

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[253] Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 405A [Louth, *Maximus,* 91-2].
[254] We will come on to precisely how.

on a cosmic and eschatological scale, implies an attitude and associated actions pertaining to love. This is easily recognisable as a kind of love, but is still quite different from brotherly and sisterly love (φιλαδελφίας), which brings to mind a much more personal kind of friendship and care. The one who has love for humankind might be one who considers and writes on matters of philosophy and theology, a task that, at face value, might be categorised as a very different act as compared to the one who practices brotherly love. For Maximus however, these two different concepts are both the domain of the monastic and actually imply one another.[255] A distinction does exist between the two kinds of love, and yet a theology (such as that of St Maximus') arises from ascetic contemplation and living, whilst ascetic living is informed by a cosmic theology and philosophy.[256] Each in turn lead one towards love of God. Hence we see two different virtues that are both kinds of love, that give meaning and arise from one another, and draw both their beginning and their end from love and contemplation of God, in the sense that they are loving, and yet through them we are led to a deeper understanding of love. We begin to see the way in which we might discuss virtues as different activities, and yet comprehend the more mystical description of them as caused by, causing, of, to and from love. There is a sense of cohesion implied in the term 'virtue' and its relationship with that which Maximus calls love. This would indicate that the virtues are virtues *because* they are different instances of loving activities. They are less an arbitrary list of good moral words, and rather selected as descriptions of what loving behaviour looks like in the different situations that confront us in life. They are what the dispensation of divine love would look like at any given moment that might arise.

The cosmological relevance of these activities is apparent in the next clause of the above quotation – "which leads one to God who deifies the human being that he himself fashioned". Love leads one directly to God so that we become like God. This again leads us back to the earlier difficulty we had where the act of virtue is both human and divine. The activities through which love is made manifest are for the human to perform. We see this even more clearly in the line preceding the above quotation: "You, who have become blessed and most genuine lovers of this divine and

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255   Cf. Louth, *Maximus*, 33.
256   Cf. Louth, *Maximus*, 34.

blessed way, fight the good fight until you reach the end, clinging fast to those qualities that will assure your passage to love's goal. I mean…".[257] These are qualities which are ours to hold on to, qualities that "assure your passage to love's goal". However, we also read that love itself (which is the presence of these qualities), is fashioned through grace (χάρις). Deification is the gathering of the human being to God, by God's grace, and not through human action alone. There must be meaningful sense in which the human can act and lay hold of virtue and the path to love, if we maintain that free will and choice are important.[258] And yet, as we read earlier, it is Christ who gathers up the fragments of creation – it is God who deifies and not the actions of the human. The reconciling of the need for the activity of virtue to be both meaningful human choice and undertaken by God will be dealt with in the next section on participation.

3.3 Participation

3.3.1 Chalcedonian Paradox

In this section I will clarify what is meant by *participate* with reference to the claim *virtues are activities that participate in divine love.* Participation is a recurring theme within Maximus' theology, that often makes sense of paradox. A number of paradoxical remarks have been made in the course of this chapter so far. It has been said that virtues lead to love, and yet love leads to the virtues (Section 3.2). It has been said that love both is a virtue and is more than a virtue (Section 3.2 and 3.3). It has been said that virtues are activities that must be human, but also must be divine (Section 3.3). These statements however are not problematic for Maximus, partly because paradoxical statements reflect the mystery of the divine that will always to a degree be unknown by us, and partly because of his understanding of participation. As Maximus himself writes:

> For who, relying on the power of rational demonstration, can explain how the conception of the divine Logos took place? How was flesh generated without seed?

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[257]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 405A [Louth, *Maximus,* 91].
[258]   As we will come onto, Maximus believes that human free will is very important.

> How was there an engendering without loss of maidenhood? How did a mother after
> giving birth remain a virgin? How did He who was supremely perfect develop as He
> grew up? How was He who was pure baptized? How did He who was hungry give
> sustenance? How did He who was weary impart strength? How did He who suffered
> dispense healing? How did He who was dying bestow life? And, to put the most
> important last, how did God become man?[259]

Whilst Maximus claims that we can never *explain* these paradoxes while "relying on
the power of rational demonstration", he does not suggest that there can be no further
discussion on the matter. The kind of discussion Maximus has in mind for dealing with
paradoxical propositions such as these is exemplified in the definition of the Council
of Chalcedon. As we saw in the Introduction, the Chalcedonian Definition attempted
to say all that could be said for certain about the paradox of Christ being both divine
and human, holding these statements in tension within the unity of the one person of
Christ:

> one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures being recognized
> without confusion (ἀσυγχύτως), without change (ἀτρέπτως), without division
> (ἀδιαιρέτως), without separation (ἀχωρίστως), the difference (διαφορᾶς) of the
> natures in no way having been taken away because of the union (ἕνωσιν), but rather
> the individual character (ἰδιότητος) of each nature being preserved and running
> together into one person and one hypostasis, not being parted (μεριζόμενον) or divided
> (διαιρούμενον) into two persons...[260]

Within the Chalcedonian Definition, the divinity and humanity of Christ were both
confirmed without implying that he had duality in person. This was done by affirming

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[259]   Maximus, 'Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice'*,* I.13, [G. Palmer,
P. Sherrard & K. Ware (eds.), *The Philokalia Volume 2,* (London: Faber and Faber Limited,
1981),168]. According to Laga and Steel, the authenticity of these five theological centuries is
generally rejected. The centuries were composed with fragments from authentic Maximus texts. The
only chapters of the five centuries that can be corroborated by earlier manuscripts and confidently
attributed to Maximus are the first fifteen chapters of the first century. The quotation used here is
from chapter 13, and thus likely to be of authentic authorship. (C. Laga & C. Steel, 'Introduction' in
Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 7, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), LXXVI, LXXXI).

[260]   Chalcedonian Definition, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith,* Bindley (ed.) (1988): *Early
Church Texts*: www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/chalcedon/chalcedonian_definition.shtml (Accessed
02.04.14). [Parvis, unpublished].

that union (ἕνωσις) could exist with difference (διαφορά), but *without* division (ἀδιαίρετος). In other words, dual statements could be held to be true without forfeiting a belief in the unity of the subject at hand. The influence of this formula in particular in Maximus' work is particularly clear in Maximus' theology of the Logos and *logoi.* We find Maximus using this same language from the Chalcedonian Definition to parallel the natures of Christ with the way in which *logoi* are gathered to the Logos:

> This is evident in the incomparable (ἀδιαιρέτῳ) differences (διαφορά) among created things. For each is unmistakeably unique in itself and its identity (ἰδιότητα) remains distinct (ἀσυγχύτως) in relation to other things. He [the one who has learned to contemplate the *logoi*] will know that the many *logoi* are the one Logos to whom all things are related and who exists in himself without confusion (ἀσυγχύτως), the essential and individually distinctive God, the Logos of God the Father.[261]

In the above passage, that which Maximus calls the *logoi* are gathered to union with the Logos and yet still retain their distinct identity. This is after the same fashion that Christ's natures still retain their identity but are the one person of Christ. Many can retain their identity as many without compromising the unity of that which is one. "All things are related" to the Logos through the many *logoi*, and yet the Logos himself is "without confusion". Similarly in the Chalcedonian formula, Christ's created and uncreated natures do not mix, and are "recognized without confusion, without change, without division, without separation". In the case of both the Chalcedonian Formula and Maximus' Logos and *logoi*, uncreated and created nature are totally unalike, and yet are brought into perfect communion in the person of the Logos who is Christ. This is not a coincidence of terminology, but precisely how Maximus understands the deification of the created to be possible: it is *because* Christ has brought these two natures of divinity and humanity into communion in Himself. The paradox of reconciling human nature with divine nature is overcome in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, as has already been discussed in *Ambiguum 41* earlier. Understanding this resolution of conflicting paradox into simultaneous union

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[261]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1077C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 54].

and distinction through Christ's reconciliation of the created and divine, is, I think, the first step toward understanding how virtue can be said to be *partaking* in love. In order to see how this union and distinction relates to participation, I will briefly describe Maximus' theology of the Logos and *logoi*, which I will later identify with the relationship of love to the virtues.

3.3.2 Logos and logoi

As suggested in the previous quotation (3.3.1), *logoi* have something to do with creatures, but also imply relation with the Logos. The *logoi* are the principles and meaning for each creature. They are the ideas for creation that reside within the mind of God prior to creation.[262] The *logoi* do not imply the pre-existence of creation as divine or as purely spiritual beings since, Louth explains, "they are not 'things', ontic realities; they are what God intends for each of his creatures."[263] We were made in accordance with them, but in the Fall we deviated from them, as God's will, and thus sinned. In Christ's redemptive act, it becomes possible again to live according to one's *logos,* and in so doing, one lives naturally and with meaning and directivity toward God.[264] In this way, the *logoi* are both of God and concerning creation. They are both of Him and yet other than Him. The *Logos* as the second person of the Trinity is still ineffable and beyond participation, and yet, Maximus clarifies, He is expressed in the *logoi* which come to be instantiated in creation.[265]

The Logos in particular for Maximus, is related to *logoi,* since it is through Christ's reconciliation of earth to heaven that we are restored to the possibility of following our *logoi.* Additionally, as the similarity of the two words suggests, there is something of the Logos in us, when we are in harmony with *our logos.* This idea of our participating in the Logos of God through our *logoi* is explored a couple of times by Maximus through the analogy of the circle and radii. The *logoi* are gathered to the Logos within the analogy of the circle and radii in *Ambiguum 7:* "It is as though they

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[262]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081A.
[263]   A. Louth, 'St Maximos' Doctrine of the *logoi* of Creation' in *Studia Patristica XLVIII*. Leuven: Peeters Publishers (2010), 82.
[264]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1084B.
[265]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081B: "Although he is beyond being and nothing can participate in him 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 Logos is the many *logoi* and the many *logoi* are One." [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 57].

were drawn to an all-powerful center that had built into it the beginnings of the lines that go out from it and that gathers them all together (πάντων συναγωγὸς). In this way the many are one".[266] Within this analogy Maximus expresses the simultaneous unity and plurality of the Logos and the *logoi,* the meanings and directivity of all created things. The *logoi* are thus dependent on the Logos for their existence, He being their origin, but also their aim and desire:

> For there is no end toward which he can be moved, nor is he moved in any other way than toward his beginning, that is, he ascends to the Logos by whom he was created and in whom all things will ultimately be restored.[267]

This description of the *logoi* being moved towards the Logos, recalls the cosmic paradigm of movement in which love and the virtues have already been situated. Before discussing the relation of the Logos/*logoi* to love/virtues, I will briefly outline the framework suggested by Vladimir Cvetković that posits the circle/radii analogy of the Logos/*logoi* as a means to understanding *logoi* theology in the context of Maximus' wider cosmology.

3.3.3 Circle and Radii

In his recent work, Cvetković proposed that we may extend the analogy of the circle and radii quoted above to encapsulate Maximus' whole cosmic vision of progress towards God-the-Logos through the *logoi.*[268] Cvetković suggests that we think of particulars as points arrayed on the circumference of a circle, who are connected to the centrepoint of this circle by radii. Along these radii we find the universals that express differences and commonalities between particulars. One travels through more generic *logoi,* then through more specific *logoi* and towards the Logos, who is the point at which the many become one, and yet is one Himself and not many.[269] The centrepoint of this circle then, towards which all particulars and universals alike are

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[266]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 57]; Circle and radii analogy also to be found in Maximus, *Myst.,* Ch.1.; Maximus, *Cap. Gnost.* PG 90 1125D-1128A II.4.
[267]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1080C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 56].
[268]   Cvetković, 'Predeterminations', 146. This is primarily offered as an alternative to Porphyian Tree as a means of explaining the categories and shapes of Maximus' metaphysics. See 4.2.2.
[269]   Cvetković, 'Predeterminations', 146.

drawn and held in place, is God the Logos. "Thus," Cvetković writes, "The individual beings by following their natural logos converge toward other human beings by discovering that they share the same humanity or creatureliness, but these are just stations on the movement along the radius toward the centre of the circle which is God".[270]

The circle and radii analogy serves as an image of cosmic movement – the struggle of the human to know God. The image is particularly useful for its depiction of movement, a feature which previous analogies such as the Porphyrian Tree[271] are lacking. It also better depicts participation in the divine as the human moves towards God. It will also bring clarity to my later discussion of human and divine activity in relation to virtue, allowing us to situate this within the context of a cosmic paradigm that points towards the Logos, or, as I will argue later, love.

Below I include a diagram showing the possible way in which this analogy may be depicted.[272] Recent work by Cvetković[273] has shown that this analogy has been drawn in a variety of different ways throughout times and places in reference both to Maximus and to the original image Maximus drew from Dionysios' *Divine Names*.[274] Movement of creatures in accordance to their *logos* in the diagram below is from the outside toward the Logos.

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[270]   V. Cvetković, 'Maximus the Confessor's Geometrical Analogies' in *Orthodox Theology and the Sciences. P.* Pavlov, & S. Tanev, (eds.). (Columbia: Newrome Press, 2013), 6.

[271]   A hierarchical understanding of biological categories where being is the best and most generic category and particulars occupy the furthest away point from this. I discuss this in detail in 4.2.2.1.

[272]   Diagram adapted in light of Cvetković's suggested way of differentiating universals and particulars according to his theory: Cvetković, 'Geometrical Analogies', 273 (Fig. 4.).

[273]   V. Cvetković, 'The Concept of the Delimitation of Creatures in Maximus the Confessor' paper delivered by C. Cvetković on behalf of V. Cvetković to *XVII International Conference on Patristics Studies.* Oxford, Examination Schools, 10th – 14th August 2015.

[274]   Dionysius, *DN* PG3 644A Ch.2.5; PG3 821A Ch.5.6.
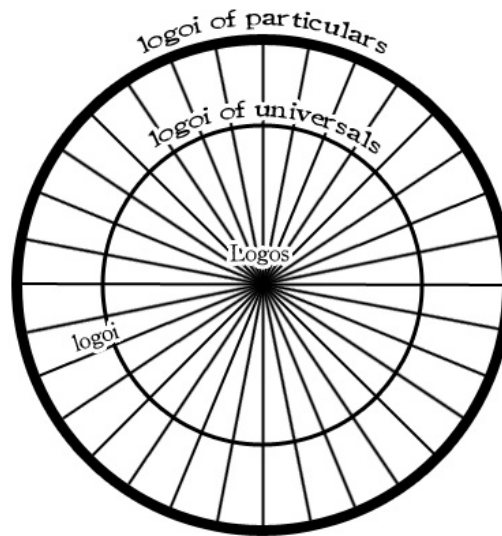
Fig. 2 Diagram showing a possible
version of the circle and radii analogy

3.3.4 *The Logos as Love*

In order to make use of the positions I have put forward thus far in this section, I will set the relationship of the Logos and the *logoi* in dialogue with that of love and the virtues. I posit that the relationship of virtue to love is identical to that of the *logoi* and the Logos, and that in explicitly making this claim we can make radical and more clear statements about what virtue is for Maximus and what is meant by its participation in love. For example, in identifying these two relationships with one another we can bring the abundance of scholarship on the Logos/*logoi*, like that of Cvetković's, into direct contact with love and the virtues. In doing this we can gain a much more comprehensive understanding of the place of love and the virtues, and especially relating to participation, within Maximus' cosmology.

Firstly we will look at the identification of the Logos with love, and what is consequently implied by such a statement.[275] Maximus reminds us in *Letter 2* when he

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[275] Also discussed by Russell in his chapter on Maximus and deification: "This [deification] is more than just a moral achievement brought about by ascetic endeavour because the mystery of love in which the believer participates is that which has succeeded the law and the prophets – that is, Christ himself." (Russell, *Doctrine of Deification,* 265).

recalls 1 John 4:8: "Indeed, love is said to be God himself".[276] It is through love and because God is love, that

> God takes form in each, through his great love for humankind, out of the virtue that is
> present in each through the ascetic struggle (πρᾶξιν) in accordance with virtue, in
> which and through which God receives his likeness to human beings.[277]

When virtue is present in us, love is present in us, which means God is present in us. Louth translates πρᾶξιν here as 'ascetic struggle'. His choice to do so lies in the fact that Maximus uses Evagrios' triad of ascetic struggle (*pratikê*), natural contemplation (*physikê*) and theology as specific terms through which the human ascends through prayer towards God.[278] Ascetic struggle and virtue will occupy the topic of the next chapter, but it bears relevance now to participation and our paradox of virtue as human and divine actions. In practising ascetic struggle virtue is able to become manifest within us. The actual presence of virtue is God in his love taking form in us. When this occurs, as Maximus goes on to elucidate, God is said to have "granted to you the splendour of virtue, which deifies you by grace, by sublimating your human characteristics. In you virtue also makes God condescend to be human, by your assumption, so far as it is possible for humans, of divine properties."[279] When the virtues are present, God, as love, is taking form in us. This sublimating of the human, in so far as it is possible for humans, is deification. This in itself can only occur through grace from the Holy Spirit:

> The Logos bestows adoption on us when He grants us that birth and deification which,
> transcending nature, comes by grace from above through the Spirit. The guarding and
> preservation of this in God depends on the resolve of those thus born: on their sincere
> acceptance of the grace bestowed on them and, through the practice of the
> commandments, on their emptying themselves of the passions they lay hold of the
> divine to the same degree as that to which, deliberately emptying Himself of His own

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276 Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 404C [Louth, *Maximus,* 91].
277 Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 401B [Louth, *Maximus,* 90].
278 Louth, *Maximus,* 35-6.
279 Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 408B [Louth, *Maximus,* 93].

sublime glory, the Logos of God truly became man.[280]

So both human endeavour as ascetic struggle and the grace of God seem to enable love as the virtues to become present in us. This is not a contradiction, but rather indicates that the virtues are instilled as part of a reciprocal relationship. Human 'acceptance' of the virtues is only possible when there is space within the human to receive.[281] We, like Christ, must first empty ourselves before we can be filled with the other. There is not space for the other when we are filled with the passions of self-indulgence. As such, for God to take form in us, that is, for *love*, which is also the virtues, to take form in us, we must allow space within us to receive. When the virtues become clear within us, the love of God is within us and we share likeness with God. We are become like Him, in so far as it is possible for humans.[282] Virtue *is* the sublimating of human characteristics. We are becoming more as God when we actualise them. Virtues move towards love *because* all things move towards God, and God is love. To return more specifically to the Logos and *logoi*, when the Logos, as one of the persons in the Trinity, goes out and makes himself known through the *logoi*, he also is love. Human activity clears space for the Holy Spirit to instil virtue within us, which draws us closer to likeness with the Logos. So the presence of virtue within us is as a result of both human ascetic struggle and divine grace. At the moment virtue is present we partake in divine love. The answer to our earlier query of if virtue is activity, whose activity is it?, lies in this understanding of ascetic struggle and virtue as *participation* in that which is of God.

3.3.5 Logoi and Virtues

Let us turn to the virtues and their relationship with the *logoi*. The *logoi* concern creatures, but are of God. They do not exist as real entities, but are instead expressions of hopes or predeterminations (προορισμός) that become manifest in creation when creatures act in accord with the divine will. Maximus is both specific and yet also broad in the way he is willing to use the term *logoi* in his cosmology. In so far as he is

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[280]   Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG90 877A [Louth, *Maximus,* 33-4]. This translation is used as it is clearer, especially in relation to the key terms being discussed in this analysis.
[281]   Covered in 4.1.3.
[282]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081B.

using the term to apply to predeterminations that are products of God's will (*θεῖα θελήματα*),[283] we could describe all these uses as saying something about the intended architecture of the cosmos according to God's will. Some *logoi* are specifically about creatures, and thus contain a vision for the trajectory of a creature's life when lived in fullest communion with God. Other *logoi* concern how those creatures are ordered – Maximus says there are *logoi* of universals;[284] and other *logoi* concern how those creatures relate to one another – Maximus implies there are *logoi* which are virtues.[285] All these *logoi* however are products or activities of divine will and we partake in them, we partake in God. The cohesion in Maximus' usage of the word '*logoi*' seems to be that, through this term, he wishes to express what intended right relation between all the cosmos and God is. A fully 'rational' (*logikos*) creation is one that is bound together in the person of Christ the Logos, entailing right relation at a personal level, a universal level, and in relation to the divine.

When talking of universals, Maximus is clear that universals would cease to exist if they were not made up of particulars.[286] We can see that *logoi* then do not have to refer just to the intended way of life for material things, but also express divine intention for the ordering of relation in creation. In Cvetković's use of the circle and radii analogy he describes universal *logoi* as being "arranged all the way along each radius, while the *logoi* of each individual rational being, angel, man and woman are placed on the circumference at the final point of each radius."[287] In this way, travelling toward the Logos is the cosmic movement of creation, but occurs, as in *Ambiguum 41,* through the drawing of all created beings together in union through the person of Christ, and by the human following in Christ's likeness by grace granted by the Holy Spirit. The *logoi* of all things are brought together in harmony in their universal *logoi* and they find their final rest in Christ. *Logoi* here are still participable and the divine will for creation, and yet are about the relationship of particulars to one another.

In the same way that *logoi* concerning creatures and *logoi* concerning universals express the divine intention for the way in which creatures relate to one

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[283] Maximus tells us he takes both the terms 'predeterminations' and 'products of divine will' from Dionysios: Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1080A.
[284] Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1080A.
[285] Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081D. See below.
[286] Maximus, *Amb. 10* PG91 1189C-D.
[287] Cvetković, 'Predeterminations', 146.

another and God, so too can we see virtue as another architectural expression of right relation manifest in creation. In *Ambiguum 7,* Maximus uses the relationship between the Logos and virtue as a model example of how one lives and thinks in accordance with the *logoi*:

> One who has learned to think devoutly about the *logoi* of existing things can explain this matter in another way. There can be no doubt that the one Word of God is the substance [οὐσία] of virtue in each person. For our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the substance of all the virtues, as it is written: 'This one God made our wisdom, our justice, our sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30). These things of course are said about him absolutely, since he is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification itself. They are not, as in our case, simply attributed to him, as for example in the expression, a 'wise man' or a 'just man'. It is evident that every person who participates in virtue as a matter of habit unquestionably participates in God, the substance of the virtues.[288]

As well as being an example of how *logoi* relate to the Logos, Maximus seems to be giving us another example of what the *logoi* are. Virtues are of God and belong to him, and through grace and ascesis, we may partake of them. They themselves are another expression of right relation between the created and the uncreated, a divine activity which when considered from a creaturely perspective is a dynamic intention setting forth the parameters of an ethical life. I believe that under the definitions given above that we can consider virtues themselves to be another kind of *logoi* – participable divine intentions that articulate the structure of the cosmos. Even without this full claim however, we can see in the above quotation that Maximus is happy to draw a parallel between the way we think about the *logoi* and the way we conceive of virtue. This in itself is still a useful observation since it means that we can apply the vast work done on our conceptions of the *logoi* in Maximus, like Cvetković's geometrical analogies, to virtue.

We could consider, for example, that since Christ is the substance and the essence (*ousia*) of all virtue, that the virtues, like (other)[289] *logoi,* can be thought of as

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[288]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081D [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 58].

[289]   I continue in this thesis to consider virtues as another instance of *logoi*, but the analogies that follow can still be considered valid even if one wished to claim that virtues should not be called *logoi.* The evidence for paralleling the concepts in Maximus is compelling and thus the apparatus we use to

radii that simultaneously are and are not the centre-point of the circle, which is love and the Logos Himself. Similarly, Christ, both is and is more than the *logoi* and the virtues. This is the answer to our earlier difficulty, how can love be both a virtue and more than a virtue. It lies in Maximus' understanding of the *logoi* participating in the Logos. Christ, like love, is the source and the perfection and end of all virtue and hence is virtue absolutely rather than attributively. Thus to partake of virtue is to partake of the Logos. We might be able to become a "just [wo/]man", but Himself Christ is "justice". We can become a "wise [wo/]man", but Christ is wisdom. Our very partaking in these respective virtues causes Him to be manifest in us and we in Him. We are being deified by grace when we partake of a virtue, *since* in so doing we are partaking of God Himself. Virtues, as some of the *logoi,* are an essential and *natural* part of our relation with our Creator.[290] To live in accord with them is to live in accord with the intended natural beauty envisioned for us. It is to be gathered to oneness in love, in Christ. So the virtues are never foreign to us in the sense that they are something divine that is unattainable. The virtues were meant to be chosen by us and are in fact something divine that *is* attainable.

However, despite the fact that the virtues, as *logoi*, were intended to be chosen by us, it is very important for Maximus that this choice is one that a human makes freely. We can see a description of this process very clearly in two passages especially. In *Ambiguum 7*, Maximus writes

> That which is in our power, our free will, through which the power of corruption entered into us, will surrender voluntarily to God and will have mastery of itself because it had been taught to refrain from willing anything other than what God wills… Do not be disturbed by what I have said. I have no intention of denying free will. Rather I am speaking of a firm and steadfast disposition, a willing surrender, so that from the one from whom we have received being we long to receive being moved as well.[291]

Also in *Letter 2*:

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discuss *logoi* is still useful to any analysis of virtue in Maximus.

[290] Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309B-C, Chs.88-95.

[291] Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1076B [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 52].

> And for this reason each one willingly frees himself from himself, by separating himself from any thoughts or properties to which he is privately inclined, and is gathered to the one singleness and sameness, in accordance with which nothing is in anyway separated from what is common to all, so that each is in each, and all in all, or rather in God and in others, and they are radiantly established as one, having the one *logos* of being in themselves, utterly single in nature and inclination.[292]

This is how unity occurs for Maximus: we willingly separate ourselves from selfish thoughts and wrong-doing, and in doing so are gathered together by God. The only active verb the human partakes of here is in freeing themselves from passion (ἀπολύοντος: active participle). After doing this, the human 'is gathered' (συναγομένου: passive participle), which is a divine act that becomes possible now that the human has chosen to accept God's love. This is a reprisal of the reciprocal relation that allows virtue to be instilled within us, where ascetic struggle meets the gift of grace. In choosing not to be dominated by the passions,[293] we become free to receive and be gathered to God. The virtues are *logoi* that we choose to turn towards, and, in so doing, we have already become receptive to the Logos, who is love. This is because the Logos and the *logoi* simultaneously exist as one and many, without ceasing to be either. And yet the *logoi* are of, point towards, and in a way *are* the Logos.[294] So too is virtue of, leading us to, and partaking of the Logos. And so also is love, the gatherer of all virtues and the origin of all virtues, God Himself. To participate in virtue, is to participate in divine love. There is not "one form of love [assigned] to God and another to human beings, for it is one and the same and universal".[295] The processes of deification – the human becoming like God – is the reconciliation of creaturely *logoi* to the Logos – it is the movement of humans through virtues towards perfect love. All these things are expressions of that singular movement of the creature towards God – deification. Virtues move towards love because all things move towards God, and God is love.

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[292] Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 400A-B [Louth, *Maximus,* 99].
[293] Discussed further in 4.1.3.
[294] Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1081B-C.
[295] Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 401D [Louth, *Maximus,* 89].

3.3.6 Chiasmus of Love and Virtues

There remains one paradox from earlier that has not yet been discussed, and that is to do with virtues leading to love, and yet love also leading to the virtues. This was a paradox that in part arose because we saw that for St Paul, if we do not have love, we have no virtues at all, whilst Maximus talked of the virtues leading us toward love. Given how much of Maximus is reliant on Paul's use of the virtues, these seemed to be an odd contradiction. In a comparison of Maximian and Thomistic virtue ethics, Louth reflects on the relationship between love and virtue by considering the "chiastic structure"[296] in chapters 2 and 3 of the Maximus' First Century on Love. He translates these chapters as follows:

> (I.2) Ἀπάθεια gives birth to love; hope in God to ἀπάθεια; patience and longsuffering to hope; all embracing self-mastery is the source of these; the fear of God is the source of self-mastery; and faith in the Lord produces fear.
>
> (I.3) He who believes in God fears punishment; he who fears punishment masters the passions; he who masters his passions endures tribulation; he who endures tribulation will possess hope in God; hope in God separates off all earthly inclination; the intellect separated from this will possess love towards God.[297]

Louth then goes on to remark of these:

> The first of these chapters has the sequence: love – ἀπάθεια – hope – patience-and-longsuffering – self-mastery – fear-of-God – faith-in-the-Lord; the second has the matching chiastic structure: faith-in-God – fear-of-punishment – mastery-of-the-passions – tribulation – endurance-of-tribulation – hope – separation-from-earthly-inclination [= ἀπάθεια] – love-of-God.[298]

Louth is justified, I believe, in identifying these two chapters as an instance of chiastic structure. We can see from the graphic I have put together below that the layout of the stages in these two chapters reverse one another so that they form a cross shape in the

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[296]   Louth, 'Virtue', 355.
[297]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 962B I.2-3 [This translation: Louth, 'Virtue', 355-6]. I use this translation so that Louth's analysis below matches up with the English terms he is using to translate the Greek.
[298]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 351-363, 355-6; cf. Maximus, *De char.* PG90 962B I.2-3.

structure of the text, resembling the letter *chi*, from which this literary technique derives its name 'chiasmus':

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LOVE
    APATHEIA
            HOPE
                PATIENCE
                    SELF-MASTERY
                        FEAR OF GOD
                            FAITH
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CHAPTER 2

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                    FAITH
                FEAR OF GOD
            SELF-MASTERY
        PATIENCE
    HOPE
APATHEIA
LOVE
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CHAPTER 3
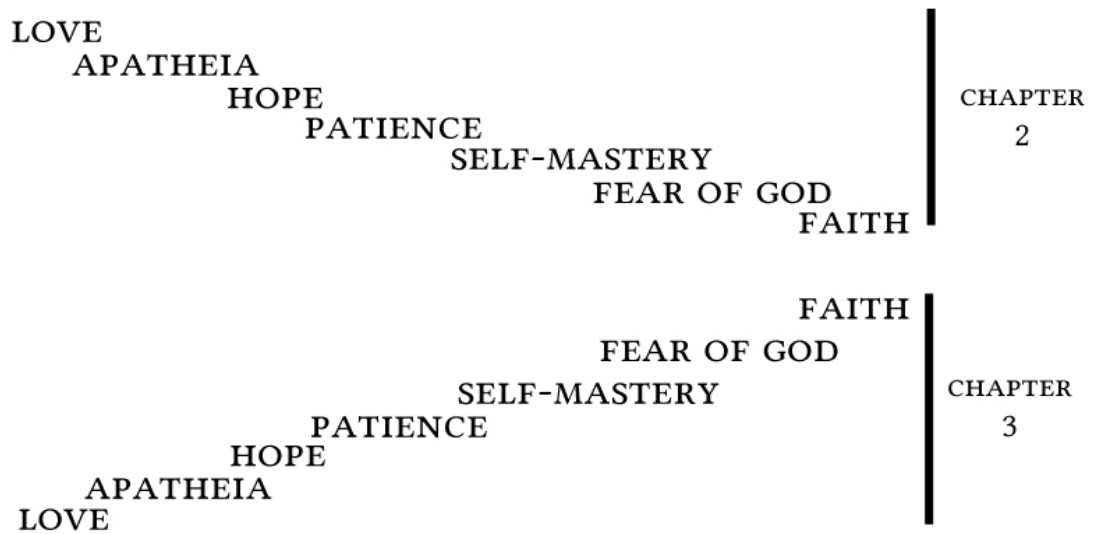
Fig. 3 Chiasmus in Centuries on Love I.2-3

The formation of the passage depicts the movement of love to faith, and then faith to love. In Louth's breakdown of these of two chapters, we can see clearly the way in which Christian ascetic virtues originate in love and lead to deeper love of God. Love and the virtues are depicted as a mirror that reflects cosmic movement, and importantly (as will be discussed in the next chapter) bring the actual ascetic practice of the virtues and love into a comprehensible paradigm. This is in keeping with the general purpose of the Centuries on Love, which at their heart are a practical set of aphorisms that enable the reader to refine their self-discipline and learn how to love. Love, as Louth also points out, *can* be learned – "There is a whole discourse about love that regards it as a kind of inspiration; it just happens, in some kind of amazing way we are swept off our feet. Maximos knows about that, too, but he is also intensely practical: we want to love – this is how to do it".[299] It is this former instance Louth refers to that describes a journey from love to faith (i.e. Chapter II) while the latter is the means for the faithful to learn how to love. The journey through virtues to love and vice versa is both a real movement through virtue and at the same time already is

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[299]   Louth, 'Virtue Ethics', 356.

love. The different virtues are distinct from one another, but, in light of what we have discussed in terms of participation, it makes sense that they both originate in love and lead to love. They both are love and are distinct from love, and at every stage our love is deepened.

The movement of the person from one love through the many virtues to faith, and then from faith through the many virtues to love of God in the manner of the *chi* of chiastic structure, recalls the same kind of movement through *logoi* in and toward Christ that was discussed in the circle and radii model. The simultaneity of movement present in the discussion of virtues in these chapters resembles that found in the analogy of the circle and radii. In the circle and radii analogy particulars are preserved through and in Christ with movement from the centre of the radii toward the outside. Particulars also move in their ascetic lives toward Christ in their journey in and to Him, the centre-point of the radii. We likewise have a similar double movement in these chapters on love. In chapter II we have the movement of love to faith, a movement descriptive of how we can come to faith when moved by love, who is God Himself. In chapter III we have the movement of faith to love – the search of the ascetic who in faith searches for love, who is God.

Both the circle and radii analogy and the chiastic structure of these chapters serve to draw multiplicity into unity through movement, and depict passage through struggle toward God. Both are depictions of cosmic movement where the many are gathered up to rest in God through love. In light of the way Maximus describes cosmic movement, it makes perfect sense that things can begin in love and progress toward deeper love, in the same way that all creatures were created by God and move toward most full relation with Him.

Within this section the Logos and *logoi* have been identified with love and the virtues, so that a clearer understanding of participation can be gained. It has been explained that seemingly contradictory statements can be held in balance with one another following the logic of the Chalcedonian Formula. The many virtues are love and love is the many virtues, and yet love is the beginning and end of all virtue; it is the perfection of all virtue. When virtue is manifest in us and our activity, so too is divine love. The Logos and *logoi* relation has, I hope, not just furnished us with an understanding of what the relation of love to virtue is, but also how this is possible,

since it is the Logos and His activity of divine love in 'recapitulating the world' that means that virtue is something attainable for us, along with participation in divine love namely, deification. Thus I hope to have demonstrated that virtues are *logoi*. They are the way in which God intended us to live. What *logoi* are is necessarily tied to the person of Christ. They are who we become when we choose to move towards Him. By grace and ascetic struggle, virtue is instilled in the human and we then display divine love. This is why Cvetković's use of the circle and radii analogy is particularly useful – it helps us see the Logos and *logoi* as dynamic relation between Creator and creature, and in turn perfectly exemplifies the movement Maximus is talking about between virtue and love. Virtue for Maximus cannot be considered without love and without this cosmic paradigm of creaturely movement towards God. Just as there are no radii if we have no centre point of a circle, just as there are no *logoi* if they are not gathered by the Logos, so we can not begin to conceive of virtue if we do not understand the manner in which it participates in love. Ontologically grounding virtue in love and understanding love to be the same act as that performed by the Logos for all creation, allows us to begin making statements about what virtues must be. First and foremost, they must be acts of love. It is this that defines them, and this that allows us to talk with any certainty of their existence. Virtues are different instances of love – of us acting in accord with divine will and so manifesting God's presence on earth.

3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain what, for Maximus, virtue is. It has been claimed that *virtues are activities that participate in divine love.* I begun by looking at the quotations from St Paul that Maximus cites when describing the relation between love and virtue. Some similarities and differences were identified and this raised questions such as how one could simultaneously claim that virtue both required love and led one to love. We moved on to set Maximus' passages on love and virtue in the context of his wider cosmology, noting recurring language that recalled other areas of his thought and, on closer inspection, seemed to make more sense of the way Maximus was describing virtue and love. This involved an exposition of cosmic

movement in Maximus' thought. I noted that when talking of virtue as moving, we are actually talking about human and divine relation made possible by both the activity of God through grace and human activity as ascetic struggle. This led us to a final section in which participation was discussed. This was done in light of the Council of Chalcedon and through the relationship of the Logos to the *logoi*, both of which shed light on the way in which it was possible for that which is of creation to participate in that which is divine without losing the particularity and uniqueness of one, nor the divinity and imparticipableness of the other. This understanding also allowed for the human to have meaningful activity whilst divine activity deified through grace. This enabled us to explain how human activity could become virtuous, and how we could comprehend this gift to be equivalent to participating in the divine. As has become apparent, a discussion of the ontology of virtue very quickly becomes about the movement of creation towards deification. This is because a discussion of virtue in Maximus, is necessarily a discussion about the human struggling to become in the likeness of God and following in the activity that Christ made possible. It becomes impossible to qualify what a good life lived with virtue is, unless it is within this dynamic picture that points toward (and simultaneously participates in) our *telos*. Virtues are God's activity as witnessed on earth and they might too become human activity, if we cultivate the right attitude. Virtues most fully manifest the divine love we have been called to imitate. They are distinct from love in their own particular fashion, but, by definition of being divine activity, are always love.

What virtue is has been discussed, and we next come on to asking *how* the human might participate in virtue and what is meant by saying that virtues are natural to us. Thus the next chapter will continue our ontological enquiry into virtue, but will also begin to bridge the gap into discussing how virtue can be manifest within our lives.

~ Chapter 4: From Physical to Ethical in the Cosmos of St Maximus ~

'It is in human nature to gather the cosmos in love'

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate that Maximus believes *it is in human nature to gather the cosmos in love.* I will explain what is meant by this statement and in doing so illustrate that the practice of virtue concerns both the sphere of ethical living and the material structure of the physical universe. It should therefore become apparent that the human struggle to acquire virtue is not only a personal ethics but is also, according to Maximus' interpretation, integral to the cohesion of the universe. I will take my main statement apart in two sections. The first section (4.1) will be 'virtues are natural' which, following on from my previous chapter, explains how love as the summit and coalescence of the virtues belongs to human nature, and is therefore 'natural'. This section will be characterised in particular by the inquiry 'how can we choose to be virtuous if virtues are natural?'. This question poses a contradiction between free will and nature. In the course of describing how we can attain the virtues, this difficulty will be resolved. The second section (4.2) will be 'Gathering the Cosmos' and will specifically look at the relationship between human nature and all the rest of creation in Maximus' *Ambiguum 41. Ambiguum 41* recounts the ways in which human nature may overcome the physical divisions in the universe. Hence the main line of inquiry in this section will be 'How can the physical world be gathered by ethical activity?', since it may not be immediately apparent how a sphere of ethics has any bearing on the physical, biological universe.

By the end of this chapter, I will have demonstrated how Maximus believes each of us may choose to acquire virtue and how it may be helpful to conceive of the virtues as manifold love. It will also have been shown that personal choice to love is a decision undertaken by the particular that enables unity in the divisions of nature that

make up the created cosmos. It is this personal electing to live in communal love that I shall take as particularly important in my next chapter when I critique current political institutions that we live in and maintain.

4.1 Virtues are Natural

As mentioned throughout the previous chapter, Maximus describes the virtues as natural rather than foreign to us. We do not have to reach for something beyond our capacity but can instead choose to become more fully who we are meant to be. In the course of proposing that virtue belongs to human nature, there arises a difficulty of choice. If something is in our nature, it might be construed as being beyond our control. This creates difficulties for how freely we can be said to be choosing virtue if it already belongs to our nature. Whilst explaining how Maximus believes the virtues to be natural within us, I will also resolve the difficulties posed by the question 'How can we choose to be virtuous if virtues are natural?'. I will begin this section (4.1.1) by looking at the passages in which Maximus describes virtues as natural, drawing especially on his *Dialogue with Pyrrhus* in which this topic is dealt with at length. Following this I will discuss the active role that the human takes in clearing the passions from within themselves (4.1.2). This should clear up a lot of the difficulties surrounding what is natural and how we have free will. Lastly (4.1.3), I will discuss the ascetic value Maximus places in referring to all the virtues as love. I will draw on Maximus' *Liber Asceticus* where he describes the ascetic life as being easier to come to terms with when we consider the simplicity of love. This last section concerns how we conceive of practical ethics and try to put it into practice. Love becomes not just a *telos* of virtues but also a measure against which we can know what virtue is, or a disposition in itself that maybe be easier to follow than a more disparate 'virtue ethics'.

4.1.1 By Nature or By Habit?

An important part of Maximus' conception of the virtues is that they are *natural* to the human being. In this section I will explore what is meant by this. In the *Dispute with Pyrrhus*, Maximus describes the relationship between virtues and human nature:

> *Pyrrhus:* Virtues, then, are natural things?
>
> *Maximus:* Yes, natural things.
>
> *Pyrrhus:* If they be natural things, why do they not exist in all men equally, since all men have an identical nature?
>
> *Maximus:* But they do exist equally in all men because of the identical nature!
>
> *Pyrrhus:* Then why is there such a great disparity [of virtues] in us?
>
> *Maximus:* Because we do not all practice what is natural to us to an equal degree; indeed, if we [all] practiced equally [those virtues] natural to us as we were created to do, then one would be able to perceive one virtue in us all, just as there is one nature [in us all], and that 'one virtue' would not admit of a 'more' or 'less'.[300]

In this passage we learn two important things. Firstly, that virtue is as much an essential part of what it is to be human as anything else we might ascribe to human nature. And secondly that human nature is not a static set of facts to which all particulars of that kind subscribe, but something that can be grown into. The first of these two statements is fairly self-evident from Maximus' response to Pyrrhus: virtues exist equally in all human beings *because* of our identical nature. The second statement is more unexpected as it implies that nature is not static but transformative, and therefore tied to the development of the particular person and their choices. The transformative aspect of nature is something we can infer from the passage in which Maximus explains that all virtues exist in all of us equally, but that if we do not practise them they are not perceptible within us. This means that manifestation of nature is to some degree reliant on the practice of the particular. Maximus tells us that by 'natural' he is referring to a capacity which we are able to exercise. What we have by nature is not an automated list of properties that make us up, but rather things we are capable of doing if we as particulars of this nature choose as agents to exercise these capacities. As Maximus is always reminding us, what exists by nature is only in existence when there are particulars that make it up. This means that to a certain extent nature is going to change with the particulars that make it up. Like for example, if humans made an irreversible choice to cut themselves off from the love of God, human nature would forever be changed in a very real way. It would require a

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[300]   Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309B [Farrell, *Disputation*, Chs.88-93, 32-3].

reinstituting of human nature – a making it anew to restore the capacity to choose God again to humans. In the next section (4.1.2), I come back to this in more detail and discuss what this means for the relationship of hypostasis to nature. For now however, let us continue to look at this description of nature, as it is not at all the one Pyrrhus is expecting.

It is perhaps easiest to get to grips with Pyrrhus' surprise and frustration with Maximus' description of virtue as natural if we look at Aristotle's reasonable but completely contrary position. At the beginning of book two of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle writes

> ... Moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature... Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.[301]

Aristotle maintains that, because we are able to form habits that are vices and the opposite of virtues, it indicates that virtues don't belong to our nature. According to Louth this habitual instilling of virtue is a position held by Thomas Aquinas as well as Aristotle,[302] perhaps accounting for the prevalence of this position on virtue in contemporary culture. In a more detailed exposition of this point, Aristotle goes on to say:

> Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the sense for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well.[303]

Senses, Aristotle explains, are capacities we have that we can just do. We don't get

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301   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1 1103a; lns 17-21, 24-26. [Ross, *Nicomachean,* 23].
302   Louth, *Virtue Ethics*, 358.
303   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1 1103a; lns 27-33. [Ross, *Nicomachean,* 23].

better at hearing by practising often,[304] it is just innate to us, Aristotle believes. In comparison, he says, virtue is much more like an artisan practice which we must work at and fine hone until it is instilled in us by habit. Senses therefore belong to us by nature, Aristotle says, and virtues do not. This Aristotelian position sounds very familiar. We don't get virtues the way we get sight or hearing or touch, we have to work hard at them in order to get them. Like playing a musical instrument or drawing and painting.

Maximus does not agree. For Maximus, virtues are much more akin to the way Aristotle understands senses. A better way of putting it perhaps is that when we are not virtuous, it is the equivalent of us walking around with our eyes shut, or our noses pegged closed, or our mouths taped up or so on. We have to consciously disrupt and distort something that is otherwise a natural part of our activity in order for it not to be present in us. Maximus further explains this to Pyrrhus when he writes:

> Asceticism, and the toils that go with it, was devised simply in order to ward off deception, which established itself through sensory perception. It is not [as if] the virtues have been newly introduced from outside, for they inhere in us from creation, as hath already been said. Therefore, when deception is completely expelled, the soul immediately exhibits the splendour of its natural virtue... Consequently, with the removal of things that are contrary to nature only the things proper to nature are manifest. Just as when rust is removed the natural clarity and glint of iron [are manifest].[305]

There is no in-between state where one is neither in possession of virtue or vice, Maximus maintains. He writes that "he that is not foolish is intelligent, he that is not cowardly is bold...".[306] In order to disagree with Maximus, one must either posit that there is an in-between state where one is neither cowardly nor bold; foolish or intelligent; unrighteous or righteous, or one must posit that we naturally possess vice.

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[304] Arguably one can fine hone hearing – for example to pick out the instruments playing in an orchestral symphony, or fine hone seeing – by learning what to look out for when spotting the silhouette of a raptor. But while we may be able to improve or fine hone senses, Aristotle is making the comparison between a sense that we can largely already use to a good degree when born and an artisan practice which we are clearly born with no knowledge of at all.
[305] Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309C-312A [Farrell, *Disputation,* Ch.95, 33-4].
[306] Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309C-312A [Farrell, *Disputation.* Ch.95, 34].

We either possess neither virtue nor vice naturally and must work to acquire either (this would seem to be more in line with Aristotle's position), or we possess one of virtue or vice naturally and our activity is focused either on ridding ourselves of vice (as rust on iron), or on trying to lay hold of virtues in order to overcome a natural state of vice (which amounts to us being foolish until we lay hold of intelligence, or cowardly until we become bold). One could argue however that Aristotle's position actually has much more in common with this latter idea. Since we have to work to lay hold of virtue which is beyond us, there is a sense in which, until we practice it, we possess only paucity on these fronts. The image of rust removed from iron is a particularly useful one to paint Maximus' position on virtue. When Louth translates this passage, he describes this metaphor as "the natural gleam and lustre of iron" (Φύσιν αὐγὴ και λαμπρότης).[307] Humans possess a 'natural gleam' that becomes shrouded in rust as we choose to act in ways contrary to our nature. The way we choose to act and its relationship with our nature falls into the *hypostasis – physis* relation that will be discussed below (4.1.2). Maximus can confidently claim that virtues are natural because of his understanding of the Logos and *logoi* mentioned in the previous chapter. If we think back to how virtues are descriptive of relationship in Christ, claiming that virtues are natural to the human is the equivalent of claiming that it is in our nature to be in Christ; to partake in God; to rest in *theosis*. Virtues, as *logoi*, are God's will for us, and being in them is to exist and to exist well. Here we can think back to Chapter 2 and the triad of well-being (2.1.3), where being was given to us, but well-being was a choice we make that is restored to us by Christ's reinstitution of human nature. If we think back to Chapter 3 (3.3) it is also precisely because virtues are love, and love is God, that we can talk of *telos* and *logoi* as being a path we are *meant* to choose. By this I mean that we always have the choice whether or not to be in God, but that it is natural to us as creatures, and desired by God, that we choose to love.

What inevitably must follow from this observation however, is an acknowledgement that human nature is fallen. Virtues may be natural, but that connectivity and walking easily with God is what was, and is lost to us. This is of vital importance to Maximus, because, unlike Aristotle, he does not believe that any

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[307]   Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309C-312A [Louth, *Virtue Ethics*, 355].

amount of human perseverance can change what has been lost to nature.[308] This means that the manifestation of virtue within the human always has its roots in Christ. It is grace and the divine opening His embrace to creation that has enabled the transformation of nature. Louth expresses the importance of the fall to the early Christians when considering why it was that they rallied to the notion of virtues rather than a moral system more directly derivative of the commandments:

> Part of the reason is, paradoxically, connected with their belief in the Fall of humankind: given that, and the consequences for humankind, any approach to ethics that remained at the level of behaviour seemed quite inadequate – ethical behaviour had to flow from a reconstructed human nature: it was a matter of being, of ontology. Virtue ethics addresses the question of goodness at this level, for it is concerned more with what human beings are, rather than how they make moral choices, how they behave.[309]

Virtue, for Maximus, is intimately tied to his understanding of human nature and the Fall. Though virtues are natural, their presence in us is always a reciprocal task where the human clears away the passions and stops misusing natural faculties, and the grace of God instils virtue within us. Before moving on to discuss how passions are cleared and human receptivity to divine instilling of virtue, let us look at the metaphysical implications of transformative nature and what this means for the way we as personal hypostases choose to act.

4.1.2 Transformative Nature and the Simultaneity of Nature and Hypostasis

We saw in 4.1.1 that Pyrrhus does not understand how Maximus can say that virtues are natural when virtues clearly change from person to person. In this section I shall look at the metaphysical implications of Maximus' response to Pyrrhus. Where Pyrrhus goes wrong in his understanding of virtue, is in assuming that human nature is an abstract universal. He imagines that those properties which belong to human nature exist as a coherent set of identical attributes to which all humans conform. Not unreasonably, Pyrrhus' understanding of 'nature' is a collection of words that we can

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[308] Cf. Louth, *Virtue Ethics*, 353.
[309] Louth, *Virtue Ethics*, 354.

say certain things have in common. We expect there to be relatively little disparity in the appearance of these features. For Aristotle, as well as the senses, human nature was considered to possess judgement, understanding, and intuitive reason.[310] In our biological categories today, we recognise physical characteristics that we expect most human beings to share: two arms, two legs, a brain etc. All these things are ways in which we tend to identify humans in general – they are properties we confer on human nature that exhibit very little variation from person to person. We can understand Pyrrhus' confusion then when Maximus adds 'virtues' to this list. Surely this is a thing that is varied between people that we cannot consider to belong to human nature, Pyrrhus essentially says. In 4.1.1 I explained how Maximus sees virtues as much more like senses that can be exercised, than limbs or other static features. I also mentioned that this means that our nature seems to be *transformative.* By this I mean that it does not appear to be a static series of descriptions, but that human nature, as in the Fall, has the capacity to be corrupted, and, through the restorative power of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, may also grow into renewed human nature.

Unlike what appears to be the case in Pyrrhus view, Maximus has a simultaneous concept of nature and person. What is in human nature is not separate from the activity of particular instances of humans. A person is not separate from nature, but an instantiation of nature. There is not an abstract human universal to which we are conforming, but rather, through Christ we possess the restored capacity to most fully become what is in our nature. In this way, nature is not the prerequisite bit we get passed on at birth and stuck with, but what we can most fully become should we choose to act in accordance with God's *logoi* for us. "It is not [as if] the virtues have been newly introduced from outside, for they inhere in us from creation, as hath already been said",[311] Maximus writes, recalling Gen. 1:31 where "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good". The distinction between what it is intended that we become and the path that we choose to take, is characterised as a distinction between *logos* and *tropos* (mode, or way of living). Loudovikos asks us to "...consider the *logos-tropos* distinction as an expression of the existential antinomy of necessity

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[310]   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* VI.11 1143b; lns 6-8.

[311]   Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 309C-312A [Farrell, *Disputation.* Ch.95, 33].

and freedom which characterises the relationship between nature and person".[312] Whilst 'antinomy' is an unhelpful term, suggesting opposition rather than participation, the characterising of nature as necessity and person (*hypostasis*) as freedom is still a useful distinction, in so far as it means that, if *logos* is the path upon which nature *can* be realised, then *tropos* is the way in which a person *chooses to act in order to achieve this*. *Logoi* remain unchanged, and we must choose to live our lives in accordance with them, if we wish to live in Christ.

Maximus' explanation of *tropos* found in the *Dispute with Pyrrhus* is worth replicating at this point. Pyrrhus, like any good Chalcedonian, knows that Christ must be considered one. He says, given this, "If Christ be one person, then He willed as one person. And if He willed as one person, then doubtless He hath one will, and not two". Maximus replies by saying if Christ is 'one', is He only God, or only man, both together? Pyrrhus replies, "Obviously God and man". Maximus then says, so in what sense can we say that Christ is truly God *and* man if He cannot will according to the divine nature *and* according to human nature? In what way does He really possess these natures, if He cannot act according to them?[313] Maximus makes a distinction for us between nature and person. He tells us that what we *can* do is to do with our nature, and what we *do* do is to do with personhood. In other words, personhood has to do with agency. The capacity to do something, is contrasted with the human choice to exercise such a capacity:

> The will and the mode of willing are not the same, just as the power of sight and the mode of perception are not the same. Will, like sight, is of nature. All things which have an identical nature have identical abilities. But the mode of willing, like the mode of perception – in other words, to will to walk or to will not to walk, and the perception of the right hand or of the left, or of up or down, or the contemplation of concupiscence or of the rational principles in beings – is only a mode of the use of a power, of the employment of will and of perception. And the same distinction may be applied to other things as well. These things demonstrate that have, by nature, the will to eat or not to eat, to walk or not to walk. But these negatives are not applicable to the will as such, but only to the particular mode of willing. In other words, things

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312   Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 94.
313   Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 288D-289C [Farrell, *Disputation.* Ch.8-13, 4-5].

come to pass by choices.[314]

Maximus here explains for us the difference between what we are able to do, and what we choose to do. The will, which is a natural capacity we have, belongs to our nature. Choosing to exercise this capacity and the mode in which we carry it out belongs to the person. The way we choose to use this natural capacity can either be in the way it is intended (i.e. in accordance with our *logos*) or can be in a twisted, corrupt mockery of this where we turn our love inwards to ourselves alone. Either way, what we *do* with our natural capacity is above called our 'mode of willing' or *tropos*. For Maximus, what is natural extends not only to the capacity to do good, but also that intended trajectory – there is a good way we can act that is the natural way to exercise this faculty. This is how we can say that virtue is natural to everyone, even though not everyone has aligned their *tropos* to their *logos* to bring this into reality. The outcome – the *telos* – is natural for humans, even if we choose to act unnaturally, virtue is still natural to us – we have just denied its presence in us and turned our natural capacities toward unnatural ends.

When our own mode of living (*tropos*) is at variance with our *logos* and has strayed from what is natural, we are living 'unnaturally'; against our nature. We can no longer reach for well-being because we have fallen away from being itself. We do not know what being even is, or how to live naturally. But if natural capacities can be used unnaturally, and if human nature is a universal tied to particular instances, is it not possible for human nature as a whole to no longer resemble what it was first intended to be?

I believe that this is how Maximus understands human nature to have fallen. Humans as particulars rejected God and turned as one from him. Because of the simultaneity of hypostasis and nature, when all humans choose other than God, all human nature falls. Whatever human nature was intended to be, it no longer exists and particular humans can no longer reach for that original nature, because its existence was in God who gave us being itself, and whom we chose to reject. The paradox is however, that to retrieve original human nature (which is to retrieve existence itself), there must be a particular instance of it, an archetype, in who's image

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[314] Maximus, *Pyrrh.* PG91 292D-293B [Farrell, *Disputation.* Ch.23, 10].

we can be renewed. There must simultaneously be an archetype who is an instance of human nature, and yet who has the divine power to restore nature which is fallen (to create it anew – thus a divine business). Christ restores nature by uniting it to the divine, and by aligning his will to the divine will. In the language of our above paragraph, he exercises the human natural will and brings a human mode of willing (*tropos*) into line with the divine will and intention for us (which is also the *logos* that it was intended we follow). Christ dies into the death and non-being of fallen human nature which has turned from being itself (if we think back to the Triad of Well-being from Chapter 2), and as God and human unites those wills and resurrects human nature. Death and non-being are defeated and the whole of human nature brought out of its self-condemnation of death. Christ makes the choices a human must make, even though a human cannot make them, because the original nature has fallen. He transfigures nature as a human because he is divine. Nature has been transformed and we, by choosing to die to the old corrupt nature may live in his new resurrected nature, bringing our *tropos* into line with our *logos*.

What this all means for our acquisition of the virtues, is that we cannot even start to reach for them, unless we choose to be a part of reconstructed human nature in Christ. At the same time, this very choice *is* the start of the acquisition of the virtues, since Christ Himself is the virtues within us, and the virtues are that moment where communion between the human and divine has become possible again. It also means that there is a process to becoming 'human' and exhibiting human nature, because we have fallen from our nature. Not only are virtues natural, then, but to talk of trying to acquire them, is to talk of becoming truly human. Exhibiting virtue is *the* most natural thing – it is us becoming human – a creature fully in communion with God – fully conjoined in love with all the cosmos.

4.1.3 Clearing Passions

I next ask how it is possible for humans to truly *choose* virtue when it is divine and we require the grace of God to instil it in us. How can Maximus claim that we are doing anything important with our 'mode of willing' if virtue itself is somehow beyond our human capabilities to ever manifest alone. In the previous chapter, participation was discussed with reference to the *logoi* and the virtues (3.3). It was emphasised that the

manifestation of virtue within us is born both of human endeavour in ascetic struggle and the grace of God. The metaphysical relation of grace and human activity has been covered (3.3), but here, using Maximus' metaphor of the rusted iron, I think a more personal and useful (in the sense of utility to those interested in ascetic practice) picture can be painted.

Rather than the Aristotelian position we looked at earlier where virtue is external to the human, Maximus believes it is *logismoi* that are external to the human. These are fleeting temptations and thoughts that plague our minds, or, in more familiar virtue language – they are the temptations towards vice. It is the task of the ascetic to repel these, on a level of mind and body. Maximus describes the different stages at which we fall into sin, where those who allow the *logismoi* to flower and flourish in the mind fall to sin, as well as those who then go on to carry physical actions as a result of these temptations.[315] These fleeting *logismoi* thus become passions, inflammations within us that rust over our natural virtues. These are the choices that we make that are against our nature. Vice is thus given reality even though it is not natural to the human. This position is not unique to Maximus and we can see similar ideas in predecessors like Gregory of Nyssa[316] and Evagrios.[317] In *Letter 2: On Love*, Maximus describes vice as the turning of virtuous capacities toward oneself. He writes that "humankind has brought into being from itself the three greatest primordial evils, and (to speak simply) the begetters of all vice: ignorance, I mean, and self-love and tyranny".[318] In a reversal of the virtues, Maximus identifies self-love as the origin of all vice.[319] Vice itself however is a corruption given reality by human choice:

> For reason, instead of being ignorant, ought to be moved through knowledge to seek solely after God; and desire, pure of the passion of self-love, ought to be driven by yearning for God alone; and the incensive power, separated from tyranny, ought to

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[315]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 1008B II.74;1010D-1012A II84;1043C III88.
[316]   Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1256B.
[317]   Evagrios of Pontos, *Chapters on Prayer* PG79 1169, Cg.9. [L. Dysinger (trans.), English public domain translation: http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/03_Prayer/00a_start.htm (Accessed 05.04.16).]
[318]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 397A [Louth, *Maximus,* 87].
[319]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 397C [Louth, *Maximus,* 88].

struggle to attain God alone.[320]

It is a misuse of our faculties that creates vice. Instead of fulfilling our natural capacities which are directed teleologically toward God, we instead turn them to ourselves. It is our will then that has brought about evil and has caused our nature to become fallen. Again similar ideas are found in Gregory of Nyssa's thought, who for example writes of evil that "It has no substance of its own; apart from deliberate choice evil exists nowhere".[321] In choosing to turn from God, we choose evil and our nature becomes corrupted. We would forever remain a slave to this fallen nature were it not for Christ's hypostatic union to our nature and the renewal of our capacity to love.[322]

We are not just defined by our natures however, but are simultaneously defined by our personhood. This means that agency is involved as well as natural capacity. Christ has restored our natural capacity but we need to choose to clear away the passions that hide virtue. Maximus uses the metaphor of the bar of iron that, when cleaned of rust, is returned to its natural gleam and lustre (Φύσιν αὐγή καὶ λαμπρότης).[323] We find that when we work to eradicate the hold of the passions within us, the virtues become manifest within us. This is our "natural gleam" as "God takes form in each". As was discussed in Chapter 3 (3.3.5) the existence of virtue within us is part of reciprocal relation between the human and God. It is grace and the Spirit through Christ which instils virtue within us, and it is the human who prepares the way. Warding off *logismoi* and the passions is that preparing the way. As Louth notes, it is this that the human partakes of when we talk of ascetic struggle, rather than any single person laying hold of virtue themselves:

> Evagrios, the first 'philosopher of the desert', as Guillaumont has dubbed him, devotes a good deal of time to the *logismoi*, and their classification. This is not, I think, primarily a doleful concern with the ravages of sin and the Fall; rather an awareness that what we can do is less to cultivate the virtues than to struggle against the assaults and distractions that the Christian is beset by; what we are doing is more clearing the

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[320] Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 397AB [Louth, *Maximus,* 87].
[321] Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1256B. [Graef, *Gregory.,*135-6.]
[322] Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 397BC [Louth, *Maximus,* 87-8].
[323] Maximus, *Pyrrh.* 309B-312A.

way for the operation of grace than building up the self through the virtues ,

something beyond our sinful powers.[324]

This clearing away of the passions is characterised by Maximus with reference to

Evagrios of Pontos' three stages of spiritual life.[325] These stages are *praktikē, physikē,*

theologia.[326] David Bradshaw gives a good succinct description of what each of these

three stages represent: "first the ascetic practice of the virtues, then the contemplation

of the *logoi* of beings, and finally the contemplation of the Logos who is their

source".[327] These stages of the spiritual life serve to roll together both the ascetic

clearing of passions we have been discussing and the cosmic unity that comes about

as a result. Clearing away the passions and receiving the Spirit within us allows us to

see God's meaning for all things about us more clearly, since to manifest virtue is to

know the *logoi* which is to know the Logos Himself who is in all things.[328] Thus far I

have characterised these stages as simultaneous since my proposition in Chapter 3

was that virtues are *logoi* and that the *logoi* are and are in the Logos. Seeing this as

stages as in Evagrios' method might also be a useful way to consider the spiritual life.

It allows us to think first of trying to clear self-love from our hearts, without being

overwhelmed by the idea that this action will ultimately bind together and unite the

cosmos in love to Christ through the Holy Spirit. It also allows us to break down what

is going on in the establishment of love – that it begins with changing the self, that it

re-establishes relation with the rest of the cosmos, and thus unites and brings all to

God. As Bradshaw notes, often in Evagrian literature, these steps are characterised as

a hierarchy that ascends away from the material world.[329] Bradshaw is keen to stress

that this is not always the case with Evagrios and neither is it with Maximus.[330] A way

to avoid the dangers of this way of thinking are to consider this as the natural

movement of a developing relationship that begins when we allow Christ within us,

and to consider the relative simultaneity of these stages, given that God is revealed

both in virtue, the *logoi* of all creatures, and ultimately in the Logos. Nothing is left

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[324]   Louth, *Virtue Ethics,* 354.
[325]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 984B-985B II.1-6.
[326]   Evagrios of Pontos, *Chapters on Prayer* PG79 1165, Prologue.
[327]   Bradshaw, 'The Logoi of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought' in *Toward and Ecology,* 15.
[328]   Also called *theoria physike.*
[329]   Bradshaw, '*Logoi* of Beings' in *Toward an Ecology,* 14-15.
[330]   Bradshaw, '*Logoi* of Beings' in *Toward an Ecology,* 15.

behind, rather, the cosmos is gathered to.

The clearing of passions is also a lifetime's work. In the *Ascetic Life*, Maximus presents the search for virtue as a continuous struggle. He cites Paul's letter to the Philippians, writing, "Let us emulate the holy athletes of the Saviour. Let us imitate their combats, *forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth* (ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενοι) *to those that are before.* Let us imitate their tireless course (τὸν ἀκατάπαυστον αὐτῶν δρόμον), their flaming eagerness..."[331] The virtuous life of the saints is presented in the context of fleeing from passion and attachment to material desires. Instead we reach forth (ἐπεκτείνω) in a race that is never set at rest (ἀκατάπαυστος). In an analysis of this same Pauline passage, Gregory of Nyssa suggested that the reason our ascetic striving is tireless and continuous is because God always remains in some way mysterious. Much like the way Maximus discussed *theosis* itself as an ever-moving rest[332], an arrival that is never complete, Gregory suggested that we can apply this apophatic mystery to the present life as well. The idea of perpetual reaching toward God was derived from Philippians 3:13: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before (ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος)". In his *Life of Moses,* Gregory interpreted Moses' theophany of the pillar of cloud in light of Philippians and the story of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:10-19) as examples of ascetic striving. Gregory described Moses' seeing God's back as part of the understanding that even in encounter with God there will always be part of God that is unknowable. Hence it is always the case that "the soul rises ever higher and will always make its flight yet higher – by its desire of the heavenly things *straining ahead for what is still to come* (συνεπεκτεινομένη τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν), as the Apostle says".[333] Whilst in Maximus we see no formal subscription to Gregory's interpretation, we do have a sense of the ceaselessness of the ascetic's task in striving for virtue – a striving that does have an end, but an end that is ever-moving rest, and stationary movement in God. This recognition that our striving is a continual part of our life here on earth becomes important later when I discuss the practical place of this ethics in

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[331]   Maximus, *LA.* TCr. Ch. 45. [Sherwood, *Maximus,* 135]; referencing Phil. 3:13.
[332]   See 2.2.3.
[333]   Gregory of Nyssa, *De v.M.* SCh.1 2.225 [J. Malherbe & E. Ferguson *Life of Moses.* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 113].

how we think about practical living.[334]

Thus far we have seen that virtue is natural to humans, but also beyond humans. Because of our choice to sin, what was natural to us was lost. To regain what was lost to us, we need to partake in the renewed nature that Christ has deified. To do this we must turn ourselves away from self-love, and the misdirected use of our faculties and capacities. We must clear ourselves of these distractions and instead have space and willingness to receive virtue, that is to know the will of God, and to therefore know God himself. This restored relation with God is also natural however. It is more truly natural to us because it is what it was intended we be prior to the Fall. We freely choose to align ourselves to God, and open ourselves to receive Him. What is lost is reinstituted. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (2.2.3), and as implied by Evagrios' stages of spiritual life – this is both a foretaste of deification that is to come, but also a continual struggle in this life to clear the way for virtue, to know His creation and His will for it, and to know God Himself.

4.1.4 Love as Simple and Manifold

In the course of discussing how the virtues are said to be natural we have made some progress in discerning what it is that we as humans need to do to live naturally and in Christ. We have read that virtue belongs in us and was always intended for us, and that it is only our will turned to selfishness that prevents us from following Christ. We have seen Maximus calling this 'clearing the passions', but what does this look like in our day to day living? And does it not still seem to be an impossibly distant proposal despite having the label 'natural' added to it?

Maximus' *Ascetic Life* starts with a startlingly human outburst from a monk who addresses his spiritual father on precisely these issues. The monk asks, "And who, Father, can do all the commandments? There are so many." To which the response is "He who imitates the Lord and follows in His footsteps." The monk then says, "Who can imitate the Lord? Though he became man, the Lord was God. But I am a man, a sinner, enslaved to a thousand passions. How can I imitate the Lord?".[335] Many things are explained to the monk, but eventually Maximus writes the following:

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[334] I discuss the importance of this concept in 6.2.1.
[335] Maximus, *LA*. TCr. Ch.3 [P. Sherwood, *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life & The Four Centuries on Charity*. Sherwood, P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1955), 104].

> This is the sign of our love for God, as the Lord Himself shows in the Gospels: *He that loves me*, He says, *will keep my commandments.* And what this commandment is, which if we keep we love Him, hear Him tell: *This is my commandment, that you love one another.* Do you see that this love for one another makes firm the love for God?... The Lord Himself makes it clear and has shown it to us by His very works; and so too all His disciples, who strove til death for love of their neighbour and prayed fervently for those that killed them.[336]

Love by being virtuous, love by following all the commandments, Maximus paraphrases Christ, but what this truly means is love one another in the love Christ has shown you – in the love Christ has restored to you. If we think about the relationship between love and the virtues in Chapter 3, we can see how this metaphysical dimension makes sense in a very down to earth, practical way. When we think of all the commandments and how difficult it seems to abide them all, we have only to think of love, which is the totality of all the commandments. When we think of the multitudes of things that have been called virtues, we can rest assured that when we *love* we have laid hold of all virtues. When doing good seems like a multitudinous unending set of rules, we can think of the radii and the circle – virtues are not multitudinous but simultaneous. They are both many and one. This is why Christ can boil down all of the commandments and the law of God to love Him and one another – in other words, to *love.* Whenever we are overcome by what seems to be a great complexity of things we must measure up to, we can think of love. When we love, we complete all the commandments. As Maximus writes above "Do you see that this love for one another makes firm the love for God?". In loving one another we partake in love itself which is God.

This understanding of simultaneity of course works the other way as well. When Christ commands us to *love*, if we struggle to know what is loving in a situation, we can think of the instances of virtue that make it up. Understanding virtues as a form of love helps us understand what in any instance the virtuous thing to do would be. Either way, the simplicity of love as all virtues and commandments, or

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[336]   Maximus, *LA.* TCr. Ch. 7 [Sherwood, *Maximus,*107].

as the means through which to understand what virtuous action is, allows us to consider the structure of an ethics reliant on the simultaneity of virtue and *telos*.

By coupling this with the conclusions drawn in 4.1.3 that emphasise the elimination of passions we can also see the way that Maximus' 'virtue ethics' is very unlike any other kind of virtue ethics. We do have a conventional structure of virtue and *telos* defined by a specific relationship, but we also have a concept of striving to regain a holiness that already exists within us from the moment of creation. It is important to remember that part of our decision making must be about removing what is hurtful and selfish from ourselves and our actions. This is, if we like, a kind of apophatic approach to virtue ethics that exists alongside Maximus' expositions on love. It is also a useful way of thinking about the manifold nature of the commandment to love. One of the ways we can think about love is to think about eliminating what is unloving and self-centred from our actions and thoughts.

This will be picked up in the next chapter, but we have identified three ways in which Maximus' particular understanding of virtue and *telos* allow for a unique approach to ethics. These are (1) instead of trying to consider all virtues when we act, to instead think of love which is their most perfect totality, (2) if we have difficulty thinking about love, we can break it down into virtues that we assess in light of them always being a kind of love, (3) that we need not always think in terms of how to do the virtuous thing, but instead can think about removing vices from ourselves, and preventing ourselves from being unloving and self-centred in our thoughts, desires and actions. Thus, when I talk about it being '*in human nature* to gather the cosmos in love', I am talking about our ability to participate in the human nature that Christ has renewed in Himself. The way we think about virtue and love and our approach to ethics are tools to help us try and become more truly human. The first half of this chapter has had a very personal focus – turning our lives to divine love transfigures us as persons. In the latter half of this chapter, I look at the cosmic transfiguration that comes about as a result of our choices.

4.2 Gathering the Cosmos

Thus far I have discussed how we can participate in virtue, what it means for virtue to be natural, and how we can reach for this new nature that Christ has perfected. In this section I wish to discuss the effects of this virtue on the rest of the cosmos. In Chapters 2 and 3 we looked at the cosmic implications of human activity, but what does this mean in practical terms? How can we reconcile the very personal and intimate actions discussed in 4.1 with this grand cosmic narrative? The way I am phrasing this question is 'how can the physical world be gathered by ethical activity?'. When Maximus interprets Christ's words to love God and our neighbour, he genuinely believes that following these commandments will affect the entire cosmos and eventually bring it to its *telos* in *theosis*. This means that the personal choices we make in our ascetic lives – our decision to align our *tropos* with our *logos* – are choices that affects the entire created order and have immediate repercussions here and now. In this section, the ethics of 4.1 are brought under a cosmic lens and have a very real impact on the rest of the world.

4.2.1 Overcoming Divisions of Nature
To enquire into how Maximus believes the physical universe is transformed by ethical activity, I will look at the 'divisions of nature' Maximus describes in *Ambiguum 41*. These have been briefly touched on in Chapters 2 and 3, but I mean to go through the divisions more systematically here to get to the bottom of how Maximus sees them being overcome. In this ambiguum, Maximus describes five ways in which creatures differ from God and one another. The differences are natural, physical differences which are overcome by the ascetic, mediating activity of human beings. This becomes problematic, however, as this ascetic practice occurs within a sphere we usually define as 'ethical'. In conflating these 'physical' and 'ethical' dimensions it becomes unclear how our actions can overcome and unite the physical differences described in Maximus' 'divisions of nature'. This is a problem that in modern parlance we describe as a naturalistic fallacy, since it conflates descriptive language with normative activity. By using Maximus' own logic of division and unity within this very ambiguum however, I maintain that Maximus does not see these two spheres of 'physical' and 'ethical' as separate, but rather as distinctions within time contained in a single

subject matter.

In *Ambiguum 41*, the five categories Maximus describes divide nature as follows: (1) uncreated and created, (2) intelligible and sensible, (3) heaven and earth, (4) paradise and the inhabited world, (5) male and female.[337]

Divisions of Nature

Uncreated and Created

Intelligible and Sensible

Heaven   and   Earth

Paradise and the Inhabited World

Male   and   Female
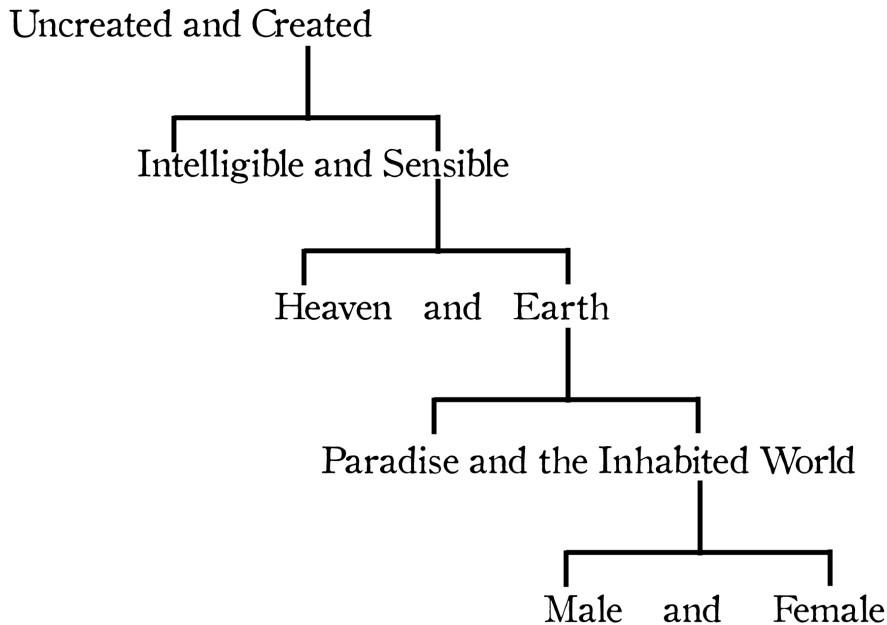
Fig. 4 Divisions of Nature in Amb. 41

In the above diagram I have shown how in each division we have a link to the former division. In every instance the latter category in each is divided further in the next step. So the created is split into intelligible and sensible, the sensible is split into heaven and earth, the earth is split into paradise and the inhabited world, and the inhabited world is mediated between by the human, who is split into male and female. Maximus' divisions are not arbitrary but form a kind of branching tree that defines the primary differences that exist between all natures.

Shortly after this, we read that the role of the human person is to follow Christ in becoming a mediator between these divisions:

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[337]   Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1304D-1305B [Louth, *Maximus,* 156-7].

> 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.[338]

Maximus goes on to say that the human

> achieves this through the perfect knowledge, as I said, of its own *logos*, in accordance
> with which it is. Then, by a way of life proper and fitting to Saints, the human person
> unites paradise and the inhabited world to make one earth…[339]

Maximus then leads us back up through the divisions of nature for a second time,
describing how at every stage, each of the five categories can be united by the life that
the human person lives. Each *physical* difference is overcome by practical, ethical
means, like in the above instance where the earth is made one "by a way of life proper
and fitting to Saints". The way of life Maximus is talking about is the ascetic practice
discussed in 4.1. When I use the word 'physical' here I mean it both in its
contemporary usage as that which is material, and in so far as it relates to the word
physis, since these are *natural* divisions. So this term refers to the present state in
which we find and describe the universe around us. In the above quotation Maximus is
describing what he believes to be the original mediating powers of the human that
have been lost through sin, but are restored in Christ. We see this vividly portrayed in
Ambiguum 41 as Maximus gives us a third repeat of all these divisions in nature, save
this time describing the ways that these have already been united by Christ.[340] We
then get a fourth repeat of the divisions describing how the mediating power of Christ
restores this ability to the human by uniting us and all divisions to Himself.[341] Thus we
have a depiction of the way the power to mediate as Christ does is restored to us and
we, by grace, are able to reach toward virtue and consent to its presence within us.[342]
The power of mediation that is restored is one deeply rooted in the ascetic realm of

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[338] Maximus, *Amb 41* PG91 1305C [Louth, *Maximus,* 157].
[339] Maximus, *Amb 41* PG91 1305D [Louth, *Maximus,* 157].
[340] Maximus, *Amb 41* PG91 1309A-C [Louth, *Maximus,* 159-60].
[341] Maximus, *Amb 41* PG91 1309D-1312B [Louth, *Maximus,* 160].
[342] Cf. Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 24 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 207].

learning to love, having faith and receiving grace. In so far as this is a sphere that concerns the way in which humans decide to live, I am calling these activities 'ethical'. In *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus moves from a physical description of the cosmos, to saying that somehow, by our ethical living, we can bring these physical divisions into unity. This conflation of physical and ethical dimensions presents a problem for the modern theologian seeking to make use of Maximus' thought. It becomes unclear in what way our actions can overcome and unite these biological differences described in Maximus' divisions of nature. This is an outline of the problem as it stands. There are two geometrical analogies I wish to look at to explain the way in which Maximus understands ethical activity to gather the physical world.

4.2.2 Geometric Structures of the Cosmos

The key to resolving this difficulty I think lies in recalling Maximus' Chalcedonian understanding where differences in nature remain distinct, but need not be divisive or at odds with one another. This also goes for our current problem. Descriptive, physical definitions are not separate from normative, ethical claims. The normative is instead a potential, (and for our purposes) future path that may be chosen by the descriptive subject.[343] The subject as we describe it now, should it choose to take such a path, can look like the normative picture too. So our normative claims and ethical claims are distinct from each other when considering a subject from within time. They are united when our present way of living is brought in line with the ethical trajectory which we can choose to align ourselves with. I will demonstrate how this problem is overcome firstly by briefly thinking about how Maximus perceives universals, and how realistically he can make claims about humans that extend to other creatures. Secondly, I go on to illustrate how our problem resolves into two distinct claims about one subject that can be brought into unity. The former point I make with reference to the work of Torstein Tollefsen and in the latter I use Vladimir Cvetković's work. These two analogies make sense of Maximus' difficulty by challenging our conceptions of taxonomy and participation.

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[343] We could arguably call this normative path timeless, since it corresponds to our *logoi* and to good life which is in Christ Himself. I use the term 'future' here in reference to the way that we as humans think about ethical choices and paths that we have yet to choose.

4.2.2.1 Universals of Division and Unity

Firstly, let us look at universals as categorisation of the biological world. For Maximus, whenever we describe differences between creatures, we are also stating a degree of similarity between them. Earlier I described Maximus' divisions as branches on a tree. Often our taxonomical descriptions favour this hierarchical analogy when describing natural categories. The application and misapplication of the Porphyrian Tree might be considered an example of a hierarchical depiction of taxonomy. In Melchisedec Törönen's work on Maximus the Confessor, he describes Porphyry as third century Phoenician who was a student of Plotinus. He claims that Porphyry's famous taxonomical 'tree' was one of the "logical tools" that Maximus uses in his works. According to Törönen, Porphyry discusses five terms in this tree:

> [...] genus, difference, species, property, and accident. Out of these five terms the first
> and third, that is, genus and species, make up a framework within which all the beings
> that constitute the universe can be considered. The hierarchy of genera and species is
> commonly known as the Porphyrian Tree. Its description as a tree is not Porphyry's
> own idea, but does convey in a tangible way the idea of hierarchy of predication which
> Porphyry presents in his treatise. The Porphyrian Tree was drawn, not as the
> ramifications of branches into twigs of an oak tree, but as a subordinate succession of
> branches ending with the roots as with a spruce tree, the left-hand-side and the right-
> hand-side branches representing the contrasting elements of each subdivision. [...] In
> whatever way one wishes to picture this tree, in terms of logic what is generic is at the
> top and what is specific is at the bottom. [...] The fundamental rule of predication in
> this pattern is that the higher ones, that is, the more generic ones, are predicated of the
> lower ones, and never the reverse. Another similar rule is that the higher ones
> 'contain' the lower ones, and the lower ones are 'contained' by the higher one.[344]

Tollefsen contests that Maximus is reliant on Porphyry as a tool, noting that it is possible that Maximus may never have known Porphyry's works. Despite this, he says, it seems that Maximus is familiar with the logic of this tree, as well as Aristotle's *Categories*.[345] Tollefsen notes that we must be careful when applying the Porphyrian Tree to Maximus' work not to map a gradation of perfection and value onto this

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[344]   Törönen, *Union and Distinction*, 20-1.
[345]   Tollefsen, *Christocentic*, 15.

taxonomical system.[346] This is a practice that can easily be fallen into given the Neoplatonist appropriation of the Porphyrian Tree. In the Porphyrian Tree, although particulars are taken as starting points (as in Aristotle's *Categories*), there was (and is) a risk of granting universals a greater degree of reality that the particulars that make them up. In part, this comes down to the most common universal shared by all things in Porphyry's Tree being 'being' itself, possibly implying that sub-categories derived being from this one source at the top of the taxonomical tree. According to Tollefsen, some Neoplatonists, like Dexippus,[347] seem to have considered "that this abstract Porphyrian tree is the conceptual copy of the perfect, intelligible system contained in οὐσία, the νοῦς of Plotinus, as the primary source of being. In this manner the Aristotelian species and genera, that is, the secondary substances of the *Categories*, were transformed into an actually existent plenary of intelligible Ideas in a principle which is the highest οὐσία".[348]

In granting greater value or reality to universals, one makes a statement about the importance of ideas and concepts over matter. The (literal) embodiment of things we have concepts for, become subsidiary to, or even imperfect instances of, ideas themselves. Immediately we fall into the kind of dualism that the early church spent much of its time trying to eradicate. We can think for example of the theologians Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus writing against Gnostics in the second and third centuries, where thinkers like Valentinus claimed that only through the Nous was knowledge of God revealed.[349] This kind of dogma resulted in an anthropology that divided human beings up into those who could be saved and those who could not depending on their mental capacities, since what was most important was to be able to reach for the highest mental concepts and ideas.[350] It was and is extremely important to Christian theology that matter is not evil, or to be rejected, but that it is part of who we as created beings are and has the potential to become holy. If perfection is located in disembodied universals, then the value of each particular along

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[346] He argues that this gradation has been applied to taxonomical systems by those such as Lovejoy in his 1978 book. Tollefsen, *Christocentic*, 81, note 49.

[347] Also including Proclus, Ammonius: Tollefsen, *Christocentric*, 33.

[348] Tollefsen, *Christocentric*, 31.

[349] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines.* Fifth Edition (London: Continuum, 2004 (First published 1958)), 23.

[350] Kelly, *Early*, 24.

with the distinctiveness of each person and the choices each person makes, become of less importance than an overall commitment to a realm of ideas and thought. We certainly could not, in this framework, make sense of God becoming a particular human and reinstituting human nature by doing so. In order for this to ever make sense, there must be something transformative about the choices and existence of a particular hypostasis that affects universals. In other words, universals and particulars must simultaneously be in one another and made up of one another. As Maximus puts it, "the parts exist and subsist in the wholes, and the wholes in the parts".[351]

This dualist attitude toward taxonomy and the independent existence of universals is still prevalent today. In something Mark Balaguer tentatively calls 'platonism spelled with a lower-case 'p''', there are contemporary positions that state that "there exist such things as abstract objects – where an abstract object is an object that does not exist in space or time and which is therefore entirely non-physical and non-mental".[352] Balaguer distinguishes this from Platonism as it draws from, but does not fully represent, the views of Plato or the early Platonists (or Neoplatonists). Balaguer names Gottlob Frege, Kurt Gödel, Bertrand Russell and W.V.O. Quine as all adhering to this kind of contemporary commitment to universals. These include commitments to the independent existence (not reliant on particulars) of numbers, relations and properties such as colour. Participation is claimed to be one-way, so that objects are said to participate in, exemplify or instantiate a property (such as redness), but no claim is made of the universal itself with regard to its make up.[353]

Recent work done by Tollefsen challenges the hierarchical depiction of the relationship between universals and particulars. He targets not only the position that universals possess more reality than particulars, but also offers a much more cohesive way of depicting the mutual interdependence of universals and particulars, and particulars as the ultimate source of reality. Tollefsen suggests that we think of Maximus' universals as more a horizontal system in which "each particular and each species mirror the whole class they belong to".[354] He emphasises that it is better to

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[351]   Maximus, *Amb. 10* PG91 1189D [Louth, *Maximus,* 145].
[352]   M. Balaguer, "Platonism in Metaphysics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), E. N. Zalta (ed.) Stanford: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/platonism/. (Accessed, 15.05.16).
[353]   Balaguer, "Platonism".
[354]   Tollefsen, 'Concept of the Universal' , 17.

think of universals as whole concepts rather than fractured composites.[355] Every time we conceive of a particular, the universals that this particular partakes of is entirely embodied in that particular (and in every other particular that we identify with this universal).[356] As a very simple example, we can look at the following:
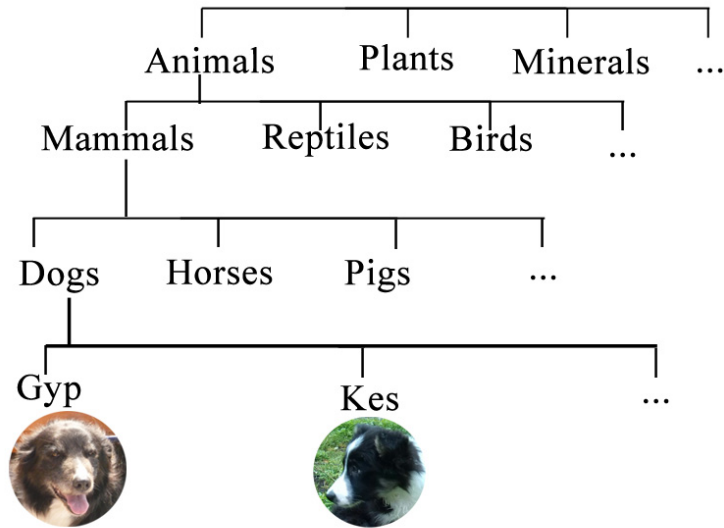
Gyp still represents the entirety of what it is to be a dog, despite being different to Kes. Likewise as a dog, she still represents entirely what it is to be a mammal, despite horses also fitting into that category.

Fig. 5 Diagram showing participation in universals

In my diagram above, it is not as though there is something else to the universal of dog-kind that we are not seeing when we look at a particular dog. All of what it is to be a dog is contained within every particular dog, even though each particular dog does not exhaust the ways in which the universal of dog-kind can be expressed. The fact that we can conceive of expressions of dog-kind that differ from the dog in front of us does not in anyway imply that there is a deficiency of the universal expressed within this particular specimen. In Maximus' language – there are different hypostases (particular beings) that operate in different *tropoi* (modes of living) but they are still complete instances of a single nature. In this way, expressions of genera, species and particulars are a way of talking about the differences but also the similarities that exist

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355   Tollefsen, 'Concept of the Universal' , 16.
356   See Tollefsen, 'Concept of the Universal' , 16.

between all parts of creation. Universals enable us to talk about a genuine unity of particulars in species and of species in genera that is more than just semantic. Whenever we use a universal term we mean it to express unity between some things, and distinction from others. In the very act of describing the divisions in nature, Maximus is also expressing the way in which they are united. Universals always unite when compared to another difference. Our biological categories are not simply arbitrary linguistic titles, but are descriptive of the similarities we have found in all things around us, including us ourselves. There is biological identity between all these creatures that is distinguished by a matter of degrees. There is actually a very close unity between all things on our planet that often seems neglected when we instead focus on the separateness of every single particular. For Maximus, the world seems to be a balance of real, distinct creatures, bound in relation to one another and united by the properties they share. The unity of the universe is preserved by its distinction from God. Of course, this also applies to every other level right the way down to particulars, all of whom are preserved in precise distinction from one another precisely *because* of the way we expression commonality and difference in universals. The very first division Maximus discussed was that between uncreated and created – a distinction that collects the entire taxonomy of the created universe into oneness as distinct from its Creator. This is what I mean when I say that 'the unity of the universe is preserved by its distinction from God'. Indeed, it is this division that can only be overcome by grace, and never by nature – if we think back to Maximus' understanding of *theosis* in Chapter 2, this division is the unassailable chasm that we are offered adoption into through Christ who brings uncreated and created nature together within him.

My point in this section is to point out that Maximus' divisions of nature are not just divisions but also universals of unity, and descriptive not just of biological difference but also of the way in all things naturally coinhere. *Physical* descriptions of the universe already point toward unity and the Creator.

4.2.2.2 Unity of Subject, Distinctions in Time

Secondly, let us think about physical and ethical in relation to Maximus' cosmology. I think we can map them onto the following ideas. As outlined in 3.3.3, Vladimir

Cvetković proposes the circle and radii analogy, to which Maximus alludes a number of times,[357] as an image of the relationship between universals and particulars. He suggests that we think of particulars as points arrayed on the circumference of a circle, who are connected to the centrepoint of this circle by radii. Along these radii we find the universals that express differences and commonalities between particulars. The centrepoint of this circle, towards which all particulars and universals alike are drawn and held in place, is God the Logos. "Thus," Cvetković writes, "The individual beings by following their natural logos converge toward other human beings by discovering that they share the same humanity or creatureliness, but these are just stations on the movement along the radius toward the centre of the circle which is God".[358] When we consider the way that convergence in Cvetković's analogy happens alongside Tollefsen's depiction of the relationships between universals and particulars, we can also say something very special about what it means to be a person.

According to Tollefsen's position on horizontal universals, none of the things we are attributing to universals *exclusively* belong to common categories. These universals are always descriptive of things that *belong* to particulars. Particulars do not derive say, rationality, by belonging to the universal of rational beings. The universal exists because rational creatures exist and creatures are collectively termed 'rational' because this is something that is exhibited commonly. Any attempt to separate out properties from particulars results in a metaphysics that tries to strip away properties to find the real 'person' underneath – properties that, together, are who that person is and belong as much to them as to a universal category. The purpose of distinguishing between universals and particulars is never to search for the most propertyless, raw version of what a person is. Why, when devoid of commonalities we share with others, might we think we have found a truer picture of who we are? If we recall from *The Mystagogia:*

> In conformity with this law there is engendered the principle of the unifying force which does not permit that the substantial identity uniting these things be ignored because of their difference in nature, nor that their particular characteristics which limit each of these things to itself appear more pronounced because of their separation

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[357] Maximus, *Amb 7* PG91 1081C; Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 1; Maximus, *Cap. Gnost.* PG 90 II.4.
[358] Cvetković, 'Geometrical Analogies', 6.

and division than the kinship in love mystically inspired in them for union. It is by this kinship that the universal and unique mode of the invisible and unknowable presence in all things renders them unmixed and undivided in themselves and in relation to each other. And it shows that they exist by the relationship which unites them to each other rather than to themselves.[359]

Instead, universals are descriptions of relations – similarities and differences shared by different particulars, and embodied in particulars.

Within a Christian cosmology – where all particulars are created – universals have an additional importance, since the similarities and differences between all creatures are *intended* by God. These means that universals, as the order and architecture of the cosmos, are also created – they do not possess the same reality a particular does, but they are a pattern of relation that exists and was willed into existence. In this way – universals are relation between particulars, and an integral part of how we relate to one another and how we understand who we are. Universals express something important about our identity, whilst at the same time describing similarities and differences we have with others. We can talk about who we are as persons with reference to particular *logoi and* universal *logoi,* which simultaneously partake in one another, and all partake in Christ. If we consider Cvetković's circle and radii model – in the grace of love we come to see the interrelation of all *logoi* and we are drawn together along the radii, through universals, to the Logos. Universals do not just belong to metaphysics, but also to ethics. They are about a person understanding how similarity and difference draw the cosmos into unity. I am a distinct *hypostasis* with a distinct *logos* who can begin to grow into that *logos* by perceiving how I relate to all (through their *logoi*) about me and to *the* Logos. We are persons defined by *logoi*, seeking to align ourselves with *logoi* that come together, through universals, to the Logos Himself. Cvetković's model is a dynamic picture of particulars who are becoming who they were created to be as they seek *theosis* in the Logos who gathers all *logoi.*

Thus Cvetković's model allows us to see the dynamism of the *logoi* and the way that this metaphysical structure is profoundly ethical in terms of the human life it

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[359]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 7 [Berthold, *Maximus,*197].

depicts. Who we are as people is intimately bound up with how we choose to relate to those around us. When considering universals and particulars alongside Maximus' doctrine of the *logoi*, we can see the way in which statements about particular creatures are never isolated from the *potentiality* that they have in their *logoi*. For Maximus, the reality of things as they are now, is not divided from the spiritual potential they have in moving toward the Logos. Each particular creature possesses a *hypostasis* that is who they are now. Every creature also possesses a *logos*, which is the perfect unchanging idea or hope that God has for the life of that creature. In order to realise this *logos*, a creature has to choose to turn towards it and God. It has to bring its mode of life (*tropos*) into alignment with that perfect vision of its life that God has for it.[360] This can be summarised in a modified version of the stages of cosmic movement outlined in Chapter 2:
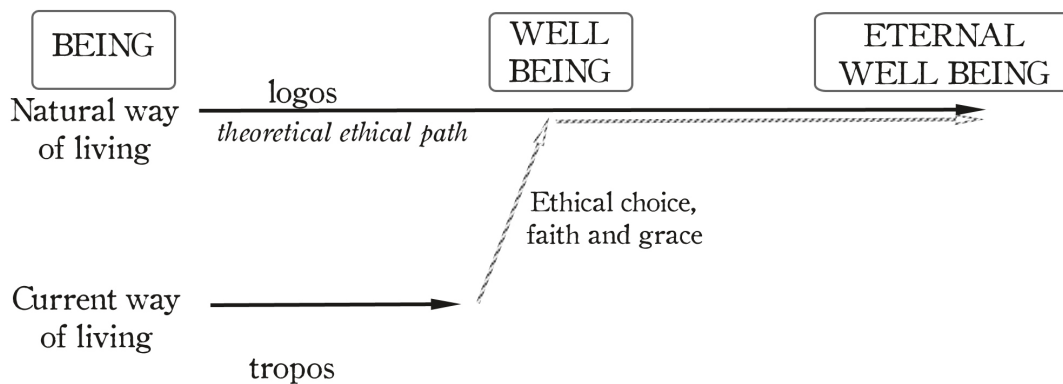
Fig. 6 Logos/tropos distinction in cosmic movement

In the above diagram I have distinguished between our *logos* as the theoretical, ethical path we wish to align ourselves with, and our *tropos* as the actual enactment of those ethics, that allows our physical, material bodies to be brought in line by our choice to act in accordance with God's will.[361] Physical and ethical in this way are not two different spheres, but rather about how a physical subject may choose to act in an ethical way. There is the way we in our material bodies are living at present, and there is our ethics. There is what we are and what we may become. The distinction between physical and ethical then is not a division but a distinction between what currently is

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[360] On the difference between capacity to do a thing, and mode of operation by choice (*tropos*) see Maximus, *Pyrrh.* 292D-293B [Farrell, *Disputation,* Ch.23, 10].

[361] Also see this interpretation of *logoi* as necessity and *tropos* as freedom in Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 94.

and what potentially may come to be. The normative force of the latter is still retained, in that so long as one desires to align oneself to one's *logos,* there is a practical imperative to choose it in preference over others. In this regard the distinction between the physical and ethical is always useful to maintain. However, unity between the two is now conceivable as bringing our current way of living (*tropos*) into line with a good way of living (*logos*).

Cvetković's proposed use of the circle and radii analogy is a particularly apt model for this purpose, since it already rolls the relations of *logoi* to creatures together in Christ and paints a picture that captures both particular existence and trajectory toward Christ. Furthermore it also illustrates the way that universals are instances of simultaneous unity and distinction, as elaborated by Tollefsen. The simultaneity of who we are is expressed in the points about the circle's circumference, while the radii themselves form the trajectory of who we can be when we allow ourselves to be gathered to the centrepoint who is Christ. Hence my point earlier about rethinking hard distinctions between universals and persons – who we are is transfigured through relation and through the *logoi,* and we become more complete as persons when we draw closer to Christ, though, after the Chalcedonian understanding, this unity never compromises the integrity of our unique personhood. Christ, the centre of the cosmos reaches through the last division of nature and makes deification through grace possible for the united cosmos.

It should be noted that Cvetković's analogy is not ideal for representing the diversity of particular taxonomy in relation to universals. It is hard using the circle and radii model, to see how universals gather up a range of particulars since the analogy lacks that traditional branching model we have come to expect in taxonomical representation. However, if we think about this in relation to the Tollefsen's point explained in 4.2.2.1 we do not have to rely on the branching picture to accurately depict the relationship between particulars and universals. If every particular fully participates in a universal with no deficiencies, then we could represent the relationship between universals and particulars as a single line. It is true that we cannot see the diversity of particulars in this way, but neither do we risk implying a multiplicity in, or ascribing greater ontological reality to, a universal. In the end all these analogies fall short in some way of depicting cosmological movement and

relationships, but the circle and radii model is still a useful one that certainly serves its purpose when it comes to demonstrating particulars and their trajectory in, and reliance on, Christ the Logos.

My solution then, is that we consider the distinctions of physical and ethical to be differentiations of time concerning one subject. There are a ways of talking about what *is*, and of what *may come to be* when a subject moves in line with its *logos*. Within the context of Maximus' cosmology, there is also a sense of timelessness to the concept of the ethical, especially if we tie it to the idea of *logos*. This is the ethical path which God wishes us to take, which He *always* wished we would take. It is an entire concept, even if, to us in our lives, it seems like a linear set of choices. This means that we can also talk about the ethical as being in our past as something we have deviated from or tried to live in accordance with, as well as always being something that we wish to turn to. My overall point remains however, that the physical is that which we may bring in line with the ethical. Like all creaturely divisions described in *Ambiguum 41*, these two distinctions are brought together in Christ, so that our mode of being (*tropos*) becomes identical to our *logos*, which is a reflection of Christ Himself. Our ethical activity, as mediating humans, determines the way in which creatures move in future, because we are deeply connected to them, as we can see when we think in terms of universals.

What we choose then, can not help but be an extension of who we and the entire cosmos are at present. This places a much greater burden on human choice, which I am now claiming is responsible for the physical, integral structure of the universe. This should not come as a particular surprise given Maximus' metaphysical commitments and the way he describes every particular as held in place and given life at every instance by the will of God. It is still difficult, I imagine, for the modern mind to comprehend that ethics can have such a real impact on the coherence of the physical structures of the cosmos. This is probably because of the divisions we have been taught are in place between our study of the sciences and our dealing with ethical choice and action. If we really think about it, it makes perfect sense that physical reality changes around us because of the choices we make. The dualism between thought and action is a lot less marked than it is often made out to be. Of course the way we choose to act affects those around us. Of course it either destroys

their lives or brings them a meaning or peace that might otherwise have been missing. These ideas might have been removed from many of our academic ways of thinking, but on a popular, common sense level, these concepts still make sense. As Andrew Louth points out towards the end of an article on the theology of Maximus and the environmental crisis:

> St Maximus's divisions of nature may seem to us quaint, but his idea that within the manifold that is the created order there are divisions that can either, when transcended, express the richness and beauty of the created order or, alternatively, cause gulfs of incomprehension, darkness, and pain seems to me an insight of continuing relevance.[362]

Humans have had dramatic effects on the balance of existence on the planet in which we live – the way we act is informed by the choices we make, which are, hopefully, informed by the ethics we live by. The mystical aspect of Maximus' thought that claims that humans 'gather the cosmos', is really a very obvious point about the far reaching extent of the choices we make. We ultimately have the gift of free will and must decide whether we are going to serve ourselves or clear a space within us to be filled with God's love. The physical is very much subject to the ethical, and the cohesion of the cosmos decided in the choices of the particular – of the human microcosm.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter we treated with the proposition that 'it is in human nature to gather the cosmos in love'. This was broken down into two sections, the first of which concerned what is meant by attributing this activity to human nature, and the second focussed on the extent to which we are pushing the physical aspect of the word 'gather'.

In section 4.1 we looked at Maximus' claim that virtues are natural to humans.

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[362]   Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 68.

This lead us into a discussion of the personal ascetic commitments implied by such a statement. We noted the simultaneous relationship of person and nature that necessitates both the grace of God, who restores nature and free will, and the agency of the person to turn toward God. I concluded this section with some thoughts on how we can apply the principle of simultaneous nature and hypostasis to the way we think about love and the virtues. I suggested that, from a personal, ascetic perspective, this kind of thinking might aid us in a more practical way to conceive of what we need to do to gather the cosmos in love.

In section 4.2, we then looked at what it meant to gather the cosmos in love, and how something physical could be moved through our ethical activity. It is important that we understand the literal way in which Maximus believes that the transfiguration of the cosmos through grace can come about here and now. This is related to the discussion that was had in 2.2.3. Because *theosis* belongs both to the end of time but also to the present, our actions here and now mean that divine love can transfigure the world now, and that we can partake in fractions of the glory that is yet to come. Maximus is dedicated to striving for the sanctification of the cosmos here and now – not just in the hope of eventual reward, but also in the manner of *epektasis* – constant struggling to deepen our knowledge of God in the present moment. This point is particularly crucial for the ideas that I will later draw out of these chapters – what we do now is paramount to now and the future. Like virtues which are simultaneous steps toward love, and the manifestation of love itself, our actions today and tomorrow and everyday after are not just steps on a ladder, they are also meaningful communion in *telos* in and of themselves.

The call for the human person to follow their nature is at once a profoundly personal and communal call. This is because it is a call to love that must be answered by *a* person, but the call to *love* is a call to a way of existing in relationship with others. We are called to be simultaneously one and many through Christ's love. For, in the moment we are united to God, we are united with every single part of creation, and all divisions are overcome. What we have in Maximus' understanding of virtue and love is a deeply personal and communal ethics. His cosmic theology describes the radical choice laid before every human to love all things the way Christ loved and does love all things. We are called to simultaneous personal free choice and communal

dependence. In my next chapter I take this understanding of personal choice to live in communal love and suggest that under our current political framework, there is no place either for personal choice or for communal love.

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~ Chapter 5: The Modern Borders of Love ~

'The means of the state conflict with Maximian virtues and *telos*'

5.0 INTRODUCTION

5.0.1 Personal Practice as Communal Ethics
In the previous chapter I considered the interrelation of metaphysics and ethics in Maximus' theology. I explained that human ethical conduct has the ability to unite the cosmos or destroy the relationship between the created and uncreated. The way humans act does not just have immediate personal ramifications, but also binds or breaks the cosmos. The things we do either allow love to flourish, or are part of problem – allowing hatred, division, greed, alienation, and oppression to dictate our relationships. Our personal ascetic practices present us with a vision for communal life. Already in every discussion of virtue, of love, of participation in Christ, and anticipation of *theosis* – we have an ethics that is simultaneously personal and communal. We saw in Chapter 2 that the Eucharist and Divine Liturgy serve as windows into the eschaton, anticipating a final *telos* of unity with God. We also saw in Chapter 3 however, that the virtues are love, and love is God Himself. With the ability to receive virtue and work towards embodying God's love in the world, every activity in our lives has the potential to be a place where God's love is embodied. Though the Divine Liturgy is a special place, unique in its uplifting of all creation to God, it is the task of humans to strive toward such consummation in all life, as evidenced by the continual place and purpose of ascetic striving in even the very smallest things we do. Our ethics becomes about continually striving to bring Christ's love to all we see and touch. As discussed in Chapter 4, there is no personal practice that is not communal in its outworking – by merit of the goal of personal *ascesis* being love, we are talking about actions that include others as well as ourselves. We do not *acquire* virtue, but seek to make space for it within us. The ethics we draw from St Maximus' theology lends itself not to concrete visions of political structures, but rather to a continual and

perpetual striving for space for love. The eschatological *telos* that we anticipate, after all, is for Maximus a cosmic reunion that is brought about through human receptivity to love here in this world. I wish to show that a dedication to the *telos* and growth of virtue in Maximian theology may have a far reaching impact not just on our personal day-to-day actions, but on our entire conception of the socio-political and economic structures we find ourselves living in.

It is my contention in this chapter that the present social structures in which we live inhibit love and have no place for the communal vision that arises from the ethics we find in Maximus' theology. When we think of virtue and seek to follow the commandment of love, we become aware of the way in which our lives harm others and the way that the structures in our communities institutionalise and rationalise these hurtful relationships. In this chapter I take apart our dogged attachment to the state as a facilitator of human relation, and characterise it as incompatible with the daily practices and vision of love that Maximus calls natural and necessary for human beings. In Chapter 6, I then go on to suggest more imaginative ways of organising human community, challenging any assumption that a state structure is the be-all-and-end-all of possible societies. Following on from the preceding chapters, I instead suggest that we allow our ethics to define the kind of relationships we wish to have with one another and build communities more capable of holding themselves accountable this love. Given the teleological character of this ethics and the importance of personal striving for the love of Christ, and also given Maximus' understanding of the simultaneity of the cosmic and ascetic, its seems bizarre to me that we should not also strive to embody the love of Christ in the way we organise our wider relations with one another.

The best way to present the preceding chapters as cohesive is, I think, to give a example of the way in which it might direct our practical ethics today. There are many ways one could begin a critique of the state, including not least its historical existence and the manner in which it first came into being as an instrument of oppression that protected property and power belonging to the few from the many. The route I have taken however, is one that fits more neatly into a virtue ethics paradigm of virtues and *telos,* and that allows me to focus on the problems right here and now that the state creates. One might concede that the state has its origins in a barbaric form of inequity

and violence, but then claim that today it is altogether more civilised and a force for good. The shape of my argument is chosen with this criticism in mind and to demonstrate that the state is still irredeemably problematic in its inherent structure and the way it orders the lives of human beings. The claim I make in this chapter then is that 'the means of the state conflict with Maximian virtues and *telos*'. I construct my argument by first identifying the state as a way of human living. In defining it as a mode of human existence, I equate the means of the states (the way it goes about operating), as not the act of an alien reified other, but as activity chosen by persons. Some personal acts weigh in with more strength that others, but it is the consistent carrying out by every person of their expected roles that allows states to have the power that they do. I thus equate the 'means' of the state as being in direct opposition to the virtues of Maximus' ethics, since they both represent modes of being that we choose to partake in (*tropoi*). I then identify key modes of state operation and demonstrate the way in which they fail the standards of Christian virtue and *telos* as outlined by Maximus.

5.0.2 A Method for Ethical Critique

The method I adopt for approaching this chapter is adapted from the current way in which environmental ethics draws on Maximus' thought. In a paper called *Man and Cosmos in St Maximus the Confessor*, Louth describes his reasons for discussing Maximus' theology in relation to contemporary environmental crises. He asks, how much of Maximus' cosmological thinking can we still think today, given that there are so many differences in our comprehension of the universe today as compared to then?[363] In answer to this, Louth writes:

> Maximus sees the universe given meaning by the *logoi* through which creatures
> participate in God. Science sees the universe as governed by laws to which humans
> can give mathematical expression. But for all the impersonal objectivity of
> mathematics, it is only humans that can know it and understand it. The same seems to

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[363] A similar approach is also taken by Anestis Keselopoulos who frames contemporary environmental and political crises as theological failures. He therefore sees Maximus as a vital resource for addressing a deficiency in theological grounding for ethics today. Cf. A. Keselopoulos, 'The Prophetic Charisma in Pastoral Theology: Asceticism, Fasting and the Ecological Crisis' in *Toward an Ecology,* 356-64.

be true at the other end of the scale: for instance, the discovery of how all living beings are structured by DNA. Again, it is only to reason that these complex codes can yield any meaning, despite the tendency of some to anthropomorphize and speak, for example, of the 'selfish gene'.[364]

Louth explains that the hypotheses we make about the world still only make sense and have meaning and utility because of human observation. Human inquiry and comprehension of the world and our place in it is a theme essential to Maximus' thought. Louth argues that there is very much still a place for Maximus' thinking in contemporary thought and that "all this suggests that much of the vision of St Maximus can be rethought in terms of current science".[365] However, he asks, just because we *can* rethink Maximus' thought in this way "why bother?".[366] An answer he offers is:

> Over the last few centuries, science has vastly expanded our understanding of the development of the cosmos, the history of life on this planet, and the details of the structures of living beings. But in so doing, there has been a lost sense of the whole, of the interrelationship between the vast and the tiny, the technical and the meaningful.[367]

He calls Maximus' vision "more than an intellectual theory", writing that it is "this sense of coherence revealed in a profound coinherence of everything in God through the Logos, who is the many *logoi*, that the vision of Maximus may help us recover".[368] Louth suggests that Maximus' vision could gift to contemporary thought this rich understanding of a cosmos that is interconnected, interdependent and coinheres in God. Louth thus contextualises Maximus' thought within Maximus' own time *and*

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[364] Louth, *Man and Cosmos,* 70.
[365] Much work is currently being done in this area due to the resurgence of interest in Maximus' work and its potential for contemporary ethics. For example, Paul Blowers discusses the compatibility of Maximus' doctrine of the *logoi* with the theory of evolution: P. Blowers, 'Unfinished Creative Business: Could Maximus the Confessor's Protology and Doctrine of Creaturely Logoi Support an Evolutionary Theodicy?' in *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Cultivating a Christian Theology of Creation* D. Meconi (ed.)(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
[366] Louth, *Man and Cosmos,* 70.
[367] Louth, *Man and Cosmos,* 70.
[368] Louth, *Man and Cosmos,* 71.

presents his theology as relevant for today. Maximus' thought is not presented as an antithesis to contemporary mathematical and scientific tools or as the same as them, but is instead a different way of seeing the world. As two living traditions that aid humans to seek understanding in the world, Louth sees no contradiction in how the two can interact and help us to recover those things which are necessary for our spiritual growth.

As agents moulded by our own time and place, there is an honesty to acknowledging our desire to learn from ethical lessons from the past. We, as contemporary theologians in our own time and place in history, can find utility in Maximus' theological interpretations, while recognising that the difficulties of the present day are unique to us. We are the key part in interpreting and reworking Maximus' thought – not as invisible translators of his work – but as visible agents in our own time finding refuge in his wisdom, and interpreting faithfully to his intentions, but anew for our own contemporary troubles. The common thread between our own thought and Maximus' is that we are still dealing with a framework that concerns the human heart and how to love. As explained in Chapters 3 and 4, love does not change, since it is God, shared with us through Christ and the Spirit. What we are doing in our study of virtues and ethics then, is trying to understand what that love might look like in our own day. It has been the premise of this thesis that St Maximus is a useful dialogue partner in helping us to find out what this is. There are obviously many ways in which Maximus' situation differs from ours. When, for example, one considers the relevance of Maximus' thought for environmental ethics, the context of Maximus is kept so that we acknowledge that the current environmental crisis is unique to our own time now. The precise political and climatological situation we are in is not one that Maximus shared. The dimension of Maximus' thought that *is* relevant, is in so far that his theology stays true to a Gospel that concerns how humans are to live. The theological visions that Maximus explores provides us with a framework for thinking about how humans and the rest of creation move toward *theosis.* Both his metaphysical underpinning and his ascetic advice concern *ways* of living that we can apply as tools to our very different present situation. We do not need to have the same context or scientific knowledge as our sources in order to find utility in what they have to say about the human condition.

We do not, for example, have to try and prove that Maximus was an environmental activist in his own day in order to justify our own choice to use his theology as a basis for the integrity of creation today. As we have seen in Louth's choice to think about Maximian ideas in the context of the present day, we are not putting weight in an argument because it is what we think Maximus would have done, but rather are taking his thought as we might a teacher's, who has helped us to read Scripture in more depth, and whose thought we consequently we build on to try and live Christ's love in the world today.

Like the environmental ethics example above, one could have an interesting discussion about whether Maximus in his own time had reservations over one form of governance or another, but my critique of the state arises only from the way in which I am applying what I believe to be the logical ends to Maximus' ethics in my own day. Given the cosmic interpretation Maximus gives of Christ's love, to what extent is it acceptable for us as Christians to consent to being a part of the state? Given the way that the state operates, the history it arises from, and the assumptions it makes of human existence and co-existence, how useful is it for us as Christians to advocate it, and might it be necessary to protest its existence or seek out more preferable modes of community? Whilst I do not give an exhaustive account of the functions of the state, in the course of this chapter I claim that there is reason enough to seriously doubt whether living within and participating in states is compatible with the Christ-like love of Maximian ethics. In the next chapter I go on to talk about alternatives to this kind of political body and a future direction in which we might turn our efforts. But for this chapter, I confine myself solely to critiquing the state and presenting the case for its incompatibility with the mode of living suggested by Maximus.

5.0.3 Anarchist Critics of State Means

To present my case, I define what I mean by the state, locating its definition in the modes of its existence. I argue that two primary means of the state are coercive force and continual creation of national identity. I do this by presenting case studies from the UK supported by the analyses of a number of political theorists. It is important at this stage that my critique is solely a political one – I intend the first half of this chapter (5.2) to be descriptive arguments concerning the state and its functions, before

going on in the latter half of this chapter (5.3) to analyse the compatibility of these means with Maximian ethics. This allows for a political and economic description of the state's functions which I will then consider from a theological dimension. I thus distinguish between descriptive analysis of the state through its means and operations, and a normative critique that evaluates whether these should be supported given a commitment to a Maximian understanding of virtue, cosmic movement, and *telos*.[369]

The political commentators I draw on come from different strands in one of the greatest political traditions of state critique – anarchist theory. I draw from key commentators today and also classical theorists from the past who fall into the general category of anarchist thinkers, or who at least are familiar with the criticisms put forward in anarchist theory. Anarchist theory does not often see mainstream treatment in ethics, but I believe many arguments put forward by its proponents require more full treatment than has hitherto been given in contemporary ethics, especially when it comes to evaluating institutions like the state. Although I draw heavily on the critiques of anarchist theorists, it is the weight of primary source analysis that I hope will lend credence to my interest in this way of thinking. What anarchism *is* is less relevant here, as I am more interested in using the critical arguments put forward that affirm an alternative to the state at this point (although I will treat further on this topic in the next chapter.)

In order to demonstrate the claim *the means of the state conflict with Maximian virtues and telos,* the chapter will be in three parts. 5.1 will consider terminological definitions, establishing what I mean by the state and my reasons for choosing it as the object of critique. In 5.2 I provide a descriptive analysis of the state and its means, demonstrating how it functions with reference in particular to the investigative research done by American political theorist and linguist Noam Chomsky and supported with primary evidence. In 5.3 I provide a normative overview of the state's functions, critiquing its methods in light of the virtues and methods provided by Maximian ethics, and giving further evidence to suggest that the state should be

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[369] This allows for a degree of continuity with other ethicists and political commentators, who, though they might have a different normative approach with a different *telos* in mind, can still see the logic in a methodological framework that considers what the state is, followed by why this is problematic given the parameters of a specific moral system.

opposed by those seeking to implement an ethics informed by Maximus' theology. I conclude by suggesting that given these observations, it must be preferable for an ethics informed by Maximus to consider supporting and developing alternative ways of communal living and organising, to be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.1 MENTAL FURNITURE OF THE WORLD

To demonstrate one of the ways in which we may apply Maximian ethics in our day-to-day lives, I use this chapter to critique the state. I suggest that the means of the state are incompatible with the virtues and *telos* in Maximus' theology. There are a number of reasons why I have chosen the state as the subject of this chapter: the first concerns what the state is, and the second concerns the place it occupies within our thought.

5.1.1 What is the State?

Firstly then, what is the state? The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the State as "a sovereign political power or community" or "the territory occupied by such a community".[370] But what do we mean when we refer to something by its power or its territory? How are we ascribing agency to something that is defined in terms of power or place? Power belongs to something and must be enacted by someone, as Maximus reminds us in the dyothelete controversy of his day.[371] This kind of way of talking about the state seems to mystify the source of its agency, obscuring its capabilities, actions, responsibilities and existence to the point where it becomes unclear what exactly we are referring to at any moment or how one can go about critiquing it. The idea that the state is 'community' at least allows us to start locating a source for its agency. Who then is the state? At least by implication in the definition above there seems to be a sense in which it is not just those with the most power in a state who are called 'the state' but also all those who caught up and included in its extended mechanisms.

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[370] W. T. McLeod & P. Hanks (eds.) "State" in *Collins Concise Oxford Dictionary.* (Glasgow: Collins, 1987 (First ed. 1982)), 1135.
[371] Maximus, *Pyrrh.,* PG91 292D-293B.

For the German anarchist Gustav Landauer[372] (1870 - 1919) the state was not something to be considered in abstract terms like 'power' and 'territory' or even in terms of 'community' where community refers exclusively to those more heavily involved in orchestrating the doings of the state. The state was instead the way that all involved in it had *chosen* to act:

> The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.[373]

Landauer suggests that we ought to think of the state and any human organisation as persons in relation. Under this reading, the state is not an *it*, or even a *them*, it's an *us*. Most of us were never given a chance to opt out of this community, but the way that we behave and allow ourselves to be directed and controlled is, according to Landauer's definition, what makes up the state. This might not be a comfortable definition, but the alternative is to somehow start deconstructing the interwoven mechanisms of the state – do we call the politicians who pass legislation 'the state', or the civil service who run all the day to day functions, or the police who enforce law and order, or the military who are the final body called upon to enforce order, or local councils who enact government laws at a local level, or the private corporations who lobby and direct so many legislative interests. There is perhaps a good argument for considering all these to be the state, but for the state to maintain power and control, the vast majority of people need to conform to a certain kind of behaviour. Without this behaviour, Landauer suggests, the state would cease to exist.

This leads us to a definition of the state in terms of how far its control can be maintained. If we continue with Landauer's idea which implies that the vast majority of people need to conform to a certain kind of behaviour for the state to maintain its existence, then the state only exists in so far as it can maintain control over its

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[372] Marshall credits Landauer as the most important German anarchist thinker after Max Stirner: P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism.* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008 (First ed. 1992))*,*410; Woodcock credits Landauer along with Erich Muechsam and Rudolf Rocker as being one of three outstanding German anarchist thinkers. G. Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements.* (London: Penguin Books, 1986 (First ed. 1962)), 362.

[373] G. Landauer, cited in C. Ward, *Anarchy in Action.* (London: Freedom Press, 2008 (First ed. 1973)) (First Published in 'Weak Statesmen, Weaker People' in *Der Sozialist* (1910)), 30.

members. There are a number of forms such a control might take, some of which will be explored later, but arguably the last resort through which the state can exert control is through coercive force. In the thesis introduction, I illustrated Aristotle Papanikolaou's use of Patristic (and in particular Maximian) sources for contemporary ethics. I explained that my approach is very different to Papanikolaou's and that ultimately his conclusion that the liberal state is the best place for the Church to flourish[374] seems more like a concession than a logical continuation of love in Maximian theology. Despite these methodological differences and radically different conclusions, Papanikolaou does not shy away from conceding, as Zizioulas did, that (1) the state is coercive[375] and (2) that this is extremely problematic for the Church.[376] He writes that "Zizioulas elaborates on the paradoxical fact that although the law should be designed to protect the uniqueness and freedom that is constitutive of personhood, it does so through the threat of coercion,"[377] and goes on to quote Zizioulas saying "Personhood, by very definition, abhors coercion and thirsts after freedom. The law, by its very nature, contains elements of coercion to the point of depriving liberty in order to – how paradoxical – secure freedom".[378] I have a number of problems with this passage – firstly, this description of personhood thirsting after freedom, for example, is characterised in opposition to the restrictions of society. This implies that the freedom being talked about here is the more traditional one we might find in J.S. Mill – freedom of the individual to do as one wishes,[379] rather than the freedom we encounter in Maximus which is expressed in contrast to what is necessary by nature. Furthermore, this 'paradox', as Zizioulas and Papanikolaou present it, is one

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[374]   This is an oversimplification of the nuance in Papanikolaou's argument, but I defended this characterisation of his conclusion in this thesis introduction.

[375]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 126.

[376]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 126-7. When talking of the Church, Papanikolaou and I assume that Maximus' *telos* of *theosis* are received as vital theological contributions to the life of the Church. In theory this is the case for the Orthodox Church to which Papanikolaou is referring. In theory it could also be received by any other Chalcedonian Church, since Maximus is universally recognised as a saint by all Chalcedonian Churches. In actuality, positions like that of Aquinas and Augustine have been much stronger in western traditions. Aquinas and Augustine put forward positions much more amenable to state structures, particularly since they defend violence and coercion in some forms. I consider some of these differences in the next chapter (6.1.3.1) where I briefly point out how an Augustinian understanding of Just War is irreconcilable to Maximian ethics.

[377]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 126.

[378]   J. Zizioulas, "Law and Personhood in Orthodox Theology" in *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today,* (Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2010), 411. Cited in Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 126.

[379]   Discussed further in 6.1.1.1.

that is later affirmed as necessary rather than explored as an irreconcilable dichotomy. Papanikolaou follows Zizioulas's theology and uses this distinction to ground what will become one of his most important conclusions in the book – namely that there is a political sphere and an ecclesial sphere and that, while the two are always different, the ecclesial sphere can maintain its most important freedoms whilst existing within the political sphere of the liberal state. However, this is not at present what matters and I do not intend to argue with this position here. The point about freedom and the different way Maximus uses it to those in post-Enlightenment philosophy is explained in detail in Chapter 6, while the dichotomy of the state's methods as compared to the Church's goals is the topic of this chapter. My point in using Papanikolaou and Zizioulas here is to illustrate that, even in a position that ultimately defends the state, the state is recognised as violent, coercive, and problematic for a theology of love and freedom. Papanikolaou takes this further and also affirms that "If the law is premised on the necessity for coercion, then it is also premised on fear, which further distinguishes the state from the church, the latter being the realization of love."[380]

The claim that the state is necessarily coercive can be traced back to Max Weber, who in 1919 wrote that "Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific *means* peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force."[381] If we look for further clarification on this, we can find Weber writing that

> Of course, force is certainly not the normal or the only means of the state – nobody says that – but force is a means specific to the state. Today the relation between the state and violence is an especially intimate one... Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory... The state is considered the sole source of the 'right' to use violence.[382]

Weber points out, violence[383] is not the *sole* means of the state and he acknowledges

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[380]   Papanikolaou, *Mystical as Political,* 126-7.
[381]   M. Weber, "Politics and Vocation" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* H.H. Gerth, H.H & C. Wright Mills, (trans. & eds.) (New York: Routledge, 2009 (First delivered 1919), 77-8.
[382]   Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", 78.
[383]   I am aware that I use the terms 'coercion' and 'violence' interchangeably, and that the definition of these terms is highly contentious in fields of political theory. Without straying too far into fields that

that it clearly also operates in other ways. It is however the only political entity that is considered to have "the sole source of the 'right' to use violence" and "claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force". We could thus alter our definition to say that that the state is all its citizens, in so far as they have been compelled (by one way or another) to conform to a certain way of behaving.

Weber's claim seems particularly prescient today, in an age where states are involved in combating terrorism. In an article assessing the use of the word terrorism, Noam Chomsky writes that rather than *defining* the term 'terrorism' and seeking instances of the phenomenon, it has been the almost exclusive practice of both governments and media bodies "to begin with the thesis that terrorism is the responsibility of some officially designated enemy".[384] From there the practice is to "then designate terrorist acts as 'terrorist' just in the cases where they can be attributed (whether plausibly or not) to the required source; otherwise they are to be ignored, suppressed, or termed 'retaliation' or 'self-defence'".[385] The terminological difference Chomsky describes is one that supports Weber's thesis that state violence is legitimate violence. When a state holds the monopoly on violence, 'retaliation' or 'self-defence' become applicable to their modes of operation. Where the monopoly on violence is not held, the activities of such perpetrators are much more likely to be designated 'terrorist'. There is an acceptability and a legitimacy to the violence perpetrated by a state that points to the continued validity of Weber's thesis today.

The definition of the state I am proposing is one that recognises it both as being *us*, the citizens whose collective behaviour make its existence possible, but also one that recognises it as the collective interests of certain people, and the capability to enforce those interests upon those who disagree with them. In other words, we make up the state and help enforce the state with our behaviour, but that does not mean we have equal (or any) representation in the interests that the state enforces. The state is the sum total of its participants' behaviour, but within this web of relationships there

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I cannot do full justice to here, I am using these terms to refer to imposing on and forcing others to act in a certain way against their will. I do not restrict this to physical force, but in most of the following examples it is these physical elements that are the topic of discussion.

[384] N. Chomsky, "International Terrorism: Image and Reality" in *Western State Terrorism.* A.L. George (ed.) 12-38. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). This version Noam Chomsky's Official Website, *Chomsky.Info:* https://chomsky.info/199112__02/ (Accessed 09.06.17).

[385] Chomsky, "International Terrorism".

is a power imbalance that grants a minority some form of administrative control over the majority. For such a minority to retain control this power imbalance must remain in place. For Hume, it seemed absurd to suggest that this minority control was maintained by coercive force, since it appeared to him that a majority of force is always on the side of the governed. He suggests that government by a minority must be therefore exist by consent and complicity of the governed.[386] In his essay *Containing the Threat of Democracy*, Chomsky assesses the validity of Hume's claim and allows that there is truth to the claim that all government is founded on some measure of consent. For this reason, he maintains, the control of thought is also important: "The public must be reduced to passivity in the political realm, but for submissiveness to become a reliable trait, it must be entrenched in the realm of belief as well. The public are to be observers, not participants, consumers of ideology as well as products."[387] Chomsky proposes that while the origins of the state have their roots in violence, it is primarily the maintenance of passivity through the *threat* of violence that preserves the state. A key element of maintaining control and therefore of defining the state, is its ability to manufacture consent[388] and claim a monopoly on the use of force, thus allowing a minority to wield power.

Jason Lindsey, who wrote a monograph on methods of state control and power, writes that key to the development of the state is the formation of ideology. He follows Marx in believing that ideology functions, firstly, as a way of taking something historically contingent and turning in it into an everlasting universal, and secondly as a means of explaining "the order of things so that everyone theoretically benefits, not just the class in charge".[389] He argues that ideology is therefore a product of class antagonism, created in order to justify and conceal inequity. Lindsey writes that ultimately "theories of political legitimacy can be deconstructed as efforts to conceal this kernel of violence that is the real foundation for the state. The sanctions

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[386] D. Hume, "Of the First Principles of Government" in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*. E. F. Miller (ed.) (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987 (First ed. 1742)), Part I Essay IV. This version: Library of Economics and Liberty: http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL4.html (Accessed 09.06.17).

[387] N. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy" in *Chomsky on Anarchism.* B. Pateman (ed.) (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2009) (First ed. 1969) (Essay first published 1990)), 155.

[388] A term first coined in E.S. Herman & N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

[389] J.R. Lindsey, *The Concealment of the State.* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 11.

the state applies are so certain and absolute because they ultimately can be backed by violence to the individual resisting them".[390] Lindsey's position allows us to affirm that we are both a part of the state as its citizens, since our agency and complicity is to a degree required, but that such a definition does not eradicate the conflict of interests that exist with a state. The us and them language traditionally described in terms of class is an inevitable feature of a social structure that concentrates power and wealth in the hands of the few. The class antagonism Lindsey mentions is thus a consistent reminder that the state is premised on violent relationships and existence of a monopoly on coercive force. Lindsey identifies ideology as a key way for that monopoly on coercive force to be maintained by a minority, describing one of the most important functions of ideology as allowing individuals serving the state to believe that maintaining the power of the state is for the common good, and to believe that "Without these forces, how can one right wrongs in society and protect the vulnerable?"[391] The normalisation of the state's methods and power becomes a key way of maintaining control and removing it from a sphere of arbitration and ethical consideration.

In his essay on *Society and the State*, Martin Buber describes a further interrelation between violence and national identity that the state relies on for consolidation and control. He writes that "the fact that every people feel itself threatened by the others gives the state its definite unifying power; it depends upon the instinct of self-preservation of society itself; the latent external crisis enables it to get the upper hand in internal crises".[392] External crisis and the use of violence abroad can be used to create an identity and an ideology of nationhood. Naomi Klein argued that the Falkland War was a precisely an excuse for this kind of control at home. She claimed that conflict could have been avoided in the Falklands but that this that helped both Thatcher's government in the UK and Galtieri's in Argentina to maintain control at home.[393] The business of maintaining power for a minority becomes a balance of coercion that is supplemented by ideological justification. A monopoly on violence is kept, but so too is a kind of monopoly on ideology. Freedom of thought can be

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[390]   Lindsey, *Concealment*, 59.
[391]   Lindsey, *Concealment*, 12.
[392]   M. Buber, 'Society and State', *World Review* 27 (London, 1951), cited in Ward, *Anarchy,* 30.
[393]   N. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine.* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 137.

directed into avenues in which it is relatively harmless – our concerns become bound up in the nuances of the precise difference between a Conservative or Labour vote, rather than whether or not centralising power into the hands of the few will ever bring about a better quality of life for those who have nothing.

I define the state as being *us,* but also affirm that it represents a power imbalance where a minority are able to maintain control through a monopoly on violence. Like Lindsey, I consider ideology to be a key way that states maintain control, and I spend time in particular looking at nationalism as an ideology that simultaneous creates unity and xenophobia as systems of control. Coercive force and nationalist ideology as key means of the state will be explored in section 5.1.2. I claim that these means of the state, as a mode of human operation, have very little in common with the *tropos* of virtue and love that our *logoi* point us toward. Prior to this, I wish to give a defence of my choice to focus on the state in this chapter.

5.1.2 Why the State?

In choosing to analyse the state, I wish to demonstrate that it is an undesirable mode of human existence that is fundamentally reliant on means that are contrary to Maximian virtues and *telos.* Ethics orientated toward the cosmic *telos* that Maximus describes does not fit well into any political agenda. It does not serve any current mode of governance, political subscription or policy. I have chosen to focus on the state because it seems not to be an obvious choice.[394] In 1851, the French philosopher, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) wrote:

> ... government has always been presented to men's minds as the natural agent of justice, the protection of the weak and the keeper of peace. As a result of this

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[394] We can see for example from a brief survey of the conference topics of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics over the last thirty-four years (Society for the Study of Christian Ethics: http://www.ssce.org.uk/conferences (Accessed 30.01.2017)), where conference titles concern a topic in particular, they focus on issues that arise from within the state, rather than lending themselves to critiques of this entire mode of human conduct. Eg. 2013 Security and Surveillance, 2011 Sport, 2007 Managerialism, 2004 Public Theology and Bioethics, 2003 Ethics of Education, 2000 Banking and Debt, 1999 Media Ethics, 1997 Euthanasia. One could conclude that the apparatus of the state has tended to remain invisible in Christian ethics. There are well established streams of Christian ethical thought like that of Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, Eco-Theology that concern specific failures of the state to address equality and harmful human activity, but tradition of Christian ethics concerned with state itself is comparatively minor. (For a summative overview of Christian anarchist thinkers, see Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism*, 1-26).

> providential and sacrosanct attribute, government ensconced itself in men's hearts and minds alike. It became part of the mental furniture of the world: it was the citizens' faith, their innermost and invincible superstition.[395]

Proudhon's concern that the state has become part of the 'mental furniture of the world' is precisely the reason why it cannot escape our ethical scrutiny. It is never absurd that anything should be undermined by ethics. There should be no part of human society that is beyond the realm of ethical scrutiny. The state is not mental furniture of the present day – omnipotent and immovable in its performing of background necessities – but a historical body created by human behaviour. How it came about, how it acquired and maintains power – all of these are important in an ethical assessment of the state, especially since it is held by many that the state ultimately still protects those ends for which it was originally set up. One of the key tenets leading to the development of anarchist intellectual thought, according to Peter Marshall, is precisely the growth of critical thinking considering the historical existence of the state and the functions it performs in the present. In his history of anarchism, Marshall notes that "… it became increasingly clear to bold and independent reasoners that while states and governments theoretically intended to prevent injustice, they had in fact only perpetuated oppression and inequality. The state with its coercive apparatus of law, courts, prisons and army came to be seen not as the remedy but rather the principal cause of social disorder".[396] We can see this position developed more clearly by Noam Chomsky. In an essay investigating the philosophical history of the language of freedom, Chomsky looks at critics of the mode and formation of the state. Citing Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1775), he notes:

> Rousseau argues that civil society is hardly more than a conspiracy by the rich to guarantee their plunder. Hypocritically, the rich call upon their neighbours to "institute regulations of justice and peace to which all are obliged to conform, which make an exception of no one, and which compensate in some way for the caprices and

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[395]   P. Proudhon, 'The Authority Principle' in *No Gods No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism.* D. Guérin (ed.) P. Sharkey (trans.) 81-98 (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005 (First ed. 1980) (Essay first published 1851)), 82.

[396]   P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, x.

fortune by equally subjecting the powerful and the weak to mutual duties". [...] Thus society and laws "gave new fetters to the weak and new forces to the rich, destroyed natural freedom for all time, established forever the law of property and inequality, changed a clever usurpation into an irrevocable right and for the profit of a few ambitious men henceforth subjected the whole human race to work, servitude and misery."[397]

Rousseau's essay, based on an Enlightenment principle of appealing to freedom as a natural property of human beings, argued that the means by which property and power were seized by a wealthy elite were unjustifiable and therefore illegitimate. The cementing of the role of the state and the creation of law were tied, Rousseau argued, to justifying the seizing and usurping of land and property and ensuring that this acquisition could not be undone and had the political and coercive apparatus to maintain its continued inequity. Though the philosophical reasoning is based on this assumption of freedom being integral right belonging to human nature,[398] much easier to synthesise with Maximian thought is the more raw appeal Rousseau makes elsewhere in the essay:

> "Do you not know that a multitude of your brethren die or suffer from need of what you have in excess, and that you needed express and unanimous consent of the human race to appropriate for yourself anything from common subsistence that exceeded your own?" It is contrary to the law of nature that "a handful of men be glutted with superfluities while the starving multitude lacks necessities."[399]

Rousseau's appeal places the injustices that the state perpetuates in its protection of property into an ethical perspective. Whilst still framed in terms of Enlightenment understandings of law and justice, the suffering caused by the inequity of wealth is a topic very familiar to early Christian and Byzantine writings.[400] The accusation that

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[397]   N. Chomsky, "Language and Freedom" in *Chomsky on Anarchism,* 103.
[398]   I discuss the differences between Byzantine and Enlightment concepts of freedom in 6.3.1.1. 'Rights' language in general is a topic I am steering clear from as I believe it is too politically loaded a term to be useful in this ethical discourse. The notion is a legal one that requires the coercive power of the state to uphold and maintain, making it tautological to employ in a critique of the state.
[399]   Chomsky, "Language and Freedom", 103 (citing Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1775)).
[400]   Eg. Acts 2:45; Acts 4:32; J. Wortley (ed. & trans.) *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers: A Select Edition and Complete English Translation.* 'The Quarrel', N.352/17.26; Gregory Nazianzus,

the state is instrumental to the protection of forcefully appropriated property is an extremely problematic one for those looking to live by Maximian ethics. As I explain in the next section, the mode in which the state operates and the ends that the state upholds can be directly paralleled to the meta-ethical paradigm of virtue and *telos* we are working with. Coercive means and dedication to preserving the privileges of the powerful and wealthy have nothing to do with the means and end of Maximian ethics. If the state does operate by these means with this *telos* in mind, then it is in direct opposition to the ethical life we are called to.

At the 1880 Congress of the Jura Federation, attended by the influential anarchist theorists and geographers Peter Kropotkin and Elisée Reclus, there were concerns that the ends that the state worked for had very little interest in the human as a person, and that consequently the means it operated by have very little regard for human freedom. The Federation went further to say that the state exists as a convenience, overriding many of ethical objections to its means by sheer force of it providing so many necessary amenities. They effectively argue that the magnitude of what the state is and does, occludes many attempts to hold it accountable for those things we disagree with.[401] Their argument is similar to Proudhon's earlier, where, because it is inconvenient to critique the state, alternatives to its existence and even critical thought about its operations and relationships are pushed to one side. The Federation therefore put forward an extremely important reason for critiquing the state, which is that its conveniences cannot absolve it of its deficiencies and dangers, and that we cannot allow present day complacency to direct ethical undertakings.

Another reason to consider the state as the topic of critique is its role and relation to law. Kropotkin suggests that the relationship between law and the state is a very close one and that, as in Rousseau's critique, the primary purpose of law is to protect the interests of the few.[402] Kropotkin suggests that historically the growth of

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Oratio IVX De Pauperum Amore (Oration 14 On Love of the Poor), J. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca (vol. 35)*, (Paris, 1857), 857-910*;* Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1247C-1204B.

[401] D. Guérin (ed.) "The 1880 Congress of the Jura Federation" in *No Gods No Masters,* 289-290.

[402] A position of recurring importance to anarchist thinkers is that removing law does not equate a propagation of chaos. Instead it is believed by a number of theorists that the ability to form agreements between people and live in a society comprised of free co-operation and mutual aid is not only possible but proven to be an alternative to state (and violent) imposition of law. This is the main topic of Kropotkin's essay *Law and Authority* (P. Kropotkin, *Law and Authority.* (London: William Reeves,1886.)Anarchist Archives: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/lawauthority.html (Accessed 09.06.17)),

laws as a system of governance is tied to reining in worse powers that previously ran rampant through the land. Using the example of the French Revolution, he writes that

> ... during and after the revolutions when the lawyers rose to power, they did their best to strengthen the principle upon which their ascendancy depended. The middle class at once accepted as a dyke to dam up the popular torrent. The priestly crew hastened to sanctify it, to save their bark from foundering amid the breakers. Finally the people received it as an improvement upon the arbitrary authority and violence of the past.

Kropotkin's observation that the law is the 'principle upon which their ascendancy depended' is a recurring critique of the relationship between the state and law. This passage echoes one that Proudhon wrote thirty-five years earlier in *The Authority Principle*,

> ... government, no matter how popular it may have been in its origins, has sided with the best educated and the wealthiest class against the poorest and most numerous one: that after having shown its liberal face for a time, it has gradually become exceptional and exclusive: finally, that instead of securing freedom and equality for all, it has toiled doggedly at destroying these things, on account of its natural predisposition towards privilege.[403]

What Proudhon calls the state's 'natural predisposition towards privilege', is for Kropotkin inseparable from the growth of law. Indeed, he implies that the growth of one is tied to the other, given that the law was created by those who held the monopoly of violence to enshrine power they had seized violently. We saw earlier that Rousseau similarly believes that society and law were about the establishment of power over the powerless and for the protection of property.[404] Kropotkin maintains however, that the contemporary use of law after the French Revolution is just as problematic as the accusations Rousseau made of the *Ancien Régime,* since laws now

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and of Proudhon's *The Authority Principle* (Proudhon, "Authority Principle" in *No Gods No Masters,* 81-98). An overview of this position as held to more broadly by anarchists is given in Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 21-22.

[403] Proudhon, "Authority Principle" in *No God No Masters*, 82.
[404] J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality.* P. Negri, & G. Boroson, (eds.) (New York: Dover Publications, 2004. (Essay first published 1775)).

uphold "the interests of consumer, priest and rich exploiter". In an assessment of the role of law within society, Kropotkin writes that "They [critics analysing law] study the characteristics of law, and instead of perpetual growth corresponding to that of the human race, they find its distinctive trait to be immobility, a tendency to crystallise what should be modified and developed day by day".[405] The failure of a society to be able to change and evolve is a critique of Kropotkin's that I shall come onto in more detail in the next chapter. However, in his criticism of the way that law 'crystallises what should be modified' is the accusation that currently society is unable to truly change in the face of suffering and dissidence. The belief that the state tends to entrench power further into the hands of the few arises from a certain criticism of law – namely the way it is wielded and whom it ultimately protects. Closely tied to the suggestion that law and the state serve an elite minority and protect their interests over and above those of other people, is the role of violence and the ability of the state to uphold such laws through coercive force. In an impassioned passage written shortly after his second incarceration, Kropotkin writes:

> They ask how law has been maintained, and in its service they see the atrocities of Byzantinism, the cruelties of the Inquisition, the tortures of the Middle Ages, living flesh torn by the lash of the executioner, chains, clubs, axes, the gloomy dungeons of prisons, agony, curses and tears. In our own days they see, as before, the axe, the cord, the rifle, the prison; on the one hand, the brutalised prisoner, reduced to the condition of a caged beast by the debasement of his whole moral being, and on the other hand, the judge, stripped of every feeling which does honour to human nature, living like a visionary in a world of legal fictions, revelling in the infliction of imprisonment and death, without even suspecting, in the cold malignity of his madness, the abyss of degradation into which he has himself fallen before the eyes of those whom he condemns.[406]

Contextually, Kropotkin is writing this passage during or shortly after his release from Clairvaux prison in France, having previously also been incarcerated in Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg. Both of these sentences were for holding views considered

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[405]   Kropotkin, *Law and Authority.*
[406]   Kropotkin, *Law and Authority*.

to be politically dissident. Kropotkin identifies the dehumanisation of not only the prisoner, but also the judge, and those caught up in the process, thereby propagating the criticism that not only the origins of the law, but also the way that it is enforced and carried through are problematic. He suggests that this is not justice, but yet another instance of the cruel use of power that degrades both the judge and the judged. It could be argued that in the United Kingdom this particular kind of political persecution is (theoretically) no longer existent, but Kropotkin's concern that the enforcing of laws has nothing to do with virtue in either the judge or the judged is still an important one for those considering Maximus' position. Previously, I raised Isaac the Syrian's concern that justice cannot be considered a Christian virtue for precisely Kropotkin's concerns. St Isaac proposes mercy as the opposite of justice. As I argued before, regardless of how fully one agrees with Isaac, it is certainly worth time and thought to consider how such judgement as that required of our legal systems fits in with an ethics that has love as its *telos*. The existence of a special kind of suffering permitted in our prisons, is arguably what holds up the legal systems of the state. Laws require violence on one end to uphold them, and suffering on the other to serve as punishment for breaking them. This chapter is reserved for critiquing the methods and means of the state, rather than suggesting alternatives (which is reserved for the next chapter), but admittance that the upholding of law is reliant on this suffering and violence adds another layer to Weber's premise that the state is defined by is monopoly on coercive force.

How the state operates and its ultimate aims have long been at the heart of critiques of the state. We can think about the way that the state operates and ask what ends are being aimed for, that these means are seen as acceptable. For someone like Rousseau, the means and ends of the state ran contrary to many of Enlightenment principles that he held to, not unlike a system of virtues and *telos*. For thinkers like Kropotkin, whose ethics arose more from an instinctive aversion to oppression and cruelty in human relationships,[407] there is again a system in place, however informal, that adheres to a certain concept of what is good, acceptable and desirable in human relations that the state fails to stand up for. Just as these thinkers have asked how the

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[407]   Though this would later feed into a theory of Mutual Aid and solidarity in the natural world. cf. P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist.* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971 (First ed. 1899)), 48-62, 338; See also 6.0.3.

state is justified within their own paradigms of ethical thought, so when applying Maximian ethics can we ask how the means and ends of the states we live in are justifiable when our aim is a *telos* of *theosis.*

5.2 MEANS OF STATE

Having defined what the state is and why it is worth talking about, I wish to demonstrate that not only are coercive force and the creation of ideology imperative for the formation of a state, but they continue to play a role in the day to day doings of a state. My purpose in doing so is to illustrate that, in giving our consent or allowing ourselves to be directed by the state, we are tacit in such modes of existence, and live our lives within the spaces that they create. As I mentioned before in my critique of Papanikolaou, it means that we accept some responsibility for the violence necessary to uphold the stability in our own lives. My claim in 5.3 will be that this trade-off is not good enough for one who truly wishes to live a loving mode of life. The stability we gain for ourselves comes at the cost of the persecution of others. Such a way of life is fundamentally opposed to Christ's words and the theology Maximus draws from them.

In this section I look at coercive force and the ideology behind national borders as means of the state. As there are limitations to what we can claim about a state in a generic capacity, I focus my critique on the United Kingdom and outline how coercive force and national borders are integral to the operation of the state in the UK. Although I am specific in my critique, I believe many of these criticisms also hold in a more generic capacity. Firstly, in section 5.2.1, I demonstrate the way that coercion is not only a founding principle of the state, but is still a live and very present means and mode of state operation. I look at standard police responses to peaceful political protest in the UK and demonstrate that coercive force continues to be a consistent state means of maintaining control. In section 5.2.2 I look at the way that the ideological language of us and them exists in the very way that the state conducts its operations, and directs its policy and enforcement of national borders. I look at the example of the UK Border Force and its public declarations of intent and conduct.

5.2.1 Coercive Force

It is difficult to assess the extent to which coercive force is officially sanctioned by a state as its primary means of operation. As we have seen, Chomsky and Klein suggest that a systemic reliance on violence to sway popular opinion or suppress it is integral to the state's continued existence, and the reliance of states on coercion is not too controversial a point to make. However for the purposes of this chapter I wish to demonstrate that coercive means are neither a relic of the past, nor always as secretive and subversive as the measures Chomsky and Klein express, and nor are such means solely reserved for those who break laws that the state has decreed. In doing so I intend to illustrate that this coercive means is not just lurking in the background, purely as a residual threat, but is structurally integral to the function of the state and represents a consistent means of state response. This means that in consenting to partake in the state, and we allow such means to establish the status quo in which we live and work. In section 5.3 I will come on to reasons why this is problematic for Maximian ethics, but here I briefly wish to demonstrate that the maintenance of the status quo and the creation of the spaces in which we live are dependent on state violence.

In the United Kingdom where expression of dissidence with the government in the form of protests is legal, regardless of the character of such protests, the go-to response of the state is to recognise such expressions as a threat and to treat with them violently. I defined the state as a community that contains a power imbalance where a minority are able to maintain control through a monopoly on violence. Despite an ideological stance that permits political protest, the reliance of the state on coercive force as means to maintaining order supersedes these ideological commitments. A concern along these lines was raised by the United Nations when reviewing the policing methods in the United Kingdom:

A trial on policing methods was brought before the European Court of Human Rights (hereafter ECHR) where police tactics in peaceful protests were brought to court in light of what the ECHR called a right to protest, freedom of expression, and assembly, which it claimed are of fundamental importance to all democratic societies.[408] On 15th March 2012, the ECHR ruled that the police operation to 'kettle'

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[408]   ECHR, quoted in P. Lewis "Human rights court backs police 'kettling'" *The Guardian.* 15th March

protesters in a demonstration in Oxford Circus, London 2001 was lawful.[409] The court found that "in the circumstances the imposition of an absolute cordon was the least intrusive and most effective means to be applied" and that "on the basis of the facts found by the trial judge, the court is unable to identify a moment when the measure changed from what was, at most, a restriction on freedom of movement to a deprivation of liberty".[410] The court noted that

> On the basis of these findings, the Court considered that the coercive nature of the containment within the cordon, its duration; and its effect on the applicants, in terms of physical discomfort and inability to leave Oxford Circus, pointed towards a deprivation of liberty. However, the Court also had to take into account the 'type' and 'manner of implementation' of the measure in question as the context in which the measure was imposed was significant. The cordon had been imposed to isolate and contain a large crowd in dangerous and volatile conditions. It was a measure of containment that had been preferred over more robust methods which might have given rise to a greater risk of injury. [...] In this context, the Court did not consider that the putting in place of the cordon had amounted to a 'deprivation of liberty'.[411]

In addition to this ruling, the court also added that "The Court underlined, however, that measures of crowd control should not be used by the national authorities directly or indirectly to stifle or discourage protest, given the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and assembly in all democratic societies" and that "Had it not remained necessary for the police to impose and maintain the cordon in order to prevent serious injury or damage, the "type" of the measure would have been different, and its coercive and restrictive nature might have been sufficient to bring it within article 5".[412] Paul Lewis, the Guardian journalist covering the ruling, concluded that

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2012. *The Guardian:* http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/mar/15/human-rights-court-police-kettling. (Accessed 09.06.17).

[409] ECHR, 'Article 5: Deprivation of liberty.' in *Information Note on the Court's case-law No. 150.* 7-9 (March 2012). Available online: *ECHR:* http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/CLIN_2012_03_150_ENG_906288.pdf (Accessed 31.01.17): "Containment of peaceful demonstration within a police cordon for over seven hours: Article 5 not applicable: no violation", 7.

[410] ECHR, 'Article 5: Deprivation of liberty', 9.

[411] ECHR, 'Article 5: Deprivation of liberty', 9.

[412] ECHR, 'Article 5: Deprivation of liberty', 9.

"The Met[413] did not respond to requests for comment. But the ruling is likely to be taken by police as a validation of kettling, which they argue is an invaluable tool to prevent disorder from spreading".[414]

On 23rd January 2013, the United Nations Special Rapporteur issued a press release detailing a statement on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association in the United Kingdom. In this statement, specific mention was made of the above ECHR ruling on kettling. The following is the full extract from the statement concerning it:

> Law enforcement authorities, when policing protests, have resorted on several occasions to the tactic of containment, also known as "kettling", which consists of deploying a police cordon around a group of protestors, often for long periods, with a view to enclosing them and preventing other protestors from joining the "kettled" group. The authorities have justified this tactic by the need to prevent violence and damage to property.
>
> The Special Rapporteur was particularly troubled to hear alarming stories of peaceful protestors, as well as innocent bystanders, including tourists, held for long periods with no access to water or sanitary facilities. The use of this tactic was challenged before British courts, most of which ruled in its favour. In 2009, the European Court of Human Rights in *Austin* v *United Kingdom* confirmed the decision of the British courts. While the Special Rapporteur takes note of these decisions, which by no means constitute a blanket endorsement of "kettling", he nevertheless believes that this tactic is intrinsically detrimental to the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, due to its indiscriminate and disproportionate nature.
>
> The practice of containment also undeniably has a powerful chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly, as also highlighted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In this connection, the Special Rapporteur was informed that many people refrained from exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly for fear of being "kettled". Finally, it appears that "kettling" has been used for intelligence gathering purposes, by compelling peaceful protestors, and even bystanders, to disclose their names and addresses as they leave the kettle, increasing the chilling effect it has on potential protesters.

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[413] 'Met' here and after refers to the Metropolitan Police Force of Greater London.
[414] Lewis, "Human rights" *The Guardian.*

The Special Rapporteur was also informed of allegations of excessive use of force further to the G20 London Summit in 2009, despite the aforementioned training provided to police forces. For instance, in December 2010 during protests in London against education cuts and higher education fees, the police reportedly "punch[ed] students who had their hands in the air, kick[ed] students who were on the floor, and ma[de] horse charges. 43 protesters were taken to hospital, [and] one student... had to undergo a three-hour brain operation for a stroke after being hit by a police truncheon". Some of the police officers covered their ID numbers and/or wore balaclavas, making it impossible to identify who was responsible. A number of peaceful protestors against the evacuation of travellers from Dale Farm on 19 October 2011 were also reportedly brutalized.[415]

Kettling continues to be used as tactic for containing protesters, regardless of whether there is any indication of violence. According to a list compiled on Wikipedia, kettling has been recorded as a major police tactic in the UK during protests in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2011.[416] Reports on Indymedia suggest this continues to be a regular present police response to protests of all kinds.[417]

As evidenced by the numerous court rulings, the law in these instances, protects the use of coercive state police tactics, despite, as attested to by an independent rapporteur, the infringement on an ideological commitment to 'freedom to protest' and the consequential criminalisation of protestors. The frequency of this police tactic as a response to political protest must be considered carefully in an ethical evaluation of the state. The luxuries and relative safeties that the state affords

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[415]   M. Kiai (United Nations Special Rapporteur), "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association." *Former UN Special Rapporteur.* 17th June 2013 *Free Assembly*: http://freeassembly.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/A-HRC-23-39-Add1_en-mission-to-UK-20131.pdf (Accessed 09.06.17), 8-9.

[416]   Wikipedia contributors, "Kettling" *Wikipedia:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kettling#United_Kingdom, (Accessed 02.06.16).

[417]   See for example (Anon) Rabble, "10.12.14: We Can't Breathe" 11th Dec. 2014 *Indymedia*: https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2014/12/518870.html (Accessed 09.06.17); (Anon) Reposter, "18.06.14: Justice for Shale" 18th June 2014. *Indymedia*: https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2014/06/516982.html (Accessed 09.06.17); (Anon) Photographer, "08.06.13: Anti-EDL" 8th June 2013. *Indymedia*: https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2013/06/510259.html (Accessed 09.06.17); '29.01.14 National Student Protest' D. Lee & B. Jackson, "Police accused of kettling student protesters at a national demonstration in Birmingham" *The Independent.* 30th Jan. 2014. *The Independent:* http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/police-accused-of-kettling-student-protesters-at-a-national-demonstration-in-birmingham-9095907.html (Accessed 09.06.17).

its citizens must be considered alongside an awareness that it is the *common* practice in the United Kingdom to treat peaceful political dissidents as criminals that are met with coercive force. We have seen this upheld in courts of law in the United Kingdom and in Europe, with rulings that this is an acceptable way for a state to conduct itself. When I talk about coercive force being a means of the state, and the state being reliant on the support, or at least the non-resistance, of its citizens, I am claiming that we are complicit in the perpetual maintenance through violence of the society in which we live.

In talking specifically about political protest, I also wished to highlight that disagreement with this method, regardless of what a state professes to ideologically commit to, it to a large extent not possible. The state permits disagreement through those channels it controls, e.g. writing to politicians, phoning the police, but in instances where it is politicians that have failed the public (e.g. Iraq War Protest 15th Feb 2003; 2010 Student Protests), and the police who are defending the state, dissent is met with coercive force and protest is criminalised.[418] When I go on to suggest that the state is an inadequate form of human community due to its reliance on coercion, I am not just talking about the State's historical roots, its foreign policy, or its justice system, I am talking about its day to day response to those who disagree with the way it conducts itself. When we are represented by and partake daily in the rituals and working life of the state, we must be aware that we are living in amidst this violence. The perception of safeties and freedoms we are permitted are contained by the threat of, and the carrying out, of violence. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that those who fail to conform to acceptable forms of dissent are met with coercive force and treated as criminals. Any ethical critique of the state must occur with the awareness that this coercive force is endemic to the state, and shapes the human community that exists within it.

5.2.2 Nationalist Ideology in Border Enforcement

I have argued that a key means of state operation is coercive force. I argue that another key means of the state is the use of ideology, in particular, nationalist

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[418]   In all but name. See for example the practice of taking down personal data of protestors, as well as arrests, brutality, hiding police identity, and kettling: Kiai, "Report of the Special Rapporteur", 8-9.

ideology to create cohesion. Earlier we looked at Klein's claim that the creation of this identity can be used to draw attention away from domestic problems. A sense of collective identity can be directed towards an external threat, creating an artificial sense of unity that overlooks internal disputes in favour of hostility towards those beyond one's own state. Further evidence of this kind of tactic can be seen for example in the recent referendum in the United Kingdom. The campaign to leave the European Union was won on the back of excessive xenophobia and in some instances open racism. In the wake of the leave result, spates of anti-immigrant violence, graffiti, propaganda, and National Front demonstrations have surfaced to levels we have not seen in decades.[419] In this section I wish to demonstrate that this kind of xenophobic nationalism is not just the domain of politically charged rhetoric in the run up to elections, or in rare foreign policy excursions at time of internal political strife as in Klein's analysis of the Falklands War. It is my contention that xenophobic nationalist ideology exists in the delineation and enforcing of national borders. My intention in demonstrating this is to show that inherent in the idea of the state and the creation of nationalist identity is an insidious attitude that treats those outside the state as lesser human beings. I will go on in 5.3 to illustrate exactly why this is problematic for those following Maximian ethics. In order to do this, I look at the professional statements of intent of the UK Border Force, and also look at the history of immigration control in the UK as an expression of the growth of extreme nationalisms.

The policing of borders in the United Kingdom is undertaken by the Border Force. According to UK Government website the Border Force is "a law enforcement command within the Home Office", which "secures the border and promotes national prosperity by facilitating the legitimate movement of individuals and goods, whilst preventing those that would cause harm from entering the UK".[420] The priorities of the Border Force are:

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[419] A. Lusher, "Racism unleashed: True extent of the 'explosion of blatant hate' that followed Brexit result revealed" *The Independent.* 28th July 2016 *The Independent*: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-racism-uk-post-referendum-racism-hate-crime-eu-referendum-racism-unleashed-poland-racist-a7160786.html (Accessed 09.06.17).

[420] UK Home Office, "Border Force" *UK Home Office Website. Gov.UK*: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force (Accessed: 13.03.14). As of 07.07.16, this information is still present, although additional priorities have been added beneath these concerning customer service and revenue. Despite these additions, the ordering of priorities with the statement to 'deter and prevent' can still be found above the 'facilitate the legitimate movement' statement.

Our priorities are to:

⚔ deter and prevent individuals and goods that would harm the national interests from entering the UK

⚔ facilitate the legitimate movement of individuals and trade to and from the UK.[421]

The first priority when policing the border then is to *restrict* movement. The priorities of the Border Force are expressed within a framework that already understands a division between 'us' and 'them'; between desirables and undesirables. The language of 'national interest' is one that has entered popular discourse and thus obscures the more xenophobic tendencies it encapsulates. In order to look at what this language entails, I wish to spend a few moments deconstructing these sentences and rethinking the way in which this language is used.

Let us think of a border as the way in which the movement of people and objects are controlled, like a membrane or gateway. Then let us look about the statements above, except where the word 'national' or 'UK' is written, let us understand 'Group A', and where an undesirable individual, specifically from *outside* the nation is specified, let us understand 'Group B'. Now we may read that the Border Force "secures the border and promotes Group A's prosperity by facilitating the legitimate movement of Group B and goods, whilst preventing those that would cause harm from entering Group A." The first priority on the list becomes, to "deter and prevent Group B and goods that would harm Group A's interests from entering Group A". My purpose in rethinking these statements is to point out that integral to existence and maintenance of borders is the division of persons in such a way that is already value laden. Group A is pre-defined and its needs, desires and safety come above that of any other. Regardless of whether Group B represents a legitimate or illegitimate party entering the country, regardless of whether Group B means harm to those living in the country or whether they are merely visiting a friend abroad, Group A has already been classified as a distinct group with rights and safeties that are paramount. I suggest that it is in these border places that Group A is defined, and that that definition happens in opposition to the other. Key to the notion of nation and the consolidation of ideas like that of the state, are those who are *not* in it. Those who are

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[421]   UK Home Office, "Border Force".

not in it experience varying degrees of discrimination based upon the fact that they are considered part of Group B rather than Group A. We have come to see these kinds of discriminations as part an parcel of belonging or not belonging to a state, but the creation of border restrictions in the UK is a relatively recent invention. The Border Force statement is a very sanitary expression of border control, but as we will see, these restrictions on movement have and always will disproportionately affect those who are poor, under-represented and otherwise perceived as 'undesirable' by the state controlling the border.

Prior to the 1905 Aliens Act, no formal long term immigration control existed in the UK.[422] Previous Aliens Acts were temporary restrictions formulated to restrict those felt to be politically motivated troublesome outsiders such as, social historian David Glover recounts in his history of the Aliens Act, "spies, subversives, agitators, and fanatics". Where the 1905 Act was different, Glover explains, is that it "set the precedent for the ever-tightening web of immigration control that is in place today". As Glovers points out, "Immigration laws create borders," where previously freedom of movement has existed, not only are restrictions now in place, but a system of judgement of who is in and out then must exist: "Immigration laws create borders – not in the sense of natural frontiers or territorial divisions, to take the two commonest meanings of the term, but borders as sites of discrimination, zones in which migrants are granted or denied a provisional legal status".[423] The 1905 Act targeted 'undesirable aliens', which were defined as those entering the UK who were impoverished, in ill-health, or were criminals. Glover explains that "Immigrants who seemed unlikely to be able to 'decently' support themselves or their dependants were refused entry, as were those whose physical infirmities or mental state indicated that they would probably become a burden on the state".[424] As Mary Riddell, a Telegraph columnist, pointed out

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[422] At the time of the 1905 Aliens Act this law applied to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The act was repealed and replaced with continuing and more extensive provisions in both Great Britain and Ireland during and after Irish independence (1921-2). See UK Government, *Aliens Act 1905.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1905). Available online: *The National Archives*: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/5/13/contents/enacted (Accessed 09.06.17); UK Government, *Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919.* (London: Swift, 1919). Available online: *The National Archives*: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/9-10/92 (Accessed 31.01.17); Office of the Attorney General, *Irish 1935 Aliens Act.* Available Online: *Irish Statute Book:* http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1935/act/14/enacted/en/html (Accessed 31.01.17).

[423] D. Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-De Siècle England: A cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-2.

[424] Glover, *Literaturee, Immigration and Diaspora,* 2.

however, though it is more politely expressed, it is a similar list of people who are excluded by immigration controls today.[425] The full extent of the harmful creation of borders and maintenance of immigration controls is best put, I think, by those groups who see the harmful effects.

'No Borders' are a decentralised grassroots organisation who work with those victimised by borders and immigration controls and believe in freedom of movement for all. The organisation points out that the maintenance of a border elevates movement of people into a commodity purchasable only by those with the economic wealth or political power to do so. The system of deportation and border control target and criminalise those who are poor. In this way, 'No Borders' write, "Modern states try to turn movement into a right that is granted or denied according to economic and political power".[426]

Likewise, we find an argument made by the group 'No One Is Illegal' where immigration control falls outside the scope of all other law, and represents the only instance in which *people* rather than actions are considered illegal. As such, they write that "Those subject to immigration control are dehumanized, are reduced to non-persons, are nobodies".[427] Within their manifesto, 'No One Is Illegal' go on to trace the history of immigration controls as part of an enforced border. They, too, point out the very recent introduction of immigration controls with the 1905 Aliens Act.[428] They stress that these controls controls were largely brought about through an unsavoury mixture of British concern over large numbers of migrant Jews fleeing persecution in their respective countries and political pressure at home from extreme right wing organisations (the British Brothers League formed in 1901 to demand controls,[429] and later, Oswald Mosley's Union Movement and Colin Jordan's White Defence League whose actions arguably lead to the passing of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act). 'No One Is Illegal' maintain that the modern day enforcement of borders can not

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[425] M. Riddell in "The Aliens Act of 1905" The Long View, BBC Radio 4. First aired Tuesday 17th February 2015. Also available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b052j0tp
[426] No Borders, 'A No Borders Manifesto': http://noborders.org.uk/node/47 (Accessed 20.03.14).
[427] No One Is Illegal, 'All Immigration Controls Must Go': http://www.noii.org.uk/controls-must-go/ (Accessed 20.03.14).
[428] Cf. UK Government, *Aliens Act 1905;* UK Government, *Aliens Act 1919.*; Cf. H. Wray 'The Aliens Act 1905 and the Immigration Dilemma', *Journal of Law and Society.* Vol. 33, 2 (2006): 302-323.
[429] A British anti-immigration antisemitic paramilitary group whose slogan was 'England for the English'. Their legacy continued in the BUF, the BLESMAW, the UM and the NF.

be divorced from its historical roots in proto-fascism. They write that "Immigration laws are inherently racist, since their purpose is to exclude outsiders. And they feed and legitimise racism". They believe that the existence of immigration controls presupposes "the crudest of all nationalisms — namely the assertion that the British have a franchise on Britain."[430]

I have argued that an important part of the day to day functioning of the state is the maintenance of its borders, and deciding who is in the state and who is out. I have argued that this is necessarily makes judgements and divisions about the worth of those seeking entry into a country, and that those who are worse off are those with the least political and economic power. When making an ethical assessment of the state as a mode of human living, I think it is extremely important that we are aware of the historic and present day racism and persecution implicit in the existence of borders and border control. We are living in a community where only those deemed acceptable or who happen to have been born into it are permitted entry. As Jason Lindsey termed it, the 'concealment' of these methods by the state becomes a part of the legitimisation of these nationalist and racist ideas. Ideologies of nationalism and patriotism are entrenched in the legality of our borders, and it is precisely 'the assertion that the British have a franchise on Britain' that is represented in the UK Border Force intention to 'deter and prevent individuals and goods that would harm the national interests from entering the UK'. In 5.3 I go on to assert that ideologies of nationalism fundamentally contradict the kind of life we are trying to lead by following Maximian ethics.

5.3 Counter to a Cosmos of Love

I have identified two key ways in which the state conducts itself that I am calling 'means'. I have said that state consists of the people who consent to be in it, and therefore that the things the state does – the means it employs – are things that we as humans participating in it allow, contribute to, and therefore to a degree are

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[430]   No One Is Illegal, 'No One Is Illegal Manifesto': http://www.noii.org.uk/no-one-is-illegal-manifesto/ (Accessed 20.03.14).

responsible for. I have also identified the power imbalance in the state as a defining part of it, so that the means of the state are predominately ways in which a governing minority may maintain power. The two means I identified were the way that control is maintained through coercive force and the way that nationalist ideology is enforced in border policy to create the physical and conceptual identity of the state. In this section I critique these two means in light of the Maximian ethics outlined in previous chapters. My purpose in doing so is to illustrate the way that we can bring this theology into the heart of very pressing debates today, and to show the depth of requirement that Maximian cosmology places upon human living. As I will demonstrate, dependence on coercive force and creation of identity through nationalist ideology become extremely problematic givens for a community when held up to a virtue ethics paradigm that understands means as simultaneous to ends. When we think about aligning our personal activity toward the *telos* Maximus speaks of, the means the state relies on become extremely problematic obstacles.

As I discussed before, there is no one way to implement the ethics we derive from Maximus' theology. We can think about virtues, we can think about love as a unity that gathers the virtues, we can even think of wider tools and ideas found in Maximus' cosmology. All of these are valid ways of trying to understand how to be persons capable of receiving grace and looking toward *theosis* here and in the eschaton. I explore four ways in which we might use Maximus' thought to challenge and reconsider the state and its means of operation. These are (5.3.1.1) the importance of free will within Maximus' understanding of cosmic movement, (5.3.1.2) the virtue of compassion and the kind of sympathy it requires of our actions, (5.3.2.1) the use of the Chalcedonian formula of union and distinction as a way of considering cultural variation and difference, and finally (5.3.2.2) love as our ultimate *telos* and the critique it poses to rival *teloi* in society.

5.3.1 No Coercion in Love

In Section 5.2.1 I analysed coercive force as a primary means of the state. I claimed that it is essential to the maintenance and therefore existence of the state. In lending our support and assenting to participate in the state, we affirm that coercive force has a place within our relationships with one another and in the way that we organise

ourselves. Over the course of three chapters, I have outlined Maximus' understanding of human purpose. I have shown that he believes humans to have been granted being, and to possess *logoi,* which are a way of life in Christ laid out for each of us personally that awaits our reception and choice to be fulfilled and realised. We have seen that the path to virtue is one that is open to us through Christ and gifted to us in the Holy Spirit. But consistently, we have also seen that all of this relies on human choice. The cohesion of the created universe relies on humans choosing to love in Christ. The choice rests with us as unique persons, even though failure to choose love might destroy us and all creation. Below, I look at two critiques of coercive force, one that focusses on the importance of free will (5.3.1.1), and the other that re-evaluates coercive force in light of the virtue of compassion (5.3.1.2).

5.3.1.1 Freedom – Love in Letting Go

Firstly, when looking at Maximus' understanding of the cosmic place of the human, we have seen that the ability to love is essential to who we are, who we can become, and our purpose in creation. Central to this is the gift of free will – human choice to turn to God – human choice to clear the passions from within us – human choice to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Who we are as human beings and how we come to *be* human beings is rooted in how we *choose* to live with one another in Christ. One can read the ascetic practices Maximus outlines in the *Four Hundred Chapters On Love* as directions for personal spiritual growth, which is certainly what they are, but as the contents is a testament to, even the most isolated ascetic is not alone, but lives in the world. Ascetic treatises are about how one lives in and as a part of creation with directivity toward God, and about how we as unique persons who partake in the Church strive to bring cosmic liturgy into the heart of all our actions and choices.

The ascetic practice of clearing passions so that virtue and love might exist within us, is a personal one. It is not forced on a person by God, by nature, or by any other. It is a personal, hypostatic response to an invitation asking us to be in relation with God. The cosmic relation between God and his creation is tied up with a continued respect for human free will because *without* it, there is no love. As discussed in chapters 2 and 4, the weight of sin is caused by human choice to reject God – to reject *being* itself and consequently to bring the curse of non-existence upon human

nature and the rest of creation. Christ's incarnation as one person in two natures means that human free will has a second opportunity – to choose to turn from that corruption or to persist in turning from God. All throughout the cosmic story in which human movement is described, is the importance of humans to be able to *choose* to love. Grace and the presence of the Spirit might instil virtue within us, but without the human choice to clear a space free from the passions and allow the Spirit entry, there is no well-being or eternal-well-being for that person, for human nature, or for the cosmos. The relationship between *tropos* and *logos* can only be brought close in the moment that a person chooses to turn toward Christ's love. From the example we are given in the story of creation to the offering of the crucifixion, the gift of freedom and choice seems to be essential to understanding what divine love is. Love and relation with God is never forced upon us, and indeed to even think of such a thing seems to be tautological. As Maximus put it in the *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer:*

> [...] and in those who are willing He frees the whole of human nature from the oppressive rule of the law which dominates it, in so far as they imitate His self-chosen death by mortifying the earthly aspects of themselves. For the mystery of salvation belongs to those who choose it, not to those who are compelled by force.[431]

There is no love without freedom, and likewise there is no loving relationship without it being freely received by both sides.

The existence of systemic coercion in the state is a clear statement that we as a society are dedicated to something we consider to be more important than giving others the space to make those choices in a personal capacity. It is a commitment to a vision of society that is so focused on some other *telos,* that the means of how we get there come second. There is a vision, whatever that may be, that we so strongly wish to be maintained, that coercive means are justified to prevent someone from disrupting that end vision or current balance. How we treat dissidents and those who disagree or do not fit a rule, cannot be sacrificed for a picture of a society that remains in our ideals. The means that we employ shape the end that comes about as a

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[431]   Maximus, *Or. Dom.* PG90 880B [Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, *Philokalia*, 289].

consequence. The freedom to love is a way life, implying that, if we wish to seek a Godly way of living, we must find a way to get on with one another that doesn't involve hitting people who disagree with us with riot shields. Neither is such a freedom to love somehow purely a personal endeavour, as if there were somehow a personal domain to our lives that does not touch those around us. Freedom to love awkwardly lands us with the difficulty of having to find ways to organise and live with people we might sometimes fall out with, without resorting to have a full-time armed unit of people come in and drag them away. If we respect someone's freedom to receive love, we must also accept that the kind of community we are going to live in needs to allow people to reject that love, and to try and find ways of making this dynamic work. I discuss the difficulties surrounding this kind of freedom in Chapter 6, but it is certainly the case that we must have the ability to allow dissent and to try and avoid reliance on coercive force to impose communal standards.

In Maximus' hypostatic understanding of transformative nature – every single dissident is one to whom free choice has been given and who is called to transfigure the cosmos. A society built upon the silencing and coercing of such people is one more committed to its own idea of a community, than that intended by the Logos. A *telos* of society that can pass over a few for the sake of an end, is one that forges an end made of such means. A society committed to silencing dissidence through coercive force will create a society where such a means have and always will exist. If the virtue ethics Maximus sets out means anything to us, then it is precisely in the treatment of those who disagree with us that who we are and the world we live in is formed.[432] Virtue not only leads to love, but *is* love. The main premise of Chapter 3 was that the path to love – to *theosis* – is realised in every we step we take towards it. In following our *logoi,* the Logos Himself is present here and now in the world. Virtue is a sanctifying act that stems from the Spirit. *Telos* is instantiated in present moments as well as always being before us – this is what Maximus meant when, in Chapter 2, we

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[432] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965AB I.24 [Berthold, *Maximus*, 38]: "The one who imitates God by giving alms knows no difference between evil and good or just and unjust in regard to the needs of the body, but distributes to all without distinction according to their need even if he prefers the virtuous person over the wicked person because of his intention."; Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965CD I.29 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 38]: "When you are insulted by someone or offended in any matter, then beware angry thoughts, lest by distress they sever you from charity and place you in the region of hatred".

talked of *theosis* being for today as well as the end time. It is both immediate and apocalyptic. In Chapter 2 I introduced the idea that ascetic practice is at the heart of cosmic liturgy. Our striving is not alone but as members of the global Church, whose liturgical praise and love extends to all our actions and relations. We are part of a community not confined by borders written in human law, and, I am arguing, a community that cannot condone coercive force as a mode of human behaviour and community. If the macrocosmic image of cosmic liturgy is applied to the image of virtues and *telos* we have been using, then today is the hymns of praise and prayer that prepare us for final communion, and it is precisely how we act here and now that prepares the whole Church and cosmos for the end to come.

When we allow our relationships with others to be dictated by coercion, we turn away from our own calling to actively love and bind together the cosmos in love.[433] Gregory of Nyssa reminded his parishioners that mercy is "a virtue in the choice of will" and that were every one of us to make such a choice freely, all the human social, political, and physical frameworks built to control society would fall away and no longer be necessary, since:

> Life would no longer be lived in diametrically opposite ways; man would no longer be distressed by want or humiliated by slavery, nor would dishonour sadden him. For all things would be common to all, and his life as a citizen would be marked by complete equality before the law, since the man who was responsible for the government would of his own free will be on a level with the rest [...] What could be thought to be more blessed than to live thus, when we would no longer have to entrust the safety of our

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[433]   In a paper interpreting Maximus' *Four Hundred Chapters on Love* in light of contemporary theories of violence and reconciliation, Michael Hardin suggested that Maximus' work requires us to replaces a mimesis of worldly violence with the example of Christ: "In this way of loving, any violent retaliation is precluded (I.28, I.30, I.37). Unlike mimesis which ends in violence, expulsion, and scapegoating, love ends in the giving of life, not the taking of life, for God is 'the Lord and Giver of life." (M. Hardin, 'Mimesis and Dominion: The Dynamics of Violence and the Imitation of Christ in Maximus Confessor' in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly.* 36 (1992): 382). Hardin expressed not only the incompatibility of a Maximian vision with any kind of violence, but also that within Maximus' ascetic writings was a way of overcoming the violence so predominant in our societies and cultures. Hardin finishes by quoting Staniloae on the source of mimetic love in Maximus: "The foundation of our own sacrifice and the source of its power, the source of our love for the Father in which is our true life, is the sacrifice of Christ, his spotless self-surrender to the Father accomplished out of love for the Father and of us, and out of love for the Father which he has on our behalf as a man." (D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church.* R. Barringer, (trans.) (Crestwood: SVS Press, 1980), 196; Hardin, 'Mimesis', 383).

lives to bolts and tones, but were secure in each other's keeping.[434]

In an analysis of Christ's same sermon, John Howard Yoder accuses the legal frameworks around us and the traditions we partake in of taking a watered down legalistic approach to the beatitudes, the commandments, and love. He claims that "Legitimacy replaces love as the standard" so that "It can ask self-discipline but not self-denial; temperance or moderation, but not asceticism; it can ask us to bear a yoke but not a cross. And so it is today: the limits of moral rigor lie at the point of survival – national or personal. Do not lie – except to save your life or your country. Do not kill – except killers".[435] In looking at the Sermon at the Mount, both Gregory and Yoder see human free will as a much more powerful tool for reconstructing life than anything the state could ever impose. Gregory's vision of a world in which mercy reigns highlights the radical nature of the kind of love required of us. Yoder's analysis takes a different but complementary angle, pointing out that not only is Christ's love more radical, but that the current political framework in which we operates hinders the limits of our love through coercion. He writes that "We construct for ourselves a manageable morality, which we can handle, without repentance" and that "This temptation is still with us, especially with regard to the problems of violence and national egoism".[436] In grudgingly settling for just a little less than the radicalism of Christ's love, we, as Yoder poetically sums it up "bear a yoke but not a cross". If we resent the means of the state but accept its *telos*, or even assume it an impermanent necessity in this world, then we set limitations in place that refrain us from focussing on *theosis* as *telos* above all. In Maximus' (and Gregory of Nyssa's) requirement that the ascetic have constant striving in all one does, there is no caveat that says – if it is a little difficult, settle for less, or, if it seems impossible in the current political climate, never mind, or, if loving the whole cosmos seems a bit big, then settle for just those relationships that are easy. As I go on to note in the next section, there are no borders to love, even if every day we are told there are by those who would have us believe in them. The means that the state employs, for whatever end, cannot be condoned if they

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[434] Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5* PG44 1254A-C.

[435] J.H. Yoder, "Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount" in *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism.* (Ontario: Herald Press, 2003 (First ed. 1971) (Lecture first delivered 1966)), 46.

[436] Yoder, "Political Axioms", 45.

run counter to virtue and love. Neither can we, as participants making up the state, allow ourselves to remain complicit in such a relation if we desire to move toward *theosis*. In an ethics premised on free will, Maximus' ethics seriously call into question the idea that coercive force could ever be a suitable response to dissidence and disagreement, or have a place in our communities.

5.3.1.2 Compassion – Love in Solidarity

Another way we can think about Maximian ethics in our everyday lives is by looking deeper at a virtue and thinking about it in the context of Christ's love. What does truly mean to live out this virtue and try and understand the way Christ lived it? In Chapter 4 I described a way in which we can think of virtues as manifold love, or love being instances of different virtues. When looking at the way that Maximus talks about virtues as being simple in love, we looked at the following passage from *The Ascetic Life*:

> Do you see that this love for one another makes firm the love for God?... The Lord Himself makes it clear and has shown it to us by His very works; and so too all His disciples, who strove til death for love of their neighbour and prayed fervently for those that killed them.[437]

Love is defined in the life and works of Christ and continued in the acts of his disciples. It is to be prepared to lay down one's life for others and to pray for those who oppress us. In an exposition of the virtue of 'mercy', Gregory of Nyssa likewise identifies it as an "intense kind of love"[438] and wrote that "Mercy is a voluntary sorrow that joins itself to the sufferings of others".[439] This understanding of Christ's love not only being about suffering for others but also a suffering *with* and identifying with those who suffer, is particularly important for our current evaluation of coercive force. Christ's eating with taxcollectors, drinking with gentiles and conversing with children is part of that identification with those who are left behind or rejected by society. Most importantly we can see this in the incarnation – Christ *becomes* human in order to

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[437]   Maximus, *LA* TCr Ch.7 [Sherwood, *Maximus,* 107].
[438]   Ἐπίτασις δὲ ἀγάπης ὁ ἔλεος, Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea.* 5 PG44 1252CD.
[439]   Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea.* 5 PG44 1252B. [Graef, *Gregory,* 133].

suffer with us and in order to transfigure the cosmos. *To suffer with* is an essential part of Christ's works – a part of love enshrined in the particular virtue of mercy or compassion that exists in, and *is* love.

If it is the part of the Christian to *suffer with*, then it is always our place to be on the side of the downtrodden. The importance of this suffering with others means that some form of commitment to pacifism is likely necessary for a Christian. To explore this further would involve a more nuanced look into what we mean by the words violence and pacifism,[440] but without delving too far into these complexities, I think Maximus' understanding of simultaneous virtue and love offers a useful way rethinking traditional difficulties in this area. Discussions about violence and pacifism require us to define what things fall into these categories and ask where the line is drawn between physical and non-physical 'violence'.[441] This emphasis and line of questioning seems counter-intuitive and unhelpful to one thinking about Maximian ethics. Instead, if we think of virtues like compassion and mercy, and consider the way in which they inform our understanding of love, we can rethink personal decisions on how we should act by looking at the balance of power, at places where oppression, coercion and victimisation are taking place, and placing ourselves with those who suffer. Rather than deriving positions on certain kinds of violence, Maximus' ethics might allow us the flexibility to ask how best to suffer with those who suffer and to be compassionate. It asks us to act not just in response to immediate appearances, but also to understand people as persons; particulars whom we are called to love, and to empathise with them and know their suffering as our own. Whilst this may not afford us quick and easy answers, this kind of ethics demands us to understand situations deeper than face value and is an ideal place to begin deconstructing systems that encourage victimisation as part of their common course of operation. By thinking about the virtue of compassion in relation to love and considering what it means to have mercy and to suffer with others, we can begin to evaluate the operations of institutions we live in and to question how useful they are for achieving the *telos* we have before us. Here I have briefly looked at the Scriptural interpretations of mercy

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[440]   An overview of Christian anarchist writers on pacifism is given by Christoyannopoulos in *Christian Anarchism*, 32-52, 161-65; cf. Yoder, "Political Axioms", 47-9.

[441]   For such complexities on this topic, we could consider Christ's upturning of the tables in the Temple, a kind of 'violence' against property that would be chargeable as such under UK law, (cf. Mark 11:15).

and compassion derived from Maximus and Gregory of Nyssa. With a more comprehensive study, bringing in other virtues and thinking about how they relate to love, we could develop either systematic critiques of means like coercive force and more fluid personal ethics that help know where to stand in situations as they arise.

Whilst *theosis* as communion with God both in this life and after remains the *telos* of all we do, we cannot condone a communal mode of organising that requires coercive force and the suppression of dissidence through violence. The societies we choose to be a part of must have the capability to identify with and suffer with others. If it comes to the point where protest against our society takes on a violent character, we as those wishing to live in relations of love, must ask ourselves how we have failed some groups of people so badly that they are pushed to express their frustration and suffering in such a manner. As I will explore in Chapter 6, a society where love is foremost in the formation of our relationships must have the ability to acknowledge, sympathise and suffer with ever person who is failed by it. The communities we aspire to live in must always seek to minimize persecution of dissidence – of those who disagree with the majority. This is something the state cannot do with the reliance of its entire power structure on violence and the threat of violence. The necessity of both freedom of choice and a virtue of compassion and mercy in love means that we cannot consent to a structure of human relationships built upon coercive force. The solution of course, cannot be to isolate ourselves from society, since this is no way to make sense of a call to love in community. In the following chapter I suggest some constructive alternatives that we might work towards with a Maximian approach to our ethics.

5.3.2 No Borders to Love

Thus far, I have argued that free will is essential to love, and claimed that personal response to love is not just a luxury but a necessity for cosmic movement toward *theosis.* I have discussed love in terms of suffering with others and the depth that explorations of virtues like compassion can lend our ethical assessment. Both of these points were used to criticise our complicity in the state's violence as a means of maintaining societal structure and control. In this section I continue discussing love, virtue and their cosmic placement within Maximus' theology to think critically about

national borders. I begin by discussing the way that difference is used to foster hatred, and think about the Chalcedonian Formula of union and distinction as a way of understanding cultural variation, before going on to critique national borders by considering love as the ultimate *telos* of our societies and therefore rival to any differing *telos*.

        5.3.2.1 Chalcedonian Distinction without the Hatred of Division

In 5.2.2, I argued that nationalist ideologies have been used to create border controls that are racist, discriminatory, and have a history richly intertwined with extreme right wing thought and persecution of 'undesirables'. I wish to distinguish between nationalist ideologies and the existences of differences in culture. Maximus' thought is very well suited to giving us a way to express this difference and may help us articulate a division that can become blurred.[442] Difference in culture does not have to equate the nationalist ideologies behind border and immigration controls. Thinking about the differences between the two may help those who profess nationalist views to understand that culture can be celebrated without persecuting those who are different. A nationalist pride that revolves around competition and pitting cultural differences against one another is precisely one of the kinds of ideology that pushed for border and immigration controls to be introduced into the United Kingdom. An awareness of cultural diversity and a celebration of those distinctions does not have to be a source of conflict. One of the ways in which we can think about this in light of Maximus' ethics is by considering the place and purpose of love within Maximus' cosmology. We can think back to the principles set forth in the Council of Chalcedon that describe heaven and earth meeting in Christ. Both are always different and distinct, but through Christ are in harmony with one another. Neither obliterates the other, and yet both subsist in him without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. The definition at Chalcedon established that union

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[442] Guardian Journalist Stuart Jeffries conducted a survey looking at the way that culture and nationalism have been conflated together in popular opinion, resulting in the association of nationalist imagery with extreme right wing racism. In particular he looked at the appropriation of the English flag by the English Defence League and the Union Jack by the National Front. S. Jeffries, 'Patriot games: how toxic is the England flag today?' *The Guardian.* 26th Nov. 2014. *The Guardian*: s://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/26/patriot-games-battle-for-flag-of-st-george-english-identity (Accessed 07.07.16).

(ἕνωσις) could exist with difference (διαφορά), but *without* division (ἀδιαίρετος).[443] And as we have seen in Maximus, this way of human and divine relating in Christ is a microcosm of the whole of creation and the hope for perfect communion between God and His creation. Maximus mirrors the terminology of Chalcedon when talking about the way that Christ gathers the *logoi* of all creatures to Him, and the way that creatures will be united to God if they follow these *logoi*.[444] There will be creaturely distinction but also unity.

We can talk about difference-without-division being the communion of love that Christ shows us in his death and resurrection. We see this dynamic applied to status, ethnicity etc. in the way that Maximus uses Galatians 3:28 to describe the Church:

> Thus to be and to appear as one body formed of different members is really worthy of Christ himself, our true head, in whom says the divine Apostle, 'there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither foreigner nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is everything in all of you.' It is he who encloses in himself all beings by the unique, simple, and infinitely wise power of his goodness.[445]

Whilst diversity and personhood are never obliterated, enmity and inequality are overcome in the Church through Christ. The love we are called to in Christ is one that loves regardless of the distinction in others. It is a love that sees beauty in diversity and celebrates distinctions found in other communities and cultures. As Maximus highlights in his *Centuries on Love*,[446] we are called to see one human nature and to love it. And as we saw in *Ambiguum 41,* it is this love that brings together the human race and the cosmos in Christ.

Cultural diversity and the differences between us are never the issue. The existence of cultural identity is not what is at issue. The problem is what we do with these differences and what we allow them to become in our relationships. One of the

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[443]   Chalcedonian Definition [Parvis, unpublished].
[444]   Maximus, *Amb. 7* PG91 1077C [Blowers & Wilken, *Cosmic,* 54].
[445]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr Ch 1. [Berthold, *Maximus,* 187]; see also Maximus, *De char.* PG90 993B II.30 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 51].
[446]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 993B II.30 [Berthold, *Maixmus,* 51].

definitions the Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives of 'nationalism' is "exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups".[447] When we allow identity to become exclusive and insular, we allow ourselves to be moved to hatred for what is different instead of love in multiplicity. We allow the differences between us to frighten us rather than inspire curiosity. We allow others to manipulate our fears, bringing ourselves to believe that geographical locations matter more than the extension of empathy to others in need. We find ourselves believing stories of entitlement because they more easily justify our failures to love and the communities we have built to uphold our entitlement. One of the specific failures of the state, enshrined in its policing of borders, is its defence of the kind of nationalist ideology that makes judgements and valuation on the basis of cultural and geographical difference.

The exploration of love that Maximus provides for us is one that is defined in Christ who at every moment embraces and respects differences, bringing them together within Him in the magnitude of his love, and transfiguring them – allowing them to be sanctified within Him. The divisions of the cosmos in *Ambiguum 41* were brought together and healed in Him. As well as virtues then, we can also see that an understanding of love informed by Maximus' wider cosmic vision can also serve to inform our ethical perspective. Virtues inform us of how our personal responses need to be rooted in patience, compassion, mercy, and long suffering with those who suffer. But remembering the cosmic vision encapsulating our actions allows us also to see a wider picture. In the formula of Chalcedon and Maximus' hope for *theosis* we have an affirmation of diversity and love that is essential to the spiritual movement of the cosmos. This means we also have the beginnings of a systemic critique in our hands. In coming up against systems that promote division according to wealth and location, and ideologies that tell us that otherness is to be estranged, feared and hated, we encounter barriers that require us to set aside our hopes for love in Christ as the foundation of our communities. If our actions are truly rooted and aiming for the *telos* Maximus speaks of, then turning away in the face of these barriers is not an option.

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[447] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Nationalism" in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online Edition*: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism (Accessed 08.05.17).

Our virtues of compassion, patience, mercy etc. are always forged in relationships with those who suffer and have nothing; with Christ Himself. As I discuss further below, the direction of our love must become subversive if we are serious about loving beyond the borders that others impose upon the world.

5.3.2.2 Love as the Telos of our Societies

I next look at how understanding love as *telos* transfigures how we think about the state and its operations. In 5.2.2 I described the origins of UK immigration control, the discrimination still present in the system and the direct effects of this, witnessed by the organisations 'No Borders' and 'No One Is Illegal' who work with those who are affected by these policies.

In discussing the difficulties that national borders pose to Christian faith, it was suggested to me that they seem to serve primarily as walls, beyond which one need not look to show mercy.[448] The way that national borders curb how we think about our own actions is something I wish to explore here. I discussed in 5.3.2.1 the way that Maximus can help us think of cultural diversity as beautiful and necessary rather than emblematic of geographical division. As well blinding us to the suffering of others, nationalist ideologies and national borders create a host of problems that perpetuate poverty, inequity and disproportionately harm the most vulnerable in society. The kind of attitudes we hold towards the marginalised at our borders also spills over into the marginalised within our country. The control of movement and becomes another kind of power that is denied some and given to others. As discussed in 5.3.1.1, it is extremely important that we have the capacity to listen to those critiquing the communities we are a part of, especially when those voices are claiming our societies are failing and victimising people. Both 'No Borders' and 'No One Is Illegal' raise challenges that are very problematic for one who lives within the safety of the state and wishes to pursue Maximian ethics. We have two organisations calling immigration controls deeply and inherently divisive and dehumanising. The roots of immigration and border policy cannot be divorced from a history of racism and the

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[448]   R.P.C. Brown, commenting as 'Bewcastle House of Prayer' on E. Brown Dewhurst, "The Radical Politics of Mercy: Commentary on Gregory of Nyssa's Sermon on Mercy" 26th Feb 2014. *Microcosmology: Meditations on the person in the Byzantine and Patristic Tradition:* http://microcosmology.wordpress.com/2014/02/26/the-radical-politics-of-mercy/comment-page-1/#comment-14 (Accessed 24.03.14).

influence of fascist ideology. In order to distinguish between those who are allowed in and those who must stay out the valuing and weighing of people must occur. The kind of valuation and judgement made by the state on our behalf is one that we as those who wish to follow Christ's example of love cannot agree with. The control of movement through border policy exacerbates the division between rich and poor within even the host country, as movement becomes a luxury available only for those with the expendable income to travel. We have seen the argument that immigration controls criminalise people, entrench inequity and poverty, call the poor and marginalised to account for themselves whilst aiding the affluent, commodifying movement, and targeting the victimised.

Thinking back to Glover's list of the original 'aliens' excluded by immigration laws – the poor, the ill in health, those convicted of crime in other countries – I am reminded of this passage in Matthew 25:

> Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' (Matt. 25:41-3)

Who we are called to be and how we interpret love and virtue in our political communities is of vital importance to Maximian ethics. If we have, as I suggest in 5.1.1, responsibility for the state in which we live, then laws like these are actively in opposition to the *telos* of love towards which we are working. The process of exclusivity that defines the parameters of who our society should care for based on wealth, health, race or any other basis, sets a limitation on where our mercy extends. If we are content to live in a society that draws such dividing lines, then we also must take responsibility for the harm these exclusions cause. When Christ tells us to welcome the stranger, there is no caveat that says 'as long it doesn't burden the state or cause us financial distress'. The *telos* of our societies is not first, financial stability, and second, human welfare, but love.

The question of where *telos* lies is a particularly important one here, as both in the original 1905 Aliens Act and the Border Force commitments we read earlier, the

priority is national economic prosperity. Borders create economic commitments, define who has access to money and who profits from transactions. A *telos* of economic prosperity creates inequity in our approach to material goods and trade. The 'us and them' attitude extends to how we think about profit and exploitation on both an international and national scale. The presence of national borders and the notion of national prosperity feeds into our market systems and encourages a closed loop view of an economy that is in fact global in its exploitation. A rhetoric of national prosperity hides the international effects of harmful economic decision making. Wealth creation plays a huge role in how our laws are written and national borders are defined. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that they only make sense when a *telos* of economic growth is committed to. Often the full extent of this rhetoric is omitted from political oratory, but the implicit message we are given is that as long as economic growth is maintained, all else is a secondary issue, and it does not matter who loses out. It is certainly the case that if we think about border policies and immigration controls through an ethics centred and pointed towards a *telos* of love, they make no sense at all. Why does it matter if someone, is poor, ill, or even a criminal? Where in our understanding of virtue and love are there places where the formation of a political society without these people is to be desired over a life of love, empathy and inclusivity.

As discussed earlier, Maximus often falls back on Paul's list of virtues from Colossians: "compassion, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love and forgiving one another if one has a complaint against the other just as Christ has forgiven us" (Col. 3:12-13). In a personal context, these virtues might be interpreted as passive qualities more associated with inaction. This is a prime example of an instance where a dedication to such virtues in love calls for a very definite rejection of the practices of a state. In an analysis of Maximus' *Ascetic Life*, Thomas Merton reminds us that

> Very often people object that non-violence seems to imply passive acceptance of injustice and evil and therefore that it is a kind of cooperation with evil. Not at all. The genuine concept of non-violence implies not only active and effective resistance to evil but in fact a more effective resistance. But Maximus takes pains to make very clear the absolutely uncompromising obligation to resist evil. But the resistance which is taught

> in the Gospel is aimed not at the evil-doer but at evil in its source. It combats evil as such by doing good to the evil-doer, by thus overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21) which is the way our Lord Himself resisted evil.[449]

Merton interprets Maximus' passages on loving one's enemy as a very active form of resistance – he argues just after this that to do nothing at all or to fight hate with hate, would be to foster the kind of evil we are called to oppose.[450] Whilst I do not explicitly affirm Merton's position of non-violence here, his point about love being an active kind of resistance is one that I wish to emphasise. In orientating ourselves towards a *telos* of *theosis*, we remove ourselves from spheres that advocate or are complacent towards conflicting means and ends. To these ends, it follows that one who wishes to pursue Maximian ethics looks towards the formation of a community that has a place place for compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience or forgiveness.[451] This also implies it is within the scope of our project to make a radical critique of the exploitation in our market system, consumer ideology, Capitalist economics, current political system, border polices, immigration laws, and the very structure of our society. In the same way that denying refugees and asylum seekers entry to the UK is a failure of love deriving from national borders, so too is the act of purchasing items in supermarkets that perpetuate a cycle of exploitation in workforces around the globe. If we genuinely believe that an ethical system like the one we have derived from Maximus is *cosmic* in scope, then we also must realise that the small actions we make in our personal lives are global in their consequences, and that just because our borders are high walls over which we cannot see, does not mean that we are not harming others in the ways that we live. I shall discuss this further in Chapter 6, but an awareness of the end goal of *theosis* means a comprehensive rejection of the exploitative systems in which we find ourselves. Given that our personal actions are cosmic in scope, we must see what it is often inconvenient to see. The ends of the state and the ends of the market have nothing to do with Christ's ends, and nor can they ever when they at essence are about maintaining power, relying on violence, or

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[449]   T. Merton, 'St Maximus the Confessor on Non-Violence' in *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays.* W.H. Shannon (ed.) (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995 (First published in *The Catholic* Worker, Sept. 1965)), 246-47.
[450]   Merton, 'St Maximus', 247.
[451]   On Christian community and the possibility of reconciliation with those of differing faiths see 6.1.3.

committed to unlimited wealth accumulation. One of the purposes of writing this thesis has been to illustrate how cosmic thinking in our ethics keeps our minds aware of the far-reaching effects of our actions. Our personal actions are literally cosmic in scope, not just in a mystical way but in a physical way. Unless we let our ethics inform our actions on a personal *and* communal level, then we will never understand or be able to change the international implications of our personal actions.

In this section I have argued that by thinking about the means and operations of the state, like the policing of borders, we can identify ends that are very different to *theosis.* In consenting to live within the spaces that the state creates, we allow ourselves to be caught up in a system which continually works towards ends that are utterly opposed to our own. We consistently have to turn a blind eye to the global systems of exploitation, exclusion and alienation in order to continue living in these political communities. It is my contention that the ethics and *telos* we are aiming for cannot be reconciled with the state as a form of political community. The state's prerequisite dedication to discrimination, persecution, and exclusivity has none of the hallmarks we wish to embody in our search to live in love in this life, and to be Christ to all – microcosms of unifying love that are not confined by the arbitrary borders of the world.

5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to give an example of a way in which we might put Maximian ethics into practice. To do this, I argued that *the means of the state conflict with Maximian virtues and telos.* I begun by justifying my choice to talk about the state, clarifying why the means of the state were important in an assessment of what the state is and does (5.1). I stated that my arguments and examples were made with regard to the United Kingdom in the present day, but noted that the critiques I make are applicable across a much broader spectrum. I then went on to describe two ways in which the state operates, drawing on contemporary political observers and the UK government's own statements (5.2). I concluded by critiquing these two modes of operation, pointing out the incompatibilities that arise between them and Maximus'

ethics (5.3). I looked at four different approaches that we might use to critique the means of the state. These were (5.3.1.1) the place of freedom within Maximus' understanding of cosmic movement, (5.3.1.2) the virtue of compassion and the kind sympathy it requires of our actions, (5.3.2.1) the use of the Chalcedonian formula of union and distinction as a way of considering cultural variation, and finally (5.3.2.2) love as our ultimate *telos* and the critique it poses to rival *teloi* in society. The first of these two methods were used to critique coercive force as a means of the state, and the second two were used to critique nationalist ideology and border enforcement.

Essential to all this was the importance of hypostatic action in the cosmos, *i.e.* That each person is called to Christ and that each *tropos*, each way of life lived, transfigures the cosmos in some way. The intimidating part of a theology that claims that the human person is a microcosm, is the huge amount of responsibility this places upon each unique person. We are responsible for the way we treat one another, for the communities we live in, for the economic relationships we perpetuate. We have been granted freedom and the ability to love. Just because somebody offers us a convenient apple, does not absolve us of the responsibility of our own actions, however menial or benign we may argue they are in the grand scheme of things. The point of Maximus' anthropology is that every personal action *is* meaningful in the grand scheme of things. Every *logos* awaits personal realisation in a communal context. Of course, this intimidating responsibility is also a source of hope. It is a comment about the importance of every personal action even in the face of what seem to be impossibly gargantuan difficulties.

In the next chapter I offer some ways in which we might use Maximus' ethics not only as a source of criticism for our current circumstances, but also as that source of hope. By keeping a *telos* of *theosis* in mind, striving for space to receive grace in our personal and communal lives, and seeking to live out the love that Christ is in the world, the revolution of love that begins in the microcosm can begin to transfigure the cosmos.

~ Chapter 6: Demanding the Impossible, Reaching for the Divine ~

'Our communities must always be rooted in and striving towards love'

6.0 Introduction

6.0.1 Community in Ascesis

In this chapter I will reconsider the four critiques made in Chapter 5.3. Using these critiques I will suggest some ways we may use these Maximian tools to inform our ethics. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, in Maximus' thought, our personal actions have a cosmic dimension. We are never creatures acting in total isolation. All we do touches those around us. This means our ethics do not just address the question 'what should *I* do', but also 'who are *we*', 'how do *we* live', and 'what should *we* do'. In this chapter I move away from critiquing present human communities and instead consider how we might better embody the cosmic Church we are called to partake in. There is no ethics, according to Maximus' theology, that is not cosmic in impact. How we act, is how we act towards other people and the rest of creation, and therefore is never just a personal ethics, but also a communal one. An essential part of our *ascesis* – clearing passions from us and preparing our hearts for virtues – is about our interactions with other people. In most of our lives we are dealing with fellow creatures, and who we are and what we choose to live by comes through in these interactions. How we choose to organise our lives as a community *is* a part of our personal ascetic practice. As in Romans 14:7, none of us live for ourselves alone, and none dies for ourselves alone. Who we are as persons, each exercising their own will – is completed in our relation to others, and ultimately in our relationship as creation to Creator. In Chapter 2.2.1 I talked about the Divine Eucharist being a microcosm of cosmic movement towards *theosis*. I referred to Loudovikos' proposal that for

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Maximus, our personal ascetic actions partake of this communal cosmic liturgy. This means that what we choose as persons is essential to the communal growth of the universe towards God. Thus there is no sphere in which our theology is not present, there is no personal life, no political life, no ecclesial life, no communal life, that is not wrapped up in creaturely relationship with God. This means that there is no place where our ascetic ethics should not be at the heart of our aims, and no moment where we forget that our hope is *theosis.*

In Chapter 5 I argued that the communal, political life that we find ourselves partaking in cannot be beyond the realm of ethical scrutiny. I argued that the state was a mode of human operation in which we participate, and that this mode of life conflicts with that which is required of us as human beings seeking *theosis.* I concluded the chapter by asking what then is to be done, given that it is necessary to still live in community. In this chapter I look at some of the challenges of striving to live in a community that is orientated towards *theosis.* I take into account such difficulties as the fact that not all those we live with may share the same *telos* as us, and how would it be possible to live with such people given that the free will to choose Christ and not have Him forced upon one is vital to our theology. I make some suggestions about how we might keep in tension the importance of choosing personally, but living communally. It is this awareness that we are both personal and communal creatures that is the focus this chapter. When it comes to thinking about our ethics, it can often be very difficult to keep this balance of personal and communal present in our thinking and living. As an example of how we may keep this tension alive in our practical living, I draw examples from communal anarchist ideas. The tension between personal and communal, more traditionally viewed in anarchist thought as one between freedom and solidarity, may be of use when thinking of alternatives to the state as a way of organising our communities.

This chapter will have two main sections, one that considers how our communities must be rooted in love, and one that thinks about how are communities can always be striving toward love. In this first section I will consider the first three critiques from Chapter 5.3, these are the place of freedom within Maximus' understanding of the cosmic movement, the virtue of compassion and the kind sympathy it requires of our actions, and the use of the Chalcedonian formula of union

and distinction as a way of understanding cultural variation. I will use these three critiques as tools for thinking about how we can build societies that are rooted in a desire to embody Christ's love on earth. In my second section I will focus on the last critique made in Chapter 5.3, which is love as the our ultimate *telos* of our communities.

6.0.2 A Methodology from the Past

In the course of this chapter, I will draw on a number of suggestions made by Peter Kropotkin and Colin Ward. My principal method in this chapter will be to present key ideas derived from Maximus' theological and ethical thought and to indicate the utility, where appropriate, of Kropotkin and Ward's suggestions for communal organising. I suggest that the Maximian principles I am carrying over from Chapter 5 can be furthered practically by learning from and looking at current anarchist ideas. These include the anarchist concern with balance between personal and communal relationships in our communities, but also ideas like the necessity of ever-evolving communities with the ability to see and call to account the flaws within itself. In keeping with both a Maximian focus on love and anarchist principles of co-operative action, the suggestions I make here are only one of a number of ways in which one could go about thinking of alternative methods for organising communities. Furthermore, the choice to draw on methods and tools from contemporary philosophical thought outside the Christian tradition is not anachronistic to Maximus' way of thinking. Maximus partook in a well established tradition of drawing from non-Christian philosophical traditions to enrich the toolset with which approached Scripture and the Church fathers and mothers.[452] Although I am not looking to anarchist thought for the same terminological and metaphysical apparatus that Maximus found in Hellenistic-influenced sources, I believe the same principle applies when looking at the theoretical and practical methods of human organisation suggested and experimented with by those in the anarchist tradition.

As in Chapter 5, my choice to focus on anarchist ideas is only one of a number of ways in which this theology and ethics might be taken forward. Future work on ways to orientate human societies towards love might look to sources past and

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[452]   Cf. Törönen, *Union and Distinction*, 13-34.

present for inspiration in transfiguring our communities. My choice to draw from the anarchist tradition for inspiration is less to do with the ethical grounding of Kropotkin's work, which is in the appropriation of natural sciences for the basis of a morality,[453] and more to do with the practical ideas he put forward in response to an anthropological and economic critique of the state. Kropotkin's despair at what he saw as the degrading and exploitative power of the strong over the weak epitomised in the political structure of the state, is countered by a hope that there may be a way of structuring our lives that engages with wider society and has the well-being of each person at its heart. The scale of this critique and the practicality of the suggestions put forward may therefore be of particular interest to those looking alternatives to what, by the standards of Maximus' ethics, I have argued are unacceptable institutions and organisations for a Christian to willingly partake in. Though there are vast differences in the grounding of someone like Kropotkin's thought as compared to Maximus, we might, as Maximus did in his own time, see the tools and methods worth keeping from those outside our tradition, and put them to use in a vision for a world closer to love. The anarchist determination to keep striving for a better world with a hope that we can live better with one another than the present, is at least a familiar one to those who look for *theosis.*

Though I draw from anarchist thought in this chapter, it would be a mistake to characterise anarchist though as a single or homogeneous tradition. Briefly, I follow Peter Marshall's choice to call anarchists those who "reject the legitimacy of external government and of the state, and condemn imposed political authority, hierarchy and domination. They seek to establish the condition of anarchy, that is to say, a decentralized and self-regulating society consisting of a federation of voluntary associations of free and equal individuals", so as "to create a free society which allows all human beings to realize their full potential".[454] It is difficult to make generalisations about anarchist thought, given its condemnation of set political ideologies, however, one thinker whose ideas continue to remain important in communal anarchist thought even today is Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). Kropotkin's writings are particularly valuable for the way that they intertwine philosophical critique of the status quo,

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[453]   P. Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origin and Development.* L.S. Friedland & J.R. Piroshnikoff (trans.) (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1992 (First ed. 1922)), 1-18.
[454]   Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 3.

anecdotal and statistical evidence of differing economic systems, biological evidence to counter the political primacy of a social survival-of-the-fittest idea, and a pragmatic ideas for both long and short term changes that can be made to society.

Kropotkin's work continues to remain important in anarchist writing today. In *Anarchy in Action*, Colin Ward goes so far as to call his own book "an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*.".[455] Ward writes that he follows George Orwell in believing Kropotkin to be 'one of the most persuasive of anarchist writers', before going on to say that Kropotkin's continuing relevance is abundantly apparent and that, for example, "Anyone who wants to understand the real nature of the crisis of the British economy in the 1980s would gain more enlightenment from Kropotkin's analysis from the 1890s than from the current spokesmen of any the political parties."[456] Elsewhere, Ward notes that the economic alternatives Kropotkin suggests are extremely important, especially "In the rich world, where we have fallen so far under the spell of capitalist ideology, and of Marxist ideology too...".[457] Ward identifies a severe paucity in the imagination of the left which has largely abandoned "those aspirations for the liberation of work".[458] Consequently, he suggests that Kropotkin's "decentralist and anarchist vision" may yet hold much for us, and that it is certainly much less an "absurd" idea than a socialist faith in the humanisation of work through the conquest of the state power by the proletariat.[459] I've quoted Ward writing of Kropotkin's relevance in 1973, 1974 and 1998, but in the wake of the 2008 economic crash, I think the need for ideas like Kropotkin's are more important now than they ever have been before. Following the systemic failures of state socialism and capitalism, Kropotkin's ideas look ever more prophetic and attractive.

6.03 What to do with our Ethics
Thus far in this thesis, I have outlined the way that Maximus' thought might be understood in the context of contemporary ethics. I evaluated the difficulties and limitations of current virtue ethics thought and tried to lay down some general

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[455]   Ward, *Anarchy,* 10.
[456]   Ward, *Anarchy*, 10.
[457]   C. Ward, 'Introduction' in P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow.* C. Ward (ed.) (London: Freedom Press, 1998 (First ed. 1974) (First published 1899)), 12.
[458]   Ward, 'Introduction' in Kropotkin, *Fields,* 13.
[459]   Ward, 'Introduction' in Kropotkin, *Fields,* 13.

premises that could be accepted in order to incorporate his thought. I went on to describe about how *telos* and virtue are understood by him, using these terms as a way into talking about Maximus' whole cosmic theology. I explained how Maximus' wholistic understanding of cosmic and ascetic theology may give us a useful way to think about how to live by Christ's words. I then gave an example of how Maximus' theology can serve as a way to critique our present day circumstances. I used the state as an example of a monolithic structure in human society that is extremely problematic when considered in light of this ethics. The other thing I would like to do in this thesis is give an example of a more positive account of how we might go about living out such an ethics. It is all very well to provide critiques of the present day institutions we depend so heavily on, but much more exciting to my mind is a vision of how we might work for change. If the state is such a terrible thing to partake in, how could we live without it? As well as giving us the tools to critique our present day, Maximus' ethics can also help us think about how we might try to live better in future. He does not give us a manual for economic and political change, but he does give us something much more important – he helps us identify what is really important in human relationship with the divine, with one another, and with the rest of creation. It is up to us to try and think of ways to keep these right relations at the heart of the way that we live with one another in larger communities. As in ascetic striving and in our liturgical participation, we come before God clearing our hearts of attachment to worldly desires and offering all that we can, in the hope that the Spirit will work through our striving. In this chapter, I look at how we might also take this attitude toward our communities, prioritising things like giving others the freedom to choose to love, placing compassion, mercy and the well-being of others at the heart of our communal endeavours, and being aware of our own fallibility, pre-empting that we may go wrong and putting in place ways to reflect and change for the better. The anarchist sources I draw from represent the attempts of different people to try and think through the failures of our current communal relationships and to push considerations like the well-being of all through to philosophical extremes that are not confined in imagination to the status quo. As I mentioned in 6.0.2, I do not suggest anarchist ideas as an exhaustive avenue of thought, but do think that the practical ideas suggested may inspire a more creative ethics founded in Maximus' theology.

There are a number of ways in which we can think about how we put our ethics into action. Firstly, we should never forget that every present moment simultaneously partakes in the end we look towards. Our virtuous or un-virtuous activity forges or breaks cosmic relationships that have repercussions for the end of all creatures. Although I argue for critiquing the state and trying to live in community outside of its influences, we cannot forget that our love must also be for those within the state and its influence. Our ethical considerations cannot be devoid from a responsibility of love to everyone around us. Thus, I think it essential that regardless of where else we take our ethical study, we never forget that in the short term we must work within whatever parameters we have to suffer with those who suffer and to give to those who need us most. These short term considerations are difficult to situate within a cosmic political framework, since many of our activities might continue within precisely the state structure I have been criticising. Perhaps the most astute insight on this matter comes from Noam Chomsky, who, from a purely secular anarchist viewpoint, argues that though we look for a better way of living, we can never do so without keeping in mind the suffering of all others around us, and doing our utmost to alleviate such suffering in the short term as well as the long term.[460]

The second thing we can do with this ethics is what I spend the rest of this chapter considering. We can start thinking creatively and imaginatively about modes of human organisation beyond those oppressive and coercive means that we currently live in. We can start thinking of ways to lessen our dependence on a state that necessarily exploits economically, politically and socially, humans inside and outside its borders. We can think about those virtues like humility and compassion that remind us how to strive for better and never to allow comfort to become complacency. I discuss the possibilities for other modes of communal relation in anarchist experimentations in communal living, and sum up these ideas in two sections. In a section called 'Rooted in Love' (6.2) I look at those things upon which we must build our communities, and in 'Striving towards Love' (6.3) I look at those practices that will encourage our communities see beauty in repentance and striving for a perfection that will always be beyond human grasp.

The last thing we may do is emphasise that the greatest long term change we

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[460]   See N. Chomsky, "Anarchism, Intellectuals and the State" in *Chomsky on Anarchism*, 212-220.

can hope for lies in changes in attitude. As we saw in Gregory of Nyssa's *Sermon on Mercy*, meaningful change in the oppressive structures around us starts in our hearts and the way that we treat one another. We can give others the chance to see Christ's love in action and to see change as real and attainable. The eschatological grounding of our ethics affords us the opportunity to think beyond a status quo that we are told gives us security and the necessities of life. A commitment to seeking Christ in all things and mediating His love to the world means that we can have hope and faith that a different way of living and loving is not only possible but necessary. We can know that our actions today and the spaces we create inside ourselves to receive virtue allow the world the potential to move closer to Christ now, and ultimately prepare the cosmos for that final consummation. Our eyes set eschatologically affords us the time to care about particular existences here and now. We do not have the time to settle for political promises that tell us that oppressive and exploitative means will eventually give us some small return for ourselves in the future. Our concern is with love and loving today – with being rooted in and striving for love.

6.1 ROOTED IN LOVE

6.1.1 Personal Choice in a Communal Life

In 5.3.1.1 I suggested that in the face of the state's coercion, one following Maximian ethics must consider the importance of freedom and personal choice. I argued that we cannot be forced to become more fully human – that is we cannot be forced into love. Both the coerced and the coercer have no part in love when coercion takes place. It is Christ's voluntary suffering on behalf of the other that forms the basis of our understanding of love. Only by imitating Christ's voluntary act can we being to partake in love.

6.1.1.1 Free Association

When it comes to questions of ethics we arrive at the difficulty of how best to live with each other whilst respecting the importance of each person's free will. As I discussed in the last chapter, there are very big differences between an Enlightenment concept of freedom as autonomous individual action and Maximian freedom of will.

For example, J.S. Mill's understanding of freedom is defined in the context of human society, where freedom is seen necessarily as an individual operation that is curtailed by the imposition of society. Society exists to prevent one individual from eroding another individual's freedom and to protect the individual from the pressure of majority social pressure.[461] Mill thus seeks to describe a way in which these two opposing forces might be maximised in the society. Individual freedom must do no harm to another,[462] whilst societal good must not suffocate the free operation of individuals to do any number things (Mill describes the most important individual freedoms as liberty of thought and feeling, liberty of tastes and pursuits and of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character, liberty of each individual to unite with others for any purpose not involving harm to others).[463]

Maximus, by contrast, talks about freedom in purely functional terms. It is something we have as humans, related to will and rationality. Freedom is discussed in so far as we have the option to do that which is in our natural capability. We have freedom to act in accord with our natural faculties that are reconstructed in Christ. Maximus' entire conversation about freedom is orientated in a different way to Mill's, since for Maximus freedom is defined in relation to hypostatic action and in opposition (so to speak) to natural necessity.[464] The ability to will, like the virtues discussed in 4.1.1, is a faculty we posses by merit of being human, but we perform the *act* of willing according to our hypostasis. In other words, we *can* do it because of our nature, but we *do* do it because we personally choose to. Free choice is characterised as a personal (hypostatic) ability as compared to necessity more commonly expressed through nature.

Initially, it is not necessarily the case then that Mill's concept of freedom and Maximus' are incompatible, so much as that they are talking across purposes. Where

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[461]   J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty' in *On Liberty and Other Writings.* S. Collini (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 (First ed. 1989) (First published 1859)), Chapter 1, 8-9.

[462]   "That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." Mill, 'On Liberty'*,* Chapter 1, 13.

[463]   Mill, 'On Liberty', Chapter 1, 15-16.

[464]   I use the term 'opposition' loosely, since we have already determined that natures are shaped by a persons growing into them. I mean here that hypostatic action refers to the things we choose to do, while nature is simply descriptive of what is within our capability. (See the l*ogos/tropos* distinction in 3.2.4 and 4.1.2)

Mill's discussion of freedom relates to political existence, Maximus' discussion of freedom relates to nature. However, despite these discussions happening in very different forums, by looking at how freedom is defined we see very important statements being made by each about what humans beings are.

Mill's understanding of liberty seems much more rigid in its application to human living. There is a presupposition that society must be oppressive of freedom, since freedom is located in the absolute autonomy of the individual. Society could be characterised as a kind of necessary evil, working to keep individuals from destroying each other with their wanton autonomy. Despite being fully aware of the oppressive and restrictive means of society,[465] Mill's position still lends itself to a Hobbesian view of the state of nature, where without society and its social contract, all would be in a condition of constant war, violence, fear and death.[466] Though Mill and Hobbes differ on how favourably they view human society, it seems that they both view it as a necessary means of restraining human autonomy from its more harmful predispositions.

Maximus by contrast describes freedom as a prerequisite to love. Love, as we have already seen, is necessarily communal in its outworking and descriptive of human relationship. If we were to draw a societal statement from this, we might say that freedom is necessary in order for right relation to exist between people. This is an unsurprising conclusion to arrive at, given that Maximus believes that by nature creation was made good, and that this goodness can be attained by participation in reconstructed human nature in Christ. In other words, a Maximian view of nature is at odds with a Hobbesian view of human nature being at war until it is bound in political contract. Instead, the human is not truly human until they have placed themselves freely in association with other humans and lives as Christ did in the world.

Also unlike Hobbes' view of humanity, there is a trend in anarchist thought that conceives of society as expressive of human freedom. Rooted in Kropotkin's

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[465]   Mill's *On Liberty* is concerned with protecting the individual's freedoms from society, which, even when supposedly democratic, still operates oppressively. However, he believes the dangers of majority pressure and the need for protection from other individuals means that some form of society is necessary. Society is thus still presented as a kind of a restraining order placed upon humans in order to allow for other individuals to exercise their freedoms as well.
[466]   T. Hobbes, 'Chapter XIII', *Leviathan*, (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), 76-79.

observations that form the backbone of his book *Mutual Aid*[467] and continued in the anthropological data collated by Colin Ward and others, there is a strand of anarchist thought that claims willing co-operation and coexistence is a natural phenomena in humanity. In Kropotkin's works these claims are made as statements about human nature itself,[468] whereas in Ward's reassessment he emphasises this more as a social tendency that arises when hierarchy is absent in a group of people.[469] Ward's position is less reliant on naturalistic claims about human behaviour, since he allows that this social phenomena seems to arise more out of convenience than out of any natural law.[470] Regardless, the observations of both mean that their practical visions for a human society may be of great use to one who lives in accord with Maximian ethics.

The anarchist vision of society is one that is freely entered into out of human choice because it is mutually beneficial. While we could argue that Mill ultimately believes something similar, with his belief that society serves the common good for all, his focus on the limitations that society forces on human freedom is suggestive of the coercive state structure in which he lives and implies that human community must always have a degree of coercive restriction if certain liberties are to be assured. Kropotkin and Ward's suggestions, by comparison, start from the basis that society does not have to be a series of limitations placed upon the individual, but is rather expressive of the desire of people to aid one another. The difference is subtle, but ultimately Kropotkin and Ward's vision is one fundamentally opposed to the top down system that Mill's philosophy is suggestive off. The intent and desire for society means that the driving force for its creation is located with its participants, and is therefore a personal choice in and of itself. This in turn feeds very directly into the shape of the resulting society. Because the anarchist premise arises from the personal desire to freely associate, its structure comes out of these base relations. Limitation, as I will go on to explain, is self-imposed and community is thus expressive of free

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[467]   Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* begins by identifying mutual aid among animals of the same species and setting this in context of Darwin's theory of evolution. He then goes on to mutual aid practices in indigenous communities, the development of the medieval city, and finally looks at examples present in society in his own day.

[468]   See 6.1.2.1.

[469]   Ward, "Chapter II: The Theory of Spontaneous Order" in *Anarchy*, 39-49.

[470]   Kropotkin's belief that mutual aid is a natural law seems to be primarily of contextual importance, given his opposition to predominant Social Darwinist survival-of the-fittest ideas. Ward allows for a reading that is much more in line with contemporary philosophical and anthropological ideas.

association and a desire to mutually aid one another, rather than out of fear and self-protection. Association is formed together rather than coercively pressed upon many by a few. Already the coercive top-down control of the state is pushed away as the sole shape and vision of human societies. In the anarchist vision for association that arises from free will is a counterpart that may suit Maximian ethics much more.

6.1.1.2 The Federalist Idea

The anarchist vision put forward by Kropotkin builds on a foundation of mutual aid and envisions ever larger and more complex human networks of association that might serve to aid such a society fulfil human needs. Kropotkin suggested that society be organised freely in structures that arise out of necessity from work and day-to-day living. Such structures would rise to meet needs and disappear if no longer necessary. Michael Bakunin, another of the great classical anarchist writers, emphasised this latter point in particular

> I bow before the authority of special[ist] men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason... I receive and I give – such is human life. Each directs and is directed in his turn. Therefore there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination.[471]

Bakunin emphasises as Maximus did that it is our free choice to limit *ourselves* and *willingly* partake in human community that is necessary. Unlike Mill's assumption that every human wishes the greatest autonomy to do anything they please (a desire tempered only by the desire not to be injured by another, thus resulting in humans subjecting themselves to the rule of society), Bakunin believes that freedom is in the choice to be in association with another, *including* our limitations: "freedom is not a phenomenon of isolation, but of mutual contemplation".[472] What Bakunin realised that Mill seems to have missed is that in order to live with other people, we must choose to limit ourselves, and that so long as we are imposed upon by the state to live in such-

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[471] M. Bakunin, *God and State.* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1916 (First Published 1882)). Available online: *Bakunin Reference Archive*: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/godstate/ch02.htm (Accessed: 09.06.17), Ch. 2.

[472] Bakunin, *God and State.* This version in *No Gods No Masters,* 151.

and-such a fashion then we do not have that freedom. One might argue that in a democratic society we are remotely involved in creating these rules, or that society is still a kind of contract people wish to participate in to avoid injury to themselves, but in the day to day living of our lives, many of those freedoms are not readily apparent.[473] We have opportunities in the UK to enact many of the freedoms Mill thought essential for humans to possess, but with the threat of law, punishment and coercion, just how many of these freedoms are freedoms if we are limited by a punitive system, state apparatus, and the cyclical confines of poverty and a debt driven society? We must have the freedom *not* to injure one another as part of our choice to love.

In 5.3.1.1 I talked about the necessity of freedom in order for love to be real. Unless we have the option to choose that which is not God, neither do we have the choice to love Him. We cannot coerce another into love, but instead the desire to change must come from within, as far as we are concerned.[474] The ability to limit oneself then, is a freedom we could call essential to a human community founded on love. Instead of units operating autonomously within the confines of a society that has the authority to limit our actions, Bakunin suggested that instead we understand authority as expertise relevant to the need at hand: "Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or the engineer".[475] Neither then do we assume that authority is a static good to be obeyed at all times. Instead, we understand relationships to be with other particular people, each of which has something unique to offer community. We do not dehumanise structure and organisation, but instead understand it as people willingly operating in community with one another. Authority is therefore not arbitrary and total, requiring unthinking obedience, but instead is the lending of a more experienced hand, when and where that experience is required, freely received by one who has respect; a relationship not born of antagonism but of mutual respect.

Authority then and the structures of organisation could be responses to needs

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[473]   As Mill himself also pointed out. cf. Mill, "On Liberty", Chapter 1, 12.
[474]   As we saw in 4.1.3 to live virtuously is the the joint work of grace and the Holy Spirit, as well the person who desires to receive love in them. Without limiting the way in which grace and the Spirit work, we can still safely say that coercing someone into virtuousness is not possible or desirable.
[475]   Bakunin, *God and State*, Ch. 2.

and difficulties wherein those concerned gather to resolve a problem. Kropotkin's models for workplace organising drew from the medieval guild structures and the syndicalist ideas being experimented on in his own day. As Ward summarised

> The classical anarchist thinkers envisaged the whole social organisation woven from such local groups: the *commune* or council as the territorial nucleus and the *syndicate* or worker's council as the industrial or occupational unit. These units would federate together not like the stones of a pyramid where the biggest burden is borne by the lowest layer, but like the links of a network, the network of autonomous groups.[476]

Decision-making might thus be made on a local basis, and where collaboration or consultation further afield is necessary, networks could be in place that allow federated communication and decision to be made.[477] Free choice to participate thus becomes essential to the structure of society and community.

 Thus, it becomes possible to envision communities that, at a local level of organisation, come together to decide all matters. Such an organisation would be small enough that every voice could be heard and considered, but large enough that it is capable of undertaking most local responsibilities. The carrying out of tasks decided by such an organisation would be delegated to voluntary working groups, which could be made up of those with expertise in certain matters. These working groups could have autonomy, but would abide by collective decisions made within the community and bring back any matters they considered needed further collective approval.[478] The

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[476]   Ward, *Anarchy,* 33-4.

[477]   Federalism was also championed by Proudhon in his book *Du principe fédératif* published in 1863. Woodcock summarises Proudhon's position on federalism thus: "In his view the federal principle should operate from the simplest level of society. The organisation of administration should begin locally and as near the direct control of the people as possible; individuals should start the process by federating into communes and associations. Above that primary level the confederal organisation would become less an organ of administration than of co-ordination between local units. Thus the nation would be replaced by a geographical confederation of regions, and Europe would become a confederation of confederations, in which the interest of the smallest province would have as much expression as that of the largest, and in which all affairs would be settled by mutual agreement, contract, and arbitration." Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 117.

[478]   I presented a case study of working groups in action in the 2010 student occupation of Appleton Tower in Edinburgh University (E. Brown Dewhurst, 'Demanding the Impossible – Reaching for the Divine: Anarchist Living and the Theology of Maximus the Confessor' paper presented to *2016 Society for the Study of Christian Ethics Postgraduate Conference: Christian Hope: Embodying Resurrection in the World Today.* Durham, 21st-22nd April 2016). A copy of the case study is available online at:
https://www.academia.edu/24943592/Handout_Demanding_the_Impossible_Reaching_for_the_Divi

community would not be limited to this local organisation, but the basis of self-governance would happen at this level. Coalition and communication with other similar organisations might result in nested, federated community structures that might meet at a regional, national or international level as described by Kropotkin. Each would be accountable to its more local group, rooting meaningful decision-making with the person and the original community. Through a system of accountable and recallable delegates people might organise and flourish in a theoretically borderless world, capable, as I will come on to, of consistently seeing its own faults and persistently trying to reform itself for the better while responding to the concerns of each person.

For Kropotkin, the desire for voluntary participation in community cannot be divorced from a concern for the welfare of fellow humans. We can see the interrelation of his thought and the way that free participation fuels alternate structures of society and is in return rewarded by them. It is not just that freedom in itself is desirable, but that it contributes directly to the mental and physical well-being of each person as well as to the welfare of the community. We can see this for example within his work, *Fields, Factories and Workshops,* written about Great Britain and first collected into a book in 1899.[479] In this work, Kropotkin outlines four aspects of his anarchist vision. The first is the decentralisation of industries which allows us "To return to a state of affairs where corn is grown, and manufactured goods are fabricated, *for the use of those very people who grow and produce them,*" so that "Each region will become its own producer and its own consumer of agricultural produce".[480] The second looks at the possibilities of agriculture, and how the market garden might be put to good use. The main point of this section is to illustrate that it is always within our means to produce food locally to feed a population.[481] On this, he says, "The obstacles against it are not in the imperfection of the agricultural art, or in the infertility of the soil, or in climate. They are in our institutions, in our inheritances and

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ne_Anarchist_Living_and_the_Theology_of_Maximus_the_Confessor. One could also experiment with methods of consensus decision making, as was the case in this example. For more on this see 6.2.2.

[479]   Ward, 'Introduction' in Kropotkin, *Fields,* iv.

[480]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 40.

[481]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 103; This is still the case today with responsible changes to land use and diet, cf. S. Fairlie 'Can Britian Feed Itself' *The Land* 4 Winter (2007-8): 18-26.

survivals from the past – in the 'Ghosts' which oppress us".[482] His point is that our cultural, traditional, political and economic practices are tied to our current institutions and prevent us from attempting to create local, self-sustaining economies and agriculture. In his third section, Kropotkin discusses the necessity of "*producing for the producers themselves*" and also the healthy need for all people to be involved to some degree in manual outdoor labour.[483] On a similar theme, the last area Kropotkin covers is education: "'Through the eyes *and* the hand to the brain' – this is the true principle of economy of time in teaching."[484] Kropotkin is keen to emphasise that understanding of the theoretical comes through the practical, and that this is true in school-learning, but also in the societies that we construct. We cannot understand labour unless we ourselves labour.[485]

In *Fields, Factories and Workshops,* Kropotkin demonstrates the need for our economic and political decisions never to occur in isolation from our social and ethical thought. The two belong to one another and inform each other and are built on one another. We could say then, that this kind of free participation and choice is one of the means that contributes to an end vision of better human co-existence. Freedom to participate in society, to choose to be a part of it and to limit our own actions so that we may work with one another affects how we conduct ourselves as human beings and the shape of the community that is brought about. Treating community as human relationships that must be worked at changes how we think about authority, about how we think about work, about how we think about living well. Freedom, in Kropotkin's thought is an extremely social concept – it is about how one chooses to live with other people, and necessarily shapes the societies we build. In so far as this kind choice bears relation to the way that Maximus understands freedom as a prerequisite to love, the kind of suggestions Kropotkin is making may suit us better as a way of trying to organise ourselves. Founding communities on the request that people limit themselves for one another certainly shares much more in common with an ethics of Christ-like love than the assumption that people must be coerced into such a relation by the state.

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[482]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 106.
[483]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 158.
[484]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 175.
[485]   Kropotkin, *Fields,* 186.

6.1.2 A Society Founded on Compassion

I have considered the importance of freedom to love in the way we structure our societies, but how can we ensure that love itself is the foundation upon which we build our communities? In 4.1.4 I described the way that, when struggling to think of what it means to love in any given circumstance, we could, if it is helpful, look back at the virtues and think about the way that they relate to love. In Chapter 3 I discussed the Pauline list of virtues to which Maximus make frequent mention. These were compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love and forgiving one another if one has a complaint against the other just as Christ has forgiven us.[486] These virtues might also be summed up in the words of Christ: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is exactly like it: 'You must love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments" (Matt 22:37-40). Essential to each of these virtues is the giving of oneself to another. It is what God does for us in Christ – simultaneously limiting Himself[487] and outpouring Himself – offering all of Himself to be received. In 6.1.1 we talked about limiting oneself – giving the other the space to choose as God has done for us. In this section I talk about that kenotic outpouring of Christ that we see on the cross, in all of the virtues and at the heart of Maximus' theology. In order to partake in Christ we follow in His voluntary suffering for others, dying into His death and clearing our hearts of things that stand between us and love. Maximus reminds us of the above Matthew passage when rehearsing the conversation between a spiritual elder and a monk:

> This is the sign of our love for God, as the Lord Himself shows in the Gospels: *He that loves me*, He says, *will keep my commandments*. And what this commandment is, which if we keep we love Him, hear Him tell: *This is my commandment, that you love one another*. Do you see that this love for one another makes firm the love for God?[...] The Lord Himself makes it clear and has shown it to us by His very works; and so too all His disciples, who strove til death for love of their neighbour and prayed fervently for

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[486]   Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 24; Col. 3:12-15.
[487]   Also discussed in 2.2.2.

those that killed them.[488]

Here and throughout the *Centuries On Love,* Maximus continuously falls back on the path of personal asceticism being about transforming our actions towards others, especially those who we struggle to get on with. In order to reach for God , we must genuinely care for others. This is the only way to healing for both us and our neighbours:

> If you harbour resentment against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your grief from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his passion.[489]

Kropotkin, as we will see, rejects what has traditionally been called 'love' in Christian thought as a necessary founding principal of society. However, his principle of mutual aid, which assumes the well-being of others to be of utmost concern when structuring society, shares a great deal with Christ's greatest commandment and Maximus' interpretation of it. I shall demonstrate Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid and describe the ways in which it may be useful to those looking for a mode of organisation that originates in care for all neighbours.

6.1.2.1 To Each According To Their Need

The philosophical ideas underlying Kropotkin's anarchist theory might best be described in the Marxist maxim[490] *'to each according to their need; to each according to their ability'* , a phrase Kropotkin used himself,[491] and (incidentally) reminiscent of Maximus' *Centuries on Love:* "...in God's fashion to each one who has need".[492] In his autobiography, Kropotkin describes how from a young age he was deeply distressed

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[488]   Maximus, *LA* TCr. [Sherwood, *Maximus,* 108].
[489]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 1043CD III.90 [Louth, *Maximus,* 39].
[490]   K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Program' in *Marx/Engels Selected Works, Volume Three.* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970 (First Published 1890), 13-30.
[491]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 24.
[492]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965A I.23 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 37].

by the inequality, injustice and oppression inherent in serfdom, and the expectations in social interaction this system enforced.[493] Kropotkin describes a continual struggle to confront the injustices he found in Russian society. Remaining at the heart of his struggle is the desire to give to those in need, to bring a measure of fairness into the lives of those about him and above all "not be just the same"[494] as the privileged who kept others enslaved. He claimed it was no good wanting to change society simply through the Marxist ideas like the "right to work" or "to each the whole result of his labour".[495] What had to be at the heart of desire for change in human society was hope for 'well-being for all',[496] based on a principle of "to every [wo/]man according to [her/]his needs".[497] It was in this way that common people could become "the builders of a new, equitable mode of organisation of society".[498]

Kropotkin justified his belief in the need for a society that seeks the well-being of all by locating a driving factor for this in an evolutionary tendency of the natural[499] world towards co-operation. He notes that while the traditions and history of a society play an important part in the development of ethics, conscience itself "has a much deeper origin, – namely in the consciousness of equity, which physiologically develops in man as in all social animals...".[500] He writes that a key factor of evolution has been the social development and ability of animals to co-operate with one another in order to survive.[501] He calls this the 'mutual-aid tendency', believing it to be something more base and instinctive than human feeling and sympathy. For him it is a kind of natural propensity for solidarity, "an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life".[502] Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid* was a vital work of its time, challenging the legitimacy of emerging social

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493   Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 48-62.
494   Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 51.
495   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 10.
496   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 11.
497   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 24.
498   Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 379.
499   'Natural' is used in reference to the biological world here, and not with any of the Maximian connotations with which it has been employed in the rest of this thesis.
500   Kropotkin, *Ethics*, 338.
501   P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution.* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1902.)*,* xvi.
502   Kropotkin, *Mutual,* xiii.

Darwinism and proposing that cooperation as well as struggle had foundations in evolutionary science.[503] Social Darwinism exacerbated the struggle of the individual in nature and derived from it a series of natural facts about the capability of the human and from there a legitimacy in the way in which human societies operated according to the survival of the fittest.[504] Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* set about challenging the premise that the struggle of the individual is all that can be found in nature (or in Darwin's theory, for that matter).[505] However, the extent to which ethics should be informed by observing nature was not called into question. This makes sense of why, for Kropotkin, it is not enough to say that human society could be founded on 'love', though the concept for him is nonetheless an important emotion derived from this natural 'mutual-aid tendency'.[506] Kropotkin still holds that scientifically proven tendencies in human nature must dictate the shape of our societies.[507] Of course, this does not really explain why it could not be possible for the human, which believes itself to have the capacity for love, to base its societies upon such a relation. Kropotkin writes, "It is not love of my neighbour – whom I often do not know at all – which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire…".[508] But need it not be? The heart of Maximus' ascetic literature is the assertion that the human can precisely cultivate an attitude of love toward any neighbour, even one previously not known.[509] Since we are *able* to cultivate such an attitude, we have a responsibility to live in this way, Maximus believes, as we are the only creatures on earth who have sufficiently developed[510] the rational capacity to live in such a fashion and thus enable harmony between all creatures.[511]

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[503] Kropotkin, *Mutual,* ix-x.

[504] Kropotkin, *Mutual,* ix.

[505] See Kropotkin, *Mutual,* viii-xii.

[506] See Kropotkin, *Mutual,* xii-xiii.

[507] Cf. Chomsky's doubt on the utility of this kind of thought in anarchism see, Chomsky, "Interview with Ziga Vodovnik" in *Chomsky on Anarchism*, 240.

[508] Kropotkin, *Mutual,* xiii. Kropotkin is making a point here about the basis of his 'scientific' ethics, rather than actually disparaging love as mode of human living. We can see the case for love in anarchism made particularly strongly by Emma Goldman in her argument that marriage should not be a prerequisite for one to love; E. Goldman, "Marriage and Love", in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, (New York, Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910). Available online from The Anarchist Library: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-anarchism-and-other-essays#toc13 (Accessed 10.03.17).

[509] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 963C I.15 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 37].

[510] On the possibility of compatibility between Maximus' *logoi*-based theology and Darwin's Theory of Evolution, see Blowers, 'Unfinished', 174-90.

[511] Maximus, *Amb. 41* PG91 1308B-C [Louth, *Maximus,* 158].

Regardless, it is clear that an ascetic call to love does not sit at odds with Kropotkin's hope for 'well-being for all', and that Kropotkin's scientific reasoning is not a boundary to the Christian seeing utility in his ideas and practices. A key part of Maximus' cosmology is that it is not only human well-being that is sought for, but the well-being of the entirety of creation, of which humanity is a part. As noted earlier 'To every man according to his needs' might be a key slogan of nineteenth century anarchist thought, but the sentiment is much older and one of the places it was cultivated as a way of life was in practical *ascesis*: "...in God's fashion to each one who has need".[512] To give to another person is to do the work of God, according to the Gospel and early Church.[513]

As has been hinted at, of vital importance to Kropotkin when considering how a society can enable each according to their need, is tackling economic oppression through poverty and debt. For Kropotkin, in order to give people what they need to live, and to give them the freedom to make their own choices without being enslaved to economic means, the monopoly of private property must be addressed. In the next section I look at Kropotkin's suggestions for a property-less society, differentiating it from state Communist solutions and comparing it to Scriptural and Maximian considerations on property.

6.1.2.2 The Abolition of Property

In Chapter 5, I presented the state's origin as closely tied to the protection of private property. In this section I argue that not only is a capitalist state instrumental in continuing to protect the inequity of property, but that its economy is reliant on perpetually increasing the gap between rich and poor. I set out the basis of Marx's critique of the capitalist relationship between labour and capital. I then go on to contrast Marx's concern with equity to Kropotkin's concern for well-being for all and demonstrate Kropotkin's commitment to the abolition of wages and property in favour of giving to others what they need.

We can see the reliance on inequity of property and the continued gap between rich and poor in the dependence of capitalist states on debt. We can see for example

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[512]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965A I.23 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 37].
[513]   John 15:13.

that the economy of the UK is heavily reliant on increasing value in the property market. As evidenced by the 2008 financial crash, the collapse of the housing market brought about the collapse of national and international economies, indicating that the way finance is invested in the property market has a knock-on effect on the rest of the economy. In an evaluation of the first twenty-five years of the Right to Buy scheme initiated by the UK government under Thatcher, Jones and Murie wrote that over 90% of houses sold through Right to Buy were purchased with mortgages.[514] The majority of transactions involving housing purchases then, involve borrowing money. By measuring economic growth in relation to the housing market, we are measuring the increase in the value of mortgages. In other words, we are measuring the amount that debt (on unpaid mortgages) might fetch if sold.[515] It was the potential price of property, as opposed to the actual price of property, that was being bought and sold in the run up to the financial crisis. According to Ian Stewart, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at Warwick University, by 2007 one quadrillion dollars was being traded per year in the international financial system, which was ten times the total worth of all products manufactured in the world over the last century.[516]

In a book contextualising the 2008 financial crisis and debt, Richard Diesnt explains that mortgages, particularly risky mortgages which were high interest with a high likelihood that they would not be paid off (subprime mortgages), were repackaged, regraded and resold so as to cover up the likelihood of payment being defaulted on to buyers. This resulted in a large part of the economy relying and profiting on the reselling of debt that was never likely to be paid back.[517] In a BBC4 radio programme, Thomas Gokey from *Strike Debt,*[518] explained that:

> Financial corporations don't actually make money when they're taking a loan that somebody can afford to pay. Credit card companies refer to people who can pay off the balance on their credit card every month as 'deadbeats' because they're not making

[514]   C. Jones & A. Murie. *The Right to Buy: Analysis and Evaluation of a Housing Policy.* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 6.
[515]   R. Dienst, *The Bonds of Debt: Borrowing Against the Common Good.* (London: Verso, 2011), 13
[516]   I. Stewart, "The mathematical equation that caused the banks to crash" *The Observer*, 12th Feb. 2012. *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/feb/12/black-scholes-equation-credit-crunch (Accessed 09.03.17).
[517]   Cf. Dienst, *Bonds*, 7-8.
[518]   "Strike Debt is a decentralized network of debt resisters, including activists, artists, and organizers." From their website: http://strikedebt.org (Accessed 09.03.17)

money off of them. Instead their real cash cow are people who struggle to pay the debt. They can add on late fees and late charges and all kinds of other hosts of fees, jack up the interest rates etc. Those are the people who they're really profiting off of.[519]

Debt always hits the poorest hardest. Loans with the highest interest rates are made available to those who are least likely to be able to pay them off. The longer the period of time that debt lasts, the greatest the profit and interest can be made from the original transaction. Combined with the above disinterest in how likely payments are to default, there is a disincentive to ever see payments ever completed, since the presence of debt itself is more profitable than a completed transaction. Debt itself, accumulated not only through property acquisition, but also through education loans and encouraged in all areas of consumerism, ties people into payments that may continue for the rest of their lives. In this way debt itself becomes a form of control that disproportionately falls on those who cannot afford.

Dienst argues that poverty has come to be seen as a sin that the poor are responsible for, whilst capitalism is seen as the solution to this problem. He argues that poverty is seen as a kind of left over from a previous history that is to be eliminated, rather than something created by the accumulation of excessive wealth by a few, concluding "That is why the most optimistic plans for helping the poor scarcely mention the existence of massively concentrated wealth, let alone suggest that such wealth is part of the sickness, too".[520] He goes on the claim that

> Yet it should be clear that there is no way to 'fix' poverty without 'fixing' the process of accumulation. Without dismantling the top-heavy structures of the world's economic architecture, poverty reduction programs and deficit-driven fiscal policies can do little to reverse the entrenched patterns of inequality. Instead of treating inequality as inevitable and poverty as some kind of immature condition, we should start by seeing both as the result of an ongoing process – actual impoverishment - that is systemically produced and maintained by the current arrangement of things. The basic mechanisms of impoverishment – expropriation and oppression, rooted in violence – have been at work for centuries, administered by a variety of social forms

[519] T. Gokey, Strike Debt, "Hope" Promises, Promises: A History of Debt, D. Graeber, BBC Radio 4 Extra. First aired 14th Jan. 2017. Available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b054tl77
[520] Dienst, *Bonds,* 34.

and political regimes in increasingly multilateral and overdetermined ways.[521]

Dienst argues that our current economies exacerbate the disparity between rich and poor. Far from alleviating the poor, a capitalist economy, reliant on the resale of debt in the markets, creates inequity. An economy reliant on debt is one that is committed to the necessity of poverty.

In the wake of the 2008 crash, we have seen a continuous language of blame in the media: equations were 'abused',[522] loans were 'misused',[523] banks were 'morally bankrupt',[524] financial regulations were a 'failure',[525] financiers engaged in 'folly' and were 'irresponsible',[526] bankers were overcome by 'revolting greed'.[527] However, it can be argued that the resale of debt in the manner that led to the financial crash is not a failure of market capitalism, but a logical extension of its operations. In 1900, Marxist economist Rosa Luxemburg argued that "as a result of its own inner contradictions, capitalism inevitably moves toward a point when it will be unbalanced" and that there are "good reasons for conceiving that juncture in the form of a catastrophic general commercial crisis". She wrote that "credit, instead of being an instrument for the suppression or the attenuation of crises, is on the contrary a particularly mighty instrument for the formation of crises. It cannot be anything else. Credit eliminates the remaining rigidity of capitalist relationships", concluding that "In short, credit reproduces all the fundamental antagonisms of the capitalist world. It accentuates them. It precipitates their development and thus pushes the capitalist world forward

[521]   Dienst, *Bonds,* 34-5.
[522]   Stewart, "The mathematical equation".
[523]   I. Griffiths, "Small firms loans scheme 'misused by banks'" *The Guardian,* 24th Feb. 2013. *The Guardian:* https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/feb/24/small-firms-loans-scheme-misused (Accessed 09.03.17).
[524]   R. Wolff, "Lehman Brothers: financially and morally bankrupt" *The Guardian,* 12th Dec. 2011. *The Guardian:* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/dec/12/lehman-brothers-bankrupt (Accessed 09.03.17).
[525]   J. McMillan, "Banking in the digital age: the failure of financial regulation" *The Guardian,* 20th Jan. 2015. *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jan/20/finance-in-digital-age-while-regulation-stuck-in-industrial (Accessed 09.03.17).
[526]   The Economist, "The origins of the financial crisis: crash course" *The Economist* 7th Sept 2013. *The Economist*: http://www.economist.com/news/schoolsbrief/21584534-effects-financial-crisis-are-still-being-felt-five-years-article (Accessed 09.03.17).
[527]   The Sun, "Cowboy bankers at RBS who allegedly ruined companies, families, marriages and lives must be help to account" *The Sun*, 11th Oct. 2016. *The Sun*: https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1950961/cowboy-bankers-at-rbs-who-allegedly-ruined-companies-families-marriages-and-lives-must-be-held-to-account/ (Accessed 09.03.17).

to its own destruction".[528] Our current financial instabilities relating to debt can be seen as fundamental to capitalism itself and to our relationship with property. Marx characterised the existence of private property in a capitalist society as dependent on "the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society".[529] In no place is this more clear than the extremes in which we currently find ourselves in. The creation of a society reliant on debt, means that the poorest in society can have the illusion of private property (which they do not yet own, since they are in debt) whilst being tied into a continual exploitative debt. Marx decried the capitalist understanding of property as absurd, relying on a nonsensical formulation of the value of commodities. He argued that the capitalist understanding of ownership and profit fundamentally failed to understand and properly value the input of labour and the labourer, and that the capitalist formula necessarily exploited workers who had to be kept poor and overworked for the capitalist to make profit.

According to Marx, the difference between money and capital is circulation. In a regular exchange, money is used to represent the value of an object and to enable it to be exchanged for a different kind of object. In Marx's words, a commodity is exchanged, via money, for a commodity. Capital, he explains is where one exchanges money for a commodity with the sole purpose of turning it back into money. Ordinarily this transaction would not make sense, since money has no value other than that of the commodity it represents. However, when an object is sold for more than its original purchasing value, 'surplus-value' is created.[530] Marx links the creation of surplus-value directly to worker exploitation, since in order to create a commodity that has more value than itself, one concerns oneself with maximising certain conditions in the manufacture of that commodity. The commodity cannot be simply made, it must be made with minimum expenditure and waste in raw materials and time. Because the capitalist is concerned with end value rather than the product itself,

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[528]   R. Luxemburg, "Chapter 2" in *Social Reform or Revolution.* (London: Militant Publications, 1986 (First published 1900)). *Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive*: https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch02.htm (Accessed 08.03.17).

[529]   K. Marx & F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.* S. Moore (trans.) (London: The Merlin Press Ltd., 2013 (First ed. 1998) (First published 1846)), 15.

[530]   K. Marx, "Vol I: Part II: Chapter 4: The General Formula for Capital" in *Capital: A New Abridgement.* D. McLellan (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 (First ed. 1995) (First published 1867)), 93-100; We can see this exact process also in the aforementioned article by Stewart explaining the mathematics behind the 2008 financial crisis. I. Stewart, "The mathematical equation".

it is not the quality of the product that is the capitalist's concern, but the amount of surplus value that can be added to a commodity by finding ways to undercut the manufacturing cost, or simply not pay for a substantial part of it.[531]

When it comes to the debt situation in our own day, far from being a misuse of money and property, the resale of debt for profit is a logical extension of the basic principle of capitalism. When broken down and described by Marx, it becomes apparent that inherent in the notion of capital, is profit out of nothing. In his compelling analysis of commodity exchange, Marx asserts that

> Use-values must therefore never be looked upon as the real aim of the capitalist; neither must the profit on any single transaction. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at... The never-ending augmentation of exchange-value, which the miser strives after, by seeking to save his money from circulation, is attained by the more acute capitalist, by constantly throwing it afresh into circulation.[532]

Marx later explains that of course there is no such thing as profit out of nothing. The creation of surplus-value in capital comes from not paying workers the total of what they have worked.[533] The total amount of time workers actually need to make a commodity was termed 'necessary labour-time' by Marx. This was contrasted with 'surplus labour-time' the time in which a worker continued to add value to a commodity but was not paid for it. This latter time is what capitalists rely on to make profit, Marx argued.[534]

Kropotkin's critique of Marx relies on two premises in Marx's argument that we can find expressed in the *Communist Manifesto.* The first is that "Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power".[535] The second is that

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[531] Marx, *Capital*, 130.
[532] Marx, *Capital,* 98.
[533] Marx, "Vol I: Part III: Chapter 9: Section 1:The Degree of Exploitation of Labour-Power" in *Capital* , 142-7.
[534] Marx, *Capital,* 46.
[535] Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto,* 14.

What, therefore, the wage labourer appropriates by means of his labour, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labour, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labour of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed only to live in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it.[536]

In light of the analysis Marx provides in *Capital*, we can see that in the *Communist Manifesto* he is advocating that people be paid the full necessary labour-time that it takes to make a product and that the profiteering surplus labour-time (unpaid time that makes profit) is eliminated. Or rather, surplus-value is eliminated because private ownership of the means of production is eliminated, thus each is paid the sum total of what they have worked.

Kropotkin agrees with Marx that capital is a collective product, however, he goes further and says that everything in society and industry is interdependent on one another. Everything we do today is built on the collective efforts of people who have gone before us.[537] Thus Kropotkin asks, "How then, shall we estimate the share of each in the riches which ALL contribute to amass?".[538] Kropotkin goes on to conclude that "Looking at production from this general, synthetic point of view, we cannot hold with the Collectivists [those following Marx[539]] that payment proportionate to the hours of labour rendered by each would be an ideal arrangement, or even a step in the right direction".[540] Kropotkin asserts that "the Collectivist ideal appears to us untenable in a society which considers the instruments of labour as a common inheritance. Starting from this principle, such a society would find itself forced from the very outset to abandon all forms of wages."[541] Kropotkin claims that "the wage

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536 Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto,* 15.
537 Kropotkin, *Conquest,* 22.
538 Kropotkin, *Conquest,* 23.
539 Throughout *Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin refers to his own position as 'Anarchist Communist' or 'Communist' and to Marx's as 'Collectivist'. cf. Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 22.
540 Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 23.
541 Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 23.

system arises out of the individual ownership of the land and the instruments of labour"[542] and gives an account of the individualism inherent in a dedication to wage labour and the monopoly of property, linking it to a history of exploitation and privilege. Whereas we might characterise Marx's system as one premised on seeking equity in the receiving of the results of one's own labour, Kropotkin's system is concerned with seeing that all have what they need.[543] Giving each what they are owed is meaningless to Kropotkin since it fundamentally still revolves around private acquisition rather than seeking the well-being of one another. Kropotkin envisions society operating much like "museums, free libraries, free schools, free meals for children; parks and gardens open to all; streets paved and lighted, free to all; water supplied to every house without measure or stint – all such arrangements are founded on the principle: 'Take what you need'".[544] More important than who owns what possession is the creation of an environment in which the human person may live without being in want. The capitalist mentality and the 'middle-class rule', as Kropotkin calls it, has a "morality drawn from account books, its 'debit and credit' philosophy, its 'mine and yours' institutions" must be demolished".[545] The threat of Kropotkin's anarchism is that "we will do our utmost that none shall lack aught".[546] For Kropotkin this is a condition that makes sense sociologically and anthropologically speaking. For us looking at how this thought can provide practical blueprints to an ethics rooted in Maximus' thought; to give to the other and to overcome division in human society and the natural world is draw near to God and to fulfil human potential as made possible by Christ.[547]

There is a rich history of communal property in the Christian tradition that comes out of the Acts of the early church. For example, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:44-5). Although Maximus does not follow the Greek of this passage,[548] we can see this interpretation of love reflected in his *Centuries*: "The

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[542]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 23.
[543]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 24.
[544]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 25.
[545]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 156.
[546]   Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 39.
[547]   Matt. 25:34-40.
[548]   Acts 2:44-5: "πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά, καὶ τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον καὶ διεμέριζον αὐτὰ πᾶσιν καθότι ἄν τις χρείαν εἶχεν·"; Maximus, *De

one who loves God surely loves his neighbour as well. Such a person cannot hold on to money but rather gives it out in God's fashion to each one who has need",[549] and "The disposition of love is made manifest not only in the sharing of money but much more in sharing the word of God and physical service".[550] Maximus clearly continues in the tradition of giving to those in need as a form of love. A better example of the attitude change that I think is shared by the ascetic Christian tradition and the vision Kropotkin outlines, however, can be found in the following story from the sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers:

> There were two old men who dwelt together for many years and who never quarrelled. Then one said to the other: "Let us pick a quarrel with each other like other men do."
>
> "I do not know how quarrels arise," answered his companion.
>
> So the other said to him: "Look, I will put a brick down here between us and I will say ''This is mine.' Then you can say 'No it is not, it is mine.' Then we will be able to have a quarrel."
>
> So they placed the brick between them and the first one said: "This is mine."
>
> His companion answered him: "This is not so, for it is mine."
>
> To this, the first one said: "If it is so and the brick is yours, then take it and go your way."
>
> And so they were not able to have a quarrel.[551]

The politics of possession, property and coexistence are all expressed within the ascetic life that treats the act of love as a lifestyle and set of choices made in order to live like Christ. The story of these two old men reflects on what it means to be holy and to truly be at peace with another person. Not only are one's actions to be unhurtful, but one's entire attitude is to be cultivated to the point where to take when another needs becomes an utterly nonsensical and bizarre notion. Possession and property hold no value in an ethos where meaningful relation is expressed through love. It does not matter whose brick it is, rather that it be given to the one in need and

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char. PG90 965A I.23: Ὁ τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπῶν καὶ τὸν πλησίον πάντως ἀγαπᾷ. Ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος χρήματα τηρεῖν οὐ δύναται, ἀλλ' οἰκονομεῖ θεοπρεπῶς, ἑκάστῳ τῶν δεομένων παρέχων."

[549]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965A I.23. [Berthold, *Maximus,* 37].
[550]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 965C I.26. [Berthold, *Maximus,*
[551]   Wortley (ed.) *Desert Fathers.* "The Quarrel", N.352/17.26.

that the object not become the source of conflict between two people who might otherwise live in peace. To live in a society where protection of private property and free trade are paramount is to set a groundwork for the kind of social relations that will characterise such a society. Where our perceptions of value and our interactions with others are built upon deserve, merit and right, then we fail to build a society that has any comprehension of compassion and the needs of others. In the story of the two old men we see the importance of property turned on its head. Private possession is seen as absurd by the two men who have come to understand how to love one another. It did not matter to them who the brick belonged to. The idea that such a thing could cause enmity between them was alien to one who knows love. This is a story that presents attachment to private property as in fundamental opposition to love.

I have outlined the bases of the Marxist critique of capitalism and indicated that our current economic reliance on debt falls into a category of exemplary capitalism rather than a misuse of the system. I have provided an anarchist critique of capitalist and Marxist positions on capital and wages in society, and suggested that Kropotkin's position is one that seriously attempts to rethink economic relation in light of a desire to work toward human well-being. My intention in briefly paralleling his vision with the communal attitudes found in the early Church is to demonstrate that, a desire to found community on care for one another conflicts with the protection of and attachment to private property. Kropotkin, like the story from the Desert Fathers and Mothers, concludes that to concern ourselves with who owns this and that is irrelevant in the face of who needs it. Kropotkin tells us that these concepts of right to property have a history of violence and misuse of power, and have been to the detriment of those who have less. If we really desire a society that looks to the well-being of others, then we must do away with the idea that ownership matters more that caring for those around us. In the story of the brick and the two men, we see the same result coming from an ascetic understanding of detachment to material wealth combined with an understanding of love as giving to the other. Though the means of arriving at these conclusions differ, the founding principle and the way of life consequently enacted suggest a strong degree of compatibility between the anarchist position and one we might derive from Maximus' interpretation of Christ's

love. I have attempted to show that the growth of anarchist responses to economics alongside Marxism should not isolate it from contemporary consideration by theologians, but rather serve as a relatively unexplored avenue for practical, communal coexistence in Christ's love.

6.1.3 Enmity and Difference in Community

In 5.3.2.1 I talked about using the Chalcedonian Formula as a basis for thinking about difference as distinction without division – the idea that we can love unique identity without obliterating individuation. This was applied to cultural diversity, and I distinguished between nationalist pride which grows out of warring states and creates identity in competition with the other, and cultural diversity as practises and differences found from place to place that can be celebrated without being a source of conflict. I described the latter as emblematic of diversity without necessarily being antagonistic. Tolerance for those who are different from us is (or was) a relatively commonplace concept under state rule in the United Kingdom. It is much more difficult to extend this principle in the way Christ advocated – 'love your enemies' (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27). The idea of an inclusive community that respects others and loves them through difference seems like a simple, essential principle when imagining an ethics that arises from Maximus' thought. As we have seen in ascetic examples in Chapter 4, Maximus' practical advice on following Christ's love always concerns reflection on one's own failures, withholding judgement on others, learning alongside those who wrong us by recognising our own failures, and loving those with whom we have disagreement:

> "but I say to you," the Lord says, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you." Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hate, sadness, anger, and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible except by the one who loves all men equally in imitation of God, who loves all men equally and "wills that they be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."[552]

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[552] Maximus, *De char.* PG90 973A I.61 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 41].

As Christoyannopoulos points out, however, Christ's command to 'love your enemies' has not always been interpreted so literally by Christians.[553] In this section I will look at some Christian anarchist interpretations of 'love your enemies' in light of Maximus' ascetic guidance and Chalcedonian understanding of love and difference and how these differ from the basic principles of Augustinian based just-war theory. I will then give an overview of anarchist propositions by Colin Ward and Errico Malatesta that concern crime and how to live with those who harm others in communities.

Before going on to discuss those who harm us in communities, I wish to briefly spend a moment thinking about those who might be happy to work towards a similar kind of community to us but have different ends in mind to us. By merit of giving those around us real freedom to receive love, we are likely to find ourselves living alongside those who don't share our faith, or the *telos* of our ethics. As in any community, these differences may cause friction.[554] From a perspective of Maximian ethics we can evaluate the means a community employs, as I did for the state in the previous chapter. Even though a community, like for example one committed to a secular anarchist ideal, claims a different *telos* and motivation to our own, where means align we can see a *telos* of love and *theosis* still being worked for. Since our model of the relation between virtue and a *telos* of love expresses identity, there are ways in which we might rethink our ethics in light of the diversity of spiritual journeys in those present around us.[555] Throughout this thesis I have stressed the importance of a framework in which our ethics is situated – of virtues that can be identified with their *telos* of love in Christ through the Spirit. This framework is essential for internal consistency, evaluation of our actions, and the situations we find ourselves in. Given a commitment to the love and freedom Maximus expresses

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[553] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* 128-9.

[554] See Section 6.1.3.

[555] Maximus writes that within the liturgy, "The grace transforms and changes each person who is found there and in fact remolds him in proportion to what is more divine in him and leads him to what is revealed through the mysteries which are celebrated, even if he does not himself feel this because he is still among those who are children in Christ, unable to see either into the depths of reality or the grace operating in it..." (Maximus, *Myst.* TCr. Ch. 24 [Berthold, *Maximus,* 206-7]). Although the context of Maximus' passage is in the divine liturgy, we can see that those at different stages in their spiritual journey are depicted as absent of knowledge of the grace that they receive, not absent of grace itself. Although Maximus himself does not discuss the relevance of this outside the liturgy (and indeed, his analysis of the liturgy includes the moment where the catechumens and those not yet ready are sent away), the reception and understanding of those at different stages in their spiritual journey in Christ must surely be an essential part of an ethics seeking to live in love with others, particularly given the reading of cosmic liturgy I have demonstrated in Chapter 2.2.1.

however, we will inevitably find ourselves amongst those who do not live by the same ethics. The ability to love and find a way to live in community with such people is also a distinction within humanity that we must consider as we put Maximus' theological ethics into practice. It is thus my contention that it is much more preferable to work towards a community with others who share our ethical means, than it is to abide in a society that declares a *telos* so clearly at odd with its and our own means and methods. Furthermore, it is conceivable that others may respect the means of our ethics without desiring to be a part of the Church. Rather than rejecting the invitation to find a way to live alongside such people in a community, could we not instead see their receptivity to loving practices as a stage of a spiritual journey, the details of which we are not privy to? If our neighbour's actions seem to live out the love we have been called by Christ to live by, then who are we to assume that such love in some way falls short of moving the cosmos toward an end of *theosis*? If we believe in allowing others around us the freedom to choose to love God, and also believe that where virtue is present so also is the Spirit, it seems to me that we ought to focus on building communities of love with such people – recognising their differences but not allowing such differences to cause needless conflict between us.

6.1.3.1 Love Your Enemies

In his survey of Christian anarchist interpretations of the passage of the Sermon on the Mount in which Christ tells his followers to 'love your enemies', Christoyannopoulos identifies two main categories: "One of these focuses on the implied condemnation of patriotism and war; the other argues that loving one's enemy is the litmus test of Christianity".[556] In the former category, he places thinkers like Leo Tolstoy and Adin Ballou. In the latter he places Peter Chelčický, Walter Wink, and John Howard Yoder. Those in the first category interpret Christ's words as being primarily about how one ought to consider those outside one's own nation to be brethren. The anti-nationalist sentiment of this interpretation stems from a reading of Christ's words where 'enemy' refers to those not traditionally considered to be 'neighbours'. The statement thus becomes a declaration that Jewish hospitality should be extended to all peoples regardless of where they come from. By contrast, those in

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[556]   Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* 49.

Christoyannopoulos' second category interpret 'enemy' as a depiction of the extremes of Christ's love. *Not only* do we love our neighbour, but so too do we love those who hate us – there is no one excluded from Christ's love, the love we are called to imitate.

Christoyannopoulos claims that Christian anarchists believe Christ's commandment to love our enemies has been misinterpreted, in particular by Augustine and those who developed his 'just war' theory.[557] One of the places Augustine's position is put forward is in *City of God,* where he writes:

> And, accordingly, they who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."[558]

In this passage and those that follow, Augustine appeals to Old Testament instances of murder in accordance with God's commandment. This base idea would later be developed by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* into a more systematic theory justifying war.[559] Christoyannopoulos calls this interpretation out as going "against both the spirit and the letter of Jesus' clear original intention".[560] Oliver O'Donavan explains that for Augustine, military obligation is treated as an obligation of love to one's neighbour. He explains that an un-Christian war is one that takes self-preservation at its bottom line, whereas "a Christian witness to God's peace must always be acted out against the horizon of suffering and martyrdom".[561] The central premise here seems to be that the intention of bringing about God's ends and acting self-sacrificially to benefit another person or a virtuous end, changes the character of warfare. Though I do not have the space here to fully do justice to Augustine's arguments, it is clear that in the passage above that there is little reinterpretation of

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[557] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* 129.
[558] Augustine, "City of God" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Vol. II. St Augustin's: City of God and Christian Doctrine.* M. Dods (trans.), P. Schaff, (ed.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1886), 52.
[559] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Fathers of the English Dominican Province (trans.) (Westminster: 1920), II.2, Q40 War, Article 1. Online Edition: *New Advent:* http://files.libertyfund.org/pll/quotes/130.html (Accessed 10.09.17).
[560] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* 129.
[561] O. O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

these Old Testament passages[562] in light of the New Testament and Christ's witness.[563] The difficulty Augustine faces when it comes to the New Testament and *Sermon on the Mount*, seems to be dealt with when he writes "If it is supposed that God could not enjoin warfare, because in after times it was said by the Lord Jesus Christ, 'I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but if any one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also,' the answer is, that what is here required is not a bodily action, but an inward disposition".[564] Christoyannopoulos characterises this position as "absurd" since it enables the hypocritical conclusion that "it is said that it is fine to murder your enemy as long as a proper inner attitude of love is maintained".[565]

The discrepancy between the Augustinian argument and the position I am proposing here goes back to the way I defined the relationship between virtue and *telos* in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Virtues *partake* of their *telos*. For Maximus, both will and activity bear out our hypostatic choices, and through them is our *tropos* aligned, by the aid of the Spirit and through Christ, to our *logos*. To agree with Augustine's position and hold to a similar metaphysics as Maximus, one would have affirm that acts of a 'just war' not only lead to virtuous ends and are performed with these ends in mind,[566] but also (presumably as a consequence) are actually virtuous in themselves. Virtue is not confined to our intentions, as if somehow only our own agency is needed in order for love to be present.[567] As we saw in Maximus, love is relational, and comes to be through the activity of the human *and* God and concerns one's neighbour. We have seen that Maximus affirms virtue to partake of an end of love which is Christ. To

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[562] Augustine goes on to make reference to Abraham called to kill his son Isaac by divine command, Jephthah killing his daughter in order to keep a promise he made before God, Samson collapsing the house on his foes as called by the Spirit.

[563] The reliance of Augustine on Old Testament Scripture to justify war is affirmed by Mattox in his monograph defending Augustine's Just War Theory. J.M. Mattox, *St Augustine and the Theory of Just War.* (London: Continuum, 2006), 127.

[564] Augustine, "Contra Faustum Manichaeum" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Vol. IV. St Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists.* R. Stothert (trans.), P. Schaff, (ed.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), 516-7.

[565] Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism,* 129.

[566] *ie.* With an 'inward disposition' that is Christian.

[567] Neither are our actions unblameworthy just because we mean well. Such a position seems to fail to fully comprehend the agency of a person in their activity – as though our mind alone performs activities we are responsible for, and that there is some disconnect between this and what our bodies do. If one assumes that actions are somehow justified (sanctified?) by virtuous intention, then there seems to be no limit to the harms one can to do another person under this stream of thought. This way of thinking seems to be extremely dualistic, with the superior virtuous intention of the mind excusing what Christoyanoppoulos and I instinctively see as horrific (bodily) actions that bear no resemblance to Christ, his teaching, or his actions.

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have a virtuous disposition is to clear oneself of (ascetic) passion and to be filled with the Spirit, meaning that we are talking about the presence of the divine when we talk about virtue. Under Maximus' understanding, the virtues and love are Christ present within us. It seems not only far-fetched, but also extremely dangerous to claim that acts performed in 'just war' are Christ present in the world and in us (a claim we can readily make of all the virtues as they have been defined in this thesis thus far). Needless to say, this conclusion is very far from Maximus' theology, and to claim that acts in a 'just war' are 'just' and therefore virtuous would require such a distorting of the Pauline virtues that not only am I inclined to agree with Christoyannopoulos that such a view is "against both the spirit and the letter of Jesus' clear original intention", but I would also go so far as to say there is little point talking about virtues if they bear no resemblance to their original meaning and we are willing to twist them to suit whatever agenda we fancy.

Maximus' position on loving our enemies seems to sit much more neatly within Christoyannopoulos' categories. With regard to the passage, 'love your enemy', there are three instances in Maximus' *Centuries on Love* in which 'love' (ἀγάπη) appears within one line of 'enemy' (ἐχθρός). The first instance is in 1.61 cited above where Maximus says that Christ commanded this in order to free us from hate, sadness and anger and lead us into perfect love in God.[568] The last instance is in 4.67, where Maximus identifies 'love your enemy' as a commandment alongside love God and your neighbour, and the ten commandments.[569] The instance found between these two is particularly interesting for our purposes, since it concerns the meaning of the phrase and uses language familiar to us from Paul's list of virtues:

> Perfect love (τελεία ἀγάπη) does not split up (συνδιασχίζει) the one nature of men (μίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσιν) on the basis of their various (διαφόροις) dispositions (γνώμαις) but ever looking steadfastly at it, it loves all men equally, those who are jealous as friends, those who are negligent as enemies. It is good to them and forbearing (μακροθυμοῦσα) and puts up with what they do (ὑπομένουσα). It does not think evil at all (τὸ κακὸν τὸ σύνολον μὴ λογιζομένη) but rather suffers for them, if occasion requires, in order that it may even make friends if possible. If not, it does not

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[568]   Maximus *De char.* PG90 973A I.61.
[569]   Maximus *De char.* PG90 1063BC IV.67.

> fall away from its own intentions as it ever manifests the fruits of love equally for all
> men. In this way also our Lord and God Jesus Christ, manifesting his love for us,
> suffered for all mankind and granted to all equally the hope of resurrection, though
> each one renders himself worthy either of glory or punishment.[570]

In an exposition on perfect love, Maximus notes that human nature is not to be divided into those who are worthy and those who are not. Instead, we are to love all equally. By coupling a discussion on 'love your enemies' with a version of the Pauline virtues we are familiar with from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Maximus gives very *personal* ascetic guidance. He is not, as in Christoyannopoulos' first category, giving us a generic reading of how we ought to treat those specifically beyond our nation, but is instead applying the text to our everyday relationships. As in other areas of Maximus' ascetic writings, we see an interpretation of how to love that always begins in and is rooted personal relation. It should come as no surprise then, that Maximus' interpretation of 'love your enemies' is much more akin to Christoyannopoulos second category, demanding love to be located in *every* personal relationship. To draw a communal ethics from this we must do as Maximus' cosmology does, and begin by loving in our personal relationships. It is from here that love is extended to the whole cosmos, and here that we may extend the principle to building community. As in Kropotkin's vision for community analysed in 6.1.1, the structure of our communities begins in personal choice to freely associate with another. We build community through personal choice. To have a 'virtuous' community, we must have particular humans in whom virtue is located and through whom love occurs. In 3.2.1, I emphasised the importance of love and virtue being understood as relationship and movement towards God. Maximus interprets 'love your enemies' in this very personal and literal way because for him love is always personal. It extends to human nature, and to the rest of creation but only because it is first of all located in personal relationships. To assume that Christ meant – those people who are not of your nation should be considered as those who are – would thus be to fail to take Christ's words (in Maximus' interpretation) to their fullest meaning. Certainly by Maximus' understanding of love, loving one's enemy concerns very real face to face

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[570]   Maximus *De char.* PG90 975BC I.71. [Berthold, *Maximus*, 42-3].

relationships wherever we go and whatever we do. Under the definition of love we have been using, it cannot be a disembodied general feeling (as we might construe category one), no more than it can be a disembodied general thought (as we might construe an Augustinian position). It is a relationship between the human and God, that Christ tells us is made manifest through love of one another. The list of virtues Maximus uses are used because they are Paul's interpretation of Christ's example. In every personal encounter, we are seeking to invite in the Spirit and allow Christ to be manifest in us. It is this that constitutes love and out of this that we seek to build communities.

We are left then in the extremely challenging position of asking what a community might look like that takes to heart a Maximian interpretation of Christ's commandment to love your enemies. There are always those we will struggle to get along with, those who, when we try to live in love alongside them may obfuscate such attempts. Traditionally, this is one of the prime places we have turned to the state for help. Like in Mill's assessment, it has been the roll of society to protect us from those who wish to impinge our freedom. Even within an anarchist understanding of a society built on voluntary association, such difficulties may still arise, and how are they to be dealt with if not by the coercive power of the state? For a window into practical discussion along these lines, I turn next to look at the anarchist writings of Colin Ward and Errico Malatesta.

6.1.3.2 Love in the Face of Crime

In response to the state's alienation of those who are different, I suggested that our love must overcome divisions by respecting distinctions. I believe one of the most significant discussions of what such a society might look like can be found in anarchist theory. Errico Malatesta, an Italian anarchist who lived from 1853 to 1932, wrote a article entitled *Crime and Punishment*, in which he spent time thinking about how one could live in a society with those who commit crime. Given that we do not want to live in a society that is coercive and harmful, what happens when there are those who violate the peace?

Malatesta begins by saying that the first thing we must do is "eliminate all the social causes of crime, we must develop in man brotherly feelings, and mutual respect,

we must, as Fourier put it, seek useful alternatives to crime".[571] Malatesta emphasised society must change first in order to lessen the need and desire for crime. He claimed that with the beginnings of an official judiciary and police we risk setting in place "a new system of oppression and privilege". Instead of reinstating coercive systems over each other, he wrote that we must deal with crime:

> By seeking the causes of each crime and making every effort to eliminate them; by making it impossible for anyone to derive personal advantage out of the detection of crime, and by leaving it to the interested groups themselves to take whatever steps they deem necessary for their defence; by accustoming ourselves to consider criminals as brothers who have strayed, as sick people needing loving treatment, as one would for any victim of hydrophobia or dangerous lunatic – it will be possible to reconcile the complete freedom of all with defence against those who obviously and dangerously threaten it...[572]

There are a number of components to Maletsta's argument that we can look at. First, he suggests eliminating the causes of crime. Ward proposes four ways in which we might see crime eliminated:

> a) most crimes are of theft in one form: or another, and in a society in which real property and produce property were communally held and personal property shared out on a more equitable basis, the incentive for theft would disappear;
> b) crimes of violence not originating in theft would dwindle away since a genuinely permissive and non-competitive society would not produce personalities prone to violence;
> c) motoring offences would not present the problems that they do now because people would be more socially conscious and responsible, would tend to use public transport when the private car had lost its status, and in a more leisured society would lose the pathological love of speed and aggressiveness that you see on roads today;
> d) in a decentralised society vast urban conglomerations would cease to exist and

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[571]   E. Malatesta, "Crime and Punishment" in *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas.* V. Richards (ed.) (London: Freedom Press, 1965 (First published c.1920-2)), 106. (The reference likely to be Charles Fourier, the French utopian socialist).
[572]   Malatesta, "Crime and Punishment", 107.

people would be more considered and concerned for their neighbours.[573]

Concerned that his suggestions are too improbable and far-fetched, Ward defends himself from the accusation that such a society would require "a new kind of human being". He argues instead that we need a new kind of environment that will take work to build, but that that such work is not beyond a human being to set their mind to. His argument is essentially that it is not beyond the natural capacity of human beings to change the way in which they act toward one another and the value they place in things that jeopardise their relationships with others (things like property, competition, status, speed, aggression). Changing our mindset and the places we put value can drastically change the societies we live in and, Malatesta and Ward argue, eliminate a large part of the conflict that drives us to hostility with one another. Change in attitude towards those things that we are attached to as markers of wealth can remove much of the conflict with our neighbours. Ward and Malatesta argue that this would also bring about a general decrease in the incentive to commit crime. We saw in 6.1.1 that, unlike the arguments made for a state in the past, the anarchist position relies on willingly entering into community with one another, and in 6.1.2 that compassion and mutual aid encourage us to voluntarily seek the well-being of others. The case for distribution of resources to where they are needed was made out of this concern for the well-being of others. Given the voluntary status of these premises, Ward suggests that the question of crime would be a totally different matter, since we are talking about a society where to give to another what they need is a reality. Like the brick for the Desert Fathers, or the pipe carver in William Morris' *News From Nowhere*,[574] a society made up of those who have meaningful control over their relationships with one another, and choose to voluntarily partake in the distribution of resources to where they are needed, already has a very different perception of wealth, property and the needs of others.

Secondly then, Malatesta proposes that we do not forget that those who commit crimes are still brothers and sisters. He writes that we ought to treat them "as

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[573]   Ward, *Anarchy,* 154.
[574]   "'Well, then take it,' said she, 'and don't trouble about losing it. What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another.'" W. Morris, *News From Nowhere or An Epoch of Rest.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (First published 1890), 32.

sick people needing loving treatment", and likens the use of prisons to the deplorable way that mental asylums were used to remove a problem from visibility in society. Ward enlarges on this point, suggesting that the practice of 'institutionalisation' became a solution to many of society's problems (including schools, poor housing, hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes) whenever a crisis arose.[575] Malatesta's call to treat criminals as "as sick people needing loving treatment" reiterates that there are underlying causes to such behaviour, and that writing off such people from society without trying to help them is not an option for one who wishes to cares for others and respects their free will.

Lastly, we come to Malatesta's phrase "leaving it to the interested groups themselves to take whatever steps they deem necessary for their defence".[576] Malatesta suggests that the ultimate way in which communities deal with these issues must be arrived at by themselves. He makes a number of propositions himself, but always cautions against turning our judgement of others into something systemic, harmful and coercive. He warns that we are only "one of the forces acting in society, and history will advance, as always, in the direction of the resultant of all the forces", a point not dissimilar to the one I have been making about means and ends – the means that we choose to live by, will be reflected in the ends that come about. Malatesta imagines that self-defence in the face of physical violence may be necessary, but that if we require systemic violence to deal with dissidence, then we will created a society of systemic violence. He suggests that the only alternative is to somehow leave any necessary judging that needs to be done up to the community. Ward is sceptical of this last point, and gives a detailed account of all the ways in which this might go wrong, especially in regard to popular justice. However, Ward again emphasises the change in who people are. The kind of society we are talking about cannot even begin to function unless people have chosen to partake in it and chosen to make it work. When we talk about people not wanting to commit these kinds of crime, this is not merely speculative well-wishing, but a comment on the existence of such a society in the first place. There will still be difficulties that we must find a way to deal with, and we have no perfect system for calling our neighbour to account, but Ward and Malatesta have

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[575]   Ward, *Anarchy,* 137-8.
[576]   Malatesta, "Crime and Punishment", 107.

more faith in a local kind of judiciary system than in one enforced at a state level. Ward suggests that the change in attitude characterising such a society may mean that the approach of a local community to calling to account one of their own could look very different from the kind of popular retribution fuelled by anxiety and guilt.

While the anarchist position on crime is neither settled nor finished, the key tenets of its arguments surround such premises as, how do we get along with people who hurt others while still respecting them as human beings? How do we help others who hurt us? How do we maintain the integrity of our larger relationships of respect and love in the face of suffering caused by one person toward another? Anarchist arguments rethinking our concepts of law and order argue that most stem from fear and anxiety concerning possessions and threats to out safety. By looking at the causes of conflict and seeking to minimise the need for violent expression Ward and Malatesta were seeking ways in which we could try to love those who harm us, a starting point that is much more familiar to Christ's Gospel than the attitudes towards criminality and deviance in state structures. Indeed, Gregory of Nyssa made a very similar suggestion, when he imagined a community that truly lives in love with one another:

> What could be thought to be more blessed than to live thus, when we would no longer have to entrust the safety of our lives to bolts and stone, but were secure in each other's keeping? For just as the harsh and cruel man makes enemies of those who have come to experience his savagery; so also, contrariwise, we become all friendly with the merciful man, since mercy naturally engenders love in those who share in it.[577]

Although much work still needs to be done on this topic, the values that anarchist theory holds as its foundations seem to have much compatibility with the virtuous means described in Maximus' work. The uniqueness of the anarchist position is that it is not confined to thinking of solutions only within traditional state structures. Since it takes as its basis the integrity of human well-being and respect for freedom, it can propose much more radical methods of coexistence.

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[577]   Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Bea. 5.* PG44 1254A-C. [Graef, *Maximus,* 134-5].

6.2 S<small>TRIVING</small> T<small>OWARDS</small> L<small>OVE</small>

As well as founding our communities on love, we also need to be aware of the imperfections in our relationships, and to strive for continual orientation towards love. It is all very well setting out with good intentions, but if we are modelling our communal relationships on the ascetic advice Maximus provides, then we must be aware that striving for love is a constant struggle throughout our lives. Final perfection in *theosis* belongs to the eschaton, and whilst there instances of love that may come to be seen here and now, it will always be a struggle to keep seeing the faults in what we do and to acknowledge our failures. In this section, I look at a number of ways in which we might take a principle of renewal and striving to heart in our communal relations, pre-empting that there will be things that we do wrong and that we will never finish our work in building loving communities.

6.2.1 From Personal Asceticism to Communal Conscientiousness
In 4.1.3, I discussed the dynamic process of constant striving towards God in our lives here on earth in Maximus. Under this ascetic understanding of striving to make space for virtue, our tasks in this life are not construed as set goals that must be attained, but as continuing and deepening relationships of love that must be struggled for with one another and God.[578] We must desire to know more, and in that desire we must never forget to keep looking at ourselves for the problem and changing accordingly. Maximus reminds us to

> Be on guard lest the vice that separates you from your brother be not found in your
> brother but in you; and hasten to be reconciled to him, lest you fall away from the

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[578] In a conference paper, I outlined that thinking about knowledge of God as something to be 'acquired' will always leave us thinking of *epektasis* as somehow a failure. Awareness that knowledge of God is what is sought and revealed in a relationship enables a dynamic picture of learning more about a person. If one wished to deepen a relationship with a friend or partner, one wouldn't speak of getting knowledge of them, and call it a failure when not all knowledge was possessed. One would respect the freedom of one's partner to reveal themselves to you, and coming to know a person is a growth of knowledge that may never fully come to an end. Seeking knowledge of God is partaking in just such a loving relationship, hence even when that relationship continues in the eschaton, it is never a failure to finish, but a growth of love in the process of deepening. 'Knowledge as a Relationship of Impossibility and Intimacy in Maximus the Confessor' *International Workshop in Oslo on the Philosophy of Late Antiquity: Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity.* Oslo, 2nd-3rd Dec. 2016.

commandment of love.[579]

He acknowledges that often in a relationship, we are convinced that it is the other person who is at fault and who has done us wrong. Maximus warns us to look inside ourselves to see if the fault is actually within *us*, much like the parable of the man who wishes to help his brother with a splinter in his eye whilst he himself has a block of wood in his own (Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-2.). Maximus reminds us that when all our actions are directed toward love, reconciliation is the aim for our broken relationships, and that this starts by looking at oneself rather than pointing out flaws in others. He also acknowledges though that when others hurt us this too breaks relationships. He writes that

> What separates you from the love of friends is this: envying or being envied, hurting or being hurt, insulting or being insulted, and suspicious thoughts. May you never have done or experienced any of these things by which you might be separated from your friend's love.

Maximus reminds us that these things are two way, and that the things done to us hurt us in a very real way. We are not just broken by our own actions, but also by the things done to us. Just as we do not love our way to God on our own, but love others and together gather up the cosmos, so do things that hurt us and are cruel to us, destroy us and our relationship with one another in a very real way. Love is a two way thing that must be worked at by both sides to foster a loving relationship. Maximus' interest here is not simply in the internal integrity of the addressee (as might be suggested from the preceding chapters on love 18, 19 and 20), but in the maintenance of love between two people, thereby building a loving community. People voluntarily loving one another and using their rational gifts to organise their relationships in ways that further enable love and further care for one another – this seems to be a vision of divine love among us lived in Christ and gifted by the Spirit. As we have seen, Maximus says there is not "one form of love [assigned] to God and another to human beings, for it is one and the same and universal".[580] The nature of such

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[579]   Maximus, *De char.* PG90 1052C IV.19. [Berthold, *Maximus,* 77]
[580]   Maximus, *Ep. 2* PG91 401D [Louth, *Maximus*, 89].

relationships is that they must be worked at, and that they are difficult. Even friendships that have been established for many years can still at any moment run into the problems that Maximus outlined above. Like our relationship with God, there is a constant struggle to deepen love, this includes the difficulties of friendship, but also leads to new depths of knowledge and more intimate relation with a person.

If this understanding of dynamism and repentant reflection is key to developing our relationships of love, then there is good reason to seek it within the organisation of our communities. Our communities and societies are still relationships between persons, and if we truly wish to foster love in them, then we must also have a means of calling into question any failures to love that happen within them. A community that genuinely strains to foster care between each different person must have the capacity to call the things done in its name to accountability. This would not be seen as an attack on the community itself but as part of the everyday, essential, ever-evolving essence of what the community *is*. For such a thing to have any success, there would have to be meaningful interaction on a personal level contained within every community. Value would have to be placed in the words of every person regardless of difference, and consequently a community would have to be small enough to do justice to these integral elements of interaction.[581] As we will see, Kropotkin suggested that human societies should have the capacity to continually change, and to have a structure that facilitates this self-criticism.[582] The best form of society, in his mind, was one that knew that it was not best, and had the ability to structure itself according to the fluctuating needs of its populace.

6.2.2 Unending Striving in Society

We have seen that Kropotkin's vision for human life is that it be led in communities that freely cooperate with one another, and that freedom of each never be compromised or subjugated. He proposed that human relations must be based upon free agreement. There must be "a society of equals" so that it becomes "an organism so

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[581] At least at a base level of organisation, some kind of smaller organising would be necessary. Even when organising in large groups, decision-making is split into smaller functional groups that delegate forward their decisions so that they can be heard on a larger scale. I discuss consensus decision-making below, which includes alternate organising and resources on large scale decision-making.

[582] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 399.

constructed as to combine all the efforts for procuring the greatest sum possible of well-being for all, while full, free scope will be left for every individual initiative."[583] By nature of being a community built upon free relation though,

> this society will not be crystallised into certain unchangeable forms, but will continually modify its aspect, because it will be a living, continually evolving organism; no need of government will be felt, because free agreement and federation take its place in all those functions which governments consider as theirs at the present time, and because, the causes of conflict being reduced in number, those conflicts which may still arise can be submitted to arbitration.[584]

Community cannot be static because relation is not static. The needs of one human differ from another, and a society must have the flexibility to serve the needs of each as well as the needs of many. Kropotkin accordingly believes that such a society:

> Acknowledging, as a fact, the equal rights of all its members to the treasures accumulated in the past, it no longer recognizes a division between exploited and exploiters, governed and governors, dominated and dominators, and it seeks to establish a certain harmonious compatibility in its midst-not by subjecting all its members to an authority that is fictitiously supposed to represent society, not by trying to establish uniformity, but by urging all men to develop free initiative, free action, free association.
> It seeks the most complete development of individuality combined with the highest development of voluntary association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all imaginable aims; ever changing, ever modified associations which carry in themselves the elements of their durability and constantly assume new forms, which answer best to the multiple aspirations of all.[585]

Kropotkin acknowledges that disagreement with one another is an inevitability, but that that such disagreements can further society and improve it for the better. A

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[583] Kropotkin, *Memoirs,* 398.
[584] Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, 399.
[585] P. Kropotkin, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal.* Freedom Pamphlets No. 10 (London: Freedom Press, 1909), 8. Digitised original available online: https://archive.org/stream/2917641.0001.001.umich.edu#page/30/mode/1up (Accessed: 10.03.17).

society that has a framework for receiving criticisms and recognising its own failures, never assumes that it has reached a stage of perfection that must be upheld at all costs, but can instead work to make amends and learn from error. Kropotkin writes that these kind of ideas cannot be understood by "a society to which preestablished forms, crystallised by law" are the norm. Where a conservative approach to the status quo is taken, a society greatly reduces its ability to acknowledge wrongdoing or the value of dissent and work towards a resolution that addresses concerns and changes for the better. In an analysis of this passage Ward writes that we should not think of this anarchic functioning of society as simplistic or lacking social organisation, but rather as "complexity and multiplicity of social organisations". He likens such organisation to cybernetics, "the science of control and communication systems", which can aid us to understand "the anarchist conception of complex self-organising systems".[586] Ward cites Grey Walter, a neurophysiologist and robotician who worked on some of the first autonomous electric robots. He uses Walter's comparison of a brain's functions to anarchist community as a way of demonstrating that organisation and complexity do not have to be hierarchical. Walter writes that:

> In comparing social with cerebral organisations one important feature of the brain should be kept in mind; we find no boss in the brain, oligarchic ganglion or glandular Big Brother. Within our heads our very lives depend on equality of opportunity, on specialisation with versatility, on free communication and just restraint, a freedom without interference. Here too local minorities can and do control their own means of production and expression in free and equal intercourse with their neighbours. If we must identify biological and political systems our own brains would seem to illustrate the capacity and limitations of an anarcho-syndicalist community. [587]

Ward draws from cybernetic theories as well as anthropological evidence[588] to support Kropotkin's theory of interconnected and ever-changing societies capable of self-organisation and self-reflection. He later suggests that a rigidity in a society that

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[586] Ward, *Anarchy*, 64.
[587] W.G. Walter, 'The Development and Significance of Cybernetics', *Anarchy* 25 (1963), 89.
[588] In this chapter Ward refers to the political systems of the Nuer and Tellensi. (Ward, *Anarchy*, 66) Being an anthropologist himself, anthropological examples of anarchic decentralised modes of organisation are also the topic of a number of his other chapters, including chapters 2 (27-38), 5 (68-74), 7 (85-92), 9 (99-108),10 (109-116), and 11(117-133).

demonises dissent is a sure way to bring about the self-destruction of free-association and freedom.[589] Ward's point about the complexity of anarchist organisation lies, I think, in its rootedness in personal interactions. As I have expressed earlier, anarchist theory is fundamentally about the balance between the personal and the communal. The freedom and uniqueness of each person is never compromised in society, since the operations and functions of society are always controlled and determined by interpersonal relationships. In a community's day to day operations, whether in the basics of organising and decision-making, in the exchange of resources, or in the way it resolves dispute, criminality and dissent, there needs to be the ability to recognise its own faults and failures and to be able to change in response to them. In terms of a teleological ethics of love and virtue, we must be able to continually reorientate our own personal choices towards love, and be aware that the way we choose to act is instrumental in transforming our communities. How we come to decisions together and how we call ourselves to account as a group of people may also need further thought and facilitation. One way in which this might be pursued is through the channel of consensus decision-making as a means of communication in large groups. The method is not exclusively anarchist, and neither is it endorsed in all anarchist thought, but as a means of thinking about personal participation in communal organising it may be a tool of particular relevance to a Maximian ethics.

An overview of consensus decision-making can be found on the online resource centre provided by the workers' co-op 'Seeds for Change'. In their resource for teaching consensus decision-making, 'Seeds for Change' explain it as "a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with".[590] Although not without its criticisms, the method attempts to eliminate some of the problems of majority-rule democracy and focuses on finding solutions to dissent that enhance a decision-making process rather than overriding the concerns of a minority. I mention this briefly as a process that may be of interest as it nominally understands the importance of personal objection to a

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[589]   Ward, *Anarchy*, 162.
[590]   Seeds for Change: http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus (Accessed: 10.03.17).

group proposition and also because its structure, even when considered on a large scale, puts in place an organisation system which may be suited to the reflection and accountability I have been discussing in this chapter.[591]

Anarchist interpretations of societal accountability and the importance of always giving the dissenting voice a chance to be heard, could be a useful tool for those seeking to keep communities grounded in the awareness of sin that Maximus' ascetic teachings on love give to us. The understanding that "there is no final struggle"[592] but that our relationships – personal and larger communal ones – must be continually worked at, is one that recognises that we are *demanding the impossible.* In always setting our sights higher, we keep our communities from stagnating into what is easy, and require of ourselves that we always seek better ways to live in compassion with those around us. For Maximian ethics, we set our sights on God – and the time to come when the cosmos is gathered in love to Him. Even then in *theosis* though do we anticipate ever-moving rest,[593] a relationship that continues to ever deepen.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate some practical ways in which *our communities must always be rooted in and striving towards love.* I offered some ways in which we might use the tools present in already existing philosophical traditions to shape our communal response to Maximus' ethics. Though many of these ideas are not unique to the anarchist tradition, anarchist thought in particular seems to me a useful source of inspiration, given its capability to think of possibilities beyond the state structures in which we presently live.

I took the key criticisms made of the state with Maximus' ethics from the previous chapter and considered how anarchist thought had sought to respond to such

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[591]   The benefits and drawbacks of consensus decision-making are discussed along with anthropological studies in L.M. Woehrle, "Claims-Making and Consensus in Collective Group Processes" in *Consensus Decision Making, Northern Ireland and Indigenous Movements. Volume 24.* (Oxford: Elsevier Science, 2003); A. Szolucha, "Learning Consensus Decision-Making in Occupy: Uncertainty, Responsibility, Commitment" in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change. Volume 36.* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd: 2013).
[592]   Ward, *Anarchy*, 37.
[593]   Maximus, CCSG 22 *Ad Thal. 59* 131.

criticisms. Where freedom was threatened by coercive force, I looked at Kropotkin's suggestions for decentralised bottom-up communities and theories of federation that allow persons to make meaningful decisions in the communities in which they live. Where compassion was threatened by coercion, I instead looked at how a society founded on compassion might start rethinking its attachment to inequity and property. Where difference fuelled nationalisms and entitlement to land, travel and the establishing of borders, I instead asked what a society looks like that receives not only those who differ from us, but also those who hurt us and hate us. I presented Malatesta's hopes and concerns on treating criminals as fellow brothers and sisters and eliminating institutionalised isolation and dehumanisation of criminals. And finally, where the *telos* of a state clearly bore no relation to that of Maximus, I looked at some of Kropotkin's suggestions on how to try and continually improve communities so that they perpetually seek the well-being of people.

In the process of setting these things out, I noted a number of key differences in anarchist intentions, particularly in anarchist ends, which often (though not exclusively) are secular in orientation. I expressed that the suggestions and tools provided by anarchist thought may none-the-less serve as a source of inspiration to those seeking practical ideas for a communal outworking of Maximus' ethics. I additionally concluded that there was no reason why we might not also try to work alongside those who share the same means, since acknowledging difference but seeking ways to love falls into the ethics we are practising. My intention in this chapter was not to state a correct way of thinking about the communal outworking of Maximus' ethics, but to make headway in considering practical suggestions for how it might be done.

When critiquing something as omnipresent as the state, the last thing we want our ethics to do is compromise on its values before we've had a chance to think about what real alternatives there might be. There are far too many interesting ideas and working experiments for us to hide behind an excuse of impracticality when it comes to imagining what more loving communities might look like. According to the anarchist critique, the state is highly impractical, since it succeeds only in inequity and control, and fails in all the places that matter. As I demonstrated in 6.1.2.2, these accusations are very much still prescient in our own day where debt is necessary to

national and international markets, so that the poor are preyed upon to feed the increasing excessive wealth of a few. Once we recognise and accept responsibility for our personal participation in such such oppressive systems, it seems only sensible to start asking what a better way of living with each other might be. Kropotkin's response was that the state does not have a monopoly on complex, functioning human communities, and that there are much better ideas out there worth trying.

In seeking to partake in a cosmic liturgy, we acknowledge the limitless place of love in the cosmos, and in the microcosm. We are not just loving in certain times and places and under certain political conditions, but everywhere and in all we do. We must see the way our actions hurt and harm others and support exploitative structures at present and seek to understand how an ethics of love and virtue requires us to challenge these communities and the roles we play in them. When we seek to live out the personal ethics Maximus helps lay out, even the smallest personal interactions are, according to the means and ends of state, reactionary. Where the state is not directly challenged, such things are passed by, but as we saw from protestors, and heard from those working with illegal immigrants and refugees in Chapter 5, the state is very quick to criminalise those who work for ends contrary to its own when the threat is great enough. Whether we choose to define them so or not, Christ's virtues and love are seen as political and subversive when they do not conform to ends held by those with the monopoly on violence. Whilst my purpose in Chapter 5 was to demonstrate that subversiveness, in Chapter 6 I have sought to let the tragedy of present circumstances fuel a desire to start working for something better. While anarchist thought is by no means the only avenue to pursue such change, the infectious hope of the tradition and the practical suggestions for alternatives certainly seem like a good place to start.

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~ **Conclusion:** Let the World Turn Upside Down ~

In choosing the title 'Revolution in the Microcosm', I meant to imply several things. The first is that Christ's words and the virtues he asks of us are, and always have been, revolutionary to those who hold a monopoly on power and violence. The requirement to love those who have nothing and to stand with the persecuted is a subversive rhetoric in a status quo that affirms stability and safety for those with wealth, status, property, and power. The second reason for the title, is that revolution more truly means change, and that change in the world starts with change within. The human person is the microcosm, and by using the word microcosm I mean, as Maximus did, to draw a parallel with the cosmos at large and the importance of human activity within this cosmic story. I have highlighted throughout this thesis that personal ascetic activity has a communal cosmic impact. I wished in this title to show that although this change is located in persons, it does not mean that it is not vital and integral and transformative. There is something very hopeful, as well as daunting, about the theological importance that Maximus places upon the unique human and their free will to receive the love of Christ.

  The way in which Maximus discusses virtue is very different to contemporary virtue ethics. In explaining the place that virtue occupies in his thought, explaining virtue as dependant in its definition on Christ, as well as describing its relation to a *telos* of theosis, I hope to have opened up some opportunities for discussion between Maximian use of virtue in ethics, and contemporary virtue ethics. In the same way that theologians like Augustine and Aquinas have become hugely influential in their systems of ethics, it is my hope that Maximus' contribution too may shape of our responses to contemporary ethical concerns. Although his work remains rooted in the context in which it was written, Maximus paints us a theology that expresses both the minutiae and magnitude of Christ in all things. He tells us that the liturgy brings all the cosmos into the microcosm of the Church, and that the ascetic every day life becomes a part of this cosmic liturgy that exists in the moments of the liturgy itself

but also as the entire perpetual movement of creation towards God. He offers us, not a way to make God understandable, but a language for recognising the paradoxical enormity of a personal relationship with the unknowable. His theology demands a huge amount from the human, claiming that through the gift of rationality, free will, and the ability to love we have the potential of the universe resting upon us. At the same time he notes that all we must do is be open and ready, and that divine grace in the Holy Spirit will work within us. His theology offers a way of acknowledging the vast problem of sin and the brokenness that human choice has caused in the world, and at the same time asks us to have hope because transfiguration happens in every human activity, and rests in persons and their love for one another, not in governments, corporations, or states. Inside a cosmic vision that offers a coherent view of the movement of creation toward God, Maximus has time for very personal, very practical advice that looks inside the human heart.

I have spent the last two chapters especially looking at how these very personal ascetic ideas are simultaneously communal and make very pressing demands upon the character of our relationships. Drawing out Maximus' understanding of the human as microcosm, with cosmic actions, I suggested that part of our ascetic striving must be a striving to live in communities that are shaped by and looking towards virtue and love. I focussed specifically on the state, since talking about the state allows us to rethink so many of the safeties and dependences we allow to almost subconsciously take a lead in our life. Following this, I discussed our dependence on violence, on alienation, on exploitation, and systems of ideology like nationalism and Capitalism that all in their myriad ways fail to love others. The oppression and exploitation, both at home and abroad, of human and non-human life has become part and parcel of our daily lives. I follow many anarchist thinkers in believing that the state enshrines and supports these ideologies and relationships, and that if in our ethics we are asking about the right way to live with one another, an important part of that must be questioning the utility of the state as a mode of human living. My aim in this thesis has not been to offer an exhaustive response to this criticism, but rather to suggest some alternatives that may inspire us to broaden our imaginations when it comes to trying to love.

I do not think Maximus' thought will ever lend itself to a rigorous system of

ethics like some may expect or wish, but, like the kind of society Kropotkin envisions, I think Maximus' thought has the capability to be versatile and personal as a contribution to ethics. It is rooted in a single end aim – that of *theosis*, fullest communion of love in God – but like the prism of love that refracts into many virtues, so Maximus offers many different ways of trying to think about seeking Christ in this life. I drew on a few different ways in Chapter 5, using a traditional critique through virtue, but also thinking about the Chalcedonian character of Maximus' understanding of difference and unity, using *telos* as a means of critique, and also thinking about the foundational importance of free will in Maximus' broader concept of cosmic movement and mediation. In Chapter 4 I offered some further suggestions on how one could use virtue to think about ethics, noting that the the multiplicity of love in the virtues might lend depth to ethical difficulties, or the simplicity of love help to clarify conflicting virtues, or even the vices, as a means of working out how not to treat others. Much work remains to be done, I think, in exploring all the different ways in which Maximus' non-linear theology may help us develop an ethics. Especially welcome would be a broad study of the personal ethics one could develop from his thought. I however am more interested in what this personal ethics means for our communal lives. I think sometimes in virtue ethics, the personal focus of character and habit building sometimes leads to a neglect of the communal outworking of such ethics and the awareness that our actions have global repercussions. Given Maximus' recurring interest in expressing the simultaneous relation of the macrocosm to the microcosm, I think he could be key to reminding virtue ethics of its personal *and* communal dimension. Part of this communal outworking must include an awareness of the cosmic impacts of our day to day actions. Now, more than ever, do we live in a global economic system, where we cannot close our eyes to the way that small, thoughtless actions, have devastating impacts on our own societies, on our ecosystems, and on those on the opposite side of the world. Part of acknowledging the responsibilities we have been given in the gifts of rationality and free will, is not allowing the convenience of easy living in situations like my own, a Western middle class person living in a state with relative personal freedoms, to obscure the realities of the damaging lifestyles we are living. The spiritual calling of humankind, involves physical, material creation here and now, and that means asking difficult questions of

powerful and dangerous institutions that would create borders to our love.

One of the things that makes Maximus' ethics so revolutionary, I think, is that all of his ethical advice comes straight out of his theology. There are no caveats to the love he seeks to express – he does not try to reconcile it to the status quo of his own day, leaving loop-holes for international warfare or property and power for wealthy patrons. He envisions all the world sanctified and a liturgical theology that has outworking even in ascetic day-to-day living. His ascetic ethics comes from his cosmic theology, and his cosmic theology comes from a rigorous exploration of Scripture, Church doctrine, and the early Church Mothers and Fathers. The ethos of his work as one that seeks to leave space for mystery and yet remain practical, to depict the cosmic trajectory of our responsibility and yet remain personal, and to voice an ethics that arises from a rich reflection on theology, is one that I think is exceptionally important for today. This kind of grounding to our ethics is uncompromisingly Christian and yet gives us myriad opportunities to work with, celebrate, and love diversity in all we come across. It forces us to question what is easy and demands us to love what is other. In the old maxim, it requires us to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

In this thesis I have set out some parameters for understanding Maximus within a virtue ethics context. I have given an outline of his cosmic theology with *theosis* as the *telos* of all creation, and a cosmic liturgy as a vision of transfigured life now and tomorrow. I have defined virtue within this context, describing how Maximus draws from Paul to call the virtues a kind of love. I also set this dynamic onto the paradigm of *logoi* and Logos, so that we can build on this rich field of contemporary Maximian study to enhance our understanding of virtue in Maximus' thought. I then talked about the ascetic dimension of this cosmology, explaining how virtue can be acquired through grace and praxis, and explaining the practical importance of the human as mediator. After setting up this picture of Maximus' theology, I asked how we can bring this to the present day to help us with our own problems. I explained the problems surrounding the state as a mode of human organisation and the hidden reliance of such communities on violence, alienation and persecution. I claimed that such a mode of living is utterly opposed to our hopes of *theosis* and the virtues that embody this end. I concluded by suggesting that there are many hopeful ways that we

can start reimagining human relationships, such as those that have been the topic of discussion in anarchist political thought over the last two hundred and fifty years.

There are many ways in which we can take Maximus' ethics forward from here, some of which have already started to arise, as I outlined in the introduction. But all the ethics we build from Maximus' theology will necessarily have a radical flavour, because the love of Christ, which is at its heart, has a radical flavour. In 1649, Winstanley penned a pamphlet on behalf of the Diggers, a group of peasants that had taken a hill near London to farm as common land in response to the Inclosures Acts. He addressed it to the city of London and the army:

> [Y]ou are all like men in a mist, seeking for freedome, and know not where, nor what it is: those of the richer sort of you that see it, are ashamed and afraid to owne it, because it comes clothed in a clownish garment... for freedome is the man that will turn the world upside downe, therefore no wonder he hath enemies... [T]he Word of God is Love, and when all thy actions are done in love to the whole Creation, then thou advancest freedome, and freedome is Christ in you, and Christ among you... [I]f thou wouldst know what true freedome is... thou shalt see it lies in the community in spirit, and community in the earthly treasury, and this is Christ the true manchild spread abroad in the Creation, restoring all things into himselfe...[594]

Drawing on Acts 17:6, where the followers of Christ were accused of having *turned the world upside down,* Winstanley reminds us "no wonder he hath enemies". The one who seeks Christ and tries to live in His community of love, challenges the structures of power and the concepts of freedom in the world. The task of love is one that turns the world upside down. What is freedom?, Winstanley asks, you do not know what freedom is or where it is to be found: "When all thy actions are done in love to the whole Creation, then thou advancest freedome, and freedome is Christ in you, and Christ among you".

The revolutionary character of Christ's love has long been a recurring theme in theologies past and present, but in Maximus we find the metaphysical and cosmic

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[594]   G. Winstanley, "A Watch-Word to the City of London, And the Army" in *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley, Vol. 2.* T.N. Corns, A. Hughes, and D. Loewenstein (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (First published 1649)), 81-2.

dimension that give this thought depth, as well as the plain ascetic advice that places it within the realm of hope and possibility. It is my hope in writing a thesis that expresses Maximus' ethics in terms of this revolutionary love, that we will refind his theology as a grounding for radical change today. His theology lets us think about *theosis* as something immanent and present, as well as unexplainable, mysterious, and eschatological. In requiring us to contain these paradoxes in out thought – paradoxes like our actions and choices being vital, and yet grace and the Spirit remaining the true source of change within us – his thought perpetually requires us to be hopeful and yet aware of our own fallenness. We are called to constantly strive toward the unknowable and to partake in the imparticipable. To gather together the cosmos in love is to begin a revolution in the microcosm.

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