

# *At the Precipice of Rationalism: Faith and Reason in the Thought of Christos Yannaras*

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The second half of the twentieth century marked a period of profound revival in Greek Orthodox theology, driven by renewed engagement with patristic sources and efforts to assert and reclaim a more authentic Orthodox identity.<sup>1</sup> Within this vibrant ‘second-wave’ of Orthodox theology, ignited by the emigre community in Paris, Christos Yannaras emerged as possibly the most creative and daring thinker, although not always free from controversy.<sup>2</sup> Today, he stands as a highly influential figure in Greece, known both for his work in philosophical theology and the broad reach of his regular column in the popular newspaper *Kathemerini*. Nevertheless, he remains largely unrecognized in the West despite the passionate advocacy of the small circle of his Western admirers. For instance, Rowan Williams describes Yannaras as ‘perhaps one of the most significant Christian philosophers in Europe’<sup>3</sup>, while Basilio Petra regards him as ‘one of the very few Orthodox thinkers of his generation capable of speaking to modern people.’<sup>4</sup> These voices encourage us to explore Yannaras’ extensive body of work and attempt to interpret it in the light of contemporary theological and philosophical challenges.

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<sup>1</sup>This generation’s prevailing sentiment is well captured by George Florovsky’s description of the period following the fall of Constantinople in 1453, heavily shaped by Western ideas, as the ‘Babylonian captivity’ of Orthodox theology.

<sup>2</sup>For instance, his appointment to the philosophy chair at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens has drawn criticism from the secular community due to the theological nature of his work, while his book *The Freedom of Morality* has faced severe criticism from conservative Orthodox circles.

<sup>3</sup>In the testimonial at the end of the 2012 English edition of ‘Relational Ontology’.

<sup>4</sup>Smytsnyk, P. 2022. *The Politicization of God: Soloviev, Clement and Yannaras on the Theological Importance of Atheism*, p. 276

With that in mind, this essay will explore the insights Yannaras' work provides regarding the question of the relationship between faith and reason. Although a comprehensive analysis of the entire body of his work is beyond the scope of this project, we will attempt to demonstrate through a selective survey, from the early *On the Absence and Unknowability of God* (1970) to the later *The Effable and the Ineffable* (1999), that he presents a convincing 'third way' between rationalism and fideism. We will argue that Yannaras accomplishes this by methodologically deconstructing the presuppositions of rationalism and advocating for a more 'empirically correct' approach grounded in apophaticism and social verification of knowledge. In doing so, he introduces a paradigm that not only challenges the binary oppositions between faith and reason but also establishes a distinctive point of encounter with contemporary philosophical discourses.

Before we proceed, it is important to briefly reflect on Yannaras' biography and intellectual formation, as it greatly influences how his writings, especially his pronounced critique of the West, should be interpreted. In this respect, his formative experience with a version of Western pietism, through his participation in the *Zoe* society, seems pivotal as it undoubtedly shaped his interpretation of the Protestant tradition, especially his reading of Kant. His subsequent doctoral studies in Germany informed his adoption and critical engagement with Heidegger's thought, while his studies in Paris immersed him, although perhaps indirectly, into the intellectual currents of Levinas and Lacan. Most importantly, in Paris, he encountered the work of Vladimir Lossky, which left a lasting mark, especially on Yannaras' early work.<sup>5</sup> Finally, after taking up the philosophy chair at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens in 1982, his work increasingly engaged with the philosophy of language, notably with Wittgenstein, as well as with critical theory and Frankfurt School thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, even drawing inspiration from the writings of the young Marx. Some of the works from this period, such as *Rationalism and Social Practice* and *Critical Ontology*, appear to be entirely steeped in secular discourse, devoid of any explicit theological references, though their arguments consistently remain rooted in his theological ideas. This highlights a distinctive openness

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<sup>5</sup>In his 2017 interview with Norman Russel, in *Russel, N. 2017. Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure, p. 63*, Yannaras states: 'I would go so far as to say that Lossky's Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church is the most important work of ecclesiastical literature since the fourteenth century and St Gregory Palamas.'

in Yannaras' approach, as he doesn't hesitate to try to validate his theological propositions through the lens of philosophy and vice versa. At the same time, this strategy seems to pose a substantial challenge with the reception of his works — Orthodox theologians might deem his engagement with contemporary philosophy too radical, whereas philosophers might find his theologically motivated ideas too obscure.

## 1. Critique of Western Philosophical Tradition

Still, no aspect of Yannaras' thought has drawn as much scrutiny as what is perceived as his strong anti-Western sentiment. This can be attributed to his habitual praise of the exceptionalism of Hellenic identity, a notion that likely has profound appeal in Greece but is met with disapproval elsewhere. Nevertheless, classifying his thought as anti-Western would be an oversimplification. Instead, his critique of the Western tradition should be seen in the light of similar critiques by Heidegger or the Frankfurt School thinkers — as an immanent critique intended to expose unexamined presuppositions rather than a complete denunciation. In his own words: 'My critical stance towards the West is self-criticism; it refers to my wholly Western mode of life'.<sup>6</sup> A perhaps more significant challenge is his tendency to use broad generalizations or characterizations concerning the Western tradition, which often oversimplify the intricate interplay of historical developments.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, such 'broad strokes' can be seen as calculated exaggerations, used as methodological devices that bring attention to what's often overlooked and challenge the prevailing norms. Such a view is especially pertinent within discussions on faith and reason, where Yannaras sees the very framing of the question as flawed, resulting from the entrenched misuse of the notion of reason in the West since the Middle Ages. Hence, his approach begins with the 'deconstruction' of the very notion of reason used in Western tradition, which subsequently permits him to re-engage with the debate on his terms.

In *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, one of his formative works, he lays the groundwork for this project by tracing the development of instrumental reason in the West, starting with Aquinas and culminating in its self-

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<sup>6</sup>Yannaras, C. 2006. *Orthodoxy and the West*, p. viii

<sup>7</sup>For instance, his characterization of *analogia entis* implies the kind of universal reception of this doctrine that was never present in the Western world, and it overlooks its significant critique within the Western tradition itself, especially by Karl Barth.

negation with Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'death of God' and Heidegger's critique of onto-theology. In the unfolding intellectual history of this era, he identifies several key milestones, including Aquinas' notion of *analogia entis*, Descartes' equation of reason with *cogito*, Leibniz's monadology, and Kant's universalization of ethics. According to Yannaras, the Western embrace of Aquinas' *analogia entis* and his principle of *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* have set in motion an unstoppable drive to replace truth with absolute certainty, encapsulated by finite concepts and metaphysical categories, thus paving the way for today's prevalent individualism and utilitarianism. In this pursuit of absolute certainty, God is posited as an 'absolute necessity', increasingly detached from human existential reality. Thus, Yannaras notes that 'European metaphysics has been built upon the presupposition of God's existence, while progressively excluding his presence from the world.'<sup>8</sup>

In this context, he sees Nietzsche's madman announcing the 'death of God' not as a direct attack on faith requiring a counterargument but as an affirmation of the 'wrong turn' in the development of Western theology, which has inevitably led to a dead end that it now must confront. In a manner reminiscent of Heidegger, he argues that the solution to this pivotal problem must begin with a genealogical retrieval of the more authentic tradition immediately preceding this fatal turn. According to Yannaras, such a tradition starts with the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus and extends through the Patristic period, culminating in the works of Gregory Palamas. Heraclitus is especially significant for his emphasis on the dynamic nature of truth, which transcends fixed categories and binary oppositions. His concept of *logos*, as a principle of unity rather than division, is noteworthy in this context, as it points to the relationship between rational discourse and the rational structure of the cosmos. According to Yannaras, it is precisely the Heraclitus' notion of a *common logos*, as a cosmic principle of unity, that the West has 'forgotten' in positing human reason as the sole instrument of the 'technology of truth.'<sup>9</sup> In other words, with the Western turn towards rationalism, we have moved away from the concern for truth as a unity of knowledge to the notion of truth as merely that which is attainable through knowledge. Yannaras observes that in this new paradigm, '*ratio* is not coin-

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<sup>8</sup>Yannaras, C. 2005. On the Absence and Unknowability of God, p. 22

<sup>9</sup>Yannaras, C. 2006. Orthodoxy and the West, p. 12

cidental with the truth, it is equated with the *possibility* of truth.’<sup>10</sup>

With this turn to what he refers to as the ‘monism of the subject’, what is precisely lost is the appreciation of the relational nature of reality and the notion of truth as participation, both of which have been anticipated in the Heraclitean approach. Instead, the existential understanding of reality has been substituted by rational metaphysics, which posits God as the ‘first cause’, or by ethics, which designates God as the ‘highest value.’ Consequently, believers are presented with an artificial dilemma between reason and faith and are forced to choose between either approaching God as an abstract concept or by way of fideism and mystical experience. Given these options, Yannaras is not surprised that nihilism appears as a compelling ‘third way’ in today’s Western society. Somewhat provocatively, he regards it as a more ‘theologically honest’ attitude than either rationalist metaphysics or utilitarian ethics, against the backdrop of the Western rejection of the existential understanding of truth as a mode of being. Thus, according to Yannaras, any path forward must pass through the nihilistic rejection of the false dilemma between a God of abstract concepts and a God of blind faith and re-ground itself in a more ‘empirically accurate’ notion of a personal principle of existence. The need for such a critical reassessment is compelled not only by the practical reality of faith’s decline in the West but, more importantly, by the pervasive logic of technological domination in today’s society, which emerges as a direct consequence of the ‘alienation of knowledge’ by way of an exclusive epistemological priority given to the instrumental use of reason.<sup>11</sup> In this context, it becomes clear that Yannaras’ critical stance should not be mistaken for conservative anti-Westernism but should instead be seen as embodying elements of contemporary postmodern critique. Still, as we will demonstrate, he takes great care to ensure his approach does not lead to relativism or agnosticism but instead remains theologically convincing and firmly anchored in the spirit of Orthodox Christian tradition.

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<sup>10</sup>Yannaras, C. 2012. Rationalism and Social Practice, p. 13

<sup>11</sup>In this regard, his repeated reference to Herbert Marcuse’s 1964 book *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* is particularly noteworthy, compelling a reevaluation of Yannaras’ ideas in the context of today’s pervasive digital technology

## 2. Apophaticism

From this perspective, we can argue that the most distinguishing aspect of Yannaras' thought is his emphasis on the *apophatic* nature of knowledge. Although he consistently refines the language he uses to express the notion of apophaticism throughout his career, he always uses it to point to the same 'empirical fact' — that descriptions never exhaust the reality they aim to depict. He articulates this fundamental intuition in epistemological terms as 'the refusal to exhaust truth in its formulations'<sup>12</sup>, or 'a denial that we can identify the knowledge of truth simply with an understanding of its declamatory logic'<sup>13</sup>, or, using the language of semiotics, as 'the refusal to identify the understanding of the signifiers with the knowledge of what is signified'<sup>14</sup>. With these definitions, he never advocates for a rejection of reason, but rather, brings attention to an 'epistemic gap'<sup>15</sup> that inevitably arises when experience is excluded from the pursuit of knowledge.

Such an understanding is essential in distinguishing between the apophaticism of knowledge that Yannaras argues for and the 'negative' approach to knowledge (*via negativa*) in Scholastic theology. According to him, the apophatic attitude cannot be reduced to negative propositions; instead, it underscores that knowledge of God is never exhausted in either positive or negative statements. This is the case precisely because no amount of propositional statements or intellectual definitions can fully embody the knowledge that emerges from a personal relationship. The validity of such assertion is corroborated by the common sensation of the sense of 'lack' between what is experienced and participated in and what can be expressed in conceptual language. Thus, his claim that 'reason cannot replace cognitive immediacy of relationship'<sup>16</sup> extends beyond theological discourse and can be seen as a universal epistemological position. Nevertheless, even while adopting such a stance, he never suggests dismissing language as inadequate despite its limitations in thoroughly expressing the experience of a relationship. On the contrary, he considers it essential, as the 'only means of accessing the rela-

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<sup>12</sup>Mitralaxis, S. 2012. Person, Eros, Critical Ontology: An Attempt To Recapitulate Christos Yannaras' Philosophy, p. 35

<sup>13</sup>Yannaras, C. 2006. Orthodoxy and the West, p. 25

<sup>14</sup>Yannaras, C. 2011. Relational Ontology, p. 9

<sup>15</sup>Sumares, M. 2014. Signifying the Mystical as Struggle, p. 12

<sup>16</sup>Yannaras, C. 2005. On the Absence and Unknowability of God, p. 29

tional *logoi* that make reality intelligible and shared'.<sup>17</sup> Language, as it were, is a call to relationship, although never its full embodiment.

In arguing for such a perspective, Yannaras doesn't merely rely on his insights but persistently seeks and draws support from patristic sources. Most notably, he engages with Dionysius the Areopagite, often as interpreted through Maximus the Confessor.<sup>18</sup> In Dionysius' characterization of the transcendent God as 'mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name'<sup>19</sup>, Yannaras finds support for the view of apophaticism as more than *via negativa*, but rather as a principle of an 'active abandonment of the consolidation of knowledge in conceptual categories'.<sup>20</sup> He substantiates this with an approach to knowledge derived from Maximus the Confessor, who emphasizes participation in the mode (*tropos*) of being, which Yannaras associates with the possibility of knowledge through personal relation. With this in mind, he engages with the theology of Gregory Palamas and his distinction between essence and energies, pointing out the unknowability of essence while simultaneously highlighting the possibility of personal knowledge through participation in divine energies. In this way, he illuminates Areopagite's notion that 'the inexpressible is bound up with what can be articulated'.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise, Yannaras insists on the separation between 'axiomatic knowledge', which can be enclosed in fixed descriptions, and 'apophatic knowledge', which is inexhaustible, existential, and realizable only through participation in a personal and relational mode of being. In this way, he both endorses the Wittgensteinian proposition that 'the limits of my language mean the limits of my world'<sup>22</sup>, while at the same time suggesting the possibility of its transcendence through the embrace of the Lacanian thesis that 'the subject is born in the field of the Other'. Therefore, as Sumares points out<sup>23</sup>, Yannaras strives to bring 'into communion' the seemingly irreconcilable realms of

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<sup>17</sup>Yannaras, C. 2021. The Effable and The Ineffable, p. 3

<sup>18</sup>In *On the Absence*, Yannaras stresses the vital importance of Maximian interpretative tradition, and argues that its precisely Western misreading of Dionysius that lead to an elevation of *analogia entis* to a key epistemological principle.

<sup>19</sup>Luibheid, C. (Translator). 1987. Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works. On the Divine Names, p. 50

<sup>20</sup>Yannaras, C. 2005. On the Absence and Unknowability of God, p. 71

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 71

<sup>22</sup>Wittgenstein, L. 1922. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 5.6, p. 149

<sup>23</sup>Sumares, M. 2014. Signifying the Mystical as Struggle

language, within limits of human existence, with mystical experience, thus directly contradicting Wittgenstein's deliberate and systematic attempt to keep these realms apart. He aims to achieve this by reintroducing a 'forgotten' and more authentic notion of *logos* into linguistic analysis, inspired by Heraclitus' notion of a '*common logos*' as a principle of unity. Through this lens, knowledge is not understood as a perfect rational signification of the signified but as an event of an encounter between the logos of human reason and the logos in the 'field of the Other'. According to Yannaras, 'human reason meets in nature another reason; the knowledge of nature is analogical or, better, dialogical.'<sup>24</sup> Therefore, he maintains that reason, as an essential characteristic of a person, remains vital in acquiring knowledge. However, this endorsement should not be confused with a validation of solipsistic, autonomous reason, but always as 'rational apophaticism', which invariably points to the possibility of a relationship with another reason.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Relational Ontology

The significance of personhood, otherness, and relationality in Yannaras' thought is hard to overstate. In fact, these notions are so foundational to his work that he frequently talks about 'relational ontology', a concept that could seem like an oxymoron in the context of Western rationalism, which would assume that atoms must preexist for the relationship to be possible. Yannaras, on the other hand, finds no contradiction in this idea and instead argues for the concept of a *relational being*, grounded in the 'image and likeness' of the Trinity, bringing together both the personal and relational modes of existence. 'To be', for Yannaras, is, first and foremost, 'to be in a relationship'. With this insight, he draws a line distinguishing an individual from a person: 'whereas an individual is defined in terms of his self-identity and distinction from other individuals, as a kind of irreducible unit or monad, person is defined in terms of relationship; an openness to and acknowledgment of the "other"'.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, otherness is unveiled as a key existential fact of a person and a product of self-transcendent freedom expressed as a relation. Consequently, knowledge of God as a personal and relational cause of existence must be grounded in the same personal mode of being. In this

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<sup>24</sup>Yannaras, C. 1991. Elements of Faith, p. 41

<sup>25</sup>Petra, B. 2019. Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology, p. 61

<sup>26</sup>Yannaras, C. 2005. On the Absence and Unknowability of God, p. 7



context, God can never be understood as an object of reason, yet reason can still assist knowledge by drawing attention to the relational mode of existence and serving as a ‘call to relation.’

Thus, according to Yannaras, reason is not to be understood as limited to the realm of the individual but rather as fundamentally linked to the realm of the person. Although reason alone does not lead to participation, it is necessary to recognize the possibility of personal participation as a realization of the relational mode of existence. Fideism alone appears incapable of this. The principal realization of this relational mode is through erotic love, which stands for ecstatic participation rather than solitary existence within the confines of autonomous reason. Such a notion finds support in the Scriptural proclamation that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:16), acting as an invitation to embody a divine mode of existence. According to Yannaras, this mode finds its fullest expression in the ecclesial body of the Church, which, according to him, ‘is the objective possibility of the apophatic knowledge of God’.<sup>27</sup>

In this way, Yannaras communicates a principle that can be seen as a ‘third way’ beyond fideism and rationalism by stressing the necessity of rationality to recognize its limitations and realize its inherent desire for self-transcendence. However, unlike Wittgenstein, who might suggest that one must ‘throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it’<sup>28</sup>, Yannaras does not consider reason merely a means to an end but rather a permanent means of exploring ontological freedom. Together, this leads to an understanding of truth that incorporates both faith and reason and is profoundly rooted in the Church’s experience. In fact, it is only the Church’s eyewitness testimony of Jesus Christ, who ‘embodies the capacity of human beings to exist in the mode of God’s uncreated nature’,<sup>29</sup> and its continuous reaffirmation in the Church’s experience throughout history, that can serve as a basis for any rational doctrinal statements.<sup>30</sup> Yet, such statements never fully encompass the truth but merely signify a possibility of participation. In Yannaras’ words, ‘the Church’s proclamation is a rational declaration and clarification of its experience, so that others can participate in it.’<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 97

<sup>28</sup>Wittgenstein, L. 1922. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.54, p. 189

<sup>29</sup>Yannaras, C. 2006. *Orthodoxy and the West*, p. 24

<sup>30</sup>In this context, Yannaras highlights that dogmatic statements arise only as historical responses to the threat to the catholicity of truth posed by heresies.

<sup>31</sup>Yannaras, C. 2006. *Orthodoxy and the West*, p. 25

#### 4. Social Verification of Truth

The emphasis on experience and participation leads Yannaras to propose the possibility of a ‘more empirically correct’ approach to the truth, which he considers fundamental to his ‘critical ontology’. Once again, he traces the potential for such an approach in the ‘forgotten’ Ancient Greek tradition of communal verification of knowledge and its manifestation in the early Christian Church. Drawing on the distinction between an individual and a person, he argues that knowledge that is a product of rational understanding differs from knowledge which emerges from the communal, relational mode of verification. According to him, the former merely ‘provides an individualist-centered utilitarianist knowledge, that defines what, how, and why’, while the latter ‘introduces us in the dynamics of the shared empirical immediacy which is perpetually being completed but never exhausted’.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the path to apophatic knowledge must pass through and be verified in the same mode of existence, grounded in personhood and communion.

This ‘verification’, according to Yannaras, extends beyond mere doctrinal statements and is, first and foremost, concerned with the ongoing enactment of the truth through the life of the community. Therefore, truth can be understood as a mode of existence manifested in a distinct communal *ethos* rather than any finite, exhaustive signification. Consequently, truth is equated with participation, as the ‘confirmation of knowledge within participatory possibility of relatedness’.<sup>33</sup> As such, communal verification of knowledge leads to a truth that embodies both personal otherness and the inherent relational character of reality. This notion is supported both by the Scriptural account that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established’ (2 Corinthians 13:1), and by the secular understanding of the construction of reason by ascribing shared meaning to emerging signifiers. Thus, any approach to knowledge must recognize that knowledge arises from experience facilitated by social relationships, which constitute an experience in their own right. This leads Mitralaxis to claim that, according to Yannaras, communal epistemology and relational ontology are inextricably linked in an inseparable union that inherently excludes the possibility of any a priori axiomatic truths.<sup>34</sup> In other words — that all knowledge requires social verification.

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<sup>32</sup>Yannaras, C. 2021. *The Effable and The Ineffable*, preface

<sup>33</sup>Yannaras, C. 2005. *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, p. 28

<sup>34</sup>Mitralaxis, S. 2014. *Relational Ontologies in Dialogue*, p. 8

The insistence on social verification of all knowledge underpins Yannaras' 'third way' of critical ontology as a 'criteria for distinguishing real from illusory relation.'<sup>35</sup> This notion is especially pertinent to the faith and reason debate, as it advocates for a 'more rational' approach that acknowledges the critical role of empirical experience in the acquisition of knowledge and demands apophatic understanding, while also recognizing the possibility of falsity in any 'personal truth' and the relativism that such an approach might entail. Thus, he rejects both the fideistic approach and the false confidence of rational concepts and categories. Instead, he consistently advocates for an apophatic approach and the non-exhaustive, open-ended propositions of critical ontology that, nevertheless, always remain open to communal verification. He stresses this point by stating that:

*With the word 'critical' we term the process of evaluating ontological propositions, evaluating the logical accuracy of these propositions on the grounds of 'koinos logos' (common sense, word, rationality, language and understanding), evaluating the capability of the ontological propositions to be empirically verified through shared, communal experience accessible to all.*<sup>36</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Throughout this essay, we have attempted to outline how Yannaras develops what can be seen as a distinct 'third way' beyond rationalism and fideism by demonstrating the limitations of rationalism and introducing the notion of apophaticism of knowledge, inherently linked to the ontological notions of personhood, otherness, and the relational nature of reality. Together, these ideas lead to an approach to knowledge that transcends rational cognition and instead serves as an invitation to participate in a personal relationship, which, in turn, opens up the possibility of a 'critical ontology' and the communal verification of truth. In this framework, both reason and faith are essential — reason as an invitation to participation in the Trinitarian mode of being and faith as an 'event and experience of relationship'<sup>37</sup> manifested in the ecclesial experience and ethos of the Church.

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<sup>35</sup>Petra, B. 2019. Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology, p. 71

<sup>36</sup>Yannaras, C. 2011. Relational Ontology, p. 51

<sup>37</sup>Yannaras, C. 1991. Elements of Faith. p. 13

An account like this seems highly compelling and profoundly resonates with the experience of the Orthodox Church, especially as illuminated through Patristic writings and the life of the early Church community. However, this specificity may also be what restricts the broader recognition of his work and provokes certain objections. The key objection might concern his ‘ontologization’ of relationship, to which he subordinates both faith and reason. As noted earlier, such a notion might appear counter-intuitive against the conventional understanding of a relationship and can be seen as introducing a metaphysical category that, at times, can be easily confused with essence. Likewise, his linkage between the personal-relational mode of the Trinitarian being and its ‘iconic’ representation in human existence might be criticized for insufficiently safeguarding divine transcendence. At the same time, his prioritization of personhood and relationships can be seen as undermining the essence-energies distinction upheld by Gregory Palamas and, in recent times, Vladimir Lossky.<sup>38</sup>

A further point of contention is Yannaras’ constant quest for historical justification, particularly his emphasis on Ancient Greek tradition as the only normative foundation for the Christian experience. Such a stance, along with persistent demarcation between the ‘Greek East’ and ‘Latin West’, could be perceived as somewhat undermining the principle of epistemic openness that he otherwise advocates for. Finally, in his firm reliance on historical grounding and sometimes undiscerning enthusiasm for natural theology, he neglects the importance of the eschatological horizon, which seems crucial for the questions of truth and unity he frequently addresses in his work.

At the same time, Yannaras’ approach deserves praise for his daring attempt to ‘blur the lines’ between different philosophical approaches, serving as an invitation for dialogue and further synthesis. His emphasis on the ontological status of personhood and relationship, while perhaps theologically not beyond reproach, holds significant relevance in a modern context where the notion of an individual is pushed to its self-negation and relationships are reduced to a mere utilitarian exchange. Finally, his emphasis on freedom as an ecstatic movement towards the other seems more crucial than ever in

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<sup>38</sup>Skloris, D. 2019. *The philosophy of mode (‘tropos’) in the thought of Christos Yannaras*, is highly relevant in this regard, as it argues, through the analysis of Yannaras’ use of the Maximian notion of *tropos*, that ‘in a very original way, he is combining theology of energies with personalistic and existentialist features, as well as with the discoveries of great psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan.’

a society that is beginning to realize that what it once considered freedom is instead a biological necessity. For these reasons alone, we can argue that his thought presents a compelling ‘third way’ uniquely relevant to our current age and demands further inquiry.

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