

# Unity, Interdependence, and Multiplicity in Maximus the Confessor An Engagement with Heidegger's Topology

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**ABSTRACT** This paper explores how Heidegger's discussion of experience as *topos* (place) can illuminate some elements of Maximus' writings. In Heidegger's later work, the experiencing subject emerges from, and experiences only within, place. Experience is only ever constituted when the conditions of its emergence come together concretely, which is to say, somewhere. *Topos*, a place, such as a city or my home, is a unity of the elements that make it up. The essay first examines how Heidegger sees philosophical inquiry as a drawing out of the different elements that constitute the unity of experience as place. Many works of Maximus the Confessor, including his ascetic writings, examine how the subject experiences within the world. Using the topological account of experience described by Heidegger, the paper examines several distinctions that emerge from Maximus' ascetic thought. Using examples, the essay suggests it is possible to see Maximus' analyses as being engagements with an understanding to the effect that experience emerges with a unity, in *topos*. The essay suggests that reading Maximus through *topos* helps explain why it is that so many structures can arise interdependently through his engagement with experience.

**KEYWORDS** epistemology; experience; Heidegger, Martin; Maximus the Confessor; philosophy of place; *topos*

## INTRODUCTION

This essay explores a resonance between the later work of Martin Heidegger and some of Maximus the Confessor's ascetic writings. It argues that examining some elements of Heidegger's work on *topos* can serve to enrich our grasp of certain aspects of Maximus' engagements with ascetic experience. Firstly, how does Heidegger understand *topos* (τόπος, place)? Place is where we are, where we are born and exist. We are somewhere, we

know somewhere. In his later thought, Heidegger begins to regard place as transcendental to experience. As such, it is only by experiencing experience that the understanding can explicate the constitutive conditions that make an experience what it is. The explication of experience is therefore an analysis of place.

I examine how Heidegger identifies this structure in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. Heidegger meditates on how an encounter with a landscape is a process of bringing the indeterminate unity of concrete experience into speech. His meditation models how drawing attention to the place in which experience arises can illuminate what makes our experience what it is. I note how the making of distinctions (“sparing” or “freeing up,” for Heidegger) draws out an entire context, not just a single principle.

Having explicated some aspects of Heidegger’s topology, the essay turns to Maximus. I examine a selection of Maximus’ ascetic pronouncements, identifying examples of Maximus making distinctions between things and highlighting the topographic character of these terms. For some particular aspect of experience to arrive at determinacy, it must be related to a broader context. I refer to some examples of this, drawing on Maximus’ analyses of the experience of temptation.<sup>1</sup> I show how he works within a model of experience which consists of the interconnections between numerous constitutive principles and concepts. I suggest that the notion of *topos* provides some insights into the origins of Maximus’ complex picture of experience.

#### EXPERIENCE AS *TOPOS*

What is experience? Experience is best described not as something we have but as something that we are in. Similarly, it may be asked: “What is the world?” The world is not something we have, but something we are in; it is transcendental to experience. Effectively, it creates us as we create it; it is our experience, the horizon within which we live. Similarly, experience is not something that happens to a subject, it *constitutes* the subject.

As Heidegger moves toward an identification of world with place, the

1. I define temptation as a way of relating to the world. Intentionality understands things as having certain characteristics: if the subject is suitably predisposed, then through their encountering something, that something becomes that in relation to which they build up their own particular set of expectations. This causes a thing’s life to become skewed by the subject’s desires or self-love. This process is called compilation (See note 23). The intentionality of the subject comes to be guided by memories, until the object of intention is dominated by the subject’s personal use. Under the influence of passion, our navigation of the world becomes more a matter of meeting personal desires than of being sensitive to our home.

descriptions above are used in relation to experience as topological, as grounded in a specific place. I am because I am in a place. I am not a mere witness to a place. *Topos* describes the unity within which the subject is in context. To say that I live in the world is to say that I experience the world. However, this is not to say that I have brought my experience to light.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* defined world as transcendental to being and experience.<sup>2</sup> In *Being and Time*, the sense that existence and experience are unified (if distinguishable) comes from our "*Being-in-the-world*." World is the place where subjects exist and come to understand themselves. World does not exist apart from experience; "world" is a "being-along-side,"<sup>3</sup> something that we are within, and without which we are not. If philosophical categories are used to define world, world is the unity of the conditional principles (history, language, subjectivity, the categories) that can be revealed through *Dasein*'s capacity for revealing that which is tacit in respect of experience.<sup>4</sup>

Heidegger saw that the structure of world is comprised of the interconnections between the various determinations that might constitute it. For example, say an important part of "worlded" experience is defined by finitude and temporality: it is defined by "time."<sup>5</sup> It might be possible for time to be distinguished within world (*Being and Time* seems to accord a preferential status to temporality as the primary showing of Being), yet time only emerges through its relationship to other things: time reveals space and space reveals time.<sup>6</sup>

2. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (New York: Harper, 1996), 63–6 [59–62 in the translation]. All works of Martin Heidegger are cited according to standard editions, with translation pages shown in brackets. In the case of *Being and Time*, these are pages of later German editions of *Sein und Zeit* (mentioned in marginal references in all major editions): Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967). In all other cases, these are volumes and pages of the *Gesamtausgabe* (abbreviated as GA).

3. Mark A. Wrathall and Max Murphey, "An Overview of *Being and Time*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6, 8–10. In *Being and Time*, the system of relations that constitute the unity of world primarily tended to be identified through intentionality. The constitutive elements of world are defined in a "for us" relationship in which intentionality has preeminence. The later Heidegger would subsequently qualify this equipmental approach by describing how things that constitute world actually create world and *Dasein*, in that they are equiprimordial with intentional structure.

4. This is basic to the existential analytic. Reason can reveal world, as can science, poetry, theology, and many other intentional enquiries.

5. Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 115.

In some of the works following *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasized temporality less. He continued to explore the problem of the structure of interdependency within which determinate experience emerges. His more explicit discussion of these issues is to be found in *The Thing*, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, and *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. In these texts he explored the basis for the emergence of determinate orders. He argued that things do not emerge on the basis of their independence; instead, it is their interdependence with things within a given context that provides the conditions that must be there for them to become determinate. Determination occurs because of relationships in place. *Topos*, as this equiprimordially, is therefore transcendental to experience. *Topos* is the condition through which a subject distinguishes the structures that comprise experience. Hence a phenomenology, an understanding of phenomena, emerges from *topos*.

Heidegger employed the concept of *topos* to explain how the co-arising of transcendental conditions is experienced as a specific unity. "Place" describes how experience arises within a unity composed of the conditions that constitute it. My home is, first of all, my home; then, as I look, it is composed of walls, floor, memories, my books, and a toaster. Experience is where we can understand experience; it is transcendental to our description of it and the source of the hermeneutic problem of circularity. Yet philosophy uses concepts that cover multiple contexts: it uses generalities. Place, as the here and now, is the co-ordination of the conditions of experience. As such, particularities and generalities arise co-dependently.

Experience is the specific and concrete unity of conditions of experience: a place. So what does it mean to say that experience is *topological*? It is to talk about how experience is "organized." It is not organized according to a set of pre-defined forms or a structure entirely external to the said experience; instead, the conditions of experience are revealed to be within the experience.<sup>7</sup> I can only distinguish constitutive principles because I am within it. Place is transcendental to experience, and experience is always in place.<sup>8</sup>

6. Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

7. *Ibid.*, 18, 23–24. A Platonic reading might argue that place, *topos*, has a logical, ontological, or temporal priority, and indeed contextualizes or delimits motion. To some extent, this is correct; however, the delimitation of motion arises within motion, and not as a result of "context" setting limits prior to motion occurring. In this way, place is not an abstract formal category external to the relations that constitute it. Rather, place is the co-operation as such: the co-operation between primordial principles that are constitutive of experience, as given in the experience itself.

## TOPOS AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSES

Experience, as place, is something we live and navigate. The reflective person seeks to understand what makes experience what it is. To look at experience in order to understand it, one must ask questions and inquire, starting from somewhere. If I want to understand experience, though, I cannot just stay with a generic question such as “What is experience?”—posing it over and over again. I need to specify, to delve into and distinguish from each other the elements that make up my experiences.

My task is to illuminate, distinguish, name—but yet, in doing so, my focus inevitably moves toward one thing, then another. However, though I distinguish, this does not mean that the original unity of my experience was fragmented. I ask questions, and when I distinguish one thing from another, this distinction is made within the overall unity within which I began my inquiry.<sup>9</sup> Distinction does not mean that what is distinguished ceases to be part of my world. So, although my inquiry distinguishes things from each other, it is experience revealing itself in different ways. “Experience” is not an encounter that the subject has with separate elements (sense experience, concepts, language), which the subject combines in a synthetic unity. Instead, the unity of experience is equi-primordial with subjectivity. By comprehending this, the concept of *topos* seeks to describe how experience is a combination of multiple conditional structures co-operating within a holistic collectivity.

One problem, as a philosopher, is communicating how experience is constituted as a concrete unity with differentiations. Experience can bring itself to determinacy, but the question is, how can it do so in a manner that does not de-contextualize the differentiations made by our explanations, so that they don’t contradict the unity, the along-sided-ness within which our questioning itself began?

Heidegger’s discussion of place and experience in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* addresses this problem. Heidegger examines how experience comprehends itself as a “Gathering” (*Versammlung*) of various structures constituted in the unity of *topos*. The analysis occurs in place: it is within the concreteness and unity of specific experience, of places—the places

8. Ibid.; Jeff Malpas, “Heidegger’s Topology of Being,” in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Galt Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 127–8; Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, 38–39, 48.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerke* [The Origin of the Work of Art], GA 5, 15–16. Cf. trans. by Albert Hofstadter in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, ed. David Farrell Krell, rev. and expanded ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins / Harper San Francisco, 1993), 156–7.

where we are when we begin to ask questions about experience itself. One is investigating the conditions that make up one's experience; one is not seeking to investigate an abstract formulation of experience. An inquiry into the grounds of experience is considered to be an inquiry into place, as a topographic inquiry, because one is seeking to establish what constitutes the situation that has conditioned my experience. Specific experiences are grounded—by language, history, and the concepts that condition these. Place is where these are unified; however, these structures are not necessarily easy to identify. Heidegger says that the composition of place needs to be brought to light. To describe how place comes to be revealed, he introduces the idea of “sparing” which he derives from *Friede*, meaning “free.” For Heidegger, revealing where one dwells is not destructive of the unity of place. Distinguishing where we are involves “sparing” or “freeing up” the structures that compose the place. That is to say, the structures identified through inquiry are not negated or destroyed, but revealed, freed-up: in this way they are “spared” from the more destructive elements that sometimes characterize inquiry. This “freeing,” like a freeing up, illuminates how a place is composed of several elements, co-operating together. “Freeing them up” brings the specific elements that constitute a place out of the background and into the foreground; it means illuminating what the unity of experience is composed of. “Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being.”<sup>10</sup> Hence, this language indicates his attempt to move away from explications of determinate features which rely on utilizing orders of explication external to the context. In other words, distinguishing distinct aspects of the landscape means simply allowing them to remain within their own character. This can include “philosophical” distinctions, such as subjectivity, which emerges from within experience. As Malpas says,

[s]ubjectivity cannot be grasped independently of a larger structure that encompasses other subjects as well as the objects and events of the world. It is, we can say, in the dense structure of place that subjectivity is embedded and, inasmuch as subjectivity is only to be found within such a structure, so there is a necessary dependence of subjectivity on the other elements within that structure and the structure as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

10. Martin Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken* [Building, Dwelling, Thinking], GA 7, 151 [351 in translation]. The translation used hereafter is that by Albert Hofstadter in *Basic Writings*.

11. Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 175.

Heidegger's exegesis (sparing) begins by examining how it is that the subject comprehends itself from within the specificity of place. This is akin to a process of philosophical analysis explicating the unity of experience itself. He gives an example of an encounter with a landscape. First, he discusses how the bridge, a thing qua *Versammlung*, gathers the landscape together. "Gathering (*Versammlung*) or assembly, by an ancient word in our language, is called 'thing' (*Ding*). The bridge is a thing—and, indeed, it is such as the gathering of the fourfold which we have described."<sup>12</sup> Here he meditates on the bridge as conditioning the appearing of the banks of the river first, and then the other parts of the landscape, too. The thing, the bridge, is that which crosses a river. By its bringing together of several elements, the bridge—a thing—is a microcosm of the manner in which place itself is a unity and a unifier.<sup>13</sup> In this way, an important aspect of the meditation concerns how a thing amounts to a gathering together of the landscape itself, while also allowing the landscape to emerge. Through observing the constitution of their experience, the person situated within the landscape sees that their experience of place occurs through a specific relation to something—a bridge—which co-ordinates the surrounding area with itself. In this sense, the distinguishing aspects of place draw the place together by their specificity.

Thus, in Heidegger's example . . . the bridge appears as a bridge not through the exercise of its own qualities in determining an otherwise featureless terrain, but through a coming to appearance in which bridge, river, and the entirety of the countryside around it are gathered together as one and as many, and are thereby determined, in their being, as bridge, as river, as countryside.<sup>14</sup>

The landscape opens itself up. The unity of the landscape is made up of the totality of what constitutes it: its parts, its things. The unity of place is also its differentiation. The emergence of distinctions, therefore, is a representation of the constitution of experience.

A space is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed, namely, within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at

12. Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, GA 7, 155 [355]. That is to say, the thing is a mediation of sky, earth, divinities and mortals: every possible sort of constitutive condition.

13. Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, GA 7. 154–5 [354].

14. Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 18–19.

which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, the distinctions do just this; they are the basis for the revealing of the constitution of experience.

My investigation of Maximus is concerned to identify a resonance between how Maximus investigates specific experiences and how Heidegger approaches the exploration of place. As the examples below will show, when Maximus draws a distinction, this distinction not only illuminates itself, but also other structures around it.

#### MAXIMUS' ILLUMINATION OF EXPERIENCE

Studies that seek to contextualize Maximus in relation to the intellectual milieu of his time show that he was both influenced by, and contributed to, a range of ideas.<sup>16</sup> Maximus' writings often lack the systematicity of the philosophical works of Philoponus or Simplicius. His ascetic writings wander between multiple topics and many developments in his theology only emerge occasionally or contextually, in response to queries or problems. Yet, despite his adoption of such an approach, his work still exhibits consistent structures. My essay, focusing as it does on his ascetic writings, shows, moreover, that his analyses consistently uncover similar structures to those outlined above: it is the concrete subject who is tempted, rather than the Aristotelian or the Stoic psyche. If inquiry succeeds in illuminating the structure of experience, it does so because the structures are living elements of experience itself. Maximus' enquiries not only show the multiplicity of structures that go to make up experience, but also, when placed in a fuller context, promise to elucidate the present so as to draw the subject towards Christ.

15. Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, GA7, 156 [356]. Heidegger's italics.

16. Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1995); Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle de l'Ecclesia byzantine. La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur dans la culture philosophique de l'Antiquité tardive*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). I note that Mueller-Jourdan's study shows that there is indeed systematicity in Maximus' explication of space and time through Synaxis. My point in the previous lines is simply that many of his works arise in response to more specific questions.



For Heidegger, it can be argued that place is the condition of experience and language; therefore language and experience express a topological sense. But my goal here is not to explain Maximus in terms of his relationship to transcendental philosophy as such. Insofar as Maximus' does not have a topological orientation—which is to say that he does not explicitly focus on bringing place to expression as such—any topological elements of Maximus' thought are more a result of language itself being topological. Nevertheless, elucidating his work in relation to *topos* helps to explain how the explication of experience can be a unity while containing a multiplicity of elements.

### *Examples of Maximus Using Topographic Terms*

In most of the passages from Maximus examined below, Maximus is focused on explicating experiences. In these examples he uses topographic images. Thus, because they provide examples of how Maximus distinguishes experience, he is, arguably, describing a process of understanding experience similar to Heidegger's descriptions of "freeing up," etc., outlined above.

The first example is the use of "χωρίζω"—specifically the spatial aspects of χωρά—referring to a location or demarcation of a space. In this context, the spatial aspect of the word indicates a separation between one thing and another. "A passionate representation is a thought made up of passion and representation. Let us separate (χωρίσωμεν) the passion from the representation, and the simple thought will remain. We can, if we wish, make this separation (χωρίζομεν) through spiritual love and self-mastery."<sup>17</sup> And again: "The virtues separate (χωρίζουσιν) the mind from passions; spiritual contemplations separate it from simple representations; then pure prayer sets it before God."<sup>18</sup> The verb has several connotations: to remove from, define, make a distinction, etc. Arguably, these interpretations have a spatial connotation. The Greek verb is similar to the verb-form of "place" in English: "he places" or "place (x) aside." Though the Greek term betrays

17. *CChar* 3.43 = PG90, 1029B; trans. George C. Berthold, 67. All translations of the *CChar* are from Maximus the Confessor, *Selected Writings*, trans. George C. Berthold, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Irénée-Henri Dalmis, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York; Mahwah; Toronto: Paulist Press, 1985). Hereafter cited as *SelWrts*.

18. *CChar* 3.44 = PG90, 1029B, trans. Berthold in *SelWrts*, 67. I note that Berthold's translation interpolates the term "χωρίζω" into the second sentence (which did not explicitly contain a form of separation). However, given the frequency of the use of derivations of the term within the context of chapters 41–44, the implication is that the translation can be used to explain any case where a distinction is being drawn.

a topographic sense, I would prefer not to go with Heidegger's archeological approach and claim that I am drawing out any "original" or primitive meanings here. Yet even if the Greek verb-form "χωρίζω" does not denote an explicit relationship to χώρα, it retains a broadly topographic sense, insofar as it denotes a separation or distinction being made between things.

Separation is not the only approach that Maximus has to experience. "Things exist outside (ἔξωθεν) the mind while thoughts about them are put together inside (ἔσωθεν συνίστανται)" (*CChar* 2.73 = PG90, 1008AB; *SelWrts*, 57). The explication of experience reveals that experience involves a "putting together (ἔσωθεν συνίστανται)"—and, once again, placing things in relation to each other, including them (bringing them in), circumscribing them, etc. "The knowledge of beings includes naturally, in view of demonstration, their own principles which naturally circumscribe them in a definition."<sup>19</sup> In some contexts, Maximus uses topological language when describing existence. He uses terms to illustrate how things are related to each other—their interdependence:<sup>20</sup> "And if time and history are not without beginning, so much less are those things which are contained (περιεχόμενα) in them" (*CGn* 1.5, 1085A; *SelWrts*, 129–30). Interdependence is differentiated and ordered in particular ways, just as the sky is not the earth, and yet the sky and earth arise equiprimordially.<sup>21</sup>

These distinctions are concerned with arriving at a determinate grasp of the constitution of experience; but what is the aim of this process? Illuminating the content of one's life can provide the basis for a complete shift in the organization of experience, enabling a subject to distinguish many other processes that constitute what they experience, or "where they are." "Separation," "putting together," and the examples above are useful meth-

19. *CGn* 1.9, 1085CD, trans. Berthold, in *SelWrts*, 130: "Αἱ τῶν ὄντων γνώσεις, συνηρημένους φυσικῶς ἔχουσι πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦς οἰκείους λόγους, οἷς περιγαφήν φυσικῶς ὑπομένουσιν."

20. "Beginning, middle, and end are characteristics of beings distinguished by time and it can be truly stated that they are also characteristics of beings comprehended in history (τῶν ἐν αἰῶνι συνορωμένων). Indeed time (χρόνος), which has measured movement (μετρομένην ἔχων τὴν κίνησιν), is circumscribed (περιγράφεται) by number (ἀριθμῶ), and history (αἰῶν), which includes (συνεπινοούμενην ἔχων) in its existence the category of when, admits of separation insofar as it began to be. And if time and history are not without beginning, so much less are those things which are contained in them." *CGn* 1.5, 1085A; trans. Berthold, in *SelWrts*, 129–30.

21. Another example, the term "συνεπινοούμενος" (see note 17) has the connotation of "includes" or "inclusion." It can also refer to the process of establishing a "set" by encompassing something, distinguishing it from another thing, designating a particular set. In this way, only certain things can circumscribe others, and these may themselves be circumscribed.

ods for describing the composition of the unity of experience. Examining experience soon reveals a large range of structures.

These examples do not explain Maximus' overall approach to analysis, to the making of distinctions, or experience. They do, however, indicate that some of the ways in which he explicates experience have a topological connotation. This involves distinguishing elements that initially co-inhere. But unless these were somehow liable to being confused, why would Maximus need to distinguish them?

#### CONTEXT OF THE EXEGESES

This section examines some of the distinctions Maximus uses, and how these relate to a broader context. Each passage shows that experience is not composed of atoms such as "temptation," or "love," that arise independently of broader relationships. It is possible to mistake one for another. Temptation and other events come to be distinguished within the unity of experience. Like the bridge within a place, a determinate thing draws on its context to reveal both its own identity and the other elements that arise with it. Distinctive elements of experience emerge from alongside me, and they reveal the structure of my experience. Desire arises when an object (that which is desired) appears.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, distinguishing, say, one type of thought from another involves a context distinguishing them. One thing is what it is, not because it stands alone, but because of how it relates to other things.

The first set of examples here are related by virtue of the qualitative character of the concept-types that are related to each other, and by how they seem to emerge interdependently. The second relates more to why the concepts—be they abstract or not—are ordered in the way that they are.

#### *The Interdependence between Generic and Specific Determinations*

Some thoughts (λογισμοί) are simple (ἀπλοί), others compound (σύνθετοι). The simple are without passion ["ἀπαθείς," "unaffected" or "passionless"], but the compound are with passion ["ἐμπαθείς," "affected" or "impassioned"], as composed of passion (πάθος) plus representation (νόημα). In this case, one can see that many simple thoughts follow on the compound when they have begun to be moved to sin by the mind. Take money, for

22. *CChar* 2.68, 4.52. These passages describe the basic intentionality that underlies much of the psychological processes in Maximus' ascetic writings. I am unable to explore the ramifications of this here.

example. A passionate thought arises in someone's memory (μνήμη) about gold. In his mind he has the urge to steal and with his heart he accomplishes the sin. Now with the memory of the gold will come also the memory of the purse, the chest, the room, and so forth. Now the memory of the gold is compound for it displayed passion; but that of the purse, chest, and so forth, is simple, for the mind had no passion toward them. And so it is with every thought, with vainglory, with women, and so forth. For not all thoughts which accompany an impassioned thought are themselves passionate, as the example has shown. Thus from this we can know what are impassioned representations (ἐμπαθῆ νοήματα) and what are simple. (*CChar* 2.84 = PG90, 1009D–12A; *SelWrts*, 58–9)<sup>23</sup>

Experience does not work in atoms of time or in sets of faculties or processes that function independently from each other. In explicating this specific event (temptation), the subject, and that which makes up the experience of the subject, arises. Illuminating the structure of temptation brings with it a whole range of internal and external elements that make me who I am. Paradoxically, by distinguishing aspects of the experience of being tempted, Maximus is not only describing the concrete subject (the person being tempted), but illuminating a range of processes that define what it means to be human. Topologically speaking, Maximus' illumination of the experience of temptation reveals the structure of the self to itself.

Maximus describes the difference between a compounded thought and simple consciousness. This and other determinations arise because they share a unified context. The emergence of each distinction illuminates broader aspects of the context. Distinguishing between compounded and simple consciousness not only reveals an aspect of temptation, but also shows the distinctive psychic operations going on within the continuity of consciousness (λογισμός).<sup>24</sup> Hence, this context also discloses something more abstract, implying as it does that the continuity of consciousness can be distinguished from other types of operation on its part. The generalized

23. There is no need to read this passage as specifically relating to wrong forms of ascetic apprehension, as it is making a statement about the internal relation of inner psychological states when they are co-operating with, or are overly affected by, other internal activities. Here, ἀπαθείς can refer to the amount of internal influence on the object through μνήμη. Joshua Lollar makes some good comments about this; see *To See into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor and His Predecessors* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 183, 90, 92, 95–6.

24. This term has enormous importance in other areas of Maximus' work, which I am unable to discuss at this juncture.

flow of consciousness requires multiple distinctions to be made in relation to many experiences; it only arises as a result of a long series of observations of intentional consciousness. And yet, in Maximus' examination, a generalized description of consciousness can be explicated alongside specific determinations. This shows that Maximus' distinguishing of specific mental actions occurs because they arise interdependently.

Secondly, the passage examines a genetic account of thoughts as exhibiting the quantitative distinction between the simple and the compound. This point is introduced prior to the specific example of temptation. Nevertheless, a specific event (temptation) demonstrates Maximus' point regarding quantity (the simple vs. the compound). One thought has additional elements attached to it. This distinction shows, again, that Maximus' examination of specific experiences brings out structures that are also observable in other contexts. Distinguishing one type of thought from another can be something that emerges from a categorial concept of quantity. Moreover, there are several elements at play here (quantity—as above; quality—gold; position—room). The specificity of analysis reveals multiple structures.<sup>25</sup> Maximus, here, is using quite generic distinctions. Other distinctions are likewise found within a context, including something akin to an ontological paradigm.<sup>26</sup> This type of reading encourages the recognition that his engagement with experience serves to reveal multiple structures such as these.

25. Törönen, *Union and Distinction*, 18, 22–3, 26–8. Arguably, this study describes how Maximus' work often presumes the interconnection between types of category.

26. "For who in his right mind, and not bereft of a love of virtue, is ignorant of the fact that the eternal movement of the soul around the Good is nothing other than a natural operation (ἐνέργεια [sic!] φυσική) of the soul on which and because of which the soul is perfected? Deviance, however, is unnatural movement suggesting the failure of the causal power of this natural energy (ἡ δὲ τροπή, κίνησις παρὰ φύσιν, τὴν ταύτης ἀποτυχίαν τῆς αἰτίας εἰσάγουσα). For deviance is, in my estimation, nothing other than weakness and a falling away from our natural operations (καὶ ἔκπτωσις τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργειῶν," *Epō* 432B. Translation by Paul M. Blowers, in his paper "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 157. (Editor's note: First parenthesis added by the translator, second and third one by the author. The text printed in PG90 does not contain the error in Greek, visible in first parenthesis, and reads "ἡ ἐνέργεια φυσική.") Readers should observe in this passage the direct relationship between virtue and deviance. Note that the basis of the distinction could have been a definition of right and wrong made in relation to the example of gold. Why, then, does Maximus relate it to a larger issue? When one says that the contexts of the texts are different, one is describing how the issues at hand relate either to larger ontological claims about the character of cosmic life, or to the more specific aspect of explicating a particular experience. Yet the passages bear a common thread: making distinctions, distinguishing negative from positive, quantities, etc.

*Topos and Ordering*

It is the distinctiveness of things that brings the constitution of experience to light. The specificity of intentionality describes the order as it appears. Intentionality within place is ordered.

There is also a case for understanding temptation as, at least in part, originating from outside the person (something can appear attractive or repulsive due to its character). What is interesting here is how the distinctions between internal operations are ordered. Distinctions emerge from experiences; therefore they arise with an ordering. This means that a formal structure is not simply replicated in a context, but in each context, they are ordered according to that context.

First (πρῶτον) the memory brings up a simple thought to the mind, and when it lingers about it arouses passion.<sup>27</sup>

And again:

Thing, representation, and passion are all different realities. A thing is, for instance, a man, a woman, gold, and so forth. A representation is, for instance, a simple recollection of any of these things. Passion, however, is an irrational affection or senseless hate for any of these things. Therefore a monk's battle is directed against passion. (*CChar* 3.42 = PG90, 1029AB; *SelWrts*, 66–7)

As the natural ordering of speech implied, “πρῶτον” also designates that this action occurs before that one. Maximus places psychic structures in a specific causal relation. Language and experience are interdependent. He could have said that “Temptation involves the mind, passion, memory and senses.” Instead, though, he demands that the explanation describe the causal relation between separable events. The ordering of space and time occurs simultaneously. The ordering, contents, and constitution of what comprises space and time emerge from within a specific context. Moreover, the causal order unfolds in a manner that reflects the context from which it emerges. Maximus' analysis leads to his identifying what processes are chiefly responsible for the said circumstance. This then aids the reader who desires to be rid of temptation in respect of fulfilling their intentions, by enabling them to focus on the cause of temptation.

27. “Πρῶτον μὲν ἡ μνήμη, φιλὸν τὸν λοισμὸν ἐπὶ τὸν νοῦν ἀναφέρει· καὶ τούτου ἐγγρο-  
νίζοτος, κινεῖται τὸ πάθος.” *CChar* 1.84 = PG90, 980B; trans. Berthold, in *SelWrts*, 44.

Hence, this explication explains, distinguishes, orders, and identifies a sphere of ethical responsibility. These principles are interconnected in experience. The illumination of temptation does not just show one isolated malfunction; rather, the whole community of structures is affected as a consequence of alterations in an intentional operation (a compounded thought).

Going back to the unity of experience shows that there are a variety of different structures, whose ordering may be different depending on the context. Their interdependence means that constitutive principles arise interdependently, too. It makes us attend carefully to how it is that an ascetic context, for example, could imply a distinctive type of approach to descriptions, including the adoption of alternative causal orders.

#### *The Topological Elements Found in the Examples*

A particular experience can share in a range of specific and generic structures. In place, the orientation and ordering of formal orders can change, yet the particularity of an encounter might still encompass generic structures such as could encompass the totality of the cosmos. It is contestable as to whether Maximus understands experience as having a *topos*-like structure, or holds that the explication of experience is the explication of place. To be sure, my exegeses have shown that reading Maximus through topology can provide some insight into how multiple complex conceptual structures co-exist, even in his ascetic works. But there are also examples where Maximus explicates experience using terms that do themselves have a topographic structure. He utilizes multiple categories in his explications, and I take myself to have shown here that there are indeed some topographic elements in the distinctions he utilizes when explicating experience. Yet proving that Maximus understands experience as *topos* is different from identifying topological elements in his thought. Even so, I hope to have demonstrated that analyzing Maximus in the light of the notion of topological unity could still provide an explanation for why such a wide variety of categories emerge, even within specific circumstances.

#### CONCLUSION

Maximus, in order to be theological, ethical, ontological, or psychological in authentic ways, must be attentive to his experience. For Heidegger, authentic attentiveness to *topos* allows multiple possibilities to emerge. This essay can only make limited claims: it cannot cover Maximus' entire corpus. However, it has engaged Maximus' thought and found examples of analyses

which utilize a topology, and some evidence to the effect that multiple concepts did emerge there from within a careful attention to context.

The paper has also considered Heidegger's conception of *topos* and how he uses it to describe experience. Describing experience as *topos* means that experience arises as a unity in a specific "place." This unity, being brought to light by inquiry, consists in the interdependence obtaining between the conditions that, together, compose it. *Topos* is specific and unified. This interdependence, this place, this unity, contains a multiplicity of distinctive elements. This is why, within any explication of place, there will be a range of different determinations that might be made. I referred to Heidegger's use of "sparing." I then examined Maximus' use of the topographic notions of "separation" and "unification," as well as several others. I subsequently went on to consider Maximus, finding that he views experience in terms that reflect a similar sense of unity and specificity.

Maximus is not a transcendental thinker. However, as I have shown in my examples, he does utilize some images that suggest a similar starting point to Heidegger's formulation of *topos*. Describing a common starting point (unity) can help us to reconstruct the context in which several distinctions emerge within Maximus' works. I then went on to examine a small sample of some of Maximus' texts principally connected to the analysis of temptation. I did not explore the reasons for why Maximus is concerned with temptation; instead, I discussed how the composition of his analyses can be illuminated when read through a contemporary lens. Reading Maximus as topological in his engagement with experience helps to explain how so many structures, some quite distinct from each other, emerge from his writing. Maximus' analysis utilizes multiple types of distinction, some more generic than others and some more specific to temptation, such as compounded thoughts. I noted that, in each case, there are multiple elements seemingly arising co-operatively. With further investigation, approaching the analysis of Maximus from this direction could help describe how the concreteness of his explication of his own experience incorporates a range of different conceptual orders.

As *topos*, experience emerges not in a generic form of interdependence, but as reflective of some concrete place. In this way, orders are revealed as being dependent on each other in *specific* ways. The order of their dependence within a context may not be reversible, despite their interdependence. The unity of context, of place, is transcendental to the identities and differences that are illuminated within it. *Topos* provides help in describing how the basis of a formal concept might emerge, but also how it might change within experience.



The points that I have been tentatively proposing here as being common to Heidegger and Maximus are the following: (1) Experience is topological—meaning that the unity of the conditions that constitute experience emerge within this or that specific experience; (2) through various questions (ethical, psychological, theological, philosophical, etc.) one brings a specific experience to light; (3) distinguishing the constitutive elements of the unity of experience involves arriving at determinate construals with respect to the composition of the unity of experience.

Our aim has been to attend to experience as it is, rather than as one would like it to be. This exercise has shown, in a small way, how, for Maximus, conceptual structures show up within the unity of experience as both dynamic and enlivened.

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