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Maynooth

Being in Reference to the Person:
Christos Yannaras and the Ecclesial Event

Joseph Micah McMeans

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Supervisor: Dr. Philip John Paul Gonzales

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ABSTRACT

The central aim of this dissertation is to offer a focused study on Christos Yannaras' unexplored response to Martin Heidegger's onto-theological critique of metaphysics, with the further intention of advancing Yannaras' proposal as a possible way forward from the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism in the emerging field of Continental philosophy of religion. Accordingly, this essay sets out to address the following questions: how and in what way can Yannaras' response overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger? Further still, this inquiry gives rise to the following question: how in and what way does Yannaras' response contribute to contemporary post-Heideggerian discourse? In response to the first question, this essay will argue that Yannaras' response to Heidegger's critique is able to overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism by A) arguing that the historical unfolding of nihilism is an event that must be restricted to the Latin (Western European) philosophical tradition *alone*, and thus neither accounts for nor applies to the non-Western, Hellenistic tradition of the Christian East, which he summarizes as the philosophical tradition of the Greek Church Fathers. Second, and for this reason, Yannaras is able to B) present the tradition of the Greek Church Fathers as capable of successfully overcoming the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology insofar as he believes it to offer a non-essentialist, testimonial metaphysics of ecclesial existence which is not derived from the onto-theological structure of value-laden metaphysics, but is capable of being known and validated through praxis, participation, and intersubjective experience. In response to the second question, I will then argue that C) Yannaras' ontological understanding of ecclesial existence offers a key methodological hermeneutic which would allow for richer discourse amongst Christian thinkers within the post-Heideggerian field of Continental philosophy of religion insofar as it would not restrict phenomenological discourse within Christianity to theology or religion, but would open the possibility for Christian experience to be discussed ontologically within the discipline of philosophy proper.

Contents

Introduction

In the world of Orthodox Christians, Christos Yannaras is recognized as "Contemporary Greece's greatest thinker (Olivier Clément),[1] "one of the most significant Christian philosophers in Europe" (Rowan Williams),[2] and "one of the most important Orthodox thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the present millennium (Basilio Petrà).[3] Yannaras is lesser known, however, in non-Orthodox, Western European countries. This is a lamentable fact which has recently begun to change due to an influx of translations over the past two decades, with his work now appearing in over twelve languages. Yet even with this rise of interest in his thought, Yannaras remains, as John Milbank has recently stated, "one of the most important yet insufficiently attended-to thinkers of our time."[4] To date, there has yet to be published any introduction to the work of Yannaras by an English speaking scholar. More importantly, for our purposes, there has yet to be published an in depth review or study on Yannaras' early work, which primarily concerns itself with responding to Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. Thus in Western European countries and the Anglosophere, Yannaras' response to Heidegger and the problematic of European nihilism has largely gone unnoticed. This is most unfortunate, as I believe many contemporary responses to Heidegger's critique could greatly benefit from the singular uniqueness of Yannaras' proposal, especially amongst phenomenological thinkers within what has been termed the "theological turn."[5] Consequently, the main objective of this essay is to offer the first in depth study of Yannaras' response to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, with the further intention of revealing the dormant potential of his project by bringing it into dialogue with contemporary thinkers within the emerging field of Continental philosophy of religion.

Yannaras' response to Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is developed and expanded across three of his major works: *Heidegger kai Areopagitēs* (*Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 1967), *To prosōpo kai ho erōs* (*Person and Eros* (1976), and *Schediasma eisagōges stē philosophia* (*The Schism in Philosophy*, 1980). To date, the few publications which have given attention to Yannaras' response to Heidegger have only done so in fragmented form;[6] that is, they

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1 Citied from Oliver Clément's preface to Christos Yannaras, *De l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu d'après les écrits aéropagitiques et Martin Heidegger*, trans. Jacques Touraille (Paris: Cerf, 1971).

2 Citied in Sotiris Mitralexis, "Person, Eros, Critical Ontology: An Attempt to Recapitulate Christos Yannaras' Philosophy" in *Sobornost Incorporating Eastern Churches Review*, Vol 34, no 1 (2012), 33.

3 Cited in Basilio Petrá, *Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, trans. by Norman Russell (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2019), vii.

4 Cited in the introduction to *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event: Engaging with Christos Yannaras*, edit. by Sotiris Mitralexis (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 2018), xii.

5 The "theological turn" is a phrase coined by Dominique Janiquad in his now famous 1991 essay, which attempts to reveal how phenomenology has been "taken hostage" by theology, especially by thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and others. For this essay, see Dominique Janiquad, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

6 For the most recognized reviews of Yannaras' work on Heidegger, see Gerald Bray, review of *Person und Eros*. "Eine Gegenüberstellung der Ontologie der griechischen Kirchenväter und der Existenzphilosophie des Westerns"

have understood and reviewed each text separately rather than attempting to grasp his response as a cohesive whole which is developed and expanded over time. And while each text is indeed worth considering in its own right, it is only when they are understood together that we can begin to understand the fecundity of Yannaras' response. Accordingly, it is necessary in this dissertation that we seek to understand his response holistically, offering the reader an appropriate synthesis of Yannaras proposal as it was developed and expanded across these major works.

In order to accomplish this, I will argue that Yannaras' proposal can be thematically divided into two dimensions—the *historical* and *ontological*. By the historical, I refer to the distinctly narrative-based dimension of Yannaras' proposal, which seeks to offer an ambitious re-reading of the history of philosophy for the sake of offering an alternative narrative to the historical unfolding of nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger. In this counter-narrative, Yannaras draws from both Heidegger and the Greek Church Fathers in order to argue that the nihilistic unfolding of metaphysics is a historical event which must be restricted to the Latin (Western European) philosophical tradition *alone*. More specifically, Yannaras argues that it is an event which took place due to the Latin traditions divergence from the Greek philosophical tradition of Antiquity, especially as it had been preserved and advanced in the dominant *ethos* of Christian Hellenism. By emphasizing this historical divergence that took place from the Greek to the Latin tradition, however, Yannaras not only will attempt to offer a different narrative from which to understand the historical unfolding of metaphysical nihilism. So too, the main impetus of this counter-narrative is to then offer the alternative, Hellenistic tradition of the Greek Church Fathers as a natural way forward from the death of the Western European tradition. This then sets up the ontological dimension of his work as it is promoted in *Person and Eros*, wherein Yannaras seeks to "test," using the medium of contemporary phenomenological discourse, whether this alternative philosophical tradition of the Greek Church Fathers can successfully overcome the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

In this manner, the ontological dimension of Yannaras response can be understood as naturally following from and completing the historical dimension, and this essay will likewise follow this pattern in our own explication: Part One—"The Historical Unfolding of Nihilism*"*—will offer a focused study on the historical dimension of Yannaras' response, whereas Part Two—"The Philosophy of the Church Fathers"—will offer a focused study on the ontological dimension of Yannaras' response as a natural continuation and fulfillment of the former. In the final chapters, we will then conclude this work by revealing how Yannaras' interpretation of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophical tradition offers a key methodological hermeneutic which would allow for

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(Gbttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) by Christos Yannaras in *Sobornost* 5: 2 (1983), 98-9; Philip Sherrard, "Review of *Person and Eros*" (published by the author, Athens 1970) by Christos Yannaras in *Eastern Churches Review* 3: 3 (1971), pp. 356-7; R.D. Williams, "The Theology of Personhood: A study of the Thought of Christos Yannaras," in *Sobornost*, no. 6 (Winter 1972), 415-30; A.M. Allchin in Sobornost, no. 1 (Summer 1970), 53-54; Daniel Isai, "Yannaras' and Marion's Overcoming Onto-Theology," in *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event: Engaging with Christos Yannaras' Thought*, edited by Sotiris Mitralexis (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2018), 151-164; Aristotle Papanikolaou, *On the Absence and the Unknowability of God* in Modern Theology 23 (2), 2007: 301-304.

richer discourse amongst Christian thinkers within the post-Heideggerian field of Continental philosophy of religion, especially amongst French phenomenologist of the "theological turn."

In the following sections, I will now offer an introductory summary of the three major points listed above. This will then be followed by an overview of the proposed methodology, structure, and outline that this dissertation will assume.

The Historical

In both *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *The Schism in Philosophy*, Yannaras' central argument, as stated above, is that that the problematic of Western nihilism is a problem that is exclusive to the Latin philosophical tradition that originated in the post-Roman West. The point of this count-narrative is two-fold: First, Yannaras is attempting to deal with the historical dimension of Heidegger's critique of onto-theology, which reads the unfolding of Western nihilism as being developed through one solid, unbroken philosophical tradition; that is, as having begun in Ancient Greece (primarily with Plato), adopted by the Church Fathers in the Middle Ages, and finally unfolding in our own time through the periods of Modernity and post- Modernity. Thus if Yannaras wishes promote the philosophical tradition of the Greek Church Fathers as a viable response to the nihilistic impasse of Western metaphysics, Yannaras must first show how the Church Fathers' philosophy is not a part of the history of onto-theological metaphysics. This he accomplishes by cutting the history of Western philosophy in half—between Ancient (Greek) philosophy and Western European (Germanic/Latin) philosophy—and restricting the nihilistic history of onto-theological metaphysics to the Western European tradition alone. And since the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers is a part of the former, Hellenistic tradition, then their philosophy, according to Yannaras' narrative, should not be subsumed within Heidegger's onto-theological critique.

The second point of this counter-narrative, then, is to promote the Hellenistic tradition of the Greek Church Fathers as a legitimate alternative to the nihilistic outcome of the Western European tradition. Here we see that the ultimate point of Yannaras' counter-narrative is not simply to reveal how the philosophy of the Church Fathers does not fall prey to Heidegger's critique. More fully, Yannaras' narrative is also attempting to reveal a fundamentally different mode of *doing* philosophy. In other words, Yannaras' narrative wishes to illuminate in Ancient philosophy, especially in the philosophy of the Church Fathers, an alternative "inner

logic," or *tropos hyparxeos* (mode of being), which is not nihilistic, and thus which can be partaken of in seeking to move beyond the nihilistic impasse of Western metaphysics.[7]

The History of Nihilism: An Alternative Reading

Yannaras' historical reading of "the West" and its current state of nihilism is a grand narrative that is assumed throughout the entirety of Yannaras' corpus, often being brought up in a cursory or even polemical manner. It is primarily in *The Schism in Philosophy*, however, that Yannaras provides us with his most systematic and detailed account of said narrative.

In the first half of *The Schism*, Yannaras attempts to offer his reader a renewed horizon from which to understand the uniqueness of the Greek philosophical tradition, starting from the pre-Socratics and continuing on with the Church Fathers and Gregory Palamas (1350AD). This he does, as later summarized in *Exi philosophikes zōgraphies*, by thematizing several "fundamental attributes" of the Greek tradition which he believes radically distinguishes it from its Latin counter-part. In the second half of this text, he then proceeds to reveal how the loss of said attributes in the Latin tradition not only led to a radical "schism" in the history of thought, but also laid the intellectual foundation for post-Roman, Western European culture. In other words, for Yannaras, the loss of these Hellenistic attributes in the Latin philosophical tradition led to the foundation of another *tropos* of participating in critical thought which has unfolded nihilistically in our own time. To understand the thrust of Yannaras narrative, then, one must begin in seeking to understand the uniqueness of the Greek tradition in light of said attributes.

First, Yannaras highlights in *The Schism* that Greek philosophy differs from its Latin/Modern counter-part insofar as its primary aim is practical rather than intellectual; more concretely, Yannaras argues that the primary end, or aim, of critical thought in Antiquity was not the need to simply "know" truth, in a purely noetic manner, but to *become* true. Here the end of all critical discourse was the harmonious becoming of social co-existence in accordance with Wisdom, whether in the city-state or the philosophical school. In other words, *theoria* was always subordinate to praxis, such that Wisdom itself was understood as that which must be holistically embodied and known in the life and practice of the community in which one lived.

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7 As Yannaras states in the preface to *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, one of its primary intentions is to: "clarify the differences between Greek philosophy and tradition and those in the West: differences that are not statically exhausted in the place of contemplation, but which determine the *mode* (tropos) or practice of life, that is to say, that which we call culture." So too, in the preface to *The Schism in Philosophy*, Yannaras writes: "this book…is an outline introduction to a mode (*tropos*) of philosophizing, not primally to the history of philosophical questions and responses proposed to them. References to the history of philosophy as such may function as an introduction to the modes of thinking that determine philosophical inquiry." For the first quote, see Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, trans. by Haralambos Ventis (Cambridge: T&T Clark, 2006), 15; for the second, see Yannaras, *The Schism in Philosophy*, trans. by Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2015), xi.

This primary impetus of philosophy *as such* thus led to the second major attribute of Ancient philosophy which Yannaras refers to as the "communal verification of knowledge," a form of gnoseological praxis that stands in stark contrast to that which would develop in the Latin tradition. The key point which Yannaras wishes to emphasize here is that *koinōnein* (communion, being- together), for the Greeks, was always recognized as the path to *aletheuien* (truthfulness, being-true). Truth, in this sense, was not established autonomously through the principles of mere reason/logic. On the contrary, Yannaras' claim is that something was regarded as true for the Greeks insofar as it could participated in by all: e.g., two plus two is four not simply because it is "self-evident" to reason, but because this *logos* can be participated in and verified by all. In other words, for the Greeks, a *logos* were recognized as true ultimately because it dwelled in rational harmony with the whole (the community) in which one participated. And this mindset of the Greeks, for Yannaras, naturally follows from the original impetus of critical discourse, which was to become true in the life and practice of the city-state or school.

For Yannaras, these two fundamental attributes thus lead to a third major attribute of Ancient philosophy; namely, that Greek philosophical discourse was ultimately *apophatic*. For Yannaras, this means that the Greeks did not seek to exhaust truth in a univocal manner, but rather recognized the symbolic nature of language in reference to a primordial given that could not be adequately accounted for through the determinate nature of the signifier. For Yannaras, this entails that the Greek's disposition towards knowledge was ultimately experiential and/or existential; i.e., knowledge was found in experience, disclosure, and participation, not simply in the abstract correctness of assertion. Indeed, it is this dimension of Greek thought which Yannaras believes Heidegger was discovering with his promotion of truth as *alethiea*. The difference between Yannaras and Heidegger, however, is that Yannaras reads this notion of *alethiea* historically in light of the two attributes listed above, thus giving it a more subtle and nuanced understanding.

These three attributes of Ancient thought, for Yannaras, must be understood as establishing Ancient philosophy's unique *tropos hyparxeos* (mode of existence); that is, the pre-predicative, historically assumed mode in which Greeks participated in critical thought. For this reason, these attributes were not systematically laid out in their philosophical texts *per se*. Rather, Yannaras presents them more as a non-ideological "thought-pattern" or historical "fore-structure" that establishing the cultural manner in which philosophy was carried out and practiced in Antiquity. Which further entails, on Yannaras' reading, that it was this very *tropos* of philosophical practice that did not carry over to the Latin tradition of the Middle Ages, which for the most part was culturally severed from Hellenism's *tropos hyparxeos*. In other words, Yannaras argues that the Latin traditions attempt to revitalize the Greek philosophical tradition in the Middle Ages was restricted to a revitalization of critical thought outside of its original historical context.

This means, according to Yannaras' narrative, that what we have with the re-establishment of philosophy in the post-Roman West is not the revitalization of the Hellenistic tradition *per se*, but simply a revitalization of Hellenistic discourse outside of its proper mode of actualization. Hence similar to Pierre Hadot's narrative, what Yannaras believes took place with the rise of the Latin tradition (predominantly in the Scholastic schools) is the reduction of philosophy to mere speculative discourse, therein establishing the rationalist, purely academic style of philosophy which dominates the West today. What interests Yannaras, however, is not only how this new form of philosophy led to the inversion of Ancient philosophy's fundamental attributes, but how this very inversion laid the foundation for the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe.

For example, Yannaras argues that this alternative *tropos* of participating in Greek discourse, now reduced largely to the Latin conception of *ratio* (reason/logic), led to a major inversion of Greek gnoseology. More specifically, Yannaras argues that the reduction of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio* transferred the verification of truth away from the "common *logos*" of communal participation to the intellectual capacity of the individual (*átomo*). On this account, one does not attempt to verify knowledge of truth through participation (*koinōnein*) in the common life of the whole, but autonomously (*autónoma*: stemming from *átomo*), through one's rational capacity (in the intellect, *facultus rationis*).[8] In the Latin tradition, then, Yannaras argues that knowledge of truth as "the correspondence of the thing and the intellect" (*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*) gradually became an ideal that could be acquired through the rational striving of the individual's intellect, secured through the autonomous work of *ratio* alone. Thus following Heidegger, Yannaras claims the misuse and mistranslation of Greek *logos* in the Latin tradition not only led away from the communal dimension of Greek thought, but also led away from the Greek experience of truth as disclosure and participatory experience.[9]

Thus for Yannaras, what we have with the development of *ratio* in the Latin tradition is not simply an inversion of Greek *logos*. More importantly, Yannaras argues that we have the development of a new way of *doing* philosophy—a different mode of participating in critical thought which, according to Yannaras' narrative, would set the stage for the problematic becoming of Western thought in the centuries to come; e.g., rationalism, individualism, utilitarianism, subjectivism, totalitarianism, technology, and finally—nihilism.[10]

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8 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 23.

9 On this point, see Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*: *Hellenistic Self-Identity in the Modern Age*, trans. by Peter Chamberas and Norman Russel (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 54.

Yet if this reading has any merit, then the nihilistic *tropos* of thought which Heidegger illuminates as being responsible for the death of God/metaphysics can no longer be read as being in continuity with Ancient philosophy (e.g., beginning with Plato onwards). Rather, historically speaking, it would be read as having only emerged when the philosophical discourse of Ancient philosophy was taken out of its proper context. On this account, it would not be Greek philosophical discourse *per se* which is the problem, but rather the historical *tropos* in which it is actualized in the Latin tradition.

This is noted, for example, in Yannaras response to Heidegger's historical reading of Greek *logos* and its transition into Latin *ratio*. According to Heidegger's grand narrative of Western nihilism, the decisive factor in the onto-theological unfolding of metaphysics came about with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition, which, due to its translation of Greek philosophical words into Latin, led to an inevitable mistranslation of the "Greek experience" altogether, thus inaugurating the "rootlessness of Western thought."[11] Amongst such mistranslations, Heidegger also highlights the translation of Greek *logos* (word/speech) as Latin *ratio* (reason/logic),[12] since for Heidegger, this reduction of *logos* to *ratio* led the Latin tradition to "equating *eidos* and the *idéa* with the sole and definitive interpretation of Being."[13] As such, for Heidegger, Being in the West began to be reduced to that which came to standing presence through the assertion/saying of reason/logic, therein setting the foundation for the unfolding of onto-theology proper in Modernity.[14]

For Heidegger, however, the Latin traditions use of reason as *ratio* is an interpretation of Greek reason which technically existed in Antiquity—especially in Aristotle—albeit alongside other, more nuanced uses of *logos*. This connection thus allows Heidegger to subsume the entirety of the Western philosophical tradition into one overarching, grand narrative, such that the death of metaphysics in Modernity is understood as the nihilistic outcome of a mode of thought which had already taken root in Antiquity. Yannaras, however, pushes back at this very point. For what Yannaras' portrayal of Ancient philosophy attempts to reveal is that the Latin traditions understanding and use of *ratio* did not exist *at all* in Hellenism. On the contrary, Yannaras argues that it only came to exist when, in the Latin tradition, the philosophical discourse of Aristotle was taken up outside of its properly Hellenistic *tropos* of actualization. In other words, Yannaras' account of Hellenism seeks to reveal that the rationalistic use of *logos* which Heidegger describes as being responsible for the historical unfolding of nihilism cannot be traced back to Antiquity, but must be recognized as emerging from the Latin tradition alone.

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10 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 98.
11 See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, edit by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 153-154.
12 See Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 155.
13 Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 208.
14 Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 208.

Yannaras will also deploy a similar logic in relation to Heidegger's reading of Nietzschean value. Meaning, on Yannaras' reading of Hellenism, Nietzsche's will to power and the historical development of value-laden metaphysics simply does fit within the Ancient paradigm. According to Heidegger's portrayal of Nietzsche, for example, it is only through the individualized, rationalist use of Latin *ratio* that the will to power can operate, since the will to power in itself has as its end the individuation of the individual, particular self. Yet on Yannaras' reading of Ancient philosophy, as stated above, the impetus of both the city-state and the philosophical schools was driven by the need to become true through rational participation in the common being of the whole, and thus had as its end a transcendence of the particular individual *as such*.[15] Thus for Yannaras, once more, it was only with the newly derived *tropos* of philosophical discourse in the Latin tradition—which allowed individual thinkers to appropriate Greek reason outside of its communal, praxis based context—that the relation between the thinker and thought primarily became one of *value*, therein setting the stage for the nihilistic *tropos* of violent metaphysics and the death of God in our own time.

Here we can begin to see how, for Yannaras, the nihilistic mode of thought which Heidegger illuminates as being responsible for the death of God/metaphysics is not inherent to Greek thought as a whole (e.g., beginning with Plato onwards). Rather, as we will draw out more conclusively in Part One of this dissertation, what Yannaras' narrative attempts to illuminate is that this nihilistic mode of thought is applicable to the general mode of the Latin (Western European) philosophical tradition alone.

As pointed out above, however, the ultimate goal of this narrative is not simply to promote a return to the Hellenistic *tropos* of philosophy after the death of the its Latin counter-part. More fully, Yannaras is attempting to promote a return to the Hellenistic tradition of the Greek Church Fathers, which he not only believes to be the fulfillment of Hellenism's metaphysical "mission," but also the only viable form of Ancient philosophy which could be re-appropriated after the death of metaphysics in our own time.[16]

This then leads to the second dimension of Yannaras' response, which seeks to test whether the Hellenistic philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers has the potential to respond to the nihilistic outcome of the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe. More specifically, he will look to see whether the Church Fathers' ontology, gnoseology, and praxis can overcome the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

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15 Indeed, as Hadot also argues, Nietzsche's will to power seeks to subsume the whole within the self, whereas the fundamental presuppositions of Ancient thought was the subordination of the self to the whole. On this point, see Hadot's "Reflection on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self'" in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

16 On this point, see Yannaras, *Hē Noellēnikē tautotēta* (Athens: Grēgorē, 1978), 94-95.

The Ontological

Heidegger's fundamental ontology, in part, is explained by Yannaras as an attempt to overcome the traditional, metaphysical response to the ontological problem which gives exclusive priority to the faculty of *ratio*, and thus identifies the Being of beings in a purely conceptual, onto-theological (nihilistic) manner. For this reason, as Yannaras points out, Heidegger attempts to transfer the ontological problem as a question about the *cause* of beings to a question about the *difference* between beings and Being. And for Heidegger, the difference lies in the fact that beings are disclosed, they are phenomena, while Being (*Einai*), or essence, "loves to hide."[17] Meaning, we do not know the Being of beings (*to Einai ton onton)* insofar as we can no longer ascribe their Being to another, causally determinate being, such as God. Rather, we only know, phenomenologically, the mode in which they are—that is, the fact of their disclosure as rising up out of oblivion (nothingness) into non- oblivion, from absence to presence. On this account, as Yannaras states, beings *are* as presence-absence, making temporality, absence, and nothingness an inherent property of the mode in which beings exist.[18]

For Yannaras, Heidegger's attempt to rethink Being as such ultimately fails, leaving a "void in ontology" that is ultimately nihilistic.[19] However, it is not Heidegger's methodology *per se* that Yannaras finds responsible for this failure. For in many ways, on Yannaras' reading, both Heidegger's ontology and gnoseology finds themselves very close to the Hellenistic presuppositions of the Church Fathers' philosophy, which not only denies any ontic, rationalist interpretation of Being, but also attributes to truth the experiential character of "appearing," or "coming to light." For Yannaras, rather, the major difference between Heidegger's philosophy and that of the Greek Church Fathers lies in the phenomenological testimony which the Church Fathers bear witness. In the West, after the dissolution of all idolatry and conceptual crutches in the event of God's death, the result was a looming nihilism, an experiential void of *nothingness* from which all beings come to presence. In the East, however, after the willed suspension of all theoretical constructs and conceptual idols, Yannaras highlights that ecclesial experience lays claim to a different form of ontological disclosure—one of erotic rapture and communion, a revelatory participation in Being which is testified to as the loving *energeia* of hypostatic existence. Such is, for Yannaras, the metaphysical testimony of the ecclesia as encapsulated in the Church Fathers understanding of the Trinity, which on Yannaras' reading, is offering nothing less than an alternative answer to the ontological question.

For this reason, we may understand Yannaras' ontological response to Heidegger as attempting to promote the Church Fathers' ecclesial ontology, along with their proposed gnoseology, in order to see if its philosophical witness could offer a meaningful and satisfactory response to the death of God/metaphysics and Heidegger's consequential fundamental ontology. Such is the primary objective of both *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *Person and Eros*, most fully articulated in the latter.[20] The majority of this essay will seek to cover the ontological dimension of Yannaras' response as it is found in *Person and Eros*, as it is in this work that we find this response in its most updated and advanced form.

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17 Quoted in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, trans. by Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 11

18 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11-12.

19 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 189.

In *Person and Eros*, as alluded to above, the ecclesial ontology which Yannaras' believes capable of overcoming Heidegger's fundamental ontology is based upon the Cappadocian Fathers' formulation of the Trinity. In attempting to use the concise language of Greek metaphysics in order to better signify the Church's participatory experience of God's loving being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Cappadocian Fathers made the critical distinction between two philosophical terms which, up to that point, had been generally conceived of and used in the same manner: that of *hypostasis* (that which has real and concrete being) and *ousia* (a thing's general or essential nature, which is also said to be its substance or "real being"). With this distinction, each person of the Trinity was able to be designated the ontological status of *hypostasis*—as having real and concrete being *from themselves*—without subverting the being of the one, common nature.[21]

According to Yannaras, this identification of *hypostasis* with the personal existence of God introduced an important yet overlooked reversal in Greek ontology. For rather than seeing, in accordance with the essentialism of Greek ontology, the particular (here, the person) as a predicate that is attached to a concrete being once its ontological *hypostasis* has been established, the Cappadocian Fathers' formulation declares that within the life of the Trinity, the person is itself the *hypostasis* of being, and thus contains an ontological independence and freedom which is not subservient to or determined by the *ousia*. Such is why, for Yannaras, the Cappadocians distinguish the divine *prósopa* from the divine *ousia* as an "otherness" and "distinctiveness" (*idiazon*) from nature itself, and it is this absolute otherness from nature that is ontologically distinguished as *hypostasis.*[22] Being as *hypostasis*, then, creates a different category of "Being" altogether, since to exist as a person is to exist as ontologically other from the determinate existence of *ousia*.

For Yannaras, we see this in the mode (*tropos*) in which the person of the Father hypostasizes the divine substance, since for the Greek Church Fathers, it is not the *ousia* that is identified as the cause of the Son and Spirit, but the personal existence of the Father, who "freely and from love begets the Son and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed."[23] In this manner, the being

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20As Yannaras states in conversation with Norman Russel, "My book, [*Person and Eros*] is…a systematic synthesis in modern epistemological terms of the ontological hermeneutic proposition of the Hellenic-ecclesial mode…" the purpose of which is to see if "the witness of ecclesial experience and its language contained any coherent answers to Heidegger's problematic."" See Norman Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure: Christos Yannaras in Conversation with Norman Russel* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 44.

21 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 204.

22 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 16, 298

23 See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. by Elizabeth Briere (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 17.

of the persons, as an otherness from nature, does not receive their being from *ousia*, but from the freedom of *schési*[24] (relation/relationship). Accordingly, it is this *undetermined* and dynamic relationship of loving communion with the other, and not the determinacy of nature, that establishes the being of the divine persons. On Yannaras' reading, then, the persons' "otherness" and "distinctiveness" from nature is defined further as an "ek- static" (from *ekstasis*: to be or stand out from oneself), relational existence which "stands out" from the common nature only in and through the event of loving communion.[25]

Yet it is not simply the being of the person which must be understood as an unique event of loving freedom. Insofar as God exists triadically, and insofar as it is the loving freedom of the Father which acts as the ontological foundation ("cause") of this event, then Yannaras emphasizes how the entirety of God's being must also recognized as an event of undetermined, loving freedom. God's being, in this regard, is not caused by the determinations of *ousia*, which would make it an ontological necessity. Rather, God "hypostasizes" his nature into a triadic act of divine communion a result of the undetermined event of hypostatic freedom that takes place between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In this manner, as Yannaras states, for the Greek Church Fathers, "essence (*ousia*) exists only *in* persons; persons make being (*ousia*) a hypostatic reality,"[26] such that the acting of the persons becomes the very Being (*Einai*) of *ousia*. In this manner, the divine persons, as the ontological ground for Being, "support" that which occurs in nature while also existing as an otherness from nature. Meaning, being (essence)—insofar as it does not exist in itself beyond of before its hypostatic realization—cannot be considered something self-evidently given, nor something subject to a predetermined ground (*logos*) or mode (*tropos*) of actualization, per traditional Greek discourse.[27] On the contrary, according to Yannaras' interpretation of the Cappadocian Fathers,

> "the absolute otherness by which the person hypostasizes its substance (renders it *hypostasis*) constitutes Being and identifies it with existential freedom from any substantial bond, rational dependence, and natural pre-determination. Being is identified with freedom, because it is realized only as personal otherness, only as a hypostatic event of self-awareness, self-determination, and self-actualization."[28]

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24 In Greek, as Yannaras points out, the word for relation (σχέση) contains the connotations of both reference and action: "σχέση is derived from the verb 'to have' (έχω)"; It refers to an event, something that happens and requires action, thus it signifies here a "referential happening/event." See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable: The Linguistic Boundaries of Metaphysics Realism*, trans. by Jonathon Cole (Winchester: Winchester University Press, 2021), 10.

25 See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19-20.

26 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 205

27 See Yannaras, *Faith as an Ecclesial Experience*, trans. by Keith Schram (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2020), 49.

28 Yannaras, *Schism*, 205

And while this is, for Yannaras, still a *metaphysical* ontology—that is, it refers to the "really real" (*to ontos on*), beyond (*meta*) the physical, natural order of created beings (*ontôn*)—it is not a "metaphysics" in the tradition sense of the word. Indeed, such forms of "metaphysics" must be surpassed. For on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers philosophy, one can no longer acquire knowledge of Being through the general, the abstract, the community of recognizable (repeatable), determinate signs and any other form of ontic categorization which belong to the being of beings as *ousia*. On the contrary, as Yannaras states, to know Being for the Church Fathers is to partake of its hypostatic realization—an "existential" (rather than intellectual) event of communion that only transpires between *hypostases* (*prósopa*), and which by definition is ontologically other than *ousia*.

Gnoseology

This then leads us to the role of the created, human *hypostasis*, which has the potential to know, participate in, and experience the hypostatic realization of Being as such. More specifically, in *Person and Eros*, Yannaras speaks of the human person's capacity to know Being as such in two manners: what I define in this essay as an "immanent" way and a "transcendent" way.[29]

The way of immanence is based upon the mode in which the human *hypostasis* exists in relation to *ousia*, or created nature. Analogous to how the persons of the Trinity exist as an indeterminate mode of the common *ousia* through ecstatic, relational, and self-determinate freedom, Yannaras claims that the human person exists in this same manner, albeit in a limited (created) fashion. The human person, then, also exits as the "absolute otherness" of created nature, wherein the being of the human *hypostasis* is not determined simply by nature, but by *schési* (relation/relationship). Like its divine architype, then, the fully actualized human person ecstatically "stands outside" the determinacy of its nature as an existential fact of absolute otherness and referential freedom, thereby allowing the human person to acquire knowledge of Being in a purely experiential, participatory, immanent fashion.

However, for Yannaras, it is also because the created person exists *as such* that he contains the potential to experience and know Being in a transcendent manner—that is, to come to know the otherness of hypostatic Being which is other than, precedes, and grounds his own being. Here the hypostatic otherness of God's triadic being is received in a radically "personal" manner (along similar lines to Martin Buber's "I-thou" relation), wherein the otherness of God's being—not as *ousia*, but as *hypostasis*—is dialogically given "in reference to/relation with" the person. And this reception of dialogical otherness is made possible, for Yannaras, insofar as the person is ontologically understood as a primordial relation beyond the determinacy of nature (thus beyond the determinate activity of the intellect). Meaning, the human person's relation with Being is "not restricted to the semantic-intellectual definition of their [beings] temporal and spatial (dimensional) presence," but rather signifies the "existential space" of primary disclosure, a purely

29 Yannaras does not actually use these two terms, but I find them helpful in differentiating the two different types of knowing which he refers to when speaking of knowing Being hypostatically.

receptive "opening" which is able to experience the otherness of hypostatic being "before any 'semantic' shaping of the content of consciousness."[30] And this potential to receive Being as such not only applies to the reception of God's hypostatic being, but the Being of all beings, since *all* that exists (created and uncreated) exists *hypostatically*; that is, within the indeterminate act (*tropos*) of hypostatic freedom.

However, Yannaras emphasizes that for the Church Fathers, the human person's reception of Being as such is not predicated on the intellect, but on the freedom of the will. And for this reason, there also lies the possibility for Being's negation, or denial. For the human person, in being hypostatically called forth from created nature to participate in the hypostatic event of communion with the divine Other, can also deny this call and choose to exhaust its otherness in the determinate mode of nature. In not appropriately responding to the call of Being, then, the human person occludes Being's realization, both in immanence and transcendence. Immanently, the person is unable to fully actualize its own hypostatic potential, living instead a life of self-referential freedom that is confined to the determined mode of nature. And insofar as this denial circumvents the proper actualization of the person's ecstatic relation *from* nature, then this denial also occludes the receptive horizon in which the transcendent otherness of hypostatic, divine Being is able to be relationally given. Thus rather than experiencing the Being of beings as rising into presence in the hypostatic *tropos* of personal otherness—as an ongoing gift from a personal Giver—this occlusion of relational existence leaves the reception of beings to be received in the ontic realm of mere presence. In other words, without the relational capacity to receive beings in the personal otherness of their hypostatic horizon, then beings are *ipso facto* given, as Heidegger describes, as mere objects or things which presence in and out of nothingness.

On this reading, then, the problematic of European nihilism will be transcended, existence will be restored meaning, to the extent in which the hypostatic being of human persons are restored. And according to Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, this restoration of meaning will not come about through any onto-theological "metaphysics" which intellectually transcends the immediate givenness of phenomena in order to causally ground their being for the sake of a projected value. On the contrary, according to the philosophy of the Church Fathers, this restoration has taken place in the hypostatic event of the God's incarnation, death, and resurrection, which sets the person of Christ (and his Church) at the center of humankind's ontological

30 In this manner, Yannaras defines the human person not simply as a thinking being, but as a "referential" and "relational" being whose primary quality is the fact of "being-opposite-someone/something" in the pre-conceptual field of immediate givenness. See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 5-6.

31 While I separate these two modes of knowing for the sake of clarification, they should be understood rather as one dynamic and complete movement.

restoration. For in and through Christ's hypostatic union, as Yannaras states, "the possibility of the ecstatic mode of existence, the personal possibility of ecstatic otherness with regard to nature…now becomes a natural possibility within the bounds of the theanthropic nature of Christ."[32] Meaning, in the incarnated *Logos*, the hypostatic being of humankind has reached its final end, allowing all those who partake of the divine *Logos* the possibility for their own hypostatic restoration. In this manner, Being is first restored to humankind in the way of immanence (the human person is "freed" from nature in order to live hypostatically), which then leads to the transcendent reception of Being (wherein the human person learns to exist, like the Son, as a radical relation with the hypostatic being of the Father), thereby restoring meaning to the Being of beings in both an immanent and referential manner.

On Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers' ontology, then, nihilism can only be overcome through willful participation in the hypostatic mode of existence which Yannaras refers to as the "ecclesial event"—that is, through willful participation in the Church's divinized (hypostatic) mode of existence, which in accordance with Ancient philosophy, is fundamentally an ongoing event of conversion, askesis, and ontological transformation. Such is, for Yannaras, the Hellenistic philosophy of the Church Fathers which he believes capable of overcoming the contemporary problematic of Western nihilism.

The Ontological Hermeneutic of Ecclesial Existence

This leads us, finally, to the key hermeneutic which we will attempt to highlight when seeking to show the fecundity of Yannaras response within the post-Heideggerian field of Continental philosophy of religion. More specifically, in this section I will attempt to provide the relevance of Yannaras' proposal insofar as I believe Yannaras' hermeneutic of ecclesial existence would allow for richer discourse amongst Christian thinkers within what has been termed the "theological turn" in French phenomenology.

The "theological turn" is a term coined by Dominique Janiquad in *Le Tournant Théologique de la Phénoménologie Française* (1991), which accuses thinkers in the French phenomenological tradition (Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and others) for "taking phenomenology hostage" by the regulation of theology.[33] Further still, one of the common traits which unites this variety of thinkers is that each thinker, like Yannaras, has primarily turned to the experiential testimony of religion—and most often, Christianity—as a means of overcoming the death of God/metaphysics. In doing so, the phenomenological inquiry of this group seeks to

32 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 268-269.

33 Meaning, rather than seeing phenomenology, as Husserl conveyed it, as a "science" upon which to ground all other sciences, Janiquad believes that these French thinkers have abandoned the rigorous phenomenological method by turning phenomenology into a kind of theology, whereby the unbiased descriptive analytic of phenomenological research is used to support or convey the predisposed biases of theological claims. Besides Levinas, the large majority of thinkers within this "turn" in phenomenology are Christian (Catholic), and Janiquad is not incorrect in claiming that they have indeed broadened the field of phenomenological discourse to a religious orientation.

investigate religion's (especially the Catholic/Christian religion) proclaimed experience of the transcendent,[34] offering a critical examination of said experiences in such a way that can justify their testimony. In so doing, this group can be understood as paving a path beyond the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism insofar as the philosophical phenomenological method is able to offer a critical justification of religious experiences that are testified to in religion, thereby affirming the possibility of transcendence within immanence.

The problem, however, is that the majority of thinkers within this group only affirm the possibility—and never the actuality—of such phenomena.[35] This is because *philosophical* phenomenology, as an ontological science, deals only with universal experience, the "fundamental structures" of human consciousness and experience, and in this sense does not concern itself with the particular, empirical experiences of human beings within a specific religion, such as the particular experiences of Christians.[36] To investigate these particular phenomena as *actual* phenomena would be to leave the discipline of philosophical phenomenology and venture into the particular, religious life-world of the faithful believer, and as such would be to venture into the ontic discipline of *theology*.[37] Or at least, this is Heidegger's diagnosis of how one should understand any phenomenological investigation of Christian experience, and most if not all thinkers within the theological turn follow him in this regard.[38] As such, phenomenological praxis within the theological turn, insofar as it promotes its discourse as being philosophical (ontological) rather than theological (ontic), necessarily limits its research to dealing with the universal structures of experience that are not restricted to particular, faith-based, empirical religious experiences. For any affirmation of such phenomena would be possible only through the particular experience (life-world) of *faith*, leaving the phenomena unable to proclaimed as actual from an ontological perspective.

But one must ask, at this point, where this leaves us in seeking to overcoming the problematic of nihilism? For while the believer might indeed experience a form of transcendence which can offer meaning to his or her life, the believer is now left with the ambiguity of not knowing whether his experiences are real or simply constituted from the pre-disposition of his faith. This is because, based upon the methodological restriction which this group of thinkers accepts, any form of justification which seeks to ground the believer's experience would, as

34 By transcendent, here, I mean an ontologically distinct form of existence—usually associated with the divine—that is outside or beyond the sensible world of change, becoming, and contingency and which further grounds or gives meaning to said finitude.

35 See for example, J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson, *The New Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 134.

36 See Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," trans. James G. Hart, John Maraldo, and William McNeill in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40-41.

37 See Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 43. Indeed, in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), Heidegger shows what a non-philosophical phenomenology of religious faith might look like.

38 On this point, see Gschwandtner, "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II)" in *Philosophy Compass*, Vol 14, (2), 2019.

Heidegger states, be circular insofar as it "originates out of faith, and leaps back into faith."[39] Here the testimonial experiences of one's religion are unable to be affirmed as actual outside the realm of faith/belief. Consequently, the meaningful experiences of the believer which have the potential to overcome nihilism remain suspended in the realm of possibility alone, leaving the metaphysical impasse of cultural nihilism untouched.

It is here that we find, most fully, what makes Yannaras' response to Heidegger so unique, while also revealing to us its fecundity. Yannaras' response to Heidegger, much like thinkers within the "theological turn," also seeks to offer the existential testimony of Christian experience as the primary means of overcoming the rationalist, onto-theological structure of metaphysics. However, Yannaras is able to overcome the previously mentioned methodological restriction of phenomenological thinkers within the theological turn insofar as he does not read the experiences of Christianity within the confines of a historical religion, *but as a testimonial participation in an ontological reality*. Meaning, Yannaras does not restrict the Church's phenomenological witness within an "ontic science," as a particular instantiation of *Dasein* that is constituted by faith. Rather, by keeping in step with the philosophy of the Church Fathers, Yannaras continues to proclaim the ecclesial event as an ontological reality in which humanity participates, and thus seeks to read Heidegger's own ontology in light of this event. For this reason, as we see performed in *Person and Eros*, the universally proclaimed phenomena of the Church's testimonial experience are not read as subjective experiences of a religious mode in which *Dasein* exists, but as bearing witness to an ontological reality in which all humankind has the capacity to participate. Here the teachings, praxis, and dogmas of the Church are read in an overtly philosophical manner, whereby its ontological expressions must be understood as an experience-based witness that is declarative of what it means to truly *be.* And if thinkers within the "theological turn" were to likewise follow Yannaras' methodological hermeneutic, then their phenomenological analysis of Christian experience would, in keeping step with the Church Fathers, be promoted as a testimonial participation in Being itself.

In this final chapter of this work, then, I will attempt to reveal the fecundity of this possibility by bringing Yannaras' promotion of the Church Fathers' *philosophia* into dialogue with the work of Jean-Luc Marion—the theological turn's most widely recognized and significant figure. In doing so, I will not only attempt to reveal how Marion's phenomenology could be greatly strengthened if he were to adopt Yannaras' proposed model of philosophical thought and praxis. More fully, I will attempt to show, on a practical level, what this integration would look like. That is, I will attempt to reveal, in a concrete manner, how a phenomenology of Christian experience might be re-understood today if it were subsumed into the philosophical preconditions and paradigms of the Church Fathers' Hellenistic mode of *doing* philosophy. In so doing, I hope not

39 For such theological knowledge "itself is founded primarily by faith," grounding itself in a circular manner insofar as "[t]he substantiate legitimacy of all theological knowledge is grounded in faith itself, originates out of faith, and leaps back into faith." Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 50.

only to reveal how such a paradigm shift is indeed possible. Even more fully, I wish to reveal why such a paradigm shift could greatly support and advance the work of Christian phenomenologists whom, like Yannaras, also seek to offer the teaching, experience, and praxis of Christianity as a response to the problematic of Western nihilism in our own time.

In the following section, I will now offer an overview of the important parameters which this dissertation will assume, including the methodology and restrictions which I have placed on this study. After this, we will close by offering an outline of how this study will proceed.

METHODOLOGY AND RESTRICTIONS

Methodology

In seeking to write a philosophical essay on a seemingly theological topic, we must begin with the primary horizon and/or methodological assumption that this essay adopts. Thus here we must respond to the natural and demanding question: how does this essay seek to promote itself as a work in *philosophy*?

Philosophy as a Way of Life

The definition of philosophy that this dissertation will seek to both structure and promote itself from within is the recently renewed understanding of philosophy as a *way of life,* recently popularized by Pierre Hadot. Hadot's central thesis is that philosophy, in the pre-Scholastic/pre-Modern era of Antiquity, was primarily understood as a rational, intentional mode of being-in-the-world, and that it was only with the rise of scholasticism and the medieval university system that philosophy began to be identified, as it still is today, primarily with theoretical/analytic discourse. For the Ancients (and for Yannaras, the Greek Church Fathers), the main goal of philosophy was not theoretical knowledge *per se*, but the transformation of the human person in accordance with an ontological vision of Being (*Wisdom*). In this manner, "true philosophy" emphasizes praxis—the philosopher's *way of life*—over and above the school's "scientific," theoretical discourse.[40] This emphasis does not, of course, exclude theoretical knowledge. However, theoretical knowledge itself is simply re-prioritized in relation to the praxis and mode of existence that is found within each school.

In this manner, Hadot understands the defining characteristics of Ancient philosophy to be 1) *theoria*: the promotion of a rational understanding of existence that encompassed the truth of the cosmos as a whole, especially in relation to the correct function of humankind and 2) *praxis*: the promotion of an ascetical, communal, and rational way of life that would allow the human

40 For example, in Antiquity, a person who participates in a philosophical school's prescribed way of life while barely participating in theoretical discourse could still bear the title of philosopher, but one who is an expert in philosophical reasoning but does not participate in the prescribed praxis of a philosophical school would be unworthy of the name.

person to truthfully live in accordance with said vision. From these two criteria, we can not only come to understand why, as Hadot and Yannaras both state, Christianity was able to so quickly proclaim itself as a philosophy in Antiquity. So too, we may also come to recognize the right that Christians *still* have in seeking to promote a "Christian philosophy" today—something which I believe Yannaras has already done in a seminal manner.[41] Consequently, this interpretation of philosophy will not only be proposed as a key hermeneutic for understanding Yannaras' response to Heidegger, but it will also be a presumed hermeneutical structure for this essay's promotion as a work in philosophy.[42] This applies to both Part One and Two: whereas a major intention of Part One will be to overview Yannaras' own understanding of Ancient Philosophy *as* such, Part Two will seek to work out the *theoria* and practice of the Greek Church Fathers philosophy as a response to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.

Phenomenology

The primary difference between Yannaras and Hadot's understanding of Ancient philosophy, however, is that the Christian philosophy which Yannaras presents is that of a critical nature, whereas for Hadot, Ancient philosophy is primarily pre-critical. Indeed, it is dogmatic by definition.[43] Here the philosophy of the Greek Fathers can be separated from the philosophy of the Ancient schools due to the participatory nature of its event, which, according to Yannaras, bases its vision of the world upon the ongoing affirmation, falsification, or clarification of those who participate in its revelatory, ecclesial mode of existence. It is for this reason that we will, following Yannaras in *Person and Eros*, engage with the discipline of phenomenological analysis as being the most appropriate "critical tool" in seeking to explain, understand, and analyze, from an ontological perspective, the historically testified mode of existence found within the life and praxis of the ecclesial event.

By *phenomenology* I refer specifically to the philosophical method inaugurated by Edmond Husserl, carried forward and advanced by important thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion. Common to this later group of thinkers is the interpretation of phenomenology as a methodology which seeks not simply to "describe," in a pre-critical sense, a

41 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 197-98.

42 In this manner, Yannaras can be understood as continuing the tradition of the Church Fathers, which, beginning in the second century and being common place by the sixth, understood the Christian life and the philosophical life to coincide insofar as the teachings and praxis of the Christian faith composed a philosophy in and of itself. On the nature of Christianity being understood as a philosophy, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. by Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 237-242; *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (128-129); Jean-Yves Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*, trans. by W. Chris Hackett (Charlestown, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 1-30, as well as Hans von Balthasar's important essay, "Philosophy, Christianity, Monasticism," in *Explorations in Theology, Vol II: Spouse of the Word*, trans. by Fr. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991). Within this tradition, we may include important ecclesial thinkers such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Evagruis of Pontus, Maximus the Confessor, and especially the Cappadocian Fathers (of whom Yannaras makes ample reference to in *Person and Eros*): Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa.

43 See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 60

faithful description of phenomena without reference to any interpretation or transcendent construction. Phenomenology, rather, is understood in this essay in a critical manner; that is, the description of phenomena in their givenness, the very phenomenality of phenomena, which seeks to understand the mode by which phenomenality becomes phenomena in relation to the workings of consciousness.[44]

Methodological Restrictions

As a work which seeks to propose Christos Yannaras' philosophy as a response to Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, this essay primarily seeks to work from within the hermeneutical structure of understanding philosophy as a *way of life*, whereas the primary form of philosophical discourse will be phenomenological. This means that this essay will not seek to engage with, critically analyze, or justify the many "theological*"* concerns that will be dealt with: e.g., the historical personhood and resurrection of Christ, the nature of Christian sacraments, etc. Nor will this essay seek to analyze, justify, or defend, through engagement with the practice of traditional "metaphysics,"[45] Christianity's ontological doctrines; e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity, the essence-energy distinction, and the like. For what is being examined in this essay is not the metaphysical or theological rational foundations of Christianity, but the potential of the ecclesial event's ontological hermeneutic, as promoted by Christos Yannaras, to overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism. Consequently, what *will* be examined, critically analyzed, or justified is the ontological content which the experience of this tradition bears witness to (the content that Yannaras' puts forth for critical analysis), and this analysis will take place, as we have already described, through the methodology of philosophical phenomenology.

Corpus Restrictions

Finally, a brief word must be stated on the corpus restrictions I have placed upon this study. As we have already explained, I will primarily be engaging with Yannaras' direct response to Heidegger and the problematic of Western nihilism. This response is primarily found in *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, *Person and Eros*, and *The Schism in Philosophy*. However, due to the grand scope of Yannaras corpus (Yannaras has published over twenty original and independent works on philosophy and theology in his lifetime), we must briefly explain why I have chosen to restrict this study primarily to these central texts.

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44 On the critical and pre-critical interpretations of phenomenology, see Merleau-Ponty, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. by Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 15-16.

45 By *metaphysic*s here I mean the practice of using pure, autonomous reason in an attempt to understand the causes, reasons, or principles underlying the givenness of beings in such a way as to account for 1) the reasons why beings behave as they do and 2) why they *have* to be as they are, with the end of 3) providing objective and indisputable knowledge of the world that, based upon reason alone, must be assented to by all rational creatures.

To begin, it must be understood that the earliest trajectory of Yannaras' corpus was heavily influenced by his confrontation with (and response to) the phenomenological work of Martin Heidegger and the existential nihilism which he encountered while studying in Germany during the 1960's.[46] In seeking to counter the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger and his onto-theological diagnosis of Western Metaphysics, Yannaras began the project of attempting to offer the *prosopo*-centric ontology of the Greek Church Fathers as a means for overcoming the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism, leading ultimately to the publication of his most important work, *Person and Eros* (1973), which would go on to act as a catalyst for his subsequent works.[47] However, the methodology of Yannaras' response to Heidegger, it will be seen below, must be understood as fundamentally different to these later works.

As Yannaras himself states, *Person and Eros* "constitutes the foundation or starting point for a critical ontology; i.e., and attempt to answer the problematic of existence (its meaning and first cause) in a way that is open to critical validation and empirical refutation—an answer free of a priori explanations and ever subject to more comprehensive clarification and more lucid examination."[48] Based upon this foundational work, Yannaras claims that a large portion of books following *Person and Eros* seek to probe "the implications of a critical ontology for the way we make sense of the various dimensions and challenges of human life (the disciplines of the so-called human sciences)," such as ethics, epistemology, historical-material, positivism, economics, postmodern worldviews, and law and politics.[49] In this manner, *Person and Eros* is similar to these later works insofar as they all are concerned with promoting the ontology of the Christian tradition as *critical*. However, what separates *Person and Eros* (as well as *Heidegger and the Areopagite*) from the majority of his proceeding works in philosophy is that it seeks to promote the ontological content of the Church Father's philosophy from *within* an ecclesial context, bringing phenomenological discourse, especially that of Heidegger's ontology, *into* the praxis and teachings of the Eastern Church's philosophical tradition so as to be judged from within said structure. The majority of works which follow *Person and Eros*, on the other hand, seek to extract the ontological content of this tradition and place it within the autonomous disciplines of the contemporary sciences in order to be "tested" outside of its ecclesial context. Meaning, the ontological content and gnoseological presuppositions of the Church Father's philosophy, as first proposed in *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *Person and Eros*, are in these later works transposed from their ecclesial context and promoted as being self-sufficient, thus enabling them to be critiqued and

46 As Yannaras states: "The writings of Heidegger were the spark and catalyst for *Person and Eros*, where I walked in the footsteps of a teacher, as it were. My opposition to his proposals (not to his language and questions), has proven to be particularly fertile." Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, xxiii.
47 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable,* xxi-xxii.
48 See the author's introduction to *The Effable and the Ineffable,* xxii.
49 Ibid.

verified on contemporary, secular grounds.[50] With this transposition, as Petra notes, Yannaras enters into a completely new stage of his thought.[51]

It is due to this methodological difference, then, that I have restricted my study primarily to the work of the "early Yannaras," which assumes a fundamentally different methodology than the works of the "later Yannaras." Meaning, this study does not attempt to critically engage with works that can be thematized within Yannaras' latter, more "secular" methodology. Each of these later works would require a study in their own right, and the radically different forms of methodology used would not allow for easy integration. Consequently, my engagement with Yannaras' work will be restricted to his writings which seek to promote the ecclesial event as a response to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, which as we have already stated, will primarily revolve around *Person and Eros*, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, and *The Schism of Philosophy*, but will also include works such as *The Freedom of Morality*, *Against Religion*, and *Six Philosophical Paintings*—the latter of which work from within an ecclesial framework yet cannot be understand as directly responding to Heidegger's critique. If and when there is made reference to the philosophically autonomous works of the later Yannaras, it will only be for the clarification of particular terms or ideas which could profit from further exposition.

Key Terms

Before moving forward, it will also be beneficial to offer brief definitions of several key terms which I will continually bear reference to throughout this work.

***Metaphysics*:** There will be several uses of the term "metaphysics" throughout this dissertation. For this reason, it will be important to clarify how I will both adopt and deploy this term. First, metaphysics will be referred to in the Heideggerian usage of the word, which in itself must be understood in relation to his critique of onto-theology; this will be referred to as onto-theological metaphysics. Second, there will be noted the Nietzschean understanding of value-laden metaphysics, wherein the Being of beings is always constituted as a value for the individual; Yannaras, it must also be noted, refers to this form of metaphysics as "axiological metaphysics."[52]

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50 This does not mean, it is important to note, that Yannaras in these later works accepts the Western ejection of theology from philosophy. As Petrá states on this very point, it simply means that Yannaras "moves on to the level of contemporary Western philosophical thought in order to demonstrate—in the context of such thought—the possibility of the rigorous thinkability of a critical ontology with the content not different from that of a (transposed) patristic ontology." Yannaras, in many of his later works, is simply being consistent with his original claim: that the Church's ontology is and always has been critical. For this reason, he makes use of contemporary, philosophically autonomous categories to test what he understands to be the same underling content of the Church's ontology—the ontological content of freedom, person, relation, eros, etc.—in order to see whether the Eastern tradition's ontology is able to stand up to modern forms of critique.

51 Basilio Petra, *The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, trans. by Norman Russell (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2019), 49.

52 Yannaras gives us his own definition of this type of "metaphysics" in *The Schism*: "[w]hen I say "Western metaphysics'…I mean in the first place a common and unified tradition of presuppositions and methods of philosophical inquiry that has as its point of departure the question "How is it possible for us to arrive a 'correct,'

These two definitions of metaphysics must be understood, in this dissertation (and for Yannaras as well), not as exhaustive of what metaphysics is and can be, but rather as the dominant form of metaphysical/philosophical inquiry in Western Europe which Yannaras acknowledges as having led to the West's current impasse of metaphysical nihilism.

This is important to note, as we must understand the trinitarian ontology of ecclesial existence which Yannaras promotes in *Person and Eros* also as a *metaphysical* ontology. But how must we understand the word here? When Yannaras uses the term "metaphysical" in reference to the ontology of the Church Fathers, he is referring to the Church Fathers' ontological interpretation of "Being" in the classical, metaphysical sense of the word; that is, the Being of beings not simply as phenomenal disclosure (Heidegger), but also as the world's eternal and divine *tropos hyparxeos* which is not susceptible to change, death, or decay.[53] In other words, using Platonic language, Yannaras' trinitarian ontology is signifying the "really real" (*to ontos on*), or that which "truly is" beyond the temporal and finite world of ontic, phenomenal disclosure. Yet he is doing this, as we will explain further in Part Two, in a non-essentialist manner.

Thus what we have with Yannaras' ontology of ecclesial existence is an ontology which *signifies* that which traditional metaphysics attempts to articulate and know (thus making it capable of offering a legitimate "ground," or objective meaning, for the becoming of finitude), all the while offering a fundamentally different, non-"metaphysical" (in the Heideggerian sense of the word) *tropos* of knowing Being as such. That is, Yannaras is promoting the Church Fathers' philosophy as offering the possibility of acquiring knowledge of Being, or that which "truly is," not through any mediation of the general of universal idea, but through the radical immanence of being-as-*hypostasis*.

***Being*:** Coming off the above clarification, it will also be beneficial to understand how we will engage with and deploy the word "being" throughout this dissertation. Yannaras, taking inspiration from Heidegger, distinguishes between being as an existent and Being as Being-in-itself (*Einai-ka-eauto*) by capitalizing the latter's form of signification. This is the formulation which is taken up in *Person and Eros*, and thus is the formulation which will be used in this work. For Yannaras, taking inspiration from Heidegger, Being is capitalized and refers primarily to the Greek verb "to be" (*Einai*) and its various tenses. Further still, however, taking now from the Church Fathers, Being *as such* for Yannaras signifies the metaphysical (rather than purely phenomenological) *tropos* by which every existing thing exists. Following this distinction, he then signifies "being" in the lower-case to signify a particular thing that is existent (*ōn*), as well as to signify the intelligible identity of said existence (being as *ousia*, or nature), both of which are

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'objective,' and 'indisputable knowledge?' [Metaphysics is] the demand that reality should be subjected to the intellectual capacity of the subject, the exhaustion of truth within the limits of a system of intellectual definitions that interpret the whole of reality axiomatically and conclusively." See Yannaras, *Schism*, 138-39.

53 This he does not specially do in *Person and Eros*, although it can be easily inferred. In his later work *Meta-Neôterikê meta-physikê* (Postmodern Metaphysics, 1993), for example, he explicitly uses the term "metaphysical ontology" when speaking of the Greek Church Father's trinitarian ontology. On this point, see Thesis 3: "A Postmodern Essay in Metaphysical Ontology," in Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, trans. by Normal Russel (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004).

understood as a manifestation of the fact of Being itself (i.e., as participating in Being without being identified with Being itself).[54]

To clarify: in relation to the Church Fathers, the acting of the three persons, as *hypostases*, is recognized as the Being (*Einai*) of the divine *ousia* (the one common nature which the person's share).[55] In this manner, the divine persons, as the ontological ground for *ousia*, "support" that which occurs in nature but are not identified with nature or essence. Rather, the dynamic freedom of the persons, as "ontologically other" to *ousia*, are understood as that which makes the divine ousia *be* at all. As such, on Yannaras' reading of the Trinity, Being (*Einai*) is the dynamic freedom of hypostatic act, since Being—as triadic, hypostatic freedom—is recognized by the Church Fathers as the foundational *tropos*, or presupposition, in which God's essence/substance "is" at all.

***Eros*:** Finally, a word must be said concerning Yannaras' promotion and use of *eros*. In both *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *Person and Eros*, Yannaras deploys the term *eros* as it is explicitly used by Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, both of whom "do not hesitate to equate *eros* with *agape*," as Oliver Clément points out.[56] Indeed, Yannaras will go on to equate divine *eros* and *agape* as "synonyms" which signify the same reality from different points of view. *Agape*, for these thinkers, is understood here as the service oriented, sacrificial love of God—a divine *tropos* of being-for-the-other that is inherent to the persons of the Trinity. *Eros*, for both Dionysius and Maximus, then represents the natural impulse, or ecstatic desire, which is the very "movement" of agapeic activity, such that the agapeic movement of the divine persons is further illuminated as a desire-filled *ek-stasis* which seeks union with the beloved.

This equation of *eros* and *agape*, however, not only leads to a fuller picture of the type of agapeic love which the human person is called to participate in. It also reveals a different picture of *eros* itself. For divine *eros*, on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, is recognized not as being driven by lack, or need, as traditionally conceived. Rather, divine *eros* seeks a form of union, or "mutual indwelling" with other persons, that is enacted through a form of *kenosis*, or agapeic self-gift; that is, it is moved by a *fullness* (rather than lack) of being which has the desire of "self-emptying" so as to belong not to oneself, but to the other. Such is, as we will see, the very movement which establishes the being of both divine and human persons, and thus will be promoted by Yannaras as revealing a critical insight into Being itself.

54 On this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 166-67.

55 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 205

56 On this point, see Oliver Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*, trans. by Theodore Berkely (Welwyn Garden City, UK: New City Publishers, 2017), 22.

OUTLINE

Part 1: The Historical Unfolding of Nihilism

Chapter I : *Christos Yannaras: Life and Influences*

Chapter I will remain introductory in nature. Not only will it seek to introduce the reader to the life and work of Yannaras, but it will also seek to introduce the critical thinkers, concepts, and themes which would go on to shape Yannaras' response to Heidegger. Here we will primarily focus on the influence that the Russian Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century had on Yannaras—especially, but not limited to, their universal promotion of a "return" to the tradition of the Greek Church Fathers in modern Orthodox theology. Further still, we will see how the philosophical/theological concepts used by these contemporary theologians to define said tradition over and against the Christian tradition(s) of the West will lay the foundation for Yannaras' own response to the "West," especially as illuminated by Heidegger, wherein Yannaras will attempt to promote the tradition of the Greek Church Fathers in a more contemporary, philosophical manner.

Chapter II : *The Rise of Critical Thought*

After having introduced our reader to the philosophical/theological vision of the Greek Church Fathers which Yannaras inherited from the Russian theologians of the twentieth century, we will then see in Chapter II how Yannaras will read the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe as resulting from a complete *inversion* of this very tradition; more specifically, he will read it as an inversion of the Greek philosophical tradition at large. In this chapter, then, we will offer a clear analysis of what Yannaras believes this unique *tropos of existence* to be by paying heed to the fundamental attributes of Hellenism.

We may thematize these attributes as follows: 1) the critical verification of knowledge, which locates truth in the shared experience of the community; 2) the emphasis of apophaticism, which refuses to exhaust comprehension of the signifier with knowledge of the signified; and

finally, the primary end or *telos* of critical thought within the Greek tradition, which Yannaras defines as 3) the need to establish a truthful mode of existence, whether in the Greek city-state or the philosophical school. In relation to these points, the primary intention of chapter one is both introductory and defensive: I seek to both introduce what Yannaras understands as the critical *tropos* of Hellenism in reference to these three essential characteristics, while also bringing in my own external research for the sake of explanation and validation.

Chapter III : *The Ecclesial Event*

Insofar as Yannaras believes the death of God/metaphysics resulted not simply from the Western European inversion of Ancient philosophy, but the inversion of Ancient philosophy as it had been adopted and continued by Christianity and the Church Fathers, then the next major step in Yannaras' narrative is to reveal how and why the early Church should be understood as a natural inheritor and successor of the Greek philosophical tradition. Such will be the intention of chapter three.

First, we must understand how Yannaras understands the emergence of Christianity not as a new religion, but as a new *polis*; that is, as a new socio-political struggle which attempts to establish a truthful mode of human co-existence that participates in the vitalizing element (*Logos*) of the cosmos. Second, and for this reason, Yannaras explains how the Church also quickly came to understand itself as a *philosophy*. In other words, it proposes A) an ontology, a definition of what it means to truly exist, B) a prescribed praxis, or way of life that allows one to participate more fully in this truthful manner of existence, and C) a critical gnoseology of the ecclesial event, which offers a criteria for the verification and falsification of the Church's claims. This chapter will primarily be an exposition of Yannaras' work once more, seeking to explain and expound upon these three points. In doing so, we will be able to reveal more clearly the nature of the Hellenistic Christian tradition that Yannaras will attempt to promote in *Person and Eros* as a response to Heidegger and the death of God/metaphysics.

Chapter IV : *The Inversion of Christian-Hellenism*

In Chapter IV we move on to the next important stage of Yannaras' narrative, which will seek to explain how he understands the primary attributes of Ancient philosophy, now carried forward in Christendom and the Church Fathers, to have been overturned with the rise of the post-Roman, Western European philosophical tradition. First, Yannaras argues that the primary end, or *telos*, of critical thought in Hellenism was overturned in both the Carolingian and Scholastic renaissance insofar as the ultimate end of these movements was of a utilitarian nature: that is, they did not seek to establish a truthful mode of being within the life and praxis of the community, but began promoting the revitalization of critical thought for practical and utilitarian purposes. Second, and for this reason, Yannaras also argues that with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition there was also an inversion of the communal *tropos* in which critical thought took place through the Latin translation of Greek *logos* to *ratio*, which transferred the criterion of truth to the individual's intellectual capacity (mere reason/logic) rather than the common *logos* of participation, thereby leading to an inversion of Hellenism's communal gnoseology. Accordingly, Yannaras then argues that this inversion of Greek gnoseology and praxis set the stage for a cultural inversion of the Church's apophatic theology/philosophy. This inversion, on Yannaras' reading, led to the development of "natural theology" and "scientific theology" in scholasticism, two movements which allowed for the Christian God of revelation and experience to become a "highest value," a

"being amongst other beings" that would eventually become subject to the nihilistic thinking of axiological metaphysics in Western Europe.

Chapter V : *The Death of God*

In the last chapter of Part One, then, we move to the final and most important stage of Yannaras' narrative, wherein we will attempt to convey how Yannaras believes the narrative which he has offered thus far is capable of countering the force of Heidegger's own narrative. In other words, we must seek to reveal how Yannaras' narrative is able to more accurately account for the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe.

While Yannaras' response here is both complex and nuanced on many accounts, it can be narrowed down to the following points: First, Yannaras' narrative attempts to reveal how the religious God of the New Testament only became a metaphysical value for the cultural mode of *Western* Christendom, since on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers' philosophy, the Christian God did not become a "metaphysical value" until the rise of Scholasticism, which in itself is a result of the Latin tradition's misappropriation of Greek thought. Second, we will then show how Heidegger's fuller narrative of onto-theological metaphysics applies neither to Hellenism nor to Christian-Hellenism, since on Yannaras' reading of Ancient philosophy, the nihilistic *tropos* of thought (Latin *ratio*) which he believes connects the Greek and Latin traditions cannot actually be found in Antiquity. On the contrary, Yannaras argues that this form of thought only came about, once more, from the fundamental misappropriation of Greek *logos* in the post-Roman, Western European philosophical tradition. As such, for Yannaras, we see how Heidegger's reading of the death of God and the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism should not be understood as the historical unfolding of one, continuous and unbroken philosophical tradition—Greek *and* Latin. Rather, according to Yannaras' narrative, the historical unfolding of nihilism must be recognized as an unfolding of the Western European tradition alone.

Part 2 : The Philosophy of the Church Fathers

After revealing how the philosophical tradition of the Church Fathers lies outside Heidegger's historical critique of metaphysics, Part Two will then move to the second dimension of Yannaras' response, wherein said tradition of the Church Fathers will be offered by Yannaras as a way forward from the death of the Western philosophical tradition. As noted previously, our primary objective here will be to look at Yannaras' attempt to accomplish this in *Person and Eros*, wherein he has promoted the ontological hermeneutic of the Greek Church Fathers as a means of overcoming the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

Chapter VI: *Ontology: Hypostatic Existence*

In Chapter Five, we will begin by explaining the ontology of personhood as it is promoted by Yannaras in *Person and Eros*. First, we will focus on Yannaras's conception of the person as *relation*. Here we understand the person, phenomenologically, as a referential event, a primordial relation with the givenness of beings that precedes their determinate objectification. Second, we move on to the understanding of the person as *hypostasis*. Here Yannaras draws directly from the philosophy of the Church Fathers, wherein the divine persons of the Trinity are identified as *hypostases*, that is, the being of nature as the absolute otherness from nature. From this vision of absolute Being, we will then be given a clearer insight into the meaning of human personhood, which, according to the witness of the Church, contains the potential to participate in this divine mode of *hypostatic* being. Here we also see Yannaras' connection between the person as *hypostasis* and the person as relation, for it is only through the person's ek-static relation, in erotic communion with others, that the person is able to "exist truly" as a radical freedom from nature. In this manner, we understand the human person as having the capacity to know Being in the referential presence of immanent experience; that is, through the cultivation of a hospitable relation with the Other, not through the practice of onto-theological metaphysics.

Chapter VII: *Gnoseology: The Semantics of Personal Disclosure*

In Chapter Six, we will attempt to work out what Yannaras refers to as the "semantics of personal disclosure"—that is, how the Church Fathers understand the meaningful disclosure and reception of this hypostatic existence in reference to 1) the immediate experience of communion with the hypostatic existence of divinity (that is, unmediated by creation), and 2) the mediated experience of hypostatic existence in reference to the determinate reception of other beings. Both of these modes of reception, however, must pass through the medium of *logos*, and thus we must come to understand how, for Yannaras, the symbolic nature of *logos* provides a medium for the otherness of hypostatic existence to be known beyond the determinate meaning of the sign. It is also from this understanding of *logos* as a means for receiving the otherness of hypostatic existence that we will come to fully understand how, for Yannaras, the experience that is witnessed to within the ecclesial event can be communally verified, thus allowing the ontological propositions to remain critical.

Chapter VIII: *Narrative: An Ontological Reading of the Fall and Salvation*

In Chapter Seven, we will seek to understand most fully how the Church Fathers understanding of Being as hypostatic existence is able to overcome the nihilism of "nothingness" that follows from Heidegger's fundamental ontology. This will be accomplished, following Yannaras, by making reference to the Church Fathers' ontological interpretation of the biblical Fall, wherein (contrary to Heidegger) "fallenness" symbolizes humankind's fall from hypostatic existence, and "nothingness" refers to

the absence of this relation, leading to the necessary reception of beings as *mere* objects, and nothing else. From this starting point, we will then move to the Church Father's ontological interpretation of salvation, or *theosis*, which reveals most fully the *tropos* of existence, or philosophical praxis, that one must actively participate in order for the problematic of Western nihilism to be fully overcome.

Chapter IX: *Yannaras and Contemporary Phenomenology*

After offering this analysis of *Person and Eros*, we will proceed to the final chapter by bringing Yannaras' response to the problematic of Western nihilism into dialogue with major phenomenological thinkers in the field of Continental philosophy of religion, especially that of the "theological turn." Here I will begin by revealing the limitations of Christian thinkers in the "theological turn" insofar as their analyses of Christian experience follows too closely Heidegger's division between theology as an ontic science and philosophy as an ontological science. It will then be argued that if we instead opt for the philosophical hermeneutic of Christianity that is offered by Yannaras and the Church Fathers (that is, in accordance with the vision of Ancient philosophy promoted in Part One), then we are offered a way to integrate the religious phenomenological insights of this group from an *ontological* perspective.

In closing, I will then offer a concrete analysis of how this alternative hermeneutic would look, practically speaking, by offering a re-reading of some of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological and theological insights in light of the Greek Church Fathers Hellenistic philosophy as interpreted by Yannaras. By bringing Marion's work into dialogue with Yannaras, I thus intend to reveal the fecundity which Yannaras' work has to offer contemporary phenomenological thinkers whose work is also directed at responding to nihilism and the death of metaphysics.

Part One:
The Historical Unfolding of Nihilism

Chapter I
Christos Yannaras: Life and Influences

The primary aim of this dissertation is to offer a focused study of Christos Yannaras' response to Martin Heidegger's onto-theological critique of metaphysics, which is expanded across three of Yannaras' major works: *Heidegger and the Areopagite* (1967), *Person and Eros* (1976), and *The Schism in Philosophy* (1980). Before we begin looking at this response directly, however, we must first take a step back and attempt to grasp the context, or horizon, from which Yannaras' response to Heidegger must be understood: What were his formative influences, and how did they color his reception of Heidegger? What is his primary methodology, and what philosophical tradition, if any, can he be identified with? And perhaps most importantly, what experiences led Yannaras to devote over ten years of his life engaging with and responding to Heidegger and the problematic of metaphysical nihilism? In relation to Yannaras' response to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, then, the most unifying question which will guide each section of this chapter will be: "from where does Yannaras speak?"[57] By offering a comprehensive answer to this question, this chapter will then act as *prolegomena* of sorts, a reference point or horizon which will help the reader understand more fully the nuance of Yannaras' response to Heidegger as it will be unfolded in the pages to come.

In seeking to understand from where Yannaras speaks, we will begin by offering a brief introduction to the life and work of Yannaras, followed more fully by an in depth look at the primary influences which Yannaras has continued to draw from throughout his career. For the former, we will briefly take a look at Yannaras' experience in the Zoe brotherhood, a Western modeled Christian movement in contemporary Greece which shaped Yannaras' initial experience of Western Christianity and culture. For the latter, we will move to Yannaras' encounter with the theological giants of the Russian diaspora, all of whom led him away from this "Western" Christian tradition into the riches of the Byzantine Orthodox Christian tradition as it had been revitalized in nineteenth century Russia by the *philokalic* movement. This revitalized form of Orthodox Christianity was the foundation upon which both Russian and Greek Orthodox thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth century sought to respond to the problematic of Western influence, and as we will come to see in this chapter, it is this same tradition which Yannaras will go on to promote as a response to the more contemporary problematic of Western nihilism, albeit in a less theological, more philosophical tenor. In closing, we will then proceed to explain more directly in what way Yannaras' engagement with this tradition directly influenced his own reading and response to Martin Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics.

Christos Yannaras

Christos Yannaras (Chrēstos Giannaras)[58] was born in Athens in 1935 to a middle class Greek family. He studied theology at the University of Athens, and upon graduating in 1964, went on to post-graduate studies for three years at the University of Bonn in Germany (1964-67), followed by three more years at the Sorbonne in Paris (1967-71), wherein he received his Doctorate in Philosophy. Amidst teaching and further study, Yannaras would also go on to receive a Doctorate in Theology at the University of Thessaloniki in 1974. The majority of his following teaching

57 Here I follow the prudence of Paul Ricoeur, whose first question for his students was always: *d'où parlez-vous*? "From where do you speak?"

58 "Christos Yannaras" is the form by which his name is known internationally.

career would be spent as the chair in philosophy at the School of International and European Studies of the Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences in Athens until his retirement in 2002, wherein he resides currently as Professor Emeritus. Since his retirement, Yannaras has continued to remain active in the Academy, with continued publications in the fields of philosophy, theology, and politics.[59] Yannaras' career has been exceptionally prolific, with over 70 books published to date. Of his most important and influential philosophical/theological works, we may list the following:[60]

- *Peina kai dipsa* (Hunger and thirst) *(*Athens: Skapanē, 1961 [first ed.], 1997 [fifth ed.])
- *Hē theologia tēs apousias kai tēs agnōsias tou Theou, me anaphores stis Areopagitikes syngraphes kai ston Martin Heidegger* (The Theology of the Absence and Unknowability of God, with reference to the Areopagitacal writings and Martin Heidegger), n.p., Athens, 1967. Second through fifth editions published as *Heideger kai Areopagitēs: Hē theologia tēs apousias kai tēs agnōsias tou Theou* (Heidegger and the Areopagite: The Theology of the Absence and Unknowabiliyt of God) (Athens: Domos, 1988, 2006).
- *To ontologikon periechomenon tēs theologikēs ennoias tou prosōpou* (The Ontological Content of the Concept of the Person) (Athens, Tip. Proodos, 1970).
- *He eleutheria tou ēthous: Dokimes gia mia orthodoxē theōrēsē tēs ēthikes* (The Freedom of Morality: Attempts at an Orthodox vision of ethics) (Athens, 1970; forth revised edition in 2011).
- *To prosōpo kai ho erōs: Theologiko dokimio ontologias* (Person and Eros: A theological essay on ontology) (Athens: Papazēsē, 1976). Fourth edition with additions and subtraction of subtitle (Athens: Domos, 1987).
- *Schediasma eisagōgēs stē philosophia* (An Outline Introduction to Philosophy), first edition in two volumes (Athens: Domos, 1980-81); second edition (Athens: Domos, 1988); seventh edition with additions and the subtitle, *Hē hellēnikē optikē kai hē dytikē antistrophe tēs* (The Greek perspective and its western reversal) (Athens: Ikaros, 2013).
- *Alphabētari tēs pistēs* (A Primer of Faith) (Athens: domos, 1983, 2006 [fourteenth]).
- *Orthos logos kai koinōnikē praktikē* (Correct reason and Social Practice) (Athens: Domos, 1984, 2006.)
- *Protaseis kritikēs ontologias* (Propositions for a Critical Ontology) (Athens: Domos, 1985; Athens: Ikaros, 2010).
- *Scholio sto Asma Asmatōn* (A Comment on the Song of Songs) (Athens: Domos, 1987, 2007 [fifth]).
- *Kataphygion ideōn: Martyria* (Refuge of ideas: Testimony) (Athens: domos, 1987, 2007 [seventh]).
- *To pragmatiko kai to phantosiōdes stēn politikē oikonomia* (The Real and the Imaginary in the Political Economy) (Athens: Domos, 1989, 2006 [third]).
- *Orthodoxia kai Dysē stē neōterē Hellada* (Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece) (Athens: Domos,

59 While Yannaras is best known by many for his work in theology, in Greece he is perhaps most active in the field of politics. Yet even here, Yannaras does not strictly demarcate his political thought from a theological foundation, as can be seen in one of his most well-known works, *The Inhumanity of Right*. For introductory essays on Yannaras' political views, see Part One of *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event*, chapters one through four; "The communo- centric political theology of Christos Yannaras in Conversation with Oliver O'Donovan," in *Mustard Seeds in the Public Square: Between and Beyond Theology, Philosophy, and Society*, edited by Sotiris Mitralexis (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2017); as well as Jonathon Cole's "Personhood, Relational Ontology, and the Trinitarian Politics of Eastern Orthodox Thinker Christos Yannaras" *Political Theology*, 2019, 20:4, 297-310.

60 For a complete list of Yannaras published works see Petrá's bibliography in *Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*.

1992)

- *Meta-neōterikē meta-physikē* (Postmodern Metaphysics) (Athens: Domos, 1993, 2005 [second]).
- *Hē apanthrōpia tou dikaiōmatos* (The Inhumanity of Right) (Athens: Domos, 1997, 2006 [third])
- *To rhēto kai to arrhēto: Ta glōssika oria realismou tēs metaphysikēs* (What Can be Said and What Cannot be Said: The Limits of the Realism of Metaphysics) (Athens: Ikaros, 1999, 2008 [second])
- *Ontologia tēs schesēs* (Ontology of Relation) (Athens: Ikaros, 2004, 2008 [second])
- *To ainigma tou kakou* (The Enigma of Evil) (Athens: Ikaros, 2008, 2009 [second])
- *Enantia stē thrēskeia* (Against Religion) (Athens: Ikaros, 2006, 2010 [fourth]).
- *Exi philosophikes zōgraphies: 'Ekomisa eis tēn technēn* (Six Philosophical Pictures: 'I have brought to art') (Athens: Ikaros, 2011, 2012 [second]).
- *Hē Eurōpe gennēthēke apo to 'Schisma'* (Europe was born from the 'Schism') (Athens: Ikaros, 2015).

However, the significance of his work is not recognized by its quantative authority. From his earliest publications, Yannaras has been recognized not as a scholar, but as a theologian and philosopher in his own right, coming to be seen by many today as contemporary Greece's greatest thinker.[61]

Yannaras' influence, however, is not limited to the Academy. He is also one of Greece's most well-known public intellectuals, writing regularly for the newspaper column *Kathimerini* as well as making numerous appearances on Greek television and radio.[62] So too, as an Orthodox Christian, his influence in the life and praxis of the Church (both in Greece and beyond) remains incalculable, a fact which perhaps can be seen most evidently in Yannaras' influence on John Zizioulas. While Zizioulas is perhaps the most well-known contemporary Orthodox theologian, he credits the personalist revival in theology which Yannaras first brought to Greece as one of the major influences that shaped the personalism that he is renowned for today.[63] With Zizioulas, Yannaras was also a vital leader in what has been termed the "theology of the 60's," a movement which can largely be understood as the integration and continuation of Russia's neo-patristic revival in modern day Greece. This theological movement (including thinkers such as John Romanides, John Zizioulas, and Nikolaos Nissiotis), which helped transform and renew not only theological discourse, but also the life and vitality of the Orthodox Church at large, is largely indebted to the formative and passionate work of Yannaras.[64] As Basileo Petra writes: "It is no exaggeration to say that one can easily distinguish between pre-Yannaras and post-Yannaras

61 Citied from Clément's preface to Christos Yannaras, *De l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu d'après les écrits aéropagitiques et Martin Heidegger*, trans. Jacques Touraille (Paris: Cerf, 1971).

62 Yannaras has amassed over thirty-six volumes of collected newspaper articles, from the newspapers *To Bēma* (The Tribune) and *Hē Kathēmerinē* (The Daily). In these articles, as well as on his television interviews, Yannaras frequently speaks on the challenging cultural and political issues that modern Greece faces. For a list of his newspaper articles, see Petrá, *Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, 116-17.

63 Yannaras was the first Greek thinker to develop a theology of personhood with his first major publications *On the Absence and Unknowability of God* (1967) and *Person and Eros* (1970). It was only five years later in 1975 that Zizioulas began to develop his own theological account of personhood in the article "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity" and in his most well-known work, *Being as Communion* (1985), which was published 15 years after *Person and Eros*. On Yannaras' influence on Zizioulas, see Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its exponents" in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 232-245.

64 On this point, see Andreas Andreopoulos, *Christos Yannaras, Philosophy, Theology, Culture*, 1.

theology in Greece," between theology as an academic discipline and theology "as a passion for the fullness of life, for victory over death."[65]

Internationally, Yannaras' prestige has increased on a steady trajectory. In the twentieth century, many of his works were translated from Greek into French, Italian, and German,[66] while in the twenty-first century, his works have also appeared in Finish, Polish, Slovenian, Romanian, Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Ukrainian. However, it has been in English that his work has received the greatest attention of late, with over twelve of his major works having been published thus far, ten of which were published in the past two decades.[67] As Norman Russell states, Yannaras' international influence is greater today than any time hitherto, with interests in his work only continuing to grow.[68] This fact is testified to in the recent conferences held on his thought at both Cambridge and Oxford, as well as the increase in books, articles, and doctoral theses published on his work in the past decade.[69]

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65 Petrá, *Christos Yannaras*, viii.

66 In French, *De l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu* [*Hē theologia tēs apousias kai tēs agnosia tou Theou*] (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971); *La liberté de la moral* [*Hē eleutheria tou ēthous*] (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1983); *Philosophie sans rupture* [*Schediasma eisagōges stē philosophia*] (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1984); *Vérité et unite et unite de l'Église* [*Alētheia kai henotēta tēs ekklēsias*] (Grez-Doiceau, Belgium: Éditions Axis); and *Variations sur le Cantique des Cantiques* [*Scholio sto Asma Asmatōn*] (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992). In Italian, there are 10 works translated, including *Ignoranza e conoscenza di Dio* [*Hē theologia tēs apousias kai tēs agnōsias tou Theou]* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1971); *La Morale della libertá* [*Hē eleutheria tou ēthous*] (Bologna: EDB, 1984); *Veriazioni sul Cantico dei Cantici* [*Scholio sto Asma Asmatōn*] (Cernusco sul Naviglio: CENS-Interlogos, 1992); *La fede dell'esperanza ecclesial* [*Alphabētari tēs pistēs*] (Brescia: Queriniana, 1993); *Heidegger e Dionigi Areopagita, assenza e ignoranza di Dio* [*Heidegger kai Areopagitēs ē peri apousias kai agnōsias tou Theou*] (Rome: Cittá Nuova, 1995); and *Veritá e unità della chiesa* [*Alētheia kai henotēta tēs Ekklēsias*] (Sotto il Monte and Schio: Servitium editrice-Interlogos, 1995). *Ontologia della relazione* [*Ontologia tēs schesēs*] (Troina: Città aperta, 2010); *Contro la religione* [*Enantia stē thrēskeia*] (Magnano: Comunità di Bose, Qiqajon, 2012); and *La libertà dell'ethos* [*Hē eleutheria tou ēthous*] (Magnano: Comunità di Bose, Qiqajon, 2014). In German, only one work has been translated: *Person und Eros* (*To prosōpo kai ho erōs*] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

67 This list includes: *The Freedom of Morality*, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); *Postmodern Metaphysics*, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, *Variations on the Song of Songs* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005); *Orthodoxy and the West: Hellenic Self-Idenitity in the Modern Age* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006); *Person and Eros*, *Relational Ontology* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011); *The Enigma of Evil* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012); *Against Religion* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013); T*he Effable and the Ineffable: The Linguistic Boundaries of Metaphysics* (Winchester: Winchester University Press, 2021); and *The Inhumanity of Right* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2022).

68 See Norman Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 30.

69 Recently published articles available in English on Yannaras' philosophical works, not including the 25 published in the two volumes listed above, include: Stoyan Tanev "Christos Yannaras and the Encounter Between Theology and Physics" in *Energy in Orthodox Theology: From Controversy to Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 179-191; Petra, "Christos Yannaras and the Idea of Dysis" in *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (Fordham University Press, 2013), 161-180; Mitralexis, S., "Relational Ontologies in Dialogue: Christos Yannaras" and Joseph Kaipayil's Distinct "Relational Ontologies," *Philosophia*, 21 August 2014; Mitralexis. "Person, Eros, Critical Ontology: An attempt to Recapitulate Christos Yannaras' Philosophy," *Sobornost* 34.1 (2012): 33-40 (2012): 33-40; J. Cole, "Personhood in the digital age: the ethical use of new information technologies," St Mark's Review 233," (2015): 60-73. I. Papagiannopoulos, "Re-appraising the Subject and the Social in Western Philosophy in Contemporary Orthodox Thought," *Studies in Europeans Thought* 58.4 (2006): 299-330; D. Payne, "The 'Relational Ontology' of Christos Yannaras: The Hesychastic Influence of the Understanding of the Person in the thought of Christos Yannaras," online at https://www.academia.edu/1479462; B. Petrà, "Personalist Thought in Greece in the Twentieth Century: a First Tentative Synthesis," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 50.I-4 (2005): 2-48; K.

The reception of Yannaras' work, both in Greece and abroad, has been largely positive. Besides the major role that he played in the revitalization of Orthodox theology in the Greece, Yannaras' work in philosophy and theology has been embraced by Orthodox thinkers throughout the world, leading to his reception as one of the greatest Christian thinkers of our time.[70] His work is not short, however, of heavy controversy and criticism, and for some, it is for this very reason that there has been a general lack of devoted scholarship on his work up to this point.[71] In the Academy, he has been accused of subordinating theology to philosophy *and* philosophy to theology;[72] in Greece, he has been condemned for his strong polemics against the Church's traditions and history;[73] and perhaps most often, he is critiqued for a strident anti-Westernism, being unfairly critical of the "West" in favor of a Greek "Hellenocentrism" (a critique we will return to below).[74] However, even amidst the controversy and debate that often surrounds his work,

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Stoeckl, "Post-secular Subjectivity in Western Philosophy and Eastern Orthodox Thought," in *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Traditions: Russian and Western Perspectvies*, ed. D. Bradshaw, 187-97; M. Sumares, "Signifying the Mystical as Struggle: Yannaras' Orthodox Refiguring of the Philosophy of Language," *Annuls of the University of Bucharest, Philosophy Series* 63.1 (2014): 3-15. Nichols, A., "Christos Yannaras and Theological Ethics," in *Light from the East: Authors and Themes in Orthodox Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 181-93. A. Papanikolaou, 'Orthodoxy, Post-Modernism, and Ecumenism: The Difference that Divine-Human Communion Makes," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42, no. 4 (Fall 2007), 527-46; Stoeckl, K., *Community after Totalitarianism: The Russian Orthodox Intellectual Tradition and the Philosophical Discourse of Political Modernity* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008); "Contemporary Orthodox Discourses on Human Rights: The Standpoint of Christos Yannaras in a Political Philosophical Perspective," in *Evert van der Zweerde and Alfons Brüning (eds), Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 185-99; David Bradshaw, "Post-Secular Subjectivity in Western Philosophy and Eastern Orthodox Thought," in *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Traditions: Russian and Western Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 185-99; Swinburne R., "A Response to Christos Yannaras' 'Against Religion,'" *Oxbridge Philokalic Review* 2 (2013), 54-60; Ware, K. "Scholasticism and Orthodoxy: Theological Method as a Factor in the Schism," *Eastern Churches Review* 5, no. 1 (1973), 16-27. Andrew Louth, "Some Recent Works by Christos Yannaras in English Translation," in *Modern Theology* 25:2 (April 2009), 329-340. For a full list of articles and dissertations engaging with Yannaras' work, see Petrà, *The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, 121-125.

70 Evaggelos Bartzis, "Greek Theology after Christos Yannaras," in *Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture*, 125.

71 While Yannaras' name is ubiquitous in contemporary orthodox scholarship, there remain few scholars who have dedicated their career (either fully or in part) to studying his work. The most prominent Yannaras scholars are without a doubt Basilio Petrá and Norman Russell, both of whom have written extensively on his work.

72 See Sotiris Mitralexis, *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event*, xxvi.

73Yannaras often criticizes the Greek Orthodox Church without reservation, lambasting its "dead ideology" and the "wooden words" of its bishops. One of his most controversial books, the first edition of *The Freedom of Morality*, generated such large hostility in Greece upon its publication that is was publicly condemned on television. See Yannaras, "Study of Civilization" in *The Daily* 2 October, 2016; *Ta Kath éauton*, 95-96; Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 36. Cited in Jonathon Cole, "Personhood, Relational Ontology, and the Trinitarian Politics of Eastern Orthodox Thinker Christos Yannaras," 298.

74 For these critiques, see Vasilios N. Makrides, "'The Barbarian West': A Form of Orthodox Christian Anti-Western Critique" in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, ed. by Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 141-155; Vasilios N. Makrides, "Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today: A Hinderance to European Integration?" International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 9, no. 3 (2009): 209-24; Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Greekness and Anti-Westernism in the Theology of the '60's* (PhD Diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2008), 209-584; Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 40.

he remains a thinker of high repute, ubiquitously esteemed and recognized for his undeniable brilliance and creative influence—even from his critics.[75]

Early Life: Zoë Movement

From the age of eighteen to twenty-nine, Yannaras was a part of the Orthodox brotherhood Zoë, a highly influential religious organization in Greece at the time that would be extremely formative for Yannaras' career. Zoë was organized in 1907 by Fr Father Eusebios Matthopoulos with the intention of bringing about moral/spiritual reform and social improvement in a struggling Greek nation.[76] The movement took on a monastic character by adopting the virtues of celibacy, poverty, and obedience. And although it was run by both Orthodox clergy and laymen, it received legal autonomy apart from the jurisdiction of the Church, allowing the organization to freely move beyond the restrictions of episcopal control in its missionary work and practices.[77]

Perhaps most important to note is that the structure and function of Zoë's evangelical efforts were largely taken from Western religious models.[78] For this reason, Yannaras considers his earliest religious education and experience to be strictly "Western."[79] The creation of Sunday schools, assemblies for catechesis, strict moral standards, and a renewed emphasis of evangelical "preaching" centering around "the Word" formed Zoë's earliest character, resembling, according to Yannaras, the "pietistic offshoots of Protestantism and Catholicism."[80] This is accounted for, by Yannaras, in the groups stern and codified approach to virtue and sexual ethics, its systematized and legalistic promotion of the gospel, the politicizing of the Church against communist Atheism, and the incorporation of a fundamentalist dogmatism in relation to the authority of scripture and tradition.[81] Yannaras, in his self-bibliography, writes about the immense sadness and frustration he felt during his time in Zoë, likening it to being altogether "bereft of life."[82] It was here, through participation in this form of "religionized"[83] Christianity, that Yannaras would later come to strongly sympathize with the atheistic struggle of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and other thinkers in relation to God's death in Western Christendom.[84]

Marcus Plested, "Light from the West: Byzantine Readings of Aquinas" in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 62-63.

75 On this point, see Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 25; Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, viii.

76 For an insightful study on the revival of Orthodox spirituality in the twentieth century, with special attention given to the Zoë movement, see Peter Hammond, *The Waters of Marah: The Present State of the Greek Church* (London: Rockliff, 1956). See also Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 217-250.

77 Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 217-218.

78 See Hammond, *The Waters of Marah*, 139. Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 218.

79 See Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 32.

80 Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 221

81 See Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 221, 227, 236.

82 See Yannaras, *Kataphygion ideōn: Martyria* (Refuge of ideas: Testimony) (Athens: domos 1990), 149-50.

83 Religionization (*thrēskeiopoiēsē*) is a term that Yannaras refers to in his later work as the ideological reduction of Christianity to objectively binding "ideas" and prescriptive ethical norms. For more on this idea, see Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 83-85.

84 Yannaras will go on to spend a large portion of his writings attempting to overcome this religionized, "Western" form of Christian teaching and praxis that he first encountered in Zoë, setting the trajectory for the tone and spirit of

Yannaras' experience in Zoë is also important to mention because it helps us come to grasp one of the most important attributes of this influential thinker. As was previously mentioned, Yannaras' work is unavoidably colored by a glaring "anti-Westernism," especially towards the Latin Church. By his critics, more specifically, he is often portrayed as an *Eastern* Christian who ideologically lambastes "the West" and "Latin Christianity." Thus while most (if not all) of Yannaras' critiques against Western Christendom and the culture it helped bequeath are shared by other Western thinkers, Yannaras' criticism is often negatively received because he is *not* a Westerner. However, it is on this very point that Yannaras wishes to defend himself. As he has now noted several times, Yannaras considers himself to be "thoroughly Western."[85] This is not only testified to in his religious formation in *Zoë*, but also in his education and cultural upbringing at large. As he states in an interview with Russell Norman:

> "in my secular education and social-bringing too, I am a typical product of the (Athenian) middle class…which was formed and functions as a poor imitation of the Western model of life. Thus when I judge the West and its culture, I am not judging something outside of myself, some opposing culture. I am judging my own life, my own outlook, the reflexes and habits that are part of my psychological makeup. And I am searching the historical past of the West proper for answers to the tragedy of the errors depicted by Axel and Bergman [here referring to Axel's film *Babette's Feast* and Berman's *Fanny and Alexander*] or those proclaimed by Nietzsche…I have experienced these errors personally, as many Europeans have, in my inner being."[86]

As we will come to see, even the Byzantine tradition which he offers as a means of overcoming this culture of the "West" is, in large part, other-than/separate-from the Orthodox Church that Yannaras finds himself apart of today. Meaning, for Yannaras, the alterity of the Orthodox "East" was swallowed by Western culture centuries ago, and the contemporary Orthodox Church finds itself no stranger to its pervasive influence. Indeed, it is due to this self-identification with the culture of the West that Yannaras will go on to be no less critical of the Eastern Church than he is of its Western counter-parts.

Nevertheless, Yannaras believes that there still remains traces of a different (non-Western) tradition in the life and history of the Eastern Orthodox Church—perhaps somewhat barren and impoverished, but still perceivable in its art, language, community, and worship—and it is Yannaras' encounter with the difference of this "other" tradition that would not only lead him away from the Zoë movement, but would also become the fundamental horizon which would guide his pen throughout his prolific career.

During his time in Zoë, Yannaras names three key figures who opened his eyes to this "other" Christian tradition which had recently been covered up by the influence of Western culture in modern day Greece: literary critic and poet Zizzimos Lorentzatos (1915-2004), architect and

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his work, even to this day. This can be noted most clearly in one of Yannaras most recent works, *Against Religion*, which can be understood most simply as Yannaras' attempt to distinguish the authentic event of Christianity from its ideological replacements in both the East and West.

85 Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 32.

86 Ibid.

painter Dimitrios Pikionis (1887-1968), and spiritual teacher Fr Dimitris Koutroubis (1921-83).[87] The first two helped Yannaras begin to appreciate the "treasure" of the folk tradition of ancient Greek culture, while Koutroubis introduced Yannaras to the wisdom of the Orthodox tradition's Hellenistic history, such as the monastic Hesychast tradition and the retrieval of patristic thought that had been revitalized by Russian theologians in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It was thus largely through the influential teachings of Koutroubis that Yannaras was introduced not only to the significance of Orthodoxy's own (somewhat forgotten) tradition, but to the Russian Patristic revival that Yannaras himself would later help bring to Greece.

After his encounter with Koutroubis, and a few years before he left Zoë, Yannaras was also initiated into what can be referred to as the "existentialist" strain of Orthodox personalism through the work of Russian Orthodox philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev. According to Yannaras, it was Berdyaev who truly opened his eyes to the richness of the Orthodox tradition in contrast to the "religionized" form of Christianity he had come to encounter through the Zoë movement:

> In the last years before I broke away [from Zoë], some readings had begun to open my eyes dimly to a different vision of life…basically, I discovered Berdyaev. Here was a Christian author, and indeed an Orthodox one, who in his writings had not the slightest trace of the religiosity which I had known…he subjected moralism to a devastating critique, laid bare the narcissistic character of an individualistic religiosity, derided turning of the faith into a legalistic and ideological structure, had the audacity to respect the tragic adventure of atheism…I discovered with surprise that the elements of corruption and change in Christianity which Berdyaev noted in the Western tradition and stigmatized implacably were the same as those which I saw to be also dominant in the Zoë movement…an egocentric self-sufficiency which was nourished by the turning of 'virtues' and of 'moral consistency' into idols. The substitution of experience by ideological certainty—the priority of apologetics, or rational 'proofs,' the given 'authorities' for the reinforcement of truth…the devaluation and depreciation of the sensible, the fear of love.[88]

Berdyaev, in other words, can be understood as the first major Russian influence which began to mold Yannaras' perceived difference between the dominant culture of the "West" which he had lived thus far and the dormant riches of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. From his engagement with Berdyaev, Yannaras was then further introduced to the work of Vladimir Lossky, Georges Florovsky, and other Orthodox thinkers of the Russian diaspora, all of whom would continue to shape Yannaras' emerging perception of the differences between the Eastern and Western Christian traditions.[89] More importantly, it is also through the above thinkers that Yannaras would be directly introduced to the "Byzantine" tradition of the Greek Church Fathers—a tradition which, along with many other thinkers of the Russian Diaspora, Yannaras will promote as the way forward from the many problems which plague "the West" today; including, but not limited to, the problematic of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger.

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87 See Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 33.

88 Yannaras, *Kataphygion ideōn*, 256-57. Cited in Petrà, *Christos Yannaras*, 4.

89After having made contact with this "other" tradition of the Greek East, Yannaras decided to further his education in Germany in fall of 1964. He then officially broke with the brotherhood that winter.

The Philokalic Movement: A New Spirituality

To understand this "other," non-Western tradition of the Greek Church Fathers that Yannaras will appropriate for his response to Heidegger, we must go back to the late eighteenth century with the publication of the Greek *Philokalia*, which is largely accepted today as the most important impetus for the revival of traditional Orthodox theology and spirituality in the past two centuries.[90] For what the *Philokalia* inaugurated was not simply a system or "theory" about Christianity. What it revitalized was a particular culture, a specific spirituality or Christian *tropos hyparxeos* that can perhaps be explained as a "philosophy" in the original sense of the term[91] (indeed, the title page of the *Philokalia* in Greek states that its writings are that of an "ethical philosophy," a form of praxis and contemplation).[92] As we will see in this section, it is this revitalized wisdom of the Greek Fathers that set the tone for Orthodox theology and praxis in the nineteenth and twentieth century, coming to be the primary horizon from which contemporary Orthodox thinkers, such as Yannaras, would draw from in seeking to respond to the manifold problems of Western life.

Before the publication of the *Philokalia*, it is important to emphasize that Orthodox theology had slowly adopted a strictly Western style of discourse from the seventeenth century forward, a fact that is largely due to historical circumstances. The Fall of Constantinople in 1453, it is well known, had largely silenced the vibrant theological/philosophical tradition of the Greek East. Consequently, with the resurgence of theological schools in Russia during the seventeenth century, there was a natural adoption of Western theological models used for this revitalization process (such as Protestant and Catholic Scholastic style textbooks).[93] Orthodoxy theology in Russia and beyond thus adopted an inherently Western academic approach to theology in the newly established theological faculties of the seventieth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century, an

90 The foundational influence that the publication of the *Philokalia* had on the spiritual and theological movements in nineteenth and twentieth century Russia is largely recognized by Western scholars today. See Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Orthodox Theology in the Twentieth Century," in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, ed. by Staale Johannes (London: Routledge Publishers, 2013), 53 and "Theologizing in the life of the Spirit: The world of the Philokalia" in Rowan Williams recent work, *Looking East In Winter: Contemporary Thought and the Eastern Christian Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021), 11-45. For an overview of the influence that the *Philokalic* movement had on Russian Orthodox theology in the nineteenth and twentieth century, see Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 1-12 and "The influence of the Philokalia in the Orthodox World, in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, edit by Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2012.

91 The *Philokalia* is a collection of writings from the Church Fathers and saints throughout the history of the Church, but unique to this collection, as Rowan Williams points out, is its unified philosophy—that is, a unified ontology, anthropology, gnoseology, and "way of life" that is set forth to guide the praxis of the Christian.

92 See Ruth Coats, "Russia's Two Enlightenments: The Philokalia and the Accommodation of Reason in Ivan Kireevskii and Pavel Florenskii" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (October 2013), pg 685.

93 There also existed the incumbent need to explain Orthodox theology to an increasingly interested Western audience, leading to the ongoing adoption of Protestant and Catholic theological categories for the sake of dialogue. See Papanikolaou, "Orthodox Theology in the Twentieth Century," 53.

influence that carried over into the theology that Yannaras himself experience in Athens during the twentieth century.[94]

The turning point away from this overtly academic style of theology began with a monastic movement in Mount Athos, which in itself sought spiritual renewal by returning to a Byzantine form of monasticism.[95] From this movement there was also published a large collection of Patristic literature, the most important being the *Philokalia* (1782), a land-mark text which, as Andrew Louth points out, presented a very different approach to theology than was found amidst the newly established theological faculties in the modern Orthodox world. Importantly, the *Philokalia* offered a theological vision that had as its heart an experience of God, one which demanded a moral transformation of the seeker and which shuns any idolatrous idea of turning God into a concept.[96] This view of theology had little to do with doctrines, systems, and the rational collection of information, and everything to do with acquiring a form of knowledge that comes through participatory experience (the victory of St. Gregory Palamas and the hesychast controversy was for these monks emblematic of true Orthodoxy).[97] This revitalization of Byzantine monasticism, importantly grounded upon the writings and theology of the Greek Church Fathers, would go on to spread from Greece into the heart of Russian spirituality by the disciples of St Païssy (1722-1794),[98] finding its center for renewal in monasteries such as Optino Pustyn and the Trinity-St Sergii Monastery outside of Moscow.[99]

The impact of this movement, however, must be understood as stretching far beyond the life of monastery. With the revival of Byzantine monasticism and Patristic literature, the Russian academic and intellectual world was also slowly transformed,[100] having an incalculable influence on thinkers such as Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900), Pavel Florensky (1882-1937), Sergii

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94 As Yannaras points out, the theological schools in Greece were imitative of the German university model. For Yannaras' account of this revitalization process, see Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 193-217.

95 This movement sought a return to the traditions of Byzantine monasticism, which included an emphasis on the theology of the Greek Church Fathers, practicing the Jesus prayer, asceticism, and an emphasis on spiritual fathers. See Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 2.

96 See Louth, "The Theology of the Philokalia" in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West*, eds. John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2003), 357.

97 See Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 1-3.

98 St. Païssy played an important role in bringing the renewal of Byzantine monasticism into the Russian consciousness, translating a large number of Patristic texts within the *Philokalia* into Slavonic.

99 Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was heavily influenced by this form of "Byzantine" Orthodox spirituality, especially due to his visitations to Optino in his later years wherein his consultation with starlets Ambrose would become the inspiration for starlets Zossima in the *Brothers Karamazov*. In many ways, the romanticized vision that Dostoevsky and other Russian thinkers portray of Russian Orthodoxy during the nineteenth century stems from this *philokalic* revival.

100 Due largely to the help of St Philaret (metropolitan of Moscow), the Spiritual Academy of Moscow undertook a vast project of translating the writings of the Greek Church Fathers of the fourth to the seventh century, leading to the creation of the best patristical library in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. See Oliver Clement, "les Pères de l'Église orthodoxe', *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 52 (December 1993), 25-6. As Louth notes, not even the parallel development initiated Oxford Movement, first in the *Library of the Fathers* and furthered in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, could match the Russian enterprise with its breath and coverage. Cited in Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 10.

Bulgakov (1871-1944), Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), and Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958). Indeed, for these Russian thinkers, this revitalized spirituality of the Christian tradition was not only proclaimed as the historically embodied ideal of Orthodoxy, but was also held up as the paradigmatic example of how the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition is radically other than/different from its Latin-counter-part(s). And Yannaras, following in the footsteps of these thinkers, it is this "other," non Western Christian tradition which he will then attempt to promote as a way forward from the death of God/metaphysics

The Tradition of the Greek Church Fathers: Key Thinkers and Concepts

The Primacy of Experience

But what is, exactly, the uniqueness of this tradition? What makes it, for Yannaras and the majority of Orthodox thinkers of the past two centuries, so distinct from its Western counter-part? As noted above, perhaps the most critical attribute which is ubiquitously attributed to this tradition of the Church Fathers is the hailing of experiential knowledge over and against Western rationalism.[101] This *philokalic*/Byzantine emphasis on experiential knowledge can be seen as a dominant influence on the development of contemporary Russian and Greek Orthodox thought in nineteenth and twentieth century, noted most prominently, for example, in the Russian concepts of "integral knowledge" and "sobornost,"[102] as well as in the later derived existentialism and personalism of Berdyaev, Lossky, St. Sophrony, Yannaras and Zizioulas. In the following sections, then, we will offer a brief introduction to these important concepts in relation to the pivotal role they played in shaping Yannaras' own response to the problematics of Western culture, beginning with his response to Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.

Integral Knowledge—Having seen the limitations and pitfalls of Western rationalism (especially in German idealism), Ivan Kireevsky and other Slavophiles of the nineteenth century quickly became enamored by this "other," non-Western tradition that the *Philokalic* movement

101 Even amongst the likes of Russia's most "Western" thinkers, such as Bulgakov, the primacy of experiential knowledge as portrayed in the praxis and theology of the Greek Church Fathers reigns supreme. Bulgakov, like his predecessors, bemoaned the rationalism of Scholastic theology, claiming that "[b]y relying on patristic doctrine, we can exit the scholastic labyrinth and go out into open air." Quoted in Marcus Plested, "'Light from the West': Byzantine Readings of Aquinas" in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*. For Yannaras, it is this experience based emphasis of the Greek Fathers which would, in the Russian tradition, as well as later in Yannaras' interpretation of the Greek philosophical tradition, become emblematic of the Eastern Christian tradition in contrast to its Western counter-part. See "Hairetikē Orthodoxia?" in Yannaras, *Timioi me tēn Orthodoxia* (Athens: Astēr, 1968), 63.

102 "On the influence of the Russian spiritual tradition upon Kireevskii's conceptions of integral knowledge and *sobernost*, see Nikolay Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1951), 21. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Russian Philosophy*, Vol 10 (New York: Continuum, 1986), 63-68, and "Russia's Two Enlightenments: The Philokalia and the Accommodation of Reason in Ivan Kireevskii and Pavel Florenskii" in The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 91, No. 4 (October 2013), 692. For an insightful essay on the Russian development of *sobornost* in the Russian tradition, see chapter seven of Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter*.

introduced to the Russian consciousness, especially concerning the alternative gnoseology which it seemed to bear witness to. In the patristic literature of the *Philokalia*, for example, there were promoted moral and spiritual conditions for acquiring knowledge of God and the world, as can be noted in the popular patristic phrase of "keeping the mind in the heart."[103] Here the subjective detachment of pure reason, along with the Western emphasis of equating knowledge with the intellect alone, were both sidelined, replaced by the prerequisite of ascetical effort and spiritual disciplines. For within the collected writings of Byzantine literature, to "know" the truth was not a manner of the intellect alone, but involved the entirety of the human person: that is, it referred to the harmonious activity of the faculties of the will, heart, and mind.

The early Slavophile's would go onto explicate this gnoseological approach of the Greek Church Fathers with their highly influential concept of *integral knowledge*[104] —an idea which can be understood most clearly as a philosophical concept that transposed the *philokalic* form of monastic, Byzantine gnoseology into an more academically rigorous medium.[105] According to Kireevsky's rudimentary theory, "knowledge" should not be understood, as it is largely understood in the modern West, as a purely theoretical endeavor that is restricted to the faculty of reason alone. Rather, inspired by the writings of the Church Fathers, Kireevsky and the early Slavophiles claimed that knowledge of truth must be recognized as an endeavor that involves the human being in his totality, the integral harmony of mankind's will, affective sphere, belief/faith, and intuition.[106] Pavel Florensky, perhaps Russia's most brilliant and creative thinker of this era, would later go on to further this experientially based theory of integral knowledge in the most eloquent and advanced manner in his work *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*. Here Florensky argues, in continuation with the *Philokalic* vision, that truth can only be acquired by entering into a different relation with the world: a truthful relation which is achieved through self- renunciation, askesis, and faith, which in themselves are only acquired in the life and praxis of the Church.[107] Which entails, furthermore, that knowledge must be recognized primarily as an *existential* phenomenon—an "irreducible datum" of wholistic experience (incapable of being

103 See Ivan Vasilievich Kireevskii, *Pol'noe sobranie sochinenii* (Completed Collected Works), ed. M. Gershenzon, vol. 1 (Moscow, Put 1911), 225, 249-52. Cited in Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 180.

104 As a philosophical concept proper, "integral knowledge" was initially used by the early Slavophile's (Kireevsky, Khomiakov, Solov'ev) to respond to the dead-ends of German idealism and Western rationalism, which is characterized by purely abstract, logical thinking. See Robert Slesinski, *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 1984), 59.

105 "Kireevsky finds the germ of such a philosophy in the Fathers of the Church." Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 21. On this connection between the philosophy of the Church Fathers and the concept of integral knowledge, see also Copleston, *Russian Philosophy*, 68, and Patrick Lally Michelson, "Slavophile Religious Thought and the Dilemma of Russian Modernity, 1830-1860" in *Modern Intellectual History*, 7, 2010, 2, 239-67.

106 See Copleston, *Russian Philosophy*, 64; Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 21.

107 In this work Florensky argues that, according to the tradition of the Orthodox Church, truth cannot be arrived at through the enforcement of mere reason, the acquisition of logical and convincing proofs that any rational being must be *compelled* to accept. Rather, truth can only be acquired by entering into a different *relation* with the world: a truthful relation which is achieved through self-renunciation, ascesis, and faith, a form of wholistic knowledge which is given only within the realm of spirit and freedom (knowledge which, importantly, the logical "proofs" of Western rationalism only encumber) See Slesinski, *Pavel Florensky*, 56-60.

manifested in univocal definition or logical formulation)—which in itself is only given through entering into a right relation with the world through the balance of correct *theoria* and praxis.[108]

This theme of giving emphasis to an experiential, praxis-based form of wholistic knowledge can be traced throughout the work of almost all Russian theologians of utmost importance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the likes of Sergii Bulgakov,[109] Nikolai Berdyaev, Georges Florovsky,[110] and Vladimir Lossky.[111] Mediated through such thinkers, this ideal of experiential and wholistic knowledge is finally appropriated by Yannaras, who will also identify humankind's knowledge of God as a "moral challenge," one which presupposes the "existential-personal integrity of Man, the unity of the intellect and the heart, of l*ogos* and action, of ethos and being, a unity that assures the universal immediacy of experiential demonstrability of 'true knowledge.'"[112]

According to this tradition which Yannaras inherits, then, the truths of the Church are not understood as being cemented in logical formulation, nor can they be known or acquired through rational comprehension. On the contrary, on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, truth is received as a wholistic experience which results from participation in the universal way of life that composes the essence of the Church's being; i.e., that which the entire body of the faithful have experienced and known through the integrity and intensity of its common life—a qualitative universal summed up in the word *sobornost*.[113]

Sobornost—the Slavonic word used to translate *katholike* in the Nicene creed—is related to the words for "assembly," "council," or "gathering together." In this manner, the usage of *Sobornost* to translate the Greek word *Kath'holon*, "according to the whole," is seen by the Kireevsky and a large portion of later Russian theologians as referring to the *quality* of shared (unified) Christian life that is constituted and discerned within the gathering together/assembly of the whole. As a *qualitative* dimension, every local Church is proposed as being Catholic insofar as it participates in the qualitative dimension of the unified whole, a quality of *shared* life, whereby the common praxis and experience of the Church is promoted as the criteria of authentic participation and

108 See Slesinski, *A Metaphysics of Love*, 65.

109 In Bulgakov, we find this in his liturgical theology, whereby the dogma (and scriptures) of the Church can only be known and understood as rooted in the prayer, discipline, and worship of ecclesial life. Thus the well-known phrase by Bulgakov: "the altar and the theologian's cell—his workspace—must be conjoined. The deepest origins of the theologian's inspiration must be nourished from the altar." Cited in Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 48.

110 For Florovsky, "Dogma is a witness of experience…in this witness of dogma is symbolic…[d]ogma is the testimony of thought about what has been seen and revealed, about what has been contemplated in the experience of faith…a 'logical icon' of divine reality…dogma is by no means a new Revelation. Dogma is only a witness." Florovsky, "Revelation, Theology, Philosophy," in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol 3 (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), 29-30.

111 Lossky, following Bulgakov and others, also finds the union of humanity and divinity as it is experienced in the wholistic praxis of Church as the starting point for theology, concluding that mankind's knowledge of God is found only in this radically apophatic experience of divine life. See Papanikolaou, "Orthodox Theology in the twentieth century," 56-57.

112 Yannaras, *Hē apologētikē sta horia tēs orthodoxou theologias* (Athens: Grēgorē, 1975), 13. Translated by and cited in Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 31.

113 For an insightful look at the notion of *Sobernost* as such, see Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter* ,184.

constitution. And of course, as a quality of shared, participatory life, knowledge of Christianity's truth is by nature existential and wholistic—requiring the moral, experiential, and praxis driven form of knowing that is common to the existential form of integral knowledge overviewed above.

For our purposes, what is most important to emphasize about the Russian notion of *sobornost* is that, according to this "Greek" inspired model, knowledge of the universal Church's truth is recognized as not being passed on through mere dogma or intellectual catechesis; rather, it is a truth that is handed down through steady and unbroken praxis. Here the Church herself is recognized as a universal, qualitative mode of existence that participates in the very life of God, and *as such* is only known through participation in her *way of life*—that is, through imitation and praxis rather than intellectual comprehension.[114] Any acquisition of Christianity's truth, then, is not a purely intellectual achievement. Rather, it is recognized as a "willed transformation of the individual into the newness of trinitarian life" (Florovsky),[115] a "skill" that is learned (Bulgakov), or the shared, experiential testimony of the "life of the Church in the Holy Spirit" (Lossky).[116] And for these Orthodox thinkers, this ideal is emblematic not of contemporary Orthodox thought, but authentically reflects the Byzantine understanding of Christianity which was revitalized by the *philokalic* movement and the writings of the Greek Church Fathers.

As we will come to see, this emphasis of truth being found in the "common" and "shared praxis" of the Christian community's way of life will go on to greatly influence Yannaras' re-reading of the Greek philosophical tradition at large, especially in relation to his re-reading of the Greek gnoseology, which he identifies as the "communal verification of knowledge." This is because, on Yannaras' reading of Antiquity, the Ancient Greeks also recognized truth predominantly as an ontological reality (as that which "truly is"), and truth as such, for the Greeks, was always found in the "common *logos*" of the community's established mode of existence (in both the *polis* and philosophical schools). Meaning, for Yannaras, the Russian understanding of *sobernost*, which is based upon the gnoseology of the *philokalic*/Byzantine Christian tradition, is understood here as a continuation and development of the communal gnoseology of that is found in Antiquity. Thus from the Ancient Greeks to the Greek Church Fathers and the Orthodox Church today, Yannaras argument is that *koinōnein* (communion) is recognized as the way to *aletheuein* (truthfulness/being-true).

As we will see, this "communal epistemology" of the Byzantine Christian tradition will become the most foundational of Yannaras' insights in attempting to offer a counter- narrative to Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.

Personal Existence

114 This idea is further adopted by Bulgakov, Florovsky, and Lossky, all of whom share in the conviction that the common and shared *praxis* of the Church contain the germ of dogma and doctrinal formulation, which in itself is manifested in the embodiment of ongoing discernment of shared/common experience. See N.O. Lossky, *Russian Philosophy*, 29. Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 190,

115 See Florovsky, *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, 20-23/37-39.

116 See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 188.

The *philokalic*/Byzantine emphasis on experiential knowledge and its moral/spiritual prerequisites would also have a crucial role to play in the development of another incredibly important concept that Yannaras will take from the Russian's exposition of the Greek/Byzantine tradition: that is, the unique emphasis of personal/hypostatic existence in the writings of the Church Fathers. This emphasis of divine personhood is a concept (if we may call it such) that is largely grounded on the interpretative work of Vladimir Lossky, a theological giant of the twentieth century whom, undoubtably, is Yannaras' largest theological influence.[117]

For Lossky, the theology of the Greek East—from the work of the Cappadocian Fathers to Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas—stands united in its emphasis that God's *ousia* is wholly unknowable and imparticipable. On Lossky's reading of the Church Fathers, human knowledge (whether from the senses or intellect) concerns only created beings, and thus knows nothing of God's being, which is radically other to and shares no correlation with created being.[118] However, while God's being may be unknowable in his *ousia*, the Church Fathers also emphasize how God has revealed himself to mankind as *personal* existence through the *hypostases* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, in his celebrated work *On the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* Lossky argues that the unified experience of the Eastern Church's tradition bears revelatory witness to the fact that humankind does not come to know God in relation to his *ousia,* but solely through His free and uncreated personal acts (energies).[119] Meaning, for Lossky, knowledge of God was never attempted to be known by the Church Fathers in an essentialist manner. Rather, "[i]f one speaks of God it is always, for the Eastern Church, in the concrete: 'The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; the God of Jesus Christ."[120]

Yet even if God does reveal himself in his personal activity, how is it that humanity comes to experience and know God *as such* if, as stated above, the created human intellect can only acquire knowledge of created being? In other words, if the gnoseological faculties of human nature—whether through the intellect or the senses—is limited to knowing created nature alone, and if God's being—including his personal *energeia*—is other than created nature, how does humankind receive knowledge of God *himself* in the givenness of revelatory experience? In response to this concern, Lossky points out we find in the writings of the Greek Church Fathers

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117 As Yannaras stated, "I started with Lossky." Papanikolaou, *Personhood and its Exponents*, footnote 3. However, as Aristotle Papanikolaou further points out, Lossky's conception of personhood must itself be understood in reference to the influence Russian thinkers which preceded him; this time, that of the Russian Sophiologists. See Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its exponents in twentieth-century Orthodox theology," 232. However, one should not then understand the Russian emphasis of personhood as an innovation of twentieth century thought. As Florovsky, Lossky, and others will argue, this concept of personhood as promoted in the Orthodox tradition today is one of the most important themes which accurately characterizes the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers.

118 See John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 13.

119 According to Lossky's reading of the Hellenistic tradition, the signifier "God" never refers to God as *ousia*, but only ever signifies the revealed, personal existence of the divine's presence in history, an experiential knowledge that is given/received in the united activity (energies) of divinity that flows from the Father, through the Son, by means of the Holy Spirit. See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 240.

120 Ibid., 65.

the idea that humankind has a means of experiencing God that is "other" than the intellectual or sensual forms of knowing that are inherent to created nature. In other words, as Palamas writes, Christian experience is "beyond nature," coming from a "divine," gnoseological capacity in humankind that *transcends* the noetic capacities of human nature, and in this regard allows humanity to acquire an experiential knowledge of divine being which, as Palamas states, is neither of "the senses, nor the intellect."[121]

As John Meyendorff points out, however, this radically apophatic knowledge of God which the Church Fathers speak of is always understood in a *personalist* manner. Meaning, it is the freedom of the human *prósopon,* or the being of the created *hypostasis,* which for the Church Fathers transcends human nature (the *ousia* of created being), thereby making the experiential knowing of God a radically *personal* event—concerning not knowledge of nature, but a loving communion of persons.[122] Thus on Lossky's reading of the Church Fathers, it is the mystery of the human person which, made in the hypostatic image of God, is able to transcend the limitations of created being, and in so doing, is able to acquire knowledge of God's hypostatic *energeia* in the radical immediacy of "first-person" experience.

A large portion of Lossky's corpus seeks to work out, in more detail, the presuppositions and implications of the Church Fathers' theology *as such*. We see this, for example, in his emphasis on the Church Fathers' ontological distinction of God's *ousia* and *hypostasis*, the testimonial nature of the Greek Fathers' apophatic theology, the role that the divine energies play in the history of the Eastern Church, and perhaps most importantly, the theme of the Greek Church Fathers identifying the unity of God in the *person* of the Father rather than the one essence.[123] For on Lossky's reading of the Fathers, the point of such teachings is ultimately to help emphasize and protect the testimonial, apostolic witness of Christianity that has been passed on through the ages: namely, that knowledge of God and his revealed *Logos* is not a reality which can be acquired and passed on through any form of speculation or reflectivity; on the contrary, knowledge of God can only be realized through the immediacy of hypostatic relation, a loving event of personal communion which transcends the being of this world, and a form of existential knowledge which can only come about through ascetical participation in the ecclesial way of life.

It is primarily in the work of Vladimir Lossky, then, that the link between A) "the priority of experiential knowledge," and B) "personhood" in the Orthodox tradition, are thematized more concretely. For Lossky, it is *because* God reveals himself as hypostatic (personal) existence that the Eastern Church has always identified knowledge of God (and his world) with the immediacy

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121 "For the Greek Fathers…to confess the unity of the nature is to recognize the Father as unique Source of the persons who receive from Him this same nature." Meaning, when one seeks to explain the being of the one God, one does not look to the unifying essence, but to the free and personal existence of the Father, who "derives from Himself His being" (St. John Damascene), distinguishing the Son and Spirit "in an eternal movement of love" (St. Maximus the Confessor), and from whom the Spirit and Son receive the fullness of the divine nature (St. Gregory Nazianzen). See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 59.

122 See John Meyendorff's introduction to Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, trans. by Nicholas Gendle (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 14.

123 "For the Greek Fathers…to confess the unity of the nature is to recognize the Father as unique Source of the persons who receive from Him this same nature." See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 59.

of holistic, particular experience.[124] It should also be noted that, for Lossky, this existential bent of the Greek East is found not simply in the *philokalic* movement and the writings of the Church Fathers, but more importantly, is ecclesial declared in the Hesychastic councils of 1341, 1347, and 1351, all of which affirm Gregory Palamas' gnoseological teachings on the essence/energy distinction.[125] Such is also why, for Lossky, along with the majority of contemporary Orthodox scholars today, Gregory Palamas is currently the most important figure of the Eastern tradition insofar as his work defends and highlights the true spirit of the Greek Orthodox tradition in contrast to the rational developments of the Western Christendom. Concerning the relevance of this point for modern times, Florovsky also makes the following claim:

> [St Gregory's theology should be described in modern terms as an 'existentialist theology'…Gregory was definitely opposed to all kinds of 'essentialist theologies' that fail to account for God's freedom, for the dynamism of God's will, from the reality of divine action…It was the predicament of Greek impersonalist metaphysics. If there is any room for Christian metaphysics at all, it must be a metaphysics of persons.[126]

From this point of view, we can easily understand why Yannaras, heavily inspired by Lossky, believes that the contemporary language of phenomenology and existentialism can act as a bridge for the modern reader when seeking to enter into the thought and praxis of the Hellenistic-Christian tradition. Indeed, as we will see, the entirety of his magnum opus, *Peron and Eros*, is an attempt to use the modern language of phenomenology and existentialism to try and articulate to the Western mind the existential, personalist conception of knowledge and Being which he finds inherent to Palamas and the Greek Church Fathers.

Criticism of the West

Perhaps one of the most well-known themes of the inherited Orthodox tradition from which Yannaras speaks is the polemical contrast that has been established between Eastern and Western Christianity. Right or wrong, this stark juxtaposition between the East and West became a defining characteristic of Orthodoxy Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth century.[127] Here the Western Church was seen not only as an "other," but an "other" that was responsible for creating the detrimental *ethos* that was seen as a threat to both Russia and Orthodox Christianity.[128] As such,

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124 On this point, see Kotiranta, "Vladimir Lossky," 384.

125 Lossky argues that this existentialist bent of the Eastern tradition was ultimately cemented in the writings of Gregory Palamas through his confrontation with Barlaam, leading to the Orthodox Church's dogmatization of the essence-energy distinction in the Hesychast councils of 1341, 1347, and 1351. For a more detailed analysis of these councils, see again Meyendorff's introduction to Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 6-7.

126 See Florovosky, "St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," *Sobornost* 4:4 (1961).

127 Beginning in the eighteenth century, the Orthodox Church in Russia was becoming starkly aware of its Western influence through contact with a revitalization of its Hellenistic roots. In this manner, Russian Orthodoxy was experiencing a crises of identity, becoming aware of its ongoing need to understand and define itself, and it is only natural that this formation be aided by negation: the assumption of identity over against what one is not (i.e., the "West").

128 From Bulgakov to Florensky, Florovsky to Lossky, there is woven throughout Russian theology a keen awareness of the ominous threat of Western culture—the death of Christianity in the West, the rise of rationalism, modern

it is natural to see in Russian literature a rejection of the *entirety* of Western Christianity, wherein the Western Church as a whole is often portrayed as a polluted source, always seen through the lens of suspicion. This is an influence that can be noted even today with the Greek Orthodox trend of rejecting (often uncritically) Augustine's theology and influence wholesale.[129]

In many ways, we must understand Yannaras' work as largely embracing this narrative, albeit in a more nuanced manner.[130] While being aware of the ideological dangers of the Slavophile movement, Yannaras agrees that the Orthodox tradition contains a very different *ethos* than that which developed in the West, and thus further agrees with the Russian "responsibility" of seeing Orthodoxy as a savior of sorts, one which can help give "old Europe" new life.[131] Yannaras presents Albert Camus as such an example of this hope, highlighting the fact that Camus' intellectual journey brought him away from Western Christianity and close to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Before his death, the famous atheist began to read the work of Lossky, and, in comparison to his outright rejection of Western theology, was surprisingly receptive to the theology presented to him in *The Mystical Theology of the Orthodox Church*. Yannaras alludes to Camus' encounter with Lossky as an example of how Europe, conscious of the death of God, could be open to this "other," Hellenistic tradition of the Greek Church Fathers as we have attempted to identify it thus far.[132]

Like Lossky, then, Yannaras' work can also be seen as promoting Florovsky's "neo-patristic synthesis," which in itself is a call for both Orthodoxy *and* the West to return to the "Christian Hellenism" of its past—noted most fully in the tradition of the Church Fathers—as it is only here that, according to Florovsky, the contemporary European problems of post-Christendom can be overcome.[133] Importantly, this call must not be understood as a move to revitalize the "object" of the Church Father's teaching and dogma. Rather, it is a call to recover the patristic *phronema* (spirit, cast of mind), which as Andrew Louth points out, is not a parroting of their

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liberalism, secularism and atheism, the looming presence of nihilism—followed by the conviction that the Eastern Church contains a culture which has the capacity to both resist and aid Western Europe.

129 This is characteristic of both Yannaras and Zizioulas, both of whom often use Augustine as a scapegoat of sorts in explaining the theological errors of the Western Churchs. And while it is true that many of the differences between the East and the West can be traced back to Augustine (Augustine's views of pre-destination, original sin, etc.), the problem with such a view lies in the wholesale rejection of Augustine. Yannaras and other contemporary Orthodox theologians are not wrong in their criticisms of Augustine—the problem lies, however, in the lack of nuance and generosity within their critique, unable to acknowledge and account for the brilliance and similarities that lie in the thought of Augustine with their own theology.

130 In contrast to the early Slavophiles and other Russian thinkers, Yannaras does not see the current form of Orthodoxy in Russia (or Greece) as the "last stronghold" of Christianity that can stand against the currents of Western influence. Yannaras, as we have already seen, sees the "West" as a ubiquitous phenomenon, and thus sees the "Eastern Church" as a culture/way of life that must be revitalized in both the West *and* the East. In this manner, for Yannaras, "East" and "West" are not reduced to *topos* (as we see in the Slavophile tradition) but identified as a *tropos*: a *mode* of existence. This will become clearer in chapter two.

131 See Petra, *Christos Yannaras,* 8-9. Dostoevsky also remained a critical influence on Yannaras. For a fuller analysis of Dostoevsky's influence, see Petra, *Christos Yannaras,* 5-14.

132 Ibid., 10

133 On Florovsky's neo-patristic synthesis, see Florovsky, "Revelation, Philosophy, and Theology" in *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, ed. by Brandon Gallaher and Paul Ladouceur (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 115-128.

opinions, but the task of learning to "think" like the Fathers, to take on the manner of their ascetical *podvid* (spiritual struggle) as it was witnessed to in Russia with the *philokalic* revival.[134] In other words, it is a call for the Church to return to the unique mode of Greek thought which we have attempted to overview so far: e.g., the priority of communal experience, apophaticism, integral knowledge, ascetical praxis, and the like, all of which are recognized as salutary mode of thinking that can help replace the detrimental modes of thought which arose in the West. Following the enormous scope of Florovsky's influence, we must understand Yannaras' criticism of the West in the same manner: that is, as identifying the negative or problematic modes of thought that transpired in the West in order to replace them with the Church Fathers' Hellenistic heritage (*Herkunft*), or unique "thought-pattern," which we have highlighted thus far.[135]

This impetus of Yannaras' narrative should, in some ways, help the reader be more generous to the more critical/polemical nature of Yannaras' thought. For what Yannaras must *not* be understood as doing, following Florovsky and others, is creating a narrative which praises the contemporary Orthodox East while simultaneously condemning the Latin West. Rather, in promoting a return to "Hellenism," Yannaras must be understood as calling *both* the East and the West back to their common, shared heritage. This is not only because both the Eastern and Western Churches are facing the same threat, but also because the Hellenistic *phronema* of the Church Fathers' is not a strictly "Eastern" or "Greek" phenomenon. It is, more fully, the intellectual heritage or "thought pattern" of the early Church that was carried over in each tradition for hundreds of years.[136] Even in the Latin tradition today, it is a mode of thought which is not lost altogether, but as can be noted in Jean Leclercq's *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, is a heritage which has been continued in certain traditions and thinkers throughout the ages.[137] However, due largely to historical circumstances, it is also undoubtably the case that this *ethos* was preserved more fully in the East.

Of course, the more hospitable context of Yannaras' criticism of the West does not make it impervious to critique. For example, a general concern one will find when reading Yannaras narrative is his lack of nuance when offering his analysis of the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Germanic/Latin) modes of thought. Yannaras often presents extremely polemical and sweeping claims that do not accurately present the incredible nuance of the subjects and thinkers which are dealt with in each tradition, especially that of the West, and this lack of nuance might be perplexing and frustrating to the Western reader. For while Yannaras' analysis of the West does indeed offer a perceptive analysis of the Latin philosophical tradition, there is no question that his reading is colored by his own tradition's view of the "West." This lack of nuance comes to the fore most

134 See Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, 81.
135 See Pui Him Ip, "'Patristic Grounding' of Christos Yannaras," in *Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture*, 46-47.
136 As Florovsky states, "Hellenism is the common background and the basis of the whole Christian civilization." On this point, see Florovsky, "Preface to In Ligno Crusis," in *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky*, 67.
137 In Jean Leclercq's work *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A study of Monastic Culture*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham Univerity Press, 1974), Leclercq notes how St. Benedict and the monastic/intellectual spirituality of the Benedictine tradition is ultimately an "Eastern" *ethos* in the "Latin West." On this point, see Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A study of Monastic Culture*, 111-117.

perceptively in his reading of *individual* Latin thinkers, such as Augustine and Aquinas. Often when reading his work, one feels that Yannaras would quite simply be *unable* to read such thinkers in an alternative, more generous light, as his writings can easily sway from the insightful writings of an academic to the passionate, uncritical diatribe of a "non-Western" Christian.[138] In this way, it must be acknowledged that Yannaras' insights are undoubtably blinded at times by his aggressive stance against the general *tropos* of the West, which withholds him from seeing the good that undoubtably has continued to exist in Western culture and thought, even if it exits in a more exceptional, less influential manner.

While acknowledging this criticism, however, it is just as important to keep in mind the nature of Yannaras' critique. Yannaras' criticism of "the West," first and foremost, is not concerned with offering a detailed account of historical facts, a mere objective rendering of history *qua* history. Rather, his critical study of and engagement with the West is attempting to illuminate the errors which led to the now ubiquitous problems of Western culture which plague humankind. And in order to do this, it is necessary that he also attempt to illuminate the general and common themes of the West's historical ethos, *not* the themes which are exceptional or particular, for it is only in the former that we find the defining impetus which dictates a culture's *tropos hyparxeos*. As Brandon Gallagar argues in a similar fashion, Yannaras criticism of the West must ultimately be understood as a *mythos* of sorts,[139] the point of which is to be both diagnostic and curative.[140] That is, as highlighted above, one should read Yannaras' narrative of the West as seeking to critically examine the historical origins of ideas, belief systems, and social norms which have led to the problems of Western culture in order to replace them with more favorable and propitious practices as a means forward. In seeking to accomplish this, however, it is only natural that one highlight the most prominent and influential modes of thought which have dictated the development of Western culture, without giving as much attention to the more nuanced and less influential movements or thinkers that do not fit within this *ethos*.

Once more, this does not make Yannaras historical criticism of the West impervious to critique. But when understood from this perspective, one may become more receptive to Yannaras' analysis of the Western European philosophical tradition. For regardless of its polemical tone at times, Yannaras critical narrative of the West is, without a doubt, rich with insights that are worth taking into account, not only when seeking to understand the current predicaments and challenges of Western culture, but also when seeking to understand how to possibly overcome them.

Martin Heidegger

138 This tone is found, I believe, most prominently in his work "*Orthodoxy and the West*," but these moments still arise, from time to time, even in his most philosophically rigorous works.

139 I use the word *mythos* loosely here, as Yannaras' narrative wishes to offer a re-telling of nihilism's history which can also be verified and accounted for by historical facts, as opposed to being merely pre-scientific and groundless.

140 On this point, see Brandon Gallaher, "Orthodoxy and the West," 211.

When Yannaras left Zoë to begin his studies in Germany, he had already been introduced to and adopted many of the themes which we have outlined above (especially from Lossky), and it is upon his encounter with this "other" tradition of Hellenistic, Eastern Christianity that Yannaras therefore began to understand, identify, and critique "the West." However, in Germany, Yannaras would encounter another critical voice of the Western tradition, one that offered an alternative perspective in attempting to understand the "errors" of Western life: that is, Yannaras encountered the work of Martin Heidegger. In Yannaras' reading, Heidegger's nuanced critique of Western thought and praxis not only complimented the Russian critique of the West—it also went beyond these critiques by highlighting more clearly the *ontological* errors of the Western tradition. By "ontological errors," Yannaras does not refer to the West's intellectual theories *per se*. More acutely, as Yannaras points out, the ontological errors of the West which Heidegger identifies allude to the errors of humankind's very existence in relation to Being: that is, *Dasein's* nihilistic, violent mode of being-in-the-world that unfolded in Western Europe. And it is here, as Petrá notes, that Yannaras' ontological research takes off.[141]

During his time in both Germany and France, then, Yannaras' attention was dedicated to the critical thinkers which laid bare the nihilist outcome of the Western Metaphysical tradition, seeking to understand these thinkers insofar as they were able to further illuminate the subtle differences between Christian Hellenism and the Western European Christendom as he had come to understand it from Russian theology. Among this critical tradition, Jean-Paul Sartre can be added to the list of thinkers who stood out most to Yannaras at this time. However, for Yannaras, the appeal of these thinkers lay not simply in their critiques. What Yannaras also found attractive in such thinkers was their radical honesty, their ability to transcend the confining customs of conventional academic guise and concern themselves with the existential questions which plague mankind, all the while having the bravery to confront the nothingness which is experienced once the West's rationalist foundations have crumbled. In other words, Yannaras finds in these thinkers a radical honesty about humankind's current situation, a rare acknowledgement and description of reality without the crutch of any value-laden rationalism.

Furthermore, and more importantly, Yannaras saw in Heidegger and Sartre's phenomenological ontology a reflection of the gnoseological apophaticism that he first encountered in the Byzantine tradition of the Greek Church Fathers. In other words, Yannaras reads both traditions as relying solely upon experiential/existential testimony in their ontological proposals, seeking to give an account of existence that is based upon the radical givenness of communally verified, subjective experience. The difference, of course, was found in the conclusions of each tradition. In the West, after the dissolution of all idolatry and conceptual crutches, the result was a looming nihilism, an experiential void of *nothingness* from which all beings come to presence. In the East, however, after the willed suspension of all theoretical constructs and conceptual idols, the experience of the ecclesial event laid claim to a different

141 See Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 14.

testimony—one of erotic rapture and communion, the revelatory presence of personal *energeia* which, as Maximus the Confessor states, is the cause even of nothingness itself.[142]

In this manner, we may understand Yannaras' engagement with Heidegger as inspiring Yannaras to begin reading the Hellenistic tradition of the Church Fathers in an overtly *philisophical* manner, seeking to understand how the philosophy of this "other," non-Western tradition might be able to respond to Martin Heidegger's critique. Which means, in contrast to the majority of Russian theologians in the twentieth century, such as Vladimir Lossky, who promoted the *phronema* of the Greek Church Fathers' tradition in a more theological, ecclesial light, Yannaras must be understood as seeking to engage with the same *phronema* of the Greek Church Fathers in an increasingly *philosophical* tenor. Here Yannaras' earliest work can be recognized most fully as attempting to further thematize the overtly philosophical dimensions of this tradition—most notably, its ontology, gnoseology, and praxis. For as we will see, it is this alternative *tropos* of philosophical thought and praxis which a young Yannaras, still in his doctoral studies, believed capable of adequately responding to Martin Heidegger's illuminating critique of onto-theology and the death of the Western philosophical tradition.

The result of this insight led to Yannaras' first three major publications: *The Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and Areopagite* (1967; 1988 [second]), *To ontologikon periechomenon tēs theologikēs ennoias tou prosōpou* (The ontological content of the concept of the person) (1970), later to be published in 1976 as *Person and Eros* (1987, fourth edition), and *The Schism in Philosophy* (1980; 2013 [seventh]), all of which attempted to promote the philosophy of the Church Fathers as a way forward from the death of God/metaphysics.[143] In this essay, we will devote ourself to understand the complexity and nuance of this response as it is accounted for in these three works.

Summary/Concluding Thoughts

From this historical overview of Yannaras' early life and influences, we have come to understand more fully "from where Yannaras speaks" in his response to Heidegger and the problematic of Western nihilism. From one perspective, we may understand Yannaras' research as a very personal matter, seeking to find a solution to the pervasive problems of a Western heritage that he himself had inherited: the tendency towards religious ideology and dogmatism, the pietistic moralism of a penal-based economic system between God and humankind, the violent rationalism bequeathed

142 As Yannaras states: "the fence that Heidegger did not have the courage to jump, Maximus was striding over with the ease of a giant." Yannaras, *Kath' Eauton*, 50

143 It must be stated that the latter work, *The Schism in Philosophy*, is not an explicit response to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. Meaning, unlike the first two works, he did not write it as a direct response to Heidegger, even though he does extensively engage in this work with Heidegger and the phenomenological tradition. Rather, as can be seen in its subtitle—*The Greek perspective and its Western Reversal*—the intention of this work is to offer a historical analysis of the history of thought in reference to the Greek philosophy of Antiquity (which the Church Fathers inherited) and the later inspired philosophy of the Germanic/Latin West. In this work, then, what we essentially have is Yannaras' most complete analysis of his initial reading of Western nihilism as promoted in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, even if its major theme is not to deal with the problematic of Western nihilism directly.

from the Western philosophical and theological tradition, and most importantly, the looming nihilism of Western culture. So too, we also understand more clearly the tradition which Yannaras looked to when searching for a response to these problems: the praxis and teachings of Hellenistic monasticism, the spiritual and ascetical emphases of the *philokalic* movement, the *tropos* of Christian-Hellenism, and perhaps most importantly, the mediating influence of this *phronema* through the Russian thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Accordingly, we can understand Yannaras' response to Heidegger most fully as his own synthesis of the Hellenistic-Christian tradition as it had been passed on to him from Lossky and other (primarily) Russian thinkers, albeit posed in a more *philosophical*, up to date manner. Just as the earliest Slavophiles sought to offer a philosophical response to the rationalism of German idealism by appropriating the gnoseological wisdom of the Church Fathers, we may understand Yannaras most fully as attempting to draw from this same wisdom in order to respond to the phenomenological and existential movements of the twentieth century, especially in relation to the work and influence of Martin Heidegger.

Chapter II
Hellenism and the Birth of Ancient Philosophy

In the previous chapter, we have attempted to paint a horizon which can best explain the tradition from which Yannaras speaks. This "other tradition," as we have explained thus far, is the Byzantine/Greek Christian tradition which the Russian theologians sought to advance in response to the problematic of Western influence during the nineteenth and twentieth century. In this manner, we may understand the early Yannaras as seeking to bring the wisdom of this non-Western tradition into dialogue with the phenomenological and existential movements of the twentieth century, thereby attempting to offer the philosophical (as opposed to purely theological) wisdom of the Greek Church Fathers as a response to the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism as pronounced by Martin Heidegger.[144] In this chapter, we will now move forward by attempting to understand what I have termed the historical dimension of this response, which ultimately seeks to rethink Heidegger's narrative of Western nihilism in order to promote said philosophy of the Church Fathers as a way forward from the death of the Western European philosophical tradition.

In his first work, *Heidegger kai Areopagitēs*, we see that Yannaras will largely agree with Heidegger's overarching narrative of Western nihilism. Here Yannaras concurs that the problem of Western European nihilism must be understood as the historical unfolding, or consequence, of a nihilistic "inner logic" which is inherent to the *tropos* of Western European metaphysics.[145] However, due primarily to his engagement with the philosophical tradition of the Greek Church Fathers, Yannaras will also make a few minor adjustments to Heidegger's narrative as a whole. Indeed, in the opening pages of *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, Yannaras will subtly claim that the nihilistic "inner logic" which Heidegger illuminates only applies to the post-Roman, Western European philosophical/theological tradition;[146] more fully, Yannaras will argue that it is a problematic mode of thought which developed from the Latin philosophical tradition's gnoseological inversion of its Hellenistic counter-part (i.e. the Latin West's inversion of the Church Fathers' Hellenistic tradition which we covered in the previous chapter).[147] Thus rather than seeing, per Heidegger, the nihilistic history of metaphysics as beginning in Ancient Greece, continuing into the Christian Middle Ages and then unfolding into Modernity, Yannaras will argue that the historical unfolding of metaphysical nihilism is a historical event that must be restricted to the history of the post-Roman, Western European philosophical tradition *alone*.

Yannaras will go on to greatly advance and support these claims in *Schediasma eisagōges stē philosophia*, wherein Yannaras offers an insightful reading of the history of philosophy as it historically unfolded within its two major traditions: that is, the Greek philosophical tradition of Hellenism (*Hellenismós*) and the contemporary Germanic/Latin philosophical tradition of Western Europe. In this reading, however, Yannaras does not seek to point out each tradition's intellectual differences—that is,

144Amongst contemporary Orthodox thinkers, Yannaras is unique in this regard. Whereas most Orthodox thinkers speak from within the discipline of theology, Yannaras remains one of the few philosophically oriented voices of the Orthodox tradition.

145 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 21-22

146 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 22-23.

147 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 23-24.

their philosophical ideas or systems which can be "statically exhausted in the place of contemplation."[148] Rather, what Yannaras attempts to highlight is the cultural/historical differences that exists between these two traditions; i.e, their cultural heritage and philosophical fore-structure which "determine each traditions mode or practice of philosophical inquiry."[149] In doing so, Yannaras wishes to reveal that the major change which took place from the Greek to the Latin tradition was not necessarily its form of rational discourse. Coming off his engagement with thinkers in the Russian diaspora, Yannaras' intuition is that the most important (and most overlooked) change which transpired from the Greek to the Latin tradition took place in the cultural heritage, or *ethos*, in which critical thought was historically actualized.

But why emphasize this cultural/historical difference? Because, quite simply, for Yannaras it is the cultural heritage in which philosophy is actualized that determines the "inner logic" of a philosophical tradition, *not the ideas in themselves*.[150] In the first half of *The Schism*, then, what Yannaras is attempting to illuminate with his reading of the Greek philosophical tradition is an alternative mode of culturally participating in critical thought, one whose "inner logic" did not actualize itself historically in a nihilistic manner. Furthermore, in the second half of the text, Yannaras will then seek to reveal how it was the loss of these cultural attributes with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition that led to the development of a drastically different mode of philosophical praxis that would nihilistically unfold in the history of the Western European tradition alone.

In *The Schism in Philosophy*, Yannaras argues that Hellenism's unique, non-nihilistic mode of participating in critical thought can be thematized in several key attributes: 1) the need of the social-collective to "become true" through the event of *koinōnein*, 2) the need to verify the truthfulness of the individual and the community in the "*koinós logos"* of the whole, and 3) the understanding of language as inherently apophatic/symbolic. Such are the primary cultural attributes which, for Yannaras, compose the Hellenistic "heritage," or philosophical fore-structure of the Ancient philosophical tradition, from the pre-Socratics to the Church Fathers. Which entails, as we will see later, that it is due to the loss of these attributes in the Latin tradition that Yannaras believes created the nihilistic "inner logic" of critical thought which unfolded in Western Europe.

Because the vision which Yannaras will be proposing of the Hellenistic philosophical tradition will be, for most readers, somewhat unfamiliar and new, the intention of this chapter is both introductory and defensive: I seek primarily to introduce the attributes listed above by focusing on their manifestation in both the life of the city-state and the life of the philosophical schools, while also bringing in my own external research for the sake of further explaining or buttressing Yannaras' claims. More specifically, I will give special attention to the work of Pierre Hadot, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Klaus Oehler, all of whom, in their own way, help develop, clarify, and define these core attributes which Yannaras ascribes to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism.

Before we begin, however, it is important to remind ourselves that Yannaras' reading of the Greek philosophical tradition must be understood as exactly that—a *tradition*, and as such, a cultural *ethos*, or pre-predicative *tropos hyparxeos* which determines how one engages-with, responds-to, and comes to know the world.[151] Thus similar to the patristic *phronema* of the Church Fathers, what Yannaras is attempting to articulate here is the guiding *ethos* or "spirit" of Hellenism proper, as it is

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148 Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 15

149 Yannaras, *The Schism*, xi.

150 On this point, see Yannaras, chapter one of *Exi philosophikes zōgraphies: 'Ekomisa eis tēn technēn* as translated in the epilogue of Petra's *Christos Yannaras: The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, 106-110 (This text will be referenced throughout this dissertation as *Six Philosophical Paintings*). See also Norman Russell, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 52-53.

151 On this point, see Pui Him Ip, "On the 'Patristic Grounding' of Christos Yannaras's 'Prosopo-centric Ontology: A methodological exploration," in *Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture*, 46-47.

only from this cultural *tropos hyparxeos* that one will begin to understand the unique manner in which critical thought found expression in Antiquity.[152] Consequently, it is also essential to note that the attributes of Greek thought which Yannaras seeks to promote will not first be found in explicit, systematic formulation. As a cultural fore-structure and thought-pattern, these attributes would predominantly be tacitly assumed in Greek praxis, belonging as they do to the unseen "horizon," or womb, from which critical discourse was nurtured and developed. Meaning, they would initially be found in Hellenism's *pre*-philosophical mode of expression—in Hellenism's language, art, architecture, laws, and socio-political being within the life of the city-state. Accordingly, in his re-reading of the Greek philosophical tradition, Yannaras does not begin with ontology, epistemology, or even mythology. Rather, in *The Schism of Philosophy*, Yannaras looks to anthropology and sociology, beginning with the most essential traits of societal development that compose the unique culture that is the Greek *polis*.

In consequence, we will likewise begin our chapter with this sociological development of the Greek city-state. This will then be followed by an in depth overview of what Yannaras believes the fundamental attributes of Hellenism to be as they grew from this socio-political impetus into their most complete and advanced form within philosophy proper.

The Need to Be True

In *The Schism in Philosophy*, Yannaras defines the historical emergence of critical thought in Antiquity as being born from a collective "need" that was unique to the Greek *polis*, or city-state. And this need, as he later articulates in *Six Philosophical Paintings*, was the need of the Greek people to "distinguish the real from the illusory, truth from falsehood, valid knowledge from subjective impression or opinion…" so that within life of the city-state, the coexistence of human beings should no longer subsist in accordance with error or utility, but in accordance with truth.[153] For Yannaras, then, if one wishes to understand the uniqueness of the Greek philosophical tradition, to understand its unique mode of participating in critical thought (*kritikí sképsi*), one must begin with understanding the socio-political horizon from which it was bequeathed.[154]

Of course, this subtle nuance of this statement needs unpacking, as the modern reader—inheritor as he/she is of this "Greek" mode of thinking—may not immediately intuit the vast implications of this statement. First, as Yannaras wishes to remind us, the cultural emergence of this alethic "need" was an astonishing development in the history of humankind. Taking inspiration from the insights of structural anthropology,[155] Yannaras reminds us that before the

152 This point is highlighted in the phrase Yannaras uses in referring to the tradition of Hellenism: *tropos hyparxeos* (mode of existence). In this context, as Dionysios Skrilis states, *tropos* is not only inspired by the Greek Church Fathers, but by Martin Heidegger as well. Per Heidegger's inspiration, Yannaras' identification of *Hellenismós* as a *tropos hyparxeos* seeks to emphasize the non-ideological manner in which the tradition is passed on—that is, the way in which it is "traditioned" (überlieferte) through our historically conditioned mode of being-in-the-world. On this point, see Dionysios Skrilis, "The philosophy of mode ("*tropos*") in the thought of Christos Yannaras," in *Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, and Culture*, 26–40.

153 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 94.

154 Yannaras writes on this priority of the Greeks in three works: *The Schism in Philosophy* (43-46; 59-64); *Orthos logos kai koinōnikē* (Correct Reason and Social Practice), section V 1a; and *Protaseis Kritikēs Ontologias* (Propositions for a Critical Ontology) 2.12., with most attention given in *The Schism in Philosophy*.

155 Including but not limited to the work of Mircea Eliade, Werner Müller, Claude Lévie-Strauss, and Ernst Cassier. For Yannaras' brief engagement with these thinkers, see Yannaras, *The Schism*, 3-5, footnotes 1-4.

rise of the Greek city-state, the central axis or cohesive center of meaning that established the co-existence (settlements) of the earliest *homo sapiens* was largely functional/pragmatic. Meaning, the unifying impetus which gave order and identity to the undetermined co-existence of human beings was ultimately established around the division of labor and relations of pragmatic exchange, a purely functional mode of co-existence which had as its center the instinctual prioritization of humankind's basic needs (the acquisition of food, pleasure, protection from the elements, etc.) and the establishment of power relations which can provide, maintain, and protect these needs. In this manner, it is emphasized by Yannaras that the initial axis of cohesion for humanity was and remains a necessary utilitarianism of survival and power, a social mode of existence formed and structured around that which is useful and beneficial for the acquisition of humankinds basic needs.

For Yannaras, then, the true achievement of the Greek people which ultimately set its mark on human history is the Greek impetus to liberate humanity from its subjection to the inexorable law of instinct by seeking to establish a social mode of co-existence that existed in accordance with truth.[156] Here the unifying axis which gave identity to the city-state was not the need to create relations of pragmatic/utilitarian exchange, although these needs were not ignored; rather, the established relations which constitute the identity of the *polis* sought to imitate the eternal and cosmic relations which establish the order, structure, and identity of the cosmos itself.[157] As such, on Yannaras' reading, it is Truth with a capital T—the Being of the cosmos—and not merely the base demands of instinct and passion, that for the Greeks became the ideal, the new axis or center of meaning which guided the social becoming of human existence within the life of the city-state. Indeed, it was this very stimulus which gave the Greeks their unique identity in contrast to all other forms of human co-habitation, therein setting the stage for the socio-political development of what is today known as "Western civilization."

This metaphysical impetus is understood by Yannaras as *the* implicit aim, or intentional presupposition, which helped defined the unique identity, or *hoú héneka* (end/final cause), of the Greek city-state—or, for Yannaras, the defining attribute of Hellenism (*Hellenismós*).[158] Explicitly, however, Yannaras claims that this impetus would come to thematically manifest itself in the philosophical literature of Plato and Aristotle, both of whom understand the Greek *polis* as a human "mini-cosmos" whose function is to participate in the rational order of the cosmos itself. Here the laws of the *polis*—which, in Ancient Greece, dictated every aspect of social cohesion—are understood by such thinkers as seeking to establish order and stability through imitation of the *tropos* in which the cosmos exists. In effect, those who participate in the being of the *polis* would then

156 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 98.
157 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 59.
158 As we will later see, there is no lack of historical evidence to support Yannaras on this point. See for example Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. by Gilbert Highet (Oxford, Basil: Blackwell, 1965) and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Origins of Greek thought* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), originally published in France as *Les origins de la pensée grecque* by Presses Universitaires de France, 1962.

be able to transcend their life of disharmony, suffering, and error through learning to participate in the beauty, goodness, and justice of the cosmos itself.[159]

Aristotle defines the purpose of Greek law (*nomos*), for example, as the establishment of *eudemonia* within the *polis*: "We call 'just' those acts that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society."[160] And *eudemonia* (happiness), here, is not simply a psychological bi-product of a particular way of life. It is, for Aristotle, the *telos* of human nature, the result of living in accordance with the divine justice of the cosmos. To reach this natural end thus requires the co-existence of human beings be in accordance with virtue, whereby virtue is understood by Aristotle as a mode of existence that is realized in accordance with *logos*, an "active and freely chosen coordination with the rationality [*logiki*] that governs nature."[161] In order for the *polis* to help man reach his final end, then, its laws must seek to be just, that is, they should be governed by the need to establish virtuous relations between the cohabitation of its citizens. Thus within the life of the *polis*, Aristotle reveals that the purpose of Greek *nomos* is the establishment of a truthful mode of co-existence through the practice of *koinōnia*; that is, communing correctly through faithful participation in and imitation of the divine and eternal rationality of the cosmos itself.[162]

For Yannaras, Aristotle's word choice here, *koinōnia*, helps us understand the ontological significance of Greek law and politics. In contrast to its Latin translation, *societas*, which signifies a fact of collective co-existence from a social agreement or contract,[163] *koinōnia* signifies a form of unity and identity that comes from the truthful relations of nature (*physis*) and life (*zoé*).[164] According to Yannaras, then, for Aristotle to speak of the Greek community as *koinōnia* is not to reference a form of co-existence that was established through pragmatic convention. For insofar as the city-state itself was seen as a "mini-cosmos," then the politically established relations which constituted the being of each *polis* ultimately had as their aim a metaphysical endeavor; that is, as we have already noted, the need for human symbiosis within the *polis* to participate in the truthful becoming of the cosmos, and in so doing, exclude the risk of suffering that results from

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159 "The apportioning-participation in cosmic rationality is therefore safeguarded for the Greeks by the political laws. They define order—for 'law is order,' as Aristotle stated (Politics VII)—and 'order always means reason (*logos*), with a clear reference to the universal reason, since 'nature is everywhere the cause of order,' (Aristotle, Physics VIII) and 'what is according to nature is always in due order,' and 'only the order of the cosmos is eternal' (Aristotle, On the Heavens II)." Cited in Yannaras, *On the Inhumanity of Right*, 58.

160 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* V, 1, 1129b 16. Cited in Yannaras, *The Inhumanity of Right*, 52.

161 See Yannaras, *The Inhumanity of Right*, 52.

162 *Nomos*, derived from the verb *nemō*, signifies "that which is apportioned to each," and that which is apportioned to each (the citizen) is "participation in the *logos*," communion with the cosmic order of justice and rationality. See Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la langue grecque*, vol. 1 (Paris: Klinchsieck, 1974), 742-3. Cited in Yannaras, *On the Inhumanity of Right*, 57.

163 For Yannaras, *koinonia* in Greek must be understood primarily in reference to communality as opposed to sociality, which was the primary understanding of the term in the post-Roman West: "At that time the *koinōniko* fact (the dynamic becoming of the relations of *koinōnia*) was alienated into *societas*: "as association for a common interest." See Yannaras, *Exi philosophikes zōgraphies*, 42.

164 Outside of its reference in the *polis*, the Greek understanding of *koinōnia* signifies the "the dynamics of relations of biological co-existence, the functionality of vital bonds of mutuality, the common participation in speech, the erotic union of love and sexual intercourse, the unity of body and soul. See Yannaras, *On the Inhumanity of Right*, 60.

disharmony, formlessness, chaos, and disorder.[165] As noted in Aristotle's work on politics, "[i]t is [*koinōnia*]…that makes an *oikos* and a *polis*…and it is the *telos*, the *hoú héneka* [the final cause, the 'for the sake of'] of *politike* that its citizens (*oi polítes*) reach their ultimate end through being-together (*koinōnien*) in a virtuous manner (in accordance with nature)."[166]

In this manner, Yannaras identifies as the foundational attribute of *Hellenismós* a simple yet often overlooked trait of the Greek city-state: the non-thematic impetus to "become true" (*aletheuien*) through the intentional act of being-together (*koinōnein)* in a rational manner. For Yannaras, it is only from this unique horizon that we will begin to understand the unique *tropos* of being that is the Greek philosophical tradition.

The Rise of Critical Thought

This need to become true within the established life of the community—what Yannaras describes as the originating "mission of Hellenism"—is described by Yannaras as an unending "struggle" of the Greek people; an ideal which was, of course, never consummated, but a new *aim* of the social-collective which indelibly left its mark on human history. On Yannaras reading, this is first seen in the political struggle of the Greeks to establish of a truthful mode of existence *kata kosmon* (in an ordered state), leading to the genesis of democracy and politics. But second (and by extension), this is seen in its most advanced form in the life of philosophers who attempted to accomplish this feat most rigorously within various philosophical schools, creating what is today known as critical thought: the human sciences and philosophy proper.[167]

In this manner, Yannaras understands the life and praxis of the philosopher as continuing this "mission of Hellenism," albeit in a more vigorous, zealous manner.[168] Here the emergence of mathematics, geometry, logic, science, metaphysics, as well as the philosophical schools and their various disciplines, must not be seen as purely theoretical and speculative endeavors, but rather a furtherment of this Greek *tropos hyparxeos* which had as its primary end the instantiation of truth (Wisdom) within the co-existence of the community. Such is why, according to Yannaras, philosophy in Antiquity was "fundamentally a mode of existence," one which "gradually initiated the student into the desire for true life."[169] From the laws established in the *agora* to the prescribed praxis of each philosophical school, this unifying *tropos* of Greek Hellenism remained the same.

This understanding of the Greek tradition which Yannaras is attempting to promote is mirrored in the work of Pierre Hadot, who also sees Greek philosophy as a continuation and

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165 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 43.
166 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a9–17. Cited in Stuart Elden's "Reading Logos as Speech: Heidegger, Aristotle, and Rhetorical Politics" in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38.4 (2005), 292.
167 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 108.
168 "[In] the evolution of the settlement into the *polis*, we can follow the main lines of the development of philosophy, its becoming independent of myth." Yannaras, *Schism*, 43
169 Yannaras, *Schism*, 16.

furtherment of this Greek mission.[170] Hadot's major thesis, in accordance with Yannaras', is that in the ancient pagan and early Christian worlds, the practice of philosophy always implicated a *manière de vivre*, a "way of life."[171] Meaning, Ancient philosophy was not, like it is today, seen as purely theoretical discourse, as merely an academic study. It was rather an intentional, prescribed form of life that had as its end the transformation of the self in accordance with *Wisdom*.[172] Ancient philosophy, in this sense, was a pedagogical way of living that engaged the whole of ones existence, an intentional life full of practices and exercises that aimed at the modification, improvement, and transformation of the self through a communal participation in truth.[173] Here the primary intention of each of philosophical school (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism, Cynicism), just like the intention of the city-state, was the wholistic embodiment of Wisdom, wherein Wisdom was understood as a truthful mode of being that was in accordance with the transcendent ontological state of Being itself.[174] For Hadot, the life of Socrates exemplifies this philosophical endeavor more so than any other. Plato and Aristotle continued this task, followed by the Hellenistic and Christian philosophers of the Greco-Roman era, all of whom must be understood not as creating intellectual or philosophical systems as we would understand them today, but as attempting to create a truthful mode of being for the philosopher to take part of.

For this reason, as Hadot states, "knowledge or *Sophia* in the Greek tradition is less a purely theoretical wisdom than know-how, or knowing how to live."[175] And this is because, for the Greek mind, truth was not simply an idea or propositional statement that must be acquired through *ratio* (reason/logic). On the contrary, as Yannaras also argues, truth was seen predominantly as an ontological reality—"the really real" (*to ontos on*), that which "truly is,"—and thus was understood as a divine and eternal reality that one must come to "know" through subordinate participation; i.e., through *becoming* true.[176] In Plato's dialogues, for example, Hadot points out that the end of dialectic was not the acquisition of particular, objective truths; rather, participation in dialectic was

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170 "The Greek city was particularly concerned about the ethical training of its citizens. This is attested by the custom of setting up *stelae* in the cities, engraved with maxims of Delphic wisdom. Each philosophical school tried, in its own way, to take over this educative mission." See Haddot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 127.

171 For Hadot, the praxis of the philosopher does not simply pertain to "a code of good/moral conduct," but, like Yannaras, to "a *way of being*, in the strongest sense of the term." See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 212. See also Matthew Sharpe, introduction to *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, trans. by Matthew Sharpe and Federico Testa (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 1.

172 On this point, see Hadot, "My books and my Research" in *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, 35.

173 Ibid.

174 See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 58.

175 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 44.

176 As Yannaras argues, for the Greeks, something was true when it was "really real" (*to ontos on*), that is, when it did not change, when it did not decay or die. And for the philosopher, the only empirically accessible reality that was immortal, and therefore true, was the rational *tropos* (that is, relations in accordance with reason: *kata logon*) by which the becoming of the universe was governed: the eternal and rational mode by which ephemeral existents (that which is mortal and subject to decay) becomes a cosmos of harmony, beauty, and decorum. For this reason, what was "true" in Hellenism would go on to be identified primarily with the immortal, divine rationality of the universe, or *Logos*, which "defines the existence and coexistence of the totality of existents" and "constitutes the eternal rational order, harmony, beauty (*kosmiotēs*) of the *kosmos*." For Yannaras treatment on the Greek understanding of truth as the mode of true existence, see the *Schism of Philosophy*, 8, 13-14, 45, 47-57. 61-86

a "spiritual practice" which had as its primary end the goal of *becoming* reasonable. Hence the acquisition of truth, for Plato, was also a *moral* activity that entailed the entirety of one's being.[177] For Aristotle as well, following his mentor, Wisdom is not acquired in mere abstraction, but in virtue—an embodied participation in that from which anything that "is" comes to be.[178] As Porphyry will later state, summarizing this mindset of the ancient Greek: "Beatific contemplation does not consist of the accumulation of arguments or a storehouse of learned knowledge, but in us theory must become nature and life itself."[179]

For both Yannaras and Hadot, it must be emphasized that this particular *telos* which guided the dynamics of critical thought was not restricted to particular or individual philosophers strewn throughout the Hellenistic tradition. On the contrary, it is regarded by each thinker as the defining *tropos* of the Greek tradition at large. On Hadot's reading in particular, we see this impetus lived out most clearly in what he has come to term "spiritual exercises" in Ancient philosophy, whereby each school proposes different forms of praxis—such as rational discourse, ascetical training, meditation/contemplation, etc.—with the end of bringing about the philosophers holistic participation in truth.[180] For Hadot, these practices reveal how philosophy in Antiquity was not simply an activity of the intellect *per se*, but more completely an "art of living," a mode of existence which required the total conversion and transformation of one's vison, life-style, and behavior.[181] Thus according to this vision of philosophy, to be a true philosopher in Antiquity was not to be someone who participates in "rational discourse"; before all else, to be a philosopher was to be someone who sought freedom from the chaos and pain of living untruthfully by seeking instead to living in accordance with a school's proposed view of Wisdom. Or, as Yannaras would say, the philosopher was simply one who had dedicated himself entirely to the Greek mission of becoming true.[182]

The Communal Verification of Knowledge

177 Every dialectical exercise, precisely because it is an exercise of pure reason, was subject to the demands of *logos*, and thus "turns the soul away from the sensible world, and allows it to convert itself towards to the Good—the dissolution of the untruthful mode of the self into the otherness of universality." Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 91-96.

178 As Hadot points out in *The Ethics* and *Politics*, Aristotle's goal is not to "set forth in a discourse the truth on some specific questions," but rather to "contribute to the perfection of human becoming," an objective which in itself is "beyond knowledge." See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 18, 44, 90.

179 Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 60

180 "[K]knowledge and truth…cannot be received ready-made, but must be engendered by the individual himself." Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 27.

181 On this reading, the philosophical school's theoretical discourse (the use of dialectic, logic, etc.) did not exist to "prove" any schools proposed ideal of Wisdom. Rather, the use of such tools was only one element of being a philosopher, and their primary function was to help cultivate and justify the appropriate attitude or disposition which came with each school's prescribed praxis. On these points, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 3, 36, 174.

182 See Yannaras, *The Schism of Philosophy*, 7. As Hadot also states, it is also for this reason that, before the fall of Athens, the philosopher's established *trópos hyparxeos* within each school was intended to overflow into the city itself. As can be perceptively seen in the character of Socrates, the philosopher existed himself as a *call* to true existence—an invitation for others to seek out the perfection of Being in himself, to remind the Greek of his duty as a citizen of the *polis*, and strive once more for the original mission which Hellenism had inaugurated. On this point, see Haddot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107.

This leads us now to the second most important attribute of Hellenism, which in itself is a natural consequence of the former. Yannaras refers to this second attribute as the "communal verification of knowledge" (*epalíthefsis tís gnósis*): the intersubjective manner in which the Hellene attempts to verify what was true from what was false when seeking to establish a truthful mode of co-existence. For just as the Greeks understood *koinōnein* (communion) as the path to *aletheuien* (being-true), so too, on Yannaras' reading, did the Greeks identify that which could be participated in by all—the *koinós logos* (common mind/experience)[183] of the community—as the ultimate verification of truth. In this manner, "critical thought" in Antiquity, the derived standards and criterion used for judging whether something was true or false, is recognized by Yannaras here as a mode of discernment which was inherently inter-subjective and communal.

This attribute, like the previous, can be first noted as having developed in the life of the city-state. Meaning, it is within the political praxis of the *polis* that Yannaras believes we find the first criteria develop for a verification principle in Hellenism. This can be noted, for Yannaras, particularly in the unique manner by which the laws of the *polis* were established. Here the citizens of the *polis* would gather together to participate in the critical, communal function of dialogue, which had as its goal the establishment of a "common *logos*" through a coordination of each citizen's individual *logoi* (each individual's proposition, idea, judgment, etc.).[184] As a result of this endeavor, the establishment of *nomos* was not dictated through the power and authority of the private "individual" (*atomikés*), but through a "coordination of *logoi*," the "common *logos*" of the community. And since the laws of the *polis* had as their end the need to create a truthful mode of co-existence, then within the life of the city-state, Yannaras argues, the common *logos* itself became the measure or standard of truth:

> "the way the laws of the *polis* operate is the first occasion on which it is possible to approach a definition of truth in the distinction between truth and falsehood. The laws distinguish the common *logos* that constitutes the truth of life (the cosmic/political realization of life) from the private *logos*, that is, the denial of truth, the refusal to participate in the common *logos* (in participatory rationality). And this distinction presupposes a term (a limit/boundary) between partaking in common (*to koinōnein*) and possessing in private (*to idiazein*), between the rational (*logon*) and the irrational (*para-ton-logon*), between truth and falsehood."[185]

What is unique to the being of the *polis*, on this account, is that its laws were established to counter the threats of living untruthfully—the threat of disorder, instinct, suffering, and chaos—and the

183 Drawing primarily from Heraclitus, the *koinōs (xynos) logos*, or "common mind," is a form of "understanding" (*xyn-noōi*) that comes from being in accordance with the mind (*logos*) that is "shared by all" (*to koinon pantōn*). This concept is drawn primarily from Heraclitus, who defines "understanding/sense/meaning" with the "mind-in-common," or *xyn-noōi* (xyn [συν: with/together/]—*noōi* [derivative of *nous*/mind]), and "knowledge" as *xunesis*, the process/action [*esis*] of understanding/grasping that which is common. On Heraclitus' understanding of knowledge, see Patricia Curd, "Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus," *The Monist*, Vol. 74, No. 4, Heraclitus (OCTOBER 1991), pp. 531-549.

184 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 44.

185 Yannaras, *Schism*, 47.

laws themselves were verified as true, as being in accordance with the eternal and divine principles of cosmic order, insofar as they were critically verified by the communal authority of the common (*to koinó*) over the individual authority of the private (*tou idiotikóu*).

In this manner, Yannaras argues that a proposed *logos* was regarded as true (*alithéuoun*) if it was "communally verified"—if it was a *logos* that could be known or verified by the *logoi* of others, thereby creating order and harmony (*koinōnia*) amongst the citizens. Likewise, a *logos* was assumed to be untruthful (thus causing discord, injustice, and destruction) if it was found only within the private *logos* of opinion (*doxa*); i.e., as that which was experienced or thought by the individual alone. Such is why, as Yannaras points out, the danger for the *polis* was to live in an autonomous fashion: "to set one's private (*idios*) *logos* against the *koinós logos*—to have your individual *doxa* set apart from, and uncoordinated with, the demands of the social reality of life" (hence the gravity of Socrates' crimes and severity of his punishment).[186] Thus the *individual*, for the Greek mind, is presupposed as ignorant (unaware of the truth)—an "idiot" (*idiōtēs*), quite literally—insofar as he does not participate in the common life of the citizens, since knowledge and wisdom resides "in the light" of common reason, whereas untruth and ignorance dwell in the darkness of the individual's private world.

This is a point which is substantially supported in the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant's enlightening study, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, which works out this principle in a much more historical, less abstract manner than does Yannaras. In this work, Vernant argues that before the rise of the city-state, in what is referred to as Greece's Bronze and Heroic age, the Greek world existed in a manner similar to all other major civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean. Mycenaean Greece, for example, was a palace-centered economic system whereby the king sovereignly controlled and closely regulated all sectors of religious, political, military, administrative, and economic life.[187] The relations of co-existence in the collective life of the community, the manner in which the division of labor, the relations of exchange, and the laws were administered, were primarily dictated by the king alone. Meaning, as Vernant points out, it was a strictly private, non-public event. The opinion and command of the solitary and most powerful individual acted as the governing center of each settlement or city, and his laws were just (*dikaiosýnē*) insofar as they had as their end the meeting of vital needs within the organized collectivity; i.e, they were created from a pragmatic and utilitarian end.

With the collapse of the Mycenaean empire came the collapse of this palace-centered economic system, leading to what is often referred to as Greece's "dark ages": an age of disorder, violent confrontation, and economic hardship, but also an age of renewal from which the political ideal of the Greek *polis* began to take shape. For it is from this era that we also see the establishment of the *arcon*, one of the first defining traits of the Greek city-state. Stemming from the Greek word *arche* (command), *arcons* were magistrates that were replaced yearly through an election system. In this process, as Vernant points out, the power of the state became a "communal" affair, as the elections themselves were public events which demanded debate and discussion. Within this new

186 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 45.
187 See Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 24.

political system, the deliberations and decisions that were once privately established by the king were now brought *es to koinon* (to the commons), which was strategically located *es to meson* (in the middle, or center), so as to be deliberated, considered, and known by all. The city-state would go on to center itself around this social space, what became known as the *agora*, a now public and communal space where problems of the city-state or general interest were debated.[188] Consequently, within the *polis,* the laws which shaped and determined the city's mode of existence were no longer an exclusive or private affair. The city, and the manner in which it would exist, was now the concern and interest of all.[189]

Insofar as the authority and power of the city-state was brought *es to koinon*, Vernant points out that we also see a transformation of the relation between speech (*logos*) and power. Rather than mandates being commanded by the solitary opinion of the king, the authority and power of the city-state now rested in the communal arena of speech, the common *logos* the community as opposed to the private *logos* of the person in power, thus enabling open debate, discussion, and argument.[190] Thus in the space of the *agora*, speech was no longer given as a solitary command, but was presupposes as a public event that could only establish a law with the consenting opinion of the many. In this manner, the use of *logos* within the *polis* took on an inherently communal and political nature, since the communal function of *logos* allowed for *alétheia* (truth), *arche* (command), and *nómos* (law) to be open to the commons (*koinon*) for critique, debate, and justification, making the common *logos* the medium in which the democratic intentions of the city-state were able to be realized.[191]

For Vernant, one can thus identify the emergence of Greek city-state's unique identity to the extent that this public domain had emerged; that is, the transition from private to common affairs, thereby affirming Yannaras thesis. As Vernant states:

> "Knowledge, values, and mental techniques, in becoming elements of a common culture, were themselves brought to public view and submitted to criticism and controversy…The law of the *polis*, as distinguished from the absolute power of the monarch, required that both be equally subject to 'rendering of accounts,' *euthunai*. They could no longer be imposed by the authority of personal or religious prestige; *they had to demonstrate their validity* by processes of a dialectical sort."[192]

Thus within every aspect of life, Vernant argues that the opinions of the individual were drawn out from the realm of shadows (the private) and "became public" for the sake of critique and verification, for such was the means by which the city-state could safeguard its political intentions. Or, as Yannaras would state, all established relations of co-existence within the city-state were

188 See Vernant, *Origins of Greek thought*, 47.
189 See Vernant, *Origins of Greek thought*, 47.
190 Ibid., 50.
191 As Yannaras states, this foreshadows Aristotle's works in rhetoric and logic, both of which sought to help "distinguish the real from falsehood, truth from illusion" for the sake of communing correctly. See *Nichomachean Ethics* IV.5.1122b; VI.13.1144b26-28; *Politics* III.4.1276.b.23-31. Cited in Yannaras, *The Church in Post-Communist Europe* (Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2003), 16.
192 Vernant, *Origins of Greek thought* 51. Italics mine.

"brought into the light" of the common *logos* to be critiqued, verified, and renewed, so that the *tropos* in which the community existed would not simply be useful and beneficial, but *true*.

In this manner, we are reminded that what Yannaras refers to here as the communal verification of knowledge is less a working definition as much as it is a gnoseological cultural presupposition which guided the "mission of Hellenism" we have described thus far. This is argued for by Vernant as well, who claims that it is this very presupposition that would later be taken up by the earliest philosophers, thereby establishing the unique *tropos* of philosophical inquiry for centuries to come. As Vernant notes, for example, the first Ionian philosophers were thinkers who no longer gave credence to the private opinion of myth to explain how nature (*physis*) had been given order and harmony within the cosmos. Rather, the pre-Socratics sought to bring the mystery of the world's origin "into the light" of common reason so as to be judged, critiqued, and debated, the same as any other concern of the city-state:[193]

> "With the Milesians, the origin and ordering of the world for the first time took the form of an explicitly posed problem to which an answer must be supplied without mystery, an answer gauged to human intelligence, capable of being aired and publicly debated before the mass of citizens like any question of everyday life."[194]

Meaning, as Yannaras argues, the inquires of the first philosophers were guided by the same gnoseological principle that guided the inquires discussed within the *agora*. Namely, that truth, or the acquisition of Wisdom, was to be found by bringing into the light of the common *logos* that which was once established in the precarious grip of individual, private *logoi* (mere opinion, *doxa*).[195]

Heraclitus' Common Logos

For Yannaras, this assumed praxis of Greek gnoseology first became explicit in one of Heraclitus' fragments, which states that "when we share in common (*koinós*), we say what is true, but when we express our private thoughts, we say what is false."[196] Yannaras reads this fragment, then, not as a new epistemological theory, but as a thematic statement which reflects the for-structure of Greek thinking as it developed within the life of the *polis*. However, for Yannaras, Heraclitus's fragment does more than make explicit this socio-political gnoseological principle. In relation to Heraclitus' other writings, Yannaras believes that Heraclitus also offers a unique insight into the ontological framework of the Greek conscience,[197] and it is only when we bring the two together

193See Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 104.
194 Ibid., 104.
195 Such is why, as Pierre Hadot has also recently pointed out, the development of philosophical thought only took place within philosophical schools, a community of life and dialogue between masters and disciples which had as its end the creation of a truthful "life in common." See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 56.
196 Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1: 148, lines 29-30, trans. Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 45,
197 As Heidegger also states, Heraclitus offers to the Western reader the strongest possibility of "redisclosing what is authentically Greek." See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being" in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 139.

that we are given an insight into the gnoseological uniqueness of the Greek philosophical tradition.

For Heraclitus, as it is well known, the cosmos is interpreted as existing in a state of constant flux and change. However, this change is not random. It is guided by a universal, divine *Logos* which permeates all existence: a general principle or formula that governs change in a rational, ordered, and structured manner, a "universal law" from which all things come to be. As we have previously seen, the idea that the cosmos is governed by a pre-existing (rational and moral) order was already a presumed notion by the Greek citizen—indeed, it was presupposed as the very starting point for the political endeavor of the *polis*. In this manner, Heraclitus can be read as thinking "like a Greek" on this matter. However, Heraclitus goes further when speaking about the manner in which this *Logos* is known, and it is here that, for Yannaras, we are given an even further insight into the uniqueness of the Greek world.

What Yannaras first wishes to point out is that for Heraclitus, the divine *Logos* which orders and structures the world's being is *self-evident*, "experienced" (*peirómenoi*: the etymological root of "empiricism") and "heard" (*akoústike*) by all."[198] In other words—speaking once more in a very Greek manner—the *Logos* is not a secret, hidden mystery (*mustárion*, coming from the Greek word *myō*, which means "I close my eyes"), as would have been previously assumed in religion when speaking of divine matters. The divine *Logos* is not seen by Heraclitus as that which can only be given to the private *logos* of priests and oracles. It is rather self-evident, *ekdilónetai* ("declared/manifested")[199] and thus experienced by all; a presupposition that, in many ways, was already assumed in the political praxis of the city-state.[200]

Thus the problem of ignorance and error—the problematic of misjudgment and living in accordance with untruth—is explained by Heraclitus as being a purely human problem; i.e., the fault lies with human receptivity, not in the *Logos* itself, which is evident through its universal *ekdílosi* (manifestation/showing/declaration). Human beings, who pay attention only to the fleeting experience of the senses, or who see the world only in light of their passions, can easily fail to see the truthful declaration of the *Logos*. Thus, for Heraclitus "[t]his *Logos* holds always, but humans always prove uncomprehending, both before hearing it and when they have first heard it."[201] Meaning, although the *Logos* is universal, given/manifested to all, one's individual comprehension/reception of the *Logos's* declaration is prone to error and illusion. For this reason, Heraclitus also states that: "it is necessary to follow what is common. For although the *logos* is common, most people live as if they had their own private understanding (*phrónêsin*)."[202] As Sextus Empiricus explains:

198 Diells and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7:133 = fr. 2

199 That Yannaras use of the word "*ekdilónetai,"* stemming from *dilóno* (declare/manifest/state), is important here. It implies the *Logos* is manifesting itself, or declaring itself, on its own terms, similar to how the human *logos* as word/speech is also manifested or declared. On this concept of the *Logos* as manifestation, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 60-63.

200 Yannaras, *Schism*, 46.

201 Diells and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7:133 = fr. 1

202 Diells and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7:133 = fr. 2

> "Heraclitus says that the criterion of truth is our becoming rational by participation in this common and divine *Logos*. Hence, on the one hand what is evident is common to all, that is, reliable (for it is received by the common and divine *logos*), and on the other hand, is experienced as unreliable by some only, for the opposite reason."[203]

On Yannaras' reading, then, Heraclitus' principle can be read as making thematic the guiding impetus of the Greek socio-political *ethos*, which recognizes the private *logos* as unreliable, prone to illusion and error, and the common *logos* as the bearer of truth, as the guide for acquiring knowledge of the real, the vitalizing element that gives identity and structure to the whole.[204]

For Yannaras, however, Heraclitus account of *logos* also helps reveal a deeper insight about the alethic nature of Greek *logos* in antiquity—one which is critical to understand when seeking to grasp how Yannaras believes the communal gnoseology of Antiquity worked. Inspired by his reading of both Heidegger and the Church Fathers, Yannaras also claims that Heraclitus' account helps us understand the dialogical, referential (existential) nature of Greek *logos*. Here *Logos* is *dialogical* insofar as the power of apprehending the *Logos* is seen as a *dia-logos*, an exchange, or dialogue, that exists between the human *logos* and the manifestation/declaration (*ekdílosi*) of the world's *Logos*. This is noted, for example, in the etymological nuance of Heraclitus' account, which argues that the rational principle of the world—as *Logos* (Word)—manifests/declares itself to the human being in a manner similar to the intelligible content that is conveyed in speech (e.g., it is "heard"— *akoústike*).[205] And it is *referential* insofar as the dialogue itself presupposes a first-person *relation* with what is given, an immediate encounter with the world's *Logos* that enables the human being to receive, or "experience" (*empería*) its manifestation.[206] In this manner, Yannaras reads Heraclitus as implying that the *Logos*, in dialogical relation with the rational (*logikós*) human being, "speaks to us," manifesting through first person experience its own sense or *logos* which can be known/experienced by the human *logos* in a receptive manner. And this insight, once more, is not read by Yannaras as a particular theory of an eccentric thinker. Like Heidegger, Yannaras believes that it manifests the Greek experience of Being altogether, which ultimately perceives the Being of beings as rising up into presence through the medium of speech.[207]

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203 Diells and Kranz, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 1:148, line 20. Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 46.

204 On this reading of Heraclitus' idea of the common *logos* being derivative from Greek political praxis, see Yannaras, *Orthos logos kai koinōnikē praktikē*, 188-193.

205 "Over the course of the fifth century…the term [*logos*] was used most commonly to refer to something said in words or appearing in language…*logos* aimed at conveying something, at presenting some subject matter so that it was believed or understood…In contrast to individual words (the Homeric *epea*), it [*logos*] was a connected, meaningful statement that presented the matter at hand in such a way that it made sense. Moreover, the term '*logos*' did not denote the actual words used, or the external manifestations of speaking…so much as that which came into being through words… In such cases a *logos* was not so much the actual exposition in particular words, but rather its content, the case made, or the argument advanced…. a *logos* was an organized presentation of things as being 'thus and so." On this point, See Mark A. Johnstone, "On Logos in Heraclitus," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol XLVII, 2014, 12, 14-17.

206 Thus to be "rational" (*logikós*), on Yannaras' reading of Heraclitus, is to be both existential and relational, wherein the intelligibility of the existent "exists only as manifestation and presence, that is, as *logos*." See Yannaras, *Schism*, 31.

207 At this point, Heidegger's phenomenological influence on Yannaras begins to become more evident. Indeed, Yannaras' alludes to Heidegger's interpretation of truth (*a-lētheia*) as highlighting this phenomenon (See Yannaras,

With this nuanced, referential understanding of *logos*, we can now more adequately understand Yannaras' interpretation of Heraclitus's axiom, which he believes contains an inherently existential, participatory horizon. Just as any written or oral account (human *logos*) can be unheard or misunderstood, so too, on Heraclitus' account, can the self-manifestation of the cosmic *Logos* be "unheard"—passed over, mistranslated, or misconstrued. However, in contrast to the plethora of human *logoi*, there is only one divine *Logos* that is disclosed/manifested, a universal *Logos* that is common to all. Therefore, is seeking to acquire reliable knowledge of the divine *Logos*, what Heraclitus offers for a criteria of verification is the *koinós logos*: "Insofar as we share in common, we say what is true, but when we express our private thoughts, we say what is false."[208] However, based upon Yannaras' relational (Heideggerian/Byzantine inspired) understanding of Greek *logos*, the common *logos* as such is not verified through rational comprehension alone; rather, as a referentially manifested/declared phenomenon, one's reception of the *Logos* is verified as true through *experiential* verification; i.e., a relational manifestation/declaration which is capable of being experienced/participated in by all.

Yannaras offers an example given by Democritus to illuminate this point. In referencing Heraclitus' principle, Democritus states: "if someone expresses the attestation-information-opinion that 'honey is sour,' it is counted as false because this *logos* is not coordinated (does not *sym-phōnie*, does not *homo-phōnei*) with the experience (*empeiria*) of all who have tasted honey."[209] Here the person *idiazei* (expresses his private thought), and it is declared that his *idian* (private *logos*) is wrong due to the fact that it is outside the common *logos* of his fellow human beings. In this example, the verified knowledge (*gnósi*) that "honey is not sour" is not simply arrived at through a noetic comprehension of the signified (e.g., I rationally understand that honey is not sour). Rather, to participate in, and consequently verify, the common *logos* "honey is sweet," would entail one to first try honey, and through this experiential relation with honey's manifested *logos*, either affirm or deny the proposition, thereby making intersubjective experience (communal participation) the ultimate form of verification.[210]

Schism, 62). According to Heidegger, Ancient Greeks *logos* "has a fundamental property of *aletheuein*," that is "making what was previously concealed, covered up, available as unconcealed, as there out in the open." According to Heidegger's lengthy investigation of Aristotle's use of the word, *logos* never means mere "reason" (ratio) but rather discourse and conversation, which in itself always had the function of "uncovering and making us familiar with beings." Consequently, man, defined as a rational animal, is not (according to Heidegger) understood by Aristotle as a being endowed with *ratio* (reason/logic); rather, this statement signifies Aristotle's recognition of *Dasein* as a being which has language, which addresses and discusses the world, and from which the world addresses and manifests itself in and through this language. On this interpretation of Greek *logos*, see Heidegger, *The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 63; cited in Stuart Eldens "Reading Logos as Speech: Heidegger, Aristotle, and Rhetorical Politics," in *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2005, 285.

208 Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1: 148, lines 29-30, trans. Philip Wheelwright, Heraclitus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 45,

209 Yannaras, *Schism*, 47.

210 Such is why, for Yannaras, *alētheuein* (being-true) is not simply, as Heidegger understands it, unconcealment. For the Greek, truth is indeed unconcealed insofar as it is manifested, as Heraclitus makes clear. But as Heraclitus further reveals, this manifestation is ultimately verified in the established common *logos* of "being-in-common," as is seen in the life of the *polis*. Therefore, for Yannaras, a more accurate reading would be to identify *alētheuein* with *koinōnien*.

For Yannaras, this principle of communal verification can be understood from the most mundane and trivial *logoi* (e.g., this chair is soft; two plus two amounts to four; it is dark outside) to more complicated or controversial *logoi* (e.g., this song is beautiful; this law is just; the world is in a state of constant flux). This is because, for the Greeks, Yannaras' claim is that in every *logoi*, even those which seem self-evident, it is not the self-referencing *logos* of *ratio* which is understood as providing their ultimate verification. Rather, in accordance with their socio-political horizon, the ultimate criterion of truth was the ability for a manifested *logoi* to be participated in or coordinated with the manifested *logoi* of others; e.g., the *logos* "two plus two amounts to four" is ultimately verified, or regarded as true, because it is a *logos* which is verified and participated in by all. And one can see how this presupposition would naturally follow if, per Yannaras, the ultimate aim of the critical thought was not the appropriation of knowledge as a purely intellectual endeavor, but the ideal of holistically becoming truthful withing the common life of the community.

In all manners of life, then, Yannaras takes Heraclitus' dictum of the private vs. the common *logos* as the fundamental criteria of verification in Hellenism: the guiding principle for distinguishing opinion from truth, illusion from knowledge, the unreal from the real.

Aristotle and the Consensus Omnium

While Yannaras' verification principle can, I believe, be evidently seen in the life of the city-state, the fragments of Heraclitus, as well as the presuppositions of the philosophical schools,[211] is it not overly bold for Yannaras to claim that this gnoseological principle can be noted as the unifying principle of Hellenism at large? This is, I believe, a legitimate point which could be raised against Yannaras at this point. In referring to this communal principle of verification, however, it must be realized that Yannaras is not referring to a systematic formation that will be acknowledged amongst all Greek thinkers. It is, for Yannaras, a part of the Greek *heritage*, a presumed thought pattern which Yannaras believes guided the "mission of Hellenism." It is also for this reason that Yannaras primarily identifies this principle in reference to the socio-political life of the city-state. But as we have stated before, Yannaras sees critical thought/philosophy in Ancient Greece as an extension of (as one with, not separate from) this socio-political endeavor. Accordingly, the best way to read Yannaras on this point is to see this gnoseological principle as an indispensable "thought-structure" which would have guided the praxis and development of the philosopher, similar to how the political need to "become true" also formed the particular manner in which philosophy was practiced in the philosophical schools.

However, even when reading Yannaras from this perspective, it would still be advantageous to find other thematic expressions of this principle within the praxis and discourse

211 Within the philosophical schools, similar once more to that of the city-state, it was presupposed that the ails which plague mankind come from the *individual* existing in error—that is, the *idiōtēs* who wished to live in accordance with his own private *logos*, which for the Greek, is always controlled by the passions and ignorance. To become a philosopher, then, one must leave behind one's uncritical, private *logos* and choose instead to (through a radical act of conversion) live in accordance with the *tropos* of common-being that was established in each particular school.

of Ancient philosophy, as it is largely on this point that Yannaras will be able to diverge from the narrative of Heidegger. For this extra support, we will turn to the work of Klaus Oehler, who in his rich essay, "Der Consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik" (The Consensus Omnium as Criterion of Truth in Ancient Phi1osophy and Patristics), further establishes the value of this communal gnoseological principle in a more systematic and historical manner than we find in Yannaras.

In my reading, Oehler refers to this same gnoseological principle in Latin as the *Consensus Omnium* (the agreement of all), or the unanimous opinion of the many. In his essay, Oehler also seeks to present it, like Yannaras, as *the* Greek method/criterion for truth which set a foundation for the political, philosophical, and religious history of the West for over a thousand years. And although Oehler makes no reference to Heraclitus' dictum (for Oehler, it was not until the work of Aristotle that we find this communal principle of verification clearly articulated and systematized in philosophical praxis), he does acknowledge ample evidence of this principle being used in Greek praxis dating back to Homer.[212] Regardless of this small deviation, it is well worth making reference to Oehler's points in seeking to better understand Yannaras's own position.

In Aristotle's work, Oehler points out how reference to the "concordant opinion of the *polloi*" is given consistent credibility, and eventually becomes the starting point for all Aristotelian philosophical inquiry. This is because, for Aristotle, it is within the *ómologia ton anthropon* (common agreement, acknowledgement, or concession of man) that common nature (*physis*) shows itself, and within this common nature, we also find the *Logos*, nature's highest expression.[213] *Ómologia*, importantly, stems from *ómo-logos*, meaning "of the same mind," thus mirroring Heraclitus's expression of the *koinos logos*. Both the *ómologia ton anthropon* and the *koinos logos*, then, can be understood as a thematic expression of their primordial use in the life and praxis of the Greek *polis*.

From a philosophical perspective, Aristotle seems to give credence to the *ómologia ton anthropon* for a similar reason as Heraclitus. For both Aristotle and Heraclitus, private opinion (*doxa*) cannot stand on its own. It is not reliable and thus is unable to be given credence. This is because, for both Aristotle and Heraclitus, the individual can never exhaustively grasp the whole, and one's knowledge of whole is always prone to error and illusion. However, for Aristotle, even when the private opinion/belief (*doxa*) of the individual is not fully correct, it is still not *entirely* incorrect. For on Aristotle's reading, all men, no matter their stature or position, have the capacity to partake of truth: "everyone must be understood as a partaker in truth, even if in a small degree."[214] Therefore, while individual *doxa* might not be understood as reliable, one could, in theory, acquire a reliable form of knowledge when the critical opinion of the many are collected to form a unified, common mind, wherein a fuller expression of the truth may arise. In the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, this principle is made explicit: "For we say that that which

212 See Klause Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik," in *Antike und Abendland*, Volume 10 (1): 28 (Dec 31, 1961, 103.
213 Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 105.
214 Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 107.

everyone thinks really is so: and the man who attacks this belief will hardly have anything more credible to maintain instead."[215] Herein, for Aristotle, "the unity of truth thus reveals itself, in a certain eschatological way, in the final agreement of all thinkers, in the *consensus omnium philosophorum*."[216]

For Oehler, we see this principle also working itself out in Aristotle's theory of logic, in the first chapter of *Prior Analytics*, specifically in relation to his rules for dialectical syllogisms. The dialectical syllogism, in contrast to the apodictic syllogism, only forms conclusions from probable *logoi.* The dialectical syllogism starts with premises/*logoi* (say, about what is good or just) that cannot be known with a form of scientific certainty (such as 2+4=6), but still retain a high enough degree of probability that allow for credible conclusions to be drawn from said propositions. However, that which is highly probable must itself be given a standard from which to measure itself, a characteristic which can help distinguish that which is probable from improbable. Accordingly, Aristotle terms *logoi* which contain this character of reliable probability *endoxa*: propositions which "seem to be true to all men or to the wise."[217] Meaning, Aristotle makes the "*ómologia ton anthropon*" the starting point, the foundational ground for dialectical syllogisms—a fact which, for Oehler, should not be taken lightly, as a large portion of Aristotle's corpus, including *The Ethics*, *Law*, and *Politics*, must be understood within this domain of dialectic.[218] As Oehler stresses, "the whole of Aristotelian dialectic is rooted in this conviction."[219]

However, drawing even further from Hadot's work, it can be noted that this communal principle can be applied to even to Aristotle's more rigorous conception of philosophy as a science, which uses deduction to arrive at determinate conclusions. This is because, as Hadot points out, the "starting points" (first principles) of each science are themselves grounded upon universally accepted beliefs (*ómologia ton anthropon*). As Aristotle states:

> "It is impossible to speak of first notions in each science while at the same time relying on the specific principles of this science, because principles are precisely that which is first in relation to all the rest. It is thus necessary, if one wants to examine them, to make recourse to what exits in terms of generally accepted ideas concerning each of these notions. This task is proper to dialectic."[220]

Thus for Hadot, Aristotle's most critical foundations, such as the identity principle, are not "proven," accepted, or made into indubitable foundations through mere *ratio* (thus presupposing an early form of foundationalism). They are, on the contrary, ultimately grounded in the intersubjective, shared *logoi* of the community.[221] And for Yannaras, commenting on the communal function of Aristotle's corpus, this is because Aristotle's logic did not exist, as it is

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215 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.2, 1172b36–1073a2. Quoted in Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 106.
216 Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 107.
217 Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 106.
218 On this point, see Alessandro Giuliani, "The Aristotelian Theory of Dialectical Definition," *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Summer, 1972), 129.
219 Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 106.
220 Aristotle, *Topics*, 101a37. Quoted in *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, 138.
221 Hadot, *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, 138.

often interpreted today, in order to create indubitable truths that must be rationally assented to by competing opponents. Aristotelian logic, rather, was created "to think right in order to commune right," as is stated by Aristotle himself.[222] For Yannaras, then, even something as simple as Aristotelian logic cannot be understood from outside of the primary attribute of Hellenism as we have attempted to portray it so far, and thus must itself be re-thought in light of this communal gnoseology.

Consequently, while the Greek conception of *ómo-logia* as a criteria for truth might have found its first philosophical expression in Heraclitus, it is without a doubt in the work of Aristotle that we find its most clear elucidation in both theory and praxis. But its influence does not end here. If anything, according to both Yannaras and Oehler, its influence only continues to grow as a philosophical and cultural force on into the Greco-Roman empire. For example, we find in the philosophy of the Stoics, inspired by Heraclitus's divine *Logos*, the idea of a universal nature in which all humankind participates, and from this shared, universal nature, there is produced ideas and concepts (*logoi*) which are "common to all." Thus, according to Cicero, the more one accommodates his life to the life of nature, the more he is able to acquire knowledge of the divine being, the *Logos* which permeates all existence—a knowledge which is "affirmed in the general recognition of all people and all times."[223] In the writings of Cicero we also find a direct agreement of Yannaras' identification of truth and communion, since for Cicero, it is in the *koinōnia* (common-being, being-in-common) of man that we find the voice of nature, *omnium consensus naturae vox est*. Consequently, in every matter, "the consensus of the people is to be regarded as a law of nature: *omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium lex naturae putanda est* (Tusc. I 30)."[224] For Oehler, this "consensus metaphysics" not only underpins Cicero's theology and ethics, but more importantly for our purposes, is recognized as having gained a world-historical significance with the Roman Empire's political concept of *consensus*, stretching over a thousand years through the life of the Byzantine Roman Empire into the Christian *ekklēsia*.[225]

Of course, these examples given by Oehler do not prove Yannaras' insight. They can only, like Yannaras, be seen as a thematic manifestation of the Greek gnoseological tradition, the assumed thought-structure which guided the Hellenistic conscience in their attempt to establish a truthful mode of existence. And understood as such, Yannaras' thesis will always be left open to interpretation and critique. However, in order to understand most fully the nuance of Yannaras' argument, one must keep in mind the previous points we have overviewed thus far.

As we saw in the previous sections, the philosopher's desire for Wisdom in Antiquity was not satiated or driven by a need for propositional knowledge. Rather, this desire was driven by the

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222 See *Nichomachean Ethics* IV.5.1122b; VI. 12.1144b26-28; Politics III.4.1276.b.29-31. Cited in Yannaras, *The Church in Post-Communist Europe*, 16.

223 Hadot, *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, 110.

224 Ibid.

225 As we will see in the following chapter, Yannaras will also emphasize how this existentially based, communal epistemological principle was adopted by the early Church and continues to guide the *Ecclesia*, even to this day. However, as both Yannaras and Oehler stress, this communal principle has largely remained the same in the Orthodox East, whereas it has been strongly altered in the West, as can be seen in the Orthodox understanding of *sobernost* and the Catholic emphasis on Papal infallibility. Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 106, 123.

need to become true—to overcome one's life of error, disorder, and suffering through participation in a truthful, and thus communal/common, mode of existence. Thus the words of Seneca: "the living word and life in common will benefit you more than the written discourse."[226] For within the philosophical schools, similar once more to that of the city-state, it was presupposed that the ails which plague mankind come from the *individual* existing in error. To become a philosopher, then, one must leave behind the individual's epistemic powers (which tend towards error and self-interest) and choose instead to subordinate oneself to the mode of common-being that was established in each particular school. For in Antiquity, as we have seen, it was only through communion with the common-being of the whole that truth, and thus the overcoming of error and disorder, could be found.

Consequently, on Yannaras' reading, the acquisition of truth in Hellenism was ultimately seen as an ongoing *event* that is communally actualized (enfleshed) in the very becoming of human co-existence, and it is by seeking to critically live in accordance with the common rather the private that one finds assurance along this path. Here the desire to be-true was not only realized through being-in-common—more importantly, the desire to be-true, whether in the life of the city-state and philosophical school, was recognized as an ongoing, ascetical struggle. That is, it was recognized as an event that could only be established by overcoming the partial, the selfish, and the private, choosing instead to transcend oneself by following the *koinós logos* of the community.[227]

Apophaticism

The emphasis given to the verification of knowledge through participating/sharing in common leads us to Yannaras' final attribute in seeking to carve out Hellenism's unique mode of existence: that is, the flourishing and progression of apophatic knowledge.[228]

Yannaras thematically defines Greek apophaticism as "the refusal to identify the comprehension of the signifiers with the knowledge of the signified, the refusal to exhaust knowledge in its formulation."[229] Yet insofar as this attribute thematically manifests the cultural *tropos* of Hellenism, it is better if we understood Greek apophaticism, on Yannaras' reading, as a gnoseological attitude or *disposition* towards knowledge. Thus further defined, Yannaras identifies Greek apophaticism with "the stance (*stasis*) that the signified in question may or may not exist," but that any knowledge which one does acquire of its existence "will not come about through a rational comprehension of the signifier, but through a communal experience of its manifestation."[230] Here Greek apophaticism represents not only a cultural awareness of language's

226 Cited in Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 56.
227 Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1: 148, lines 29-30. Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 45,
228 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 104.
229 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 103.
230 See Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 52.

incapacity to properly signify/exhaust the givens of primordial experience, but also represents an alternative model of knowledge altogether.

In order to understand this final attribute of Ancient thought, we must first come to understand the two presuppositions from which Yannaras believes this stance towards knowledge is derived: 1) the symbolic function of Greek *logos* in Antiquity, and consequently 2) the identification of knowledge with "an attestation that is chiefly experiential."[231] The second aspect follows from and can be made sense of only in reference to the first, as it is this symbolic function of Greek *logos* which Yannaras believes led to the cultural "stance" of identifying *gnosis* with direct/manifested experience (of the signified) over and against mere comphrension (of the signifier).[232] It is to these two dimension of Greek *logos*, then, that we will offer our attention to below.

The Symbolic Function of Logos

As always, the understanding of Greek *logos* which Yannaras seeks to portray, first and foremost, is believed to be an initial characteristic of Greek culture and praxis. Consequently, this apophatic stance towards knowledge must be understood as having first developed in a non-thematic manner, embodied in Greek plays, myths, epics, architecture and art. For what these forms of cultural expression demonstrate, on Yannaras's reading, is not only the symbolic function of the sign in early Antiquity, but how the symbolic functioning of *logos* (as metaphor, analogy, etc.) was presumed as a genuine mode of expression for the transference of knowledge in Greek culture. This is noted in the work of Democritus, for example, who argues that Greek language is understood to function analogously to the masterpieces of the Greek sculptor, which by definition are not faithful (univocal) imitations of their natural original, but symbolic representations (ideals) that provide a common *logos* of participation.[233]

As further evidence for this symbolic reading of Greek *logos* in Antiquity, Yannaras also draws our attention to its etymological origins:

> "The primary sense of *logos* is derived from *legô*. It means collection (*syl-logê*), gathering, or assembly. Homer says: 'Let us gather up (*legômen*) the bones of Patroclus, son of Menoetias.' Originally, *legô* meant I assemble, I bring together partial elements or attributes into the unity which is indispensable for that which exists to become manifest."[234]

Meaning, for Yannaras, the primary sense of *logos* in Antiquity (before it was understood as speech, word, or idea) was itself understood as a derivative of *symballō*, which implies the action of coordinating, harmonizing, or putting together. Thus for it to be later developed in conjunction

231 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 103.
232 This is an important theme that Yannaras will carry with him throughout his critique of Western thought, and even beyond genealogy into the second "stage" of his work, which he himself defines as testing the Christian/Hellenistic understanding of apophatic knowledge in response to Wittgenstein and the contemporary/metaphysical critique of language.
233 On this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 34-35.
234 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 159.

with speech/language implies that language itself (*as logos*) was seen in a similar light. In other words, language was recognized as a *symbolo*, as being inherently symbolic. Indeed, the verb *symballō* (syn–ballō) would also go on to develop a naturally linguistic connotation, as it could be used to signify the act of "putting something together" in one's mind or "conversing" about something in relation to oneself.

What this implies, for Yannaras, is that the common linguistic code of comphrension in Hellenism originally functioned in an iconological, symbolic manner. In the use of poetry, myth, art, as well as "everyday language," the names (*onomata*) by which one names things (*pragmata*) or goods (*chrēmata*), were recognized as having sense and/or meaning only when they function symbolically; that is, "when they *syn-balloun*, put together, bring into accord, particular individual experiences and provoke comphrension (syn-ennoēsē).[235] As Aristotle himself states, "There is nothing that belongs to names by nature, but only when they become symbols."[236] Which entails, for Yannaras, that the meaning of a word would not have been found in its "frozen image" or definition; that is, through "comprehension of the signifier." Rather, for the Greek, if one seeks to understand the *logos* of a symbol, one must be ana-logically transferred to the original meaningful experiences (the signified) from which the unifying symbol (the signifier) was derived.

When critical thought would later arise from this cultural *ethos*, then, Yannaras argument is that that this symbolic element of Greek discourse remained the primary lens for understanding Greek *logos*, even in relation to the more determinate, conceptual *logoi* of abstract thought. Here the abstract idea of philosophical inquiry was likewise recognized as bringing together/harmonizing all the previous elements of given experiences into a unified and general *logos* (a common *logos*), which would then act as a signifier (*symbolo*) which defers beyond itself to the unrepeatable manifestations of particular experiences (the signified).[237] Thus even in its more rational, philosophical development, Yannaras believes that Greek *logos* would continue to be understood from this apophatic disposition: that is, the cultural "stance" of not identifying "one's comphrension of the signifier with knowledge of the signified." For insofar as the determinate nature of Greek *logos* remained symbolic, then to acquire knowledge of the signified would not be to comprehend the signifier, but to experience, first-hand, the signified's disclosure.[238]

In seeking to point out this thematic continuation of the symbol in philosophy proper, it is to the work of Aristotle that Yannaras turns.[239] In the Aristotelian theory of abstraction, for

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235 See Yannaras, *Paintings*, 101.

236 See Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 165a 7-8; *De interpretation* 16a 27-28; cited in *Schism*, 24. For Yannaras' analysis of the symbol in Hellenism, see *Schism*, 23-26; 52-57; *Person and Eros*, 159-63, 165-70; and *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 101-103.

237 Yannaras alludes to Gorgias, for example, who understands the power of rational thought as making "abstractions" from the "recordings" of our experiences within the mind. See *Gorgias*, frgm. 11 (17). Cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 34.

238 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 72-76.

239 Not only does Yannaras turn to Aristotle because he genuinely believes Aristotle's work portray the symbolic function of *logos* as previously described, but it is also with the work of Aristotle that Yannaras feels the strongest need to break his reader free from its "Western" (Latin), rationalist presuppositions, as it is largely upon this rationalist

example, Yannaras points out how the universal idea/concept is understood to be the result of the mind abstracting all accidental properties of a species and "putting them together" (*sym-ballontai*) in order to arrive at the uniform genus (*eidos*) of said existent, leaving behind only the characteristics which are uncommon to every encountered being.[240] In this process of abstraction, then, the mind retains the *ousia* of an existent—say, for example, the common elements of every river one has ever experienced. And according to Aristotle's theory, it is then due to this universal idea, abstracted from our individual experience of all rivers, that we can both share our unrepeatable experiences of the particular river in a common linguistic code, as well as engage in critical thought concerning said experiences (e.g., putting together propositions which seek to better understand what a "river" *is* from what it *is not*). As Yannaras states: "although individual experiences of each one of us is derived from whatever rivers we have seen in our life…when we hear (or see written) the word river, we all recall the abstract *ennonia*-idea that is common to all (not private)…and comprehension occurs."[241]

In this manner, we see how Aristotle's theory of abstraction works in correlation with the previous understanding of symbol. Here the *logos* "river" is also recognized as a name (*onoma*) which "means nothing by nature." Rather, the Greek word for river (*potámi*) only *is* (becomes something/becomes meaningful) when it functions as a symbol: i.e., when it *syn-balloun*, puts together, brings into accord, particular experiences of individual rivers into an intelligible unity, therein providing a form of sense to what would have otherwise been a meaningless sound or image. As such, on Yannaras' reading of Aristotle, the *ousia* that is derived from abstraction is not signifying an autonomous meaning that exists "in itself." That is, as Yannaras states: "the definition of a being (its *ousia*)...is not a "*logos* (formula) *about* something (some individual being)," nor does it represent "the establishment of an arithmetical/significative autonomy for the thing as it exists in itself."[242] Rather, it is declaratory of a unifying rationality in which all "beings" of certain kind participate; i.e., as a symbol, it is signifying the particular event(s) of various river's manifestations that have been "gathered together" into a coordinated unity in order to be comprehended and inter- subjectively communicated in speech.[243]

For Yannaras, this symbolic, referential function of Aristotelian abstraction naturally leads to an alternative reading of Greek reason—one which, he believes, would allow for an emphasis to be kept on the particular, existential form of knowing which we have attempted to articulate thus far.[244] For according to this account of Greek *logos* as symbol, even the determinate idea/concept,

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interpretation of Aristotle that the philosophical impetus of Western metaphysics is based. On this point, see Petra, *The Apophatic Horizon of Ontology*, 24-25.

240 Ibid.,

241 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 102.

242 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 7.1034b21; cited in *Schism*, 49-50.

243 "The definition then, of *ousia*, signifies all those beings that participate by a common mode in the common *logos* of social experience—all those beings of which we all have a common experience, that is, a common *logos* of approach… 'Things are said to be one,' as Aristotle states, 'when the account [*logos*] of their ousia is one and the same.'" See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.1016b8-9; cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 49.

244 For Yannaras' entire re-reading of Aristotle, which we unfortunately do not have the time to go into here, see *Schism*, 46-57.

such as a being's *ousia*, must ultimately be understood as offering of form of knowledge that is not acquired simply through the signifiers comphrension, but through one's first-hand experience of the signified's disclosure.

As noted already with Sextus Empiricus' commentary, for example, someone who comprehends the statement "Honey is sweet" cannot be said to *know* that honey is sweet; that is, just because one comprehends the *ousia* of honey through another's rational articulation of its common *logos* does not mean that one has acquired actual knowledge of what honey *is*. To know the *ousia* of honey—to know it is sweet, for example, or that it is sticky—one must first have a particular experience of honey's sweetness and stickiness, to actually experience the manifested *logos* of honey itself, and this particular *logos* would then be recognized as "true" insofar as it is verified (is participated in) by the *logos* of others. In other words, Yannaras argues that for the Greeks, the abstract idea/definition, as symbol, allow us to "share the reference of experience,' but it cannot "be substituted for cognitive experience," which in itself is the primary event of meaning which accounts for any form of knowledge proper.[245] As Aristotle himself states: "one must have more trust in observation of facts than in reasoning; *that latter is to be trusted only insofar as it accords with the observed facts*."[246]

At this point, however, could it not be objected that the emphasis of Greek philosophy is the prioritization of rational comprehension (comprehension of the universal) and the mistrust of subjective experiences (the particular), especially those experiences which are derived from the senses? To a certain point, yes, but it is not this form of experiential knowledge that Yannaras is referring to when he states that, for the Greeks, knowledge is identified with an "attestation that is chiefly experiential."[247] And to understand this point, we must keep in mind the previous points we have overview thus far. What Yannaras is referring to by "experiential knowledge" here is not the autonomous experience of an individual, as this would be the experience of an uncritical, private *logos.* It is this form of experiential knowledge which, for Yannaras, Plato, Aristotle, and others rightly took issue with. However, in reference to the critical verification of knowledge previously discussed, "experiential knowledge," for Yannaras, signifies rather the "coordination of all the subject's cognitive powers with the event of *intersubjective* relation."[248] Thus it is with Aristotle: the *ousia* of "river," as a symbol or "common logos" of inter-subjective dialogue (*dia-logos*), offers the possibility of coordinating, correcting, and verifying the individual experience of every participant, such that one's rational comprehension/participation in the common *logos* is understood as affirming/verifying one's particular experience. As such, rational participation in the common *logos* allows for one's particular, private reception/understanding of a being's manifestation to be transferred from mere opinion (*doxa*) to the common mind" (*syn-ennoeitai*) of the whole, therein securing a form of knowledge (*gnósis)* in the proper Greek sense of the word.

245 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 47-48.
246 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 760b30. Cited in Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 82.
247 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 56-57.
248 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 103. See also Yannaras, *Schism*, 60-63.

On this reading, then, Yannaras emphasizes that one cannot acquire knowledge of a river's *ousia* through rational comprehension of the signified alone; that is, without first having experiential knowledge of the river's own manifestation. Indeed, for Aristotle, to acquire knowledge of what a being is always presupposes an experience of the being's particular disclosure (as noted previously with Heraclitus' account). However, for Yannaras, this self-manifestation of *logos* is then revealed as true (one's knowledge is justified) when one's particular experience is found to be in communion with the common *logos* of all who have participated in the river's self-disclosure: such is the *ousia*, the *koinós logos* that is rationally participated in and acknowledged by all. Meaning, the verification of the abstracted symbol—the universal idea of "river"—indeed leads to knowledge of the river, but Yannaras' point is that *the Western misreading of Aristotle is the mistake of equating said knowledge with a comprehension of the signifier alone*. For while intellectual comprehension of the signifier does indeed allow one to say that they have acquired knowledge of the river, this is only because the symbol—the *ousia* (common *logos*) which all share in—has allowed one to verify that one's knowledge of a particular *logoi's* manifestation is indeed *true* (*pistos*: trustworthy/faithful/able to be relied upon).

For Yannaras, then, this signifying-formulation of manifested experience by the common linguistic code of rational comprehension presupposes that the code, even in its abstract/conceptual form, should function symbolically.[249] On this reading, the recognition of the concept/idea as symbol acts as a limit-principle, ensuring that knowledge remains inherently tied to existential manifestation rather than the intellectual comprehension of the signifier alone. Here knowledge (*gnósi*) is verified neither through mere intellectual comprehension of the signifier or direct, private experience of the phenomenon. Rather, as can be first seen from the *tropos* in which the *polis* functioned, knowledge of truth comes only from the struggle to establish *koinōnien*—the intersubjective experience of common-being.

Knowledge and Participation

As should be clear, Yannaras' symbolic reading of Greek *logos* here is attempting, in part, is overcome the modern/postmodern, rationalist reading of the Hellenistic tradition. This reading interprets Ancient thought, beginning especially with Plato and Aristotle, as attempting to exhaust the possibility of knowledge in humanity's intellectual capacity—in the intellectual apprehension of Being/beings through the concept/idea—thereby setting the stage for the rationalist mode of thinking which proliferated in Modernity.[250] However, as we will see in chapter four, Yannaras believes this reading of Plato and Aristotle is based upon a drastic mis-appropriation of *logos* in the Latin philosophical tradition of Western Europe, which for various reasons, did not contain the historical continuity of cultural horizons which would allow for a proper understanding and adoption of Greek thought and praxis. For Yannaras, then, it is only when we look once more to the cultural horizons in which Greek *logos* was actualized that we can truly come to understand

249 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 101.
250 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 76.

that "ancient Greek gnoseology has only the most tenuous relationship, if any at all, with what we call rationalism in the history of Western philosophy."[251]

Plato, for instance, is often critiqued as one of the founders of "totalitarian" metaphysics.[252] However, Yannaras believes Plato's works have only been viewed as such insofar as they have been read backwards outside of a properly Hellenistic context. For while there may be plenty of textual support for such "violent" readings of Plato's essentialism, Yannaras wishes to call our attention once more to the apophatic, moral, and "erotic" dimensions of Plato's thought, which in many ways underlies the entirety of Platonic discourse.[253] Indeed, for Yannaras, even the more determinate dimensions of Plato's dialogues, such as the identification of *gnosis* with knowledge of the *eídos* (form/idea), must also be understood from this existential and apophatic horizon. Plato's *eídos*, for example, is not an abstract idea which the intellect exhaustively knows in a purely determinate, rational manner. As Yannaras points out, the *eídos* (from *idein* "to *see*"), rather, is a "divine spectacle," the knowledge of which is a dynamic vision, an indeterminate mode of seeing, one which presupposes a relational experience of the soul's participation in the beauty of the its manifestation (*ekdílosi*). Likewise, one's gnoseological participation in the *eíde* (the forms) is understood by Plato as an "embodied ascent" that requires ongoing conversion and askesis—a wholistic endeavor which requires the heart, the will, and the intellect. Such is why, on Hadot's reading, "knowledge [for Plato] is never theoretical. It is the transformation of our being…it is affectivity…it is virtue."[254] In Plato's own words, it is "a dynamic movement of the soul," a "moral" and "ecstatic flight" which leads one into the "vast ocean of beauty" which is the Good. That is, it is a participation in that which lies "beyond being" and can only be known in the relational participation of immediate experience.[255]

Indeed, it is for such reasons that we may also come to understand René Schauer's analysis of Plato when he writes that "Platonic dialogue is "supradiscursive." Meaning, Platonic discourse:

> "does not say what the Norms are, or the Forms [*eíde*], or Reason [*Logos*], or the Good, or Beauty; *for all these things are inexpressible in language and inaccessible to any definition*. One experiences them, or shows them in dialogue and desire; but nothing can be said about them."[256]

In other words, nothing could be said about them in a determinate, univocal manner. But such is Yannaras' point. For what *was* said was ultimately symbolic—words which put together and bring into accord particular individual experiences for the sake of reflective and inter-subjective discourse. For the Greek, then, the words used in Platonic discourse would have been recognized as inherently *apophatic* in the sense in which Yannaras seeks to communicate: that is, as not seeking to exhaust the meaning of the experience in the determinate idea, but as seeking to point

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251 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 77.
252 See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), Section 1.A
253 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 77.
254 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 70
255 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 78.
256 Cited in Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 75. [Italics mine]

beyond themselves to the unique and ultimately "unsayable" experience which the word itself signifies.[257]

And as we have seen previously, Yannaras believes this apophatic mode of thinking should be applied to Aristotle as well, whom Yannaras regards as one of the most misunderstood thinkers in the Western (Germanic/Latin) philosophical tradition. For Aristotle, who emphasizes true philosophical discourse as a "science," indeed presupposes a rigorous mode of definitions and correct structuring of concepts and syllogisms for the carrying out of such philosophical discourse. However, as we have seen with Yannaras' re-reading of Aristotle in light of the common *logos* of Greek gnoseology, Yannaras wishes to emphasize that Aristotle does not claim to exhaust knowledge in this structure. Rather, Yannaras' claim is that knowledge for Aristotle remained primarily "experiential," an inter-subjective mode of knowing which no form of reasoning could replace. Indeed, for Aristotle, even the correctness of reason itself "is not simply methodological or formal," but is also "confirmed 'by virtue,' and virtue is a 'work of community."[258] Thus while knowledge of truth (the common *logos*) does indeed come about through "contemplating rationally," Yannaras believes that even Aristotle's notion of rational contemplation would have little do with the scholastic and later modern interpretation of rationality, since for Aristotle, it is "ultimately the soul that thinks and understands," and the soul, for Aristotle, is not simply the "rational" faculty of man,[259] but the wholistic totality of the human being—an "indeterminate inclusion of that which exists: 'the soul in as sense is everything that is.'"[260] The soul which "thinks and understands," then, does not simply understand merely through intellectual comprehension, since the soul's parts "appear to be infinite," and the knowledge which the soul ascertains transcends mere rational apprehension. Such is why, as Hadot also confirms, Wisdom for Aristotle is not given in mere abstraction or demonstrative reason, but in "know- how" (living truthfully), the acquisition of virtue,"[261] which in itself can only be secured through participation in the common-being of the community.[262]

Once more, then, we see how this gnoseological dimension of Greek thought can only begin to be grasped when it is understood in reference to the Hellenistic *tropos* of actualization, which Yannaras describes as the need to *become* true through the critically established, common life of the community. This is noted most acutely in the Ancient philosophical schools, wherein the path towards knowledge was not seen as a mere "comprehension" of the school's *theoria*.[263] In the

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257 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 100.
258 Yannaras, *Schism*, 78. Here Yannaras cites *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.5.1122b29, 6, 13.1144b26-28.
259 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 78-79.
260 Ibid.
261 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 44.
262 "It is the sharing of a common view (*koinonia*)…that makes an *oikos* and a polis." Accordingly, "all forms of public discourse—*strateniken* (strategy), *oikonomiken* (householding), and *retoriken* (rhetoric)—must become subordinate to the *telos* of the *politike*." That is, all forms of discourse must "have their ultimate end in the good of man [agathon tanthropinon], which is the *telos*, the *hou heneka* [the final cause, the 'for the sake of'] of politike. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a9–17; *Nic. Eth.* 1094b7–8. Cited in Eldens "Reading Logos as Speech," 292
263 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 70.

philosophical schools, rather, the path towards knowledge first and foremost required the wholistic praxis of *conversion*—the withdrawal for living for oneself (*idiazein*), or living privately (in accordance with the disordered state of self-interest and the passions)—so as to become true within the rational, common being of the community. Thus the true "philosopher," the true lover and participant of Wisdom, was not he who participated abstractly in philosophical discourse alone. To become a philosopher, and thus to participate in Greek *logos* correctly, was first and foremost to participate in a truthful mode of existence, as it is only here that the "Greek mission" of needing to become true could be realized.

As we will see in chapter four, then, Yannaras argues that the rationalist interpretation of Greek philosophy which is prominent today was only made possible insofar the philosophical discourse of the great thinkers of Antiquity were (and continue to be) read outside of this properly Hellenistic horizon. More fully, it is *because* the critical discourse of philosophy was mis-appropriated in the post-Roman tradition of Western Europe that, on Yannaras' reading, we have the development of an altogether new *tropos* of participating in critical thought—a new *ethos*, or philosophical tradition, which has guided the history of Western Europe for the past millennium. And as well will see in the following chapters, it is upon this later derived, non-Hellenistic philosophical *ethos* that Yannaras believes the foundation is set for the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe.

Summary/Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, we have attempted to lay out the unique *ethos* of the Greek philosophical tradition. We have defined these attributes, with Yannaras, as 1) the need to create a truthful mode of existence, 2) the "communal verification of knowledge," which placed the verification of truth in the common *logos* of referential/relational experience, and finally, 3) the apophatic stance of Hellenism, which identifies knowledge with a communal, intersubjective attestation that is chiefly experiential. These primary attributes, for Yannaras, establish the alternative "inner logic" of the Greek tradition, the alternative *mode* in which critical thought was realized within the Hellenistic philosophical tradition, and it is this mode of realization which he believes stands in contrast to the philosophical tradition of the Latin West.

This vision of Hellenism which Yannaras portrays, as ingenious as it may be at times, is not impervious to critique. The first matter of concern comes from a general lack of historical scholarship on Yannaras part. For while Yannaras' depiction of Hellenism is indeed insightful, often illuminating aspects of the Greek tradition which are very much forgotten in our own time, the problem is that Yannaras presentation of Hellenism is proffered with minimal engagement with primary sources. And such a concern becomes all the more problematic when his claims propose a fundamentally new outlook or interpretation of Greek philosophy at large. His depiction of the common *logos*, for example, is not sufficiently argued for in his writings, especially in relation to

the significance of its claim.[264] For while he does spend an in depth amount of time expounding upon this idea in *The Schism*, he offers very little primary literature from Ancient philosophy which can substantiate this claim (indeed, this notion of a "common logos" was not an idea that I was initially convinced by when reading his work. It was not until I further investigated this idea myself, outside of Yannaras' writings, that I found a sufficient amount of literature which seemed to affirm this insight).

So too, his portrayal of Greek apophaticism—especially in relation to his reading of Aristotle—is also in need of further engagement.[265] For example, he speaks of "knowledge" for Aristotle primally being an existential event that is confirmed/verified in the common *logos* (*ousia*). However, Aristotle speaks of many different forms of knowing throughout his writings: i.e., knowledge as perception, knowledge as experience, knowledge as memory, knowledge as intellectual virtue, demonstrative knowledge, scientific knowledge, etc. And while Yannaras' gnoseological insight about the "common *logos*" of participation could indeed be applied to these various modes of knowing, this is a subject which Yannaras does not himself go into in any extensive manner. If Yannaras' wishes for his interpretation of Aristotle to be taken more seriously by Western thinkers, he would need to provide a more extensive study for how his reading of Aristotle could be applied in the above modes of thought.

The point, however, is not that Yannaras' insights are misguided or incorrect. Indeed, as he himself is a native-Greek, I have found in my own research that these insights which he offers concerning the Greek tradition are often unapparelled in comparison to contemporary, non-Greek scholars. However, Yannaras immanent, first-hand experience of Hellenism (both in Greece and the Orthodox Church) does not excuse his lack of extensive scholarship, especially when he is making such grandiose claims. In many ways, these key aspects of his narrative are simply glossed over too quickly.

To be fair, Yannaras himself indeed recognizes the need for these ideas to be demonstrated more effectively.[266] However, such is not the purpose of his work. What Yannaras is seeking to provide is a narrative which explains the cultural mode of existence in which critical thought functioned in Antiquity. And on this level, Yannaras' narrative undoubtably offer us inspiring insights into the uniqueness of the Greek tradition. As I have attempted to show in my engagement with historical thinkers like Hadot, Vernant, and Oehler, the major attributes of Yannaras' vision of Hellenism are indeed historically accurate. Thus even with its shortcomings, I believe we may still receive the overall interpretation which Yannaras gives of Ancient philosophy as a viable

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264 Concerning Yannaras promotion of the common *logos* in *The Schism*, he grounds his claim only a few of Heraclitus' fragments (pgs 45-46 in *Schism*), while then offering an extensive re-reading of Aristotle in light of this insight (pages, 47-57). While this is a good start, one would need to engage with more than two thinkers of the Greek tradition in order to make a claim about a communal gnoseology which applies to the entirety of Hellenism. While Yannaras does extend and elaborate on some of these concepts in his later writings, such as *Orthos logos kai koinōnikē praktikē* (188-193), they are still presented in these works in a cursory manner, similar to *The Schism*.

265 Yannaras does further elaborate on his notion of the symbol and apophaticism in *To rhēto kai to arrhēto*, chapters 1-5; however, he does not do so here in relation to the writings of Aristotle explicitly.

266 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 77.

alternative, or vision, from which to understand the uniqueness of the Ancient philosophical tradition.

In review, what also must be re-emphasized here is the similarities that exist between the Byzantine tradition of the Church Fathers and the Greek tradition as a whole. For example, the primacy that the Eastern Orthodox tradition gives to experience, the Russian idea of *sobornost* as a universal and shared way of life, and the emphasis that the Church Fathers put on having moral and spiritual pre-conditions for the acquisition of knowledge, can all be found in Yannaras' account of Hellenism at large. However, this is because what we have with the tradition of the Church Fathers, on Yannaras reading, is a direct continuation of the Ancient philosophy's cultural heritage—a pristine inheritance of the manner in which philosophy was performed in Antiquity. As such, Yannaras believes that the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers—especially their gnoseology—offers the modern reader a critical insight into the uniqueness of the Greek philosophical tradition—a working model, if you will, which shows us the Greek *tropos* of philosophical praxis as it existed in contrast to its Latin development.[267] And if this claim is indeed true, that is, if the philosophy of the Church Fathers truly did inherit and preserve the *ethos* of Hellenism, then the unique vision of Ancient philosophy which we have overviewed in this chapter would demand to be taken seriously.

This connection then leads us to our following chapter, which will attempt to reveal how and why Yannaras believes this to be the case. More specifically, we will attempt to understand in the following chapter how, according to Yannaras' narrative, Christianity is a direct inheritor and continuation of Ancient philosophy proper.

267 On this point, see Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 24-25. Alongside the Church Fathers, it must also be noted that Heidegger is a strong influence on Yannaras' reading of Greek thought, yet more so because Heidegger seems to be affirming that which is *already* found in the philosophy of the Church Fathers.

Chapter III
The Ecclesial Event

In chapter one of this essay, it was shown that Yannaras is seeking to offer the philosophical (as opposed to purely theological) wisdom of the Greek Church Fathers as a response to the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism as pronounced by Martin Heidegger. In chapter two, we began our exposition of the historical dimension of this response, which seeks to offer an ambitious re-reading of the Greek philosophical tradition at large in order to offer a different narrative from which to understand the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe. As stated previously, Yannaras will attempt to accomplish this by arguing that the historical unfolding of metaphysical nihilism must be restricted to the Germanic/Latin philosophical tradition *alone*. More specifically, Yannaras will argue that the phenomenon of Western nihilism is an event which took place due to the Latin traditions inversion of, and thus divergence from, the Greek philosophical tradition of Antiquity, especially as it had come to be advanced in the dominant Christian tradition of the Church Fathers. In this chapter, then, we must move forward to the next critical step in Yannaras' narrative, which is to reveal how Yannaras understands this tradition of the Greek Church Fathers—and indeed, Christianity itself—to have both adopted and continued this Hellenistic tradition.

Unique to Yannaras' narrative is his claim that before the Church began to self-identify as a "philosophy," it was *already* a direct inheritor of Hellenism's unique *tropos hyparxeos* (as opposed to it becoming "Hellenized" over time through its participation in Greek philosophy). For Yannaras, this fact is revealed first in the Church's self-identification with the political reality of the Greek *ekklēsia*, signifying that the early Church's intentions were not to create a new religion, but to establish a truthful mode of human co-existence which participates in the vitalizing element (*Logos*) of the cosmos. It is also for this reason that he believes the early Church to have intentionally chosen (and still continues to use) the philosophical language-terminology of Greek metaphysics to best describe its identity and function. Second, and for this reason, the Church Fathers would agree that the Church should be understood as a *philosophy* in its own right: that is, as testifying to an ontological vision (*theoria*) of what it means to truly exist, as well as provided a prescribed praxis, or way of life, that allows one to participate more fully in this truthful mode of existence. For these reasons, we see that for Yannaras, the Christian *ekklēsia* must be recognized, even from the beginning, as a direct inheritor and continuation of Hellenism's unique "ethos" as explained in the previous chapter.

In seeking to explain the aforementioned points, this chapter will once more be expository. The first part will attempt to explain how, for Yannaras, the Church can be seen from the very beginning as a new *polis*, a new political reality in the Greek sense, rather than a mere religion, as it is most commonly signified today. This will then be proceeded by an in depth analysis of what Yannaras understands to be the later developed philosophy of the ecclesial event. In order to offer the reader a brief introduction into what Yannaras believes this philosophy to be, we will offer an overview of 1) the Church's vision of Being, 2) the Church's prescribed way of life, or praxis, which allows for participation in this truthful mode of existence, and 3) the Church's gnoseological criteria which can determine the veracity of its proposed *logoi*. The Church's gnoseology and ontology as it is described in this chapter will then be analyzed more closely in Part Two of this work, as it is the Church's philosophy as such that Yannaras will attempt to promote in *Person and Eros* as a response to the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism.

The *Ekklēsia* as a New *Polis*

According to Yannaras, the particular attributes which established the unique flame of philosophical Hellenism continued to burn, even if dimly at times, throughout the history of the Greco-Roman Empire (which, importantly for Yannaras—and indeed historically—did not end with the sack of Rome in 476 AD, but the fall of the Constantinople in 1453 AD).[268] For even with the decline of the Greek civilization upon its subjugation to Rome, we first see a continuation of this Greek ideal in the various philosophical schools that flourished in the Roman Empire, especially that of Stoicism, and second, as Oehler points out, there is the continuation of certain political ideals of the Greek city-state, such as the Roman concept of *consensus*. And of course, as Yannaras, Oehler, and Hadot all argue, its most significant continuation is found in Christianity itself, inaugurating the era of "Christian-Hellenism" in the Ancient world.[269] However, perhaps Yannaras' most interesting point is his strong emphasis that Christianity did not gradually become "Hellenized" through the writings and influence of the Church Fathers and their appropriation of Greek philosophical concepts. Rather, he believes that the Christian faith began, from its very inception, as a continuation of Hellenism's tradition, a fact which Yannaras claims can be seen even in the etymology of the word that the earliest Christians chose to identify themselves with.

As is well known, the term *ekklēsia* was chosen by the earliest Christians to signify their communal gatherings, later to be translated in English as "church." What is less known is that before it was used in these communities as designating the collectivity of gathered believers, *ekklēsia* signified the socio-political gathering (assembly) of Greek citizens who were called together in order to make decisions about the life and concerns of the *polis*:[270] to judge, debate, and decide upon the laws which would establish the harmonious and ordered mode of the city-state's existence, as we explained in detail in the previous chapter.

For Yannaras, then, the term *ekklēsia* is understood as having been intentionally chosen by the first Christian communities so as to manifest the analogous identity, intentions, and mindset that Christians had with the citizens of the city-state. *Ekklēsia*, stemming from the verb "*kaleo*" (to

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268 Yannaras here points to the study of Basil Tatakis' "La philosophie byzantine" in *Histoire de la philosohie*, edit. by Emile Bréhier (Paris: PUF) and Klaus Oehler's book, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter* (Munich: Bech, 1969) as the two first land-mark texts which argued this point fully. Here especially Oehler, inspired by Tatakis, speaks of the "organic continuity of Greek philosophy *without a break* and of a second phase (after Classical and Hellenistic Periods) that lasted until the fifteenth century." This period Oehler and others now refer to as the "Byzantine philosophy" of the Christian Hellenism. See Yannaras, *Schism*, 198n623.

269 As Yannaras argues, in the early Church, the seeds of the Church's Gospel took root and flourished most quickly and prosperously in settlements or areas that were most heavily influenced by the Hellenism of Greek culture. (The peoples of Persia, Arabia, the northern Germanic tribes, and even the Jewish people themselves were not as eager to accept and assimilate the Christian message). Most of the intellectual activity of the early Church, for example, were products of Greek speaking inhabitants throughout the Eastern Roman Empire: Ignatius of Antioch (35-110), Justin Martyr (100-165), Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Irenaeus (130-202), Origen (185-254), Athanasius (293-373), and the Cappadocian Fathers (330-389). For further reading on this Hellenistic development, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500*, Revised Edition (New York: Harper&Row, 1975), 76-78.

270 See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 21

call), with the prefix "ek" ("out from"), represented in the Greek *polis* those who were called together to discuss and establish, as Aristotle states, *eudemonia* within the polis, which is the *telos*, the *hou heneka* (the final cause) of *politike*. So too, as Yannaras argues, the earliest Christians saw themselves as those who have been called-out to help establish God's Kingdom on earth, to help actualize an entirely new mode of existence in which humankind was called to participate, making their identity and function reflect the wholistic struggle of the Greek *polis* more than it did the supplemental function of religion.[271] Here the goal of the *ekklēsia*, similar to the citizens of the *polis* and philosophers, also sought to "become true" within the co-existence of the human collectivity; to partake-of and live in accordance-with the mode of the eternal and divine *Logos*, and in doing so, overcome the disruption of sin, suffering, and death.[272]

St. Athanasius would go on to succinctly summarize this Hellenistic *telos* of the Christian community in his well-known and provocative statement: "God became man so that man might become God."[273] Thus in the early Church, and still in the Orthodox Church today, Yannaras wishes to emphasize that "deification" (*theosis*), or the process of humanity learning to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), has always been seen as the purpose and *telos* of the Church, the axis or center point of meaning which establishes the collectivity of gathered believers within the *ekklēsia*.[274] In this way, Yannaras sees in Christianity an immediate continuation and fulfillment of the Greek tradition, for "[i]n both of these versions of the fact, or event, of *ekklēsia* (the Greek and the Christian), there was a very clear metaphysical axis: the reference to and orientation toward the mode of existence according to truth."[275]

Yannaras even goes so far as to claim the culture of Hellenism as having paved the way for the Church's gospel to be adequately heard. As shocking as this might be to the Western reader, such language is not uncommon in the Eastern Orthodox Church, as many of the Eastern Church Fathers also made similar claims, such as the Greeks being "prepared in advance" for the Gospel,

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271 As N.T. Write also writes in his own work(s) on Paul, substantially supplementing Yannaras' point, "the messiah was never supposed to start a new religion"; for Write, Paul's message was "inescapable political. It had to do with the foundation of new *polis*, a new city or community"—a *polis* which, in light of the resurrection, meant the establishment of a "new humanity, a different model of the human race…the launching of a new creation, whole new world." See N.T. Write, *Paul: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2018), Part two, chapter 5.

272 See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 22

273 Such is, importantly, a philosophical *telos*, as the philosopher strove most fully, as Aristotle states, to "become immortal" through participation in the eternal and divine order of the cosmos. On this point, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7.

274 Of course, this doctrine was an evolutionary development in the Church's history, becoming more clear as time went on. One finds its earliest themes in both Pauline and Johannine writings. In the second century, both Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr make thematic man's union with the divine, though perhaps the theme is seen most clearly in Irenaeus of Lyons, who speaks of man having come to participate in the divine life through baptism. In the third century we also find this theme in Clement of Alexandria and Origin, with Cyril in the fifth century, and later reaching its apogee in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite (fifth to sixth), Maximus the Confessor (seventh), and Gregory Palamas (fourteenth), all of whom read the ultimate goal/telos of the Church in light of *theosis*. Deification as such is acknowledged by the Orthodox Church today as the primary lens from which the understand the salvation of mankind. For an overview of the development of *theosis* in the Christian tradition, see Andrew Louth, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

275 Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 22.

or Greek culture as a "preparatory instructor for Christ."[276] Quoting Yannaras in full on this point is necessary to emphasize the radical importance he bestows upon Hellenism in relation to the life and praxis of the early Church:

> Ancient Greek culture (the mode of the Hellenes) 'became a preparatory instructor for Christ' not only through the philosophy….but also because it transformed the human 'association for the satisfaction of needs' into a 'political struggle,' a struggle with a common aim so that the association for the satisfaction of needs (division of labor, etc.) should imitate the 'mode of government of all things' (Heraclitus), the mode of being true, that is to say, the mode of being related 'according to logos,' according to 'order,' 'harmony,' and 'decorum'—which are immortal 'terms,' or modes, of the functioning of the universe."
>
> The "assembly (*ecclesia*) of the people" was not simply a coming together of citizens; it was the realization and manifestation of the *polis*, the "city" of another (new) mode of human existence and coexistence, a mode that aimed at truth and not only at satisfying utilitarian needs. With this Hellenic precedent, the first Christians defined themselves not as a "new religion," (which is always, like every religion, individualistic), but by the name 'ecclesia,' which indicates the common struggle to realize and manifest the coexistence of the mode of the true with the mode of becoming immortal.[277]

In other words, as we have attempted to see in the previous chapter, Yannaras reveals two primary modes in which the human community can exist: either in accordance with the instinctual and primitive needs of nature (a basic utilitarianism), or, like the Greeks, in accordance with truth (Wisdom), the second of which is always understood as seeking to negate the former. Consequently, Yannaras sees the *tropos* of Hellenism as having paved the way for Christianity insofar as Christianity would go on to promote itself to the world not as a new religion—which for Yannaras is inherently utilitarian/pragmatic[278]—but as the establishment of a divine mode of existence in which humanity was called to participate.

The Church, then, is seen by Yannaras as having bestowed upon itself a political signifier so as to reveal its Hellenistic intentions; that is, the coming together of the social collective to establish a truthful mode of co-existence that is in accordance with the world's *Logos*. To be a

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276 Such were the claims of Clement of Alexandria and many of his disciples. See Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 80, 85.

277 Ibid., 85.

278 As Yannaras argues, in the time of Christ, the religions of the Greco-Roman world primarily concerned themselves with securing beneficial blessings from the gods: this economy of sacrifice existed to acquire either prosperity or protection for the individual or community, such as a good crop, victory in war, and other important concerns of daily life, and it is upon this very emphasis that, for Yannaras, we must learn to demarcate Christianity from its religious counter-parts. For religion, in this manner, does not seek truth, to live in accordance with that which transcends the basic needs of nature; on the contrary, as Yannaras states, it is fundamentally a utilitarian mode of existence that seeks the procurement of such basic needs, such as the "urge for self-preservation, for domination, the enjoyment of security and pleasure." Religious practices (worship, sacrifice, prayer, etc.) as such seek the continuation of mankind's egocentric being by seeking to persuade or woo the will of the gods, mankind's feeble attempt to control the uncontrollable forces of the world so as to acquire their blessing or mercy. On this point, see Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 1-20.

Christian, on this reading, was indeed to follow Christ, but according to Yannaras, to follow Christ was to follow Christ's "mode of existing"—for St. John, a divine mode of existence that was not "birthed from flesh" but "birthed from Spirit" (John 3:6). To follow Christ was, like the Stoics, to participate "in truth" (1 John 5:20), to receive *life* by living in accordance with the being of the *Logos* rather than living in accordance with the errors of instinct and passion. And the *ekklēsia* was the name bestowed upon those who were "called out" by the *Logos* to establish this new mode of existence, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Accordingly, the being of the Church *as such*, for Yannaras, resembles the structure and metaphysical mission of the Greek *polis* (and philosophical schools) more than it does the utilitarian structures of religion.

Indeed, and for this reason, it did not take long before the early Christians started calling the faith itself a *philosophía*. The earliest Christian apologists, for example, called Christianity "our philosophy," a "barbarian philosophy," or "the philosophy of Christ."[279] There was one key difference, however, between the philosophy of Christianity and the philosophy of the Greeks: that is, *revelation* (*apokálypsi*), a revealed Wisdom.[280] For in Christ, as the earliest Christians bore witness, the truth of Being—the answer to what it means to truly be—was not speculated about through mere reason, but was revealed to humankind by God himself. Thus in response to the Wisdom of the Greeks, the earliest Christian's considered their philosophy to be *the* (and thus final) philosophy. What had once been sought in Wisdom was now revealed in Christ the incarnated Word, whom "from the beginning was with God and was God" (John 1:1). Thus by the fifth and sixth century, it was not uncommon in the Eastern Roman Empire for the word "Christian" to be synonymous with "philosopher," as the Christian was recognized as he who followed the revealed Wisdom of the incarnate *Logos*, who participated in Christ's "way of life,"[281] and who, like the Greeks of the city-state and the philosophical schools, could acquire knowledge of the *Logos* through *koinōnein*, being-in-communion with the social-collective that sought to live in accordance with the *Logos*.[282]

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279 From its origination in Origen to the writings of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom, all these authors speak of "our philosophy," of the "complete philosophy" of Christ. See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 129

280 *Apokálypsi* comes from the Greek verb *apokalupto*, which means to "reveal," the "removal of a veil" so that something can be seen.

281 "In the monastic middle ages, as well as in antiquity, *philosophia* did not designate a theory or a way of knowing; rather, it signified a lived wisdom and a way of living in accordance with reason."—that is, in accordance with the Logos. And Christian philosophy consists in living according to the Logos—that is to say, according to reason—to the extent that, as Justin puts it "those who, before Christ, led a life accompanied by reason are Christians, even if they were known as atheists. Such were Socrates, Heraclitus, and those like them." Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 270.

282 As we saw in the previous chapter, Yannaras sees an inherent correlation between the life of the city-state and the life of the philosopher. This is noted most clearly in the practice of all philosophical schools, wherein philosophy is seen as a continuation of, and not separate from, the metaphysical (political) intentions of the *polis*. Thus for Yannaras, we see this relation between the *polis* and philosophy continue within Christianity as well. In its originating practice, Christianity self-identified as a new *polis*, a (divine) *trópos hyparxeos* in which the humanity could realize itself within the co-existence of the community, and it is because of this foundational *tropos* that the language and terminology naturally became explicitly "philosophical" in the centuries to come, leading to the ultimate identification of Christianity as a philosophy proper.

Christianity, then, is not understood by Yannaras as a continuation of the Hellenistic tradition, and thus as a philosophy, simply because it makes ontological or speculative claims about the nature of Being. Rather, for Yannaras, it was primarily because it offered itself as a truthful *trópos hyparxeos*, a lived Wisdom that participates in the being of the divine *Logos*, that enabled it to promote itself not simply as "having a philosophy," but as *being* a philosophy—one which, Yannaras believes, has the answers to the pressing problems of our world today.

Towards a Trinitarian Ontology

The fact that Christianity was promoted as a philosophy in Antiquity is not a debated fact. And today, the acknowledgement that Christianity was correct in this self-proclamation is proving less controversial, thanks to the current scholarship on the Ancient philosophical tradition.[283] Of course, the modern reader who still restricts the definition of philosophy to the later derived Latin tradition would still be hesitant in confessing Christianity to be a philosophy in and of itself (much less, acknowledging any form of "Christian philosophy"). However, insofar as one cedes to the Greek conception of philosophy that we have sought to reintroduce in this work, then Yannaras promotion of Christianity as a philosophy here should be met with little to no criticism.

In this sections below, then, we will attempt to offer an analysis of what Yannaras understands the Church's philosophy to be as it was developed in the writings of the early Church Fathers. And as noted above, the working definition of philosophy which we will use for this exposition will be the Hellenistic *tropos* of philosophical praxis as it has been laid out in the previous chapter. That is, we will see how, on Yannaras' reading, the being of the Church contains A) an ontology, a definition of what it means to truly exist, B) a prescribed praxis, or way of life that allows one to participate more fully in this truthful manner of existence, and C) a critical gnoseology of the ecclesial event, which offers a communal criteria for the verification and falsification of the Church's claims.

Absolute Being as Hypostatic

283 The tradition of seeing Christianity as a philosophy began as early as the first century apologists, such as Justin Martyr, flourished in the Alexandrian School with Clement and Origin, and would continue through a host of other important ecclesial thinkers, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Evagruis of Pontus, Athanasius of Alexandria, Dorotheus of Gaza, and Maximus the Confessor. And beginning in the sixth century, the monastic life especially began to be associated with a Christian philosophy, as it was here that Christians often attempted to follow the life of Christ most severely, dedicating the entirety of their life towards *theosis*, humankind's becoming like God through ascesis, humility, and grace. On the understanding of Christianity as a philosophy, see Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* 237-242; *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (128-129); Jean-Yves Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*, trans. by W. Chris Hackett (Charlestown, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 1-30, as well as Hans Von Balthasar's important essay, "Philosophy, Christianity, Monasticism," in *Explorations in Theology, Vol II.* See also Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 25-28; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 46, 49.

For Yannaras, as noted above, Christianity was primarily understood as a "philosophy" by the early Church Fathers, not merely because of its speculative claims about the cosmos, but primarily because it offered itself as a lived Wisdom that was in accordance with the being of the *Logos* (John 1:1). And this "lived Wisdom," for the first few centuries of the Church's existence, was primarily that—*lived*. For the first few centuries of her existence, the *ekklēsia*, as Yannaras states, "lived this truth empirically."[284] That is, her truth was known not through theoretical formulations, in schematic and axiomatic formulations, but primarily through the Church's liturgical life and praxis.[285] However, in time there was created a natural need for her Wisdom to be clarified through definition, and it is from this need that we see, in the philosophical literature of the Greek Church Fathers, the Church's Wisdom thematically defined in explicitly determinate language for the first time.

During this period of exposition, we see an explosion of explicitly philosophical activity from the Greek Church Fathers, all of whom continued, engaged with—and at times, advanced—the critical discourse of previous philosophical schools. However, the most important philosophical advancement that was made during this time, for Yannaras, is the Greek Church Fathers novel understanding of Being which was portrayed in their doctrinal formulation of the Trinity.

In attempting to use the concise language of Greek metaphysics in order to better signify the Church's participatory experience of God's loving being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Yannaras believes that the Cappadocian Fathers made the critical distinction between two metaphysical terms which, up to that point, had been generally conceived of and used in the same manner: that of *hypostasis* ("substantive existence," that which has real and concrete being) and *ousia* (a thing's general or essential nature, which is also said to be its substance or "real being"). Using Aristotle's distinction between primary and secondary substance,[286] the Cappadocians identified God's *hypostasis* with his primary substance, and God's *ousia* as his secondary substance. Accordingly, the persons of God, as primary substance, are the *hypostases* of his specific or particular existence, whereas *ousia*, as secondary substance, is the general, the "form" of which each person is a unique substantiation of. Thus the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to which the Church bore experiential witness are proclaimed as three *hypostases* that have a common *ousia*—God is "one in essence, three in person." In this way, the substance does not negate the real (hypostatic) character of the particular existences, and no particular existence exhausts the reality of the one substance.[287]

According to Yannaras, what must not be overlooked in this trinitarian formulation is the Cappadocian identification of *hypostasis* (substantive existence/real and concrete being) with the *person* of God—a move which, for Yannaras, introduced a radical reversal in Greek ontology.[288]

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284 See Yannaras, *Faith as an Ecclesial Experience*, 29.
285 Ibid.
286 Yannaras clarifies this claim by stating that "the opinion of scholars is divided as to whether this clarification of terms was based on Aristotle. At any rate, we may accept that at least it "echoes" the Aristotelian distinction between primary and secondary substance." Yannaras, *The Schism*, 203-204
287 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 204;
288 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 207.

For rather than seeing, in accordance with the essentialism of Greek ontology, the particular (the person) as a predicate that is attached to a "real and concrete being" once its ontological *hypostasis* (its *ousia*) has been verified, the Cappadocian Fathers claimed that within the revealed life of the Trinity, *the person is itself the hypostasis of being* (that which has primary, real and substantiative existence), and thus contains an ontological independence and freedom which is not subservient to or determined by the being of the *ousia*. Such is why, for Yannaras, the Cappadocians distinguish the divine *prósopa* from the divine *ousia* as an "otherness" (*eterótita*) and "distinctiveness" (*idiazon*) from nature itself,[289] and it is this absolute otherness from nature that is ontologically distinguished as *hypostasis*.[290] The *prósopon*, then, is not a determinate mode of nature, wherein its being is ultimately understood as the actualization of a pre-established *ousia*. On the contrary, as Yannaras states, to exists as a person is to exists as a radical otherness from nature insofar as the person constitutes its own being apart from and as ontologically other to the determinations of *ousia*.

For Yannaras, we see this in the *tropos* in which the person of the Father hypostasizes the divine substance, since for the Greek Church Fathers, it is not the *ousia* that is identified as the cause of the Son and Spirit, but the personal existence of the Father, who "freely and from love" begets the Son and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed.[291] In this manner, the being (*einai*) of the persons, as an otherness from nature, do not receive their being from *ousia*, but from the freedom of *schési* (relation/relationship), an importantly chosen word which, for Yannaras, signifies "a referential happening/event."[292] As a free and dynamic relation, for example, the Son and Spirit do not exist as a determinate mode of the nature, but exist only as a dynamic response to the love of the Father's personal activity, who through loving freedom begets the Son and causes the Spirit to proceed. Accordingly, it is this undetermined, absolutely free, and loving relationship of communion with the other, and not the determinacy of nature, that establishes the being (*to einai)* of the divine persons.

However, it is not simply the being of the person which must be understood as an unique event of loving freedom. Insofar as God exists triadically, and insofar as it is the loving freedom of the Father which acts as the ontological foundation ("cause") of this event, then the entirety of God's being must also recognized as an event of undetermined, loving freedom. God's being, in this regard, is not caused by the determinations of *ousia*, which would make it an ontological necessity. Rather, in Yannaras' interpretation of the Cappadocian Father's formulation, God "hypostasizes" his nature into a triadic act of divine communion as a result of the undetermined event of loving freedom that takes place between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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289 On the identification of *hypostasis* as ontologically "other" than nature, see Gregory of Nyssa, *On the difference between ousia and hypostasis* 5 (PG 32:336c); Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 16; *Schism*, 207-210.

290 Consequently, to refer to God as a person is not to understand his existence in the manner which we understand other personal "beings" (human beings, Zeus, or other anthropomorphized forms of existence). Quite the opposite. To refer to the Absolute as *hypostasis* is to refer to Being not in relation to other beings but in relation to the absolute otherness which every form of being is *not*.

291 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 207.

292 In Greek, as Yannaras points out, the word for relation (σχέση) contains the connotations of both reference and action: "σχέση is derived from the verb 'to have' (έχω)"; It refers to an event, something that happens and requires action, thus it signifies here a "referential happening/event." See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 10.

For this reason, the *tropos* in which God is, the Being (*Einai*) of God's being (*ousia*), is recognized as a fact of love and personal communion. According to this personalist ontology, then, Yannaras believes that love—the person's radically free and kenotic act of self-gift—is being proclaimed as the ontological category *par excellence,* the only possibility for existence, since it is through the free and indeterminate act of loving self-offering that God, as Trinity, "gives substance (*upóstasi*) to his essence (*ousía tou*) and constitutes his Being (*sunistá tó Eínai tou*)."[293]

This does not mean, it should be made clear, that the persons of God can and do exist "without" an *ousia*. What is of concern here is the ontological ground of trinitarian life. Does God exist as Trinity because it is in accordance with his nature/essence to do so, or is God's being the result of loving freedom, which would imply that the ontological ground of God's being is his personhood. In identifying the *hypostasis* (real/actual being) of God with the *prósopon,* Yannaras' claim is that, for the Cappadocian's understanding of divine being, nature does not have ontological priority over against the reality of the person, whereby the onticity (real existence) of the person would be a determinate mode of the nature. Rather, according to the Cappadocian's trinitarian ontology which the Church would go on to adopt, "essence (*ousia*) exists only *in* persons; persons make Being a hypostatic (*upostatikós*) reality,"[294] whereby the divine persons, as the ontological ground for Being, "support" that which occurs in nature while also existing as an otherness from nature.[295]

For this reason, Yannaras believes that what this metaphysical icon of the Church is attempting to signify is that within the triadic life of God,

> Being does not exist in itself beyond of before its hypostatic realization. It only exists "in persons"; persons make Being a hypostatic reality…the absolute otherness by which the person hypostasizes the person's substance (renders it *hypostasis*) constitutes Being and identifies it with existential freedom from any substantial bond, rational dependence, and natural pre-determination. Being (*Einai*) is identified with freedom, because it is realized only as personal otherness, only as a hypostatic event of self-awareness, self-determination, and self-actualization.[296]

Thus for Yannaras, this metaphysical icon of the Church Fathers declares that Being should no longer be understood, as it is according to Greek essentialism, in a determinate and ontic manner (that is, in relation to "*ousia*"). Rather, according to the testimonial witness of the ecclesial event, Being (*einai,* existence in itself) only *is* through the personal, unbounded, indeterminate act of loving communion.[297]

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293 Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 18.

294 Yannaras, *Schism*, 205

295 This does not mean, it must be made clear, that the person can exist *without* a nature, since the person always exists relationally as an absolute otherness "from" nature. What it *does* mean, however, for the being of God to be "hypostasized" by the freedom of divine persons is that nature does not and cannot exist *without* persons.

296 Yannaras, *Schism*, 205

297 It is important to note that the absolute freedom of God spoken of here should not be understood as a form of modern libertarian freedom, wherein a "self," as an autonomous and self-subsisting agent, has absolutely no internal or external impediments on his self-will or actualization. Rather, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as hypostatic relations that receive their very identity from being in loving communion with the other, must be understood as an

According to this ontology of the Church Fathers, then, Yannaras believes the world was offered a new answer to the ontological question. When seeking to understand the meaning of Being, to acquire knowledge of that which "truly is" (existence in itself), one is no longer called to engage in representational thinking, wherein the Being of beings becomes identified as presence and identity (as unitary, unchanging, determinate, universal, etc.). Rather, according to the Church's metaphysical testimony, Being is identified with absolute otherness rather than presence, relation rather than self-contained identity, communion rather than self-subsistence, particularity over universality, and the absolute freedom of love over static determinacy. For as was revealed in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, the form (*tropos*) of existence which is not susceptible to limitation, corruption, and decay is Christ's *hypostatic* being, which derives its existence not from the determination of nature, but from the loving freedom of *schési* with the Father.[298] In this manner, Yannaras understands that according to Wisdom of the ecclesial event, to truly be is to be in reference to the *prósopon*.[299]

The Hypostatic Being of Humanity

This leads us, then, to the Church's understanding of the human person: its answer to what it means for human beings to "truly exist" in light of this trinitarian ontology. Like the being of the Trinity, Yannaras interprets the philosophical tradition of the Church Fathers as also seeing the existence of humanity as "one in essence" according to created nature, and "in many hypostases" according to persons.[300] Analogous to the persons of the Trinity, then, each human being exists not only as a created being (having a created nature), but as a unique, distinct, and unrepeatable *prósopon* that exists as an "otherness" from this created nature. Meaning, there also exists in humanity an ontological distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia*. In this manner, each individual human being existentially "sums up the universality of human nature, but at the same time surpasses it," because his hypostatic mode of existence, like the divine *hypostases*, "is" as freedom and distinctiveness from the predeterminations and necessities of created nature.[301]

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absolute otherness of ek-static freedom insofar as they "stand out from" the determinate mode of nature through the freedom of *schési* (relation/relationship). In this manner, to exist as a *prósopon* is not to *first* exist and *then* chose to act, as an self-subsisting agent, in a loving and ek-static manner. To exist as a *prósopon* is to dynamically exist as the referential event itself, which means that one's very being is inherently tied to freely being-for-the-other.

298 As Yannaras states, to exist as *hypostasis* (and thus to truly *be*) is to exist and act "not out of oneself as an autonomous ontic individual, but in reference to the Father," drawing existence and life "from the freedom of a loving relationship with the Father." Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 47.

299 For Yannaras, "The resurrection signifies the Son's freedom to exist both in accordance with the terms (in our relative human language) of "divine" nature and in accordance with the terms of human nature. He is free from the existential prescriptions (limitations and necessities) of any natures whatsoever: he is subject neither to the obligatory eternity of God nor to the inescapable death of Man. He draws his existence and *hypostasis* only from the freedom of his relation with the Father, not from any given nature…Christ's resurrection…as a sign points to a new mode of existence…[wherein] nature's *hypostasis* 'draws existence' not from nature but from *relation*." See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 32.

300 See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19.

301 "Man constitutes an image of God as an ontological hypostasis, free from space, time and natural necessity." Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19

For this reason, Yannaras stresses that the substance (*upóstasi*) of humanity must not be recognized as drawing its being primarily from the determinacy of nature. For the human person, as a *hypostasis*, is also recognized here as ontologically distinct from its *ousia*, and thus is not constituted by nature alone. Rather, like its divine archetype, the human person derives its ontological substance from an event of loving *schési* (relation/relationship). Just as the Father "freely and from love" bets the Son and causes the Spirit to proceed, so too does the Father "freely and from love" call forth the being of the human *hypostasis* from the determinacy of created being, causing human persons to existentially exist by ecstatically (*ekstatiká*) "coming forth" from nature through the responsorial *tropos* of relation. Meaning, the human person, like the hypostatic being of the Son, also derives its ontological substance from the fact of relation, or love, which gives substance to its being.

Here the activity of God's love is recognized as constituting humanity's being in a hypostatic manner—as calling the human person forth from the determinate being of nature for the sake of existential freedom and loving communion. In this manner, human nature does not cease to be created, but in and through this gift of hypostatic life, created nature is graced with the potential to "become like God": that is, to exist not through the determinacy of nature, but through the absolute freedom of loving relation.[302]

Thus Christ's commandment to love, according to Yannaras' interpretation, is not an ethical command, but an invitation to participate in Being itself. For love, as revealed in Christ's revelatory mode of existence, is set forth not as that which one must learn to do once one *already exists*, but that which one must learn to do so that one may be *at all*—that is, in order to "truly be" as *hypostasis*. Here the way of love is recognized most fully as the lived Wisdom of the Church, the prescribed way of life which it offers the world so that humanity can learn to "become true," to participate in the eternal and divine mode of existence which knows not of change, suffering, decay and death—since the God of trinitarian community "is love," and "all who love live in God and God in him." (1 John 4:7-8). And of course, it is within the *ekklēsia* —what Yannaras refers to as the ecclesial event[303]—that this newly proposed mode of human co-existence is realized.[304]

Such is, for Yannaras, the philosophy of the Church, the testimonial Wisdom, or mode of existence, which Christianity offers the world as the "sole and eternal philosophy." As Clement of Alexandria states, Christianity is in possession of the *Logos*, and thus must be considered *the* (revealed) philosophy which "teaches us to conduct ourselves so as to resemble God."[305] And to "resemble God," according to Yannaras' synthesis of the Eastern tradition, is to resemble Christ's hypostatic existence of self-gift and loving communion, the overcoming of created nature's limitations through an entry into the triadic, relational mode of *hypostatic* Being.

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302 See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19

303 Yannaras refers to the church as the ecclesial *event* in order to emphasize this participatory, Hellenistic structure of seeing the Church as unique, deified mode of existence, or dynamic *happening*, rather than an objective fact. This term became most used in his work, *Against Religion*, which seeks to delineate most clearly what the Church *is* from what it is *not.* See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 21-48.

304 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 268.

305 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*? 239

Gnoseology: The Common *Logos*

In the sections above, we have seen in what manner Yannaras believes the Church to have adopted and continued what he considers the metaphysical "mission" of Hellenism. As first noted in its political terminology, the Church recognized herself from the beginning as a new *polis*, a new city or community which, in light of the resurrection, sought the establishment of a new mode of human co-existence. Second, and for this reason, Yannaras reveals how the Church would later come to understand and promote itself as a philosophy, in the classical sense of the word; that is, as offering a vision of Wisdom, of what it means to "truly be," with a coordinated way of life that makes participation in Being possible.

Besides this continuation of Hellenism's metaphysical impetus, however, Yannaras claims that we also see in the *ekklēsia* an important development and continuation of Hellenism's gnoseological principles.[306] Thus even though the Church offered a substantial change in Greek ontology, his claim is that its gnoseological horizon remained consistently the same—which, for Yannaras, is all the more critical when seeking to faithfully inherit the *ethos* of a culture.[307] For Yannaras, this continuation is found both in 1) the Church's adoption of the Greek gnoseological principle of communal verification, and 2) the Church's continuation of Greek apophaticism, the second of which Yannaras believes reached its apogee in the Christian tradition.

The first point need not be dwelled on in great detail, since the communal principle of verification argued for here within the life of the Church is a fairly uncontroversial and well established fact. Oehler perhaps makes this point clearest of all in his article on the history of the *consensus omnium*, which argues that this communal principle found (and continues to find) one of its most important continuations in the life of the Church. And for Oehler, this continuation of the Greek *ethos* within the life of the Church was not a gradual development. Rather, like Yannaras, Oehler argues that it was from the Church's infancy that she began to identify truth with the general unanimity of all.[308] For example, as found in the first epistle of Clement, congregational decisions are made by the unifying voice of many, wherein those with opinions and experiences contrary to the unified whole are disregarded as *hairetikós*. This communal principle would also go on to be used by the Church when seeking to establish any documented truth, such as can be found in council decisions, or even in the election of bishops. Throughout her history, the Church has identified her truth with the unity of belief and practice that have been passed on within the tradition of the apostolic churches.

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306 On this point, see Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 28, 86; *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 111; *Orthodoxy and the West*, 153.

307 Yannaras points out that while the ontology of a culture may change, its cultural *ethos* or way of life is still capable of remaining the same (such is what Yannaras believes took place in the transition from Hellenism to Christian-Hellenism). On the other hand, a radical change in gnoseology, as noted for example in the transition of the Middle Ages to Modernity, can lead to a drastically different socio-political *tropos* of being. On this point, see Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 52-53.

308 See Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium," 117.

Thus for Yannaras, when seeking to establish that which is true concerning the being of the *ekklēsia* from that which is false, it was the "common logos" of its participants that acted as the ultimate criterion.[309] As such, any opinion, experience, or authority that did not conform to the common *logos* of ecclesial experience was considered unreputable or untrue, and thus excluded from the being of the *ekklēsia*. For something or someone to be "heretical" (*airetikós*) then, was quite simply to be outside the "common mind" (*syn-ennoetai*) of the Church: to have opinions, experiences, or believes that could not be participated in, verified, or accounted for by all.

However, this communal principle which guided the mission of the Church must not be regarded simply as the propositional (noetic) opinion of the many, such that one can establish truth based upon "common opinion" or mass acceptance of an intellectual idea.[310] Rather, in continuity with its Hellenistic *ethos,* Yannaras argues that the dogmatic *logoi* of the Church would have been recognized as symbols, or "metaphysical icons" (Florovsky), which present rational testimony to the universal experience of all who partake of the ecclesial event; that is, they seek to signify, protect, and delineate, in a clear and rational manner, the ontological mode of existence which the Church is from that which it is not. Thus each *logoi* was verified as true not to the extent that it was rationally agreed upon by the majority of opinion, but insofar as it bore witness to a participatory (experiential) *logos* that was known (manifested) and recognized by all.[311]

For Yannaras this fact bears important consequences, especially when one is seeking to understand the ontological and gnoseological implications of the Church's teachings. For if the Church's truth, in the Greek tradition, is established in common *logoi*, and if such *logoi* are understood as iconic symbols which manifest the common (shared) life of all who participate in the *tropos* of the ecclesial event, then the authenticity of each local community's participation in the ecclesial event is recognized as being defined without being determined definitely.[312] Meaning, the symbol, or dogmatic "icon," would not be recognized as exhaustively determining the meaning of the ecclesial event, but would be seen only as seeking to express its meaning through non-univocal forms of rational expression. For Yannaras, this is clearly seen in the pedagogical, praxis based manner in which the early Church communicated her truths. Rather than systematic theology and tedious catechisms, the early Church sought to express and teach her truths in pluri-vocal forms of expression: in the symbolism of narrative, art, chant, prayers, and liturgical praxis, all of which, for Yannaras, signify the experience of the Church's universally shared, participatory struggle to take on the *hypostatic* mode of the divine *Logos*. It is only when these experientially based practices and truths become questioned that they are then made more thematic, using language which can articulate more clearly the knowledge passed on in the previous forms of

309 Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 39-41.
310 See Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure*, 54.
311 "A council of bishops summarized the ecclesial experience of the whole (*katholou*) body (the catholic, total, and unified body) of the local eucharistic communities whose presiding bishops constituted the council…there could be disagreements and differences in the formulation of the common experience, but if the different formulation also pointed to a different experience, an experience that did not coincide with or was incompatible with which was shared universally, then the possibility that the difference could be regarded as compatible was *ipso facto* excluded." Yannaras, *Against Religion,* 39.
312 See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 40.

expression. Such would be the case, then, in the Church's adopted metaphysical dogmas. However, even when transposed into more rational, seemingly univocal expressions, Yannaras is quick to emphasize the symbolic structure of said expressions; that is, how they are unable to exhaustively determine the being of the ecclesial event, and how their rational content can only be truly known through an existential participation in the event itself.[313]

This leads us, then, the final trait of Greek Hellenism which the Church adopted: the flourishing and progression of apophaticism.

Gnoseology: Apophaticism

Apophaticism, as we have portrayed it in the previous chapter, is more than just an approach to theological knowledge (knowledge of God). For Yannaras, it is rather a gnoseological attitude (*stasis*) towards knowledge itself, one which "refuses to identify the comprehension of the signifiers with the knowledge of the signified," and thus "refuses to exhaust knowledge in its rational formulation.[314] As noted in the introduction, this apophatic disposition, according to Vladimir Lossky, can be understood as a "non-rationalist" stance towards truth that exists not only in the writings of the Church Fathers, but within Eastern/Byzantine Christianity as a whole. We can see now, however, that Yannaras understands this gnoseological *stasis* of the Eastern churches as largely being adopted from the philosophical tradition of Hellenism itself, and thus should be seen again as one of the key Hellenistic attributes that Christianity is a successor of.[315] Thus while Yannaras points to this culture of apophaticism as being more pervasive and evolved in the Greek Fathers of the early Church, he often makes reference to its origins in Antiquity, which the Greek Church Fathers, as well as the general *ethos* of the early Church, would have naturally adopted simply through cultural assimilation.

However, what Yannaras also wishes to emphasize is the unique manner in which the Church Fathers would go on to radically advance the Church's apophaticism in the following centuries of Christian-Hellenism. In its earliest states, as noted above, Yannaras understands the teachings of the *ekklēsia* as a "common *logoi*" which bore rational witness to the universal experience of the Church's mode of existence. In this manner, the participatory experience of the Church was always given primary importance in relation to her teachings, such that the latter were always understood a signifying, or referring back to, the manifestation of the former. In other words, the signs and signifiers of the Church were always fashioned *a posteriori*, seeking not

313 "The truth and authenticity of the ecclesial event was and always is a common quest, never a fixed possession—it is a dynamic "come and see" that cannot be pinned down to a specific institutions…[e]ven the decisions of the ecumenical councils do not transcribe ecclesial truth in a codified (ideological) coordinates. The simply define (in the etymological sense of setting protective semantic boundaries to) the empirical quest (in the common struggle) of the eucharistic community. They are indicative presuppositions for participation in the ecclesial event, a participation that is visibly crowned in the common cup of the Eucharist." Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 40.

314 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 103.

315 The name Dionysius, it may be argued, stood for the reception and transmission of this particular Greek tradition, one which was established when the ecclesial event (St. Paul) was adopted by the mission of Athens (such is the point of the pseudonym: the Areopagite).

speculation or conjecture, but testimony and evangelical witness. In other words, they were also recognized as *symbols*, no different than the forms of *logoi* passed on through the Church's liturgical praxis. On Yannaras' reading, it is this symbolic relation between ecclesial experience (the signified) and teaching/doctrine (the signifier) that would naturally be adopted and continued—in an even stronger manner—with the development and flourishing of the Church's philosophical literature that arose in the third and fourth centuries. Which means, furthermore, that Yannaras believes the writings of the Church Fathers, especially their metaphysical/ontological discourse, carried on this apophatic, symbolic "stance" of rational testimony and witness (*martyria*).

What this entails, for Yannaras, is that what we have with the Church Fathers is a fundamentally unique mode of participating in the critical thought—especially in relation to the rational discourse that is generally termed "metaphysics" today. For on this model, the Church Fathers' metaphysical proposals should in no way be seen as purely intellectual modes of speculation that seek to understand that which exists "beyond" (*meta*) the immanent world of beings (*physics*) through a form of dialectic or demonstrative logic. The Church Fathers metaphysical discourse, on the contrary, would be seen here as inherently symbolic: as Florensky states, they are to be understood as "metaphysical icons" that "gather together" (*symballō*) the universal experiences of the faithful which bear testimony to inquiries of an ontological nature.[316] And it is with this insight that, for Yannaras, we can begin to understand the uniqueness of apophaticism in the Christian-Hellenism, especially in its more philosophically advanced forms.

The Way of Positive Negation

As Yannaras points out, *apophasis* and *kataphasis* signify in Greek literature the mode of both negative and positive attestation. They each allow one to define an existent through either affirming (saying what something is) or denying (saying what it is not) its positive characteristic. Used together, however, they allude to the fact that we can attest to or define an existent (understand something of its nature) by alluding to its negative characteristics: e.g., "The negation of 'to be white' is 'not to be white." In this manner, by excluding positive categories of what the signified is (saying what it is not), we still gain an awareness of its identity, albeit in an indirect, non-determinate manner.[317] Consequently, when seeking to use the symbolic language of signifiers to signify the experiential knowledge of the ecclesial

316 As Rowan Williams points out, this outlook which Yannaras proposes for interpreting the Trinity would be similar to that of Klaus Hemmerle, who states in his celebrated work, *Thesis Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, that the Trinity is not "a logical abstraction from exaggerated individual scriptural statements; it is not speculation which busily stretches out tentative beginnings into cut-and-dried rationality. It is a statement of the fundamental experience of how human beings are newly given to God and newly given to themselves when they believe in Jesus Christ." See Klaus Hemmerle *Thesis Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, trans. by Stephen Churchyard (Brookline, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), 32. For the similarity between Yannaras and Hemmerle which Williams notes, see pg. 5 of the forward to this text.

317 Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 103.

event—especially knowledge of God—Yannaras claims that the Greek Church Fathers relied upon the apophatic method in order to both protect and transmit the unique, dissimilar, albeit universal experience of the faithful.

For example, in Yannaras' reading of the *Areopagitical Writings*, which he understands to be the pinnacle of the apophatic Christian tradition, the apophatic way does not have as its end a form of positive knowledge which can define God's being in a determinate manner; e.g., God *is* one, simple, unchanging, eternal, because he is *not* complex, passable, and he does *not* have a beginning. Rather, in relation to participation in the ecclesial event, there is first offered particular *logoi* that testify to this event—"God is good, God is holy, God is Father, God is love"—directly followed by a negation of these *logoi*—"God is *not* good, *not* holy, *not* Father, *not* love." In this manner, the shared experience of the *ekklēsia* states that God is "like this" (e.g., God is "*eros*"), but common experience also verifies that God is not like "this" (*eros*) in the creaturely manner in which one generally uses to the term. In reference to the meaning which is posited to the term "*eros*," then, the positive attestation is immediately denied: God is "*not* eros." However, for Yannaras, this negation is not the end of the contemplative's journey. Rather, according to Dionysius, it is this very exclusion of positive attestation that allows the participant to be led beyond the unifying symbol (the common *logos*: "*eros*") back to the original event of existential manifestation; that is, back to the original experience which was symbolized with the signifier "*eros*."[318] In such instances, as Dionysius states, "the soul is led beyond concepts into the darkness where God dwells," creating an experiential union with that which is "beyond nature" and wholly "unknowable" to the intellect, and thus which brings about a "darkness of knowing" which "transcends the mind" and is only known in the immediacy of hypostatic union.[319]

But what is the point of this circular movement? What is the point of understanding the mediation of language as such? For Yannaras, the answer is simple. It is the mind's circular movement from the experience, towards the symbol, and back to the experience once more which allows for this initial immediacy of "knowing" that is given to the participant to be shared and critically verified by others. In other words, it allows for the "private logos" of mystical experience to be shared in a "common logos" of the community, thus allowing one's experience to be recognized as knowledge (*gnosis*) in the proper, Greek sense of the term.

In relation to the being of the Church, then, Yannaras highlights how this apophatic mode of discourse is able to both avoid any form of mysticism that would revert to the darkness of private *logoi*—thus relativizing the unity of ecclesial witness—while at the same time overcoming the idolatrous intentions to reduce her knowledge to the univocity of the concept or idea.[320] Knowledge, in this sense, is always recognized primarily as an experiential event, yet it remains a mode of knowing which does not lead to any form of subjectivism or relativism that is prominent today. For according to the apophatic, communal gnoseology of this tradition as described by

318 Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 86.
319 Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1.3 1000D. Quoted in David Bradshaw, *Aristotle, East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192-193.
320 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 89, 94

Yannaras, what is verified through the symbol is not simply the individual, private experiences of the participant, but the universal experience of all who participate in the unique mode of existence that is the *ekklēsia.* In this way, we see how knowledge of the ecclesial event—and thus knowledge of God's revealed being—is not passed on and protected through rational comprehension. Most fully, it is inherited through *koinōnia*: through correct participation in, or communion with, the hypostatic mode of existence that the *ekklēsia* fundamentally *is*.

As noted above, then, this point leads us to one of the most critical yet overlooked facts of the Church today: in relation to the metaphysics/philosophy of the *ekklēsia*, what separates it from the rest of the world's philosophies is not simply that it proclaims a metaphysics of "revelation" (that is, a historically revealed Wisdom—the *Logos* incarnate). So too, for the Church Fathers, it offers a participatory form of Wisdom which is capable of being known by all who partake of the ecclesial mode of existence, which simply *is* humankind's graced participation in said *Logos*. For Yannaras, then, what the ontological hermeneutic of the Church Fathers offer is ultimately a "come and see" metaphysical ontology that is capable of being verified by first-person, participatory experience. For insofar as the Church's ontological claims are unifying symbols which bear witness to the Church's universal, ongoing experience of God's revelatory being, then for Yannaras, the Church's ontological signifiers are "verifiable" by all who wish partake of the Church's *philosophia* (way of life). In other words, they are "common *logoi*" which are able to be examined, denied, affirmed, or developed—and most of all, known and participated in by all.

In this manner, we begin to see what is perhaps Yannaras' strongest point in response to Heidegger's critique of "Western metaphysics," which uncritically subsumes the "metaphysics" of Christianity within his all-consuming narrative of onto-theology proper. For on Yannaras reading of the Church Fathers, the metaphysical discourse of their philosophy has nothing to do with the form of abstract, speculative modes of inquiry which Heidegger's critique of onto-theology infers. For what the Church's metaphysics offer is not a rational speculation, or value-laden judgment, about that which "truly is" beyond the momentary presencing of ontic phenomena. Rather, what the Church offers is what Yannaras has come to term a "critical ontology," a vision or understanding of that which is "beyond-physics" (meta-physical) and is "subject to critical verification and falsification" through the participable (non-private) experience of ecclesial witness.[321] Here it is not the demands of *ratio* (logic/reason) which determine and account for the veracity of the Church's *theoria*, or proposed vision of Being. On the contrary, in continuation with the Hellenistic mode of thought as discussed in the previous chapter, it is the communally verified experience of the community which acts as the primordial criterion of cognitive correctness. For what is being verified, according to the Church Fathers, is not the soundness or validity of a speculative theory; i.e., that which has been posited through reason alone, and thus signifiers which are not tethered to any existentially given/manifested *logos*. What is being verified is a symbol which bears testimony to the common-being of ecclesial experience. And the common-being of ecclesial experience, from its very origins, has proclaimed itself to be participating in mode of existence which is "not of this world"—not of "nature" or "flesh"—but that which is

321 See Yannaras, *To ontologikon periechomenon tēs theologikēs ennoias tou prosōpou*, 8-9.

beyond (meta) this world: the being of the *Logos* which, "from the beginning was with God and was God," and from which all that is has come to be (John 1:1-2).

Christianity, on this account, is not to be understood as a mere religion in the traditional sense of the word. And it is not, per Heidegger, a particular instantiation of *Dasein*, a phenomenological (purely existential/subjective) mode of being-in-the-world which is itself determined by and understood within the historical unfolding of Being. This is because, for Yannaras, those who most authoritatively bear witness to the ecclesial event unanimously affirm, in their life and experience, a qualitatively different *mode* of existence—a fundamentally different mode of being which transcends the existential being of *Dasein*, one which by definition transcends the limitations of the natural order. For this reason, the being of the Church is ultimately understood by the Church Fathers as an *ontological* reality. It is a lived Wisdom, a *philosophia* in the traditional sense of the word. And according to Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers—most fully, in light of their trinitarian ontology—what the lived Wisdom of the Church ultimately reveals is that to truly *be* is to be *hypostatic*; that is, a non-dimensional, relational existence of absolute freedom and personal communion which transcends the limitations of space, time, nature, death and decay.

Such is, for Yannaras, the Church's answer to the ontological question, the way of life which the Church Fathers' offered as the "true" and "eternal" philosophy. And it is this unique philosophy, alongside the historical development of the *ekklēsia* for over a millennium in the Byzantine East, which Yannaras sees as an inheritor and most comprehensive fulfillment of the "mission" of Hellenism.[322]

Summary/Concluding thoughts

What we have attempted to overview in this chapter is, for Yannaras, the manner in which Christianity inherited the cultural *tropos* of Hellenism as we have identified it in the previous chapter. Furthermore, we have attempted to reveal how Yannaras' reading of both Hellenism and Christian-Hellenism is an attempt to trace out the development of the Church's philosophical *phronema*: the heritage ("thought-pattern" or "fore-structure") of the Greek Church Fathers, as well as their shared/universal quality of life they bore witness too. And all of this we have attempted to due from a philosophical, rather than theological, horizon, as it is this philosophical tradition that Yannaras will attempt to promote as a response to Martin Heidegger and the problematic of metaphysical nihilism in Western Europe.

The cultural aspect of what Yannaras is arguing is an important point to dwell on here, since some of the language-terminology used above (e.g., "common *logos*," "existential," etc.) is not thematically defined as a constant throughout the Eastern tradition. This is because what Yannaras' is offering, as we have noted in the introduction, is a modern synthesis or non-identical

322 See Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 25-28; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 46, 49. For an interesting analysis of this event from a secular perspective, see Luc Ferry, "The Victor of Christianity," in *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*, trans. Theo Cuffe (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 78-91.

repetition of the Church Fathers' philosophical tradition, much in the same way that Florovsky attempted to offer a "Patristic synthesis" of the Church Father's *phronema*, or how Lossky sought to offer a synthesis of the Eastern theological tradition's mode of thought in *The Mystical Theology of the Orthodox Church*. Thus what Yannaras is likewise offering with his overview of Christian-Hellenism is a thematic synthesis of the Church Fathers' "common-mind." He is taking the common experiences, teachings, and writings that are scattering throughout the Patristic tradition so as to provide the reader with a new horizon in which to read and understand this "other" tradition which he wishes to promote. Consequently, while one may not directly find some of Yannaras' language-terminology in the writings of the Church Fathers, the justification for his analysis is that they can indeed be found throughout the tradition in a less thematic, more nuanced manner.

For example, the concept of deification is indeed a significant theme which has long guided the East's teleological interpretation of the its life, teachings, and practice. Yet it only in the twentieth century that the "hypostatic" emphasis of deification has been thematically emphasized to the extent that we find in Lossky, Yannaras, and others. However, this personalist ontology, as it is has been popularized most evidently by John Zizioulas, is seen by a large majority of Orthodox thinkers today as offering a beneficial and accurate synthesis of the Orthodox tradition at large, as one can naturally find this hypostatic emphasis throughout the history of the East's theology, even if in a piecemeal, non-thematic manner.[323] Consequently, for the those in the Orthodox Church today who subscribe to the heavily promoted personalist ontology as it has been articulated in this chapter, this hypostatic dimension of *theosis* is simply seen as the most accurate synthesis of the tradition on deification up to this point, albeit with the use of new signifiers (e.g., "existential," "otherness," etc.), all of which are also believed to most accurately manifest the Church's universal, shared experience to the modern reader.[324] Which means that for many in the Orthodox Church today, this ontology not only accurately depicts the theological, philosophical, and doctrinal literature of the early Church, but perhaps even more importantly, it is also an ontology which is verified by the experiences of all who participated most fully in the Church's

323 As Andrew Louth points out in his seminal work on deification in the Orthodox tradition, it was as early as Irenaeus of Lyons, followed by Clement of Alexandria, that deification was seen in light of our filial relation to God, as it was through baptism that one recovers their lost likeness to God, the ability to participate in the divine life once more, and this participation/likeness was brought about in our "sonship." Origin also saw deification through participation in the life of the Son and Holy Spirit, a life that was ultimately derived from the Father. In Athanasius and the Cappadocians, there is advanced the point that it is ultimately in Christ's flesh, in the body of Christ wherein the *Logos* is assumed, that human nature is deified; in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, the divine likeness is recovered in our practice/action as well, which finds expression in our filial sanctification, our imitation of Christ's being. And in Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the Theologian and Gregory of Palamas, there is also further emphasized an experiential dimension of *theosis* through a participation in Christ's hypostatic energies, which are ontologically distinct from his essence. See Louth, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 12-13, 106, 136.

324 While the engagement with contemporary language-terminology (especially existentialism) is largely accepted by contemporary Orthodox theologians, this is a hermeneutical move which is not accepted by all. For example, Nikolaos Loudivokos heavily critiques Yannaras' Heideggerian point of departure in *Person and Eros*. For this critique, see Loudovikos, *Hē kleistē pneumatikotēta kai to noema tou Heautou: Ho mystikismos tēs ischyos kai hē alētheia physeōs kai prosōpu* (Athens: Hellēnika Grammata, 1999), 285-91. For Yannaras' response to this critique, see *Hexi philisophikes zōgraphies*, 124-34.

revelatory mode of existence; that is, it is the most accurate "metaphysical icon" that affirms the universal testimony of the Church's Saints throughout her history.[325]

In closing this chapter, perhaps we may summarize our point by stating that the saints, from this Hellenistic perspective, would not be considered by Yannaras to be "religious" people. They are, most acutely, philosophers in the Hellenistic sense of the word. They are those who have given their life, in an act of total conversion, to acquiring the Wisdom of Christ. Which means, on Yannaras' reading of Christian Wisdom, that they fully abandoned their natural tendency for existential autonomy, their life of radical self-determinacy through the *tropos* of nature alone, and have chosen rather to actualize their hypostatic life, like Christ, *from* the Father and *for* the Father: to find their being not through the life of nature, but to ground their life in the ecstatic existence of erotic *relation*: in loving self-gift and kenotic self-offering. Academic philosophers and theologians may have much to say about God's nature, purporting rational propositions about his *ousia*, and thus how, as the "highest being," God must *have* to be in relation to both himself and the world. However, on Yannaras' reading, for those who speak only from ecclesial witness and participation, such words are "like straw."

325 This fact, I believe, would apply just as much to contemporary Western Saints as much as it does to contemporary Eastern Saints. So too, I believe it would apply to the general *ethos* of all forms of monasticism in the Latin West and Orthodox East. Indeed, outside of the more "rationalist" language of academic theology that developed in the West, I would argue that this "personalist" ontology reflects the universal Christian experience which all "christians"—Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox—testify to. As such, I do not believe it would be accurate to critique Yannaras on the grounds of offering a strictly "Eastern" vision of the faith. Yannaras' point, along with the Russian theologians, is that this understanding of Christianity is what the early Church held to, including that of the Latin West, and thus what they are doing is calling the "Western" forms of theological discourse and practice back to their historical roots.

Chapter IV
The Inversion of Christian-Hellenism

In the previous chapters, we have been laying out what I have called the narrative dimension of Yannaras' response to Heidegger, which as we stated in the beginning, claims the death of God in Western Europe to have resulted from an inversion of the Greek *ethos* as its manifested itself in the Christian philosophical tradition. In the previous two chapters, we have given an exposition of what Yannaras believes this Hellenistic *ethos* to be as it began in Antiquity and culminated in the life and praxis of the *ekklēsia*. Thus in this chapter we must now show how, according to Yannaras, this philosophical tradition of Hellenism was inverted with the rise of the Latin-philosophical tradition.

As we layed out in chapter two, Yannaras describes the most important characteristics of the Greek philosophical tradition as 1) the need to establish a truthful mode of existence through *koinōnein*, 2) the communal verification of knowledge, which verifies the truth of each community in the common *logos*, and 3) the emphasis of Greek *apophaticism*, which presumes knowledge to be a primarily experiential event. In chapter three, we noted how Yannaras sees a direct continuation of these attributes in Christianity, wherein we find a change in Greek ontology but also a continuation of the Greek gnoseological *ethos* and praxis. In this chapter, then, we will attempt to reveal how Yannaras believes the Germanic/Latin philosophical tradition to have inverted the *ethos* of the Greek philosophical tradition insofar as it inverted these foundational attributes.

The above narrative is layed out by Yannaras first in *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and later most fully in *The Schism in Philosophy*. In these texts, Yannaras argues that the first attribute of Hellenism is overturned in both the Carolingian and Scholastic renaissance insofar as the ultimate end of these movements were of a utilitarian nature: that is, their foundational and primary intention did not seek to establish a truthful mode of being within the life and praxis of the community, but rather sought the revitalization of critical thought for practical and utilitarian purposes. Second, Yannaras argues that with the rise of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition there was also an inversion of the communal gnoseology and praxis of Greek *logos*. This took place, per Yannaras, through the Latin translation of Greek *logos* as *ratio*, which transferred the criterion of truth to the individual's rational capacity rather than the common *logos* of ecclesial participation. As such, the acquisition and verification of knowledge was no longer an experiential, communal, and praxis based event, nor was knowledge understood in a primarily existential/apophatic manner. Rather, knowledge was primarily seen as a purely rational achievement of the individual's intellect, a mere comprehension of the signified and the "correctness of assertion." For Yannaras, this inversion of Greek gnoseology and praxis then set the stage for a rationalist inversion of the Church's "existential" ontology of relation and personhood, allowing for the Christian God of revelation and experience to become a "highest value," a "being amongst other beings" that would eventually become subject to the onto-theological mode of metaphysics that ended with the death of God in Western Europe. The change in Greek gnoseology, then, is explained by Yannaras as leading to a change in Christian ontology, and it is only with this two-fold inversion that we can properly understand the unique *tropos* of thought in which the nihilism of Western metaphysics historically unfolded.

The purpose of this chapter, once more, is primarily expository. I will seek to lay out in more detail the points listed above by drawing on various texts in which Yannaras offers said narrative. Similar to the previous chapters, I will also bring in the work of secondary sources, paying close

attention once more to the work of Pierre Hadot and other thinkers for the sake of either clarifying or buttressing Yannaras' argument.

The Utilization of Critical Thought

The Carolingian Renaissance

As we have layed out in the previous chapters, Yannaras argues that the foundational principle or ideal of Ancient Greece was is its sociological impetus to "become true": to inter-subjectively live in accordance with the *Logos* by living a rational (*logikos*) way of life. On Yannaras' reading, this metaphysical "need" would go on to create the critical mode of social co-existence, or cultural *ethos,* which is classically referred to today as "Hellenism" (*Hellénismos*), noted first in the being of the *polis* and later in the development of the philosophical schools. However, most important for Yannaras is that we also recognize the authentic continuation of these Hellenistic ideals in Christianity, therein leading to the development of "Christian Hellenism": a new *polis* and *philosophia* which would go on to become the dominant mode of socio-political influence in the Greco-Roman Empire. And on Yannaras reading, this tradition of Christian-Hellenism did not "end" with the fall of Rome in the West (476AD). Indeed, this tradition would go on to flourish for almost twelve-hundred years in the Eastern Roman Empire (330AD-1453), known more widely today as "Byzantium," or the Byzantine Empire.

Thus it was only in the Western Roman Empire, as Yannaras points, that the ideal of "Christian Hellenism" was short lived, decisively put to an end for over six centuries by the "great migration of peoples."[326] For from the fifth to this ninth century, the Latin West entered into its "dark ages," wrought by continuous warfare and invasions from rivalrous Germanic kingdoms. Besides the Roman Church, during this time there remained no cultural trace of the Greco-Roman Empire in the West. Hence politically, as a way of life, Yannaras argues that the *tropos* of Hellenism in Western Europe had been decisively lost, replaced by the pragmatic, utilitarian needs of survival and power.[327]

The first major efforts of Hellenism's revitalization were attempted by Charlamagne, King of the Franks (768-814), beginning with what is known today as the Carolingian Renaissance.[328] The Carolingian Renaissance, backed also by aspirations of the Roman Church, led to a major

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326 That is, by an influx of barbarian invasions from the north. This should not come across as a controversial or biased claim. Even those who have no interest in East and West ecclesial relations acknowledge that "the barbarian invasion…put an end to the civilization of Western Europe…" whereas "[i]n the Eastern Empire, Greek civilization…survived, as in a museum, till the fall of Constantinople in 1453." See Bertrand Russell, *A History of Philosophy*, 16th printing (New York: Simon and Schuster), xvi.

327 While such a claim may be polemical, I do not find it uncredible or inaccurate. See for example Hanz Zummer's *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), which exists amongst a myriad of other texts which articulate how the "dark" ages of Western Europe were predominately a "political" *ethos* established on power, utility, and violence (an ethos which the Church herself was attempting to mitigate).

328 This is a major insight that Yannaras will use to explain major derivations in both praxis and theory between the East and West. See for example, Yannaras, *Against Religion*, 144.

revival of learning and economic stability in the eighth and ninth century. During his reign, Charlemagne ordered the building of schools for the clergy, while also gathering scholars scattered throughout the Empire into his court. He attracted learned men from England and Ireland especially, and would go on to establish schools in every abbey of his Empire (these schools would go on to become centers of medieval learning during the rise of Scholasticism). He also pushed for an advance in architecture that emulated both Ancient Roman and Byzantine styles, creating an impressive amount of cathedrals, monasteries, and royal residences that sought to reflect the resurrection of the Roman Empire in the West. In this manner, Charlemagne's renaissance was responsible for a significant cultural advancement in Western Europe—from architecture to liturgy, theology, and philosophy—leading "the West" out of its so called dark ages of stagnation.

However, what Yannaras wishes to call our attention to is the starkly pragmatic and political nature of this revival of learning, the utilitarian *tropos* from which this renaissance was born. In other words, Yannaras wishes to argue that the Carolingian revival of critical thought and other Greco-Roman aspirations which helped lift Western Europe out of its "dark ages" were not a natural and spontaneous response of Western peoples. That is, it was not, like its Greek predecessors, brought about in response to a societal/communal ethos to "be true," to find harmony and justice by living in accordance with the very Being of the cosmos. Rather, as historian Wallace-Hadrill also argues, critical thought was revived during this time by a small majority of the social elite primarily for its pragmatic benefits, and must therefore be seen as a "strictly utilitarian" endeavor.[329]

Of course, it would be unfair to claim that every form of philosophical discourse which arose during this time was primarily "pragmatic," or that all thinkers during this time only had utilitarian intentions. One only need to look at the work of John Scotus Eriugena to argue otherwise. But such a response would be to miss the point which Yannaras is attempting to make here. What Yannaras is focusing on, once more, is the *cultural ethos* in which critical thought is developed, as it is this *ethos* which would inevitably go on to guide the germination and development of critical thought proper. And indeed, historically speaking, it must be recognized that the impetus of the Carolingian Renaissance was primarily an achievement and product of Charlemagne's new government, which sought the restoration of Greco-Roman ideals for the ends of economic prosperity and stability.[330]

For Yannaras, then, what we see beginning to take shape at this point in history is the development of an alternative cultural horizon in which critical thought would be actualized. More directly, in dialogue with Heidegger's narrative of "metaphysics," what we see beginning to take shape here is Western Europe's appropriation of critical thought as an mere "organon (instrument)

329 See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, 4000-1000, 1st Edition (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 1985) 96, 99, 100.

330 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 95-104. See also Walter Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 81. See also Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, 96-110; Walter Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 19-37; or Hanz Zummer's *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe.*

of an authoritative efficacy," the appropriation of Greek *logos* as mere *value*, and thus a reversal of the Greek terms.[331]

Scholasticism

On Yannaras' reading, what began in the Carolingian Renaissance reached its *apogee* in the scholastic movement, and it is consequently in the method of scholasticism that we can most clearly this reversal of Greek terms. Meaning, for Yannaras, the general *ethos* which guided the practice of scholasticism must also be understood from within this economic horizon of benefit and utility, and thus it is in scholasticism that we have the concretization of an entirely different mode of philosophical thought and praxis. For what we have in scholasticism, for Yannaras, is an "inversion" of Greek thought that is not located in the ideas of particular thinkers *per se*, but an inversion in the mode or *ethos* in which philosophy is practiced. And this cultural change can be defined, for Yannaras, as the *instrumentalization* of Greek *logos*.[332]

In seeking to justify this claim, Yannaras points to scholasticism's roots in the Carolingian Renaissance, wherein we see an increase of episcopal synods that led to an expansion of theories and doctrines which "considerably buttressed" papal doctrines, while at the same time arguing against the Frankish theocratic form of government.[333] Likewise, Yannaras brings our attention to the manner in which *ratio* (dialectic) was initially used by the newly educated clergy to support the Church's teaching in all areas of life, from theology to Church practice and law. This is noted, for example, in the famous investiture controversy, or in the large publications of ecclesial tracts written "against the Greeks" (*Contra errores Graecorum*), wherein it was demonstrated, through reason alone, how all claims of the Greek Church Fathers that are contrary to Roman Catholic teaching are in error.[334] So too, and most fully, Yannaras points to how reason/logic, eventually accompanied by Aristotle's metaphysics, was used in Scholasticism as a means to buttress and objectively enforce (through the demands of reason) Catholic teaching and praxis. This is noted, for Yannaras, most fully in the Latin Church's thematic divorce between "philosophy" and "theology" proper into two distinct "sciences," wherein the critical discourse of philosophy was used primarily as a "tool," or means of support, for theology, the "queen of the sciences." In these ways and more, Yannaras thus wishes to argue that the general cultural *tropos* which guided the Latin scholastic renaissance must be recognized as largely utilitarian (pragmatic/benificial) in nature, since *ratio* was not seen, as it was in Hellenism, as a means to establish a truthful mode of

331 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 105.
332 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 95.
333 Yannaras, *Schism*, 100.
334 See Yannaras, *The Church in Post-Communist Europe*, 14.

existence,[335] but began to be used as an efficacious tool, an instrument which could be used for the benefit of economic, ecclesial, and political ends.[336]

Yannaras' claim here is, without question, as polemical as it is controversial. Indeed, one cannot help but feel Yannaras' gross oversimplification in reference to the scholastic tradition, which as a whole cannot be reduced to this definition or understanding. Yet however controversial or biased one might finds Yannaras' claims at this point, many of his insights are not without justification or evidence. For example, this overarching insight is heavily supported by the work of Hadot once more, who also argues that with the rise of Scholasticism, the critical discourse of philosophy largely became subject to the needs and projects of theology.[337] So too, we also see this point laid out most clearly in in Walter Ullman's insightful study on the history of political thought in the Middle Ages, which clearly argues that the emerging political controversy between Church and State of the eleventh and twelfth century must be recognized as the primary stimulus that conditioned the flowering of the scholastic renaissance insofar as its original intention was the reinforcing of Roman Catholic doctrines, teachings, and praxis.[338]

Again, it would be reductionistic to claim that critical thought was *only* appropriated in this manner during the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition, and it is important to emphasize that this is not what Yannaras is intending to argue. Yannaras' narrative, it must be remembered, is

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335 As Gilson claims also states in his text on Medieval philosophy: "In the eleventh century philosophy proper was reduced to Aristotle's dialectic. No physics, no anthropology, no metaphysics, no purely rational ethics were known to the men of that period." See Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House Publishers, 1955), 130.

336 In *The Schism*, Yannaras claims that the primary aim of the Scholastics is "to safeguard objectively and indisputably (that is, to prove obligatory for every thinking individual) the authority of the metaphysical ideology of Roman Catholicism, which constitutes the basis of the cultural (and by extension, the political) unity of the people of Europe." See Yannaras, *Schism*, 99.

337 Hadot's major claim is that with the rise of the medieval scholasticism, philosophy was "emptied of its spiritual exercises" and reduced to the role of furnishing theology with conceptual (and hence purely theoretical) material. In this manner, Hadot argues that philosophical discourse became a "servant" to theology, being appropriated as an essential tool for settling theological debates or strengthening the revealed truths of the faith. Hadot traces the origins of this practice back to the writings of the Church Fathers, who also used Greek philosophy similar purposes. The difference, however, between the way in which the Greek Church Fathers appropriated philosophical discourse and the manner in which the later-derived Latin tradition appropriated philosophical discourse is important to note. For the Church Fathers, as Hadot points out, philosophy was not reduced to philosophical discourse *per se*, as it would become in the Latin tradition. Rather, philosophical discourse was used by the Church Fathers to communicate and clarify their own revealed philosophy—to create their own *theoria*—which was ultimately grounded on their philosophical understanding of Christianity as a way of life. Thus the Church Fathers can be noted as working within the tradition of Hellenism, which understands philosophical discourse as only one dimension, and not the whole of, philosophy proper, since the Church Fathers still identified Christianity as a philosophy in and of itself. However, as Hadot argues, in the Latin tradition (especially with the rise of the scholastic university) this understanding was reversed insofar as there was drawn a clear distinction between *theologia* and *philosophia*. On this point, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107; and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 258.

338 In the realm of law, we see this defense of the Church played out in the important work of Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum* (around 1140AD), and in philosophy and theology, we see Abelard's *Sic et Non* (*Yes and No*) (1120AD), both which seek to reconcile discordant opinions of the Church. So too, we also see the works of John of Salisbury, St Bernard of Clairvaux, Giles of Rome, Hugh of St Victor, St Anselm, and other canon lawyers who adopted the efficacy of Greek reason in order to support the papal-hierocratic thesis that the pope's sovereignty reached the whole world in both secular and religious matters. On this interesting and well documented thesis, see Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 116-129.

attempting to describe the general and dominative modes of thought in the both the Greek and Latin tradition—as opposed to the particular and the irregular—as it is only in the former that one can explain the "inner logic" of a culture's mode of thought. And for Yannaras, what must be emphasized when seeking to understand the cultural *tropos* of critical thought in the Latin medieval tradition is this teleological shift in praxis, the inauguration of a new and incredibly influential end for which critical thought was appropriated via the scholastic method. For rather than, as can be seen in the *tropos* of Hellenism, critical thought being actualized within the life of the community for the sake of acquiring a truthful mode of existence, Yannaras argues that critical thought (mainly, Aristotle's logic and metaphysics)—from the Carolingian renaissance into the period of early and high scholasticism—began to be forcefully taken up for its efficacious value, thereby leading ultimately to the instrumentalization of Greek *logos* in the Latin philosophical tradition.[339] In this manner, for Yannaras, what we see in the historical actualization of the Latin tradition is ultimately an inversion of Hellenism's primary and most fundamental attribute, and it is this socio-political inversion which, on Yannaras' reading, helped lay the foundation for an entirely new, non-Hellenistic mode of philosophical participation.

The Inversion of Greek Gnoseology

For Yannaras, this change in the *tropos* of critical thought's actualization cannot be fully understood without additional reference to further inversion of Hellenism's communal gnoseology, which on Yannaras' reading of the Latin tradition, transferred the criterion of truth away from *koinonein* ("communion"/"being-together") to the intellectual striving of the individual. Meaning, for Yannaras, it is only when Greek *logos* was seen as a means for the individual to secure truth through the intellect alone that critical thought was able to be seen as an efficacious *tool*, or value. On this reading, the socio-political instrumentalization of Greek *logos* as outlined above could not have occurred without a more fundamental change in the manner in which Greek reason was understood and used. And for Yannaras, we see this change, most evidently, in the translation of Greek *logos* (word) as Latin *ratio* (logic/reason).

In this section, then, we will attempt to understand how, on Yannaras' reading, the Latin understanding and use of Greek logos as *ratio* led to a further inversion of Hellenistic tradition. More fully, we will began to explain why this change in Greek gnoseology, coupled with a change in Greek praxis, must be understood not simply as a minor change in the history of philosophy, but as leading to an altogether new, non-Hellenistic philosophical tradition

From Greek Logos to Scholastic Ratio

In the Latin West, after the fall of the Greco-Roman Empire, it is generally accepted that philosophy was no longer a living tradition in Western Europe. Thus during its attempted

339 We will look more closely at this point in the following chapter.

revitalization in the ninth and tenth century, all that largely remained of Greek philosophy was its translated manuscripts, or written discourse. For this very reason, as Yannaras argues, philosophy *qua* philosophy in the West was initially interpreted *as such*: as theoretical methods of purely rational inquiry, the advancement of knowledge through reason/logic alone.[340] As Etienne Gilson points out, highlighting this very point, for the earliest Latin philosophers in the 11th century, "there was no knowledge of the Ancient's philosophy's theory of physics, anthropology, metaphysics, or ethics. There was only Aristotle's logic, implying that they [medieval philosophers] must be considered dialecticians 'in the strictest sense.'"[341] Even later with the development of the university system, as Pierre Hadot argues, the revitalization of philosophy in the Latin middle ages did not reflect its Hellenistic origins, but was instead "reduced to theoretical discourse," understood primarily as a "purely abstract-intellectual endeavor."[342]

For Yannaras, then, it is largely for historical reasons that we find the transition from Greek *logos*, as explained in the previous chapters, to the now widely accepted understanding of Greek reason as a purely rational (intellectual) event; that is, the Latin-based conception of Greek reason as *ratio*, which Yannaras identifies primarily as the individual's capacity for rational thought (*facultas rationis*).[343] And for Yannaras, what is most important to understand about this transition from *logos* to *ratio* is its gnoseological implications—what it entails about the manner in which one may come to acquire knowledge. For according to Yannaras' reading, as we will see below, what this this transition from *logos* as *ratio* ultimately led to is a fundamentally new "disposition" or cultural "stance" (*stasis*) towards knowledge. In other words, it is believed to have created a new "for-structure" or "thought-pattern" for participating in critical thought—one which, on Yannaras' reading, led to a radical inversion of the communal, ascetical, and experiential/apophatic dimensions of Greek *logos* which were inherent to the gnoseological presuppositions of Hellenism.

For example, on Yannaras' reading, one of the primary models of knowledge in (early) Scholasticism is the intellect's ability to grasp the Being of beings through an intellectual comprehension of a being's *ousia*. Here the first medieval scholastics, inspired predominantly by their interpretation of Aristotle's logic and metaphysics, largely presumed that the being of the object is thoroughly exhausted in the concept or abstracted idea, such that to comprehensively

340 On this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 178.

341 See also Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 130.

342 Hadot, like Yannaras, argues that this rationalist reduction of philosophy to mere theoretical discourse began as early as the ninth century in the Carolingian Renaissance and would continue on into the eleventh century. During this time, due to a lack of source material, Hadot also argues that "philosophy" was largely identified with the purely conceptual discourse of Aristotle's dialectic. Later, with the rise of Scholasticism proper (due to an influx of Aristotle's translated works in the twelfth and thirteenth century), Aristotle's dialectics were then supplemented with his theory of knowledge and his physics. In this manner, Hadot argues that philosophy in the scholastic renaissance largely became identified with the theoretical discourse of Aristotelianism. And it is largely philosophical discourse as such that, on Hadot's reading, became a "servant" to theology, being appropriated an essential tool for settling theological debates or strengthening the revealed truths of the faith, thereby affirming Yannaras' primary arguments as noted above. For these points, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107; Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 254, 258

343. For Yannaras, *ratio* is understood largely as the intellect's ability to noetically grasp the Being of beings by their *ousia*, which then makes possible the extension of knowledge through mere dialectic.

grasp the idea which represents the *ousia* is to comprehensively grasp, and thus know, the actual being of the object in its entirety.[344] In in contrast to its Hellenistic counter-part, then, Yannaras emphasizes that Latin *ratio* does not recognize the truth of a being in its existential disclosure/manifestation, nor does it intuit the abstract idea/concept in a *symbolic* manner. Rather, knowledge is now exhausted with "the comphrension of the signified," in the noetic idea/concept/definition, such that "intellectual conception is absolutely consistent with ontological truth.[345] This is noted, for Yannaras, in Aquinas' definition of truth as the "*adaequatio rei et intelletus*" (the adequation/correspondence of the thing and the intellect).[346]

The second major model of knowledge in the scholastic tradition is of a dialectical sort and builds off the presuppositions laid out above. According to this second model, Yannaras argues that is was also largely presumed in Scholasticism that these very concepts/ideas that are known by the intellect are then able to be placed in a logical structure of rational discourse—one that corresponds to the rational structure and order of the cosmos itself—such that correct participation in said structure would allow for the possible extension of "knowledge" in the form of logic/dialectic. In other words, for Yannaras, the "correctness of reason" which Aristotle's logic formulated, the technique of syllogistic reasoning in itself, is recognized by the Scholastics as an actual participation of the intellect in a rational, cosmological order that reflects the eternal laws of divine reason.[347] In theory, then, one could extend one's knowledge of the cosmos—of *all* that is, even that which one has not experienced or known through the senses—through theoretical discourse alone, since reality itself is recognized as being in accordance with the determinate structure of human thought. Accordingly, this structured fusion of abstract ideas/concepts and mere reason/logic would theoretically allow one to acquire knowledge of all that exists as an "indisputable science," a form of syllogistic proof which exhausts knowledge in the intellectual capacity of individual (*átomo*).[348]

In both of these models of knowledge, then, Yannaras believes there to be a radical inversion of Greek *logos* and its gnoseological presuppositions as defined in the previous chapters. As noted in the first model, Yannaras points out how the correct functioning of *ratio* was not a form of existential participation in the *Logos*' primordial disclosure, nor did *ratio* recognize the abstract idea/concept as a communal *symbol* which allows for the intersubjective verification of said experience within the community. Rather, Yannaras argues that the type of knowledge which *ratio* helps secure is identified solely with the individual's intellectual grasp of the idea/concept in the mode of abstract reflection—the identification of knowledge solely with one's rational comphrension of the signified—therein leading to a drastic reversal of the apophatic, communal, and experience driven *stasis* which were inherent to Greek gnoseology.

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344 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 101.
345 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 102.
346 Cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 102.
347 Quoting Aquinas once more: "Every apprehension of the intellect is from God—the thing is said to be true by comparison to the divine intellect." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1.16.5 ad. 3m; and 1.16.6 ad. 2m); cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 103.
348 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 103.

Furthermore, Yannaras notes how this loss of the "Greek experience" which accompanied Greek *logos* was even furthered in the second model of knowledge, which largely identified truth with "correct reason"—that is, with purely abstract propositions which have no symbolic correlation with an existential given. According to this second model, then, knowledge is reduced to the "correctness of assertion" (Heidegger),[349] with the intellectual precociousness of the *individual*, who can now create "objective" and "obligatory knowledge" simply through his capacity to think correctly.[350] In this manner, it is neither through experience nor communal participation (*koinōnia*) that truth is found. Rather, knowledge of truth is established solely in the correctness of rational definition/assertion—received, established, and verified solely through the rational capacity of the intellect: "*ergo nec veritas nisi in intellectu—veritas est rectitudo sola mente preceptibilis*" (there is not truth outside of intellectual conception, truth is the correctness precipitable only by mind)."[351]

Furthermore, and for these reasons, Yannaras also emphasizes how knowledge of truth, in the scholastic university, was not recognized as a holist event which must be participated in through conversion, correct praxis, or "becoming true." That is, the archetype of "knowledge" which *ratio* strove had no sense of being an ongoing "event"—a continual "struggle" of overcoming the passions, instinct, and one's "private *logos*" through ascetical participation in the common-being of the community. Instead, what the scholastic tradition/method primarily concerned itself with, as Yannaras points out, was primarily of an intellectual rather than practical nature.[352] In other words, its primary concern was not being-true, but knowing truth in a purely intellectual manner. Truth was thus no longer seen, as it was in Hellenism, as that which must be embodied and known in the life of the *polis* or in the spiritual practices of the philosophical school. Rather, truth was reduced to that which can be procured in a classroom, through mere rational comprehension. Or even, as would come later, by oneself—sitting in one's armchair, completely dissociated from the world of manifestation and wholly lost in the "objective" and indubitable structures of *ratio*.[353]

For these reasons, we may begin to understand how, for Yannaras, the gnoseological "inversion" of Greek *logos* which transpired via the development of Latin *ratio* not only led to a different form of thinking, a new interpretation of Greek thought and praxis. On the contrary: for Yannaras, it led to a foundationally different philosophical tradition, a fundamentally different mode of *doing* philosophy that cannot be understood as a genuine continuation and revival of its Latin counter-part.

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349 On the reduction of the Greek understanding of truth to the modern notion of truth as the "correctness of assertion," see Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 209

350 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 102

351 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 11. Translated as "Therefore neither is there any truth except in the intellect—truth is the correctness perceptible only in the mind." Cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 102.

352 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 96-97.

353 In this manner, Yannaras sees the mode of thought which Descartes' founded as being a direct continuation of the mode of thinking which was established in Scholasticism. On this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 98.

The Efficacy of Ratio

On Yannaras' reading, however, it must not be forgotten what this inversion of Greek *logos* led to. For as noted above, Yannaras believes that it is only due to the development of Latin *ratio* that critical thought came to be appropriated in the Western tradition for its efficacious value.[354] At this point, we may now come to understand more fully the nuance of this statement.

As explicated in the previous section, Yannaras' reading of Latin *ratio* is recognized as an inversion of Greek gnoseology, and as such, it is recognized as leading to entirely new "for-structure" or "thought-pattern" for participating in critical thought; that is, a thus a new "stance" (stasis) or disposition towards knowledge in general. Included with this new *stasis*, as Yannaras highlights, is the presupposition that knowledge is a purely rational event which can be established through the intellectual striving of the individual; e.g., through the rational discourse or argumentation that takes place within the confines of the classroom. Here the "stance" of the participant was the need to acquire objective knowledge through the correctness of assertion, which in itself could be secured solely through the rational capacity of the individual; that is, through convincing another of one's view, or combatting a critique of one's view, solely through the determinate structure of mere reason and/or logic. And according to Yannaras' narrative, it is only when Greek *logos* was seen *as such*—that is, as a means for the individual to secure truth through the intellect alone—that critical thought was able to be seen, for the first time, as an efficacious *tool*, or value. In other words, it is only when Greek *logos* was presumed capable of establishing knowledge through mere reason/logic that, using Heideggerian language, it began to be seen as something "handy"—a mere tool which can be used to secure/establish a beneficial result for its handler, thereby becoming an *organon* of efficacious value.[355]

However, as we have seen in the opening section, Yannaras believes that this potential for Greek *logos* to be actualized *as such* would go on to be its primary mode of actualization in the Latin Western tradition. For Yannaras, this is noted, historically, as first being advanced in the Carolingian renaissance, and then reaching its apogee in the scholastic university, both movements which can be understood as appropriating *ratio* as a critical tool for the buttressing, protection, and objective enforcement of Western Europe's central axis of cultural unity (i.e., the teachings and praxis of the Latin Church). And since scholasticism itself became the predominant mode of philosophical thought which set the stage for the philosophical tradition of Western Europe, then Yannaras concludes that the primary mode in which Latin philosophy actualized itself, historically, is ultimately in this efficacious, instrumental manner.

But is Yannaras not overstepping here? Has his generalization of Latin *ratio* gone too far? In seeking to answer this question, I will begin by pointing out that this point is not without historical and scholarly evidence. As already noted, this point is also argued for in the work of Hadot, who claims that with the rise of the medieval scholasticism, philosophy was "emptied of

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354 Meaning, it is not simply, per Heidegger, the rational transition of Greek *logos* as word/discourse to the Latin interpretation as mere reason that led to the instrumentalization of the Greek thinking.

355 See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 209.

its spiritual exercises" and reduced to the role of furnishing theology with conceptual (and hence purely theoretical) material. In this manner, Hadot argues that philosophical discourse became a "servant" to theology, being appropriated as an essential "tool" for settling theological debates or strengthening the revealed truths of the faith.[356]

Outside of Yannaras and Hadot, however, this thesis is perhaps most strongly supported in Walter Ullmann in his work *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, which argues that the political controversy between Church and State of the eleventh and twelfth century (the Investiture Controversy) must be recognized as the primary stimulus that conditioned the flowering of the scholastic renaissance within the medieval university.[357] In this manner, Ullmann argues that the primary use of scholastic inquiry and method—at least, as it was practiced by the clergy—was the reinforcement of Roman Catholic doctrines, teachings, and praxis through the regulative demands of *ratio* (mere logic or reason).[358] For example, Ullmann points out how a large portion of initial scholastic inquiry sought to quell any critical doubts or contradictions concerning the church's doctrines or teaching, such as the juristic authority of the pope's plenitude *potestatis*, which was heavily critique by the German State during the investiture controversies.[359]

This is noted, for example, in the very structure of the scholastic method itself. In many scholastic debates, as Ullmann points out, Church doctrines and teachings were formatted into a scientific form through rigorous and analytic effort, reduced to their rational skeletal structure for the sake of critique, definition, and dialectical proof. Reduced to this purely rational medium, "knowledge" of the faith could then become analogous to "scientific knowledge" (*sciencia*), imbued with the certainty that comes from deductive inferences and syllogistic proofs. In this manner, as Ullmann argues, the scholastic method was able to offer individual mastery and objective comprehension/enforcement of the Church's teachings through their systemization in a logical and rational whole (one which was now free from contradiction or error).[360] With the *quaestiones disputatae*, all arguments against the faith could thus be dealt with in a clear and rational manner; contradictions could be reconciled and doubts could be curtailed.

For Ullmann, then, following Hadot and Yannaras, the scholastic method (at least, in its origins) must be acknowledged not simply as an unbiased philosophical method which seeks to acquire "truth for truth's sake," nor did it have as its end the establishment of a truthful mode of existence. For the truth, in both practice and written codification, was *already* established in the Church, and this very truth, in its rational formulation, does not and cannot err.[361] Consequently, the role which was attributed to *ratio* was primarily that of a tool: it was used in as a means to support, enforce, or defend the truths of the Church which were *already* established and/or revealed. Such is why, as Hadot further argues, philosophy itself within this political climate was "emptied of its spiritual exercises," reduced to the role of furnishing theology with conceptual (and

356 On this point, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107; and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 258
357 On this point, see Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 116-138.
358 See Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 116-118.
359 See Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 117-118.
360 See Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 120.
361 Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought in the Middle Ages*, 121.

hence purely theoretical) material;[362] that is, philosophy was reduced to theoretical discourse which could serve, as a hand-maiden, the theoretical discourse of theology.

In such ways, we may see how Yannaras believes this socio-political *ethos* did indeed lead to a very different manner in which critical thought was appropriated and/or actualized in the Latin West. No longer, like its Hellenistic counter-part, was it guided by the metaphysical "need" for the community to become-true in the life and praxis of *koinonia*. Rather, being re-vitalized outside of this Hellenistic context, Greek *logos* in the scholastic schools was "reduced to rational discourse," transfigured into mere reason/logic for the sake of establishing "objective" and "indisputable truths" (truth as mere correctness) which must be assented to by all rational creatures, and appropriated *as such* by the socially elite for largely pragmatic and utilitarian ends.

However, in regards to worry listed above, it must also be stated that the form of thought which Yannaras is attempting to articulate here is the "general" manner in which critical thought was actualized in the Scholastic tradition. Meaning, not all philosophical discourse during scholasticism can be categorized under the *tropos* of critical thought described above. Indeed, Yannaras is aware of this blatant fact.[363] For example, there were many "scholastics" in the beginning who were more Platonic than Aristotelian, and there were also a great many number of thinkers who stood opposed to the apparent rationalism of scholastic discourse (St. Bernard, St. Peter Damian, and others). There were also those who later, ironically, appropriated its methodology to seemingly implode it from within (Scotus and Ockham). Which means, quite simply, that one should not equate Yannaras' general critique of scholasticism as a *method* and cultural practice with the individual thinkers and systems which emerged during this time.[364] For what Yannaras is describing here is not necessarily the theories of particular or well-known Scholastic theologians/philosophers. Rather, what Yannaras is describing is the general environment or cultural "ethos" of the scholastic schools, the general "mode of thinking" that belonged to the system itself, and thus the manner of thinking which thousands of students adopted in the scholastic Middle Ages. For it is here, in the general and the common mode of thinking, and not the unique and the particular, that we find the "inner logic" which unfolds within a tradition.

Hadot also makes this point explicitly by acknowledging how in the Middle Ages, in the monastic schools especially, philosophy was still recognized not as "a theory or a way of knowing, but as a lived wisdom."[365] However, Hadot also argues that it is with the rise of the medieval university that this conception of philosophy was lost altogether, and it was upon the university (scholastic) model of philosophy that the philosophical tradition of Western Europe was built,

362 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 258.
363 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 98.
364 Thinkers such as Aquinas offered genuine insights and advancements in philosophical discourse which must not be disregarded or taken lightly, nor should the work of all scholastic thinkers be reduced to purely "theoretical discourse" and utility. Non-rationalist thinkers such as Bernard of Clairvaux or Bonaventure, it must be admitted, would fit more into what Yannaras considers to be the *tropos* of Hellenism insofar as their work ultimately had as its end the flourishing of the human person through a wholistic participation in Wisdom.
365 Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 270. This is a point which, admittedly, Yannaras seems to drastically overlook.

therein leading to the form of philosophy which is still practiced in our own time.[366] Thus while philosophy as a way of life might have been retained in the monastic community, as well as in particular thinkers within scholasticism, it must be acknowledged, with Yannaras, that the general practice of philosophy during this time was still largely reduced to purely theoretical, often instrumental, forms of discourse, and it is *this* manner of doing philosophy which culturally dominated the philosophical *ethos* of the Middle Ages.

Thus while the this analysis of the Latin philosophical tradition cannot in any manner be said to exhaustively cover the various movements and thinkers that appear in its development, it must be remembered that Yannaras is only attempting to identify here the common and most influential modes of thought which led to the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe. And since the predominant form of philosophical thought and praxis which developed in Western Europe does indeed match the rationalist, individualistic mode of philosophical practice which Yannaras speaks to here, then the historical and cultural insights which Yannaras offers as a means to explain this development should not be easily over-looked.

The Inversion of Christian Hellenism

Thus far, we have attempted to explain how Yannaras believes the primary attributes of Hellenism were inverted with the development of the Latin philosophical tradition. Moving forward, however, we must now look more closely at how these attributes were also inverted in relation to their development of Christianity; that is, how the theological/philosophical tradition of the Latin Church also inverted the fundamental attributes of "Christian Hellenism" as overviewed in the previous chapter. In order to accomplish this, we will look at how Yannaras believes this inversion took place historically with 1) the transition of "theology" into a science, and 2) the introduction of natural theology in Latin thought.

Theology as a Science

For Yannaras, "theology" as it came to be practiced in scholasticism and the university today did not exist from the patristic period to the high Middle Ages. Rather, as we saw in Yannaras' explication of the *ekklēsia's* philosophy, all reflections on the Christian faith were either 1) pedagogical, such as biblical exegesis or sermons, or 2) unitive and testimonial, which present a unifying, testimonial *logoi* of the *ekklēsia* for the sake of unity and correct praxis.[367]

On Yannaras' reading, however, this approach began to be inverted in the Middle Ages when the pedagogical teachings of the ecclesial event became subject to the practice of *ratio* as

366 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 258.

367 For this reason, Yannaras emphasizes that in the tradition of the Church Fathers (as well as continued today in the Orthodox Church), there is no strict-division between "philosophy" and "theology," nor is "Christian philosophy" reduced to philosophical discourse in service of faith and revelation. For further reading on the nature of patristic philosophy, see Florovsky, "Revelation, Philosophy, and Theology," 118-121.

described in the previous sections, leading to the eventual understanding of the Church's teachings as a "science" in themselves.[368] Most notably in the eleventh century, this transition is often attributed to Peter Abelard (1079-1142), who introduced dialectical reasoning into the reflections of Christian teachings with the presupposition that "truth" from *sacra doctrina* could be established by rational procedure.[369] With this move, Abelard transposed "theology" (*sacred doctrina*) beyond the communal reading, meditation, and exposition of scripture towards a form of rigorous *disputatio*, and it is this model of theological discourse which became a standard in the first universities of the thirteenth century; that is, the understanding of theology as a professional, academic discipline which is detached from pastoral, liturgical, and spiritual ends.[370]

As an academic discipline, the writings and teachings of the faith were accepted here as axiomatic first principles, and one enters into the academic practice of "theology" when one makes valid deductions from these revealed axioms; i.e., faith seeking understanding through *ratio*. In this manner, the scholastic practice of theology entails making explicit what is implicit in the logical structure of *sacred doctrina*.[371] For the scholastic, inspired by Abelard's innovation, these truths act as first-principles for theology upon which the dialectical process can be grounded, in the same way in which Aristotle's first principles are the self-evident foundations for philosophical knowledge. Meaning, both scholastic philosophy and theology are understood here, as described in the previous section, as the dialectical process of establishing propositional truths through valid deduction; that is, as forms of "theoretical discourse" which are practiced by professional academics. On this model, then, the major difference between theology and philosophy is defined primarily in relation to their contrasting starting points: whereas scholastic philosophy begins with the self-evident principles of reason and dialectically proceeds with the autonomous activity of the intellect, scholastic theology begins with revealed first-principles that are not self-evident to human reason, and thus begins and moves forward with faith guiding its dialectical process.

Aquinas would later take this understanding of theology to its natural end by claiming that *sacred doctrina* must be understood as an actual *science*;[372] that is, the practice wherein one makes valid deductions based upon self-evident first principles (unvarying and constant principles that the intellect has grasped directly without the process of inference), thus enabling one to acquire necessary truths generated from syllogistic discourse alone. Before Aquinas, theology in the Latin tradition was not considered a "science" in this technical, Aristotelian sense, since its axiomatic first-principles were not self-evident to reason but rather revealed in faith. However, Aquinas, drawing from the Aristotelian idea of a subordinate science, claims that theology fits the Aristotelian mode of deductive science since the revealed truths of *sacred doctrina* are indeed self-evident truths due to the fact that they are self-evident to God. *Sacred doctrina*, for this reason,

368 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 103.
369 On this point, see Geoffrey Turner, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the 'Scientific' Nature of Theology," *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 78, No. 921 (November 1997), 464.
370 See Turner, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the "Scientific" Nature of Theology," 464.
371 As William of Auxerre wrote: "faith is above all things the acquisition of first truths in themselves," which are sedimented in the axiomatic statements of scripture and doctrinal creeds. Cited in Turner, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the 'Scientific' Nature of Theology," 465.
372 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt I, qu. I, art 2

would be a "science" for God, and thus a subordinate science for human-beings, making theology a species of the genus science.[373] As such, theology can be seen as a deductive science in the Aristotelian sense (or at least, the Latin interpretation of Aristotle): it begins with self-evident first-principles and proceeds syllogistically to generate necessary conclusions about reality; a form of knowledge which, for the scholastic mind, is as certain as the knowledge acquired through mathematics and logic.

In conjunction with Yannaras' previous critique of *ratio*, several presuppositions can be stated about this new, scholastic understanding of theology. First, as Yannaras claims, the scholastic understanding of theology as a science works with the assumption that knowledge of the faith can be found in a rational comprehension of propositional content alone. Meaning, to acquire knowledge of both God and the Church is, in part, to intellectually comprehend the axiomatic statements (first-principles) of revelation as they are rationally articulated in scripture or in the Church's dogmas. From this perspective, then, knowledge of both God and the faith can be transferred in a rigorous and strictly "academic" manner simply through rational dialogue and intellectual comprehension, as was often presupposed in the methodology of the scholastic method as practiced within the university classroom. Likewise, and for this reason, it was presumed that one can also acquire further knowledge about each through valid deductions that are grounded upon revealed axiomatic principles, wherein the verification of these dialogical inferences is established through the agency of mere reason or logic.

In this manner, Yannaras claims that with the scholastic introduction of understanding theology as a science there is introduced in the Latin West a drastic reversal of the *ekklēsia's* original gnoseological assumptions and practices. For according to Yannaras' reading of Christian-Hellenism as noted in the previous chapter, it was a working assumption that logical symbols of the *ekklēsia*—that is, its writings and teachings which bore witness to the common-being of ecclesial experience—cannot not be known through the intellect alone; that is, merely through a rational comprehension of the signifier or definition. On the contrary, as symbols, they demanded a first-person participation in the signified, the wholistic experience of participation, or *koinōnia*[374]—a fact which is strongly pronounced in the apophatic theology of the Greek Church Fathers. However, in seeking to transpose the iconic proclamations of the faith into a science, Yannaras argues that this apophatic, participatory gnoseology of the *ekklēsia* (which he underlines as being a continuation of Hellenism's gnoseology) was inverted. Divorced from its pastoral, liturgical, and meditative medium, the sacred texts of the Church were restructured and systematized, broken into chapters, sections, headings in accordance with a "tables of contents"—

373 On this point, see Brian Davies, "Is Sacred Doctrina Theology?" *New Blackfriars*, March 1990, Vol. 71, No. 836 (March 1990), 142-143.

374 "It is not accidental that the undivided Church of the first eight centuries and its historical continuity in Orthodox in the East based its catechesis of the faithful, that is the accountment and transmission of her truth, chiefly on the liturgy. From the liturgical cycle of the Church's services, theology became a poem and a song—experienced more than thought out by syllogistic inferences. Initiation into the truth of the Church is participation in her way of life…in the visible actualization and revelation of the new humanity which has conquered death." Yannaras, *Faith as an Ecclesial Experience*," 32.

all of which allowed for a greater mastery (knowledge) of their purely intellectual content.[375] And with this alternative gnoseological approach to the rational symbols of the *ekklēsia*, Yannaras argues that knowledge of Christianity began to be seen by the scholastic schoolmen in a completely different manner than the theologians which came before them. For the academic, as Yannaras notes, theological "knowledge" was no longer recognized fundamentally as an event of ecclesial participation. On the contrary, it began to be recognized simply as the rational comprehension and mastery of Christianity's "rational icons," such that "comphrension of the signifier," in the act of faith, was identified with "knowledge of the signified."[376]

These gnoseological presuppositions of scholastic theology/philosophy, then, are ultimately understood by Yannaras as leading to a radical transformation in the manner in which the Latin tradition began to culturally understand and engage with the doctrines and teachings of the *ekklēsia*. Most importantly, Yannaras argues that the teachings of the Church slowly began to lose their apophatic, testimonial, and symbolic nature—that is, as revelatory, "metaphysical icons" which signified, through testimonial witness, humankind's universal experience of God's self-revelation. Rather, with the introduction of *ratio* in the Latin theological discourse, the symbols of the Church were formatted into a scientific form through rigorous and analytic effort, reduced to their rational skeletal structure for the sake of critique or refinement, and finally transposed into axiomatic and objective statements which could be verified, stipulated, and discussed by the individual within the determinate confines of reason/logic. In other words, the symbols of the Church became recognized as forms of knowledge "in themselves" which could be known purely through reason alone—no longer intuited as symbols which point beyond themselves to the original given of ecclesial experience, but "correct assertions" of purely abstract/conceptual definition which offered knowledge of the Church through simply through their rational comphrension.

For these reasons, Yannaras argues that we see, historically, the Hellenistic gnoseology of the early Church begin to be inverted with the scholastic transformation of "theology" into a science. Most especially, what was lost was the apophatic, "existential" stance of early Church, which identified knowledge of God and the *ekklēsia* primarily with the "common logos" of testimonial experience and participation. More fully, as we will come to see in the following chapter, Yannaras believes that it is this new development of Christian theology that set the stage for "onto-theology" in the West, wherein one's understanding of "God" in the Church is no longer understood as a symbol of ecclesial experience, but is rather understood as a purely rational idea, or conceptual *value*, that is capable of being known independently of communal participation or experiential validation. Before we understand this transition, however, we must first come to understand the bridge which led to this event, which Yannaras identifies historically as the rise of "natural theology" in the West.

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375 See Philipp Rosemann, "Philosophy and Theology in the Universities" in *A Companion to the Medieval World*, ed. by Carol Lansing and Edward D. English (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishers, 2012), 549.
376 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 101.

Natural Theology

For Yannaras, the influence and development of natural theology in the Western Church can ultimately be understood as a consequence of this divorce between the Church's universal experience and the testimonial witness of her metaphysical "icons." In other words, Yannaras believes it to be a result of scholastic theology, which reduced the symbols of the Church into their abstract, scientific form, therein creating a rationalist "stance" in theology which seeks to acquire knowledge in a purely conceptual, intellectual manner. For such is, according to Yannaras, exactly what natural theology is attempting to do, yet now without the aid of revelation. Thus rather than beginning with revealed "first-principles" from which to generate necessary truths about God in the form of syllogistic discourse, natural theology begins its syllogistic discourse on first-principles derived from natural reason alone. Yet the manner of thinking, as well as its end result, is the same: the acquisition of necessary and self-evident truths concerning God which can be procured solely through rational comprehension (*ratio* alone).

On Yannaras' reading, one of the primary ways in which the Scholastics attempted to accomplish this feat was through the analogy of being.[377] Through this process, the method of analogy attempts to make known to us the transcendent attributes of God's essence which the scholastics would go on to identify as the "transcendentals," i.e,, *unum, veru, bonum, res, aliquid* (one, true, good, thing, something). Along with the *analogia entis*, another form of natural theology is found in the "negative theology" of medieval theologians, wherein one can acquire determinate knowledge of God's being that is based upon what he must *not* be; i.e., God's essence *is* one, simple, unchanging, eternal, because he is *not* complex, passable, and he does *not* have a beginning.[378] Finally, we also find in natural theology the attempt to prove the existence of God's being, as *ousia*, through mere *ratio*, such as can be noted in Anselm's ontological argument and Aquinas' five ways.

Similar to his critique of theology as a science, Yannaras' critique of natural theology is that *ratio* began to be seen as the "exclusive entry to metaphysical knowledge,"[379] thus creating an intellectualist methodology that reduces knowledge of the Christian God to a purely intellectual event. Even when accounting for the "apophatic" approach of the scholastics, which attempts to emphasize the radical unknowability of God's essence, and thus the relativity of all cataphatic statements about God, Yannaras argues that this form of apophaticism is still working within an intellectualist methodology which assumes that all knowledge of God is mediated by means of intellectual, determinate knowledge (such is why the analogy of being presupposes an analogical

377 On this model, there is assumed an analogical correlation between beings and Being itself, thereby allowing one to acquire knowledge of the creator (the greatest and highest Being) through a knowledge of creation, since the cosmos, as a creature, bears an analogical likeness to its creator. On Yannaras' reading of the *analogia entis*, then, one acquires positive knowledge of God's being through an intellectual extension of Aristotelian categories of being (knowledge of created beings), which through an analogical ascent to the absolute are able to disclose the perfections of Being itself. On Yannaras' understanding of scholastic analogy, see *Person and Eros*, 206-212

378 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 27

379 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 22.

likeness of God's being (*ousia*) and the being (*ousia*) of created beings).[380] In this manner, apophaticism in the West is, on Yannaras' reading, concerned primarily with defining the limits, or relativity, of cataphatic assertion, underlining the limited character of intellectual definitions and analogical ascents, all of which are concerned with predicating statement's about God's *ousia* in relation to the determinate being of creation.[381]

Similar to the presumptions of "scientific" theology, then, Yannaras argues that the primary mistake of natural theology can be traced back to its use of *ratio*, which identifies knowledge solely with rational comphrension or the "correctness of assertion"—even in relation to the being of God. Thus contrary to the gnoseological *ethos* of Christian-Hellenism, especially as highlighted in the writings of the Church Fathers, scholastic theology presumes that knowledge of God can be acquired without ascetical praxis, without participation in ecclesial being, and without experiential verification of one's *logoi* in the common *logos* of the community. Such is, for Yannaras, one of the largest deviations of the Scholastic tradition from the philosophical tradition of the early Church Fathers.

More importantly, however, Yannaras argues that the rise of natural theology (and theology as a science), with its emphasis of equating knowledge of God's being with a rational comphrension of an idea or concept, naturally led to the demise of Church Fathers' personalist, existential ontology as expounded in the previous chapter. For with the rise of theology as such, knowledge of God's being began to be associated no longer with God's revealed, hypostatic *energeia* (activity)—per the Greek Church Fathers—but primarily with the determinate structure of his *ousia*, as it is only the *ousia* of God which could, in theory, be comprehended through the idea/concept. Thus rather than seeking to acquire knowledge of God's being through his personal *energeia*, through the praxis of first-person participation in the life of the ecclesial event, the scholastic theologian began to come back upon himself in abstraction, seeking to acquire knowledge of the Christian God in the determinate structure of the *idea*. For Yannaras, then, it is due to the Latin Church's appropriation and use of *ratio* that we see for the first time in the ecclesial history of the Church the mediation of Christian revelation (the experience of God's revelatory being) through the use of the *eidos* and the *katēgoria*—an ontological transition from knowing God's being (*einai*) as *hypostatses* to knowing God's being as *ousia*.

For such reasons, Yannaras argues that in the Latin West, the trinitarian God of absolute freedom not only began to be signified in a way that, up to that point, the *ekklēsia* had always refused to allow—that is, as being synonymous with the "God of the philosophers," and thus as being known through the mediation of natural reason.[382] So too, and for this reason, Yannaras

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380 Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum* (Rome: Herder, 1976), 262. Quoted in Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 62.

381 Thus even with this apophatic stance that emphasizes the radical distance between the being of God and his creatures, "being" here is referenced on essentialist terms (as referring to the essence of God and creatures), which means, for Yannaras, that knowledge of God is still presumed to be an intellectual event (such is why the "beatific vision" that will be granted to man is ultimately an intellectual vision of God's *essence*).

382 As noted in the previous chapter, the early Church Fathers were unanimous in their teaching that God is wholly beyond being, since his *ousia* is completely and wholly other to be being of the created order. For this reason, the Church Father's also taught that any knowledge which humankind has of God is through a first-person participation

argues that this inversion of the Church's gnoseology led to a further inversion of the Church's ontology. In other words, the Church for the first time began to understand the being of the triadic God of hypostatic manifestation primarily in relation to his *ousia*, likening him to a "highest being" or "object of science" whose being (*ousia*) has propositional correlation to the being (*ousia*) of the created world at large.

Thus what we see in the movements of "scientific" and natural theology within the Latin theological tradition is, on Yannaras' reading, an entirely different mode of practicing philosophy and theology in the Church, one which Yannaras believes completely inverted its Hellenistic counter-part. And for Yannaras, it is only with *this* change that we can come to better understand the historical unfolding of nihilism as explicated by Martin Heidegger. For according to Yannaras, it is only here, with the introduction of *ratio* into the Christian tradition, that there emerged in Christendom the possibility for the Christian God of revelation to become known as a purely conceptual "object" of thought—that is, a purely abstract signifier, a "highest being" or idea which could be used (instrumentalized) as an efficacious value, or ontological "ground," for the being of all other beings. Or, as Nietzsche points out, as a purely conceptual foundation for the socio-political *ethos* of Europe.

According to Yannaras' narrative, then, it is only with this inverted development of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition that the foundation was set for the historical unfolding of Western nihilism.

Summary/Closing Thoughts

As we stated in the beginning, Yannaras believes that the historical unfolding of nihilism is a problem that is exclusive to the Latin philosophical tradition that originated in the post-Roman West. Meaning, the historical problematic of Western nihilism should not be seen as one continuous development in the philosophical tradition at large (as it has been noted in the narratives of Nietzsche and Heidegger), beginning in Antiquity and unfolding through the Middle Ages into Modernity in our own time. Rather, Yannaras wishes to argue that the Latin tradition, because of its inversion of the fundamental attributes of critical thought in Hellenism, is not an authentic inheritor and continuation of the Greek philosophical tradition, and that it is because of this inversion that the foundation was set for the problematic of Western nihilism to unfold in Latin philosophical tradition alone.

In this chapter, we have noted the primary ways in which Yannaras understands the Latin tradition to have inverted the tradition of Hellenism as such. First, Yannaras argues that the socio-political environment in which Greek thought was revitalized in Western Europe was ultimately of a pragmatic, utilitarian nature, thus leading to the inversion of Hellenism's primary attribute of needing to *become* true. Second, and coinciding with this event, Yannaras claims there is also an

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in his hypostatic *energeia* within the life and praxis of the Church; that is, in the personal activity of the divine persons, which are ontologically "other than" the divine *ousia*. In this manner, knowledge of God always remained a first-person, participatory experience in the theology of the early Church

inversion of Greek gnoseology, the transition of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio*, wherein we find a loss of the communal, experiential/apophatic, and praxis based dimensions of Hellenistic thought. Finally, we then looked to see how this newly established mode of critical discourse in the Latin tradition also led to the inversion of Hellenism as it had been advanced in Christendom, especially in relation to the theology/philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers. Here we attempted to show how, for Yannaras, the primary mistake of scholastic theology is its attempt to identifies knowledge solely with rational comphrension or the "correctness of assertion"—even in relation to the being of God. As such, Yannaras claims that we find in scholastic theology an inversion of the Church Father's apophatic and praxis based gnoseology, which always identifies knowledge of God with a first-person, participatory experience within the common life and praxis of the *ekklēsia.* Furthermore, Yannaras argues that this inversion of the Church Fathers' gnoseology also led to a further inversion of the Church Fathers' personalist ontology: the ontological transition from knowing God's being as *hypostases* to knowing God's being primarily as *ousia*.

For these reasons, Yannaras argues that what we have in both the philosophical and theological traditions of scholasticism is ultimately a new mode of participating in critical thought—an entirely new mode of "doing" both philosophy and theology—which in itself was derived from an improper adoption of Greek thought altogether. And as we will see fleshed out more clearly in the following chapter, Yannaras believes that it is this newly derived "inner logic" of critical thinking which nihilistically unfolded in the historical development of Western Europe.

Before moving forward, however, a few words must be spoken concerning this vision which Yannaras has offered of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition.

First, it must be acknowledged that Yannaras vision of the Latin tradition is, undoubtably, far too broad and unnuanced. For even though Yannaras' narrative does indeed highlight certain aspects of the Latin tradition, there still exists a large amount of literature during this era which would not fall within the specifications of Yannaras' critique. It would be preposterous, for example, to claim that all scholastic treatise were utilitarian in nature, or that all scholastics defined knowledge in the rationalist manner which Yannaras portrays it. However, as we have already briefly acknowledged in this chapter, such is not Yannaras claim or intention. What Yannaras is attempting to identify in his narrative, it must always be remembered, is the rational thought-pattern" or "fore-structure" which guided the pen of the scholastics—the cultural "horizon" or *ethos* which dictated the manner in which their thought unfolded. In other words, Yannaras is describing the intellectual "medium" in which the scholastics participated in through being given a scholastic, "academic" education. Thus for Yannaras, it is the *medium itself* which is the problem, not necessarily the thinkers, systems, or theories which came from said medium. For what Yannaras is attempting to offer, after all, is not a synthesis of scholastic beliefs and theories. Rather, he is attempting to describe the "general" (rather than particular) mode of thinking from which these beliefs and theories germinated. And it is this general mode of thinking, on Yannaras' reading of the scholastic schools, that Yannaras accuses of having inverted the primary attributes of the Hellenistic critical tradition.

Of course, one can simply disagree with Yannaras at this point: either on the ground that Yannaras' reading of the Hellenistic tradition is simply idealized, or that his reading of the Latin tradition is simply not nuanced enough. Yet even here, Yannaras' over-arching narrative of the Greek and Latin tradition's *mode* of thinking cannot so easily be dismissed, especially when one becomes aware of the influx of contemporary research which is beginning to recognize the radical changes that *did* in fact take place with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition. In seeking to reveal this, I have primarily chosen to dialogue most heavily with the research of thinkers like Hadot, Oehler, Vernant, Ullmann, all of whom paint the same picture concerning the radical differences that existed between the Greek and Latin philosophical/theological traditions. However, complimenting such literature is also a plethora of other works which I have not directly covered,[383] such as Ivan Illich's *In the Vineyard of the Text*, which documents in a clear and concise manner the radical changes that came about in relation to the theological texts of pre and post-scholastic theological discourse. In this work, for example, Illich compares the monastic character of ecclesial reading and critical discourse (wherein, as he importantly states, *philosophia* still meant "to live the life of a monk [*monachum agree*]")[384] in contrast to the technical, individualistic, and scientific mode of reading and discourse that developed in the scholastic schools[385] (a mode of discourse, I might add, that Illich argues was heavily influenced by the mode of socio-political discourse that existed between the clerics and royalty within the twelfth century).[386] Thus what Illich highlights, along with Yannaras, is a drastic theological transformation that took place with the development of scholastic discourse—a transformation not of *theoria* and interpretation, but rather a transformation of praxis—a new "stance" or "attitude" towards the text which, as Philip Rosemann likewise acknowledges, led to the development of a new "theory of knowledge" altogether.[387]

Due to the amount of respected secondary literature which would seem to directly affirm Yannaras' reading of scholasticism's general mode of thinking, I do not believe this specific aspect of Yannaras' narrative should be critiqued, although it *would* be preferrable if Yannaras would engage more often with primary sources for the sake of buttressing his arguments. However, where Yannaras can and should be rightly critiqued is in relation to his lack of generosity when engaging with the Latin tradition. For while I do not regard his cultural analysis of Latin discourse to be wrong, I acknowledge that it may come across as incorrect due to his lack of generosity; that is,

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383 See for example Ludwig Stien, "Die Continuität der griechischen Philosophie in der Gedakenwelt der Byzantiner" (Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 9 (1895): 225-46; Basil Tatakis' *La Philosophie byzantine*; Oehler's *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter*; John Zizioulas, "Hellenism and Christianity: The encounter of two worlds" in *Historia tou Hellēnikou Ethnous* (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon), 519-59;); Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The therapy of desire: theory and practice in Hellenistic ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994; Hanz Zummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Philip Rosemann's "Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages" and "The Future of Scholastic Thought" in *The Irish Contribution to European Scholastic Thought*, ed. by James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 254-273—just to name a few.

384 See Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 92.

385 On these points, see Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 81, 82, 86,

386 Ibid., 96.

387 See Rosemann's "Philosophy and Theology in the Universities," 554.

due to the fact that he does not acknowledge any *positive* dimensions to Latin theology/philosophy. For there does exist, undoubtably, particular thinkers and movements in the Latin tradition which simply do not fall under this criticism—thinkers which, ironically, would heavily support the Hellenistic mode of thinking which Yannaras himself is attempting to promote (Scotus Eriugena, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh of St. Victor, Meister Eckhart, St. Bonaventure). Likewise, Yannaras does not look into the positive intentions of scholasticism, which for many participants still coincided with prayer and the spiritual life. However, the polemical—and I would argue, often ideological—nature of Yannaras' narrative keeps him from doing so. This is most unfortunate, as it likely discredits his insights in the mind of the Western reader.

While acknowledging this critique, however, I do not believe it enough to discredit Yannaras general narrative as a whole, nor do I think it should dissuade one from acknowledging the insights which Yannaras analysis provides. And this is because, once more, what Yannaras is attempting to focus on is the most widespread and influential modes of thinking in scholasticism, the rational "thought-pattern" or "fore-structure" which guided the pen of the scholastics in general, not the particular and less influential modes of thinking which the more positive modes of scholastic inquiry would belong to. And ultimately, it is Yannaras' analysis of this more general and pervasive mode of thinking that is indeed accurate on many accounts—a fact which I have attempted to illuminate with frequent references to secondary literature which supports Yannaras' theses in a much more historical and scholarly manner. What differs between these secondary sources and those of Yannaras, however, is that what Yannaras is attempting to reveal is not simply the differences themselves, but how these very differences play an essential role in understanding the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe.

This then leads us to our final chapter in Part One of this work, wherein we will take a closer look at how and why Yannaras believes the historical unfolding of nihilism to be an event that germinated from this alternative mode of thought which developed from the Latin philosophical/theological tradition which we have overviewed in this chapter.

Chapter V
The Historical Unfolding of Nihilism: An Alternative Narrative

Up to this point, we have been attempting to offer a comprehensive synthesis of what I have called the historical dimension of Yannaras' response to Martin Heidegger's onto-theological critique of metaphysics and the problematic of Western nihilism. As stated in the beginning, Yannaras central argument is that the problematic of Western nihilism is a problem that is exclusive to the Latin philosophical tradition that originated in the post-Roman West. This is because Yannaras does not see the philosophical tradition that originated in the Latin West as an authentic continuation of its Hellenistic counter-part, especially as it had been advanced in the *ethos* of Christian-Hellenism. Rather, Yannaras' claim is that the revival of critical thought in the post-Roman West ultimately led to an inversion of the Greek philosophical tradition altogether, and likewise to the inauguration of a new philosophical tradition altogether which cannot be seen as an authentic inheritor of its Hellenistic counter-part. And for Yannaras, it is only with the development of this later tradition that he believes the foundation was set for nihilism's historical unfolding in Western Europe.

In seeking to understand this narrative more completely, we began in chapter two by laying out what Yannaras believes the fundamental attributes of the Greek philosophical tradition to be: that which constitutes Hellenism's unique *tropos* of participating in critical thought. In chapter three, we then articulated how Yannaras believes these fundamental attributes were both authentically inherited and advanced with the rise of Christianity, most evidently seen in Yannaras' articulation of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy. In chapter four, we then attempted to reveal how Yannaras believes the fundamental attributes of the Greek philosophical tradition were inverted with the rise of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition, leading to the inauguration of an entirely new mode of participating in critical thought. At this point, then, we must now take a closer look at how 1) Yannaras explains the historical unfolding of nihilism to be an event that germinated from this new *tropos* of thought which developed in the Latin philosophical/theological tradition, and 2) how this counter-narrative is able to adequately respond to the problem of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger.

In order to set the stage for the following analysis, this chapter will begin by offering a brief overview of Yannaras' interpretation of Heidegger and the problematic of Western nihilism—first, as Heidegger had initially interpreted it in the writings of Fredrich Nietzsche and the "death of God," and second, in his fuller and more nuanced mythological narrative of onto-theology. After offering this overview, we will move forward by seeking to show how Yannaras, taking inspiration from these narratives, seeks to subsume the major insights of Heidegger's narrative within his own counter-narrative that is based off his reading of the Greek and Latin philosophical traditions. As such, Yannaras re-telling of the historical unfolding of nihilism would be able to acknowledge and take into account the majority of Heidegger's critiques of metaphysics while simultaneously limiting these critiques to the *tropos* of the Latin philosophical tradition alone. More specifically, Yannaras attempts to argue this by revealing how 1) Heidegger's Nietzschean reading of Western metaphysics as *value* must be understood as a *tropos* of thought which developed in the Latin philosophical tradition alone, and that it is only at *this* point in history that the Christian God became a metaphysical value of socio-political efficacy. Similarly, Yannaras will then argue that 2) Heidegger's more advanced critique of metaphysics as onto-theology must also be understood as a *tropos* of thought which does not apply to apply to the Greek philosophical tradition; rather, Yannaras will attempt to reveal how the "inner logic" of onto-theology is a mode of participating in critical thought which historically germinated from the non-Hellenistic, post-Roman tradition of the Western Europe. As such, we will see that, for Yannaras, the problematic of Western nihilism as illuminated by Heidegger is a problem that is exclusive to the Latin philosophical tradition alone. More fully, we will also

see that this narrative of Western nihilism makes space for the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers to be offered as a legitimate way forward from the death of the Western European philosophical tradition, which we will then turn our attention to in Part Two.

The Problematic of Western Nihilism

Heidegger's engagement with and analysis of the problematic of Western nihilism which Yannaras seeks to respond to can largely be broken up into two primary movements, or critiques: first, there is Heidegger's in depth analysis of Western nihilism in his Nietzsche lectures; second, Heidegger then builds off of and develops this analysis in relation to his own narrative of Western metaphysics as "onto-theology." In *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, Yannaras primarily focuses on Heidegger's initial analysis and interpretation of Western nihilism in relation to the work of Fredrich Nietzsche, wherein the problematic of Western nihilism is largely understood, in part, as a result of the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe. It is then in *The Schism* and *Person and Eros* that Yannaras deals with Heidegger's later and more exhaustive interpretation of Western nihilism through his mythological narrative of onto-theology. Thus even though Heidegger's later critique of metaphysics as onto-theology takes into account and advances his earlier insights from the Nietzsche lectures, Yannaras deals which each account, or narrative, separately—on their own terms. In this chapter, we will do the same. The first section will offer an overview of Heidegger's analysis of Western nihilism in relation to his direct engagement with Nietzsche, which will then be followed by an overview of Heidegger's own more autonomous and advanced reading of Western nihilism in light of his mythological narrative of onto-theology. I will proceed to show how Yannaras' counter-narrative responds to each of these critiques, respectively.

The Death of God

In 1882 Nietzsche prophesied through the mouthpiece of the madman that God had died, and that because of his death, Europe was entering a new era of nihilism—an age wherein existence would have no meaning, and human willing would have no purpose. In the following century, Heidegger proclaimed that this age of nihilism is upon us, affirming that what Nietzsche proclaimed was not the raving lunacy of a madman, but the intuitive foresight of a prophet.

According to Nietzsche—or at least Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, which has become canon for many—the death of God and the ensuing era of nihilism comes from the recognition that the God of Christendom is in fact the God of Greek metaphysics,[388] a dead fashioning of the mind which was adopted by Christianity to create a ground (purpose) for life in Western Europe, and as such is nothing more than a *value* which had only been believed in insofar as it gave objective meaning and purpose to society. Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of

388 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row Publishers), vol. IV: Nihilism, 4; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is dead,'" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New Yordk: Harper & Row), 61-65.

"God," for Heidegger, is thus not identified with the death of the Christian God of religion *per se*,[389] but with the death of the conceptual validity of the "transcendent," "supersensory world": the posited world of metaphysical ideals, norms, principles, ends and values which are set "above" the contingent givenness of beings so as to ground the world of becoming with a goal and purpose; that is, to give the world *meaning*.[390] God's death as such does not refer specifically to the death of any religious God, but refers rather to the death of metaphysics (and thus the God of metaphysics), the historical event whereby the validity of this transcendent world has become null and void,[391] leaving the immanent world in which man dwells without an aim, purpose, or meaning.

However, in order for us to understand the gravity of this historical event, we must begin by understanding Nietzsche's more foundational critique of metaphysics as *value*. On Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, value-laden forms of metaphysics must be understood as derivative of a primordial *need*; that is, the need to acquire a meaning, aim, or purpose for human willing, which Nietzsche equates with the *will to power*, an incessant "self-powering" of preservation and enhancement that *is* insofar as it wills (what Heidegger calls "the will to will").[392] For such a will to be at all there must be an aim or a purpose for the will, wherein "purpose," on Heidegger's reading, is equated with *meaning*; to find a purpose or aim for the will is to find a meaning for the will.[393] Such is why any response to the ontological question (what is the meaning of Being?) is to be understood as a *value*; that is, something which is "good" or contains value in reference to the fact that it can give meaning or purpose to the will's willing.[394] In this manner, all metaphysical inquiry which seeks to provide an answer to the meaning of Being takes on a completely axiological nature insofar as it is *produced* by the will for its own self-powering; i.e., as a value, "that which validates."[395]

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche interprets the history of Western metaphysics in light of this critique of value.[396] Beginning in Antiquity, especially with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, it was recognized that the immanent world of becoming was meaningless unto itself, and as such was unable to offer any meaning or purpose to will. As such, Nietzsche claims that the earliest Greek philosophers began to look beyond the realm of becoming to the realm of transcendence, to the intelligible realm of ideas (Plato) or previously unknown *causes* (Aristotle) in search of a purpose for existence.[397] In this manner, Greek metaphysics is accused by Nietzsche as having posited the existence of a rational, eternal, "true world"—that which is beyond/after

389 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 4; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is dead,'" 61-65.
390 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 4; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 61.
391 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 27; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 62.
392 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 31; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 72
393 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 31
394 Ibid., 15; "The Word of Nietzsche," 78
395 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 15.
396 Heidegger, on the other hand, believes that this critique applies most pertinently to the metaphysics of Modernity, and only has its *roots* in Ancient philosophy). On this point, see Merold Westphal, *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence* (Bloomington: IN, Indiana University Press), 32
397 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 5, 33.

(*metá*) physics (*phusika*)—over against the immediate, ephemeral world of change in order to give said world meaning, and as such must be recognized as nothing more than a projected, validating *value*.

Furthermore, Nietzsche points out how the very culture of Western Europe must be recognized as the establishment of a particular way of life (a particular aim) that is grounded upon this posited, transcendent realm of apollonian values. One thus finds inherent to the fabric of Western culture the prioritization of cosmological values such as *telos*, essence, potentiality, actuality, substance, and of course "God"—the conceptual first cause, prime mover, or *perfectus actus* (a value that was particularly important for Scholastic philosophy in the Middle Ages). So too in Modernity, we see a continuation of these apollonian values in notions such as justice, love, or human rights, all of which are recognized by Nietzsche as "transcendent" values which continue to secure the meaning (culture) of Western Civilization. For insofar as this aim/trajectory of Western Europe was built upon and guided by the transcendent, determinate values established early on by Ancient metaphysics, then the *history* of the West is to be understood as the natural unfolding of this metaphysical center.[398]

On Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, then, we may consequently understand our present stage of nihilism as the final stage of this history, the historical *withdrawal* of humanity's highest values, whereby the upmost values, once set up over and against the ephemeral world of becoming, have now become valueless; that is, they have lost their effective, "vitalizing" and "obligatory power." They have become impotent in their ability give purpose or meaning to human willing.[399] And this nihilistic unfolding is *necessary*, on Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, since the culture of Western Europe was grounded upon subjectively posited purposes in all events of immanent becoming that were not actually there to begin with. Per Nietzsche, these "purposes" were and only have ever been mere values, psychological projections that were accepted based upon their vitalizing power to give life meaning.[400] Consequently, it is inevitable that these subjective projections of metaphysical, transcendent values would eventually lose their axiological power insofar as they come into competition with new values and/or grounds for human existence—an event that had already begun to take shape in the Modern period.[401] Such was Nietzsche's prophecy: the value-laden, metaphysical foundation which Europe had built itself upon was crumbling, and it was only a matter of time before this fact would catch up to Modernity,

398 Most recently, then, it could be argued that difference, otherness, hospitality, and justice have become the reigning values of post-modernity.

399 Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 61, 66.

400 Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* 30. "And yet the highest values are already devaluing themselves through the emerging of the insight that the ideal world is not and is never to be realized within the real world." Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 66.

401 Nietzsche recognized that it was now the human subject, not God (the transcendent realm) which was the ultimate ground/value for human existence. And insofar as it is the being of the human subject, and not the world, which establishes values (meaning) for human becoming, then the world itself will quickly be recognized as lacking inherent value or purpose.

inaugurating an upcoming era of violence and nihilism whereby "the 'aim' will be lacking and the 'why?' will receive no answer."[402]

Nietzsche did not live to see this day, but such is the stage of Western Europe's history that we now find ourselves in. As Heidegger points out, taking the torch from Nietzsche, our age of technology is both a sign of metaphysic's end and nihilism's beginning.[403] Plato's super-sensual, "real world" has fallen, and most importantly, the Christian God, which in Christendom had become equated with this super-sensual world of Greek metaphysics, is no longer believed in. To the Modern mind, the finite world of meaningless becoming now gives itself as the only reality, the only world that is considered authentically real.[404] And this is not because Modern man has disproven the existence of God or any other metaphysical reality, as God and the world of transcendence was never proven in the first place. They simply were, and only ever has been, valuable ideas: a purely intelligible world which was metaphysically posited, projected, and presumed by a very *interested*, value-driven subject,[405] and thus an ideal world which was accepted as true or real due to its efficacy alone.[406]

Yannaras speaks of this event as creating a metaphysical impasse for the West, and at this point we can understand why. Modern man, according to the problem as it has been framed thus far, cannot bring himself out of this state, he cannot "rechain" the earth to its sun.[407] To attempt to do so, as Heidegger helps us realize, will only make the problem worse. For to have to argue for or ground God's existence through mere reason would be to step back into the axiological form of metaphysics which brought us to our current state of nihilism in the first place. It would, as Heidegger states, simply keep man in God's place, whereby human subjectivity would remain the "being upon which all beings are grounded as regards to their manner of being and their truth,"[408] the *ground* upon which the Being of beings are dependent.[409] And as long as God (or any form of transcendence) remains dependent upon the justification/creativity of human reasoning for its being, then nihilism will remain unwavering insofar as transcendence will continue to exist as a mere value. Such is why the Nietzschean "killing of God," according to Heidegger, is equated with the idolatrous transformation of God into a value: "the ultimate blow in the killing of God is perpetrated by metaphysics, which, as the will to power, accomplishes thinking in the sense of

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402 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 4, 14

403 Technology, for Heidegger, "exposes the illusory character of 'past principles' in that it shows that all archaic principles are maximizations of the regional 'fabrication' and 'representation.'" Joeri Schrijvers, *Between Faith and* Belief: Towards a Contemporary Phenomenology of Religious Life (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016), 36.

404 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 34.

405 Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 26.

406 Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 90.

407 This quote refers to the Nietzsche's *Parable of the Madman*, who, in speaking on the event of God's death, asks "What where we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun?" Cited in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882, 1887) edit. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 181-82

408 Insofar as God has always been understood, metaphysically, as the "highest being" who causes and brings about that which is. See Heidegger, "The World of Nietzsche," 100.

409 Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 128.

value thinking."[410] To attempt to rechain the earth to the sun through the practice of metaphysics, then, would be only to twist the knife in further.

Of course, Ancient and Medieval thought does not fit within Modernity's ontological subject-object dichotomy which has been described up to this point. Heidegger admits that the Ancients cannot be critiqued, strictly speaking, of representational/value thinking.[411] However, as Heidegger further points out, returning to these forms of philosophy are still not an option insofar the subject-object ontology of Modernity and our current age of nihilism is the end product of the metaphysical form of "scientific" and "calculative" thinking which *started* in Ancient Greece.[412] For Heidegger, then, to step back into *any* form of metaphysics would be to step back onto a conveyer belt which will inevitably leads to nihilism.

Onto-Theology

This historical critique of metaphysics, which began to emerge in Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, will come to be more fully elucidated in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as "onto-theology," a critique which, for many today, hammered the final nails in the coffin of metaphysics. In 1957, coming off his recent engagement with Nietzsche, Heidegger published two important lectures under the title "*Identität und Differenz*." In the second lecture, which begins with an analysis of Hegel, we see Heidegger make reference to what he understands to be a fundamental trait of Western metaphysics from Plato onward: that is, from its beginnings among the Greeks, metaphysics is "onto-theo-logy."[413] Meaning, metaphysics is always A) ontology: the discipline which studies the existence/Being of existents/beings; B) theology: the study of God, and C) logic: that is, the logic of *logos* which seeks to render both the existence of Being/beings comprehensible by seeking the *rational* ground (reason) of each.[414] Ontology is thus onto-*logic* insofar as it seeks to think the Being of existence in the fathoming unity of the greatest generality (the ontic universal as *ground*), and theology is theo-*logic* insofar as it seeks to think the existence of God on the rational basis or logic of said *logos*.

For Heidegger, metaphysics as such wants nothing to do with the "whylessness" of beings, the *unfathomable* ground, the abyss of "no-thing-ness" from which beings come into phenomenal presence. Metaphysics rather seeks self-security through the stability of *intelligible* grounds, thus identifying the Being of beings always in a causal, determinate manner. And since all that can be

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410 Ibid., 108.

411 For in Antiquity, there had yet to exist a pure, self-grounding "subject" which exists in relation to the representation of objects, and it is only with the development of the subject as such that this mode of "value-thinking" can fully actualize itself. On this point, see Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason,* translated by Reginald Lilly (Blommington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 82, 87.

412 See Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 127, 131.

413 Heidegger, "The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics" in *Essays in Metaphysics*, trans. by Kurt F. Leidecker (New York, NY: Philosophical Library Inc., 1960), 47.

414 "Logic is, to be sure, the name for that particular thinking which everywhere tries to fathom and comprehend Existence as such within the totality of Being as ground (logos)." Heidegger, "The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics," 52.

conceptualized for this causal ground are other intelligible beings (now in their greatest generality), Heidegger identifies metaphysics as the act of grounding particular, contingent beings upon the eternal and unchanging (general) existence of other *beings,* whereby the Being of beings becomes identified with the presence and identity of sameness (as unitary, unchanging, determinate, universal, etc.).[415]

This act of understand the Being of beings in a causal manner, however, inevitably leads to the need for a *first* cause and "highest being" to explain the Being of all other beings, thereby identifying "existence as such in the universal and primary," which itself is "one with the Existent as such in the highest and Ultimate."[416] Metaphysics is onto-theo-logical, then, insofar as it seeks to grasp the Being of beings in reference to the causal grounds of other beings, leading ultimately to its fullest representation as *causa sui*, which, for Heidegger, is in essence the metaphysical concept of God (or some highest being).[417] For the Ancients, this stability was constituted in the transcendent, intelligible world. For the Medieval world, it was God. Today, it is the Modern subject. All accounts are onto-theological (including Nietzsche!) insofar as they seek to explain the Being of beings in causal reference to that which grounds beings, wherein Being is given rationally as intelligible presence (as another being).

It is also important to note that, for Heidegger, this onto-theological history of metaphysics begins in Ancient Greece with Plato and Aristotle, and *not* with the pre-Socratic thinkers, for whom Being, as *physis*, was given/sheltered in the plurivocal form of poetic thought. In the writings of Heraclitus and Parmenides, for example, Heidegger argues that the Being of being is disclosed as *alethiea* (unconcealment), a form of primordial self-showing that allowed for *Dasein* to marvel before the wonder of Being yet still be at home in the world. In other words, Heidegger believes that the pre-Socratics were able to establish a mode of thinking Being wherein there existed a non-nihilistic "essential belonging together of Being and apprehending."[418]

As we saw in Nietzsche's narrative, however, Heidegger argues that we see a new form of thinking develop with Plato and Aristotle, a mode of thinking which was no longer satisfied with identifying the Being of beings with the mysterious "rising to presence," but rather sought to think the Being of beings in relation to a determinate and intelligible ground which exists beyond the world of temporary disclosure. And it was with this critical move that, on Heidegger's reading, metaphysics as onto-theology began to create an unnatural rift between *Dasein's* harmonious, primordial belonging together of Being and thought. For in the mode of onto-theological disclosure, Being was now given as standing presence up "over against" the thinker, therein creating an unnatural fissure between the thinker and his primordial "dwelling" with Being. As

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415 Here Being as such is always understood in light of the principle of identity [(A)=(A)], wherein (A) is understood as having Being because it itself is the same with itself: (A) has Being insofar as it is determinately (A), and not not (A): [(A)≠ (B)]. For Heidegger's critique of this traditional interpretation of identity, see Heidegger, "The Principle of Identity," in *Essays in Metaphysics* (New York: Philosophical Library Inc, 1960).

416 Ibid.

417 Heidegger, "The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics," 53.

418 Martin Heidegger, What is Metaphysics? 156. For Heidegger's most important writings on the Ancient Greek understanding of *alethiea,* see Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1992).

such, thinking metaphysically (onto-theologically) leads to the loss of one's primordial, meaningful dwelling with Being. Or, as Heidegger states it, it leads to the *withdrawal* of Being from thought, which is the only place man feels "at home" in the world.

The history of metaphysics, in this regard, is understood as the history of Being's withdrawal from thought; furthermore, it is understood by Heidegger as the historical unfolding of nihilism, wherein man is further torn from his meaningful dwelling with Being as metaphysics unfolds in time. From Plato's idea to Aristotle's substance, the Christian Creator-God, Descartes' *cogito*, and even Nietzsche's will-to-power,[419] all are understood by Heidegger as a part of metaphysics' history—the epochal and historical unfolding of Being's historical withdrawal in the West. So too, Heidegger understands this history to have ended in our time, a time of complete nihilism, wherein Being has withdrawn from thought altogether after metaphysic's death; i.e., Being is no longer able to be given or thought at all; there is only the nothingness left in its wake.[420]

For this reason, by the time Heidegger publishes his updated edition of "What is Metaphysics?" in 1943, he no longer sees his work as the continuation of *metaphysics* but rather its necessary overcoming. And eventually, Heidegger will equate this task of overcoming metaphysics with the "end of philosophy" as such.[421] For "onto-theology," now understood as the nihilistic history of Being as presence, refers to *all* philosophical discourse insofar as philosophy continues to concern itself with causal grounds: a value-laden, metaphysical mode of thought which is now recognized as only furthering *Dasein's* estrangement from Being.[422] In response, Heidegger thus calls for a "step back" from metaphysics in order to transition towards a more accommodating mode of thought which will render *Dasein* ready for a different, non-nihilistic *epoch*, a mode of releasement (*Gelassenhiet*) towards things which is ultimately an openness towards the mystery of Being's sending—a "surrender" that is the same time a "thanking."[423] Such is why, once more, metaphysics has no role to play in overcoming our current stage of nihilism. Humankind does not have the capability to rechain the earth to the sun, and to attempt to do so would only make matter worse, widening the nihilistic gap that now exists between Being and *Dasein*. On the contrary, for Heidegger, to overcome our current stage of nihilism one must seek to overcome metaphysics: to be released from the estranging, value-laden, onto-theological structure of metaphysical thinking in order that *Dasein's* primordial "belonging to Being" may be restored. Thus according to Heidegger's analysis, not only is philosophy unable to overcome our

419 In this manner, Heidegger understands Nietzsche's critique of value metaphysics as correct, but correct only insofar as it accurately describes the current epoch of Beings historical givenness. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics as value is therefore subsumed within his own metaphysical narrative of Being's withdrawal from thought. See Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 104-105.

420 For a clear explanation of the link between metaphysics and technology, see Mark C. Taylor, *Erring* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 25-29.

421 On the end of philosophy as such, wherein philosophy is identified with metaphysics, see Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

422 On this new way of thinking, see Heidegger, *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics*, 267, 275

423 Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" in *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed Walter Kaufmann, 2nd ed (New York: New American Library (1975), 262-63. For Heidegger's call for a step back from metaphysics, see Martin Heidegger, The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being*, 55-73.

current state of nihilism, but *all* human thought and endeavor "will not be able to effect an immediate transformation of the present condition of the world."[424] The only thing man can do is anxiously prepare for the apocalyptic advent of Being's arrival. Meaning, at this point, "only a god can save us."[425]

An Alternative Narrative

In his early work, Yannaras finds a great amount of continuity between his own tradition's critical response to the problematics of Western culture and Heidegger's diagnosis of Western nihilism. However, as we have seen in the previous chapters, one of the major problems which Yannaras ascribes to Heidegger's genealogical narrative of Western nihilism is that it does not offer enough nuance to the difference between the Eastern and Western (Greek and Latin) philosophical/theological traditions. Heidegger, as we have pointed out, reads the historical unfolding of nihilism as being developed through a solid, unbroken tradition—that is, he sees the tradition of "metaphysics" as having begun in Ancient Greece (primarily with Plato), adopted by Christianity in its earliest stages, and finally unfolding in our own time through the periods of Modernity and post-Modernity. However, while admittingly doing justice to certain periods of the Western philosophical tradition(s), Yannaras believes that this narrative does not appropriately account for the radical differences that exist between the "Greek" (Patristic) and "Latin" (Scholastic) modes of thought, nor does it offer an accurate reading of the form of philosophical praxis that existed in Hellenism proper. For this reason, Yannaras argues that one cannot offer an accurate account of the historical unfolding of nihilism without looking at the radical differences between these two traditions. Indeed, Yannaras believes that if one begins to understand the radically different nature of these traditions, then one will come to see that the phenomenon of Western nihilism which Heidegger is illuminating must be understood as a phenomenon that applies to the "inner logic" of the Latin tradition *alone*, which in itself is an inverted, non-authentic repetition of its Greek counter-part.

Accordingly, in the same way that Heidegger both adopts and critiques Nietzsche's narrative by creating a more elaborative, nuanced narrative which ultimately subsumes the latter, Yannaras will make a similar move in his own work by subsuming both Heidegger's insights within his own re-reading of the Greek and Latin philosophical traditions.

In chapters two through four, we have laid the groundwork for this narrative, which is built upon the foundational thesis that the death of God and the historical unfolding of Western nihilism is the result of the Latin philosophical tradition's inversion of its Hellenistic counter-part. In the remainder of this chapter, we must now show how, according to this narrative, we are offered a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon of Western nihilism as articulated above. We will begin this exposition by dealing with Yannaras' response to Heidegger's reading of value-

424 Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," 62.

425 See Martin Heidegger's interview with Rudolf Augstein and Georg Wolff, "Only a God Can Save Us" in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. by Thomas Sheehan (New York: Routledge, 1981), 45-67.

laden metaphysics and the death of God, followed then by Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology proper.

The Death of God: Revisited

As can be expected, Yannaras will attempt rethink Heidegger's critique of value-laden metaphysics in relation to the new end, or purpose, which he believes was attributed to Greek philosophical discourse with the emergence of the Latin philosophical tradition; that is, the historical appropriation of *ratio* as an organon (instrument) of efficacious value within Western Europe. What will needed to be shown in this section, then, is how value-laden metaphysics, on Yannaras reading, is better explained in relation to this development within the Latin tradition alone, as opposed to it being a development that historically unfolded from its Greek predecessor.

As we have noted above, value-laden metaphysics must be understood as derivative of the *will to power*, an incessant "self-powering" of preservation and enhancement that *is* insofar as it wills.[426] In this *tropos* of metaphysics, then, the relation that exists between the thinker and thought is one of value: everything that *is* and is given to thought is appropriated and accepted only to the extent that is can be used for the particular self's preservation and enhancement.[427] The individual thinker, in this regard, subsumes that which is other into himself, as that which is given to the thinker in reflection becomes a value, or good, which stabilizes its very being, a "constant reserve" which becomes a necessary condition of its own securing of itself."[428]

At this point, Yannaras does not disagree with Heidegger's appropriation of Nietzsche. Indeed, he has his own name for it: "axiological (*axiologiká*) metaphysics." [429] However, as we saw in the previous chapter, Yannaras believes that axiological metaphysics cannot be ascribed to Hellenistic discourse. On the contrary, he believes that it is a form of thought that is derived from the inversion of Hellenism's primary attributes with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition. But how, exactly, must we understand the force of this argument?

As we described in chapter two, the primary attribute of Hellenism is defined by Yannaras as the need to become true within the life of the community. But for our purposes, what is important to look at here is the Hellenistic presuppositions that, on Yannaras' reading, were assumed in seeking to accomplish this event. First, in both the city-state and the philosophical school, Yannaras emphasizes how it is the life of the individual *(átomo*), and thus the private *logos*, that was assumed, in an *a priori* manner, to dwell in untruth. Meaning, it was the individual's inner world—the individual's private (imparticipable) experiences, ideas, and projects—that was considered untrue, such that truth always belonged to that which was different, or *other*, to the

426 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 31; Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 72

427 For insofar as beings derive their being from the *will to power*, the beings which exist as objects for the subject simply *are* as value, as a "constant reserve" which only have as their end the securing of the subject's Being. For the subject, things are "true" in proportion to their efficacy; i.e., representation is only "correct" in relation to subject's need for security and stability. On this point, see Heidegger, *Age of the World Picture*, 91-95, 100, 132

428 Heidegger, *Age of the World Picture*, 103-104.

429 From the Greek, *axia* is value or worth. See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 9

individual's natural, primordial world as such. Accordingly, the embodiment of truth, or one's participation in that which truly is, always implied the individual and his inner (private) world be transcended, and this transcendence, on Yannaras' reading, was made possible through *koinōnein*—participation in the otherness of the common rather than the privacy of the same.[430]

For this reason, as Yannaras states, the communal presuppositions of *koinōnien* in Antiquity always implied a freedom, or transcendence, from the individual's epistemic powers (information from the individual's senses, conceptions of individual understanding, products of individual perception, the 'existential' experiences of the individual), as the private, natural experiences of the individual were recognized as untrue insofar as they were always self-inverted, bent towards securing one's passionate mode of error prone existence. And it is also for this reason that, as Yannaras argues, the Greek endeavor to acquire truth was recognized an ongoing event (*ekdílosi*), or struggle, as the embodiment of truth always implied the ongoing negation of one's private and natural "world" for the sake of aligning the entirety of one's being with the otherness of what is common (the non-private: shared by all). And for the Greek, this was because it is only here, in the transcendent, public (shared) life of the rational community (*xyn-noōi*) that participation in truth can be secured.

From this *tropos* of Greek thought, then, it is easy to understand how Yannaras would claim that the *tropos* of thought described by Nietzsche would not fit within this paradigm. Indeed, not only does Yannaras argue that it does not fit within said paradigm. Furthermore, he argues that the *tropos* of Hellenism exists as its very antithesis.

According to Heidegger's reading of the will to power, it is the primordial self's preservation, or "securing of itself," which is fueled by that which is given to itself in reflection (or, so too, its participation in a particular way of life).[431] In this manner, it is the natural self, the willing of the particular individual, which seeks to be cultivated, possessed, and established via the *will-to-power*, such that the appropriation of *logos* would lead to its further individuation as a self-established individual (or later, as subject). Yet this relation between the thinker and thought is, for Yannaras, the exact opposite to the gnoseological praxis that was presumed in Hellenism. For as noted above, it is this very life of the primordial and individual self *as such* (the private, natural life of the individual) which was assumed as untrue, and thus was in need of being transcended through its universalization within the common life of the whole.[432]

As Pierre Hadot points out as well, Ancient philosophy always sought to align the empirical self, with its egocentric passions and unbridled freedom, to a truthful mode of existence (Wisdom)

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430 For this reason, we should understand the communal gnoseology of the Hellenistic world which Yannaras speaks of not simply as an intellectual epistemology, *but a form of praxis in and of itself*, a way of being-in-the-world which governed the Greek ideal of becoming true.

431 On this point, see Heidegger, *Age of the World Picture*, 91-95, 100, 132

432 Such is why, for Plato, as Yannaras states, the fullness of knowledge is found only in *eros*, wherein the relation that is established between the person and the idea is arrived at through transcending any form of self-interest in the erotic act of self-gift. See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 100.

which was by necessity *other* to the natural self and its individualized world.[433] And for Yannaras, this impetus is emphasized by the fact that the guiding principle for this struggle was the identification of truth with *koinōnía*, that which is shared in and participated by all. In this manner, the Wisdom which the philosopher sought was indeed, per Nietzsche, that which would give meaning or purpose to life, but the value-laden manner in which Nietzsche describes the embodiment of Wisdom does not fit within the paradigm of Antiquity. As Hadot argues, echoing Yannaras' point once more, Wisdom in Antiquity is not recognized as an otherness which would be subsumed by the natural self for its individuation, but was rather a form of otherness which the natural self would subordinate its empirical self to for the sake of its universalization (as Aristotle would say, for the sake of "becoming divine").[434] Such is why, for Yannaras, this event was both established and protected through Hellenism's communal gnoseology, which, as a praxis, or way of being, sought the radical overcoming of one's private and untruthful mode of existence through an ongoing participation in the otherness of common-being (*xyn-noōi*).

In this manner we may see how on Yannaras' reading, critical thought in Antiquity, as an *a priori*, did not seek to cultivate or establish the particular, individual self's world, as would be assumed in the self-individuation of will to power. On the contrary, the end or purpose which was ascribed to Greek *logos* and praxis was the transcendence of said empirical, natural self through participation in a communal world which was other to the natural individual as such; that is, for Yannaras, the general *tropos* of Hellenism sought the otherness of a *transcendent self* through the particular, untruthful self's universalization, and the path towards this ideal was through ascetical participation in the common, inter-subjective life of the community.[435] Thus Hellenism, as Yannaras has described it in chapters two and three, would have no room for the type of value-laden metaphysics—dominated and enforced by the causal impetus of the will to power—which Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche ascribes to the entirety of the Greek tradition and "Western metaphysics" proper.

However, this is not to deny the form of thought which Nietzsche's work has intuitively described. As noted already, Yannaras largely agrees with Heidegger's reading in this regard. It is simply that he wishes to re-adjust the narrative. For Yannaras, a more accurate reading of how this form of value-laden metaphysics arose would be to take notice of the new *tropos* of critical thought that arose in the Latin tradition, wherein we see, on Yannaras reading, the first historical signs of critical thought's instrumentalization.

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433 To be a philosopher, then, was also an ongoing event of participation wherein the untrue self could "universalize" itself in accordance with the being of the whole within the common life of the community. On this point, see Hadot, "Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.

434 As Hadot states, once more supplementing Yannaras' point: "In this way, [the philosopher] identifies oneself with an 'Other," nature, or universal reason…this implies a radical transformation of perspective, and contains a universalist, cosmic dimension…interiorization is a going beyond oneself; it is universalization." See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 211.

435 "In the Greek case the rise of critical thought was preserved without its being subordinated to utilitarianism…because it was linked from its origins to the need for truth to be determined not simply as knowledge but also as existence." See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 95.

First, Yannaras draws our attention to how with the inauguration of the Latin tradition, there was an almost immediate loss (and thus inversion) of the Greek's communal gnoseology and praxis, which is the primary event that Yannaras believes kept critical thought in Antiquity from falling prey to the instinctual, value-laden impetus of the individual. As noted in the previous chapter, Yannaras argues that this inversion began with this mistranslation and use of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio*; that is, when *logos* was translated in the Latin West primarily as the intellectual functioning of reason (mere discourse), such that knowledge was understood primarily as an event that could be acquired simply through the capacity of the individual to think correctly. In this manner, not only could knowledge be established merely through rational comphrension, but it was also due to this gnoseological development that knowledge was thought capable of being passed on, enforced, and made logically binding through the use of the individual's ability to reason correctly. In other words, contrary to the impetus of Hellenism, one no longer needed to participate in the otherness of the common *logos*, nor did one need to participate in a particular school's way of life, as is argued for in depth by Pierre Hadot.[436] Rather, knowledge could be acquired, verified, and secured simply through the intellectual activity of the *individual* (*átoma*). For Yannaras, then, it is only from this gnoseological inversion of Antiquity's communal gnoseology (praxis) that the stage was set for critical thought to be pragmatically appropriated by the natural (private) self, or individual, for its self-establishment and individuation, as it is perceptively described by Nietzsche's account of value-thinking.[437]

This is made evident, for Yannaras, by taking a look at the new relation that is established between the thinker and thought in the Latin tradition, especially with the rise of Scholasticism. In this method of thinking, for example, not only does the philosopher no longer seek to participate in a school's common way of life—but most importantly, the scholastic philosopher, whom had largely reduced philosophy to philosophical discourse, *no longer begins with the presupposition that his natural self or individual world was untrue*. Meaning, in the newly established *tropos* of thinking which we find in the scholastic tradition, it was no longer recognized as a general presupposition that the natural, individual self was in need of transcending. On the contrary, as Yannaras argues, the individual self and its primordial world were no longer questioned, leading to the inevitable outcome of philosophy (now reduced to philosophical discourse/*ratio*) being seen primarily as an efficacious instrument in which to buttress, secure, or validate the private, natural, empirical world (or private *logos*) of the individual.[438]

This is not only noted by the fact that philosophy, in early and mid-scholasticism, was largely reduced to commentary on the theoretical discourse of Aristotle. More fully, Yannaras

436 See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107.

437 From the Scholastic renaissance forward, then, Yannaras' critique is that the acquisition and verification of knowledge was transferred from the praxis of the community to the capacities of the individual, and it is for this reason that with the rise of the Latin tradition, "the history of philosophy is divided into two eras…the era of common reason and the era of subjective reason, of the absolute and self-evident priority of the subject." See Yannaras, *Schism*, 98.

438 Thus, on Yannaras' reading: "The immense gulf that separates Descartes from ancient Greek philosophy is the fact that with him the certainty of knowledge 'as a result of the subject' becomes autonomous and is severed from any dynamic reference to natural and social 'becoming' or to transcendent Being." See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 110.

argues that we see this in the way in which Greek *logos* was reduced primarily to the functioning of reason and/or logic, and how this tool was appropriated by theologians as a means to secure the teachings of the Christian faith (a point also emphasized by Hadot).[439] As can be seen in the appropriation of philosophy to theology, for example, the metaphysical discourse of Greek *logos* was no longer seen by the theologian as that which could help the untrue self and its world become true. The theologian and his world were *already* true. All that was left for *logos* to do, primarily, was clarify or buttress the world to which the theologian already belonged. This can be seen, for Yannaras, in the transition of Christian teachings into a "science" and the rise of natural theology. Thus rather than seeing philosophy holistically as a manner of living in which to *become* true within the life and praxis of the community, Yannaras argues that in the Latin tradition, Greek *logos* began to be seen as a "utilitarian object, subject to the demands of the self-assertion and comfort of the individual," a "technical capacity for securing a powerful and useful result."[440] Meaning, as noted in the Carolingian and Scholastic Renaissance, the relation that was now established between the thinker and *logos* began to become one of *value*, wherein that which "is" now only exists insofar as its supports and buttresses the being of the individual and his world.

In this manner we see how, on Yannaras' reading, the value-laden *tropos* of "metaphysics" describes not a universal trait of metaphysics proper, but is rather a form of thinking that historically germinated from the Latin tradition alone. More specifically, Yannaras believes that it should be understood as a development which germinated from the Latin tradition's unintentional inversion of its Hellenistic counter-part, thus severing it from any connection with the *tropos* of critical thought as it existed in Antiquity.[441]

The God of Christendom

On Yannaras reading, this conclusion is most evidently noted by looking at the philosophical literature and ecclesial praxis concerning God in the Greek and Latin Christian traditions. For, according to the metaphysics of the Greek Church Fathers as revealed in chapter three, Yannaras argues that that the revelatory God of the Christian tradition, quite simply, never became a metaphysical "value" in the Nietzschean sense. Even though the Church did offer a "metaphysics," its metaphysics resembled nothing of the form of value-laden metaphysics which Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche attributes to it. And the major reason for this, on Yannaras' reading, is because of its assumption and continuation of Hellenism's philosophical *ethos.* So too, as noted in the previous chapter, it is only when critical thought was revived *outside* of this Hellenistic horizon that we see the signifier for "God," in the Christian tradition, beginning to be looked at for the first time in an axiological manner.

For example, Yannaras points out that the signifier that is "God" in the philosophical literature of the Greek Church fathers never became identified with the "transcendent,"

439 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 253-255.
440 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 95.
441 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 95.

"intelligible world" of Greek metaphysics. More specifically, "God" in the Christian East was never alluded to as a metaphysical idea/concept which was used to rationally ground the Being of beings—whether a "first cause," "pure act," or a "highest being."[442] Rather, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Yannaras argues that the metaphysics of the Greek Church Fathers' was and remains a metaphysics of *revelation*, the manifestation of transcendence within the horizon of personal disclosure. Accordingly, Yannaras argues that the signifier for "God" in the writings of the Church Fathers was always understood as a *symbol*—as that which signifies beyond itself to the communal experience, or inter-subjective witness, of God's self-disclosure within the being of the *ekklēsia*.

From this perspective, it is quite clear for Yannaras that in the Hellenistic Christian tradition, the "God of the New Testament," which Heidegger acknowledges as being different than the "God of Christendom,"[443] never became identified with the God of Greek metaphysics—a fact which is perhaps best highlighted in the Church Fathers universal disavowal of natural theology as well as the East's dogmatization of the essence/energies distinction. In making this claim, however, Yannaras does not wish to deny Heidegger's insights altogether. He simply wishes to illuminate that Christianity's identification of God as a metaphysical *value* did not take place until the rise of the scholastic philosophical/theological tradition, as it is only in this latter tradition that the Christian God began to be spoken of and signified as a purely abstract idea or concept—a fact which, as we attempted to make clear, only emerged in the scholastic tradition's advancement of natural theology and the development of theology as a "science."

In this manner, Yannaras initial response to Heidegger's analysis becomes clear: the narrative of God's death in Christendom and the ensuing problematic of European nihilism is both perceptive and accurate on many points. However, in accordance with Yannaras' reading of the Greek tradition, it must be recognized that these critiques only illuminate the "inner logic" of the tradition which Heidegger himself was "thrown" into; that is, it only reveals the historical unfolding of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition of Western Europe. As such, Yannaras believes that the Hellenistic philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers and the early Church—which Heidegger himself seemed to be largely unaware of—cannot be brought to blame for the nihilistic unfolding of this metaphysical tradition. It can, however, be offered as its solution.

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442 This is emphasized for Yannaras in the Cappadocians' trinitarian ontology, which on Yannaras' reading, seeks to overcome the rational structure of Greek essentialism (with its prioritization of *ousia*) insofar as it grounds God's being upon his hypostatic, personal, *revelatory* existence alone. Here God's being as *hypostatic* does not signify his "ousia" as a "highest being" or "first cause," but signifies only His free, personal activity as it is revealed in space and time.

443 For both Nietzsche and Heidegger, there is recognized a difference between the "the God of the New Testament" and the "God of metaphysics," in the same way in which there is recognized a difference between "Christianity" and "Christendom." For Nietzsche, *Christendom* is understood as a historical, world-political manifestation that has manifested itself in the power structures of Western society and culture, whereas *Christianity* was lost with the death of Christ and his disciples. Thus, as Heidegger states: "Christianity in this sense and the Christianity of the New Testament faith are not the same." On these points, see Heidegger, *Holzwege*, 203, and Heidegger, *Nietzche* II, 92.

Onto-theology: Revisited

As previously noted, however, this is only one dimension of Heidegger's analysis which must be responded to by Yannaras. For while Heidegger, in his Nietzsche lectures, would seem to endorse many facets of Nietzsche's narrative, he will later go on to subsume Nietzsche's analysis within his own, more nuanced, grandiose narrative of the history of metaphysics as *onto-theology*. As such, we must also look to how Yannaras' re-reading of the Greek philosophical tradition can stand up to and respond to the insights which Heidegger's onto-theological narrative of metaphysics further reveals about the problematic of Western nihilism.

According to Heidegger's narrative, as we have already seen, the history of metaphysics is the history of nihilism, not because metaphysics is inherently driven by the will-to-power (such is only characteristic of Modernity), but insofar as the history of metaphysics has severed *Dasein* from being "at home" in the world. This is noted, on Heidegger's further reading, by the fact that metaphysics (starting with Plato and Aristotle) began to lead thought away from Being's reception as manifestation—as meaningfully "rising up to presence" from mystery—and towards the nihilistic sending of Being as the static and controllable *idea*: as eternal and unchanging presence (as unitary, determinate, universal, etc.) that is dominated by the inauguration of Being as *ratio*.[444] Onto-theological metaphysics, then, is recognized by Heidegger as the *tropos* of thought which is responsible for the severance of *Dasein's* original, natural, and meaningful dwelling with Being, and nihilism is understood by Heidegger as the historical end of metaphysical thinking as such. In our time of nihilism, all the lamps which were lit have now burnt dim, and there is no metaphysical *idea* left which can shine a light into the darkness of nothingness which remains from Being's withdrawal. For Heidegger, all that is now left to do is accept this end, to go beyond the age of metaphysics and wait, patiently and openly, for the arrival of Being's return. For it is only then, when Being sends itself to *Dasein* to be thought in a non-metaphysical manner, that *Dasein* will overcome nihilism and be at home in the world once more.

Per usual, Yannaras' response to the Heidegger can be understood as both borrowing from and re-interpreting several key events in this narrative, while also silently ignoring others. First, and perhaps strangely to some, the mythological aspect of Being's sending, which envelops the entirety of Heidegger's narrative, is something which Yannaras does not seek to engage with. This is, I believe, due to the fact that the entirety of Yannaras' corpus seeks to philosophize within what he understands to be the *tropos* of Hellenism, which by definition would exclude mythological accounts as foretold by Heidegger. For, after looking beyond the poetic hyperbole of Heidegger's later writings on the subject, Heidegger's grandiose narrative of Being's sending and withdrawing from thought must ultimately be recognized for what it truly is: the loquacious dialogue of a self-appointed prophet (even priest). Speaking from within Yannaras' vision of philosophy, this aspect

444 For Heidegger's critique of this traditional interpretation of identity, see Heidegger, "The Principle of Identity," in *Essays in Metaphysics* (New York: Philosophical Library Inc, 1960). On the inauguration of this event in light of *ratio*, see Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 199.

of Heidegger's narrative would ultimately be considered a *private logos* that, for the true Hellene, would dwell in darkness, and thus must be considered untrue, or not worth considering, by its very nature. This does not mean that Yannaras completely avoids this aspect of Heidegger's thought entirely, for as we have attempted to reveal, his silence on the subject can be taken as a response in itself. In other words, one could read Yannaras' silence as attempting to subsume the loudness of Heidegger's musing within his own narrative (a narrative which, it should not go unnoticed, seeks to stay close to the generally accepted facts of historical analysis, as well as offering *logoi* which can be examined, verified, or denied within the light of common reason). Thus we may say that the full vision of Heidegger's narrative, for Yannaras, would not be worth engaging with insofar as this narrative cannot be recognized as the proposed wisdom of a philosopher, but as nothing more than a private *logos* of a self-proclaimed oracle.

When Yannaras does engage with Heidegger's narrative, then, one will notice that he does so by engaging only with aspects of his thought which are able to "bring into the light" (as practicable *logoi*) the reasons for God's death and our current era of metaphysical nihilism. And perhaps the most important insight which Yannaras takes from Heidegger in this regard, as noted in the previous chapter, is recognizing the crucial change that took place in the history of thought with the transition of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio* (a fact also illuminated by Russian Orthodox thinkers well before Heidegger).[445] Indeed, for Heidegger, it is upon this latter understanding of Greek *logos* that the crux of the problem lies, as his onto-theological reading of metaphysics is entirely dependent upon the development of Greek reason as such.[446]

According to Heidegger, the onto-theological development of *logos* was initiated with Plato and Aristotle's metaphysics, which began to identify the manifestation/appearing of Being (*phusis*: the "self-showing of Being in nature)[447] with the *idéa* (as *eidos*: the form, essence), and thus as that which comes to standing presence in the reflective act of thinking.[448] Thus on Heidegger's reading, it is only with this transition of Being from *phusis* to *eidos*, and from *eidos* to the *idéa*, that we see the development of Greek *logos* first becoming identified with reason, or logic, since it is only in identifying the self-showing of *phusis* with the stagnant presence of the *idéa* that Being can be preserved in determinate discourse ("saying").[449] With this development, beginning with Plato's metaphysics and advanced by Aristotle's logic,[450] Heidegger thus argues that *logos*, as *ratio*, became the primary place where decisions were made about that which was

445 In this manner, as noted in the introduction, we should not see Yannaras as blindly following Heidegger here, but as seeing Heidegger as illuminating a problem that his tradition had already acknowledged.

446 "*Logos* and *phusis* disjoin, step apart from each other…this happens only when *logos* gives up its inceptive essence, that is, when Being as *phusis* is covered up and reinterpreted. Human Dasein then changes accordingly. The slow ending of this history, in whose midst we have long been standing, is the dominance of thinking as *ratio* (as both understanding and reason) over the Being of beings." See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 198-199.

447 For Heidegger's account of Being as *phusis*, see Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 109-111. See also Yannaras, *Schism*, 48

448 See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 201-202.

449 See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 201-202.

450 For Heidegger, Aristotle derived the categories as "ways of saying Being," wherein Being is understood in light of the idea, or *ousia*, and logic is developed as that which seeks to establish securely this ideal of truth as correctness, the veracity of *logos* as assertion.

originally given in unconcealment. Consequently, Being as manifestation began to be covered up and reinterpreted by the dominance of thinking as *ratio*,[451] as can be found in the long-standing tradition of understanding Being in relation to the *katēgoria* (categories).[452]

However, it must be noted that for Heidegger, while this form of thinking began to surface in Antiquity, it had yet to be established as *the* way in which Being gave itself during this time, since Greek *logos* in Antiquity was still understood in other manners, such as *relation*, *gathering*, *manifestation*, and *dialogue*.[453] As such, Heidegger argues that the decisive factor in the onto-theological unfolding of metaphysics came about with the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition. For along with the translation of Greek discourse into Latin, Heidegger also argues that there was an inevitable mistranslation, and thus loss of, the "Greek experience" of Being altogether, thus inaugurating the "rootlessness of Western thought."[454] Amongst such mistranslations, one of the most important was the translation of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio*, which as we have already seen, carried over primarily as reason/logic.[455] Thus in the Latin tradition, Heidegger argues that Aristotle's development of *logos* as reason/logic became the *definitive* way of thinking in the West, the foundation upon which philosophy would be developed from scholasticism forward. Such is why, on Heidegger's reading, this transition of Greek *logos* to Latin *ratio* is recognized as *the* critical point in the historical unfolding of nihilism, as this exclusive understanding of *logos* as *ratio* led the Latin tradition to equating *eidos* and the *idéa* with "the sole and definitive interpretation of Being."[456] In the Latin tradition, then, truth largely became idented with the "correctness of assertion," and Being was reduced to that which came to standing presence through the assertion/*saying* of reason/logic. Which means, for Heidegger, that it is only with the reduction of Greek *logos as such* that the onto-theological unfolding of metaphysics unfolded as it did in Western Europe.

Critical to this narrative, however, is Heidegger's analyses that the Latin' tradition's use of reason as *ratio* already existed in Antiquity, albeit alongside other nuances of *logos*, such that the Latin translation of *logos* is understood as having only developed this particular use of reason, as *ratio*, outside its Hellenistic context. Yannaras, however, pushes back on this reading insofar as he believes that the Latin's understanding and use of Greek reason did not exist *at all* in Hellenism, and only appeared as a result of its inversion. Meaning, for Yannaras, the nihilistic manner in which *ratio* was appropriated in scholasticism is an altogether new use of reason which never existed in Antiquity, and it is this new use of reason that established the radical "schism" between the Greek and Latin traditions. According to this reading, then, the onto-theological use of *logos* which Heidegger describes as being responsible for the historical

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451 For it is only when Being is reduced to *eidos* that truth can be seen as preserved in "saying," in what has been determined in discourse, such that the truth of Being is no longer experienced as that which is manifested, but as that which takes place in "correct saying." In this manner, as Heidegger states, *logos*, in the sense of saying and asserting, now becomes the domain and place where decisions are made about that which was originally given in unconcealment, and thus about the Being of beings as such. On this point, see Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 207.
452 See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 208.
453 See Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 203.
454 See Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, 153-154.
455 See Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, 155.
456 Heidegger, "The Restriction of Being," 208.

unfolding of nihilism would be traced back to the Latin tradition alone.

Hellenism and the Harmony of Experience

As we have laid out in the previous pages, there are several factors which Yannaras adds to Heidegger's understanding of Greek philosophy which allows him to make this move—and as always, they will have to do with rethinking Greek thought in light of the *tropos* of Hellenism as described up to this point. However, of primary importance when seeking to understand the difference between the Greek use of reason/logic and that of its Latin replacement is the communal and praxis based dimension of Greek thought—two attributes of the "Greek experience" which Heidegger spends little time illuminating.

First, as Yannaras heavily stresses, the Greek use of reason as it developed in Antiquity, from the *polis* to the philosophical schools and the *ekklēsia*, should not be understood as an autonomous achievement of the individual intellect, whereby knowledge of Being or truth was thought to be realized simply through an intellectual apprehension of the *idéa*, or within the correctness of assertion alone (as Heidegger's interpretation implies). Rather, as described in the previous chapters, Yannaras argues that the rational function of reason/logic was a *communal* event of harmonious experience and praxis—a "non-private" mode of discourse which had as its ultimate end, or *telos*, not the intellectual appropriation of truth, but the desire to become true through an established mode of being-in-common. The acquisition of Wisdom (being-true: *aletheuien*), in this manner, was an event that was realized through *koinōnein*; it was an ongoing, never static, ascetical struggle that is only established by transcending the partial, the selfish, and the private (*idios*) through following the *koinós logos* of the community.[457] And for Yannaras, Heidegger's description of the rational development of *logos* in Plato and Aristotle, as well as his description of "metaphysics" within the Christian tradition, simply does not fit within this paradigm.

Beginning with his exposition of Heraclitus, Yannaras argues that even with the advancement of Greek *logos* as reason/logic in Greek thought, knowledge (Wisdom) was not seen as being acquired in the stagnant presence of the *idéa*, such that Being could be preserved in mere discourse (the correctness as assertion), nor does Yannaras believe this way of thinking subverted the Being of beings as manifestation. And this is because, according to Yannaras' reading of Hellenism, knowledge of the *Logos* was still understood by the Greeks as being a experiential phenomenon of relational disclosure, and it was simply the verification of this knowledge which was sought in the common *logos* (the *idea*) of the community.[458] In this manner, as we have explained in chapter two, knowledge remained an event of existential manifestation, but said manifestation was only revealed as true (one's knowledge is justified) when one's particular experience is found to be in communion with the common *logos* of all; that is, in the common

457 Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1: 148, lines 29-30, trans. Philip Wheelwright, Heraclitus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 45.
458 Diells and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7:133 = fr. 2

manifestation of *Logos*, as Heraclitus implies.[459]

On Yannaras' re-reading of Hellenism, then, even with the more rational development of Greek *logos* in Plato and Aristotle, knowledge for the Greek remained an event that is inherently tied to existential manifestation, communion, and wholistic praxis. As can be seen in Yannaras' reading of Aristotle, for example, the abstract *idéa* (the common *logos*) which represents the Being of beings, as well as its appropriation in the rational structure of reason/logic, does indeed lead to knowledge of that which truly "is." Yannaras argument, however, is that the Western mistranslation of Aristotle is the mistake of equating said knowledge with an intellectual comprehension of the *idéa* and/or propositional statement alone.[460] For while intellectual comprehension of the idea (e.g., the river's *ousia*) does indeed allow one to say that they have acquired knowledge of the signified (the river), Yannaras insight is that this is only because the symbol—the *ousia* (common *logos*) which all share in—has allowed one to verify that one's knowledge of a particular *logoi's* givenness (the river's particular manifestation) is indeed valid (*pistos*: trustworthy/true/faithful).

According to Yannaras' reading of Greek reason, then, Being is not subject to the "court" of *logos*, nor is the self-giving of Being as manifestation being "covered over" with its development. Rather, based on Yannaras communal, symbolic reading of Greek *logos*, the *idéa* (common *logos*) and its correctness through assertion only acts as an epistemic potentiality insofar as it unites (as a symbol, it collects/gathers up) the manifested experiences of the individual with the inter-subjective experiences of the community, thus ensuring knowledge by participation in the common *logos* that is shared and known by all.[461] The Hellenistic functioning of Greek *logos*, in this manner, is seen by Yannaras as a "radical empiricism," the ongoing verification of communal, existential manifestation, such that the praxis of *logos* is always subject, or in service to, the revealing of Being's manifestation.

On this reading, then, the problematic of Greek reason as described by Heidegger would only appeared once this communal gnoseology of Antiquity was lost with the rise of the Latin philosophical/theological tradition.

The Harmony of Praxis

The fullness of this argument, however, can only be grasped when understood in relation to the other major attribute of Greek thought, which emphasizes the rational functioning of *logos* as a communal event of harmonious *praxis*. For it is here that we see that the apprehension of truth, or Wisdom, is not simply acquired through the harmony of communal experience (the common

459 Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1: 148, lines 29-30, trans. Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Quoted in Yannaras, *Schism*, 45,

460 For Heidegger, this is noted in equating knowledge of Being in one's comprehension of the idea, which is the labor and work of thought *via* memory and representation, and the consequential equation of truth with "the correctness of *logos*," or assertion.

461 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 56.

logos), but most fully, in the harmony of being-in-common (*koinōnien*): that is, the communal embodiment of truth through partaking of the same *tropos* of co-existence. For as Yannaras reminds us, the ultimate end or *telos* of Hellenism (and thus Christian Hellenism) was not an intellectual appropriation of truth, but rather the desire to *become* true through an established mode of being-in-common, or communion. Accordingly, insofar as in the *tropos* of Hellenism, the acquisition of knowledge was primarily the result of truth's embodiment within the life of the community, then even Being as manifestation must be understood as a part, and not the whole, of the Greek understanding of truth, as Heidegger advances. For as Yannaras' work emphasizes, the *Logos* not only had to be acquired through its initial manifestation—which was verified in that which was manifested to all—but it also had to be *embodied* through correct praxis, through wholistic participation in a truthful mode of being that is established within the common life of the community. Such is why, on Yannaras' reading, *koinōnien* was the ultimate path to truth for the Greek conscience.[462]

Thus it is only from this wholistic perspective of Greek experience and praxis that, for Yannaras, we can being to understand something like Aristotle's discourse on logic. For as we have seen in chapter two, the practice of "correct reasoning," as many of the early scholastics were unaware (and to which the Moderns disregarded completely), is always understood by Aristotle as a communal and embodied act, the result of *koinōnien*, and not the individual, autonomous activity of the intellect, as Heidegger's interpretation implies. Aristotle's advancement of *logos* as reason/logic, in this sense, did not exist in order to create indubitable truths of mere assertion that must be rationally assented to by competing opponents. The advancement of logic, as Aristotle himself states, was rather created "to think right in order to commune right,"[463] thereby tying the correct appropriation of logic not simply to the intellectual functioning of the individual's intellect, but also to the virtuous *tropos* of the community. Thus as Yannaras reminds us, participation in "correct reason," for Aristotle, is "not simply methodological (or formal)," but is "confirmed 'by virtue,' and virtue is a 'work of community," the wholistic acquisition of Wisdom in relation to the being of the city-state.[464] And as Hadot also confirms, one's knowledge of "eternal things," which theoretical discourse aims for, is not for Aristotle given in mere abstraction or demonstrative reason. Rather, the operation of rational discourse for Aristotle is a wholistic and embodied act which must be performed with the heart, the will, and the mind: it is an "ethical" and "affective life" of desire which is "practiced, lived, and active" through participation in the common-mind of the community.[465] Which means, furthermore, that the primary end of Aristotelian discourse is not "to transplant specific theoretical contents into the auditor's minds," but rather to "form them" in accordance with the rationality of the cosmos.[466] Thus through rational communion within the life and praxis of the philosophical community, *theoria* and praxis become one: one does not come to acquire knowledge of Wisdom simply

462 For Yannaras, this is a fact which will go on to be emphasized in the Church Father's axiom that "knowledge" of God's being can only be acquired through humankind's deification.
463 See *Nichomachean Ethics* IV.5.1122b; VI. 12.1144b26-28; Politics III.4.1276.b.29-31.
464 On this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 78 as well as Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, 44.
465 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 84-87.
466 See Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, 44.

through the abstract idea or concept, but with the entirety of one's being.[467]

With this nuanced use of Greek reason as explained by Yannaras, it could be argued, then, that the "rift" between *Dasein* and Being which Heidegger articulates had yet to emerge in the philosophical tradition of Hellenism. For on this reading of Antiquity, the true philosopher, or lover of Wisdom, would not simply dwell in harmony with Being due to his poetic reception of Being as rising to presence. Even more fully, it is because the philosopher has come to holistically embody and participate in Being, such that *theoria* has "become nature and life itself,"[468] that the Greek, even after having previously experienced the chaos and disruption of living untruthfully, can come to harmoniously dwell with Being once more.

In this manner, it is because Greek reason functioned as a communal event of intersubjective experience and praxis that, for Yannaras, Heidegger's onto-theological description of the restrictive dominance of *logos* (*ratio*) over and against the appearance of Being as manifestation cannot be read as a form of thought which existed in the Greek tradition. Rather, for Yannaras, Heidegger's description of Greek *logos* (as logic/reason) is only applicable to the form of thought which arose in the Latin tradition, since as we noted in the previous chapter, it is within the Latin philosophical/theological tradition that we find the appropriation of philosophical discourse outside of this communal, praxis based *tropos*. Thus once more, the problematic mode of thought which is inherent to Heidegger's critique of onto-theology is, according to Yannaras' re-reading of the Greek tradition, a mode of thought which must be recognized as having developed and unfolded within the Latin philosophical tradition of Western Europe alone.

An Alternative Narrative

At this point, we can fully understand how Yannaras critically appropriates yet distances himself from key points in Heidegger's narrative. Both Yannaras and Heidegger believe that Western European philosophy, dominated by its misguided use of *ratio*, 1) restricted the Being of beings to the *idea*, to that which came to standing presence through the assertion/*saying* of reason/logic, which then 2) led to the reduction of truth to mere assertion, the deportation of Aristotle's metaphysics and logic as a useful tool (*organon*) for the individual, both of which 3) led to the development of the subject, value-thinking, technology, and the nihilistic death of God/metaphysics in our time. However, insofar as each thinker offers a different narrative for how the "West" arrived at its nihilistic conclusion, each thinker is able to offer a different way forward from its metaphysical impasse.

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467 As Yannaras states, for Aristotle, it is "ultimately the soul that thinks and understands," and the soul, for Aristotle, is not simply the "rational" faculty of humankind, but the wholistic totality of the human being—an "indeterminate inclusion of that which exists: 'the soul in as sense is everything that is.' The soul which "thinks and understands," then, does not refers simply to intellectual comprehension, since the soul's parts "appear to be infinite," and the knowledge which the soul ascertains transcends mere rational apprehension. See Yannaras, *Schism*, 78-79.

468 Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 60

For Heidegger, as we have seen, the problematic of Western nihilism traces its roots back to the Greek tradition, since the Latin tradition is understood as directly inheriting the onto-theological mode of thinking which was originally birthed in Antiquity. Thus there is, for Heidegger, a direct link between the Greek and Latin philosophical traditions, so much so that the death of the latter is likewise understood as the death of the former. So too, for Heidegger, this nihilistic unfolding of metaphysics in the West is understood as inevitable, since Being itself is that which has slowly withdrawn from thought since it first sent itself to be thought in light of presence. Thus while Heidegger bemoans the nihilistic, technological relation of utility and consumption that that has now been established between *Dasein* and Being in the West, the blame should not be placed on *Dasein*, nor should the responsibility be given to *Dasein* in seeking to move forward or resolve the problem. For ultimately, it is Being which has given itself to be thought and received as such, and it is likewise up to Being alone to save *Dasein* from its current state of nihilism. All *Dasein* can do, then, is ready itself for this inaugural moment by learning to acquire a more poetic, non-metaphysical mode of dwelling in the world. As such, *Dasein* can make itself passive and readily receptive to Being's sending, but the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism will remain until Being's long expected arrival finally comes.

Aside from the mythological nature of this narrative, Yannaras finds several points of criticism in relation to Heidegger's reading of Western philosophy. First, he believes Heidegger is too quick to read the historical unfolding of nihilism as being developed through one, solid, unbroken tradition. For as we have attempted to reveal, Yannaras believes this reading does not appropriately account for the radical differences that exist between the "Greek" and "Latin" (Scholastic/Modern) modes of thought, especially in relation to the cultural/historical nuances which determined the manner in which critical thought was actualized in each tradition. Thus for Yannaras, when seeking to understand the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe, one should not simply look at the historical unfolding of ontic *ideas* within the Greek and Latin traditions; more fully, one should look the cultural mode in which these ideas unfolded and developed, the historical "thought- pattern" or structure which determined the manner in which critical thought was performed. In doing so, Yannaras believes it will become clear that the Latin tradition of Western Europe should not be recognized as an authentic continuation of its Hellenistic counterpart. On the contrary, Yannaras argues that the revitalization of Greek philosophy in the post-Roman West must be understood as having developed an entirely new and "other" philosophical tradition, so much so that it would be unreasonable to equate the end of the latter as the death of the former. In other words, for Yannaras, the death of God/metaphysics should not be understood as the end of "Western (Greek) philosophy" proper. Rather, Yannaras argues that it should be re-understood, historically, as the nihilistic end of the Latin philosophical tradition that developed in Western Europe alone.

According this reading, we see with Yannaras that the nihilistic unfolding of metaphysics in Western Europe is but *one* of the ways, and not *the* way, in which the Greek philosophical tradition

historically unfolded. Consequently, Yannaras' work seeks to offer an entirely different reading of the history of the Western philosophical traditions from Antiquity to Modernity, one which he believes can illuminate more fully the problematic of Western nihilism in our own time.

According to Yannaras' narrative, the emergence of the Greek metaphysical tradition is not understood, per Heidegger, as a result of Being's sending, but is rather recognized as the response of a primordial *need*: the need for the co-existence of the human beings to become true so as to overcome the chaos, disorder, and suffering that comes from not living in accordance with the eternal order and justice of the cosmos. As such, Yannaras' narrative understands the rise of critical thought in Antiquity as a natural outcome of the socio-political *tropos* which guided the Greek people within the life and praxis of the city-state, and it is thus from this unique mode of being-in-the-world that we can most fully understand the praxis of critical thought (the nuance of Greek *logos*) as it developed in philosophy proper. As noted in chapter two, this mode of existence is identified not simply by its metaphysical impetus to "become true" within the common being of the community, but most fully by the gnoseological implications which follow: that is, the existential, communal, and ascetical (praxis based) dimensions of Greek *logos* and thought. And most importunately, as noted in chapter three, Yannaras believes that the pinnacle of this tradition would historically unfold in the philosophical tradition of Christian-Hellenism: first, in the life and praxis of the *ekklēsia* (the new *polis*), and second, with the development of Christianity as a philosophy proper, as noted most prominently in the philosophical literature of the Greek Church Fathers.

With the rise of the Latin philosophical tradition, however, Yannaras' narrative highlights how we have a radical break, and thus divergence from, the historical unfolding of the Hellenistic tradition as such. More fully, Yannaras argues that the Latin philosophical tradition largely inverted the fundamental attributes of the Greek tradition as described above insofar as the critical discourse of the Greeks was taken up and actualized in a completely different manner (*tropos*) from which they had been practiced in Antiquity. Thus while we have a continuation of Greek ideas and Greek discourse, there is ultimately lost here the correctness of Greek culture and praxis, and thus a loss of the unique "tradition" (*heritage*, in the Heideggerian sense) of Hellenism altogether. What we have with the revival of Greek discourse in the Latin West, then, is the creation of a new philosophical/theological tradition entirely, a new *tropos* in which critical thought was actualized. And for Yannaras, as we have attempted to show in this chapter, it is only within *this* tradition that we find the nihilistic *tropos* of thinking which Heidegger's critique of metaphysics illuminates.

According to Yannaras' narrative, then, Heidegger's critique of onto-theology is indeed describing an "inner logic," or mode of thinking, which has nihilistically unfolded in Western Europe. However, for Yannaras, what Heidegger is describing is ultimately a mode of thinking

which does not apply to Ancient philosophy, but which belongs to the Latin, Western European philosophical tradition alone.

However, as stated in the beginning, the intention of Yannaras' counter-narrative is not simply to make this point. What Yannaras' re-reading of the Greek and Latin philosophical traditions has also attempted to reveal is another mode of *doing* philosophy; that is, his reading of Hellenism/Ancient philosophy is attempting to promote a non-nihilistic mode of philosophical practice which can be offered as a way forward from the death of the Latin philosophical tradition. Yet it is not just any form or school of Ancient philosophy which Yannaras believes capable of fulfilling this role. More fully, it is only the non-essentialist, existential philosophy of Church Fathers that Yannaras believes capable of adequately responding to the death of God/metaphysics in our own time.

The remainder of this work, then, will be attempting to look more closely at how, and in what way, Yannaras believes that the philosophical tradition of Christian-Hellenism would be able to accomplish this feat.

Part Two:
The Philosophy of the Church Fathers

Chapter VI
Ontology: Hypostatic Existence

In the previous chapters we have looked at what I have termed the historical aspect of Yannaras' proposal. The major intention of this aspect of Yannaras' response, as we have seen, is to offer an alternative narrative from which to understand the event of God's death and the historical unfolding of nihilism in Western Europe. More specifically, we have noted that the major intention of this counter-narrative is to reveal 1) the philosophy of Hellenism as another mode of *doing,* one that is fundamentally different and other than the mode of philosophy which nihilistically unfolded in the Latin West, and thus 2) to promote the Hellenistic philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers as a legitimate way forward from the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism. Moving forward to Part Two of this dissertation, then, we will now look at the ontological dimension of Yannaras' response as found in his magnum opus, *Person and Eros.*

In his own words, Yannaras states that the primary purpose *of Person and Eros* it to "test," using the medium of contemporary phenomenological language, whether this Hellenistic philosophical tradition of the Greek Church Fathers can successfully overcome the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology after the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe.[469] And as I have argued in the introduction, Yannaras believes the philosophical tradition of the Church Fathers capable of accomplishing this feat insofar as he believes their philosophical tradition to be offering a response to the ontological question which is not established and known from the onto-theological structure of value-laden metaphysics. Rather, in accordance with the mode of Hellenism as offered in Part One, Yannaras believes their philosophical tradition to be offering a non-essentialist, testimonial metaphysics which is derived from that which is being disclosed/manifested in a "common logos" of communal participation. As such, Yannaras believes the Church Fathers' philosophy to be offering a non-nihilistic response to the ontological question which capable of being known and validated through praxis, participation, and intersubjective experience—i.e., through participating in the philosophy's *way of life*—and thus as offering a legitimate way forward from the death of God/metaphysics in Western Europe.

Part Two of this work will therefore seek to lay out this argument more clearly by offering an in depth overview of *Person and Eros* in light of our argument thus far; that is, we will seek to understand Yannaras' work in *Person and Eros* in light of the *tropos* of Ancient philosophy which was laid out in Part One—in its "Hellenistic" vesture. In Chapter VI, then, we will begin by focusing on the philosophical vision, or *theoria* of the Church Fathers' philosophy, which Yannaras understands as ultimately trinitarian and hypostatic; Chapter VII will then focus on the gnoseology of the Church Fathers' philosophy; more specifically, it will attempt to overview the unique manner in which the Church Fathers attempted to both signify and verify their trinitarian understanding of Being through the use of Greek language (*logos*); and finally, in Chapter VIII, will offer a summary of the Church Fathers' philosophy in light of their ontological reading of the Fall and *theosis*; in doing so, we will also come to understand most clearly the way of life, or praxis, which one must participate in in order to acquire "knowledge" of Being as *hypostases.*

In Chapter IX, I will move on from this explication of *Person and Eros* in order to bring the work of Yannaras into dialogue with the contemporary field of Continental philosophy of religion. Here I will begin by arguing that Yannaras' ontological hermeneutic of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy is able to overcome Heidegger's fundamental ontology and critique of metaphysics insofar as he reads the experience of Christian testimony not as an ontic science (and thus as a "religion" or "theology"), but as bearing testimony to the very Being of beings; that is, with the Church Fathers, he reads Christianity as containing a philosophy in and of itself, thereby seeing philosophy once more from the Hellenistic tradition of Antiquity as overviewed in Part One. For this reason, I will then argue that Yannaras' ontological

469 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable,* xxi.

understanding of ecclesial existence offers a key methodological hermeneutic which would allow for richer discourse amongst Christian thinkers within the post-Heideggerian field of Continental philosophy of religion insofar as it would not restrict phenomenological discourse within Christianity to theology or religion (as an ontic science), but would open the possibility for Christian experience to be discussed ontologically within the discipline of philosophy proper. In seeking to bolster this argument, I will then attempt to close this work by bringing Yannaras' phenomenological analysis of hypostatic existence into dialogue with the work of leading French phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion, revealing how many of Marion's phenomenological insights—such as the saturated phenomenon, the possibility of revelation, distance, the given, the erotic phenomenon, the *adonne*, and his univocal understanding of God as *love*—could be advanced and strengthened from the Greek Church Father's ontological hermeneutic of ecclesial being.

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This current chapter, as noted above, will seek to overview the Church Fathers' *theoria*, or ontological vision of Being. In *Person and Eros*, however, this promotion of Being must always be read as attempting to respond to and overcome Heidegger's fundamental ontology; i.e., Heidegger's post-metaphysical understanding of Being. As such, we will begin this chapter by offering a quick overview of Yannaras' interpretation and critique of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which attempts to re-think the meaning of Being from a purely phenomenological (non-metaphysical) horizon. This will then lead into Yannaras' reply to Heidegger, which offers the trinitarian ontology of the Greek Church Fathers as a post-Heideggerian, post-Kantian (critical) ontology that is able to restore meaning to human existence whilst avoiding the value-laden, onto-theological characteristics of "metaphysics" as illuminated by Heidegger.

Heidegger: A Void in Ontology

Heidegger's fundamental ontology, in part, is explained by Yannaras as an attempt to overcome the problematic "metaphysical" (onto-theological) response to the ontological problem as developed in the Western (Latin) philosophical tradition.

According to Yannaras interpretation of Heidegger,[470] as we have seen in the previous chapter, onto-theological metaphysics always identifies the Being of beings in a causal, determinate manner. And since all that can be conceptualized for this causal ground are other intelligible beings, onto-theological metaphysics becomes the act of grounding particular, contingent beings upon the eternal and unchanging (general) existence of other *beings*, whereby the Being of beings becomes identified as intelligible presence and identity (as unitary, unchanging, determinate, universal, etc.). Thus in seeking to give an answer for what it means to be (*einai*), metaphysics responds in an "ontic" manner by investigating Being as a specific *thing*—as an intelligible "what," or being, which causes beings to be. Thus because of its starting point, as Yannaras states, Being (*Einai*) itself becomes subject to the methodological principles and presuppositions of *physics*—that is, to the intelligible principles and presuppositions that allow us to understand and define physical beings (*onta*).[471] In this manner, Being is reduced to and

470 The following overview of Heidegger below will be restricted to Yannaras interpretation of Heidegger, most notably as it is found in *Person and Eros*, while also being additionally commented on in *The Schism in Philosophy*.
471 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 9.

understood primarily as an *object* of thought; here the existence (*ýparxi*) of beings is identified with the correspondence of objects to their causal principles, which are understood as absolute concepts, or ideas, now in their greatest generality. Accordingly, one is able to acquire knowledge of Being, or the existence of an object, when there is established a coincidence of meaning with the mind's object of thought. Such is why existence (*ýparxi*), as Yannaras states, will ultimately come to be identified in the Latin tradition with *thinking*, and anything other than that which can be controlled or understood by the calculative demands of *ratio* cannot be said to *be* (*einai*) at all.[472]

As Yannaras notes, this 'ontic' understanding of Being is often attributed to contemporary thinkers as having its origin in Aristotle, who speaks of Being in relation to the onticity of form—that is, a specific "thing" which causes a specific substance to exist. This causal understand of what makes a being be thus eventually leads to the introduction of a "first mover," the causal principle (Being *qua* Being) which determines the transition of matter from "being in potentiality" to "being in actuality."[473] However, on Yannaras' reading, it is this very movement from beings to the first mover *as such* which detaches Being from its correlation with beings in the Aristotelian corpus, since Being is referred to here as the principle (*archê*) of existence prior to any natural onticity, and thus by definition distinguishes itself from any object of thought, ontically speaking (that is, as an "entity"). In this manner, as Yannaras states, Being is not yet subject to the methodological principles of *phyiscs*, nor is one able to come to know Being as such in relation to the determinate structure of thought, which derives its definitive character from nature.[474]

For Yannaras, rather, the ontic response to the ontological problem which Heidegger highlights is brought into the history of philosophy primarily with the rise of scholasticism, wherein the mechanism and methods of Aristotle's scientific reasoning, which for Aristotle were restricted to the positive definition of physical objects, were taken and (analogically) applied to the "object" of metaphysics—that is, to the God of Christian revelation.[475] In this manner, as Yannaras states, that which by definition transcends the being of the physical world became subject to the methodological principles and presuppositions of Aristotelian physics, such that "the problem of Being is restricted to the possibility of applying an objectively credible apodictic methodology with a view to defining Being positively as an object of knowledge."[476] In this ontic

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472 Metaphysics, then, when seeking to be understood Being from this ontic perspective, is only concerned with foreseeable and "present-at-hand" objects which lend themselves to the control and calculations of *ratio*, and thus does not allow one to identify existence with anything that is "other" to what can be foreseen or understood within the jurisdiction of reason. See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 9-10.

473 On Yannaras' interpretation of Aristotle here, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 169-177.

474 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 177; *Person and Eros*, 9-11.

475 "[T]he mechanisms and methods of scientific syllogistic reasoning, which are designed to enable the positive definition of physical objects, are also applied by the Scholastics to the positive definition of the "object" of metaphysics, which is the given God of Christian revelation. The "object" of metaphysics—precisely in the same manner as the objects of physics—is subjected with absolute fidelity to the demands of Aristotelian demonstration…[t]his objectification of Being—the sense of Being as an object subject to the rules of correct reasoning…constitutes and exhausts the ontic version of Being." See Yannaras, *Schism*, 180. See also Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 9.

476 Yannaras, *Schism*, 181.

version of Being as described by Yannaras, the Absolute, whose existence had been established through demonstration (natural theology), and whose Being is known through the absolute (or analogical) predication of creaturely being, became recognized as the determinate and causal ground of all that is, and thus was constituted as the definitive and logically-binding principle of every natural, moral, and social law, thereby shaping the authoritative functioning of socio-political becoming in the Latin West.[477]

For both Heidegger and Yannaras, as noted in the previous chapter, this ontic restriction of Being to the determine structure of *ratio* not only led to the "forgetting of Being" in Western history, but also can be understood as establishing a violent *tropos* of thought which led to the death of God and our technological age of metaphysical nihilism. And it is in response to such issues that we can understand, in part, Heidegger's ongoing attempt to give an alternative answer to the ontological problem—one which begins its inquiry not by focusing on the *relation* between Being and beings, but by focusing on their *difference.* By framing the question as such, as Yannaras points out, not only is one denied the possibility of identifying the Being of beings causally, which is inescapably bound up with ontic categories (thereby liberating metaphysics from the methodology of physics), but for this very reason, one is also able to let Being show itself on its own terms as that which is other than/different from the methodological principles and presuppositions of the natural, physical world.[478]

For Yannaras, this reframing of the ontological question by Heidegger largely revolves around his interpretation of Heraclitus' fragment, which states that "*phýsis krýptesthai fileí"* (nature [the manner in which nature is comes to presence] loves to hide/conceal herself). Nature (*phýsis*), on Heidegger's reading, was the Greek's first naming of Being. In this manner, Heidegger reads Heraclitus as stating that Being "hides/conceals itself" in its manifestation as phenomena—an insight which itself marks their ontological difference (one cannot identify Being with nature, or phenomena, if it is recognized as being unseen [concealed] in *phýsis* as such).[479] In this manner, one would not know or apprehended Being in itself through the phenomena. Rather, according to Heidegger's reading, Heraclitus is stating that we originally only know that beings *are* to the degree in which they are manifested (*phainontai*), and this mode of their manifestation in no way exhausts Being itself, which "hides" in this very manifestation.[480] Put in another manner: we do not and cannot know the Being of beings (*to Einai tôn ontôn*) as *phýsis* or *ousia*; we only know the mode by which they are, and this mode is the fact of phenomenal disclosure.[481]

For Yannaras, it is this very insight that largely guided Heidegger's work in *Being and Time,* wherein he attempts to rethink the meaning of Being in light of this ontological difference; that is, he attempts to "make manifest" the Being of beings which was previously "hidden" or "concealed" in the original giving of Being as *phýsis*. In doing so, Heidegger will ultimately define

477 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 96-104.
478 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11.
479 Heraclitus, Frgm. 123, in *Diels and Kranz, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1:178, trans. Wheelwright. Cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 185.
480 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 12-13; *Schism*, 185.
481 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11.

the Being of being's in this work solely in light of their phenomenological disclosure, which he identifies as "rising up from absence (*ap-ousia*) to presence (*par-ousia*), from oblivion (*lêthe*) into non-oblivion, or truth (*a-lêtheia*)."[482] Here the rising up of beings from absence, as Yannaras explains, is not simply the reality of their manifestation, but that which constitutes the mode of their manifestation (that is, the Being of beings). For this reason, we understand that absence *and* presence are both presupposed in order for the phenomena to *be* at all; that is, self-hiding (oblivion or absence) belongs as much to the Being of beings as does manifestation (truth/presence). Thus beings are disclosed as presence and *are* (*einai*) as both presence *and* absence.[483] And as an event of continually coming into being from absence, there is also recognized the dimension of temporality in Being, which is why time, for Heidegger, is posed as the ultimate "horizon" for beings to become manifest.

As Yannaras points out, this understanding of Being necessarily prevents us from metaphysically identifying the truth (*alētheia*) of Being with the mentally conceived object, which mis-identifies knowledge of Being with the idea or concept. Instead, "truth"—as *a-lētheia*, coming to presence from oblivion (*lêthe*)—restricts knowledge to the mode by which beings are disclosed. And the mode by which beings are disclosed is recognized, per Heidegger, as temporal manifestation, an event that exists only between *Dasein* and Being, wherein beings "swing" between the void of nothingness, rising up from oblivion and returning to the nothingness in which they came. In this manner, knowledge of Being is no longer an objectively complete intellectual certainty, but a cognition of relativity with regard to its hiddenness.[484] It is the realization that the universal *idea*, or object, which was rationally constituted "on the other side" of the given phenomena in time is not actually a part of Being's manifestation, and thus it is an anxious awareness that oblivion, or "no-thingness," is the true given that gives itself on the other side of temporal disclosure.[485]

As Heidegger emphasizes, this experience of distantiality from Being leads to an experience of estrangement (*Entfremdung*), the anxious recognition that one is not "at home" in the world. For to be "at home" in the world is to be naturally "dwelling" with Being to the extent in which one is absorbed in a meaningful project (through *Dasein's* primary structure of care), as it is the historical dwelling with beings as such that allows for beings to be given meaning at all.[486] To not be at home is thus to lose this natural dwelling, leading to an ultimate meaningless of existence, which in itself has come at the cost of humanities recognition of the nothingness. Thus in a quasi-Nietzschean manner, Yannaras understands Heidegger's response (in *Being and Time*) to the nihilistic, homelessness of humanities current condition in his call to *resoluteness*: the

482 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 12.
483 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11.
484 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11.
485 Ibid.
486 That is, beings are given Being, or meaning, only in reference to the project's and mode of Dasein's dwelling, which acts as the fundamental structure, or horizon, for Being to become manifest. See especially Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 147, 178. For Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as care, See *Being and Time*, 184.

accepting of responsibility for one's own being—regardless if it has no "metaphysical" *telos*—and resolutely choosing to exist by meaningfully projecting oneself into the world of possibility in an authentic manner.[487] Thus the restoration of meaning is not to restore meaning to an "objective" world, but to restore meaning to one's own world, which one can accomplish through escaping one's "fallenness" of inauthenticity (conformity to the "they") and learning to care for one's world in an authentic manner, which for Heidegger, is accomplished most fully when one is being-towards-death (*sein-zum-Tode*).[488]

In *Person and Eros*, Yannaras sees Heidegger's attempt to overcome the nihilistic implications of metaphysics as a valiant but ultimately unsuccessful endeavor. And this is because, quite simply, Yannaras believes that Heidegger's fundamental ontology does not overcome the rationalist, ontic version of Being insofar as it continues to restrict knowledge Being to *intellection*; that is, it ultimately equates knowledge of the Being of beings to their ontic individuality, and thus still equates that which "is" with that which can be determinately known in thought.[489] For even when one understands Being as the actualization of temporal manifestation, as "rising to presence from nothingness," Yannaras points out that the individuality of beings remains ontic, since one's knowledge of a beings (*onta*) Being is still restricted to the understanding of beings as an intelligible, determinate phenomena, as the "other side" of the being's being is not given or known at all.[490] Hence, as Yannaras states, "however

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487 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 226-227. On Heidegger's understanding of resoluteness and authenticity, see *Being and Time*, 316-325.

488 The later Heidegger would go to rescind many of his conclusions in *Being and Time*. This is mainly due to the transcendental nature of this work, which sought to give an account of the universal, *a priori* conditions for both human existence and Being's manifestation. That is, the early Heidegger sought to give an account of how the structure of Being is given, and thus dependent upon, the structures of human existence (*Dasein*). In seeking to move beyond this subjectivists (and anthropological) basis from which to understand Being, the later Heidegger chose to no longer refer to Being as that which is co-constituted by *Dasein*, but would chose instead to speak of Being as that which gives itself (*es gibt*), or withdraws, to and from *Dasein* completely on its own accord. In seeking to illuminate this event, Heidegger moves to an idiosyncratic examination of art, poetry, architecture, and particularly important moments in the history of Ancient philosophy, especially in the writings of the pre-Socratics. It is also at this point that we begin to find the emergence of Heidegger's *mythos* of Being's sending, and thus his overall rethinking of metaphysical nihilism as noted in the previous chapter. As we have also noted in the previous chapter, it is at this point which Yannaras also loses interest in Heidegger's work, as the once great philosopher had now taken on the role of "prophet and priest," reverting to a form of mysticism (private *logos*) which was no longer able to reveal, via a common *logos*, the how and why of Western European nihilism. It is at this point that we can also see Yannaras' turn to and increased interest in Sartre, as Sartre would seem to carry on the natural and logical consequences of Heidegger's fundamental ontology in *Being and Nothingness* and the existentialist movement at large. For these reasons, Yannaras' response to Heidegger in *Person and Eros* largely restricts itself to the "early Heidegger," while also engaging at times with the work of Sartre, as it is with these thinkers that Yannaras finds the most honest response to the "death of God/metaphysics" and the Modern predicament of Western European nihilism. On this turning in Heidegger's thought, see Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings.*

489 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 190; *Person and Eros*, 13.

much forgetfulness or nothingness is emphasized by phenomenology as the other side of the phenomenicity of phenomena, the ontic individuality of phenomena is not impaired," since it does not cease to define beings in terms of the distantiality of individuality; i.e, as *this* determinate "thing" and nothing else.[491]

Thus for Yannaras, not only does Heidegger restrict the Being of beings to their ontic givenness, but he never actually gives an answer to the ontological question. For what Heidegger ultimately offers, according to Yannaras, is a problematic understanding of Being that uses both ontic and non-ontic categories: on the side of temporal disclosure, we have the determination of ontic individuality, the Being of the being as that which is given to presence as a "phenomena" and nothing else. However, as Yannaras points out, Heidegger leaves the "other side" of the phenomenon in an almost "mystical state of indetermination," in the non-ontic categories of "forgetfulness"/"nothingness," such that the ontological problem, the problem of seeking to actually understand Being beyond its subjective appearance, is left philosophically "in suspension."[492] In other words, for Yannaras, the individuality of the phenomenon as presence only exhausts one side of the problem of Being. The other side, being suspended in the arbitrary definition of nothingness, leaves the ontological question unanswered, creating "a void in ontology as such."[493]

For Yannaras, what Heidegger's fundamental ontology essentially offers, then, is not an answer to the ontological problem. That is, it has nothing to do with an interpretation or account of Being as Being (as that which "truly is" beyond the momentary presencing of beings in time), and everything to do with a particular mode of understanding the Being of beings by the human subject (*Dasein*).[494] In other words, Yannaras' believes Heidegger's proposition constitutes nothing more than an *epistemology*: it investigates the epistemic possibilities of the subject beyond the conventional marking of substances/concepts, but it does not offer an ontology that succeeds in replying to the question concerning Being (*Einai*) as a reality in itself. As such, Yannaras believes even the great Heidegger to remain imprisoned within the very gnoseological/metaphysical tradition which he himself attempted to overcome, wherein knowledge of Being is equated with that which can be given and known in the determination of the intellect (as a determinate phenomenon of presence), and ontology becomes reduced to its identification with a theory of knowledge in light of said presence.[495]

All the same, however, Yannaras still finds Heidegger as having offered a great contribution to the field of ontology in Western metaphysics. The ontological difference remains an important distinction when seeking to understand the meaning of Being *qua* Being. Of great importance also remains his deconstruction of the ontic/intellectualist tradition of "metaphysics," which subjected Being to the jurisdiction of *logos* as *ratio*. But most of all, Yannaras argues that

490 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 190; *Person and Eros*, 14.
491 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 12-14.
492 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 14.
493 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 15.
494 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 191.
495 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 193.

Heidegger's attempt at a non-metaphysical, experience based ontology can act as a valuable bridge in helping the Western reader understand the Greek Church Fathers' response to the ontological question.

Being as *Hypostasis*

Using Heidegger as a spring-board, Yannaras then brings our attention to the Greek Church Fathers understanding of Being, which as we have seen in chapter three, Yannaras believes inaugurated an entirely new response to the ontological problem. By way of reminder, Yannaras' formulates this response in the Cappadocian's trinitarian identification of the term's *hypostasis* and *prósopon*. In this formulation, it is not the *ousia* which constitutes the being of the divine *hypostasis*, wherein the particular (the person) is understood as a predicate that is attached to a concrete being once its ontological hypostasis (its *ousia*) has been verified. Rather, according to the Cappadocian's usage, the freedom and particularity of the person is identified as that which constitutes the *hypostasis* of Being: the person is the *tropos* (the how) by which the substance (*ousia*) subsists as an existential reality.[496] Accordingly, it is the person itself that ontologically grounds and exhausts Being (*Einai*). In the Trinity, the persons make being (*ousia*) a hypostatic reality.[497]

On this reading, we see that the person, and not the *ousia*, is recognized as the *hypostasis* of being, and as such the person contains an ontological independence and freedom which is not subservient to or determined by the *ousia*. Such is why, for Yannaras, the Cappadocians distinguish the divine *prósopa* from the divine *ousia* as an "otherness" and "distinctiveness" from nature itself, and it is this absolute otherness from nature that is ontologically distinguished as *hypostasis*. [498] To exists as a person, then, is to exists as a radical otherness from nature insofar as it constitutes its own being apart from and as ontologically other to the determinations of *ousia*.

Before the Trinitarian ontology of the Greek Church Fathers, as Yannaras points out, *ousia* was conceived as the ground for beings, as that which established their identity, form, and thus which determined their manner of existence. Accordingly, to speak of the ontological ground of an individual, or particular, would be to refer to its *ousia*. But on Yannaras' reading of the ecclesial event's thematic articulation of metaphysical witness, we have a reversal of this ontological

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496 "An hypostatic nature, that is, essence, can therefore never exist. Nature is not hypostasis, because they are not conversely predicable. For hypostasis is also nature, but nature is not yet also hypostasis. For nature admits of the principle of being, but hypostasis admits also of being in itself. For the one [nature] points to the principle of the form, while the other [*hypostasis*] reveals the being of something." Leonitius of Byzantium, *Against the Nestorians and Eutychians* (PG 86:1280a). Cited in Yannaras, 27n9.

497 See Yannaras, *Schism*, 205.

498 For the Cappadocians, the being of the person is the "basis of the uniqueness and dissimilarity of the properties," wherein the person is understood as "the concurrence of the characteristic features around each…the distinguished sign of the existence of each," and "the concept by which the characteristic features that appear restrict the common and uncircumscribed in a particular thing." Quotations from Gregory of Nyssa, *On the difference between ousia and hypostasis* 5 (PG 32:336c). Cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 16, 298

structure. For by grounding the triadic being of God on his free and hypostatic activity, we see that for the Greek Church Fathers, *ousia* only exists "in persons," such that it is the free and loving activity of personal communion, and not the determinate structure of *ousia*, which is the primary, ontological ground for Absolute Being.

In this sense, being (essence/substance)—insofar as it does not exist in itself beyond of before its hypostatic realization—cannot be considered something self-evidently given, nor something subject to a predetermined ground (*logos*) or mode (*tropos*) of actualization.[499] On the contrary, according to Yannaras' interpretation of the Cappadocian Fathers, "essence (*ousia*) exists only *in* persons, persons make being (*ousia*) a hypostatic reality,"[500] such that the acting of the persons becomes the very Being (*Einai*) of *ousia*. According to this understanding of Being, then, one does not acquire knowledge of Being through the general, the abstract, the community of recognizable (repeatable), determinate signs and any other form of ontic categorization, which belongs simply to the being of beings as *ousia*. On the contrary, as Yannaras states, to know Being for the Church Fathers is to partake of its hypostatic realization—an "existential" (rather than intellectual) event of communion that only transpires between *hypostases* (*prósopa*), and which by definition is ontologically other than *ousia*.

More specifically, this event of hypostatic participation is signified by Yannaras and the Church Fathers in two ways: first, there is the actualization of one's own hypostatic activity (in the mode of immanence). Here the human person exists, analogous to divine persons, as the "absolute otherness" of nature, wherein the being of the human *hypostasis* is not determined simply by nature, but by *schési* (relation/relationship). In this manner, the mode in which the human person exists is an "image" of its divine archetype, such that it partakes of and acquires "first-hand" knowledge of Being simply through its own mode of actualization. Second, and most fully, the Church Fathers also talk about a first-person event of participation in, or communion with, the hypostatic activity of the Absolute (in the mode of transcendence). Here the human person, by existentially "standing outside" its nature in a non-determinate manner, comes to participate in Being in a transcendent manner—that is, one comes into existential contact with the otherness of hypostatic Being which is other than, precedes, and grounds one's own being. In this manner, the hypostatic otherness of God's triadic being is received in a radically "personal" manner, wherein the otherness of God's being—not as *ousia*, but as *hypostasis*—is dialogically given "in reference to/relation with" the person.

Thus in the dynamic event of one's own hypostatic actualization, which then leads towards the possibility of communion with the triadic act of Absolute Being, the Church Fathers' speak of a possibility of knowing that which "truly is" in a manner that is completely foreign to the traditional practice of Greek metaphysics. For according to the Greek Church Fathers, the possibility of knowing Being is no longer predicated on the life of the mind, or intellect. Rather, it

499 See Yannaras, *Faith as an Ecclesial Experience*, 49.
500 "Essence does not subsist in itself, but is contemplated in the hypostases (John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.6 [PG 94: 1001]). Cited in *Person and Eros*, 27.

is predicated on the life of the *prósopon*, as it is only the created person, through the actualization of his being in the loving mode of relation, that one can acquire knowledge of Being.

For Yannaras, as noted in chapter three, this ontology of the Church Father's must be understand as a metaphysical "icon," a testimony or witness to the common *logos* of ecclesial experience which speaks of that which "truly is" beyond the finitude of death and decay. Meaning, it is understood as a rational symbol which discloses the Church's experience of "the really real" within the life and praxis of the ecclesial event. Which means, even further, that Yannaras believes this explication of Being must not be understood as a "metaphysics" in the Heideggerian sense, but an metaphysical ontology of revelation, or manifestation, which can be known and "existentially" verified through participatory experience.[501] Thus for Yannaras, it is an ontology which he believes the language/discourse of phenomenology is potentially capable of both illuminating and affirming. In this chapter, then, we will move forward by revealing how Yannaras' engages with the work of phenomenology, especially that of Heidegger, in order to re-present the ontology noted above in relation to contemporary philosophical (phenomenological) language. By doing so, we will see how and why Yannaras believes the ontology of the Greek Church Fathers is able to offer a metaphysical answer to the ontological problem, of what it means to truly be beyond the phenomenological givenness of subjective reception, without reverting to the rationalist, value-laden structure of onto-theological metaphysics.

The Person as Relation

The first and primary aspect of the Church Fathers' ontology which Yannaras attempts to illuminate via the medium of phenomenology is the Church Fathers' understanding of the prósopon as a *relation* (*schési*). Indeed, we see this in the opening page of his work, wherein he attempts to illuminate the "existential" dimension of the Greek/Christian word in reference to its etymological definition.

Moving away from the general interpretation of *prósopon* as a "mask," Yannaras argues that the word *prósopon*, in Greek, also defines and signifies a referential reality: "the preposition *pros* (towards) together with the noun *ôps* (*ôpos* in the genitive) which means "eye," "face," "countenance," form the composite "*pros-ôpon*": meaning "I have my face turned towards someone or something; I am opposite someone or something."[502] As such, Yannaras argues that the word, in its primitive use, signified initially a term indicating an immediate reference, or existential relationship with otherness. Meaning, to be a person does not signify an "individual" form of atomic existence. On all accounts, it signifies in the Greek experience a reality which only

501 On this exclusively revelatory, experiential nature of Christian truth, see John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 9.
502 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 5.

"is" as a dynamic actualization of relation, as "being-with" and "being-opposite" someone or something.

According to Yannaras, then, it is this existential, referential aspect of the word which was adopted and promoted in the Greek Church Fathers. For as we see in their trinitarian ontology, the person, or *prosôpon,* is quite literally defined as an existential reference of relationship—as noted in their identification of the persons of the Trinity as a *tropos* of relation.[503] So too, as we will come to see, it is this very relational mode of existence that the Church Fathers believe humanity—made in the hypostatic image and likeness of God's being—is able to immanently know and partake of through the actualization of their own hypostatic potential.

To help bring out what Yannaras believes this "relational" and "existential" dimension of personhood entails in the Greek/Christian tradition, Yannaras attempts to bring the Church Fathers' conception of the human *prósopon* into dialogue with the foundational insights of Husserl's phenomenology. Here Yannaras argues that "consciousness," which is argued for by Husserl as also being necessarily "referential" (consciousness is always consciousness *of* something), would be understood in the Church Fathers' tradition as a "property" of the person, and not identified with the being of the person as such. Meaning, for Yannaras, that the consciousness of the person—the fact of being determinately "conscious of something" through the intentional workings of consciousness—does not exhaust the reality of the *relation* between the person and beings.[504] On the contrary, according to the Church Fathers' use of the term, Yannaras emphasizes that that person's relation which that which "truly is" *transcends* the experience of "being/objects" as they are determinately re-presented by consciousness (or in Heideggerian language, the person's experiential reception of that which is manifested transcends the "worlding" of the world.)

In seeking to clarify this point, Yannaras points to Husserl's distinction between the subjectivity of cognition ("die Subjektivität des Erkennens") and the objectivity of the content of cognition (die Objektivität des Erkenntnisinhaltes"), a distinction which differentiates the representational "sense" of meaning (the ideal unity) that arises from the workings of consciousness and the original (subjective/personal) experience of these objects/manifestations as they were primordially received.[505] In this manner, Yannaras notes how the objective "cognitive content" of consciousness—which is, according to phenomenology, the universal conception and synthesis of primordial consciousness—is differentiated and other than the originally lived/received moments of subjective experience. And for Yannaras, it is these very "subjective experiences" that cannot be re-presented as a determinate object of knowledge that reveals

503 As Yannaras states, in the patristic literature of the Greek East, relation is always revelatory of hypostasis. Cf. Athanasius the Great, *Dialogues of the Trinity* 1.25 (PG 28:1153d): "the term 'god' indicates the nature, the term 'father' the relation with the son.' Also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 29.16 (PF 36:96a): "The Father is neither the name of an essence…nor of an energy, but of a relation." And Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomious* 2 (PG 45:473b): "The name Father does not represent an essence, but indicates the relation with the son" (ed. Jaeger, 2:319.1-3). Cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros,* 34n35.

504 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 7.

505 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros,* 7. For the Husserl quotation, Yannaras cites "Edmund Husserl, *Logische Utersuchungen,* 4th ed., vol. 1 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1928), 133-74.

the form of "knowing" which the Church Fathers' *prosópon* is capable of. For example, the "personal" experiences of beauty, ethical values, and religious experiences are all proposed by Yannaras as primary examples of such "non-objectified" phenomena, all of which potentially reveal the person's experiential, receptive relation with that which is *beyond* the objectness/beingness of consciousness.

On this reading, then, Yannaras interprets the Church Fathers' understanding of the human *prósopon* as a primordial, referential/relational existence which signifies a cognitive power of potential reception "before any 'semantic' shaping of the content of consciousness"; that is, it signifies the "existential space of the primary disclosure of beings," the ultimate "horizon" in which the human person can receive (experience/encounter) that which transcends the determinate, objective knowledge of beings which both Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenological analysis refer to. And indeed, Yannaras reading of the Church Fathers here must be recognized as both insightful and uncontroversial. For as we noted in chapter III, the type of "personal" knowledge that the Church Fathers' believe the human being can acquire of God and the world is indeed a purely experiential, albeit intelligible, form of knowing which by definition *transcends* the intellect and the natural capacities of nature. As Gregory Palamas states in summation, the human person's "organ of vision" which achieves knowledge of God's being transcends human nature altogether, and thus is "neither of the senses" nor "the intellect."[506] And as John Meyendorff also writes, summarizing this point even further: "A possibility of experiencing/encountering God through means other than intellectual and sensory knowledge.…stands behind the Greek patristic understanding of Christian faith and theology."[507] In this manner, for Yannaras, the experiential mode of knowing which the Church Fathers speak of would by definition be wholly "other" to the determinate form of knowledge which both Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenological inquiry bear witness to.

Thus rather than understanding this "organ of vision" which the Church Fathers' bear testimony to as a property of objective phenomenological consciousness, Yannaras understands this "organ of vision" as a referential/relational existence which signifies a cognitive power of potential reception "before any 'semantic' shaping of the content of consciousness"; an "existential space" which is a property of the *prósopon* alone. And the person, it must be remembered, is identified by the Church Fathers as an ontological otherness which is not identified with nature; e.g., a relational, existential otherness which is ontologically other than the natural workings of the intellect and the senses. In relation to the concepts of contemporary phenomenological discourse, then, Yannaras understands the person's primordially established relation with existence as being ontologically "other than," and thus existentially *prior* to, any determinate form of knowledge which is mediated through the intellect or the senses. Which means, furthermore, that the person's "organ of vision" *as such* would in theory offer a purely experiential knowledge of existence which is other than and prior to and intellectual-objective definition that can be given to Being (*einai*),

506 See Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 14.
507 See Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 13.

whether metaphysical *or* phenomenological (or at least, according to the forms of phenomenology which Yannaras was aware of at the time).[508]

On Yannaras' interpretation of the Church Fathers ontology, then, the foundational, ontological status which the Church Fathers ascribe to the *prósopon* would enable the questioner to overcome the very thing which Heidegger could not: that is, it would allow one to offer a theory of Being, of that which "truly is," in a non-ontic manner; i.e., outside the determinate, purely intellectual restrictions of presence. For according to Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, "the starting point of the ontological question is not humanity's power of rational thought, but the more universal [existential] reality of the person itself."[509]

The Prósopon as Hypostasis

In the above section, we have noted what might be called the strictly "existential" dimension of personhood which, for Yannaras, corresponds with, yet slightly differs from, the insights of contemporary phenomenology. Here Yannaras understands the being of the person in the writings of the Church Fathers as a primordial, referential/relational reality, one that is capable of acquiring experiential knowledge of existence "before any 'semantic' shaping of the content of consciousness." However, following the insights of the Greek Church Fathers, Yannaras will take this reading of the person one step further by reading this existential relational reality of the person in an ontological, metaphysical manner. For according to Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, the existential/relational dimension of personhood as referred to above does not simply refer to the particualr existence of an individual—that is, a mere "subjective experience." More fully, Yannaras believes that this the existential, relational existence of the person also signifies for the Church Fathers the very being (*einai*) of the person. In this manner, the person would not simply be understood as "having" a relation. More fully, the human person would be understood, most fundamentally, as *being* a relation.[510]

For Yannaras, as noted above, this identification of the human person's being with the fact of relation is grounded in the Cappadocian's trinitarian ontology, wherein we first find an identification of *prósopon* with *hypostasis* when referring to the being of the divine persons. For according to the Church Fathers, as we have seen, to *be* as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit is not to exist as a determinate mode of nature. Rather, to exist as divine person, or *hypostasis*, is to exist

508 I believe that the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry would both capture such a mode of knowing in their analysis of an experience which transcends the being of Heideggerian *world*. For Marion, see his concept of givenness in *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002). For Henry, see his understanding of "auto-affectivity" in *I Am the Truth: Towards a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

509 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 8.

510 "Hypostasis signifies not only being, but also presents how it is and of what sort" (Theodore of Rhaithu, Proparaskeue, Analecta Patristica, Orientalia Christiana Analecta (Rome, 1938), 204.10.16); "For the essence subsists actively in the hypostasis." John Damascene, Dialectica 42 (PG 94:613a; ed. Kotter, 109).

as an ontological "otherness" from nature itself,[511] and this "otherness" of the divine *hypostases* is further identified by the Church Fathers as the being of relation.[512] In other words, the *ek-stases* of divine persons, the ecstatic freedom of "coming forth" from nature in loving communion, is identified as the event of relation (*schési*), and it is this very event of relation/relationship which the Church Fathers identify as the being of the persons: i.e., the being of the person as *hypostasis*.[513]

For Yannaras, as noted in chapter III, we see this in the *tropos* in which the person of the Father hypostasizes the divine substance, since for the Greek Church Fathers, it is not the *ousia* that is identified as the cause of the Son and Spirit, but the personal existence of the Father, who "freely and from love" begets the Son and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed.[514] In this manner, the being (*einai*) of the persons, as an otherness from nature, do not receive their being from *ousia*, but from the freedom of *schési* (relation/relationship)—an importantly chosen word which, for Yannaras, signifies "a referential happening/event."[515] Accordingly, it is this undetermined, absolutely free, and loving relationship of communion with the other, and not the determinacy of nature, that establishes the being (*to einai)* of the divine persons. Relation/relationship, in this manner, is not understood as that which the persons have once they already exist by means of *ousia*. Rather, relation—or the loving "event" of relationship—is that which causes the person's to be at all. It is the very being (*einai*) of the divine person's as *hypostases*.

Likewise, Yannaras argues that this notion of hypostatic existence is also understood by the Church Fathers as applying to the being of human persons well. Here the human person, created in the hypostatic image of God, do not exists as a determinate mode of nature.[516] Rather, to be a

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511 "Hypostasis…is something which exists as a hypostasis in its own right and is the division of the indivisible essences into the number of each things according to person; hence the Fathers understand it as being the same as person and call it such." (Leonituius of Byzantium, Against the Nestorians 2.1(PG 86:1529d); See Athanasius the Great, *Dialouges on the Trninity* 1.25 (PG 28:1153d); "*Hypostasis*, that is, the indivisible subject of nature, is nature but not nature alone because it is with characteristic property. But nature is not *hypostasis* which is indivisible" (John Damascene, *Against the Jacobites* 52 (PG 84:1451a); cited in *Person and Eros*, 26n4. "

512 "The Father is neither the name of an essence…nor of an energy, but of a relation." Gregory of Naziansus, *Oration* 29.16 (PG 36:96a); "the name 'father' does not represent an essence, but indicates the relation with the son" (ed. Jaeger, 2:31.1-3); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2 (PG 35:473b); cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, pg. 34n35.

513 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 26.

514 See Yannaras, *The Schism*, 207.

515 In Greek, as Yannaras points out, the word for relation (σχέση) contains the connotations of both reference and action: "σχέση is derived from the verb 'to have' (έχω)"; It refers to an event, something that happens and requires action, thus it signifies here a "referential happening/event." See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 10.

516 The Church Father's speak of the person as that which "supports" (*hyphistatai*) that which occurs in nature, such that the "accidents" of nature are recognized as "passions of the person," all the while keeping the person differentiated as an otherness from nature and the accidence of nature. See Maximus the Confessor, *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 4:412bc), as well as Theodore of Rhaithu, *Proparaskeue* 206.5 "*Hypostasis* is a subsistent and substantial thing, in which the bundle of accidents subsists as if in one underlying thing and energy."; See also John Damascene: "The Holy Fathers called the same thing *hypostasis* and person; that which subsists individually in itself from essence and accidents " in *Dialectica* 16 (PG 94:613b; ed. Kotter, 109). Citations from Yannaras, *Person and Eros* 27.

human person, or *hypostasis*, is to also exist as an ontological "otherness" that derives its ontological substance not from nature, but from an event of loving relation.[517] For the Church Fathers, then, just as the Father "freely and from love" bets the Son and causes the Spirit to proceed, so too does the Father "freely and from love" call forth the being of the human *hypostasis* from the determinacy of created being, causing human persons to existentially exist by ecstatically (*ekstatiká*) "coming forth" from nature through the responsorial *tropos* of relation. Meaning, the human person, like the hypostatic being of the Son, also derives its ontological substance from the fact of relation, or love, which gives substance (*upóstasi*) to its being.

Here the hypostatic activity of God's love is recognized by the Church Fathers as constituting humanity's being in a hypostatic manner—as calling human persons forth from the determinate being of nature for the sake of existential freedom and loving communion. In this manner, human nature does not cease to be created, but in and through this gift of hypostatic life, created nature is graced with the potential to "become like God": that is, to exist not through the determinacy of nature, but by *transcending* nature through the absolute freedom of loving relation.[518]

Yet for the human person to exist as such—that is, as *hypostasis*, as transcending nature in the ecstatic event of loving communion—one's knowledge of Being would no longer be restricted to that which is referentially "other" and "transcendent" to one's being. Rather, as Yannaras points out, it would also be to acquire *immanent* knowledge of Being: it would be to participate, first-hand, in the eternal and divine mode of existence in which God himself, as Trinity, also exists. As such, *it would offer a first-person experience of what it means to truly be in the immediacy of one's own hypostatic act.*

Once more, it is in the work of Maximus the Confessor that this concept is laid out most clearly. In seeking to explicate the form of first-person knowledge that comes through a participation in God's hypostatic act (energy), Maximus states:

> "Man, the image of God, becomes God by deification; he rejoices to the full in abandoning all that is his by nature…because the grace of the Spirit triumphs in him and because manifestly God alone is acting in him; thus God and those worthy of God possess in all things one and the same energy, or rather, this common energy is the energy of God alone, since he communicates himself wholly to those who are wholly worthy."[519]

Consequently, for the person whom has transcended his nature and has come to participate in the hypostatic being of divine life, the created person becomes "uncreated." As Maximus states, he has "possessed in himself the unique *Logos* of God, living and acting…He became without beginning and without end, since he lived no longer by that temporal and ever changing life that

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517 "The holy Fathers called the same thing *hypostasis* and person; that which subsists individually in itself from essence and accidents…and indicates someone such as Peter or Paul" John Damascene, *Dialectica* 43 (PF 84:613b; ed Kotter, 109). Cited in *Person and Eros*, 27n6

518 See Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 19

519 Ambigua; PG 91, 1076BC; cited in John Meyendorff's *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: Vladimir's University Press, 1974), 45.

has a beginning and end [the being of nature]…but only by the divine life of the Word which dwelled within him, the eternal life, that is not limited by death [the hypostatic, relational being of the divine *Logos*]."[520]

Thus for Yannaras, what this ontological understanding of Being provides, once more, is an alternative mode of knowing Being; more specifically, in relation to Heidegger's critique of onto-theological metaphysics, it presents an alternative possibility for acquiring knowledge of that which "truly is" in a non-ontic manner, non-determinate manner. And this is because, as noted above, the starting point of the ontological question, according to the ontology of the Church Fathers, is not humanity's power of rational thought, but "the more universal [existential] reality of the person itself."[521]

However, as Yannaras emphasizes, this alternative mode of knowing Being, for the Church Fathers, must be understood as a cognitive *possibility*, not a given necessity. For as we will come to see more clearly, the actualization of the human *hypostases*, and thus it hypostatic transcendence from nature through the universal establishment of loving relation, is not a determined, guaranteed event. Rather, it is also a possibility that is contingent upon the radical freedom of the human *hypostasis*. Or, more fully, in congruence with the Hellenistic philosophy of the Church Fathers, it is a cognitive potential which is actualized only through wholistic participation in the *philosophia* of Christianity; that is, through ongoing conversion to and participation in the truthful mode of existence which the is the ecclesial event.

The Essence/Energies Distinction

At this point we may ask ourselves: what could make an experience of the Absolute possible? On what basis may one claim, as does Dionysius the Areopagite, that one may acquire knowledge of God not as an object of the intellect, but as a primordial, pre-cognitive experience?[522] And how exactly are we to understand this establishment of relation? Or, more fully, how does the creature come to know and commune with the Creator in such a way that the creature remains a creature and the Creator remains Creator? In seeking to answer such questions, Yannaras moves his attention to the Orthodox essence/energy distinction, wherein he gives a nuanced reading of said distinction in accordance with the personalist ontology as discussed above.

Energies as the Disclosure of the Person

As has been stated up to this point, Yannaras argues that, for the Church Father, we know essence or nature only as the "content" of the person; that is, only in its actualization as a mode of the person, which is only given through its ecstatic recapitulation in the fact of personal disclosure. Here the nature of the person becomes accessible and participable not as a concept, but as a mode of personal uniqueness and dissimilarity. Taking this process one step further now, Yannaras makes the argument that we must understand this hypostatic ecstasy of the nature not as the nature itself, but as what the Greek Church Fathers refer to as the nature's *energeia* (translated as "activity" in the Western tradition).[523] The nuance of the essence/energy distinction in the Greek-

520 Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, 3 (PG: 3:869c). Quoted in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 57.
521 The word *energeia* comes from Aristotle, as is derived from "*to ergon*," which is a "deed" or "thing done," and

Christian tradition is incredible complex, and we will not attempt to defend of explain it in its entirety here.[524] Rather, we will limit our explication to the extent in which Yannaras appropriates it in his own work.

For Yannaras, the energies, or activity of the person, must be understood here as that which actualizes nature, since it is the person, according to the early Christian tradition, which hypostatically constitutes *ousia*.[525] In this manner, the activities of the person "formalize" (give form to) nature *without being identified with nature*. Here the identity of the nature is actualized, and thus disclosed, through the hypostatic mode of the person's activity, but the two (nature and hypostatic activity) remain ontologically distinct.[526] In this manner, one would ultimately come to know the nature through the person's hypostatic activity, which ecstatically manifests nature "outside nature" in a unique mode of absolute otherness. Furthermore, since the nature is ontologically distinguished from the person's activity as such, what would be *experienced* here not the nature *per se*, but the person's hypostatic activity, which is united to but also ontologically distinguished from the nature itself.[527]

The will, for example, is understood as a personal activity of human nature. As a free and undetermined activity of the person, however, it is not *identified* with the nature, in the same way in which a cause is not identified with its result. As Dionysius states, the products of causes make known and "image" causes, but are not identified with the causes themselves (in the same way that heat and light are effects of fire, but should not be identified *as* fire).[528] Thus even though it is *through* the nature that the will has the capacity to be actualized, the will itself is only accessible (manifested) and experienced through its personal bearer as an ecstatic activity that exists "outside" of nature. In this manner, as Yannaras states, the "what" of the will makes known to us the nature, which has the power of willing, while the *how* of the will reveals the personal otherness of its bearer.[529] The act/energy that is the will, however, is identified neither with the nature nor

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the verb *energein*, "to be active or effective, to operate." In this manner, energy is recognized etymologically as something like an "activity or operation," and would eventually go on to be used by Aristotle as "actuality." *Energeia* would be translated in the West philosophical tradition as activity, and thus we will interchangeably use this word for the remainder of this essay when speaking of divine energy. On an authoritative text of the development of the concept in the Christian Church, see David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-7. See also Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 53-57.

522 For perhaps the most well-known study on this distinction, see J. Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), as well as his more introductory text, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 1974

523 "For the essence subsists actively in the *hypostasis*," thus ""*hypostasis* signifies not only being, but also presents how it is…" See John Damascene, *Dialectica* 42 (PG 94:613a), 109 and Theodore of Rhaithu, *Proparaskeu, Analecta Patristica, Orientialia Christiana Analecta* (204.10.16).

524 See Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2 (pG 45:564b; ed. Jaeger, 2:402.16-26). Quoted in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 54.

525 See Palamas, *Triads* III.2.8–9, pp. 95–96.

526 There is not exact likeness between caused and cause…for the caused carry within themselves only images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the caused themselves are located in the realm transcending the caused, according to the argument regarding their source…the fire which warms and burns is never said itself to be burnt and warmed…caused things preexist more fully and more truly in the causes." *On the Divine Names* (PF 3:645cd; trans. Luibheid-Rorem, CWS). Cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 54.

527 As Maximus the Confessor states: "Willing and the 'how' of willing are not identical, any more than seeing and the 'how' of seeing. For willing, like seeing, belongs to nature, and is an attribute of all beings of the same nature and

the person; rather, the act of willing is "rooted in nature," which has the power to will, and is actualized/manifested as an activity of the person, whom hypostatically constitutes the nature in a unique and unrepeatable manner.[530] The same may be said of all other activities/operations of the person: from rationality to reason, sight to seeing, voice to speaking, etc. In each case, it would be the free and indeterminate activity of the person which hypostatically constitutes nature, such that the nature is known as the "content of the person," as a mode of the *hypostasis*. In this manner, one would be able to acquire strictly participatory and experiential knowledge of both person and nature through the activity as such.[531]

For example, from a phenomenological perspective, when I experience another human person's act, it can be recognized that the person (say, my father) and the person's nature (the common form of human beings) are both revealed *and* concealed in the act. When my father speaks to me, it is the unique, free, and undetermined being of his person which is revealed in the act of speaking. But we cannot identify the person, my father, with this spoken word as such. Rather, it is as if the person "flows" into the act without becoming identified with the act. As such, the person is both revealed *and* concealed at the same time in and through his *energeia*. Yet the same may be said of the nature. When my father speaks, what is actualized is a capacity of his human nature, but we cannot identify his spoken word with the nature itself, which only has the power, or capacity, to speak. Thus here too, the nature "flows" into the act, by way of the person, without becoming identified with the act as such. Likewise, then, the nature is both revealed and concealed in and through the act, since the activity of speaking both reveals and images its cause (human nature) without being identified with the nature as such.

In this manner we see that, phenomenologically, I would only acquire knowledge of the human person's being through an immediate participation in their unique and unrepeatable activity, which simply *is* the hypostatic and unrepeatable constitution of a person's nature. Thus when I experience an other's embodied act of speaking, willing, loving, laughing, and all other forms of human action, what I am receiving/experiencing is not the person's nature *per se*, but the person's unique and unrepeatable activity, which both reveals the person and the nature without being strictly identified with either. And for Yannaras, the reception of "personal knowledge" as such, it must be emphasized, is not able to be known or received, phenomenologically, as either an object (Husserl) or even a being (Heidegger). For, as Yannaras states, the person *is* the very otherness of nature—the unique and undetermined *tropos* ("how") of the nature—and thus is only ever experienced as a personal (referential) fact of absolute otherness which precedes any

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race. But the 'how' of willing,' like the 'how' of seeing…is the way in which willing and seeing are used. It is an attribute of the one who exercises it and separates him from others with what is commonly called a difference." Cited in *Person and Eros*, 57n89.

528 "For energy is the essential movement of the nature, and what is operative is the nature, from which the energy issues"; John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 59 (ed. Kotter, 144); "For the energy is referred back to the one who operates, and the nature in turn to the substratum." Maximus the Confessor, *Theological and Polemical Chapters* (PG 91:25a).

529 "*Hypostasis* is naturally disposed to have essence with accidents and subsist in itself and be contemplated by sense-perception or energy." John Damascene, *Dialectica* 1 (PG 94:593a-96a; ed. Kotter, 94-95), cited in *Person and Eros*, 27n6.

conscious-intellectual determination.[532] Consequently, I only can acquire knowledge of the person through his activity, which in itself is only known through the non-reflective, primordial act of relation/relationship, whereby the uniqueness of the person's otherness is able to be experienced first-hand as a dynamic event which over-flows any effort of categorical determinations or constitution.[533]

However, this unique mode of knowing persons, as Yannaras points out, must not be understood simply as the manner in which one acquires knowledge of *human* persons. Rather, on Yannaras' interpretation, this is the mode of knowing which the Church Father's ascribe to *all* hypostatic beings—both uncreated and created, as the latter was made in the image and likeness of the former.[534] In this manner, quite simply, the way in which I acquire knowledge of God is the exact same as the way in which I acquire knowledge of another human person: that is, never as an intuition of thought, as a mere definition or dialectically established idea, or as an "object" or "being." God, according to the Church Fathers' philosophy, can only ever be known in the immediacy of personal experience and relation, which is made possible only through coming into contact with (being-in-reference-to) his revealed, hypostatic *energiea*.[535]

This distinction between essence and energies, however, does more than reveal how the Church Fathers believe humankind acquires positive knowledge of God's Being. More fully, for Yannaras, it also functions as a means to protect God's being from idolatry and violence, and thus also establishes the radical unknowability of God in relation to his *ousia*.

For Yannaras, this emphasis is most thematically noted the writings of St. Gregory Palamas. As noted in chapter three, Palamas emphasizes how the Greek Fathers' signify God's

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530 Such is why one cannot acquire knowledge of the person, as almost all phenomenologist have shown in the past century, through the determinate activity of thought, and thus as an "object" of representation. To know the person only comes about through the immediacy of pre-conscious relation, and every thought or image one may form of them is but a trace that is left-over from the person's manifestation through the relation as such. In many ways, this understanding of personal knowledge would find great support with the "personalist" thought of the early phenomenologists—Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Edith Stein, Karol Wojtyla (I have in mind here most specifically Wojtyla's *Person and Act* —the difference being that Yannaras' Trinitarian ontology and essence/energy distinction would be able to act as an ontological ground which could better explain and support these thinkers phenomenological analyses. For further readings, see Max Scheler "The Being of the Person," in *The Phenomenology Reader*, edited by Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (New York: Routledge, 2007), 203-226 and Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Act and Related Essays* (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 2020).

531 As I will argue in the final chapter, I believe Yannaras' analysis of "personal knowledge" would also align well with Jean-Luc Marion's understanding of the saturated phenomenon.

532 See Basil the Great, *Against Eunomious* 2.32 (PG 29:648a).

533 It must be emphasized, however, that this gnoseological rendering of personal knowledge must not be understood as an anthropomorphic rendering of God's being. In other words, we must not understand Yannaras as offering an existential analysis of human personal being, and then unassumingly applying this reading to God as well; nor is he, per Heidegger, onto-theologically establishing the person of God as a "highest being" that is posited through the work of reason. Rather, Yannaras is beginning with the ontological understanding of reality as witnessed to by the metaphysical "icons" (testimony) of the Church Fathers, and is then seeking to understand and explain these insights through the "common logos" of human experience. Meaning, Yannaras is taking a strictly "theological" (revelatory) rendering of God's existence and what this account has to say about what it means to truly exist, and then applying this ontological hermeneutic to human personhood and experience with the attempt of revealing its profound implications and explanatory power.

"essence" as always transcending the powers of finite knowledge and experience. That is, for the Greek Fathers, it is always inaccessible, "beyond apprehension," "unevocable," "above every name," and "eludes every perception, imagination, opinion, name, word, contact or cognition."[536] Yet at the same time, Palamas emphasizes how the Church Father's *do* regularly speak of (signify/name) God's being. But as Palamas points out, at such times they are not signifying his *ousia*, but his energies/activity, which are recognized as being ontologically distinct from the divine *ousia*.[537] As such, for the Greek Fathers, it is only through a participatory experience of revealed, divine *energeia* that the divine being becomes accessible, knowable, and participable, such that his essence, which is acknowledge as being "unevocable" and "imparticipable," remains unknown and untouched.[538]

Thus as Dionysius the Areopagite states, whom Palamas heavily engages with, "when we give 'names' to the transcendent hiddenness of the uncreated Trinity"—using signifiers such as 'God,' 'life,' 'light' 'word,' 'goodness,' etc.—then "what we conceive of mentally [signify] is not the divine nature," but "nothing other than the powers [operations] which reach out from it [nature] towards us and deify, create substance, generate life, or bestow wisdom."[539] Along with Dionysius, Palamas will also draw from a plethora of Church Fathers throughout the Greek tradition, all of whom concur that the energies of God are seen as the sole way in which God reveals himself and can be participated in and known.[540] As St. Basil the Great states, "It is by His *energies* that we know God; we do not assert that we can come near to the essence itself, for His energies descend to us, but His essence remains unapproachable."[541] And as St. John Damascene states, following St. Gregory Nazianzen: "all that we say positively of God manifests not His nature but the things around His nature"—that which Dionysius refers to as the "divine operation/powers" which are "manifested" like "rays of divinity."[542] In this manner, God's *ousia* remains other/than separate from created being, but his hypostatic activity, which ecstatically exist "outside" the *ousia*, is able to penetrate the universe with divine being, even to the point of full union with the created order (as is seen in the incarnation). As such, human beings, who partake

534 Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* 5 (PG 3:593ab). Quoted in *Person and Eros*, 59n93.
535 For Yannaras, the simplicity of God's being (as three persons and one nature) "flows" into the acts without becoming identified with the acts as such. Here Palamas notes that with this distinction of God's simplicity is not destroyed, since the *ousia* of God is wholly present in each energy or operation, and thus for Palamas, something can be said to be simple and remain simple in and through its many activities. On this point, see Palamas, *Triads* III.1.29, as well as Bradshaw, *Aristotle: East and West*, 240-41.
536 As Yannaras states, this essence/energy distinction "goes back to, and is presupposed in, every aspect of Greek patristic literature (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, Gregory Palamas) and constitutes the most striking difference between ecclesial theology and the religionized metaphysics of the Western European tradition." See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 79. Here Yannaras states a similar statement made by Vladimir Lossky in chapter four of *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*.
537 Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* 5 (PG 3:593ab). Quoted in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 59.
538 Though most importantly, Yannaras argues that for the Greek Church Fathers, it is in his "homogeneous" activity (uncreated grace) of God's being that the Church "wholly participates in" in the event of *theosis*; in and through this participation of God's uncreated activity, humankind is thus able to become by participation that which God is by nature, thereby leading to a radically *immanent* experience and knowledge of God's being.
539 St. Basil, 'Epistle 234 (ad Amphilochium)' P.G., XXXII, 869 AB. C.f. ' Adversus Eunomium, II 32', P.G., XXIX, 648; cited in Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 72.
540 John Damascene, 'De fide orth., I, 4', P.G., XCIV, 800 BC; cited in Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 72.

of this created order, are able to acquire real, participatory knowledge of God through his hypostatic activity/operations while always remaining "outside"/other than the impenetrable divine *ousia*.

As Yannaras summarizes, then, whenever the Greek Church Fathers speaks of/name God's Being, it is never his *ousia*, but always his activity/operations that are referred to. And his activity/operations, as the Church's testimony bears witness, are always received and experience as *personal* (thus further illuminating that the Church Father's "metaphysics" remained a metaphysics of *revelation*).[543]

Beings as Things

Thus far, our discussion of the Church Father's ontology has largely been focused on the manner in which one knows Being in a non-ontic, hypostatic manner. More specifically, our discussion has revolved around humankind's ability to acquire direct and immediate knowledge of Absolute Being in relation to God's hypostatic self-manifestation, which is understood solely as God's revealed *energeia*, not his *ousia*. This hypostatic distinction of God's essence/energies, however, finally leads us to the third major component of the Church Fathers' ontology: that is, the being of the cosmos, which is understood by the Church Fathers being a "created" (heterogeneous) energy of God's hypostatic act. In this manner, as Yannaras states, the Being of beings within the cosmos are understood by the Church Fathers not as being eternally generated from "the One," but as *pragmata*, "things/deeds" which have been freely accomplished (*pepragmena*) as products of a personal act (praxis)."[544]

In referring to the Being of the cosmos as *pragmata*, Yannaras if referring primarily to the Church Fathers' understanding of creation ex-nihilo, wherein the Being of the cosmos is understood as being made "out of nothing" through the indeterminate freedom of the creator's personal *energeia*. However, what Yannaras will attempt to emphasize in *Person and Eros* is that we must not understand this doctrine in a "metaphysical" (in the Heideggerian/Nietzschean sense of the term) manner. In other words, Yannaras believes that one should not read the Church Fathers as metaphysically positing, through rational assent, that God is a "first cause" which grounds the being of the created world. Rather, in accordance with the Church Fathers' ontology, Yannaras believes this doctrine should be understood in a phenomenological/existential manner; i.e, as a testimony of experience, wherein the participant of the ecclesial event *experiences* the Being of beings as being given (created) as a product of personal *energeia*.

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541 "But He who is beyond every name is not identical with what he is named; for the essence and energy of God are not identical…the divinity of God designates the dive energy par excellence." Gregory Palamas, *In Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* 3:2.10 (ed. Christou, 1:664-65.9, trans. Gendle, CWS). "On the one hand God is in himself what he is believed always to have been; on the other, he is called by those who invoke him not that which he is (for the nature of beings is inexpressible), but is believed to have the divine names from the effect he has on our lives." Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomious 2 (PG 45:960; ed. Jaeger, GNO 1:268). Cited in *Person and Eros*, 59n95.

542 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 36.

In order to express this fact more clearly, Yannaras takes from both Heidegger and Lossky in their radically different analysis of the work of art.[545] What is a painting by van Gogh?—Yannaras asks. In one sense, we may understand it forthright as a composite whole made up of neutral materials which *in themselves* (the canvas and pigments of color), as material objects, do not possess any fundamental qualities which are different from any other similar materials (other paintings on canvas with similar colors). However, insofar as the painting is a *pragma*,[546] a created "thing/deed" of van Gogh, it is also something essentially different from the dimensional-qualitative objectivity of its materials which compose it—a fact which can only be realized through phenomenal experience. For as a *pragma*, as a personal energy of van Gogh, the painting manifests more than its dimensional and qualitative objectivity. It also now "testifies" to the *person* of van Gogh. In some ways, as Yannaras states, it *is* van Gogh. For insofar as the painting was made/created by a *prósopon*, the painting bears the mark of its maker: i.e., the painting manifests itself as an unrepeatable, unique, and intentional work of a creative genius. Such is why, after having come to recognize the absolute uniqueness of the master's brush stokes, when we find ourselves in front of another of his paintings, we say "this *is* van Gogh." The painting, as a *pragma* of van Gogh, bears the unique and unrepeatable mark of the master's hypostatic otherness, and thus becomes a *logos* which testifies to his being as such.[547]

Such is, according to Yannaras' Hellenistic reading of the Church Fathers, the same manner in which the Being of beings within the cosmos are manifested to the receptive horizon of the human person: here the beings of the world, insofar as they rise up into presence "in the horizon" of relation, ultimately give themselves as a *personal* phenomenon. As manifested *logoi*, they bear witness to the Person's (Creator's) hypostatic otherness in their very being.[548] (Importantly, for Yannaras, it should be emphasized that the thing/deeds of creation does not bear witness to the creator's *ousia*, but to the *hypostatic* energies of the creator's being—the same of which may be said of the artist's art work to the artist). In this manner, we see that the reception of beings as *pragmata* manifests personal otherness as the universal mode of existence of every being. Here

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543 For Heidegger's analysis of van Gogh's painting, see Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); For Lossky's analysis of Rembrandt, see *Mystical Theology*, 53. 546 For Yannaras, this understanding of beings "rising up to presence" in reference to the person—as the "content of the person"—corresponds with the Greek understanding of beings as *pragmata* (things/deeds acts), as "those things which have been accomplished (*pepragmena*) as the products of a personal act (praxis)." In this manner, beings, insofar as they are both actualized/understood "in reference to the person" (that is, as the content of the person), reveal the Being of beings as the "disclosure of personal ecstasy," that is, the *tropos* of beings as hypostatic otherness. Yannaras is creatively drawing from Heidegger here, who references the Greek term for "things" as *pragmata*. But whereas Heidegger focuses on the etymology of the word which alludes to things phenomenologically in reference to our concernful dealings (praxis), Yannaras turns this into a metaphysical definition of "things" by focusing on its etymological nuance of understanding *pragmata* as "deeds" and "acts" which have been done. On this point see Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 36

547 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 36-37.

548 While Yannaras does not make this link, one could point to Romans 1:19-20 at this point, which states that "Because that which may be known of God is *phaneron* (clearly visible/manifest) among them, for God hath *ephanerosen* (manifested/revealed) it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (*kathoratai*: beheld/perceived), being understood as things made (works/deeds), even his eternal power and Godhead."

beings are not recognized as rising up to presence from nothingness, but experienced as existing in the *tropos* of hypostatic otherness—as the unlike, unique, and unrepeatable principle of a personal energy, in the exact same manner in which we experience the otherness of van Gogh in and through his deed/act of a particular painting.

Of course, it must be remembered once more that Yannaras is talking about a cognitive *possibility*.[549] For insofar as the "horizon" for the experience of hypostatic otherness is the ecstatic actuality of *relation*, then the reception of the world *as such* is subject to the person's mode of being (not on his a-historical "reduction"). In the same way that, due to a person's violent and dominating nature, one can perceive another person as a mere object, so too, for the Church Fathers, can the acts of the person be reduced to mere *chrêmata* (objects of use), thereby occluding their hypostatic manifestation.[550] In other words, just as the painting *Irises* ultimately is, and manifests itself as, a *pragma* of van Gogh, it can still be received, depending on the being of its observer, as that which it is not: i.e., a mere composite whole made up of neutral materials, or a mere object of potential profit. Such is why Yannaras, taking from Heidegger here once more, sees the modern *ethos* of the West (characterized by technology and the anti-thesis of *hypostasis*: the machine) as a radical denial of Truth, a violent and frenzied attempt to overturn the hypostatic order of reality: the overall denial of the hypostatic truth of the person and world. But in the same manner that truth can be occluded through the person's response to Being, so too can it be restored through one's correct participation in reality, such that one realizes, through a correctly established relation with the world, the hypostatic manifestation of Being once more.

Even here, however, the disclosure of *pragmata* must be recognized not as manifesting the Person (Creator) himself. For on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, the Person is indeed given/known through his deeds/acts, but only in the space of referential *absence*.[551] On a smaller scale, once more, a painting by van Gogh is the *logos* of his hypostatic otherness, but a *logos* all the same which is given through the non-space of negative presence. The person who comes into contact with the hypostatic activity of another person is thus aware of an "other" hypostatic presence that is "opposite" to him, yet it is an awareness which is not met with fulfillment. Here the thing/act of the person points "beyond itself," it testifies/bears witness to the presence of another, albeit absent, *Prosópon*.[552]

Accordingly, it is because of the absence of the Person that Yannaras believes the Church Fathers further speak about their experience of creation as a "summons," a "rational invitation" to *relation*, igniting a desire in the recipient to know the creator "face to face," *prósopo* to *propsopo*.[553] In this manner, the Being of beings, as *pragmata* (as creation), are interpreted as pointing beyond themselves to their hypostatic constitution, always calling the knower beyond

549 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 35
550 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 37.
551 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 37
552 On Yannaras' phenomenological analysis of this event in relation to the writings of Sartre, see *Person and Eros*, 108-114.
553 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 73

themselves to acquire a fullness of knowledge through the possibility of relation with the unknown Giver.

Overcoming Distance though Love

This brings us, finally, to perhaps one of the most important points in Yannaras' interpretation of the Church Fathers' ontology; that is, the relationship that exists between the being of God and the being of creation, and how the knowledge of the latter both can and cannot lead to knowledge of the former.

To put it simply: since the cause of the world's being is recognized here as the product of divine energies that are other-to/different from the divine *ousia*, then for the Church Fathers, Yannaras stresses that there exists no correlation between the being (*ousia*) of the created order and the being (*ousia*) of God. Such is the reason why, for Yannaras, the Church Fathers would take this reading even further by claiming that creation is hypostatically brought into being from nothingness/non-existence: creation *ex-nihilo* ("from nothing"). In this manner, the existence of the cosmos, being brought into being from the ecstatic activity of that which is "outside" of God, is recognized by the Church Fathers not as emerging from the divine *ousia*, but from *nothingness*, from the void of non-existence, both of which (*nothingness* and God's hypostatic *energeia*) are outside/ontologically other than God's essence.[554]

The metaphysical concept of creation ex-nihilo, then, is not simply a metaphysical concept, or idea, which must be understood in an onto-theological manner. It is, for Yannaras, primarily an apophatic safe-guard for the Church Fathers which emphasizes the radical otherness of God's being (as *ousia*) from the being of the created order. For the doctrine of creation *ex-nihilo* not only speaks to the fact that the created order is *created* as ontologically "other than" the being of God. More fully, as Yannaras emphasizes, it also emphasizes for the Church Fathers that the otherness of this created order has no ontological correlation or similarity to the being (*ousia*) of its cause. It is thus not simply understood as "other," but *absolutely* other. For insofar as God's "*ousia*" (of which we must use the term loosely, as Maximus states) lies beyond the nothingness which brought forth beings, then as Maximus states, God cannot be predicated as "a being" or even as having any correlation of identity with the being of created beings.[555] Rather, God is better understood himself as "nothing," since no representation or image can be drawn from the reality of existent things to the being (*ousia*) of God as such, and thus he cannot be said to exist, or be, in a manner similar to the "being" of this world. Indeed, as we also pointed out in chapter III, the separation that exists between God's being (ousia) and created beings is recognized in the philosophical literature of the

554 As Maximus the Confessor states, "He [God] is the cause of nothingness, for everything posterior to him is in accordance with the cause of being and not being." Maximus the Confessor, Scholia (260d-261a). Cited in Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 78.

555 "If he created beings from that which does not exist, then he is not among the beings, but beyond beings…thus therefore he is nothing, as beyond all the things that are." Maximus, *On the Divine Names* 1.1 (588B); cited in Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 78n8.

Church Fathers as an unbridgeable *distance*—a "breathtaking abyss which no metaphysical concept can bridge, however analogically and infinitely dissimilar."[556]

However, as Yannaras states, the very ontological distinction between Gods' essence and *energeia* which demands this radical apophaticism is also the very distinction which, for the Church Fathers, keeps the human person from being stranded in the abyss of nothingness. For insofar as God's hypostatic activity is ontologically other than, and not restricted to, the determination of divine being (*ousia*), then it is God's homogeneous, hypostatic energies *as such* that proves capable of crossing this very "distance" which separates the being (nature) of God and humankind. In other words, Yannaras argues that the nothingness/non-existence which separates humanity from the Absolute is capable of being overcome, according to the Church Fathers, not through an intellectual or rational intuition of the divine nature (whether mystical or analogical deduced), but as we noted earlier, only in and through mode of hypostatic *relation*, which is understood most fully now as the communion of divine and human hypostatic *energeia*.[557] For as Yannaras highlights, the hypostatic being of *schési*, as that which existentially "comes forth" from the restrictions of nature "towards" and "for" the other, is a mode of being which the Church Fathers recognize as not being encumbered by the determinate being of *ousia*, created or uncreated.[558] Rather, the relation that exists between persons—between the Father and the Son, and now, according to the "good news" (*evangélio*) of Christianity, between the Father and humanity—knows no bounds. It transcends space and time, being (*ousia*) and nothingness, even death itself.

Thus coming full circle, for Yannaras, it is the hypostatic being of loving *relation*—that which is ontologically other than the determinate being of nature (both human and divine)—which is proclaimed capable of crossing the distance between God and man, therein allowing for a form of "empirical knowledge" through the catholicity of experience. Here the radical distance that exists between the being (*ousia*) of God and the being (*ousia*) of creation is not crossed in and through the power of the intellect, or reason. Rather, the distance is crossed, according to the Church Fathers, solely through the loving *ek-stases* of human and divine persons: the hypostatic movement of divine *energeia* which "comes forth from the ousia" for the sake of loving communion with human beings, and the hypostatic response of the human person, which transcends the being of created nature in response to this invitation to communion. Or, simply put,

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556 In this manner, Yannaras believes that the philosophy of the Church Fathers and the phenomenology of Heidegger seem to cross paths at this point. Both Heidegger and the Church Fathers believe that God has nothing to do with "Being" as *ousia*, while also both agreeing that the existence of the cosmos only *is* as dis-closure (*a-létheia*), as non-oblivion, as emergence from nothingness (the other side of ontic disclosure) into the manifestation of temporality. However, for Yannaras, this is as far as their similarities go, since the Church Fathers offer a radically different answer concerning what this fact entails. See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 78, 81.

557 As Zizioulas states, commenting on this fact: "the distinction between essence and energy in God serves to indicate the relationship between God and the world as ontological otherness bridged by love, but not by nature or essence…the principle object of this theology is to remove the question of truth and knowledge from the domain of Greek theories of ontology in order to situate it within that of love and communion." See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 91-92.

558 This is, for Yannaras, a fact most characterized by the incarnation, wherein the hypostatic being of the Son was able to 'empty itself' of his divine nature and take on the form of created, human nature.

the distance is crossed only in the movement of love, an event which transpires between persons alone.[559]

According to this alternative language of the Church Fathers, then, creation still act as a foundation, or spring board, which establishes the existential possibility of transitioning from beings to Being. However, for the Church Fathers, as Yannaras points out, this transition is understood as the existential transition from "*pragmata*" to *Prósopon*.[560] And such knowledge of the *Prósopon*, as we have already established, is not a matter of essence and reason (*ratio*). Knowledge of Being for the Church Fathers is predicated on the actualization and establishment of relation/relationship, of immediate communion, which according to the testimony of the ecclesial event, is an event of "ecstatic reciprocity," that is, of "reciprocal loving-erotic self-offering."[561]

The Call and Response

For Yannaras, however, this *ek-stases* of persons from nature which overcomes the distance between God and creation must not simply be seen as a gnoseological potential. More fully, for Yannaras, this ecstatic movement of the person towards the fulfillment of relation, insofar as it is also understood as the actualization of the person's being, also reveals to us a deeper insight into the nature of the Being itself, or what it means to "truly exist." As such, we will close this chapter by focusing on what this movement between divine and human persons—now understood as the communion (interpersonal relation) between God and creation—has to say about the ultimate meaning of being in the philosophical literature of the Church Fathers.

On Agapeic Eros

For Yannaras, what is unique to the philosophical literature of the Church Fathers is that they speak of this ecstatic "movement" of persons from nature not simply as an event of "love," or *agape*. More fully, Yannaras wishes to emphasize how the actualization of the person's *ek-stases* from nature—both within the immanent life of the Trinity as well as within the ecstatic being of the creature—is further understood by the Church Fathers as an "erotic" event of "call and response." As such, to "be truly" as a created person is not simply to act in the mode of divine *agape*. Rather, coming off the previous section, what it means to "truly be" according to the literature of the Church Fathers is to "come forth" from created nature as a *response* to a divine call, wherein the proper response to said call is only realized in the mode of divine *eros*—the erotic realization of agapic self-gift for the sake of life as relation.

But what exactly is meant here by "eros" and "erotic"? While it is indeed common in the Greek tradition to speak of God and humankind's hypostatic being in relational, erotic terms, it is

559 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 114.
560 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 40.
561 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 40-41.

primarily in the corpus of Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor which we find its most thematic development. And according to Oliver Clément, the primary manner in which these thinkers deployed the term is ultimately as a synonym for *agape*; meaning, for these thinkers, *agape* and *eros* are understood as signifying the same reality (God's loving being), with each term simply emphasizing or highlighting a particular dimension of it.[562] *Agape*, for these thinkers, is understood primarily as the service oriented, sacrificial love of God—a divine *tropos* of being-for-the-other that is inherent to the persons of the Trinity. However, for these thinkers, *agape* as such does not adequately describe the Church's testimonial participation in, or experience of, the being of divine life as it has come to be known in the *ekklēsia*. As such, *eros* is deployed by these thinkers as a means to better signify this "movement" of agapeic activity, further revealing the kenotic movement of sacrificial self-gift to be a desire-filled *ek-stasis* (a form of standing outside oneself) which seeks union with the other.

Regarding the first insight, it is first in the Dionysian corpus that the name of love (*agape*) alone is argued as inadequate for defining the Church's testimonial experience of divine being, thereby leading to the first thematic designation of *eros* as a more adequate definition which can more accurately express the being of God."[563] In this manner, *agape* is not negated, but it is given an additional meaning which transforms the manner in which it is ultimately understood. In being used to describe *agape*, however, *eros* also takes on a different meaning. For divine *eros*, according to Dionysius, is not driven by lack, or need, as traditionally conceived. Nor is it not understood as an "individual" event of carnal pleasure and self-satisfaction. Rather, divine *eros* seeks a form of union, or "mutual indwelling" with other persons, that is enacted through a form of *kenosis*, or agapeic self-gift; that is, it is moved by a *fullness* (rather than lack) of being which has the desire of "self-emptying" so as to belong not to oneself, but to the other.[564] The sacrificial, kenotic love of *agape*, in this sense, is not canceled out by Dionysius, but is further illuminated as being itself fueled by an erotic desire for the other, the longing for union and life as relation/communion. Such is why, for Dionysius, "'true eros' is praised by us and by the scriptures themselves as being appropriate to God," and should be understood most reverently as the ultimate "divine name."[565] So too, as noted in the writings of Maximus the Confessor, divine *eros* is further named as the "unifying form" of Trinitarian existence; that is, the mode in which God's being is "*hypostsized*."[566]

According to the Church Fathers, for example, the persons of the Trinity actualize their hypostatic being through the free and undetermined *response* of love: i.e., the Son and Spirit exist only as a free and relational response to the love of the Father, and the Father only exists as *Father*

562 On this point, see Oliver Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 22.
563 "Indeed some of our writers on sacred matters have thought the word 'yearning' (eros) to be more divine than 'love' (agape). The divine Ignatius writes: 'my love (*eros*) is crucified'. In the introductory scriptures you will note the following said about the divine wisdom: 'I became a lover (*erastes*) of her beauty.' So let us not fear the term 'yearning' nor be upset by what anyone has to say about these two names." Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* 4.12 (709B); cited in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 100.
564 Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* 4.13 (PG 3:712a). Cited in *Person and Eros*, 20n25.
565 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 100n4.
566 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 100n4.

as a loving response to the Son. As such, each divine *prosópon* is understood as "transcending" and "standing outside" the one common nature as a responsorial event of loving relation, and it is this responsorial "movement" of coming forth from nature which is very often spoken of by the Church Fathers in erotic terms: that is, as a "desire" and "longing" to dwell in communion with the Other. In this manner, the trinitarian being of God is often signified by the Church Fathers not simply as *agape*, or love, but also as *eros*.

For Dionysius and Maximus, however, the ecstatic movement of agapeic *eros* applies not simply to the mutual coinherence of the divine persons. So too, it also applies to the *ek-stases* of human persons' from the being of created nature as well. This is because, according to the Church Fathers, the hypostatic *energeia* of agapeic *eros* which constitutes the being of the divine persons is also recognized by the Church Fathers as "coming forth" from the divine essence to create the *cosmos*; which means, furthermore, that it is this same the energy of divine *eros* that the Church Fathers understand as constituting the being of the human *hypostasis* as well. Here the human person, as a created "otherness" to God (as that which stands "outside of" in "reference to" God's being), is dialogically "called forth" by God's ek-static *energiea* with the end of entering into communion with the God-head: to exist, not in the determinate mode of nature, but relationally, in the responsorial *ek-stases* of loving communion.[567]

In this manner, the same movement of agapeic *eros* which causes the Father, Son, and Spirit to responsorially "come forth" from nature in the *tropos* of hypostatic relation is the same energy which the Church Fathers recognize as "summoning" the human being to "come forth" from created nature and exist in this same manner: that is, as *hypostasis*, in the relational mode of ecstatic freedom, love, and communion. Which means that the human being, made in the hypostatic image of God, is also understood by the Church Fathers as a responsorial, erotic being *through and through*. Here what it means to *be* a human being is fundamentally to be a being who moves and exists in the *ek-stases* of *eros*: to exist is to exist ecstatically in response to a divine summons—the actualization of one's being through the desire to find one's life not in nature alone, but in and for the Other.[568]

What this ontological understanding of the human person does, for Yannaras, is allow us to offer us a radically different understanding of what it means to *be* a human being, especially in relation to contemporary ontological research in phenomenology. For according to the trinitarian ontology which the Church Father's provide, the ecstatic, existential being of the human person which thinkers such as Heidegger (or Sartre) describe can never be reduced to nihilistic "being-there" of individual distantiality.[569] Rather, according to the ecclesial witness of the Church

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567 As Dionysius states, the *eros* of divine being "stirred him to use the abundance of his powers in the production of the world," wherein the divine nature "comes to be outside of himself…beguiled, as it were, by goodness and love and eros," and in this ecstatic act, is "moved to operate according to the superabundance productive of all good things," thereby establishing and sustaining in *eros* all that which now exists "outside himself." Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* (PG 3:712ab); cited in *Person and Eros*, 41n42.

568 Since the divine exists as *eros* and moves as *agapé*, it draws towards itself as the objects of its *eros* and *agapé* those things that are receptive of *eros* and *agapé*." Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1260). Cited in Yannaras, 41n44.

569 This is a point we will take up most clearly in chapter eight.

Fathers, Yannaras states that "we know the person only as the fact of relation, and consequently only as a response to the primary summons which "preserves" the person as the realization or failure of relation."[570] In this manner, the human person only *is* as ek-static freedom from nature insofar as he first *is* as a responsorial being-in-relation. To be a person, phenomenologically, is not reduced to a mere being-in-the-world. To be a person, even more primordially, is to be-in-relation: to "ek-sist" as an existential "coming forth" from nature in response to the loving touch of the divine Other—a belated, erotic impetus of freedom which is always sprawling towards the Other, regardless of its eventual reception or rejection of this divine summons.[571]

However, it is critical to keep in mind here that this ontological proposal must not be understood not a rationally posited metaphysics. On the contrary, for Yannaras, it must be recognized as a testimony, an ontological witness of universal ecclesial experience, which from the first moment of its establishment has testified to the fact that "God is love," and that "he who loves exists in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16). What the Church Fathers ontological proposal thus offers, for Yannaras, is simply a rational, metaphysical "icon" which more accurately explains and bears witness to the nature of this experience. For according to Yannaras reading of the Church Fathers, God does not simply exist as *agape*. Rather, God triadically exists as agapeic *eros*, and it is this very being of *eros* which has zealously "come forth" with the desire to dwell in communion with each of his creatures.[572] Thus it is ultimately in this very event of *schési*, in the human beings ecstatic "yes" to the divine call, which leads humankind to participation in an entirely different form of being; or, more specifically, towards participation in a divine and eternal mode of existence which is not restricted to space, time, nature, or even death.

It is also for this exact reason that Yannaras believes the Hellenistic philosophy of the Church Fathers not only offers a different mode of understanding what "Being" in itself is, but as a radically different manner in which one may come to acquire knowledge of Being, as we will come to understand more fully in the following chapters. For according to this ontological testimony of the Church Fathers as described above, humanity is able to acquire knowledge of

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570 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 250.

571 "The dimensional "opposite" of the world's reality, as disclosure of God's personal creative energy, reveals to humanity God's existence as a non-dimensional 'topical' proximity, an immediacy of relation. And within the boundaries of God's topical proximity,…the cosmic "hereness" of human existence transcends the conventionally objectified topical restrictions, the definitions of here and there…the "being-here" of human existential reality signified "being-in-the-world" and, consequently, in the space of a relation, a non-dimensional personal immediacy…being-in-the-world signifies being-opposite the divine, personal, creative disclosure." Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 118.

572 See Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 106. As Dionysius states: "The very cause of the universe in the beautiful, good superabundance of his being eros for all is carried outside himself…beguiled, as it were, by goodness, by love, and by eros and is enticed away from his transcendence to all things and beyond all things and comes to abide within all things…that is why those possessed of spiritual insight describe him as 'zealous' because his good eros for all things is so great and because he stirs in human kind a deep yearning desire for zeal. In this way he proves himself to be zealous because zeal is always felt for what is desired and because he is zealous for the creatures for whom he provides." On the Divine Names, 4.13 (712A). Quoted in Yannaras, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 106.

Being, of the "really real," not through the mode of traditional metaphysics—through reason, dialectic, or the mediation of any ontic idea—but through "becoming true," through becoming *in themselves* that which "truly is." And for the Church Fathers, as we have noted in chapter II, this event of "becoming true" only takes place through correct participation in the "common-being" of the ekklēsia. For the very being of the *ekklēsia*, according to Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, simply *is* the created order's participation in absolute Being. Thus all who participate in her *Logos*, in her revealed Wisdom, or mode of existence, will come to acquire knowledge of Being not through intellectual comprehension, but through the act of *becoming* true: the ongoing act of setting aside one's life of error, delusion, and passion, and learning to participate instead in the revelatory Wisdom of Christ.

And for Yannaras, while there exist many symbols of the *ekklēsia* which attempt to offer a rational *logos* of what this revelatory Wisdom is, the common *logoi* of ecclesial witness which Yannaras believes has been promoted most thematically throughout the ages is that this mode of being which knows not of sin, sickness, decay, or death—is signified most accurately as the hypostatic life of agapeic *eros*: that is, as we have seen, the mode of erotic *schési,* wherein one exists "only to the extent in which one is loved and loves in return."[573]

Summary/Concluding Thoughts

In starting this chapter, we have attempted to begin understanding how and in what way Yannaras believes the personalist, trinitarian ontology of the Greek Church Fathers is able to offer an non-nihilistic overcoming and response to the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger, without also reverting the onto-theological tradition of Western "metaphysics." In beginning, we saw how Yannaras' believes Heidegger to be trapped within the ontic, rationalist understanding of Being and gnoseology as it developed in the Western/Latin tradition, especially the neo-Kantian tradition, which restricts ontology to the theory of knowledge, and ultimately limits knowledge of truth to a static reception of meaning within the intellect/mind. Meaning, Heidegger's fundamental ontology does not give an actual answer to the ontological problem insofar as his answer has nothing to do with Being as reality in itself (as that which "truly is" beyond the momentary presencing of beings in time), and everything to do with a subjective mode of understanding Being by the human subject (*Dasein*).

Thus for Yannaras, the first way in which the Church Fathers' ontology surpasses that of Heidegger's is that their ontology not only remains "existential"—based primarily on what has been *manifested* in a "common *logos*"—but it speaks to that which "truly is" *beyond* the mere presencing of phenomenon in time, thus offering an actual answer to the ontological question which can restore meaning to existence. In other words, Yannaras argues that both Heidegger and the Church Fathers attempt to offer a non-essentialist, non-ontotheological answer to the ontological problem, but whereas Heidegger, in limiting himself to the Western tradition, can only

573 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 45

offer a response to the ontological problem as that which either is or is not given in the determinacy of presence (thus limiting his non-metaphysical ontology to an "epistemology" concerning Being), the Church Fathers, in focusing on the primacy of the person and hypostatic existence, are able to offer an actual response to the ontological question without reverting to the value-laden, rationalist crutches of onto-theological metaphysics.

As we have attempted to show, this move is largely grounded on the fact that Yannaras interprets the Church Fathers as reading the relational, existential dimension of personhood in an ontological manner, such that the existential experience and freedom of the human person does not simply signify the particular existence of an individual, but a metaphysical participation in *Being itself*; that is, the person is regarded as the "how" or "*tropos*" in which Being is hypostatically constituted. Accordingly, the person is able to acquire knowledge of Being through a radical sense of participation, wherein one immanently partakes of hypostatic being through his or her own first-person experience.

The critical aspect of this account of Being is that it leads to a radically different gnoseology: first, as Yannaras points out, to know Being is no longer is restricted to the question of Being-in-itself as an intellectual, ontic idea, per onto-theological metaphysics, nor is it restricted the mode of temporal disclosure, per phenomenology. Rather, it is a hypostatic "otherness" known only "in reference to the person," in the "horizon of the person," which as an *ek-stases* from nature is a form of experiential knowing which precedes any conscious-intellectual determination and is disclosed only in the dynamic actualization of a personal fact. Second, and for this reason, we see that the "ultimate reduction" for the reception of Being is not a purely "rational" event of the intellect, but is rather predicated on the act of *conversion* within the life and praxis of the ecclesial event, which both enables and establishes the realization of the human person *as* relation.

In this manner, we see that Yannaras believes the *philosophia* of the Greek Church Fathers to offer a response to the ontological question which not only illudes the onto-theological structure of metaphysics, but which also gives an actual response to the ontological problem, therein giving it the potential to offer meaning to human existence beyond the nihilistic constitution of subjective values. For the response to the ontological question which the Greek Church Fathers offer, based as it is upon their testimonial witness, has given to the world a "common logos," a testimonial icon for what it means to "truly exist" beyond the limitations of space, time, change, and death—and thus, for Yannaras, a *symbol* which can known and verified through the phenomenological witness of those who participate in the philosophical "way of life" that is the ecclesial event.

In the following chapter, we will now take a closer look at the nature of the symbol as such in the philosophy of the Church Fathers, seeking to understand what Yannaras understands the role of the symbol to play in the advancement, protection, and verification of knowledge within the *ekklēsia*.

Chapter VII
Gnoseology: The Semantics of Personal Disclosure

In the previous chapter, we focused on the Greek Church Father's answer to the ontological problem as interpreted by Christos Yannaras as a means to show its potential for overcoming the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's post-metaphysical, fundamental ontology. Most specifically, we looked at the ontological distinction between person and nature, essence and energies, and what it means for the person to exists relationally—*as* a relation—in light of these ontological categories. In this chapter, we will now dive deeper into the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers by looking at Yannaras' interpretation of *logos* in the thought and praxis of Greek-Christian Hellenism; more specifically, we will seek to understand its semantic role in relation to the image as symbol, and how this particular understanding of the symbol in patristic literature is used for the sake of acquiring knowledge of Being in a non-ontic manner, as described in the previous chapter.

In order to accomplish this, our main intention will be to understand Yannaras' nuanced interpretation of the Greek Church Fathers usage of *logos* from both an ontological and semantic perspective, which in itself is believed by Yannaras to be a continuation and advancement of its use in Hellenism. Thus what we will see in the following pages is an overview of *logos* as Yannaras believes it was used and understood in Antiquity, followed by Yannaras' unique interpretation of its continued use in the philosophical tradition of the Church Fathers. In doing so, we will come to understand what Yannaras believes to be the "apophatic" use of language in the Church Fathers' philosophy, wherein one is able to pass on and protect the particular experiences of the person's reception of Being for the sake of intersubjective verification, all the while keeping the unique otherness of said experience from being negated within the static determinacy of the general idea.

Logos as Disclosure of the Person

In the previous chapter, we overviewed a non-ontic understanding of Being that does not identify Being with any category of thought. Being—as the absolute otherness of nature, as the radical freedom in which nature "is" at all—is identified here as a purely experiential event which is always other to the general and repeatable idea. On this account, then, the natural question to ask here is how language, which works within the categorical sphere of the general rather than the particular, can be used in seeking signify "Being" as such, both for the sake of self-understanding as well as communication.

It is from this paradoxical tension between this proposed non-essentialist understanding of Being and the determinate nature of language that I believe we should understand Yannaras' engagement with the Church Father's ontological and semantic conception of Greek *logos* in *Person and Eros* (as well as in his later published work, *The Effable and the Ineffable*).[574] Here

574 In this chapter, I will prioritize Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers in *Person and Eros*, whereas *The Effable and the Ineffable* will be referenced only insofar as it can further illuminate the points made in the former text.

Yannaras not only seeks to articulate a symbolic (apophatic) reading of Greek *logos* as "word" and/or "definition," as we have seen in chapter two, but he also seeks to reveal how this symbolic connotation of *logos* as word/definition is connected to its later ontological use in metaphysics, which seeks to understand the very Being of beings in relation to *logos*. Below, we will trace out Yannaras' reading of the origin and history of this conception of *logos*—both in its ontological and semantic use—as it first arose in Antiquity and was later adopted by the Church Father's for the sake of expressing, sharing, and validating this new articulation Being which we have spoken of in the previous chapter.

Logos in Hellenism

In seeking to understand the nuance of Greek *logos* as it was used in both Hellenism and Christian-Hellenism, Yannaras begins, following Heidegger, by taking account of its etymological roots. Here Yannaras emphasizes that in ancient Greece, "[t]he primary sense of *logos* is derived from *legô*," which means collection (*syl-logê*), gathering, or assembly.[575] As Homer states, "Let us gather up (*legômen*) the bones of Patroclus, son of Menoetias."[576] *Legô*, on Yannaras' interpretation, thus has the primary sense of "assembly" and/or "gathering," which has as its end the manifestation of a given unity or identity. Consequently, with its further development in the use of *logos* as both word/speaking and logic/reason, Yannaras believes that *logos* was understood primarily as that which "gathers together partial elements or attributes into a unity which is indispensable for that which exists to become manifest."[577]

This conception of *logos*, I believe, helps us bring together and understand the nuanced and complex range of meanings which are attributed to Greek *logos* today. In English, *logos* has been translated as "saying," "statement," "story," (thus *logos* as word/speaking), but also as "explanation," "proportion," "thinking," "argument," or "reason" (thus *logos* as *ratio*). As we saw in chapter two, however, the unifying element to these uses is not the mere action of speaking, nor the mere use of reason. Rather, *logos* in the Greek language refers to speech which seeks to give an account of things as *being a certain way.* As noted in Mark Johnstone's enlightening article, "[i]n contrast to individual words (the Homeric *epea*), it [*logos*]…did not denote the actual words used, or the external manifestations of speaking…so much as that which came into being through words… [i]n such cases a *logos* was not so much the actual exposition in particular words, but rather its content, the case made, or the argument advanced…. a *logos* was an organized presentation of things as being 'thus and so."[578] This understanding of *logos* thus coincides harmoniously with Yannaras' definition, and as such can perhaps shed light on its meaning: *logos*, deriving from *legô*, can be understood here as referring to that which assembles, unifies, or gathers together partial elements or attributes of something in order to manifest it "thus and so." Such was

575 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 159.
576 Cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 159.
577 Ibid., 159
578 On this point, See Mark A. Johnstone, "On Logos in Heraclitus," 14-17.

the purpose, or use, of words (in statements or stories) as well as rational thought (dialectic, logic, geometry, mathematics, etc.), both of which seek to manifest something's sense or identity; i.e, offering an account of it being a certain way.

It is for this reason that in its later development, as Yannaras points out, *logos* came to be identified as the essence (*ousia*) of a being; i.e., that which *is* in its gathered and universal unity.[579] Here the *ousia* of that which has manifested itself is recognized metaphysically as a being's *logos*. As *ousia*, the *logos* of beings is that which unifies (assembles) and binds things together, keeping them from disintegrating into non-being, and thus allows them to "rise to presence" (be disclosed) with form and identity.[580] For Yannaras, importantly, this means that even with this philosophical transition of *logos* from its semantic use as "word/saying" to its metaphysical use as Being, the Hellenistic function of *logos* was still thought in light of manifestation, or *declaration*;[581] it always contained the activity of disclosing (*apo-phainesthai*), or allowing something to appear, which, for the majority of latter (post-Socratic) Greeks, always presupposed a form of "gathering" and "assembling" into a cohesive and intelligible unity.

This etymological understanding of *logos*, for Yannaras, also importantly leads to the further understanding of *logos* as *definition* (*orismoú*)[582]. For insofar as both the semantic and metaphysical understanding of Greek *logos* contains the activity of disclosing in and through the gathering (*syl-ogê*) and assembling of partial elements into a unified whole, it also presupposes the exclusion of other elements and predicates which do not belong to this unity, thereby leading to the notion of *logos* as that which *defines* (*orizei*): that which "distinguishes," "circumscribes," and thereby creates a "boundary" which separates the uniqueness and otherness of that which now is from what which is not in order that its otherness may appear.[583] Accordingly, as Yannaras points out, the metaphysical use of *logos* in Greek thought not only refers to the unity of being (as universal), as it is traditionally understood in the West, but also refers to the "mode" of this unity; that is, the manner in which a being is defined (given universal shape or form) by the *Logos* so that it may become manifest in the cosmos.[584] Thus for Yannaras, Greek *logos*, metaphysically, refers

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579 As Plato states "The essence is one, the *logos* of the essence is one, and the name is one," thus, "the essence of which we define the *logos* of being is the same." Plato, Laws 10:895d4-5; Phaedo 78d1; quoted in *Person and Eros*, 159n3n4.

580 As Aristotle states, "The *logos* of the parts must be present in the *logos* of the whole", as "the *logos* of what the essence is contains the part of the thing defined." *Metaphysics*, 7.10: 1034b22-23; cited in *Person and Eros*, 162n25n26.

581 This point can be seen as an implicit response to Heidegger, who argues, as noted in chapter five, that it is with this transition of *logos* to Being as idea in the writings of Plato and Aristotle that we see the first "forgetfulness" of Being emerge in the history of thought.

582 *Orismoú* (definition), stemming from the verb *orizo* (to divide, limit, separate, mark out), refers to the process or act of marking out the limitations or boundaries of something through division or separation.

583 "It is one thing, the *logos* of which we call a definition." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.12:1037b11-12; "clearly the definition is the *logos* which comprises the *differentiae*." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.12:1038a8-9; cited in *Person and Eros*, 161n21n22.

584 As Yannaras states: "So long as beings are disclosed with the *logos*, they are also disclosed according to their *logos*. The mode of their disclosure is determined by the *logos* that is declaratory of their essence. It is logical mode, referring to a harmonious and ordered…combination of distinguishing differentiae and incomplete "parts" which manifest the unity of the universal essence—that which being *is*." Thus quoting Aristotle: "'order is every logos,'"

also to the harmonious and ordered (rational: *logikós*) *process* of cosmic gathering and separating, combining and distinguishing, so that a unity may be formed from the nothingness of incomplete, non-ordered "parts," whereby that which "was not" may now *be*—that is, may be "declared," or made manifest, through its having been defined.[585]

This leads Yannaras, finally, to the correlation between the cosmic *Logos* and the human *logos* in Greek thought, the latter of which also contains the potential of "gathering" and "defining" for the sake of "making manifest." On Yannaras' interpretation of Aristotle, for example, this very mode or "how" of cosmic disclosure constitutes a being's *form*, or species, its universal unity and uniqueness which distinguishes it from that which it is not.[586] And it is the *logos* of the being as such which the human *logos* seeks to predicate with its own definition, or *logos*; that is, it seeks with its own *logos* to define (divide, limit, separate) the boundaries or limitations of the manifested *logos* with its own *logos*, which thereby allows one to understand the "how" or mode of its disclosure.[587]

However, in speaking of the nature of this relation between the cosmic and human *logos*, Yannaras emphasizes how the original *logos* of a being which has been disclosed in the primordial reception of experience can only be "signified" by the general unity of human *logoi*. That is, as we have already pointed out in chapter two, Yannaras believes that the abstract and general idea contained in the human *logos*, as a corresponding reception and definition of the cosmic *logos*, was recognized in Hellenism as a "sign" or "symbol" (common *logos*) which signifies, or points beyond itself, to the experiential uniqueness of the being's original disclosure.[588] In this manner, as Yannaras emphasizes, the human *logos* contains the possibility for the disclosure of being (both as *ousia* and the "how" of *ousia*) only when it functions as a symbol; that is, only when it presupposes the experience of the form's particular manifestation and *refers* to this experience.[589]

The Church Fathers Understanding of Logos

On Yannaras reading, when the Greek Church Father's began to engage with Greek thought in order to create a thematic synthesis between their own epistemic experience and the metaphysical questions of the Greeks, it was from the above conception of *logos* that they worked from. Semantically, as we have already articulated in chapter two, Yannaras believes the Church Fathers

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and "'that which for the sake of which it is is in the *logos*.'" See *Person and Eros*, 162. For an elaboration of this point, see Yannaras, *Schism*, 47-57.

585 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 161-163. This is also noted, for example, in the etymological nuance of Heraclitus' account, which argues that the rational principle of the world—as *Logos* (word)—manifests itself to the human being in a manner similar to the intelligible content that is conveyed in speech.

586 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 162.

587 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 163.

588 Per Aristotle: "the *logos*, of which the name is a sign, becomes a definition," such that the *logos* (forms and species), "gives names to the individuals that belong to it." However, "no name is a name naturally, but only when it becomes a symbol." See Aristotle, Metaphysics 7:11:1036a28-29; Metaphysics 4.7:1012a23-34. Quoted in *Person and Eros*, 163n32-34.

589 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 101-102.

worked primarily with the understanding of *logos* as a symbol, as a rational, mediating *logos* which refers beyond itself to the original experience of Being's disclosure. However, in reference to its metaphysical usage, Yannaras argues that it was the second understanding of *logos* (*logos* as mode) that the Church Father's primarily worked from. For insofar as Greek *logos* is understood, in Hellenism, not simply as referring to the unity of a being (as that which it is, its *ousia*), but also to the logical mode in which it is able to be disclosed, then we may now understand how, for Yannaras, the Greek Fathers were able to proceed using this later notion of Greek *logos* when signifying the being of 1) God, 2) the cosmos, and 3) the human person, albeit in an non-essentialist manner. Here Yannaras claims that the Church Fathers primarily used the term *logos* as signifying the rational (*logikós*) *tropos* in which beings become that which they are, which as we have seen thus far, refers not to essence, but to the free and hypostatic being of the person.[590]

Using different terminology, it may be said that Yannaras, clearly following in the footsteps of Maximus the Confessor, is defining the cosmic *Logos* within the Byzantine tradition—the mode or manner in which a thing/being is—exhaustively with the loving will or *energeia* of God's hypostatic being.[591] This is a point which would naturally follow from the essence/energy distinction as explained in the previous chapter, which has severed divine being (*ousia*) from created being by understanding the being of creation to have its origin solely in the radical and uncaused freedom (*energeia*) of the divine persons, which is ontologically distinct from the being of the divine essence. Such is why, as Yannaras states, Maximus refers to the *logoi* of things/beings not in relation to pre-eternal and divine *ideas* which reflects the divine *ousia*, but as the *energeia* or acts of divine will: i.e., to the hypostatic being of agapeic *eros*.[592] Here we see, quite clearly, a metaphysical usage of *logos* referring to the mode in which something is rather than referring to its essence. Such is also why, for the Church Fathers at large, the logical harmony or *Logos* of the cosmos—the beautiful arrangement of "things/deeds" coming into existence from the undetermined will, or *eros*, of a creator-God—is said to iconically reflect and signify the *personal* truth of the Absolute,[593] such that natural contemplation (*fysikí theoría*) of the world's *logoi*

590 As a clarification, it must be noted that not "all" the Greek Church Father's used this notion of *logos* when referring to Being. It is found, however, in its central and most influential figures: the Cappadocians, Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas, and arguably, Dionysius the Areopagite. As we have seen, the Cappadocians paired the term *logos* of nature (*logos phusis*) with mode of existence (*tropos hyparxeos*) when speaking of the Trinity. Maximus the Confessor then took this *logos-tropos* binary as a means to speak of creation as a whole, which would go on to influence many other patristic thinkers, such as Gregory Palamas. On this point, see Dionysius Skliris, "The philosophy of mode (*tropos*) in the thought of Christos Yannaras." See also John D. Zizioulas' analysis of the use of *tropos* in Patristic thought in *Communion and Otherness*, 23-36.

591 On this point, see Dionysius Skliris, "The philosophy of mode (tropos) in the thought of Christos Yannaras," 27-29.

592 See Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy* 1 (PF 91:665a); cited in *Person and Eros*, 171n47.

593 "For the origination and shaping of creation…the principle of the origination of all things is the *logos* of God"; Basil, *Against Eunomius* 5 (Pg 29:736c); "the omnipotent and perfectly holy *Logos* of the Father himself… is present in all things and extends his power everywhere, illuminating all things visible and invisible, containing and enclosing them in himself." Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 42 (PG 25:84b). "It (the cause of all things) brings forth essences as an overflowing of essence…we give the name "exemplar" to those *logoi* which…produce the essences of beings. Theology calls them predefining, divine and good acts of will which determine and create things…" Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Names* 5.8 (PG 3:824bc); cited in *Person and Eros*, 172n49.

(manifested phenomena) do not lead to contemplation of the divine *ousia*, but instead lead to a personal participation in the hypostatic activity of God.

For Yannaras—and of course, the majority of Greek Church Fathers—this radically personal understanding of the cosmic *Logos*, understood primarily as the hypostatic *tropos* in which things are, naturally requires a different understanding of the human l*ogos*. That is, it requires a different understanding of what it means for the human person, endowed with *logos,* to intelligibly receive and participate in the manifestation of the world's *Logos* in a personal rather than essentialist manner.

In response, Yannaras begins by re-emphasizing that in the philosophy of the Church Fathers, that which is capable of receiving the personal *logos* of beings is not identified with the noetic powers of humankind's nature (whether through the senses or the intellect). This is because, as we noted in the previous chapter, for the majority of the Church Fathers it is only the being of the created order which the intellect is able to grasp and understand, and the divine *energeia* which brings all that "is" from nothingness into being necessarily transcends the being (nature) of the created order as such.[594] For this reason, as Yannaras states, any knowledge of the world's *Logos* is testified to by the Church Father's as necessarily transcending the determinate function of thought, as being "beyond" form and image.[595] So too, it is also for this reason that, as Gregory Palamas summed up in his response to Barlaam, the basic anthropological presupposition of the Church Fathers is that humanity is capable of acquiring knowledge of God only when one *trancends* one's nature; in other words, on Palamas' interpretation of the Greek tradition, it is only the existential being of the human *prósopon*, which is "other than" and transcends the being of created nature, that possess the cognitive capacity to know the hypostatic *energeia* of divine Being.[596]

For Yannaras, this means that knowledge of the divine *Logos*—the Being of beings—is not a possibility for the human *logos* as intellect/reason. Rather, the primary and universal capacity of humankind's ability to experience and receive knowledge of the *Logos* is through the existential relation of the person alone, which "precedes" and is "other than" that which is given in the natural capacity of the created intellect. Consequently, in continuity with the previous chapter, Yannaras argues that for the Greek Church Fathers, the primary receptive functioning of the human *logos* is recognized primarily as the person's universal capacity for relation (*schési*), whereas the rational functioning of the intellect is secondary and derivative of this cognitive capacity.[597] Here the referential relation of the *prósopon,* and not the intellect, is recognized as the primary "horizon" for receiving the hypostatic *energeia* of God, thereby making the human capacity for existential

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594 On this point, see Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 13.

595 "[R]eaching God himself in a mystical and supra-intellectual union with him—they have been initiated into that which transcends the human mind." St. Gregory Palamas, *Tome* (PG 150, 1225-1230); cited in Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palmas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 96.

596 On this point, see John Meyendorff's introduction to St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 14.

597 This does not mean that the intellect, or reason, is disregarded by the Church Fathers. The Greek Fathers were not *anti*-rational. What this means, as we will later see, is that the *ek-stases* of the person as relation constitutes a form of knowing and experience which precedes and is different from the cognitive form of knowing that is derived from the intellect and senses.

relation the primary *logos* which is capable of experiencing and/or acquiring knowledge of Being.[598]

With this alternativstarting point, it is presupposed that any knowledge of the world's *Logos* cannot be exhausted within the determinate knowledge of reflection or the univocity of the idea, which would exhaust itself in the onticity of individual things through the natural capacity of the intellect.[599] Rather, for the Church Fathers, Yannaras points out how knowledge of the *Logos* presupposes above all the pre-reflective, universal-ecstatic relation of the *prósopon*, the existential "readiness" of the human *logos* for a dialogical encounter with the logical disclosure of the world's personal *Logos*; that is, the reception of hypostatic givenness before being objectified in the realm of ontic individuality.[600]

Thus in accordance with the "ontological reversal" of Greek/Christian thought, *logos* (as the human person's capacity to receive Being's manifestation) can be used both in reference to the experience of humanities rational *(logikós*) reception of the world's *logos* as *pragmata* (things/deeds of the Person), and most fully, as a personal encounter and reciprocal dialogue (*dia-logos*) of the human *logos* with the personal *Logos* which "is" on the otherside of ontic disclosure.[601]

The Semantic Use of *Logos*

Above, we have begun to lay out what Yannaras believes to be the Church Fathers' purely "experiential" dimension of Greek *logos*; one that, for Yannaras, lies outside and beyond the determinate structure of thought, and for this reason, lies completely contrary to the gnoseological use of *logos* in the Western/Latin tradition. We will return to this notion of *logos* briefly. But before we do, it is necessary that we build up to this understanding of *logos* in relation to the traditional understanding of *logos* as a definition, or intelligible unity (concept/idea), of that which has been disclosed. That is, we must come to understand how, for the Church Fathers, this indeterminate, purely experiential understanding of *logos* as relation relates to the secondary, later derived understanding of *logos* as an intelligible and determinate image or idea, both in its initial manifestation as well as its representation in thought.

For Yannaras, the Church Fathers' "existential" and non-essentialist interpretation of *logos* can only be understood in reference to the apophatic tradition of Hellenism as explained in chapter two. By way of reminder, Yannaras argues that in Hellenism, the symbol, linguistic or other, is ultimately understood as a sign that *sym-ballei* (puts together, coordinates) the individual

598 Besides its phenomenological reference, *orizon*, in Greek, means "that which determines or defines," and thus should be read here in correlation with the understanding above as a *logos* which "defines' [*orizei*]), that allows for the logical reception, and thus disclosure of, the hypostatic *tropos* in which beings *are*. As Yannaras states: "what we call a "horizon" of disclosure, before being a specific where, a specific "place" of either reflective or conceptual knowledge, is a dynamic how of ecstatic reference, and existential fact of pre-reflective relation, which constitutes the necessary and sufficient presupposition for the disclosure and truth of beings. See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 164.
599 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 165.
600 On this point, see Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 165-167.
601 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 166.

experiences of the *Logos'* initial manifestation into a common reference (the common *logos*) so that the private experiences of the individual can now be made experientially accessible to all. In this manner, as Yannaras states, Greek language functions primarily as a stimulus and point of departure for recalling and reliving the unique and dissimilar forms of manifested experience which every person has with the signified, such that what is known, via the symbol, is not primarily what is signified rationally (the sense), but a recollection, and thus verification, of one's own experiential reception of the world's *Logos*.

Human *logoi*, in this sense, are seen by Yannaras as unifying symbols which put together and coordinate the individual and "personal" experiences of logical (referential) reception, while also acting as "definitions" which are able to logically manifest, or disclose, the experience as such. Accordingly, as Yannaras argues, the experiential knowledge of subjective otherness cannot be shared in a univocal, direct manner, but *can* be communicated indirectly through the significatory code of a common reference, or symbol, which allows for the sharing of one's purely "subjective" knowledge insofar one's experience of an object or event can be "affirmed" to be in communion with the *logoi* of others.[602]

By way of comparison, this (Hellenistic) understanding of symbol must naturally be disassociated from the analytical sense of symbol that it is often associated with today, as is noted primarily by Yannaras in the work of Saussure and Wittgenstein.[603] Here Yannaras believes the modern thinker, working from the residue of Latin *ratio*, understands the symbol primarily as a "sign endowed with a sense"; meaning, the symbol is understood as an "expression" of a determinate sense that was first conceptualized in thought through the common linguistic code of historical and conventional language.[604] The symbol as such does not signify beyond itself to a primordial experience of otherness that transcends the comprehension of an intellectual sense; on the contrary, it is limited to re-presenting the meaning (intelligible form and content) of a signifier in a different, less ambiguous (more univocal) mode of expression. Such is why, for Wittgenstein, language is equated exhaustively with the explicit demonstration of sense as it is conceptualized in thought, such that what cannot be intelligibly said in language cannot be known.[605] In other words, for Yannaras, the logical outcome of this understanding of language and the symbol which dominates the West today is that the world can only be intelligibly known to the extent in which it can be positively mediated through the sense provided by language.

The Hellenistic understanding of language as symbolic, however, leads to a radically different position. For on Yannaras reading, language (*logos*) functions *primarily* as a symbol and *secondarily* as an intellectual meaning, thereby reversing Wittgenstein's thesis.[606] As noted in chapter II, Yannaras argues that for the Greeks, the function of language is always and primarily symbolic; that is, the words—the names by which we signify things—always function as symbols

602 On this point, see Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 72.
603 On Yannaras' engagement with Saussure and Wittgenstein, see *Person and Eros*, 174-175. See also *The Effable and the Ineffable* for Yannaras' most in depth engagement with Wittgenstein.
604 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 15-16.
605 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 175; *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 15.
606 On this point, see Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 74-75.

which signify (disclose) an individual's primordial reception of what has been manifested, without which they would no longer have meaning: "There is nothing that belongs to names by nature, but only when they become symbols," says Aristotle.[607] Which means, on Yannaras' interpretation, that by their very nature, names as spoken sounds are nothing; they signify nothing, and they refer to nothing. They only become something when then function as symbols—that is, when they *syn-balloun*, "put together," "bring into accord," particular individual experiences through the unified definition (the abstracted concept that is derived from the multitude of one's experience) and provoke comprehension (*syn-ennoēsē*).[608] In this manner, the *knowledge* that the symbol provides, as explained in chapter two, is not simply the comprehension of the signifier (the understanding of the symbol's "meaning" or "sense" as it exists within the autonomous structure of language), but the verification of original experiences insofar as they are now recognized as being "common" and not "private."

In this manner, as Yannaras notes, the Greek attempt to express the experiential knowledge of subjective otherness, or, for Wittgenstein, that which is "outside the world"—such as moral, religious, or aesthetical *logoi*—is not reduced to "non-sense," or senselessness.[609] Of course, the knowledge that is given from the otherness of subjective experience is undoubtably unable to be communicated directly through speech. However, for Yannaras, it can be communicated *indirectly* through language as a significatory code of a common existential reference, or symbol. And this is because the symbol, according to its Hellenistic usage, is that which allows for the sharing (disclosing) and verification of one's experiential reception of something insofar as one's *logos* of an object or event is demonstrated to be in communion with the *logoi* (subjective experiences) of others.[610]

Of course, for Yannaras, this symbolic function of Greek *logos* is most applicable when referring to the Church Father's testimonial experience of God. Indeed, as shown in chapter three, Yannaras believes this notion of symbolic (apophatic) knowledge to be the very foundation which grounds the Church Fathers' view that the Church's teachings are fundamentally "testimonial"; that is, they are common *logoi* which bear witness to the subjective otherness of divine being that is universally affirmed by those who participate in the *ekklēsia's* mode of existence. As Yannaras notes in relation to the writings of St. Basil the Great on idolatry, for example, St. Basil is clear that the experience of relation between God and his creatures, constituted by God's self-disclosure, cannot be substituted by intellectual notions that locate such experience in the customary forms of language.[611] However, this does not imply that the Church's experience of the divine, and thus its teachings and dogmas, are "non-sensical," private, or purely mystical. Rather, for Basil the Great,

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607 Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 165a 7-8; *De Interpretatione*, 16a 27-28.
608 See Yannaras, *Six Philosophical Paintings*, 101.
609 See Yannaras, *The Effable and Ineffable*, 255.
610 For example, when I hear the *logos*—"sunsets are beautiful"—the words "sunset" and "beautiful" are recognized as symbols, or rational communal referents, which allow me to recall my manifold experiences of both sunsets and the sensation of "beauty," and thus I am able to either affirm or deny said *logos* not through mere comprehension, but in reference to my subjective experiences of sunsets.
611 See Basil the Great, On the Prophet Isaiah PF 30:27c; cited in *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 151n290.

Yannaras notes how it is possible for the word God [and the many signifiers which signify his being] to refer to the second term of a personal *relation*, and thus as a linguistic sign which functions in correlation with the empirical cognitive immediacy of said relation.[612] From this starting point, as Yannaras argues, the verification of the referential function of the word is naturally transferred to the community for its communal confirmation, thereby enabling the possibility for knowledge of the divine to become sensible and non-private, albeit keeping the original otherness of its manifestation.[613]

For Yannaras, however, this symbolic function of Greek *logos* refers not simply to verbal and written communication. In Ancient Greece, for example, Yannaras claims this understanding of the symbol also thrived through the architecture, music, poetry, and artwork of the city-state. Likewise, as Yannaras points out, within the *ethos* of the Church, the "interior *logos*" of ecclesial experience was initially passed down primarily through the same methods, especially within the hymns and artwork that were mystagogically understood in liturgical praxis. Today in the West, however, Yannaras believes that the functioning of *logos* as such has primarily been reduced to the function of art, as it is here alone that one still finds a *logos*, or symbol, that seeks to communicate one's subjective, lived experience of the world.[614] The work of art, as Yannaras argues, always remains a *logos*, or logical disclosure, of the person and his or her unique reference to the world.[615] For the genuine piece of art, as *logos* (declaration/manifestation), is a form of logical expression which transcends the impersonal and conventional versions of objective reception: it leads the object away from its impersonal neutrality and consequentially invites its beholder to participate in its uniquely personal reference of disclosure.[616] In this manner, as Yannaras states, art functions as a rational symbol, or "common logos," that brings together (*sym-ballei*) the radically "personal" experiences of the person's relation with objects and events as they were initially manifested, and thereby reunites the presence of beings with the horizon of their original manifesation.[617] In this manner, the piece of art not only "re-awakens" the observer to what was once manifested but had been covered over in the recesses of objective time, but also bridges the world between the artist and the observer, thereby establishing *koinonia* in its proper, Greek sense.

The Icon and the Ineffable

From the above understanding of *symbol*, we can begin to understand how, on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, *logos* was used by the *ekklēsia* for the sake of "defining," and thus

612 See Yannaras, *The Effable and the Ineffable*, 151-152.
613 On Yannaras' understanding of Greek *logos* for the Church Fathers, see Manuel Sumarez, "Signifying the Mystical as Struggle: Yannaras' Orthodox Refiguring of Philosophy of Language" in *Annals of the University of Bucharest - Philosophy* Series, Vol. LXIII, no. 1 (2014) 3–15
614 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 168-169.
615 Ibid., 168.
616 Ibid., 169.
617 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 169.

disclosing, the unique otherness of one's testimonial experience, the "witness" of God's revelatory and life-giving *energeia* as it was received by all who participate in the Church's unique mode of existence. Thus at this point, we may now further expound upon how this symbolic understanding of *logos* also was appropriated by the Greek Church Fathers in relation to their ontological understanding of hypostatic being, whereby the personal reception of the cosmic *Logos* (the mode in which a thing is) is given outside and beyond the determinate structure of thought.

In order to do this, Yannaras introduces his readers to what he understands to be the "iconic" (*eikoniki*) understanding of the signified image (*eikóna*) in Eastern thought. Here the *logos* as *eikóna*, as another mode of the working symbol, is understood primarily as that which depicts or represents a reality that is similar too, yet other than, itself. In this manner, as Yannaras points out, the *eikóna* offers a form of analogous (*ana-logikai*), or allegorical (*alligorikós*), knowledge: that which gives knowledge of another reality by acting as a sign which rationally guides the mind to that which is similar to yet other than itself.[618] Traditionally, the iconic image in Greek cosmology presupposed an analogical relation between the form, as *ousia*, and the being of another reality, thus offering an analogous similarity in relation to the intelligible onticity of an object. However, in accordance with the personal cosmology of Christian experience as overviewed thus far, Yannaras states that the Greek Church Fathers saw in the images of creation an *eikóna* of *personal* (hypostatic) disclosure, wherein the beauty of the cosmos, via its intelligible forms and images, were recognized as a "icons" of the divine, personal *Logos*. In this manner, as Yannaras points out, the "image" of created forms were iconic (*eikonikí*) not in relation to their "true being" as *ousia*, nor in relation to the *ousia* of divine being, but in relation to the hypostatic being of the personal Absolute. That is, they were recognized as "icons" of God as *prósopikós* insofar as they reflected his absolute, hypostatic otherness, therein manifesting the *logoi* of beings as *prágmata*, "things/deeds" of the creator God. Thus, as Theodore the Studite declares, "when anything is depicted, it is not the nature, but the *hypostasis* that is depicted."[619]

For Yannaras, once more, this personalist understanding of the iconic images of creation can be understood analogously in relation to the human person and art. Here Yannaras seeks to point out how the piece of art, as a symbol or image, does not simply signify, or iconize, the person's *experience* of the world's manifestation. As a logical *pragmata* (thing/deed) of the person, it also signifies, or iconizes, the ineffable world of otherness that *is* the person; that is, it functions as a *logos*-disclosure of personal being. Such is why, when encountering a painting of van Gough or a symphony of Mozart, one does not simply think "this represents each artist's experience of the world." So too, we first exclaim: "this *is* van Gough!" "This is Mozart!" Hence no matter the various forms of analysis and understanding, Yannaras' argument is that the *logos* of the created work always points beyond itself towards its personal bearer, and thus may be understood as symbol, or icon, which rationally manifests the person's being. Consequently, while the painting may be accurately described in many ways, it is ultimately not described as that which it

618 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 184.
619 Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetics* 3.34 (PG 99:405a); cited in *Person and Eros*, 186.

fundamentally *is* without reference to its personal bearer; that is, as a "*pragmata*": a "thing/act" done or accomplished in the absolute otherness of hypostatic freedom.

Making a full circle, then, to the Greek Church Father's understanding of the world's *Logos* as referring to the will, or creative energy, of the divine Person(s), we can grasp more fully the correspondence that the intelligible *logos* (as *eikóna*) has to the *logos* of created things. For in the same way that a piece of art, as a "thing deed" of created activity, is recognized as being a symbolic manifestation, or iconic disclosure of, the person, so too, on Yannaras' reading, do the Greek Church Fathers read the intelligible *logoi* of created things as "logical" (*logikós*) symbols, the meaning of which is not exhausted in themselves, but rather of which is manifested only in relation to their personal bearer. Such is why in the patristic writings of the Church Fathers, as Yannaras points out, creation is often referred to as a *symphony* (*sumphonia*)—the logical (harmonious) arrangement of *logoi* which come together and iconize the personal truth of the Absolute, such that natural contemplation of their beautiful arrangement, as Maximus the Confessor recalls, leads to a transcendence of the image in itself to a personal participation in the will/energy of God: a "crossing of the distance" for the sake of communion between created and uncreated persons. Here the *logos* of the image always "signifies" an erotic *energeia* of invitation, [620] the language of which is received as beauty (*kalloní*).[621] Such is also why, for the Church Father's, the contemplation of the created order, as an *eikóna* of divine being, does not analogically lead the intellect to an abstract or impersonal *ousia*, but is rather experienced by the human *prósopon* as a rational, hypostatic *call* to communion with a Personal absolute.[622]

For Yannaras, then, according to the philosophy of the Church Fathers, the Being of beings, creation as a "thing/deed" of the person, is only "known" insofar as it refers beyond itself to its hypostatic disclosure, which is its *Logos*, the hypostatic mode in which it is:[623] "when anything is depicted, it is not the nature, but the hypostasis that is depicted."[624] Which means that the intelligible images of creation, as "icons," are only truly known when they are known (manifested) as *beauty*, in the form of an erotic call, for it is this very erotic dimension of invitation which draws

620 "I reverence [the matter] not as God but as brimming with divine energy and grace" (John Damascene, Apologetic Discourse 2.14 [PG 94:1300b; ed. Kotter, 105.17-20]); cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 191.

621 "The beauties of the phenomenal world are presentations of the invisible loveliness" (Dionisius the Areopagite, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 1.3, SC 58 *bis*, 72 [PG 3:121c]); "If it should wish to understand the external beauty fully, it knows how to wonder at the Creator analogously from the creatures…for in this way the mind becomes cognizant of the Creator from the wealth and beauty of creatures, and ascends to the contemplation of him." (Symeon the New Theologian, Ethical Treatises 1, Or. 6 [SC 129. 138]); cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 191

622 "For the beauty on earth is not self-made, but…sent by the hand and will of God," and "this is a property of the cause of all things and of the goodness that is beyond all things, to summon all beings to communion with it." Athenagoras, *Embassy on Behalf of the Christians* 34.1 [PG 6.968]); Dionysius the Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy* 4.1 SC 58 bis, 93 (PG 3:177c); cited in *Person and Eros*, 228n60.

623 As Maximus states, the entire reality of nature is "logical" in the degree in which the *logoi* of beings are not exhausted in themselves, but disclose the personal energies and "acts of will" of God…" See Maximus the Confessor, Mystagogy (PG 91:665a); cited in *Person and Eros*, 172.

624 Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetics* 3.34 (PG 99:405a).

the knower beyond the image into a participatory recognition of its existential presupposition: the person of the God *Logos*.[625]

In other words, according to Yannaras' interpretation of the Church Fathers, it is first the intelligible image, as an iconic disclosure of hypostatic beauty, that calls the person forth in a state of *eros*, the desirous movement which seeks union with He whom called him forth. This ecstatic movement of the *prósopo*n, then, is further recognized as that which allows for the created *hypostasis* to transcend its nature (and thus its natural intellect), therein opening the possibility for participation solely in the immediacy of loving *relation*. *Eros*, then, is promoted by Yannaras as the actualization of humankind's relational *logos*: a "cognitive potential," or "vision," which the Church Fathers speak of as acquiring "formless," "shapeless," yet all the same, *universal* knowledge of God and the cosmos.

Logos and Analogy

For the Church Fathers, however, the semantics of the image as icon, and thus the appropriation of the image as helping secure hypostatic knowledge of the Absolute, is a "language" which must be learned, and thus poses the ongoing possibility of its failure or achievement. Meaning, for Yannaras, that the process of learning this language, no different from any other philosophical school of Antiquity, requires the effort of spiritual praxis and discipline.

As is noted in the work of Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the primary disciplines, or forms of *praxis*, that is used when seeking correct "contemplation" of God and the world is what Yannaras has already referred to as the apophatic language of negation (chapter three), which allows human language to function iconically when thinking of and referring to the *logos* of things (e.g., God is good, God is not good). However, a largely overlooked emphasis of Dionysius' writings, as Yannaras points out, is that his radically apophatic theology of the divine names is not a dialectical exercise, or abstract discussion, concerning the divine properties; on the contrary, Yannaras believes that Dionysius' writings—and those of all the Church Fathers—must be understood as a part of and continuation of classical Hellenistic discourse, and as such can only be understood and participated in within the philosophical "way of life" from which they are derived. Such is why, as Andrew Louth correctly points out in his book on Dionisius, the "theology" of Dionysius is fundamentally a *liturgical theology*, wherein the liturgy and the scriptures are the fundamental context to which his writings refer.[626] The iconic, apophatic discourse of the divine names, which is a historical witness to how the Church does and ought to speak of God's being, can thus only be understood within the light of said experience and *praxis*.

With this small aside, we can move forward in understanding more properly the nuance which Yannaras is attempting to communicate when speaking of the semantic use of *logos* in the philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers. According to the negative theology of Dionysius, any

625 The symbol, as an *icon*, thus "acts and, by means of a mystery which cannot be taught, puts souls firmly in the presence of God." Dionysius the Areopagite, *Epistle* 9 (1105D); cited in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 70n24.
626 See Andrew Louth, *Denys The Areopagite* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), 30.

positive attestation of the ecclesial event which seeks to define (make manifest) the relational experience that the Church has of God's revealed being—"God is good, God is holy, God is Father, God is love"—must directly followed by a negation of these very *logoi*—"God is *not* good, *not* holy, *not* Father, *not* love." In this manner, the shared experience of the *ekklēsia* states that God is "like this," while simultaneously stating that God is "not like this." Yet on Yannaras reading of Dionysius, it is through this very exclusion of positive attestation that the ecclesial participant is led beyond the unifying symbol to the original event of existential manifestation, which in itself is further testified to as a form of "ineffable knowledge" that cannot be exhausted or known through any mediation of the intellect.[627]

So too, there is also implemented in and beyond the Dionysius corpus what Yannaras refers to as the scheme of linguistic conceptual contradictions, wherein concepts within the writings of the Church Fathers often conflict one another. For example, God is referred to as the "nameless name," "incomprehensibly comprehensible," "Godhead transcending Godhead," "mind beyond mind," "principle of origin beyond origin," and "ineffable *logos*"; furthermore, said knowledge of God is referred to as a "seeing of the invisible," an "imparticipable participation" in a "shapeless shape," "formless form," a "non-symbolical symbol," a "perfection beyond perfection," all of which can be regarded as a "visionless vision."[628] From this linguistic formulation, as Yannaras points out, the signified (God) is referred to with a noematic concept, or thesis, that is directly followed by its negation, or antithesis, thereby immediately canceling out the static image or comphrension that is recollected upon encountering such *logoi*. However, for the Church Fathers, this negation does not lead to the radical nothingness of non-thought, nor does it lead to a "private mysticism" of religious consciousness. Rather, insofar as the simultaneous reference of the noematic thesis and antithesis are recognized as a unified *symbol* of the *ekklēsia*, then we understand said signifiers to be referring to an *encountered* reality of which the determinate structure of language is incapable of fully conveying.[629] The signifier, in this regard, is recognized as a human *logos* which attempts to name that which has been encountered; as a *symbol*, it functions as a point of departure for recalling and reliving the unique relation of its existential reception. However, the *logos* which signifies one's experience of said reality must then immediately be crossed out through a form of anti-thesis, not because the signifier is unknown, but because the static meaning of linguistic or conceptual comprehension is unable to capture the radical otherness of the event itself. In this manner, as Yannaras states, the negation of intellectual

627 "But now as we climb from the last things up to the most primary we deny all things so that we may unhiddenly know that unknowing which itself is hidden from all those possessed of knowing amid things." Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology* 2 (Mign, Patrologia Graeca 3: 1025AB); cited in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 74n5.
628 Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Treatises* 4 (SC 129.68-70); cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 192.
629 For example, according to monks who practice the Jesus prayer with the ultimate goal of acquiring said union with the divine, they are strictly taught to let no image or idea of the imagination come into their minds. For as John Meyendorff states, what the monks and Saints seek through said prayer is not a subjective state, but *contact* with that which is other than there being. Thus the idea is to completely quite the mind and, through invocation of Christ's name, let the heart lead the way into the "darkness," such that any response or experience was recognized as an actual encounter with the Other, and not the effects of the imagination. See Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 38, 71.

comphrension "makes way for" another kind of knowledge; that is, it acts as a dynamic transition or "passage" which allows the reader to recall and participate in the original manifestation of that which was given in the cognitive immediacy of personal *relation* (e.g., that which transcends and is other to the natural capacity of the intellect).[630]

The uniqueness of this form of analogy and negative theology, for Yannaras, is important to note, especially in relation to its Latin counterparts. First, in relation to analogy: the "names" which first signify God, followed by their immediate negation, are referred to by Dionysius as "dissimilar similarities."[631] On Yannaras interpretation of this idea, any similarity that is first posited between the two realities is in itself immediately recognized as a dissimilarity, thereby negating the possibility of its objective similarity as a quantiatively-measureable likeness. Meaning, as Yannaras states, the Byzantine method of analogy takes the initially posited similarity as a real *dissimilarity*, thereby requiring the mind to "cross-out" whatever image it had conjured to signify the being of God.[632] And of course, the point of this cognitive method is to lead the person away from the intelligibility of the idea and "into the darkness where God dwells," creating an experiential union with that which is "beyond nature" and wholly "unknowable" to the intellect, thereby bringing about a "darkness of knowing" which "transcends the mind" and is only known in the immediacy of personal union.[633]

This form of "analogy" is thus contrasted to its Latin counter-part, which on Yannaras' reading, is largely understood in the history of the West as an analogy of *similarities* (rather than *dis*similarity). From this counter starting point, Yannaras understands the predominant use of Western analogy as a method which allows for a cognitive (purely intellectual) assent from the being (*ousia*) of the created to the being of the uncreated.[634] In this manner, as Yannaras notes, the analogy of similarities—even when presupposing an even greater unlikeness—presupposes the same *logos* (ratio) of relative and absolute, partial and universal, since the being of the divine is not recognized as absolutely "other" than created being—as it is in the East—but is, in some form or fashion, somewhat "similar." In this manner, as Yannaras argues, scholastic analogy offers a quantitatively-measurable version of analogy that can be used to compare essences, or common attributes, of divine and created being (*ousia*), which further implies that no matter how apophatic its emphasis, analogy as such always attempts to bridge the distance between divine and created being as an intellectual endeavor; that is, through the capacity of the intellect.[635]

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630 As Maximus the Confessor states, the person is "united to God in a union that transcends intellection," such that knowledge, "in the true and proper sense is found only in experience through an operation apart from reason and concepts." Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassius* 60 (PG 90:621cd); *Various Texts* 2.12 (PG 90:1225b); cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 198n98n105.

631 *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 2.4, SC 58 bis, 83 (PG 3:144c); cited in *Person and Eros*, 213n40.

632 Such is why, for Dionysius, the way of negation describes God most truly, since God is in no way like the things/being of the created order. On this point, see Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 45-46.

633 Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1.3 1000D. Quoted in *Aristotle, East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192-193.

634 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 213.

635 For Yannaras understanding of scholastic analogy, see *Person and Eros*, 206-213.

The point, for Yannaras, is that the negation of similarities between the East and the West leads to, and has in mind, two different outcomes. The West's analogy of "similarities," as noted above, uses language as a medium which can bridge the distance between God and man as an event of the intellect; that is, through the likeness of their being as *ousia*. Consequently, as Yannaras notes, the potential negation of the similarity, insofar as it can be positioned as infinitely unlike God, leads either to the radical denial that we can actually know anything about God's being, or leads to a form of subjective mystery, wherein the heart is emotively warmed by the fact that our intelligible experience of the world's being still somewhat reflects, however so dimly, a small likeness to the being of the creator. In either case, knowledge (or the denial of) remains as exclusively intellectual event. However, on Yannaras' reading of Dionysius' analogy of *dissimilar* similarities, even this infinitely small "likeness" which bridges the created and uncreated is severed, necessitating that any knowledge of divinity comes from a mode of purely existential knowledge which transcends the intelligible being (*ousia*) of created things. In this manner, as Yannaras states, the analogy of Byzantine dissimilarities presupposes a "dynamic transformation of objective predicates into experiences of personal cognition," a transition from the cognitive level of intellectual categories to the space of the universal knowledge provided by the ecstatic *logos* of personal relation.[636]

For this reason, we also see what Yannaras believes to be the most significant point of divergence between the general uses of analogy in the Greek East and Latin West. The Latin understanding of analogy (generally speaking), which uses the sense inherent to human language and the abstract idea to bridge the divide between God and man can be accomplished as an intellectual event—that is, without ascetical praxis, or participation in, the divine *Logos*. In this manner, one can, theoretically, acquire knowledge of God's being through the use of "natural reason," outside the being of the ecclesial event. On the other hand, the "analogy" of dissimilar similarities, which is crossed out completely, does not lead to knowledge of God by way of the intellect, but is rather accomplished as a *moral* achievement within the life and practice of the *ekklēsia* alone; that is, through erotic self-transcendence in response to a loving call, and thus the agapeic actualization of the human *hypostasis* in the fullness of personal communion.

Thus in the philosophical *tropos* of the Church Fathers, no different from the philosophical *tropos* of Hellenism, the acquisition of truth is always a wholistic endeavor: "the unity of mind and heart, *logos* and action, morality and being; in short, in its whole human *hypostasis*."[637]

Logos and Hierarchy

This strong correlation between the iconic image and ascetical/moral praxis when seeking to acquire and pass on knowledge in the Greek Fathers' tradition is portrayed most acutely in what Yannaras understands as the hierarchical ordering of "analogical" knowledge within Byzantine thought—an emphasis which was first made thematic in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite,

636 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 215.
637 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 187.

but which, as Yannaras states, has now "has been integrated into the whole structure of the Church's teaching."[638]

In the writings of Dionysius, hierarchy is understood as a sacred order of created beings; namely, the celestial (angelic) and ecclesial (human beings and the Church). However, this hierarchy is much more than a mere rank of order. Rather, hierarchy is understood as a unique mode of existence that assimilates those who partake in it towards a likeness with God, each according to their in its own measure.[639] Hierarchy, for Yannaras, thus implies the natural "stages" of existential/ontological perfection:[640] the more one becomes like God through imitation and/or participation, the more one is united to him, and the more one has union with him, the more one becomes like him. For this reason, Dionysius states that hierarchy is "a sacred order, knowledge and activity," the end of which is assimilation to God and union with him; that is, the deification of the participant.[641] In this manner, the Church Father's promotion of "analogical knowledge," as described in the section above, *is* hierarchical, an ordered structure of dynamic becoming which leads to experiential knowledge of the divine through the stages of purification, illumination, and union, thereby presupposes the unity of praxis, experience, and analogical illumination for the acquisition of truth.

In many ways, this understanding of hierarchy in Eastern Orthodox thought can be highlighted as the ultimate "symbol," one might say, which can define, or make manifest, the "personal" form of knowing which is presupposed in Byzantine/Orthodox thought. Thus to understand the gnoseological function of hierarchy is, for Yannaras, to understand the uniqueness of the early Christian tradition in contrast to the dominant rationalism that would go on to develop in the Latin West.

First, concerning the ecclesial hierarchy, there stands for Dionysius the dynamic movement of purification. The "lowest" order in this hierarchy includes mainly catechumens and penitents; i.e., those who stand in need of purification and being purified. To this order primarily belongs the deacons, whose job it is to purify through ethical teachings and exposition of the Church's doctrines and scriptures. Then there is the "middle order," the "sacred people" who are in the process of being purified (i.e., those who are in a state of grace, or who are actively participating in the divine life), and thus are furthermore in the following process of being illuminated. Here the role of the priest or clergy is ultimately to illuminate others, which also comes about through the process of the sacraments, wherein one is gifted a participation of and union with divine life. Finally there is the highest order which belongs to the monks: in having been purified and illuminated, the monks are now in the process of being perfected through attempting to wholly align their will, or activity, with that of divine activity. Thus throughout the Church we have the

638 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 216.
639 "Hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is raised up to the imitation of God in proportion to the illuminations divinely given to it." Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 3.1, SC 58 bis, 87 (PG 3:164d); cited in *Person and Eros*, 217n51.
640 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 217.
641 "The goal of hierarchy, then, is assimilation to God and union with him so far as it is attainable…" Dionysius, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 3.2, SC 58 bis, 87-88 (PG 3:165a)

threefold movement of purification, illumination, and perfection, the purpose of which, in all its stages, is to draw rational beings up to union with God through the process of deification.[642]

What is unique to this vision, as Yannaras points out, is that imitation of, and union with, God is recognized by Dionysius as the way and goal of all knowledge. Or, going back to our previous terminology, one comes to know truth only by *becoming* true.[643] For the Christian, of course, this requires a participation in God's triadic mode of existence, which in itself is only accomplished through a conversion to, and wholistic participation in, a communally established, liturgical way of life.[644] The "sacred people," then, who have fully converted to the life and practice of the ecclesial event begin to acquire knowledge of the truth to the extent in which they participate in her mode of existence: a kenotic, loving, ecstatic life of *koinonia*, established and secured through symbols (icons, Church architecture, the scriptures, writings of the Church Fathers), ascetical praxis (fasting, obeying the commandments), and sacramental participation (baptism, confession, communion, etc.), all of which allow the participant to acquire a likeness of, and thereby communion with, the divine being. And finally, the monk, having given up the untruthful way of "the world" in its entirety, has dedicated every fiber of his being to acquiring the above life to the fullest measure. As such, it is most often the monk which is recognized as the pinnacle of Christian perfection, becoming themselves "clear and spotless mirrors" of Christian Wisdom.[645]

From this context of hierarchy and communal praxis, we are thus reminded that for Yannaras, the symbols of the *ekklēsia*—written, spoken, sung or painted—lead to "knowledge" only to the extent in which they guide the participant beyond themselves (their intelligible sense of meaning) towards their final end: an experiential, personal union with divine being.[646] Here each symbol is not understood as a containing a "meaning" that can be understood autonomously within the structure of human language. Rather, they are recognized as common *logoi*, or universal testimonies, of those who have been most fully illumined and perfected. Hence, as Yannaras states, the symbols of the *ekklēsia* can only be understood primarily from within the context of *mystagogy*: that is, as the rational testimony of those who have come to acquire knowledge of God through their deification, and thus as symbolic *logoi* which can existentially guide the converted along this very path of purification, illumination, and perfection.

In this manner, we see how within the writings of the Church Fathers, the knowledge acquired through the use of *logos* does not represent an "intellectual-methodological scheme," nor

642 For the three primary levels of the ecclesial hierarchy, see Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 52-78.
643 "Knowledge is the perfection of man as man." Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.10 (PG 9:477c); cited in *Person and Eros*, 216n49.
644 "Knowledge is life, since it is in travail with the whole power of the mystery…by which we are assimilated to the living and life-giving *Logos*." Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* (PG 74:485d); cited in *Person and Eros*, 215n45.
645 See Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 69.
646 As Symeon the New Theologian clearly states, thematizing the Greek position: "Nobody can speak about the unapproachable glory of his countenance and about the energy and power of his all-holy Spirit, or light, unless he has first seen this light with the eyes of the soul and gained precise knowledge of the radiance and energy within himself…Neither can he therefore say that he has arrived at knowledge of God simply by hearing about it. For how can he know what he has not seen? *Ethical Treatises* 5 (SC 129.98.10).

a static-intellectual understanding of objectively signified essences and/or propositional statements. Indeed, the use of the person's *logos* does not lead to any form of knowing which is apprehended through the intellect alone. Rather, for Yannaras, the use and apprehension of *logos* articulates an existential reality that transcends the determinate nature of mere thought, wherein knowledge of God is recognized as an experiential-universal union,[647] a personal *relation* that is actualized and guided pre-eminently through the function of communal praxis.

Of course, the Church's cosmological understanding of hierarchy transcends the ecclesial function of hierarchy as we have so briefly touched upon here. Not only is there involved the participation of celestial beings, but this hierarchical vision of imitation extends to the whole cosmos as a uniform hierarchy and thearachic arrangement of beings. In this manner, *all* beings harmoniously participate in the divine "will" or *energeia* of God, such that the entire cosmos, as beauty, acquires a "likeness" to God; that is, once more, the beings in the cosmos are recognized a *pragmata*, things/deeds of the creator God, receiving the hypostatic mark of their personal bearer as they come in and out of being. But even here, as emphasized in the previous chapter, Yannaras believes that this is not simply a vision of the cosmos that is deduced or constituted *after* the fact of beings having "risen to presence" from nothingness, such that the nothingness is rationally replaced by the causal will of a creator-god once the beings have already been manifest. Rather, Yannaras argues that, for the Church Fathers, the hypostatic mode in which beings *are* is an inherent part of their primordial manifestation: it is recognized as the *tropos* in which they rise to presence in reference to the person. And this experience, furthermore, is not a subjective experience of one who, through faith, has created a mediating horizon which determines this givenness of beings as such. Rather, it is promoted as a universal fact of the created *prósopon*—the being who, through the process of purification, illumination, and perfection, erotically "stands forth" from nature in the agapeic *tropos* of relation, and thus naturally experiences the manifestation of beings as a gift from the "divine lover" of whom he dwells in communion with.

Thus when the Church Fathers *speak* of the cosmic *Logos*—and likewise, the Being of beings—they do not speak of or refer to *ousia*. Rather, for Yannaras, they speak of the mode in which something is, its mode of existence. And this existence, in both its created and uncreated forms, is the existence of hypostatic being: "he whom was 'in the beginning,' and 'by whom all things were made' (John 1:2)," since "in everything depicted, it is the *hypostasis*, and not the *ousia* which is depicted."[648] Yet even here, as Maximus the Confessor states, there remains the danger of attempting to make stagnant this knowledge in a form of dogmatic objectification. Thus as Yannaras seeks to constantly remind his readers, to "know" that which is proclaimed in the philosophy of the Church Fathers can only be found in the immediacy of *relation*, not in the determinate nature of thought—an event which itself is only actualized and apprehended through "becoming true" within the life and praxis of the ecclesial event.[649]

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647 "Knowledge unites man by experience with God." Diadochus of Photice, *Gnostic Chapters*, 10:22; cited in Yannaras, 216n45.

648 Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetics* 3.34 (PG 99:405a).

649 "And when any mind that has become a lover of mystical theology…teaches and initiates others into theology , if he should keep any form of intellection while being initiated or initiating others into the *Logos* (who is beyond

For Yannaras, then, it is only with this understanding of critical thought in Hellenism, combined with the Church Father's personalist ontology, that we can understand the uniqueness in which Greek *logos* was appropriated and understood in the philosophy of the Greek Fathers.

Phenomenology and Personhood

With this overview of the use of *logos* in the Greek/Christian tradition as interpreted by Yannaras, it would be beneficial in closing to overview in what way Yannaras' reading is and is not influenced by the phenomenological tradition. This will then allow us a clearer understanding of what is and is not the actual philosophy of the Church Fathers, while also helping us see how Yannaras believes the Church Fathers are able to overcome the problems of Heidegger's phenomenology.

First, as pointed out in chapter, one, it must be remembered that Yannaras is not simply "interpreting" the Church Fathers from a phenomenological, existential horizon. Rather, Yannaras believes that Heidegger and the phenomenological/existential movements of the twentieth century simply reflect, or come close to, the existential language and presuppositions of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy as it had been passed on to him from the Russian diaspora. Thus we must always keep in mind this ordering of events when seeking to understand Yannaras, who sees Heidegger's phenomenology, especially his insights into the Greek tradition, as mirroring the form of thought he had *already* adopted, and thus as a helpful tool in seeking to bring to presence the language-terminology/philosophy of the Christian Greek East—an seeming forgotten use of *logos* which, as Rowan Williams points out in his review of Yannaras' work, "does seem to offer a genuine alternative language to that of the Latin West."[650]

This distinction between phenomenology and Yannaras' interpretation of Greek *logos* is most evidently noted in the fact that, in the latter part of *Person and Eros*, Yannaras outright distances himself and the philosophy of the Church Fathers from certain presuppositions of phenomenology.[651] For even though phenomenology has brought the thinker "back to the things themselves," Yannaras' final critique of phenomenology is that it limits itself to the Western tradition's intellectualist reduction of knowledge, and thus always restricts the Being of things to their intelligible givenness.[652] And this critique, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is applied even to the great Heidegger, who identifies the beings (in part) with their temporal disclosure in presence. Thus no matter the form it takes—whether in the reflective *logos* of Husserl's objects or

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intellection) , he dishonors his head' (1 Cor 11:4), for he has subjected him who is simple and beyond any intellection to some being or something that is subject to knowledge." Thus, "[i]t is necessary for him to see the true God *Logos* sightlessly and stripped of very concept and knowledge…" attempting rather to be initiated into "what belongs to the divine through the complete subtraction of beings." Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassius* 25 (PF 90:333cd); cited in *Person and Eros*, 196n79.

650 On this point, see Rowan Williams, "The Theology of Personhood: A study of the Thought of Christos Yannaras," in *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event*, 226.

651"Our understanding of the existential and cognitive fact of relation depends on ontological presuppositions necessarily different from those relating to phenomenology." Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 176.

652 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 174.

the ecstatic *logos* of Heideggerian Being—Yannaras believes that the phenomenologist's *logos* always presupposes some semantic-objective content, a rational "horizon" which attempts to know that which "is" solely in the light of intelligible presence.[653] In other words, Yannaras claims that phenomenology (or at least, the phenomenology he was aware of at the time) cannot account for the type of experiential, non-mediated knowledge of personal experience which the Church Fathers spoke of, which always transcends and is absolutely other to that which can be intelligibly received as presence.

For Yannaras, then, reflecting the critique of Emanuel Levinas, the presuppositions of the phenomenological movement (from Husserl to Heidegger and Sartre) problematically create an epistemology that inevitably reduces knowledge to an objective expression of its semantic content: that is, to the intelligible "sense" or meaning that can be recollected through various forms of the reduction. And this leads, as the history of the twentieth century testifies, both to a relativization of knowledge within the particularity of hermeneutic expression (as noted in Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl), or to a restriction of knowledge to the boundaries of language (as can be noted in logical positivism, structuralism, and analytic philosophy).[654] This first point, on Yannaras' reading, is clearly worked out in the work and influence of Saussure, whereby the noted arbitrary link between the signifier an the signified leads to the divorce of *logos* from its relationship with the existential experience of the person;[655] the second point is defined clearly by the work of Wittgenstein and other logical positivists who reduce knowledge of the world to that which can be given meaning in and through language.[656] And while one may question Yannaras' leap from Heidegger and phenomenology to the discourse of twentieth century linguistics (linguistic neopositivism), Yannaras main point here is to reveal how both of these movements are founded on the presupposition that knowledge is identified solely with the semantic disclosure of sense—that which is intelligibly given to presence with a clear meaning—thereby reducing knowledge to an event of the intellect alone, even if non-reflective, as noted in the work of Heidegger.[657]

For Yannaras, then, these philosophical movements are all understood simply as the logical unfolding of the Latin tradition at large, wherein knowledge of truth was first established as purely abstract-intellectual endeavor—"*adaequatio rei et intelletus*" (the adequation/correspondence of the thing and the intellect), such that "*ergo nec veritas nisi in intellectu*" (therefore neither is there

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653 In phenomenology, "the *logos* bridges the void between the subjectivity of knowledge and the objectivity of the semantic content of knowledge. Knowledge is always experience or awareness of disclosure, but a disclosure of a particular thing. Knowledge always has some semantic content." See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 174.

654 On this point, see Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 175.

655 For Saussure, the objectivity of content is shaped by the *logos* as concept, as what is signified, so that the signifier might be expressed linguistically through the acoustic image. And the acoustic image as such shapes, or defines and exhausts, the content of knowledge. However, for Saussure, insofar as the signifier is arbitrary in conjunction with the signified, it is severed from its relationship with the existential experience, or relativity, of what has been received. On Yannaras' reading of Saussure, see *Person and Eros*, 174-175.

656 For Yannaras full engagement with Wittgenstein on this point, see *The Effable and the Ineffable.*

657 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 180.

any truth except in the intellect").[658] Thus in reference to knowledge of Being in the West, this presumption would naturally be carried forward in the same manner, whether unfolding in the dialectic of analogy (scholastic), univocity (modern), or equivocity (post-modern)—all of which, for Yannaras, are part of a rationalist *ethos* which even the great Heidegger was unable to escape from.

In this manner, we see clearly how Yannaras believes the gnoseological and ontological presuppositions of the Greek East radically differs not simply from the Scholastic and Modern tradition, but also from that of Heidegger and the existential, phenomenological movements, even if the latter have similar insights and emphases. The main points of convergence, as we have already noted, can be found in the apophatic denial that knowledge of a being's Being can be defined (disclosed) in ontic categories, as well as the radical emphasis given to experience and manifestation. Other than this, Yannaras believes that the correlation between the philosophy of the Church Fathers and the phenomenological movement have no further common ground.[659]

For according to Yannaras, the Church Father's difference in methodology is primarily founded upon the existential-universal relation that the person fundamentally *is*, which in its ecstatic reference *from* nature (and thus from the workings of the natural intellect), is the ultimate "horizon," or *logos*, which allows for the existential reception of the cosmic *Logos*, which by definition transcends the intelligible and determinate "shape" and "form" of thought. From this perspective, as Yannaras states, the *logos* of the Christian East possesses wider margins of possibility for the disclosure and realization of knowledge that are fundamentally ignored by the existentially inclined movements of Western thought.

It should also be noted in closing that the phenomenological method as it had been advanced in Yannaras' time of writing *Person and Eros* had yet to offer a satisfactory account of the phenomenon which could account for the type of ecclesial experience which Yannaras speaks of. However, since this time there has been many advancements in the discipline of phenomenology, especially in the movement of the "theological turn" in France, which I believe mirrors, in an uncanny manner, the gnoseological and ontological presuppositions of the Greek Church Fathers which Yannaras has attempted to explicate in his own work. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will attempt to reveal how and why this is the case.

Summary/Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, we have attempted to lay out what Yannaras believes to be the unique function and understanding of *logos* in the Greek/Christian tradition; more specifically, we have attempted to understand how this unique understanding of *logos* in the patristic literature is used for the sake of acquiring knowledge of Being in a non-ontic manner, as described in the previous chapter.

We began by focusing on the Hellenistic understanding of *logos* as it functioned in antiquity, both from a semantic and ontological perspective. Ontologically, Yannaras wishes to

658 Cited in Yannaras, *Schism*, 102.
659 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 176.

emphasize how *logos* signified not simply the identity or unity of a thing, but the *manner* (mode) in which it is what it is in the mode of disclosure. For Yannaras, then, it is particularly this mode of signifying *logos* that the Greek Church Fathers adopted in their own philosophy. For the Church Fathers, what is known about Being does not refer to *ousia* as much as to the logical (*logikós*) *tropos* in which beings become that which they are, which as we have seen, refers to the free and hypostatic being of the person. Consequently, it is this use of *logos* by the Church Fathers which Yannaras believes made possible a non-essentialist appropriation of the term in their writings.

From this ontological understanding of the cosmic *logos* then comes a different understanding of the human *logos*, which participates in and allows for knowledge of the cosmic *logos* as such. Here Yannaras identifies the *logos* of the human being not simply with the noetic powers of man (the intellect alone), since the receptive experience of the world's personal *logos* is spoken of by the Church Fathers as always transcending the determinate function of thought. Rather, following the patristic synthesis of Palamas, Yannaras identifies the existential *relation* of the *prósopon* as the primary and universal capacity of humankind's rational (*logikós*) capacity: that is, it is the person's universal capacity for existential relation that is recognized as primary functioning of human *logos*, whereas the rational functioning of the intellect, as *logos*, is secondary and derivative of this primary function.

This naturally led us to try and understand the relationship between the human *logos* and its two primary functions, wherein we have an understanding of *logos* as a universal, logical relation as well as *logos* as a universal *idea*, both of which allow the human person to receive and bear witness to their experience of Being. We began by reviewing Yannaras' understanding of the symbol, which according to its Hellenistic use, sees language (*logos*) as functioning primarily as a signifier (symbol) for one's immediate and personal experiences, and *secondarily* as an intellectual meaning. From this perspective, we see how the symbol allows for knowledge to be identified primarily with the form of knowing that is received in the relational understanding of knowledge as described above. In this regard, the intelligible idea which is derived from said experiences acts as a "common logos" from which the experience itself can be recalled, shared, or verified. Such is the function of *logos* which Yannaras ascribes to the philosophy of the Church Fathers, whom he believes use this understanding of the symbol to define, protect, and pass on the purely experiential form of knowing that is witnessed to in the ecclesial event.

This is noted by Yannaras in the Church Father's iconic understanding of the images that are derived from the created order, whereby what is depicted in the *eikon*, as Theodore the Studite declares, it is not the nature, but the *hypostasis*.[660] This use of the symbol is also noted in the Church Fathers unique use of analogy, whereby in relation to the Church's experience of divine being, the created image is recognized as a "dissimilar similarity," that is, a real *dis*similarity to divine being, therein leading the participant to cross out the posited image completely so as to "recall" and "relive" the immediacy of one's experience of revealed divine being that "transcends the mind" in and through the immediacy of personal relation. In closing, we then saw how this very use of *logos* led to a form of knowledge that could only be understood and given within the

660 Theodore the Studite, Antirrhetics 3.34 (PG 99:405a)

hierarchical mystagogy of the ecclesial event, thereby affirming how, for Yannaras, this unique understanding of *logos* in the patristic literature is capable of acquiring knowledge of Being in a non-essentialist, albeit communal, manner. Therefore, we see once more how Yannaras believes the philosophy of the Church Fathers is able to give a non-nihilistic response to the ontological problem that does not succumb to the onto-theological problematic of Western "metaphysics."

Chapter VIII
Narrative: An Ontological Reading of The Fall and Salvation

In the previous chapters, we have offered an overview of what Yannaras understands to be the non-"metaphysical" (in the Heideggerian use of the term) ontological and gnoseological presuppositions of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy, with the further intent of revealing how Yannaras believes their philosophy as such can overcome the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

On Yannaras' interpretation, the ontological problem for the Church Fathers is summarized exhaustively in the reality of the person (*hypostasis*), or personal (*hypostatic*) existence. More specifically, we may say that for the Church Fathers, everything that *is* only exists insofar as it is hypostatically constituted in the act of personal *energeia*, both human and divine. Here all that "is" is situated within the single fact of relation between God, as triadic communion, and humankind, as the personal dimension of created being. Starting with the Trinity, we understand the Absolute as radically personal, as being hypostatically constituted through the absolute freedom and love of divine persons. In light of God's free and hypostatic existence, we then understand the reality of the world as *pragmata*, created deeds/acts of the divine *Prósopon*. Here the dynamic arrangement of created beings as such constitutes forms and structures of *beauty*, an adornment which manifests the rationality of the *cosmos* as an "invitation" to relation with the divine Other.[661] The third component of this ontology, then, is the being of humanity, with whom the invitatory, relational structure of the cosmos receives its sense, or meaning. In this manner, we understand that human beings, unlike the rest of creation, have been gifted with the potential to exist not merely as a determinate product of hypostatic *energeia* (as a determinate, created thing), but relationally, as *hypostases*, insofar as they respond to the divine call in the erotic mode of loving relation. Thus as we explained in detail in the previous chapter, it is this very relational mode of personal existence which is argued for by the Church Fathers as making possible humankind's knowledge of that which transcends the being of the created order through the *tropos* of hypostatic communion.

At this point, we now come to the narrative dimension of the Church Fathers' philosophy, which Yannaras believes is best understood from within this ontological and gnoseological structure. For insofar as we understand the very being of the cosmos as situated within the single fact of relation between God and humanity, the end of which is the hypostatic realization of creation through humanity's personal communion with the divine, then, as Yannaras states, the Church Fathers also understand the entire process of cosmic and historical becoming as "the positive impetus of acceptance, or the converse movement of rejection, of this personal invitation to communion between the created and the uncreated: that is, it revolves around the existential fact of personal freedom in its pragmatic and cosmic dimensions."[662] Here Yannaras is claiming that the Church Fathers' *mythos* of the Fall and salvation (*theosis*) must be understood in an ontological, Hellenistic manner, such that the "Fall" is not understood simply as a historical event, but as humanity's ongoing hypostatic movement of *rejection* in response to the divine call, and thereby its rejection of Being itself; so too, salvation is also understood ontologically as the positive impetus of *acceptance*—the reversal of this initial rejection—and thus humankind's communion with and participation in Being.

In this chapter, we will take an in depth look at the ontological and phenomenological implications of this narrative as such, especially in regards to what this understanding of Being and becoming implies about Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the nihilistic experience of nothingness. Most specifically, we will show how the ontological starting point of the Church Fathers allows for a different phenomenological analysis of nothingness, one which will ultimately be identified by Yannaras as the

661 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 179.
662 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 179.

human person's falling away from its hypostatic potential, its inability to transcend the self and the being of nature, and thus its inability to "cross the distance" of nothingness *via* relation with divine being. This will be accomplished, first, by offering an overview of Yannaras' ontological reading of the Fall, followed by a corresponding ontological rendering of salvation. In closing, we will then see how, according to this overarching narrative, it is only through holistic participation in the *philosophia* of Christianity that, for the Church Fathers, the threat of nothingness is able to be overcome.

An Ontological Understanding of the Fall

To understand the ontological significance of the Fall for the Church Fathers is to understand it in light of humanity's end, or *telos*. And to understand humanity's *telos*, on Yannaras' reading, is to understand the ontological status of the person in relation to nature as described in chapter VI, since it is here, in humanity's hypostatic "otherness" from nature, that we find the image of God in humankind, and thus the potential for humanity to exist in the *tropos* of divine being.[663]

As we have previously explained, there is promoted within the writings of the Church Fathers a critical ontological distinction of the *prósopon*, or *hypostasis*, from human nature in the same way in which there is posited an ontological distinction between the divine persons and the divine nature. For both God and human beings, the being of the person exists as a radical otherness *from* nature, such that the being of personhood is not derived from the nature, but from the fact of relation, which is actualized in the ecstatic act of freedom. In this manner, we also see that the end, or *telos*, of humanity is the realization of this potential: to transcend the determinacy of created nature in the mode of ecstatic self-gift and loving communion with divine being, and in so doing, take on this very life for itself.

As explained in chapter VI, this ecstatic otherness of the persons from nature, and thus the hypostatic constitution of God's (and humanity's) being, is most commonly signified by the Church Fathers as love (*agape*), *eros*, and freedom.[664] Thus for Yannaras, these symbols are synonyms which signify the same reality. In humankind's current state, however, Yannaras believes that the most enlightening word which can be used here is *freedom* (freedom is the only symbol which allows the fallen human person to "recall" their otherness from nature, since divine love, or *eros*, are symbols only understood fully by those within the ecclesial event). Freedom, in this regard, is not understood as an abstract idea, nor is it understood as absolute freedom in the libertarian sense, as existential freedom from any restriction or coercion. Freedom, as understood in reference to the ecclesial event, is recognized rather as transcendence from the determination of nature.[665] Made in the image of God, as an ontological "otherness" *from* nature, freedom is understood here as the precondition of personal existence—that is, for "eternal life"—as it is

663 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 232-34.
664 See, for example, Maximus the Confessor, *Scholia on the Divine Names*, PG 4, 221A.
665 As Gregory of Nyssa states, "There is no necessity governing the divine nature." Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1 (PG 45:329a); On this point, see Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 232.

freedom alone that contains the potential for the self-realization of the human *hypostasis* as a being-in-relation.[666]

As a *potential*, however, Yannaras emphasizes that the freedom of the human person contains the possibility of failure, and thus its own self-annihilation. In other words, contingency lies within its very structure. The human person cannot be coerced to use the gift of its being as a means towards relation, and thus can use the potentiality of its freedom to refuse the actualization of its created purpose, or end. The freedom of the will, in this sense, can lead not only to the unfulfillment of humanity's hypostatic potential, but also to a different mode in which the human person actualizes itself in relation to its given nature. And on Yannaras' reading of the Church Fathers, it is this alternative, non-relational *tropos* of personal actualization that humanity now finds itself.[667]

As we have seen, for Yannaras, the intended *tropos* in which human nature was created to exist was as the "content of the person"; that is, in his synthesis of the Church Fathers' philosophy, Yannaras argues that human nature was made to exist as a mode of the human person's freedom, wherein nature was wholly subject to and determined by the freedom of the person, just like its divine archetype. In this state, the responsorial freedom of the person, through adequately responding to the call of divine being, becomes that which constitutes the being of its nature, thus allowing created nature to participate in the mode of the uncreated. However, insofar as the freedom of the person is not fulfilled—insofar as the human *hypostases* refuses to actualize its freedom in the mode relation—then Yannaras points out that for the Fathers, this order between the person and nature is naturally *reversed*, such that the ecstatic freedom of the person becomes subject to the determinate being of created nature, becoming defined by nature as such.[668] In this state, the person no longer hypostatically constitutes its nature through the *ek-stases* of loving communion; on the contrary, outside the life-giving mode of *schési*, it is now the determinate structure of nature alone which grounds and constitutes the being of humanity. Such is, for Yannaras, the Fathers' understanding of "the Fall"—the deterioration or reversal of the primordial relation between person and nature, an "existential alienation" of their ontological difference.[669]

The Fall, in this sense, is a fall from life as hypostatic relation, which in light of God's triadic being, *is* eternal life—that which "truly is." Consequently, this severance from Being leaves the freedom of the human person to exhaust itself within the becoming of the created order alone, which apart from God, is defined by finitude, decay, suffering, and death.[670] Such is, for the Church

666 For an overview of Yannaras' patristic understanding of freedom and the human person, see Dan Chitoiu, "Personal Reality and Understandings of Freedom," in *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science*, No. 4, January 2009, 113-139.
667 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 233-34.
668 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 234.
669 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 233.
670 Here Yannaras quotes Romans 8:19-22, referring to the "subjugation" of creation to "futility" and its "bondage to decay" because of humankind's fallenness.

Fathers, the current tragedy of mankind: the subjection of absolute freedom to the determinate structure of created being, the fall of the potentially infinite into the realm of mere finitude.[671]

The Biblical Account

In the biblical account of the Fall, for Yannaras, this reversal of humankind's relation to God and nature is symbolized with the imagery of food, or eating, as depicted clearly in the Garden of Eden.[672] On Yannaras' reading, this taking and eating of food that transpired in the Adamic myth must be understood ultimately as two different manners in which humankind (Adam) can receive his nourishment; that is, his sustenance for living.[673] In the Genesis account, as Yannaras notes, God created all things as *kala lian* (very good), and that which was "very good" he then offered to humankind as a blessing (*eulogia*); or, in the Hebrew, *berakà*, which means "gift" of "charism."[674] For Yannaras, the offering of food as such should be understood as the establishment of a relationship between God and humankind as Giver and recipient, a paradisial economy of life-giving relation that is symbolized as a "garden" (Gen 3: 8-9).[675] Here the fruit of trees in the garden is offered by God to man as a blessing, a *gift*, and in this manner, the nourishment that the human being requires for his existence—his very life source—is taken and received not through "the sweat of his brow" (Gen 3:19), but through the mode of relation/communion.[676]

Accordingly, we see in the Genesis account that the prelapsarian *relation* that man has with God is mediated by the created order—symbolized here with food—such that the manner in which Adam receives his very being (his "nourishment" or "sustenance") is through the economy of relationship, or communion. Thus in the event of food being blessed and given as a gift, the reception of one's food—or one might say, one's "creatureliness"—by Adam was a *eucharistía* (thanksgiving), thereby establishing the foundation and beginning of humankind's existence as an event of relation.

On Yannaras reading, then, the "tree of life" and the "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" which were planted in the garden each symbolize a different mode in which Adam and Eve may "take and eat"; that is, each tree symbolizes the manner in which, through their freedom, human beings can engage with God and creation so as to acquire life (sustenance).[677] The "tree of life" represents life as the practical result of Being as gift, thus containing God's *eulogia*: it is life

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671 For this conception of the Fall in relation to the Father's trinitarian ontology, see Jonathan Cole "Personhood, Relational Ontology, and the Trinitarian Politics of Eastern Orthodox Thinker Christos Yannaras" in *Political Theology*, 20:4 (2019), 302.

672 Yannaras' in depth reading of the *mythos* of the Fall is expounded upon more in his later work, *The Enigma of Evil*, and thus it if from this work that I will primarily be drawing from in this section.

673 See Yannaras, *The Enigma of Evil*, 23-24; 30.

674 Yannaras, *The Enigma of Evil*, 23.

675 "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." Gen 3:8-9.

676 See Yannaras, *The Enigma of Evil*, 22-23.

677 Yannaras, *The Enigma of Evil*, 24.

as relation (*schési*) between the Giver and the receiver, the initial reception of humankind beginning to participate in the mode of hypostatic, triadic being, and thus is symbolized as a eucharistic act which grants immortality. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, represents its counter-part: that is, the refusal for human beings to receive and realize their existence eucharistically as *gift*, and thus outside the life-giving *tropos* of relation. The taking and eating of the second tree, therefore, symbolizes humankind's choice to acquire life *apart* from God, through mere creatureliness rather than *schési*, and thus is an option that is forewarned with the consequence of death. Here humankind receives creation not as a gift, and thus as a potential means for communion with the Giver, but rather as an object of use which can allow one to acquire life outside of relation with the creator: "when you eat from [the tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God…When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Gen 3:5-6).[678]

For Yannaras, it is for this reason that the biblical account of the Fall is read by the Church Fathers not simply as humankind's free decision to reject communion with God. What is also symbolized in the Genesis account is the inauguration of a different mode of existing for humankind. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the one tree which was not blessed, not given to Adam and Eve as a *gift*. To take and eat from this tree, then, represented not simply a transgression of a divine commandment; so too, it represents the decision of humankind to enter into a fundamentally different relation with the created order, one wherein what is given is no longer received as gift, but as a good that only exists self-referentially—as an beneficial good for self-propitiation—and thus outside of the economy of loving communion. Accordingly, it also symbolizes the attempt for humankind to achieve life and immortality *outside* of communion with God. Such is why the natural consequence of seeking to eat from the tree of good and evil led to an immediate severance of the relation between God and man (the excavation of Adam and Eve from paradise), the loss of immortality (the tree of life), as well as the beginning of humankind's violent history (Cain and Abel), all of which symbolize the newly established mode of existing within the created order.

Here we see more clearly what Yannaras means by claiming that the "Fall" for the Church Fathers is recognized as "the deterioration or reversal of the primordial relation between person and nature," leading to the "subjection" of the human person to nature. Before the Fall, the human person constituted the being of his nature in the mode of *ek-stases* insofar as his being was ontologically founded on the event of relation with God; after the rejection of said relation, fueled by humankind's attempt to acquire life in an autonomous manner, the ontological grounding of humanity's being was naturally reversed, such that humankind found its sustenance, its "life," solely through the finitude of creation; that is, through a mode of existence that, outside of participation in divine life, is subject to the change, decay, suffering and death.

678 Yannaras, *The Enigma of Evil*, 24-26.

From Person To Individual

This ontological reversal between person and created nature, understood by the Church Fathers as the "Fall," led to what many contemporary Orthodox theologians refer to as the transition from the *prósopon* to the "individual" (*átomon*).[679] Taking mainly from Lossky at this point, Yannaras argues that the "individual" within Orthodox Christianity—often signified by the Fathers as *aùtotes* or *filantia*—symbolizes the *non-relational* manner in which the human person exhausts his being; i.e., within immanence alone.[680] Whereas the prelapsarian person hypostatically constituted its being, and thus created nature, in the mode of loving relation, the individual, in having rejected this hypostatic potential, seeks to acquire being autonomously through nature alone; that is, outside the fact of communion. Such is why humankind's relation to food is completely changed outside of the paradisial garden: no longer as a potential for relation and thanksgiving, "food" (symbolizing here the entirety of the created order) now exists as the primary means for the self-constitution and self-propitiation of *individual* survival.

The created person, in this manner, no longer exist as an absolute otherness from nature through the dynamic act of being in communion. As individual, the person degrades its *ek-stases* from nature to exhaust itself in immanence, in the created order alone.[681] Here the human *hypostasis*, severed from relation, must exhaust his being within mere nature, thereby reducing the actualization of the human person to an autonomous and self-sufficient event.[682] In other words, the fallen person reduces their freedom to the constitution of its individualized nature through the mode of self-imposition, which he then regards as "himself" (*my* thoughts, my feelings, my will).

For the Church Fathers, the actualization of human nature as such fragments it into individual wills with discordant needs and desires, each of which seeks the establishment and protection of its own individuality.[683] Here, as Yannaras points out, the autonomous individualization of one's actualized nature comes to exist *against* and in opposition to other individuals. This then naturally leads to an instinctive self-defensiveness of the individual, since the very existence of each individual threatens and collides with the autonomy of other individuals.[684] Thus rather than being seen as a possible event of communion, the other is now

679 Yannaras refers to the being of the *individual* primarily using the word *atomikotés*, which seeks to emphasize the person as an individual, autonomous unit. In this manner, it has been translated as "atomic individuality" in the English.

680 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 234, 264. This idea of the person versus the individual is found most explicitly in Lossky, but as Aristotle Papanikolaou points out, it is an explicit distinction in Orthodox thought that can be traced back to the Russian Sophiologists in response to German Idealism. See Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its Exponents in Twentieth-century Orthodox Theology," 232-245

681 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 242.

682 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 265.

683 As St. Maximus states: "the self-love and cleverness of men, alienating them from each other and perverting the law, have cut our single human nature into fragments. They have so extended the insensibility which they introduced into our nature and which now dominates it, that our nature, divided in will and purpose, fights against itself." See Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts* (PG 90:1196abc); cited in Yannaras, 238n31.

684 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 265-266.

given primarily as a threat to one's very existence, as I now "am" only insofar as I continue to assert the autonomy of my nature over and against the autonomy of the other.

From this perspective, the "fallen" relation between the person and nature is naturally seen by Yannaras as the primary horizon from which we may understand the history of violence and suffering that has plagued human existence. For rather than persons living in harmonious, loving communion, as is noted in their trinitarian archetype, each fallen person now exists as a self-sufficient *átomon*, seeking to individualize and sustain itself through nature alone. In consequence, human nature's basic needs of instinct and survival become ends in themselves, turning the natural needs of nourishment, self-perpetuation, and self-preservation into passions that end up dominating humankind's freedom.[685] In other words, the individual becomes subject to the determinate being of instinct, futility, violence, and death, all of which are understood as the natural consequences of the created world not reaching its hypostatic potential.[686]

From Relation to Nothingness

As we will see in the following section, the Church Fathers' ontological understand of the Fall in hypostatic terms, along with the contemporary Orthodox distinction between individual and person, lay the foundation for Yannaras' most exhaustive response to Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the problematic of Western nihilism. For what this reversal between the person and nature reveals is not simply a new manner in which the human person lives in the world; more specifically, and coming off our previous chapter, Yannaras draws our attention to how this new mode of personal actualization leads to a fundamentally different manner in which humankind *experiences*, or receives, the world's manifestation.

The human *prósopon*, as seen by the Church Fathers, exists as a relational, responsorial being which ecstatically transcends the being of nature in loving *eros*; that is, as an existential desire, or impetus, which freely seeks union with He whom called him forth. As stated previously, the beginning of this life-giving relationship is mediated through creation, symbolized in the garden as food. For Yannaras, humankind fell from said relation when it entered into a different relation with the created order; i.e., when the created order became an end in itself outside of its relation to God. As noted in Yannaras' reading of the biblical account, the food of the garden was no longer seen as a eucharistic sight of thanksgiving and blessing, but as a "good" *in itself* that exists outside the economy of gift. Here the created order began to be mediated from the lie of the deceiver—as containing the possibility for self-divinization, or life, apart from God—and for this reason, insofar as man believed and acted upon this lie, the manifestation of the created order began to be received in a fundamentally different manner. No longer as a gift, but as a tool, a subjective good for individual use or personal gain.

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685 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 235. See also Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 29-35.

686 As Basilio Petrá states, it is not difficult to find passages in the Church Fathers which demonstrate this personalist-ontological significance of the Fall, but Yannaras thought can be understood here most explicitly as founded upon the work of Maximus the Confessor. See Basilio Petrá, *Christos Yannaras*, 46.

Accordingly, we see even in the Genesis account that the manner in which the world is manifested/received is contingent upon the manner in which the human person seeks to actualize their freedom in relation to both God and the world. What Yannaras' ontological and gnoseological synthesis of the Church Fathers' philosophy seeks to do, however, is explain how and why this is the case.

Consciousness for the Individual

First, Yannaras points out that the fallen human being, as an *individual* whom has severed its relation with transcendence, comes to now experience itself and the world primarily in the mode of self-referentiality; that is, as an event of the self-conscious ego.[687] Rather than the person's existential *ek-stases* transcending nature, reaching its end in the dynamic and ongoing act of communion with Absolute Being, the individual's responsorial act of existential *ek-stases* "lands" on nature alone, tempted by the possibility of self-divinization, and thus comes to grasp or comprehend nature as a mere value or good—as that which exists "for me." Thus after encountering and accepting the being of nature as a mere value (as that which exists simply for my benefit or good, rather than as a means for relation), the erotic event of existential *ek-stases* reverses and comes back upon itself, creating a self-enclosed gnoseological movement of consciousness that exhausts its desire-filled impetus within the plane of immanence.[688]

Importantly, this movement of self-referential consciousness, or what Yannaras calls the "distantiality (*apo-stasis*) of atomic individuality," must not simply be seen as the intentional result of each individual person's will. It is, as noted above, the natural and necessary consequence of the Fall, the deterioration or reversal of the primordial relation between person and nature, and thus the necessary mode of existing that the person is subject to after its severance from being-as-relation; that is, it is the fallen person's "more or less involuntary subjection to [human] nature," which in its fallen (non-relational) state, is fueled by the "dynamic urge to be liberated in terms of atomic self-completeness, to prove itself (as natural individuality) to be self-determining."[689] In this manner, the drive for existential self-completeness is inherent to the being of humanity in its fallen state, thereby making the establishment of the ego and the self-referential movement of consciousness a necessary event that is procured more by the self-determinate drive of nature rather

687 "The failure to attain personal relation…the falling away of the person…falls away to the existential limits of natura atomic individuality. It is [the fallen person] an ontic unit simply endowed with individual self-consciousness and a capacity for rational thought….intellectually in terms of mental capacity, and psychologically in terms of a self-conscious ego." See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224-225.

688 I define immanence here in both a phenomenological and metaphysical manner. Metaphysically, immanence is that which is limited to the created order, and thus that which is known by the natural intellect. Thus phenomenologically, immanence is that which is known by the subject, or *Dasein;* i.e., the exhaustion of knowledge within the workings of natural consciousness in relation to the created world. Yannaras does not use the words immanence and transcendence in *Person* and *Eros*, but I have appropriated to use them here for the sake of better explaining his contrast between the experience of the person and the experience of the individual.

689 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 240.

than the will, or freedom, of the human person, even if the freedom of the person becomes complicit with the being of fallen nature as such.

For Yannaras, we may say that this enclosing of individual self-consciousness within immanence, and thus the reception (disclosure) of the gift as a self-referential, utilitarian value, is constituted in both a positive and negative manner. Positively, the being of creation is now disclosed as an impersonal value, or "object" of use, insofar as the intentional acts of the individual actively constitute it as such; that is, insofar as the egoistic movement of the person's individualized nature actively bestows upon it a value, or meaning, which it did not previously have.[690] Negatively, however, the being of creation is also manifested differently insofar as the this absence of hypostatic communion leaves the gnoseological reception of the given to the capacity of rational thought alone; that is, in continuation with the previous chapter, the world is received solely through the *logos* of natural reason rather than the *logos* of relation.[691] Thus it is not simply that the individual experiences the given as a mere object, or value, simply because it actively constitutes it as such. So too, as Yannaras points out, after the severance of *relation*, the gnoseological reception that the person has with beings is *necessarily* reduced to that which can be known (grasped or mastered) with the intellect alone, since the form of personal knowledge that comes only from the *logos* of existential relation has been occluded.

This insight has two important implications for Yannaras' reading of phenomenology. In relation to the first point, we must understand that the reduced, value-laden experience of consciousness must not be considered "natural" or primordial (the original phenomenon). Rather, when starting from the philosophy of the Church Fathers, the "neutral" phenomenological analysis of contemporary phenomenologists, which by and large reduce the primordial manifestation of *pragmata* either to impersonal "objects" (Husserl) or "beings" (Heidegger), is to be recognized in itself as an unnatural (non-primordial) and derivative phenomenon.[692] Meaning, for Yannaras, what is being offered here is simply the phenomenological analysis of the *individual* which no longer has the relational capacity to receive and experience the hypostatic manifestation of Being's primordial manifestation.[693] This then leads to the second point, which is that what is described by contemporary phenomenologist as being given to consciousness is not a description of *all* that is or can be received or experienced by the human person. For without the fullest actualization of the person's being in the ecstatic mode of *relation*, the person's reception of Being/beings is *necessarily* reduced to the intellectual and conscious marking of phenomenal onticity. Here the fallen human being, as *individual*, severed from relation, comes to experience itself and the world not simply in the mode of individual *self*-consciousness, but as a form of self-consciousness that is constituted primarily within the determinate capacity of rational thought, which by definition excludes the radical otherness of *hypostatic* being.[694]

690 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224, 229.
691 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224, 226-27.
692 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224-225.
693 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224.
694 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 224-27.

After making this important distinction, Yannaras engages primarily with the phenomenological analyses of Sartre in order to explicate more fully this "fallen" mode of consciousness. Here the categories of "being for-itself" (*pour-soi*), the violent gaze, and shame, all illuminate well the postlapsarian, intersubjective workings of consciousness which Yannaras' speaks of.[695] This analysis of the domineering ego, however, could naturally be used in reference to a myriad of thinkers, especially within the German idealist tradition and its ongoing reception in France, all of whom have been interpreted by the Orthodox tradition as giving a perceptive account of the postlapsarian *individual* in contrast to the ecclesial consciousness of the *prósopon*.[696] This initial interpretation was carried out, in part, by the Russian Sophiologists and other dominant thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth century in response to the rationalism of German idealism; thus what Yannaras can be understood as doing here, as we have noted in the introduction, is taking this analysis further in relation to the existential and phenomenological movements of the twentieth century.[697]

In this regard, Yannaras' engagement with phenomenology here is not technically "new." Similar to the Russian Orthodox thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he is recognizing the description and study of subjectivity and self-consciousness in Western thought—now as it has been advanced and further elaborated in the contemporary movement of phenomenology—to not be describing a natural, primordial, or universal phenomenon. Rather, when starting from the philosophy and testimony of ecclesial experience, that which is being described as "natural" or "primordial"—being given in both the natural attitude as well as in the intentional experience of the "reduction"—is only recognized as being given to the *individual*, and thus is understood as *secondary*: that is, it is recognized as a derivation and reduction from a more fundamental form of consciousness that is primordial and natural to the *prósopon*.

For this reason, Yannaras argues that the phenomena of both Husserl's ego and Heidegger's Dasein are both universal *and* reduced phenomena. Which means that the phenomenological analysis of Being/beings, when conducted from these starting points, are not invalidated *per se*. Rather, on Yannaras' reading, it is simply that their reception of what has been disclosed is not complete. For Yannaras, they offer an investigation of a derivative form of consciousness, one which, because of its postlapsarian nature, obstructs, occludes, and reduces the "things themselves" as they are originally given. Both the subject and *Dasein*, then, only receive in part what has been given in full. And according to the philosophy of the Church Fathers', what is given in full can only be received by the *prósopon*, an event which is only made possible through one's intentional participation in the being, or Hellenistic philosophy, of the ecclesial event.

This leads us, then, to Yannaras' interpretation of *theosis*, or the Church Fathers' Hellenistic understanding of salvation, which, when read correspondingly in light of this

695 For Yannaras' engagement with Sartre, see *Person and Eros*, 243-45.
696 On this contrasting development between the individual and person, see Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its Exponents in Twentieth-Century Orthodox Theology," 233-336.
697 See also Aristotle Papanikolaou on the influence of Bulgakov for the development of personalism in the contemporary Orthodox tradition in "Eastern Orthodox Theology in the Twentieth Century," 53-64.

ontological structure of the Fall, is able to offer more clearly the mode of being, or philosophical praxis, which makes this transition from individual to *prósopon* possible.

The Ontological Content of Salvation

As we outline in the previous section, the Church Fathers understand the end or *telos* of humanity as that of bringing the created order into union with the Absolute, which is revealed as personal, or hypostatic. In this manner, the created order was created "opposite" God, as an otherness from divine being, for the sake of freely entering into relation with him, and humanity is recognized as the existential potentiality for this realization. Here the human person, made in the hypostatic image of God, is understood as the created order's potential to existentially "stand outside" its nature in ecstatic freedom, and through this erotic movement, freely unite itself to divine being through the personal event of loving communion.

In and through the existential freedom of the human person, then, created nature—that which lies "opposite" God—has the potential to transcend itself in the dynamics of personal relation, but also, in and through this very freedom, the potential to deny this relation. Accordingly, as Yannaras states, the human person's *ek-stases* from nature not only constitutes the one and only potentiality of bridging the gulf, or "distance," between the world and God, but also the potential to occlude the intended process of union.[698] The Fall of humanity signifies the second option, which represents for the Church Fathers not simply a trespass of divine commandments, but a fall from Being itself. To fall from the fullness of Being, in this regard, is ultimately to fall from one's personal potential, the inability of humanity to constitute the finitude of its created nature through the eternal mode of triadic relation. This then leads, as we have extensively explained, to the deformation and ontological reversal of person and nature, such that the being of the human person is subject to and determined by the limited *tropos* of the created order.

Based upon this ontological understanding of the Fall, Yannaras argues that the Church Fathers then offer a corresponding interpretation of humanity's salvation that is also understood in an ontological manner. For if the Fall of humanity is understood as a fall from Being, as the inability of humanity to actualize its hypostatic potential through the triadic mode of relation, then the salvation (*sozo*, in Greek, to "make whole") of humanity would likewise be understood as the restoration of humanity's hypostatic potential.[699] And it is this very event of hypostatic restoration which, on Yannaras' reading, the Greek Church Father claim has been accomplished in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, thereby placing Christ—the divine *Logos*—at the crux of the Church's *philosophia*.[700]

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698 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 233.

699 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 237.

700 Yannaras' immediate switch to a seemingly distinct theological topic may come as a surprise to the Western reader, but as Petrá states, for Yannaras, being in the Eastern tradition, which never made the scholastic divide between theology and philosophy, it is much more common. For when working from the Hellenistic framework of philosophy as described in part one, the union of "theology" and "philosophy" in such a manner is not only encouraged, but

In the incarnation the *Logos* "became flesh" and, using the language of the Church Fathers, fully united his divine *hypostasis* to the fallen state of human nature; correspondingly, in his death, resurrection, and ascension, the divine *Logos* is seen as having restored human nature to its hypostatic potential, giving humanity "new life" by bringing the finite nature of humanity into the infinite fullness of hypostatic relation with the Father.[701] Thus as proclaimed most acutely in the resurrection, we see that in and through the *hypostasis* of Christ, human nature is no longer actualized through the determinacy of the created order (thus susceptible to death and decay), but is now fully constituted, or given its being, solely through the eternal *tropos* of trinitarian relation.[702] Thus in the divine *hypostasis* of Christ, humanity has been "saved"—renewed, restored—deriving its being no longer from the created order of finitude, death, and decay, but from the triadic being of hypostatic life.[703]

Such is, on Yannaras' reading, the hypostatic meaning of the Church Fathers' "metaphysical icon" of deification, or *theosis*.[704] Here "man becomes God" not according to *ousia*, but according to *tropos*: through human nature partaking of God's mode of existing, which is the hypostatic existence of triadic relation, or agapeic *eros*.[705] Such is, for Yannaras, the Church's "good news" (*evangélio*): in the God-man, humanity has been "made new," restored, such that the proper actualization of every particular human *hypostasis* is now a natural possibility for all who wish to participate in the "eternal life" (*aiōnios zōē*) given to humankind through the being of the divine *Logos* (John 17:3). Such is, furthermore, Yannaras' interpretation of the Church's very being.[706] Here the *ekklēsia* simply *is* this restored mode of human actuality, the gathering of all those who seek to "become whole" through participation in this eternal and life-giving *tropos* of existence; that is, as we noted in chapter three, the Church is the creation of a new *polis*, or mode of human co-existence, which seeks to participate in the eternal and life-giving *tropos* of the divine *Logos*.

Thus when we understand, along with the Church Fathers, the content of the Fall and salvation in an ontological manner, then we also understand the Church herself as an ontological reality: a mode of human co-existence which takes on the life of that which "truly is," and in so doing, is saved, or made whole. Here Christianity is understood primarily from a Hellenistic

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necessary, as can be noted throughout the entirety of the Greek Father's philosophy. On this point, see Petrà, *Christos Yannaras*, 43, and Yannaras, *Schism in Philosophy*, 197.

701 For the development of deification in light in this personalist light, see Louth, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 12-13, 106, 136.

702 "For our Lord Jesus Christ came for this reason…to change and transform and renew human nature….to mingle human nature with his own spirit of the Godhead." Macarius of Egypt, *Spiritual Homilies*, Hom 44.1; cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 269n35.

703 Christ, "having joined what is earthly to what is heavenly, offered it up to God, saving…and deifying it not by identity of essence but in virtue of the Incarnation. Through his holy flesh which he took from us as…he also made us 'partakers of the divine nature.'" Maximus the Confessor, *Ep*. 11 [PG 91:468c]; cited in *Person and Eros*, 270n37. 704 As Basilio Petrà states, "the economy of salvation can therefore be understood…only as the restoration of a personal mode of existence and it is this way that Yannaras actually views the matter." See Petra, *Christos Yannaras*, 46.

705 On the Church Fathers understanding of *tropos* in relation to deification, see Dionysios Skliris, "*The Philosophy of Mode in the Thought of Christos Yannaras*," 27, 30-34.

706 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 269-270.

horizon, since on Yannaras' interpretation, it is only from such a horizon that we can most properly understand the Church's earliest modes of testimonial, self-signification. For insofar as those who participate in the ecclesial event are not participating in a new "religion," but in Wisdom—the eternal mode in which all that "is" exists—then the Church is better understood, as stated by the Church Fathers, as both a new *polis* and a new philosophy.

In this manner, we may understand Yannaras here as calling his contemporary reader, influenced as he/she is by the development of "Christendom" in its Western forms, back to the Church Fathers' Hellenistic, ontological understanding of ecclesial being; that is, as an event of *theosis*, or deification—the overcoming of the Fall, or human "error" and untruth—through humankind's gradual and progressive participation in Being itself.[707]

The Reality of Divine and Human Communion

At this point, Yannaras' connection between the Fall, salvation, and the overcoming of metaphysical nihilism, or nothingness, should be evident. For insofar as knowledge of transcendence is, for the Church Fathers, predicated upon the actualization of the human *hypostasis* through the event of divine/human relation, and insofar as the actualization of the human person as such only takes place through humankind's active participation in the ecclesial event, then it follows, on this model, that any overcoming of nihilism is an event that may only takes place through wholistic participation in the Church's prescribed mode of existence; that is, for the Church Fathers, in her *philosophia*, or *orthologikó trópo zoís* (a way/mode of life in accordance with the *Logos*).

Before moving forward in seeking to explain more clearly the nature of this event, we must emphasize once more that the human person's ecclesial participation in the being of the divine *Logos* as described above is understood unanimously by the Greek Church Fathers and the Orthodox Church today as a *real* union.[708] In the Eastern Church, the human person is primarilly understood as being able to actualize his hypostatic potential (become deified) not through a form of "created grace," as some in the Western tradition hold, but through a real union with the uncreated *energeia* of the divine *Logos*.[709] The Greek Church Fathers often speak of this as a fusion of divine and human hypostatic *energeia*, most notably referred to as "synergy*"* (*synergeia)*, which seeks to explain how the human person cooperates with the activity of God's grace. Here the human person is recognized as being able to transcend his (fallen) nature and exist relationally not through his own effort, but through sharing in the hypostatic *energeia* of Christ, which exists

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707 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 273.

708 This is, in the Orthodox East, a non-negotiable. As Aristotle Papanikolaou states, "what is remarkable about contemporary Orthodox theology, especially after Ottoman and Communist oppression, is the absolute consensus among Orthodox theologians on the realism of divine-human communion," even if some modern theologians have different forms of emphasis when seeking to explain how this event takes place. See Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," 55.

709 This doctrine was made official in four separate Church councils in Constantinople by endorsing Palamas' theology against his critics, two in 1341 (condemning Barlaam), one in 1347, and one in 1351 (condemning Nicephorus Gregoras).

fundamentally as a relation with the Father.[710] Thus the human person, through ecclesial participation in this event of hypostatic relation between the Son and Father, is able to acquire knowledge of God not simply as that which is other than itself, but immanently, through his own hypostatic act, which is now fused with the hypostatic *energeia* of triadic life (what I have referred to as the way of immanence).[711]

For this reason, according to the Greek Fathers, the revelatory knowledge of God's triadic being which is historically revealed through Christ's life on earth is also a participatory reality which is capable of being known here and now; it is, most fully, a reality, or life, which is capable of being experienced first-hand by all who fully participate in the life and praxis of the ecclesial event. For example, just as the incarnated *Logos* exists in the *tropos* of Trinitarian communion—that is, as *hypostases*, as a loving relation with the Father—so too, for those who participate in the being of the ecclesial event, the universal testimony of the Church Fathers is that this very mode of existence is a reality which can be existentially realized and known in one's own life. Here the human person also can chose to exists in the *tropos* of Trinitarian communion—so too, as *hypostasis*, as a loving relation with the Father—thus acquiring a "first-hand," immanent experience and knowledge of God's being.

It is also for this reason that, as covered in the previous chapter, Yannaras believes the language used by the Church Fathers to explain the triadic being of God must be understood primally as *symbols* which bear testimony to the "new life" which humanity partakes of within the *ekklēsia*—a fact which, for Yannaras, bears a critically important implication for the philosopher who wishes to acquire knowledge of Being through the *philosophia* of the Church. For if we understand the metaphysical dogmas of the Church primarily as symbols, as "metaphysical icons," or common *logoi*, which bear rational witness to the Church's universal experience, then the Church's metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity must not be seen, primarily, as rationally deduced propositions that are based upon scripture's revelation, thereby providing a purely rational response to the ontological problem. Rather, we must understand that the Church Fathers speak of God's being as triadic because God is *existentially* known triadically within the immanent life and praxis of the Church; that is, because human beings "in Christ" now participate in the triadic relation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a new mode of existing which reveals to humankind what it means to "truly exist."

Which means, for Yannaras, that the Church's answer to the ontological problem, its proposed *logos* for what it means to truly be as found within the doctrine of the Trinity, is not simply a metaphysical conclusion which is known or verified through rational comprehension, nor

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710 Such is the role of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox doctrine. Here the human person binds his *energeia* to the uncreated *energeia* of the Holy Spirit (as sent/manifested from the Son), such that the two acts synergistically "become one" without losing the individuality of their hypostatic bearer. For "grace," in the East, simply *is* the uncreated *energeia* of the Holy Spirit in which humankind participates. See John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 86 (PG 94:1141); Cited in Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 254-55.

711 As St. Basil States, "Thus the way of knowledge of God is from one Spirit through the one Son to the one Father." See *On the Holy Spirit* 47 (PG:32:153bc); cited in *Person and Eros*, 255n14.

is it a mere dogma of propositional value.[712] As a *symbol*, the Church's rational articulation of what it means to be *as such* is ultimately recognized as a signifier which signifies a lived, communally verified experience, and thus can only be truly known *as such*. For this reason, as Yannaras' entire corpus seeks to make clear, the Church Fathers' teachings on the Trinity do not simply offer a rational response to the question of Being. They are, more fully, attempting to rationally articulate the universal testimony of the ecclesial event, and thus an experiential witness which seeks to articulate the existential meaning which is conveyed within the divine words: "I Am," *Ego Eimi.*

Perichoresis and Kenosis

In Yannaras' work, this fact becomes extremely important when trying to understand the relation between praxis and *theoria* in the Church Fathers' philosophy. For as we have already noted in the previous chapter concerning hierarchy and analogy, what is implied here is an interesting dynamism between experience, practice, theory, and knowledge that is not accompanied by any other forms of metaphysics, thus making it unique to the Church Fathers. As noted in the introduction, it is what Yannaras refers to in his later work as a "critical ontology,"[713] whereby the Church Fathers' *theoria*, or vision of Being, is claimed capable of being affirmed by experiential participation in the Church's mode of existence.[714]

In his work, *Person and Eros,* I believe we see this initial insight illuminated most clearly in relation to the Church Fathers' term "perichoresis." *Perichoresis* is a term which the Church Fathers use that refers to the mutual coinherence (communion, *koinonia*) of the divine persons; in other words, it refers to the mode in which the one God exists as an eternal act of triadic being.[715] The basic understanding of *perichoresis* seeks to thus explain the unity of three divine person's through their mutual indwelling: the mutual sharing of a unified divine life (an essential monad), or existence, albeit in three distinct *prósopa* (an existential triad). Meaning, *perichoresis* signifies how each divine person "contains" the other person in their being, such that the being of the one is not isolated or detached from the being of the other two. As Yannaras states, using contemporary language, this act of mutual indwelling is spoken of by the Fathers as being accomplished by a kind of "self-concealment" of each of the persons in relation to the other, or by "the perfect absence

712 "Trinity…is not just a name and an evented word…but a trinity in reality and truth (*alítheia*)." Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.28 PG:596ab; cited in *Person and Eros*, 253n8.

713 For an overview of Yannaras' attempt at a critical ontology, see Sotiris Mitralexis, "Person, Eros, Critical Ontology: An Attempt to Recapitulate Christos Yannaras' Philosophy," in *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event.*

714 This is not a controversial claim, as many thinkers within the Orthodox tradition also make such claims. Such is the very impetus of St. Gregory Palamas' *Triads*, which seek to defend and explain the experiential knowledge of God which the Eastern tradition bears witness to and which is defended through the means of invitation and testimony rather than syllogistic proof. Indeed, one could even make the claim that this "come and see" gnoseology has been inherent to the Church's metaphysics from the beginning. See especially Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 31-41.

715 "[Perichoresis is] the indwelling and abiding of the *hypostases* in each other. For these are undivided and inseparable from each other, since they mutually interpenetrate each other"; John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1.14 (PG 94:860b); cited in *Person and Eros*, 253n6.

of any element of existential self-completeness."[716] Accordingly, as Yannaras states, the persons of the Trinity dwell in total communion and oneness only insofar as they "transcend both atomic distantiality (*apo-stasis*) and dyadic division (*dia-stasis*)"; i.e., only insofar as they do not exist as a form of individual self-completeness, which would lead to the dividing of the one nature and consequential multiplicity (three distinct gods). Rather, there is a oneness of being amongst the existential triad of persons insofar as the very existence of each person coinheres in, or indwells, the others: each divine *prósopon* exists "in" the other and *for* the other, such that their being is not distinct or detached from, but dwells within the singularity of harmonious communion.[717]

According to Yannaras, however—taking from a more recent development in Orthodox thought—what makes this event of mutual indwelling possible is revealed most clearly in the *kenosis* of Christ's incarnation. "Kenosis," or the "self-emptying" of Christ, is thus read here not an attribute of the Son's existence alone (thus understood economically). On the contrary, the Son's *kenosis* is seen here as a revelatory *logos* of divine, triadic life, the fullest revelation of what makes *perichoresis*—and thus trinitarian communion—possible.[718] In other words, the "perfect absence of any element of existential self-completeness" which allows for the mutual indwelling of divine persons is illuminated here as being conditioned by the self-emptying of each divine person, thereby "making space" for the "containment" of the other. The Father's eternal generation of the Son, for example, is thus understood in a kenotic manner: here the Father "freely and out of love" gives *all* of his being to the Son in a form self-gift, emptying himself completely so as to find his life not in a form of existential self-completeness, but *in* and for the other. And the Son responds in kind. The Son, begotten by the Father, does not keep the gift of his divine existence for himself as a form of possession; rather, in the free act of reciprocal love, he empties himself, wholly returning his being to the Father through the kenotic act of self-gift, thereby completing the mutual indwelling of divine communion. In so doing, each person exists relationally as *hypostasis*: not as a form atomic individuality, but as an erotic relation of loving communion that is completely dependent upon the other for its existence.

Thus most simply put, according to Yannaras' reading of the Orthodox tradition, the being of trinitarian communion only *is* through the hospitable act of *kenosis*: the loving act of each divine *hypostases* emptying themselves completely in an act of erotic self-gift for the sake of receiving the other in their absolute fullness. Such is, for Yannaras, the very dynamism, or movement, which is understood as constituting God's very being—the "how" of Absolute Being, which has been

716 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 253.
717 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 253-54.
718 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 256. The emphasis of *kenosis* as inherent to the being of the Trinity was first thematically emphasized by St. Philaret of Moskov and Sergei Bulgakov, and has since been a staple for many Orthodox thinkers, including the likes of perhaps the most well-known and influential Orthodox saint of the twentieth century, St. Sophrony of Essex, whose work has heavily inspired the work of both John Zizioulas and Christos Yannaras. On the development and influence of *kenosis* in the Russian theological tradition, see Sakharov, *I Love therefore I Am*, 96-105.

revealed as love (1 John 4:16).[719] Thus in Christ, it is revealed that to truly be is to be hypostatic, to be as relation, and to be as relation one must be kenotic. Here *kenosis* is recognized not simply as the fullest manifestation of what it means to truly "love," but in light of the Church Fathers understanding of perichoretic communion, of what it means to *be* at all.[720]

As a universal *testimony* of those who participate in the being of the ecclesial event, however, Yannaras emphasizes once more how this perichoretic articulation of Being was not established theoretically through mere reason, and thus is not capable of being known as such. Rather, as a symbol, it is only capable of being known through the immanence of experiential participation; i.e., through wholistic participation in the ecclesial event's mode of existence.[721] And as noted in the previous chapter on ecclesial hierarchy, such is, for the Church Fathers, the very point and end of all Christian practice: the acquisition of divine life, now understood most clearly as the relational *tropos* of perichoretic *kenosis*.[722] Here the practices of fasting, self-denial, obedience, and other ascetical practices of the Church are understood as a kenotic emptying of oneself in order that the divine Other may come to dwell in the human *hypostasis*; likewise, the practices of prayer, almsgiving, meditation, charity, or participation in the sacraments are recognized further as a kenotic response of self-gift in order that the human *hypostasis* can reciprocally dwell in the divine Other.[723] Such was the promise of Christ to humanity (1 John 2:24-5; John 14:23;)—the acquisition of eternal life as loving relation (John 17:3)—and such is the existential affirmation of those who participate in his *logos* (1 John 5:11-12).[724]

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719 "It [kenosis] is the hypostatic mode of existence of the *Logos*…the mode of existence of the triadic *perichoresis* which reveals to us the mystery of the One Triadic God in the kenotic mode of the *Logos's* assumption." Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 256.

720 I believe this kenotic emphasis of agapeic *eros* can be offered as a response to thinkers such as Deborah Casewell, whose sympathetic critique of Yannaras' work in *Person and Eros* is that its understanding of love is *too* erotic. In this manner, Yannaras would seem to downplay the sacrificial, service oriented dimension of love (as noted in Levinas) for the self-motivated movement of *eros*. But on this reading of trinitarian kenosis, *eros* "is" sacrificial— there is no *eros* without self-gift, since what divine *eros "*is" is not a receiving of the other in order to make up for one's lack (and thus understood as a need), but a giving away of one's self which has already received itself in full (thus the self-emptying). For Deborah's analysis of Yannaras in relation to Levinas, see "Loving in Relation to Nothing: On Alterity and Relationality" in *Polis, Ontology, Ecclesial Event: Engaging with Christos Yannaras' Thought*, 101-119.

721 "The knowledge of the Godhead's hypostatic mode of existence, or the truth of the *hypostases*, is accessible to humanity within the context of historical experience…the truth of kenosis is not simply is not simply a new category of thought. It offers us the possibility of experiential coordination with the truth and authenticity of existence." See *Person and Eros*, 255-56.

722 "The idea of Christian asceticism and Christian virtue…means nothing other than the effort to achieve this *kenosis*…an attempt to achieve the personal fulfillment which is the realization of hypostasis." See *Person and Eros*, 257.

723 See Yannaras reading of asceticism and the overcoming of the passions in the philosophy of the Church Fathers in pages 234-240 of *Person and Eros*. See further Demetrious Harper, "The purpose of Morality in the Theological Schema of Christos Yannaras," in *Christos Yannaras: Theology, Philosophy, Culture*, 56-76.

724 "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23); "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3); "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of" (1 John 5:11-12).

In this manner, we see more clearly how the rational articulation of the Church's metaphysics, as well as her answer to the ontological problem, is understood by Yannaras as being fundamentally different to that of any traditional understanding of metaphysics, as Yannaras' entire corpus seeks to bear witness to. Different not in what is being signified (both speak of that which exists beyond the phenomenal world of presence), but in the mode in which it is known. Rather than offering a form of knowledge which is acquired through the workings of reason, and thus through a comprehension, intuition, or mediation of the idea or concept, the rational *logoi* of the Church are primarily understood as symbols which, as we have seen, not only signify the universal experience of the Church's participation in Being, but *logoi* which are communally known only through their existential verification; i.e., through ascetical participation in the Church's kenotic mode of existence.

Thus it is here, for Yannaras, through the Church's praxis, or mode of existence, that humanity is able to acquire knowledge of that which "truly is" beyond the manifestation of ontic phenomenicity. For in and through the human person's ascetical participation in the kenotic *energeia* of Christ, the human person gradually comes to exists once more as *hypostasis*, as a loving relation with the Father, thus enabling the infinite "void" or "distance" between God and created being to be crossed. Thus it is also here, in the praxis of the ecclesial event, that one is able to say that the "metaphysical" and the "phenomenological" meet. For through the fullness of participation in the ecclesial mode of existence, that which is beyond (meta) physics is now known through the hypostatic indwelling of the infinite within the finite—a form of existential indwelling, per the perichoretic *kenosis* of the Son, that occurs not in or through the intellect or nature, but in and through the establishment of *relation*: the immanent immediacy or hypostatic *energeia*, or personal communion, which is ontologically "other" to the being of nature.[725]

From the Individual to the *Prósopon*

Based on the above analysis, we may now come to understand most fully why, for Yannaras, it is only through the Church's practice, or way of life, that the problematic of Western nihilism may be overcome. For according to Yannaras, following both Heidegger *and* the Greek Church Fathers, the threat of nothingness is not capable of being overcome through means of the intellect, especially through the active positing of that which is beyond the presencing of ontic individuality. Rather, for Yannaras, the overcoming of nihilism, wherein one receives knowledge of that which "truly is" without any subjective constitution of the willing subject, is only possible through ascetical participation in the *philosophia*, or revealed Wisdom, of Christianity. For according to

725 Speaking on the ability of the person, and not nature (e.g., the natural intellect), as that which is able to know God, St. Maximus states: "Nature does not contain the inner principles (*logoi*) of what is beyond nature…by what is beyond nature I mean the divine and inconceivable pleasure which God naturally produces in those found worth of being united with him." Thus, "at the creation of each *person* [which for Maximus, is ontologically "other" than nature], he proved each *hypostasis* with the capacity to perceive and sense him…" Various Texts 4.20 [PG 90:1312c]; Cited in *Person and Eros*, 278n40.

the Church Fathers, it is primarily through ascetical participation in the Church's mode of existence—that is, through gradual participation in the kenotic *tropos* of Christ's hypostatic constitution—that the human person is finally able to transcend the limitations of created nature, to actualize itself as relation, and thereby restore its capacity to receive and experience the hypostatic givenness of Absolute Being (in other words, to come into relation with the Father).[726]

Here the human person, it must be emphasized, is not understood by Yannaras as simply learning to take on another mode of being-in-the-world; that is, the Church is not *Dasein* learning to actualize itself in the world in a different manner. Rather, the actualization of the *prósopon* within the *ekklēsia* is understood by the Church Fathers as transcending the very being of human nature as such, and thus must be understood as a radical overcoming of *Dasein's* mode of existence. In this manner, as Yannaras emphasizes, participation in the ecclesial event leads to an entirely different mode of human constitution—one which completely overturns and restructures the experience of human consciousness, both of oneself and the world. Meaning, quite simply, it is a mode of conscious experience which is not given to or capable of being known by *Dasein*, but only to the *prósopon*; that is, to the extent in which the person actualizes their hypostatic potential in and through the kenotic askesis of ecclesial life and praxis.[727]

This does not mean, however, that the experience of the *prósopon* is unable to be spoken of or communicated to those outside the ecclesial event. And this is a fact which Yannaras' believes is secured through the Church Fathers unique understanding of the *symbol*, as we have attempted to overview thoroughly in the previous chapter. From this perspective, the experiences of the person can be rationally articulated and partially understood by others on the ground of both analogy and negation: here the individual can analogously relate the common signifiers used by the Church in relation to his own experiences of said *logoi*, as well as begin to understand the nature of hypostatic experience through a negation of his own experience (that which the individual's consciousness is not). In this manner, there are universal structures and experiences of the *prósopon* which, to a certain extent, can be communicated to others, both in reference to its mode of being as well as its experience of that which has been disclosed. Such will be our intention below, wherein we will attempt to convey, in closing, the universal experiences (common *logoi*) of the ecclesial consciousness as promoted by Yannaras.

Consciousness for the Person

726 Wisdom…is perceived in a single form in the operation of the virtues." Thus, "The person who combines spiritual knowledge with the practice of the virtues…is a throne and footstool of God (cf. Isa 66:1)—a throne because of his spiritual knowledge and a footstool because of his ascetic practice." Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts* (PG 90:1292b); cited in *Person and Eros*, 288n56.

727 As perceptively stated by Marcarius of Egypt, God became man to "change and transform and renew human nature…he came to mingle human nature with his own spirit of the Godhead." For this reason, all who participate in Christ experience "[a] new mind and a new soul and new eyes, new ears, a new spiritual tongue…in a word, [they are] new humans." Marcarius of Egypt, *Spiritual Homilies*, Hom 44.1; cited in *Person and Eros*, 270n35.

To begin, in contrast to the being of the individual, the Church Fathers argue that the human *hypostasis*, or *prósopon*, has no individualized "self-consciousness," no form of autonomous identity, or subjectivity, that is known or experienced "in itself." Rather, through the ongoing and intentional act of perichoretic *kenosis*—through self-denial, self-gift, and opening oneself to the Other—there is thus enacted in the human *hypostasis*, like the *hypostasis* of Christ, a "perfect absence of any element of existential self-completeness," and thus an entry into the trinitarian movement of mutual indwelling. In this movement of loving *ek-stases*, then, any form of existential self-completeness is wholly dissolved in the kenotic act of self-emptying, wherein the giftedness of one's being is wholly and freely returned to the Father in the loving act of communion. As such, the ecstatic movement away from the self does not lead to a void, emptiness, or lack of being, but on the contrary, leads to the erotic overflowing and existential fullness of self-realization. For in the place of the autonomous and foundational ego, there is now the responsorial ecstasy of the divine *Logos*, an upsurge and overflowing of hypostatic *energeia* which, in loving *eros*, leads one towards union with He whom called one forth.

This means that for the human *hypostasis*, like each person of the Trinity, there is no longer an autonomous "I" or possessive "me," severed and wholly distinct from the other, since the human *prósopon* no longer receives its being, nor experiences its identity, in the enclosed mode of self-referential consciousness. Rather, the person, in its hypostatic actualization, *is* as a pure response of kenotic *relation*: an event of existential *ek-stases* that finds its rests not in itself, but in the Other. Consequently, this change in the person's *tropos* of self-actualization naturally leads to a fundamentally different mode of self-conscious experience.

For example, the erotic "flight" of consciousness, fully actualized in the mode of relation, is now understood primarily in a *unidirectional*, rather than circular, manner. This is because, through participation in the kenotic *logos* of Christ's *energeia*, the human *hypostasis* now acquires the existential fullness of its being and identity not through coming back upon itself in a circular movement of self-mastery (creating an existential self-completeness), but through the interpenetration and mutual indwelling of the Other's loving presence. That is, the existential *ek-stases* of the human person, united to the kenotic *energeia* of the *agapeic* eros, now finds the fullness of its rest, the quenching of its desire, *in* the Other—full stop—thus circumventing the "need" for one to establish oneself through the circular movement of reflective consciousness.[728] In this manner, there exists no atomic "self" or self-enclosed "subject," but only the erotic ecstasy of responsorial *relation*—the immediacy of being loved and loving in return—thereby making the Other inherent to one's very being. Such is, in part, the renewed experience of those who begin to make the transition from being-as-individual to being-as-*prósopon*.[729]

728 In my reading, then, the *eros* of the *hypostasis* is not possessive and/or violent since the movement of the person towards the Other has its end not in self-mastery (a violent movement which is spurred on by emptiness and/or lack), but in self-emptying/self-gift (a kenotic movement of which is spurred on by a fullness and/or plentitude that can be *given* as gift).

729 This above analysis does not mean that the person no longer possesses the capacity for reflectivity, or that consciousness for the person no longer comes back upon itself in a circular movement. The point is that the manner in which this event takes place is actualized in a fundamentally different manner, such that when consciousness does

On Yannaras' reading of the Fathers, this mode of hypostatic-constitution, or self-actualization, not only leads to a fundamentally different experience of "self-consciousness," but also naturally leads to a fundamentally different conscious experience of otherness—a different mode of receiving and experiencing that is given "in reference" to the *prósopon*. The most obvious reason for this, of course, being that the person's relation to the world is no longer established and secured in the postlapsarian mode of violence. For the person, now actualized relationally as gift, as an erotic response to the loving call of the Other, does not need to establish and secure its being through the violent appropriation of otherness into the self: in other words, that which is given is no longer experienced simply as a potential value, or good, for my self-actualization in the world. Likewise, the person does not experience the radical autonomy of the other as a threat to its being. For the impetus of the person, as a fully actualized *hypostasis*, is no longer driven or moved by the need to exist as a self-sufficient, self-established being, and thus does not have a form of subjectivity or individualized identity which it must constitute or protect. On the contrary, the being of the person *is* that of agapeic *eros*, a responsorial relation of loving self-gift and *ek-stases* that transcends the instinctual and determinate being of individualized nature, thus allowing the *prósopon* to enter into a non-violent and hospitable relation with others and the world once more.

For this reason, the actualization of the *prósopon* not only eliminates the occlusive horizons of the egoistic individual, but also renews the capacity of the human person to receive and/or experience the *pragmata* (things/acts) of the world "from themselves"—as they truly are, in their full disclosure. For rather than receiving the world through the constitution of the *individual*, which reduces the disclosure of creation to the impersonal disclosure of "objects" (Husserl) or "beings" (Heidegger) that come into presence from nothingness, the kenotic actualization of the person leads to an experience of the world's disclosure as a "gift," as the things/deeds accomplished of He whom the creature dwells in relation with.[730] Here the otherness of creation is experienced once more in its original gift-like character—as a personal invitation, or triadic *summons*, to establish more fully the event of divine/human communion.[731]

Further still, it must be emphasized once more that for the Church Fathers, the world is not known here as the creation, or gift, of a personal Absolute in an "onto-theological" manner;

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come back upon itself, for example, it receives its intelligible identity as wholly mediated by the Other. So too, and perhaps most importantly, the very movement of kenotic consciousness is no longer violent insofar as it is not moved by lack, but rather a fullness of being which it seeks to give as gift. Here there is not the immediate *need* for the circular movement of self-constitution, which then allows consciousness to rest in the presence of both otherness and mystery. Such is, for the Church Fathers, the very moment of hypostatic communion, wherein the person experientially dwells unidirectionally in the presence of the divine Other without the intelligible mediation of the idea or concept. For a wonderful analysis of this movement from a twentieth century Orthodox saint and theologian, see Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, trans. by Rosemary Edmonds (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2006), 195, 209

730 As Clement of Alexandria states, the Christian "knows…through the created world God's *energeia* through which he adores the will of God." Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.2 (PG 9:416a); cited in *Person and Eros*, 255n17.

731 "He who through love…fixes his gaze on beauty…refers himself through this beauty to the artificer and the true beauty." Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.2 (PG 9:416a). "Indeed, creation cries out aloud through the things that have been made in it, and proclaims, as it were, to those able spiritually to hear its own cause hymned in a threefold manner." Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassius* 13(PG 90:296bc); Cited in *Person and Eros*, 253n7.

i.e., through the intellect rationally positing that the world is created by a personal God, thereby creating a filter or horizon in which the phenomena is intelligibly received. Rather, as St. Basil states, the erotic beauty of the world is experienced as a gift, quite simply, because the person dwells in communion with the Giver, the same way in which the recipient of a lover's poem experiences the utter uniqueness and otherness of her beloved in and through his gift.[732] The outsider, who does not partake of this relation, may stumble across the poem and notice only scribbles on piece of paper, having no experience of reception of its erotic disclosure. But for the lover who knows the sender, the poem is given in an altogether different manner, disclosing not the objective meaning of propositional statements, but an erotic gift that came from the hands of their beloved. For the fully actualized *prósopon*, then, the disclosure of creation renews itself as an *eulogia* once more, an erotic gift for the establishment of life of *schési*.[733]

Thus for the person whom, through the intentional and ascetical practice of the Christian way of life, has learned to kenotically participate in the perichoretic being of the divine *Logos*, both the world of intelligible phenomena as well as the being of their own *ek-stases* do not manifest themselves solely "from nothingness," hanging on the razor's edge of an infinite void. Rather, the entirety of the world's disclosure—that Being of all beings—is experienced as rising to presence from the loving *energeia* of a personal Absolute, a summons to divine communion, and thus as an unquantified and unmeasured "place," or "garden," of loving communion between God and humanity.[734]

Such is why, according to the philosophy of the Church Fathers, it is above all practice, or the Christian way of life, that is presented as the ultimate "path of knowledge." For as Yannaras never tires of reminding his readers, "knowledge of truth," for the Church Fathers, is fundamentally "an existential realization, not something appropriated mentally."[735] In the Eastern Christian philosophical tradition, in continuation with its Hellenistic roots, knowledge of the "really real," that which "truly exists," is acquired only through ongoing *askesis*, virtue, and moral effort, through conversion and ongoing participation in the existential *kenosis* of Christian life and practice.

In this manner, we understand how through the ascetical effort of kenotic "violence," the cross bearer is able to "take the kingdom of heaven by force" (Matt 11:12), finally allowing the lover of Wisdom to see, "as in a glass darkly" (1 Cor 13:12), what it means to truly be: that is, an

732 "For when we receive gifts, the first thing that occurs to us is the giver, then we think of the sender, and then raise up our thoughts to the source and cause of these benefits." Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 37 (PG 32:133d); cited in *Person and Eros*, 255n13.

733 "For this is a property of the cause of all things…to summon all beings to communion with it, as has been laid down proportionality for each being." Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* (4.1SC 58 *bis*, 93). Cited in *Person and Eros*, 253n7.

734 Yannaras, in chapters two and three of Part Two of *Person and Eros*, gives a wonderful phenomenological analysis of this renewed experience of "place" (in relation to "space" and "time") from the phenomenological disclosure of the *prósopon*. For the sake of time, however, we will not be able to cover this analysis here.

735 Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 289.

imminent, "first-person" participation in the hypostatic life of the eternal I AM which is not susceptible to change, decay, suffering or death.[736]

Summary/Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, we have concluded our exposition of Yannaras' ontological response to Heidegger as it is found in *Person and Eros*, which deals primarily with the narrative dimension of the Church Fathers' *philosophia*. This is important, not only because it provides us with the fundamental horizon, or structure, from which the Church Fathers interpreted humanity's current mode of existence and its corresponding reception of Being; so too, in interpreting the theological terms of "the Fall" and "salvation" (theosis) from an ontological register, this provides us with further support for Yannaras's attempt to read and understand Christianity, along with the Church Fathers, as a philosophy in and of itself, as opposed to a mere religion, as it is generally understood today.

Here the "Fall" is not understood simply as a historical event, or a pure mythos of religious significance, but as humanity's hypostatic movement of rejection, or saying "no" to, union with divine being, and thereby the rejection of Being itself; so too, salvation is also understood ontologically as the positive impetus of *acceptance*—the reversal of this initial rejection—and thus humankind's communion with and return to Absolute Being through a participation in the kenotic mode of the divine *Logos*. We then looked at the ontological and phenomenological implications of this narrative as such, especially in regards to what this understanding of Being and becoming implies about Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the nihilistic experience of nothingness. Most specifically, we saw how this starting point of the Church Fathers allowed for Yannaras to claim that, after the destruction of all metaphysical idols, the "angst ridden" experience of nothingness is not to be interpreted as the primordial phenomenon. Rather, in starting with the philosophy of the Church Fathers, the primordial experience of Being must first be understood as dialogical event of hypostatic relation wherein nothingness is recognized as a the absence of said relation: as a void that is left after the individual's fall (severance) from Being. Finally, we then closed by showing how, in accordance with the Church Fathers' philosophy, the threat of nihilism is only overcome through participation in the life and praxis of Christian Wisdom. This is because, as we have seen, it is only through participation in the kenotic *logos* of the *ekklesia's* philosophical praxis that humankind's hypostatic potential for relation is restored, and it is only through the establishment of personal relation, in opposition to the determinate knowledge of the natural intellect, which allows the human being to acquire knowledge of that which, or he whom, transcends the ontic givenness the world's phenomenal disclosure.

736 "The life that is free is not subject to law, and therefore transcends all natural necessity and change. He who has attained such a life is as if liberated from the outer flesh, and through his participation in the Spirit he becomes incandescence. Since what is partial within him has been abolished (cf. 1 Cor 13:9-10), he is united wholly to Christ, who transcends all nature." St. Niketas Stethatos, *Gnostic Chapters* 3.91 (Philokalia 3:352).

Such is, on Yannaras account, the philosophy of the Church Fathers. And on his reading, it is only this philosophy which has the capacity to adequately respond to the problematic of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger. For now that the intellectual idols and metaphysical values of the "individual" have been torn down, the only way forward is to, like the philosophy's of old, seek to acquire Truth not through the primacy of thought, but through *praxis* and wholistic participation; that is, to convert to a new way of life, and through said conversion, begin one's quest for the overcoming of ignorance and error through the embodied acquisition of Wisdom. And for Yannaras, after the death of Western metaphysical tradition, there exists no better philosophy for the modern individual than that of the Greek Church Fathers, as it is only here that metaphysics and phenomenology, *theoria* and experience, come together.

Ch IV
Yannaras and Contemporary Phenomenology

In Part One and Two of this essay, we have attempted to respond to the first question which this work proposed—namely, how and in what way can Yannaras' interpretation of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger?

In Part One, we have argued that Yannaras' response to Heidegger's critique is able to overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism insofar the historical unfolding of nihilism is, according to Yannaras' narrative, an event that must be restricted to the Latin (Western European) philosophical tradition alone. For this reason, Yannaras argues that Heidegger's onto-theological narrative of Western metaphysics neither accounts for nor applies to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism or the Church Fathers. The point of this counter-narrative, however, was not simply to reveal how Heidegger's critique does not apply to the Church Fathers' philosophy as such. For Yannaras, as we have attempted to argue, the point was also to reveal the "inner logic" of this other, non-Western tradition as another mode of *doing* philosophy. Here the fundamental attributes of Hellenism as they were adopted and continued by the Church Fathers were thus presented as a fundamentally different *tropos* of philosophical thought and practice which Yannaras invites his reader to partake of now that the Western *tropos* of philosophical thought and practice has reached a nihilistic end.

After establishing the philosophy of the Church Fathers' as a viable alternative to the death of the Western philosophical tradition, we then moved to Part Two in order to reveal more directly how this alternative philosophy could help overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism in a manner that is not inhibited by the traditional, value-laden projects of onto-theology. As we have seen in the previous three chapters, Yannaras argues that the Church Fathers' trinitarian, hypostatic ontology is capable of accomplishing this insofar as it offers a non-essentialist understanding of Being. Here Being is not grasped or known via the universal or general idea, but is rather hypostatically received as that which is other and *beyond* the ontic givenness of phenomenal presence (as ontologically other to both nature and that which is given to the natural intellect). So too, this reception of Being is not recognized as a subjective or particular experience of religious mysticism (a private *logos*), but rather remains grounded in the horizon of universal possibility and inter-subjective verification. Consequently, Yannaras believes that the philosophy of the Church Fathers is capable of providing a vision of Being that 1) transcends the onto-theological logic of "metaphysics," per Heidegger's interpretation, while also 2) avoiding the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's post-metaphysical ontology. For this reason, Yannaras believes that we find in the philosophy of the Church Father's an utterly unique and viable way forward from the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism.

The second question which this work now seeks to answer is the following: how in and what way does this response contribute to contemporary post-Heideggerian discourse? In response to this second question, I will argue in this final chapter that Yannaras' understanding of the Church Fathers' philosophy offers a key methodological hermeneutic which would allow for richer discourse amongst Christian phenomenologists within the "theological turn" insofar as it would not restrict their phenomenological discourse to theology or religion (as an ontic science), but would open the possibility, once more, for Christian experience to be discussed ontologically within the discipline of philosophy proper.

In order to show this, I will begin this chapter by offering a brief introduction to thinkers of the theological turn in phenomenology, all of whom seek to promote Christianity—or Christian experience and praxis—as the primary means of overcoming metaphysics and the problematic of Western nihilism. In this section, I will also argue that this attempt falls short due to their modern, Heideggerian paradigms. For as we will see, all contemporary phenomenologists within the theological turn admit of a strict division between A) philosophy, defined as an ontological science that deals with the universal structures of consciousness, and B) theology, defined as an ontic science which deals with the particularity of Christian experience as a religion. Which means, from a philosophical perspective, that the phenomenological

experience of the Christian has no relation to ontology, whether from a metaphysical *or* phenomenological perspective. For this reason, I will argue that the experiences of "religion"—and especially Christianity—which these thinkers promote are incapable of offering a legitimate way forward from the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism, since the believer, on this paradigm, cannot understand his experiences and vision of the world from a universal, ontological perspective.

After this introduction, I will then argue that if we instead begin with the ontological hermeneutic which we find in the work of Yannaras—that is, with his Hellenistic understanding of philosophy, and consequently with his promotion of Christianity as a philosophy in and of itself—then this alternative starting point would allow us to read the phenomenological experiences of Christianity not as an "ontic science," *but as testimonial participation in an ontological reality*. In this manner, as we see performed in *Person and Eros*, the universally proclaimed phenomena of the Church's testimonial experience would be read not as subjective experiences of a religious mode in which *Dasein* exists, nor as empirical experiences of particular individuals, but as bearing witness to an ontological reality in which all humankind has the capacity to participate. Accordingly, it will be argued that if thinkers within the theological turn were to likewise follow Yannaras' hermeneutic, then their phenomenological analysis of Christian experience would once more be promoted, along with the Church Fathers, as bearing testimony to humankind's experience of Being itself. Meaning, such a paradigm would enable them to promote Christianity as bearing witness to a universal, ontological vision of the world that can be affirmed, phenomenologically, through first-person experience, therein greatly strengthening their original proposal.

This chapter will then close by offering an analysis of how this alternative hermeneutic would look, practically speaking. In order to do this, I will offer a re-reading of some of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological and theological insights in light of the Greek Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology as interpreted by Yannaras. By bringing Marion's work into dialogue with Yannaras, I thus intend to reveal the fecundity which Yannaras' work has to offer contemporary phenomenological thinkers whose work is also directed at responding to nihilism and the death of metaphysics.

Contemporary Responses to Heidegger and the Death of Metaphysics

For many today, Heidegger is seen as a major turning point not only in twentieth century philosophy, but in the history of Western European philosophy at large. On the Continent at least, Heidegger's critique of the Western metaphysical tradition is often seen as the final nail in the coffin of metaphysics, thus leading to the era of "post-Heideggerian literature" that seeks to answer the looming question which now hangs over the Western conscience: after the death of metaphysics, after the death of God and the void of meaningless which pervades Western life, what comes next? How are we to know how to be when Being itself can no longer provide an answer?

One can, in part, read a large portion of philosophical movements in the twentieth and early twenty-first century as responding to this question, whether deliberately or inadvertently. The human person, as Nietzsche rightly showed, *must* have meaning, leaving the ontological question a question which must be responded to, consciously or subconsciously, at all places and all times, even if one's response is that of negation or doubt. Yet of all the responses that have been offered as a means to overcoming the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism, one would be hard-pressed to find one which is ubiquitously recognized as *successful*. This is not a point which I wish

to deliberately argue here.[737] I only say it with the intention of revealing why Yannaras' response to Heidegger might still be pertinent to the Western reader today.

The Theological Turn

From the many contemporary responses to the death of God/metaphysics of late, the movement which I believe could benefit the most from Yannaras' work is the "theological turn" in French phenomenology. The "theological turn" is a term coined by Dominique Janiquad in *Le Tournant Théologique de la Phénoménologie Française* (1991), which accuses thinkers in the French phenomenological tradition (Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Yves Lacoste, Michel Henry, and others) for "taking phenomenology hostage" by the regulation of theology.[738] While Janiquad's critique, seemingly, intended to help bring an end to this particular form of phenomenological discourse growing in France, the debate which Janiquad's critique inaugurated only ended up proliferating the movements growth. Today, the prestige of these thinkers in the "theological turn" has only increased in prestige and renown in both philosophical and theological circles—a fact testified to in North America, wherein said thinkers have become the dominating figures in the emerging discipline of Continental philosophy of religion.[739]

One of the common traits which unites this variety of thinkers is that each thinker, like Yannaras, has primarily turned to the experiential testimony of religion—and most often, Christianity—as a means of overcoming the death of God/metaphysics. In doing so, the phenomenological inquiry of this group seeks to investigate religion's (especially the Catholic/Christian religion) proclaimed experience of trancendence,[740] often offering a critical examination of said experiences in such a way that can justify their testimony.[741] In so doing, as Bruce Benson and others have pointed out, this group can be understood as attempting to pave a way beyond the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism insofar as the philosophical

737 From both a cultural and academic perspective in the "West"—especially Western Europe—I do not find it a controversial statement to claim that the recognized meaningless of human existence, objectively speaking, has not begun to rescind. And while there have been offered a plethora of responses to this problem in the Academy, there has yet to be one which has been readily accepted as a the right path forward.

738 Meaning, rather than seeing phenomenology, as Husserl conveyed it, as a "science" upon which to ground all other sciences, Janiquad believes that these French thinkers have abandoned the rigorous, phenomenological method by turning phenomenology into a kind of theology, whereby the (supposedly unbiased) descriptive analytic of phenomenological research is used to support or convey the predisposed biases of theological claims. Besides Levinas, the large majority of thinkers within this "turn" in phenomenology are Christian (Catholic), and Janiquad is not incorrect in claiming that they have indeed broadened the field of phenomenological discourse to a religious orientation.

739 On the major figures of Continental philosophy of religion in North America, see Christina Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

740 By transcendent, here, I mean an ontologically distinct form of existence—usually associated with the divine—that is outside or beyond the sensible world of change, becoming, and contingency and which further grounds or gives meaning to said finitude.

741 On this point, see J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson's introductory work to this group of thinkers, *The New Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), which defines this attribute as one of the primary characteristics of this "new phenomenology."

phenomenological method is able to offer a critical justification of religious experiences that are testified to in religion, thereby affirming the possibility of transcendence within immanence.[742]

The problem, however, is that the majority of thinkers within this group only affirm the philosophical possibility, and never the actuality, of such phenomena.[743] This is because *philosophical* phenomenology, as explained by Heidegger, deals only with the universal, "fundamental structures" of human consciousness and experience, and in this sense does not concern itself with the particular, "empirical" experiences of human beings within a specific religion, such as the particular experiences of Christians.[744] Thus to investigate these particular phenomena as *actual* phenomena would be to leave the discipline of philosophical phenomenology and venture into the particular, religious life-world of the faithful believer, and as such would be to venture into the ontic discipline of *theology*.[745] Or at least, as Christina Gschwandtner has pointed out, this is Heidegger's diagnosis of how one should understand any phenomenological investigation of religious experience, and most if not all thinkers within the theological turn largely follow him in this regard.[746] As such, phenomenology in the theological turn, insofar as it promotes its discourse as being philosophical (ontological) rather than theological (ontic), necessarily limits its research to dealing with the universal structures of religious experience that are not restricted to particular, faith-based, empirical religious experiences. For any affirmation of such phenomena would be possible only through the particular experience (life-world) of *faith*, leaving the phenomena unable to proclaimed as actual from an ontological perspective.

But one must ask, at this point, where this leaves us in seeking to overcoming the problematic of nihilism? For while the believer might experience a form of transcendence which can offer meaning to his or her life, the believer is now left with the ambiguity of not knowing whether his experiences are real or simply constituted from the pre-disposition of his faith. This is because, based upon the methodological restriction which this group of thinkers accepts, any form of justification which seeks to ground the believer's experience would, as Heidegger states, be circular insofar as it "originates out of faith, and leaps back into faith."[747] Here the testimonial experiences of religion, quite simply, are unable to be *philosophically* affirmed as actual outside the realm of faith/belief. Consequently, the meaningful experiences of the believer which have

742 It should be noted here that not all thinkers within this group would affirm to this possibility. While Marion, Henry, and Chrétien all attempt to offer a phenomenological investigation of humankind's experience of the divine, Lacoste, for example, does not believe God can be actually experienced in this lifetime. On this latter point, see Gschwandtner's "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II)" in Philosophy Compass, Vol 14, (2), 2019.

743 On this point, see Simmons and Benson, *The New* Phenomenology, 134; as well as Gschwandtner's "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II)," 2019.

744 On this point, see Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 40-41.

745 On this point, see Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology, 43. Indeed, in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Heidegger shows what a non-philosophical phenomenology of religious faith might look like.

746 On this point, see Gschwandtner's "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II)," 2019; as well as Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*, 133-135.

747 For such theological knowledge "itself is founded primarily by faith," grounding itself in a circular manner insofar as "[t]he substantiate legitimacy of all theological knowledge is grounded in faith itself, originates out of faith, and leaps back into faith." Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," 50.

the potential to overcome nihilism are left philosophically suspended in the realm of possibility alone, leaving the metaphysical impasse of cultural nihilism untouched.

On the Separation of Philosophy and Theology

It should be emphasized, however, that the problematic described above cannot be traced back to Heidegger alone. More broadly, it can be understood as a symptom of the Latin/Western philosophical tradition at large. And this is because, as noted in chapter IV, it is only in the Latin tradition that we find a strict hermetical distinction between "philosophy" and "theology" as two distinct "sciences," and thus the consequential distinction between "philosophical knowledge" and "theological knowledge" proper; i.e., scientific knowledge which has been acquired through natural reason, and scientific knowledge which is revealed or is grounded upon revelation. Thus on my reading, Heidegger's analysis of philosophy as fundamentally agnostic/atheistic, as dealing solely with the finitude of *Dasein*, in many ways can be understood as the logical conclusion of this original scholastic distinction. For what Heidegger is arguing, quite simply, is that humanity's "purely philosophical" knowledge of the world which the scholastics first demarcated—that is, our purely rational knowledge of the world as it exists apart from revelation and faith—is fundamentally atheistic; i.e., it is a given experience that does not include God. In this manner, we would understand the noted problem which thinkers in the theological turn face to not simply be a result of Heidegger's interpretation of philosophy and theology. More fundamentally, we would understand the root of the problem to trace itself back to the Western tradition's rationalist division and interpretation of "philosophy" and "theology" as two distinct "sciences"—a non-Hellenistic *mode* of participating in critical thought which Heidegger's interpretation of theology/theological knowledge, and all those following in his wake, can be understood as a natural consequence of.

For example, both Lacoste and Falque work with the assumption that philosophy today must begin as a "fundamentally agnostic/atheistic" phenomenon. In other words, like Heidegger, they understand philosophy as dealing with the "human *per se*" ("*l'homme tout court*"), and the human *per se*, as analyzed through the method of philosophical phenomenology, is initially interpreted universally as an atheistic/agnostic experience; i.e., as "mere finitude," and thus without God.[748] In this manner, the universal, primordial experiences of humankind are recognized as that which philosophy deals with, whereas any religious (theological) dialogue or experience is recognized as being built upon, or coming after, the *l'homme tout court*.[749] As such, for Falque especially, humankind's "religious" experience of transcendence is not recognized as being ontologically primordial or universal, and thereby is reduced to the faith based, ontic category of religion and theology, which always comes *after* a more primordial, atheistic—i.e.,

748 Such is Lacoste's presupposition, for example, in *Experience and the Absolute*, wherein he argues that Heidegger's Dasein must be the fundamental starting point of any philosophical investigation, even that of religious experience. Such is also one of Falque's most critical points in *Crossing the Rubicon*, wherein he argues that the philosopher's horizon must begin with "finitude" as such. See Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* , trans. Mark Raftery-Skeban (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, translated by Reuben Shank (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

749 On this point, see Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 129.

philosophical—experience. Thus even when one seeks to allow for harmonious dialogue between the disciplines of philosophy and theology proper, as Falque attempts to do in his work *Crossing the Rubicon*, the disciplines themselves must not be confused, nor the lines between them blurred or dissolved.[750]

Jean-Luc Marion, on the other hand, does not start with this explicit Heideggerian framework, and thus rejects the atheistic/agnostic experience of *Dasein* as being fundamentally primordial. Rather, Marion's seeks to surpass Heidegger's framework by arguing for a more primordial phenomena: that is, the *given*, or givenness (in German: *Gegebenheit*; in French, *donation*). In making this move, Marion is able to claim that the agnostic/atheist experience of Heideggerian Being/beings (and Husserlian object's) are not primordial, but are rather derivative of the given (*le donné*).[751] Here the given, which Marion describes in the mode of the "saturated phenomenon," not only precedes the reception of Being/beings, but also logically presupposes a radically receptive subject which in no way constitutes the given through the active workings of intentional consciousness. As such, the phenomenon is finally able to "give itself wholly from itself," which Marion believes is the most fundamentally principle of Husserl's phenomenology.[752] What is important to emphasize for our purposes, however, is that Marion believes the primacy of givenness allows for the possibility of a primordial experience which is non-atheistic. For *if* the given comes from a divine Giver, which is within the realm of possibility, then it can be affirmed that the atheistic experience of *Dasein* is not in fact primordial, but is rather derivative of one's inability to receive the phenomenon as *gift*. In this manner, Marion's phenomenology makes room for the Christian, rather than the atheist, to proclaim his experience of the world to be primordial, therein reversing the Heideggerian paradigm altogether.

Marion, however, who carefully works within the scholastic/modern distinction of philosophy and theology, will emphatically claim that such can only ever be the claim of *theology*.[753] Thus Marion, like his contemporaries, also wishes to keep a stark separation between philosophical phenomenology, as an ontological discipline, and theological phenomenology, as an ontic discipline. What his phenomenology as a philosophical method can offer, then, is only the actuality of givenness, therein calling us to an experience of that which precedes Being/beings, while also calling our attention to the *possibility* of experiencing said givenness as a gift from a divine Giver. Only theology, however, which works within the presupposition of revelation and faith, has the right to claim the actuality of the Giver as such. In other words, only theology, or

750 Here philosophy, as the fundamentally atheistic/agnostic, ontological discipline of phenomenology, can learn from the expressions and events of theology, and likewise theology, as the faith based life-world and testimonies of the believer, can also learn from and engage with the experiences and life-world of the philosopher. See Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 128-136.

751 On this point, see Falque's analysis of Marion's work in *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. by Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 121-124.

752 On expanding his conception of givenness from Husserl's phenomenology, see Marion's *Being Given*, 12-14.

753 On this point, see especially Marion's "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology" in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 49-65.

faith, has the authority to interpret/experience the given as a gift, and thus in a non-nihilistic manner.[754]

Thus even when working outside the atheistic/agnostic paradigm of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, all thinkers within the theological turn are united in affirming the scholastic/modern distinction between theology and philosophy as two distinct sciences/disciplines.[755] Consequently, when offering the experiences of Christianity as a non-metaphysical way forward from the impasse of Western nihilism, all thinkers within the theological turn are limited to offering mere faith as the fundamental mode of overcoming, therein falling critique to the problematic discussed above.

Yet if we read the weakness of this model not simply as a result of its Heideggerian influences, but more fundamentally as a result of the Latin/modern interpretations of philosophy and theology, then could one not, in theory, look to Yannaras' interpretation of the Church Fathers' Hellenistic philosophical tradition as a possible solution? In moving forward, I will attempt to reveal both how and why this would be a beneficial move for thinkers in the theological turn.

Philosophy and Theology: An Alternative Reading

In seeking to accomplish this task, I would like to begin by drawing the reader's attention to the fact that the philosophical/theological model which thinkers in the "theological turn" presuppose in their work is not simply different or other than the Hellenistic model of the Church Fathers. Rather, in accordance with the logical of Yannaras' narrative, I wish to reveal how their framework can indeed be recognized more fully as an *inversion* of the Church Fathers' Hellenistic model altogether, and how it is this very inversion which can be identified as the root cause of the complications which we have identified above.

First, in light of what we have noted above, we may understand this French variant of phenomenology as an "inversion" of Ancient philosophy in relation to their very definition and understanding of what philosophy fundamentally is. In Antiquity, as we have seen, philosophy was an intentional, rational way of life that sought to become true by learning to participate in the immutable and incorruptible element of cosmic being; i.e., philosophy was the acquisition of Wisdom, which was by definition an erotic impetus to participate in the "eternal" and "divine" being of the cosmos. In this manner, it must be recognized that philosophy in Antiquity was, for the large majority of schools, *not* atheistic. This cultural presupposition would be carried on even further, of course, in the philosophy of the Church Fathers, who understood the Church as a fulfillment of this metaphysical impetus. In this manner, then, one can clearly see how the phenomenological definition of philosophy as "fundamentally atheistic" is not simply a different "theory" that results from a particular school's philosophical presuppositions. Rather, for the majority of phenomenologists in the theological turn, it must be recognized as thematically

754 On the debate over interpreting the given as gift, see Robin Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2001).
755 See Simmons, *The New Phenomenology*, 111.

highlighting, or bringing to light, the fundamental presuppositions which define what the universal practice of philosophy *is* and must be. As such, we may understand it, unequivocally, as a radical inversion of one of Ancient philosophy's most fundamental attributes.

But why understand philosophy in this manner? Why would Christian thinkers in the "theological turn" be so willing to continue holding to this latter understanding of philosophy? If Yannaras' narrative of the Western philosophical tradition is correct, then one could offer a tentative answer to these questions in relation to two primary factors: first, as we have already hinted at, it should be understood that the French phenomenological understanding of both philosophy and theology is a result of the Latin philosophical tradition which they are "thrown into," which from its inception has reduced philosophy and theology to mere "sciences," or speculative forms of discourses, that offer purely rational (intellectual) modes of knowing. And such would indeed be the general presupposition of most thinkers in theological turn, especially those of Marion, Lacoste, and Falque.[756] Second, and more fully, the acceptance of said "philosophical discourse" as being fundamentally "atheist" or "agnostic" should be understood as these thinkers adherence to Heidegger's narrative, which understands the death of God/metaphysics as the logical result, or nihilistic end, of this particular *tropos* of doing philosophy. From this perspective, it would not simply be Modernity's acceptance of philosophy as a distinct "science" from theology which would keep thinkers within the theological turn from returning to the Hellenistic from of philosophy which we have overview in this dissertation. So too, one should understand the death of metaphysics, or the death of this particular mode of philosophical practice, as an extra barrier. And this is because, for those who have accepted Heidegger's narrative, the "eternal" and "divine" realities which the Ancient's believed themselves to participate in are recognized today as nothing more than fabrications of the human mind, the result of value-thinking and the problematic discourse of onto-theology. As such, the acceptance of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics would naturally nullify the possibility of participating in the *tropos* of Ancient philosophy as such.[757]

However, Yannaras narrative of the Western philosophical tradition, as well as his unique understanding of the Greek Father's philosophy, gives us an alternative starting point from which to critique the above paradigm. First, we see from Yannaras' narrative that the "death of metaphysics" should not fundamentally change the definition of what Ancient philosophy was and could continue to be today, as the "death of metaphysics" only refers to the death of one *tropos* of philosophy that burgeoned in the Latin West. So too, we also see with the Church

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756 The work of Chrétien and Henry would be harder to fit within this stark juxtaposition. As Jeffrey L. Kosky points out, for example, in his reading of Chrétien and Henry's response to Dominique Janicaud's critique, both Chrétien and Henry still wish to emphasize that their work must be understood from a strictly phenomenoglical, and not theological, point of entry. And indeed, in response to Dominique's critique, this is what they are attempting to argue, as can be noted in Chrétien's need to emphasize the universal dimensions of prayer (from various religions, including Judaism and Islam) which transcends the particularity of the Christian faith. However, while their response to Kosky can be read in this light, there still exists a large amount of work in both Chrétien and Henry's corpus which, seemingly, does not fit within this neat divide. Henry's more explicitly Christian or "theological" works (e.g. *I Am the Truth*), for example, would perhaps be better classified as a "Christian philosophy" rather than a philosophical theology. For Kosky's analysis, see Kosky in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn,*" 116.

757 From this perspective, I believe that the promotion of Ancient philosophy as a way of life (outside of Christianity) would be reduced to its therapeutic benefits by post-metaphysical thinkers, which is ultimately the reading that Hadot gives. See Hadot's post-script in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 282.

Fathers how philosophy can *remain* the fundamental practice of "participation in Wisdom," regardless of whether the original attempt made by the earliest Greek philosophers is recognized as a failure.

Indeed, such were the claims of several Church Fathers, many of whom recognized, with the apostle Paul, Greek philosophy as "vain" and "deceitful." (Col 2:8) Yet the Church Fathers' response to this posited failure was not the rejection or redefinition of philosophy as such. On the contrary, in working within their Hellenistic context, they instead proposed Christianity as the "final" and "sole" philosophy of humankind insofar as Wisdom had been fully revealed in the incarnate *Logos*. Thus rather than seeing the Christian's participation in divinity as a departure from "philosophy"—restricting its discourse as something other to philosophy, such as "religion" or "theology"—it was in fact because of this very claim of deified participation that the Church Fathers recognized Christianity as "the philosophy" *par excellence*. Unfortunately, the paradigm which all Catholic/Christian thinkers in the theological turn work within—due to their inherited understanding of what philosophy and theology both are—could not be farther from this hermeneutical starting point.

This fact is further exemplified by focusing on each groups methodology. In Antiquity, as we have shown in chapter two, that which was given/experienced in humankind's original (pre-philosophical) state was by definition recognized as *untrue*. Such is why, as we have seen, it was only through an intentional change (or conversion) in one's primordial mode of existence that one could come to recognize that which "truly is"—or, on Yannaras' reading of Heraclitus, that which has been originally disclosed by the *Logos*. Thus for the Ancients, truth was only disclosed, or given, after a radical change in one's way of life; e.g., truth was only recognized as being manifested, or disclosed, in an act of transcendence, the overcoming of one's primordial, "pre-philosophical" self, which itself was accomplished through converting to a truthful way of life (as opposed to a mere "reduction"). However, with the modern phenomenological starting point, it is now this very "pre-philosophical" state which is recognized as the primary horizon of truth's disclosure, whereas any intentional or philosophical change in one's primordial mode of existence—such as *askesis*, the practice of virtue, or participation in religion—is considered to be a straying from, or occlusive to, the truth of Being's primordial disclosure.

But are these not simply presumptions of the modern mind—or, as Yannaras states, simply the Western mode of practicing philosophy? Could the atheism of *Dasein's* primordial experience not simply be Western man's current experience of what is primordially disclosed? Could it not be, per the Greek's original diagnosis, that humankind's reception of Being is wholly subject to his *tropos* of being, and thus that his original reception of Being is possibly in error because of the manner in which he freely relates to Being? Thus could it not also be just as much the case that one must live in a truthful manner in order to recognize and receive the world's proper disclosure? Furthermore, how would this model be any less "philosophical" than that of the modern/Heideggerian model? Indeed, could Heidegger's approach not be more accurately portrayed as only *one* of many competing philosophical "visions" and schools of thought which a philosopher can participate in, rather than understanding him as having some sort of hold on what both Being *and* philosophy truly are?

For if one cedes, with Yannaras, that the scholastic/modern approach to philosophy is indeed only *one* working model of philosophical practice, and if one accepts the validity of the

Hellenistic approach to philosophy as we have attempted to portray it in Part One of this work, then would it not be possible, once more, to offer Christianity as a philosophy in and of itself, and thus offer an alternative model from which to understand Christian experience in contrast to that which has been proffered by contemporary phenomenologists? As I have already argued, this is exactly what Yannaras has accomplished in a seminal manner in his magnum opus, *Person and Eros*, wherein Christian experience is not restricted to the ontic science of "theology," but is recognized ontologically as a participation in Being itself. What I would like to do now, with the remainder of this chapter, is explore what it might look like if thinkers within the theological turn were to follow Yannaras' example; that is, I wish to examine how one could understand a phenomenological analysis of universal Christian experience if rethought from the Church Fathers' alternative (Hellenistic) mode of philosophical practice.

Yannaras in Dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion

While there are many thinkers in the theological turn whose work I believe would be compatible with many aspects of the Church Fathers' philosophy as such, this chapter will focus primarily on the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion. The reason for this is not simply because Marion is generally understood today as the most renowned and influential figure of all phenomenologist in the so called "theological turn," but also because his phenomenology, as Natalie Depraz points out in her own work, is already playing a very similar "tune" to that of Yannaras and the Greek Church Fathers.[758] Thus even though Yannaras and Marion have seemingly not come into contact with each other's work,[759] the responses which both Yannaras and Marion give to Heidegger and the death of metaphysics are largely the same—the main difference being, as I will show below, the hermeneutical starting points from which they wish to offer said response.

What I will offer below, then, is a brief overview of some of Marion's most important "theological" and "philosophical" ideas with the intention of showing not only how they would harmoniously fit with Yannaras' ontological vision of the Greek Church Fathers, but also how Yannaras' alternative hermeneutical starting point could be used as a means to both strengthen and further Marion's promotion of Christian experience as a means forward from the death of metaphysics.

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758 As Depraz states, a "thematic affinity links the research of C. Yannaras and J.-L. Marion; this affinity is surprising if we think of the different religious and cultural anchors of the two philosophers…This affinity, however, becomes understandable if we observe…J.-L. Marion's constant reference to "oriental" theologians (Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, but also, more occasionally, Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, or even Gregory Palamas, John Damascene and, closer to us, among the Orthodox Russians, Paul Evdokimov, Vladimir Lossky or Leonid Ouspensky)." See Depraz, "Théo-phénoménologie I: l'amour –Jean-Luc Marion et Christos Yannaras," in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* Volume 74, Issue 2, (2012): 247-277 [translation mine].

759 Besides their lack of reference to each other's work, this point is also made by Depraz in "Théo-phénoménologie I: l'amour –Jean-Luc Marion et Christos Yannaras," 248.

Early Responses to Heidegger

Jean-Luc Marion, in his early career, published two theological responses to the death of God/metaphysics which are most pertinent to our discussion: *L'idole et la distance: cinq études* (*The Idol and the Distance: Five Studies*, 1977) and *Dieu sans l'être. Hors-texte* (*God without Being*, 1982). In *The Idol and the Distance*, similar to Yannaras in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*, Marion interprets the modern death of God not as the death of the Christian God, but simply as the death of the God of onto-theological "metaphysics." This insight, however, is not simply an extension of Heidegger, who claims that the "God" which Nietzsche proclaimed as having died is different from the "divine God" that once can pray or fall on one's knees before in reverence. For Marion, this agreement with Heidegger is further grounded upon the Church Fathers' uniquely trinitarian understanding of God, which Marion believes further highlights Heidegger's insight.

According to Marion's reading and promotion of the Church Fathers' theology—a reading that is importantly inspired by the *Nouvelle théologie* of the early twentieth century[760]—God can only be known personally as a loving "Father" through his self-revelation in the Son, who is an "icon of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). In this manner, any knowledge of God (as Father) is iconically mediated through the Son in a form of filial relation, or *distance*.[761] On Marion's reading of the Church Fathers, then, one does not come to know the Father (and thus cross the distance between God and humankind) through the idolatrous mediation of any concept or idea, but only through "traversing this distance" relationally, as *hypostasis*, in the act of love.[762] Consequently, Marion advances in *The Idol and the Distance* that that the death of God/metaphysics should ultimately be understood as a positive event, as the death of these purely conceptual and idolatrous gods can help promote the necessary withdrawal, or distance, which is needed for the Christian God of revelatory experience to manifest himself once more in this trinitarian, filial light of relation.

While Marion engages with the work of Nietzsche and Hölderlin as exemplars who are able to help "think" this distance, it is primarily the negative theology of Dionysius the Areopagite that Marion engages with in order to advance this point, as it is in the work of Dionysius that Marion believes we find the penultimate example of thinking this paternal distance which the Church Fathers bear witness to.[763] For this reason, it should not be overlooked that Marion's engagement with Dionysius' negative theology of "divine names" in *The Idol and the Distance* is ultimately understood in a trinitarian—and more specifically, Christic—manner.[764] The thinking

760 Marion, like Yannaras, is inspired to respond to Heidegger by promoting his own tradition's theological movement which sought a return to the theology of the Church Fathers. For Yannaras, as we have noted in the introduction, this was the "Christian Hellenism" of Florovsky. For Marion, this can be noted with theological influences from the *Ressourcement* movement, most prominently through the work of Von Balthasar. For the influence of von Balthasar's work on Marion, see Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 175-177.

761 See Marion, *The Idol and The Distance: Five Studies*, trans. by Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 8-9.

762 "The icon [that is the Son] manifests neither the human face nor the divine nature that none one could envisage but…the relation of the one to the other in the *hypostasis*, the person." *Marion, Idol and the Distance*, 8.

763 See Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, xxxv.

764 See Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, 171-80.

of "distance" which Marion finds in Dionysius' writings, in this sense, is always understood Patristically as the filial distance of the Father in relation to the kenotic being of the Son, whom iconically reveals to humankind the "eternal existence of God" as trinitarian love in and through the "mode of our finitude."[765] Furthermore, this Dionysian notion of distance is also thematically highlighted by Marion as being intrinsically ecclesial insofar as it is an event between God and humankind which is played out in the hierarchical being of the Church.[766] Thus through participation in the *ecclesia*, the Christian is able to dispel the darkness of his ignorance concerning God insofar as he is able to know God as love, or charity, which is recognized by Dionysius and the Patristic tradition as the Christian's trinitarian participation in Christ's filial relation to the Father in the mode of distance.

Here we see that Marion in *Idol and the Distance* is responding to Heidegger and the death of God/metaphysics in a strikingly similar manner to that of Yannaras in *Heidegger and the Areopagite* and *Person and Eros*—a fact which is all the more impressive when one takes into account that such a response to Heidegger had yet to be conceived in each thinkers respective traditions.[767] In these texts, both Yannaras and Marion largely adopt Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, and thus argue that the death of God in Western Europe is a result of the development of onto-theology in Western Europe. So too, both Yannaras and Marion argue in these texts that this mode of onto-theological "metaphysics" flourished in the Latin/Scholastic theological tradition, but not in the Patristic tradition of the Church Fathers.[768] In consequence, both thinkers attempt to promote the Patristic tradition of negative theology, grounded on the writings of Dionisius the Areopagite and the Church Fathers understanding of the Trinity, as a way forward from the death of God/metaphysics in our own time.

However, in relation to Marion's second theological publication, *God without Being*, the trajectories between Yannaras and Marion's work begins to clearly diverge.

In *God without Being*, Marion attempts to extend his earliest insights from *The Idol and the Distance*, yet he does so in a slightly different tenor. First, Marion's primary concern is no longer that of distancing the God of Christianity from the God of metaphysics. Even more specifically, Marion's primary concern is now to reveal how the God of Christianity must be distanced from the language of Being altogether. Here Marion central argument is that the Christian God should not be thought in relation to the restrictive horizons of Being, whether metaphysically *or* phenomenologically. Rather, in accordance with Dionysius the Areopagite and other Patristic thinkers, Marion argues that love, or charity, is the best name to signify God, since love "loves without condition…without limit or restriction," and thus gives itself outside of the

765 Ibid., 175-176.
766 See Marion, 174-175.
767 This strong correlation between Marion and Yannaras' response to Heidegger is also made by Aristotle Papanikolaou in his review of Yannaras' work. See Aristotle Papanikolaou's review of *On the Absence and the Unknowability of God* in Modern Theology 23 (2), 2007: 301-304
768 See for example Marion's critique of Aquinas and his onto-theological proofs for God's existence in *The Idol and the Distance*, 10-11.

conditions of Being's manifestation."[769] In other words, love is simply received and given "without a why or cause."[770] It does not follow the rules of Being, and thus both shatters and transcends the idolatrous gaze of metaphysics. Consequently, Marion emphatically argues that the Christian God of love, as well as the Church's teachings concerning Him, must be theologically understood and thought outside the play of Being altogether.

In *God Without Being* then, Marion seeks to overcome the death of God/metaphysics not simply with theological discourse—as noted in *The Idol and the Distance*—but with theological discourse which now has been stripped of any metaphysical language that attempts to name God in relation to the restrictive horizon of Being/beings.[771] This is noted, of course, in Marion's critique of modern thinkers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel, and Heidegger. However, Marion also extends his critique to the Latin Christian tradition as well. Here he looks especially at Aquinas and others in the scholastic tradition, all of whom began to speak about God as a "proper object of the intellect" or "object of science" that can be predicated and spoken of as analogically "being" in a similar manner as created beings.[772] For Marion, then, Aquinas and others in the scholastic/Christian tradition are not exempt from this critique. For while their discourse does contain an element of apophaticism, their theology still falls prey to the temptation of idolatry insofar as their discourse also began to determine the Christian God in light of the Greek categories of being.[773] Thus for Marion, it is this very mode of theo*logical*, "scientific" discourse which is still prevalent in the Church today that is in need of being overcome.

What is most important about this claim, however, is the manner in which Marion believes this overcoming should be procured. For as noted more explicitly in his later work, Marion argues the "overcoming" of metaphysics, or the "crossing out" of Being in theology, should ultimately be accomplished through the practice of phenomenology.[774] In other words, metaphysical theological discourse should be replaced with a strictly phenomenological mode of discourse, since only phenomenology, according to Marion, is able to offer a non-scientific mode of thinking which is able to accompany the revelatory and testimonial nature of Christian theology and experience.[775]

This endeavor can be understood as a major impetus that would go on to guide Marion's phenomenological career, which to Marion's credit, has led to an impressive advancement of the phenomenological method at large. As first worked out in his magnum opus, *Étant donné* (*Being*

769 See Marion, *Go without Being*, 47-49.
770 Ibid., 106-107.
771 See Marion, *God without Being*, 47-49; 106-107.
772 For Marion's critique of Aquinas, especially his interpretation of Dionysius, see *God without Being*, 73-82.
773 It should also be noted that Marion does later retract this critique of Aquinas in the preface to the English edition of *God without Being*, pages xxii-xxiiv. However, as Marion quickly follows up, this debate over whether Aquinas' understanding of God's being truly is or is not onto-theological still misses "the heart of question" which he attempted to present in his work. For even after conceding this point, Marion still asks the question of whether God can be thought outside even Aquinas' understanding of *esse*, which still remains a metaphysical concept of Being, even if it is not onto-theological. See Marion, *God without Being*, xxiiv.
774 On this point, see Marion, "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A relief for theology," 49-65.
775 This idea, for Marion, is largely inspired by his engagement with von Balthasar's theology, whose "object of theology," as Robyn Horner points out, is often seen by Marion "as being described as a phenomenon." See Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 175-176.

Given), for example, this intention has led to the discovery of givenness and the saturated phenomenon,[776] both of which, according to Marion, are able to help establish a form of *theo*logical thinking which can make room for God to "give himself" once more in an unconditional mode of *self*-revelation. Here phenomenology, after the death of God, is offered by Marion as a superior language to that of metaphysics, not simply for the philosopher, but for the theologian as well.[777] For rather than speaking of *ousia* and the categories of Being when trying to teach, explain, or make sense of Christian experience and theology, Marion's work proposes that the Christian instead use phenomenological signs of signification which are capable of signifying that which is *other* than Being; e.g., the icon, the call, givenness, love, the saturated phenomenon, and the like, therein leaving the language and methodology of metaphysics behind.

To a certain extent, Yannaras would agree with Marion on many of the above points. Christian discourse, on Yannaras reading, *should* leave behind the form of (onto-theological) metaphysics which Marion's work is attempting to overcome. So too, Yannaras also agrees that this should be done by reverting back to the theology/philosophy of the Church Fathers. However, contra Marion, Yannaras does not believe that this move demands Christianity leave behind any and all forms of metaphysical language/inquiry. For the while Greek Church Fathers, in agreement with Marion's interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite, indeed refused to speak of God's being in an onto-theological (essentialist) manner, Yannaras' argues that this fact did not keep them from offering a form of *metaphysics* all the same; that is, of offering a metaphysical ontology which signified not only the being of God, but also the being of the created order at large. And this is because, as Yannaras emphasizes, the Church Fathers' hypostatic ontology of the Trinity offered the history of metaphysics a completely different way of understanding and knowing Being; that is, it offered a non-essentialist understanding of Being which is capable of being known through the immediate experience of hypostatic activity rather than through the mediation of the idea. Consequently, as we have seen, Yannaras believes the Church Fathers' ontology was able to transcend the essentialist limitations of Greek metaphysics, and thus the problematic of onto-theology, while still providing a genuine, metaphysical response to the ontological question that is exclusively based upon the givenness of inter-subjective experience.

Thus in contrast to the response of Marion, who seeks to revitalize a repetition of patristic *theo*logy by leaving behind any and all talk of Being and metaphysics (therein leaving his phenomenological analysis void of any foundational ontology), Yannaras reading of the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology allows for the Church's discourse concerning God and the world to remain grounded on the givenness of experiential disclosure while still explicitly engaging with ontology (the ontological question) from a *metaphysical* perspective. For while the Christian *Logos* might indeed be completely "other" to the being (*ousia*) of this world, and while it also, per Marion, was primarily spoken of as a disclosed phenomenon, it unquestionably remained for the Church

776 On Marion's most exhaustive study of the saturated phenomenon, see *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomenon*, trans. by Robyn Horner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); On the individuation of the *adonné*, see *Being Given*, 267-279.

777 On Marion's presentation of phenomenology as a relief for theology as such, see Christina Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion*: *Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 131-161.

Fathers a metaphysical *Logos* in the classical sense of the word. Such is the very point which Marion and other phenomenologist today seem to completely ignore—or, perhaps as a nod to Yannaras' critique, quite simply do not have the appropriate language within their metaphysical tradition to argue for.

Herein we find the major quandary that faces contemporary, post-Heideggerian thinkers, in the "theological turn." For while such thinkers, such as Marion, wish to promote Christianity as a way forward from the problematic of God's death, they also wish to avoid returning to any idolatrous promotion of God in relation to the restrictive discourse of Being and/or metaphysics. The problem, however, is that the Church, both in the East and West, has *from the beginning* adopted the metaphysical language and practice of Greek philosophy as a means to intelligibly signify the experiential event, or mode of existence, that is Christianity. Thus what we ultimately have with thinkers such as Marion is the attempt to promote a "*nouvelle théologie*"—a "return" to the revelatory, experience based *theo*logy of the Patristics—without also fully returning to the language which the Church Fathers themselves used. In other words, as seen in Marion's theological works, such thinkers wish to revisit Christian theology with a purely phenomenological mode of discourse that is it stripped of any reference to Being, metaphysics, or ontology. And as I have attempted to explain at this beginning of this chapter, this reduction of Christian philosophy severely limits, or handicaps, one's ability to adequately respond to the death of God and the problematic of Western nihilism.

But why this difference in method between Marion (French phenomenology) and Yannaras? Why does Yannaras, who has also been inspired by his own "*ressourcement*" movement in the Russian Orthodox tradition, retain the language of Being and metaphysics in his promotion of the Church Fathers' philosophy, while Marion, in an almost identical response to Heidegger and the death of God/metaphysics, seeks to re-present the Church Fathers' mode of theological discourse in a purely phenomenological light?

In my reading of these two responses, the answer to this question can largely be understood in light of the French phenomenology's presumed understanding of both metaphysics and Being. Following Heidegger, for example, metaphysics is identified largely by Marion and other thinkers within the "theological turn" with the structure of onto-theology, or advanced later by Derrida as a "metaphysics of presence," both of which by necessity attempt to identify the Being of beings with that which can intelligibly "stand to presence" in the general or universal idea.[778] And insofar as this form of metaphysical discourse is generally recognized after Heidegger as the only manner in which Western philosophy can and has sought to signify what it means for something to truly *be*, then it is also presumed by Marion and other post-Heideggerian thinkers that any metaphysical discourse concerning Being in the Christian tradition must be set aside when seeking to overcome the metaphysical impasse of God's death.[779] This then leaves phenomenological discourse—

778 As Christina Gschwandtner states: "metaphysics, for Marion, is a 'metaphysics of presence,' in both Heidegger's and Derrida's sense of that term." For an extensive look at Marion's understanding of "metaphysics," see Christian M. Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics*, 13-38. For the quote above, see page 30.

779 This can be noted even after the fact that Marion has withdrawn his critique of Aquinas. For even after admitting that Aquinas' understanding of Being does not fall critique to his reconfigured understanding of onto-theology, he still

without a metaphysical ontology—to be recognized as the most advantageous form of *theo*logical discourse for the Christian after the death of God/metaphysics.[780]

With Yannaras, however, as we have attempting to explain in this dissertation, we find an alternative promotion of the Church Fathers that is driven by an alternative understanding of both Being and metaphysics. For what the trinitarian ontology of the Church Fathers offers, on Yannaras reading, is ultimately a non-essentialist—*albeit metaphysical*—answer to the ontological problem that is grounded solely on the givenness of Christian experience. Here we have, on my reading, an alternative reading and thus possible solution to the quandary described above. For as we have shown in this work, if Being is redefined with the Church Fathers in a hypostatic manner—that is, as personal relation, freedom, communion, and agapeic *eros*—then Being (*Einai*) is now able to be known and signified not through the onto-theological practice of metaphysics, but through the immanence of hypostatic *ek-stases*. Or, to put it plainly, the Church Fathers' understanding of Being would also be recognized as a given phenomenon, and thus could be known and engaged with through the discipline of phenomenology.

Consequently, on my reading, Yannaras' promotion of the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology could be offered as a relief for post-Heideggerian discourse in the theological turn, whose response to the death of God/metaphysics is severely limited by its lack of ontology and metaphysical inquiry. For the Church Fathers' hypostatic understanding of Being, as I have attempted to reveal above, would allow the possibility of a genuine metaphysical ontology that would both ground and work in harmony with, rather than in opposition to, the immanence of post-Heideggerian discourse. In other words, this move would allow Christian phenomenologists such as Marion, ever wary of the death of metaphysics, to once more promote the identity of Christianity in accordance with its historically proclaimed identity—that is, as an experiential, metaphysical participation in Wisdom—without reverting to the traditional, onto-theological structure of Western metaphysics.

A Trinitarian Ground for Givenness

Naturally, this proposal would entail several important consequences for the practice of phenomenology in the "theological turn," the most important of which I will attempt to cover in the remainder of this chapter.

First, this alternative starting point would imply that Marion and other Christian phenomenologists would need to explicitly ground their phenomenology on a Trinitarian ontology.

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promotes phenomenology as a superior mode of discourse. This can be explained, perhaps most simply, in the fact that Aquinas' discourse is still contaminated by forms of "metaphysical" discourse; i.e., "scientific," theo*logical* forms of thinking which Marion wishes to avoid. See for example Marion's engagement with Aquinas in "The Aporia of the Concept of Revelation: The Epistemological Interpretation," in *Giveness and Revelation*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10-28.

780 Here I find sympathy with John Milbank's critique of Marion's work, which argues that the language of "Being" is essential to Christian discourse. For this critique, see Milbank's Article, "Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena toa Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," in *Modern Theology* 11.1 (1995): 119-161.

This potential must be looked at and explained with some care, since for many, such a move is simply out of the question. Phenomenology, God, and metaphysics, as it has been traditionally argued, cannot be brought together as such.[781] Yet much of this objection, as noted above, is contingent upon one's definition of each term, as well as one's hermetical starting point for understanding philosophy *qua* philosophy.[782] Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the potential of grounding Marion's phenomenological analysis upon a trinitarian ontology would not be as much a stretch as some might believe. And this is because, on my reading, this is what Marion is *already* doing, albeit in a "masked," reticent manner.

In order to properly defend this claim, we must go back to Marion's first major response to Heidegger and the death of metaphysics as found in *The Idol and the Distance*. As pointed out earlier, Marion's central concept of distance in this work is ultimately understood in a trinitarian manner. Such is why distance, for Marion, is recognized "hypostatically" as the necessary ontological otherness, or "separation," that allows for the possibility of loving communion between 1) the divine persons of the Trinity and 2) the Father and human beings.[783] Which means that, at least in this early text, Marion's promotion of God as love is ultimately grounded on the event of trinitarian participation; or as Christina Gschwandtner states, on *deification*.[784] In this initial work, then, it would be uncontroversial to read Marion's promotion of theology, revelation, and "Christian experience" from an exclusively trinitarian perspective.

This fact is made even more evident in that Marion, following Dionysius, will go on to read the possibility of loving communion between God and humankind as a contingency that is only actualized by participation in the Church's hierarchy, which for Marion, like Yannaras, is read as a kenotic participation in the Son's filial mode of existence.[785] Here the participant of the ecclesial hierarchy learns to participate, through the Holy Spirit, in the self-emptying *kenosis* of Christ, and in so doing, learns to actively participate in the trinitarian play of divine communion (more specifically, in the loving distance that exists between the Father and Son).[786] Thus in the same way that the Son receives his very being insofar as he kenotically receives himself wholly from the giftedness of paternal anteriority, so too does the Christian take on this very life for himself, such that his own life becomes a recipient of giftedness; that is, a *hypostatic* recipient of

781 See for example, Husserl, *Ideas I*, 134; and Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 48-49; For a more extensive look at this issue, see Laurence Paul Hemming, *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) and Angela Ales Bello, *The Divine in Husserl and other Explorations*, trans. Antonio Calcagno (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

782 We will look more closely at this objection in the next major section.

783 On Marion's reading of distance in light of the divine *hypostases*, see *The Idol and the Distance*, 168, 171, 174. On the possibility of love due to distance, see Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, 155-56.

784 On Gschwandtner's reading of Marion in light of *theosis*, see Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 140.

785 See Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, 173.

786 "The kenotic abandon of the Cross declines, in the mode of our finitude, the trinitarian play of distance. Thus the same distance plays within the Trinity and, *iconically*, in the hierarchy." See Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, 176. See also "The Gift of a Presence," in *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 124-152, wherein Marion reads the concept of distance in an explicitly Trinitarian light. See especially Marion, *The Gift of Presence*, 141-142.

God's giving act, which as Marion states, is "nothing except the movement of the infinite *kenosis* of charity."[787]

In this manner, we see that Marion's first response to the death of metaphysics is to argue for a form of participatory Christian experience that is not only based upon the Greek Church Fathers' emphasis of deification. Even more so, like Yannaras, Marion's emphasis of deification must be recognized in a trinitarian, "personalist" manner; that is, it is based upon humankind's hypostatic participation in the kenotic movement of charity that exists between the divine persons. And if one were to read Marion's work systematically, as Kevin Hart, Dominque Janiquad, Thomas Carlson, and Derrida have all pointed out, then one could easily read the entirety of Marion's corpus published after *The Idol and the Distance* as seeking to offer a phenomenological analysis of this trinitarian reading of Christian experience (what Janiquad calls a "theology of the Father"), which in itself has vibrantly swung between the strictly separate disciplines of "philosophy" and "theology."[788]

In *God Without Being*, for example, Marion picks up where he left of in *The Idol and Distance*. Here Marion seeks to take his analysis further by revealing more fully why God must be thought iconically as gift, or love (*agape*), rather than through the idolatrous language of Being. One of the major differences between *The Idol and Distance* and *God without Being*, however, is that this point is now made with less explicitly theological, trinitarian language. For example, God is still understood as love, or *agape*, yet now without reference to its trinitarian foundation. So too in *God without Being*, it is still in and through the human being's loving response to the gift that one is able to adequately receive and/or experience God. However, this "response" is no longer promoted explicitly, as was the case in *The Idol and the Distance*, as a participation in the kenotic being of relation between the Son and the Father.[789] In some ways, then, one could find in *God without Being* the emergence of Marion's attempt to become less dependent upon explicit trinitarian language, and thus the beginning of his attempt to use phenomenologically neutral words as a means to justify the explicitly trinitarian experiences which he first attempted to think in *The Idol and Distance*.[790] We see this mission carried out perhaps most fully, for example, in *The Erotic Phenomenon* (*Le phénomène érotique*), wherein the above ideas—especially the ineffable "love of the Father"—are fleshed out from a purely phenomenological, non-theological/trinitarian vantage point.[791]

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787 See Marion, *The Idol and the Distance*, 166, 168.

788 See Kevin Hart in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3; Thomas A. Carlson's introduction to *The Idol and the Distance*, xii; Dominque Janicuad's *Le Tournant theologue de la phénoménologie française* (Combas: Editions de l'Eclat, 1991), 44-45; and Jacques Derrida in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1992), 52.

789 See Marion, *God Without Being*, 107.

790 Although there is a withdrawal from explicit trinitarian language, this text must still be recognized as "theological," as can be noted in Marion's emphasis of theology needing to be ultimately "eucharistic." See Marion, *God without Being*, 149-152.

791 As Kevin Hart points out, we see Marion in *The Erotic Phenomenon* attempt to offer a "deeper thinking of charity…without relying on religious dogma." See Kevin Hart, *Counter-Experiences*, 3n5.

Even more importantly, however, we also see in Marion's purely philosophical works such as *Reduction and Givenness*, *Being Given*, and *In Excess* the deployment of neutral phenomenological terms and methods which, as Carlson points out, bear a "strikingly deep resonance" to his earliest theological (i.e., trinitarian) insights from *The Idol and the Distance*.[792] As Carlson points out, for example, the is an unmistakable correlation between Marion's theological mediation on "distance" (again, a distinctly trinitarian term) in *The Idol and the Distance* and his most groundbreaking concept of "donation," or givenness.[793] Yet this is just one of the similarities. As Carlson points also out, there is also a direct correlation between the being of Marion's theological, "Christic" subject—which comes into existence "in response to the conceivable goodness, charity, or love of the Father"—and the being of the *interloqué* and *adonné*, which also "comes to birth in, or more precisely as, an irreducibly delayed response to a call."[794] So too, following this correlation, Carlson also notes how Marion's understanding of language is also based upon this Christological model of passive reception, wherein one receives language as a "gift" that is received in response, and thus as a meaning that is understood in "dispossession" rather than mastery.[795] And finally, in the same way that the Father "gives everything to be" through the "infinite kenosis of charity," so too in Marion's later philosophical works, Carlson points out how "everything, without exception, obey the laws of givenness (including nothing), since the given is gifted 'without limit or reserve.'" Thus the reception of the gift, both theologically *and* phenomenologically, is a question of "welcoming the act of giving," which is found in a Christic repetition of first "giving oneself."[796]

For Carlson, then, along with several others (noted above), the "core logic" of Marion's theology in *The Idol and the Distance* is undeniably the same logic which would go on to inform the purely phenomenological concepts and discourse in his later works. Understood in this light, we may also find sympathy with the claims of Emanuel Falque, who argues that Marion's phenomenology is essentially a "masked" apologetic.[797] Here Marion's explicitly philosophical works in phenomenology are not to be read as unbiased phenomenological accounts of what gives itself, but are rather understood more fully as conditioned by his attempt to guide his reader towards a Christian horizon of experience.[798] Whether Marion is justified in this attempt is not our concern here. Our concern, primarily, is pointing out that this foundational horizon of Christian experience as first promoted in *The Idol and the Distance*, this "core logic" which undoubtably

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792 See Carlson's introduction to *The Idol and the Distance*, xi.
793 Ibid.
794 See *The Idol and the Distance*, xxiv.
795 Ibid., xxiv-xxv.
796 Ibid., xxvii.
797 It is also for this reason, Dominique Janiquad notes, that Marion's theological content can be all too easily inserted into his "philosophically neutral" phenomena, thus making his theology as clear supplementation to his phenomenology. See Janiquad's critique of Marion in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, 64. See also Falque's critique of Marion in *The Loving Struggle*, 129-140.
798 This is not a point which Marion seeks to argue against. Indeed, he claims that such is the very point of a "Christian philosopher": i.e., making apparent in philosophy that which has come to be made apparent through means of faith/theology. On this point, see Marion, "Christian Philosophy," in *The Visible and the Revealed*, 71-74.

has colored and influenced the entirety of his theological and philosophical corpus, is ultimately *trinitarian.*[799]

What I will attempt to show below, then, is not only how Marion's phenomenology could be gracefully grounded with a trinitarian ontology, but also how this potential move, if read in light of Yannaras' Hellenistic reading of the Church Fathers' philosophy, would allow for thinkers within the theological turn to overcome the problems which we have outlined thus far.

Being and Loving

As I have argued above, Marion's phenomenology is, in many ways, already working from an implicit trinitarian horizon. That is, his phenomenological analysis of the world, God, and the self are inspired by the Church's participation in the life of the Trinity, even if he does not make this logic explicit throughout his corpus.

If it is true, however, that Marion's phenomenology is foundationally based upon the Christian's revelatory experience of triadic deification, then—hypothetically speaking—if one were to bring this ontological foundation to the light, one would seemingly be able to reread his phenomenological discourse as no longer signifying mere phenomena, but also as signifying a metaphysical reality—"*to ontos on*" (the really real)—exactly as we find in the work of Yannaras. In other words, in Marion's corpus, it is very well possible that the foundation is already laid for such a project to take shape. All one would need to do in order to accomplish this transition is make a few minor adjustments to the hermeneutical starting point from which to read his phenomenological analyses.

For example, this potential can clearly be noted in *God without Being*, wherein Marion promotes love as the primary name for God after the death of metaphysics.[800] What is perhaps most interesting about this account of God, however, is the manner in which it is framed. As Marion states in his preface to the English edition:

> no doubt, God can and must in the end also be, but does his relation to Being determine him as radically as the relation that his Being defines all other beings?...[w]ith respect to Being, does God have to behave like Hamlet?[801]

In response, Marion replies emphatically: if "God is love" then "God loves before being, He only is as He embodies himself—in order to love more closely that which and those who, themselves, have first to be."[802] Hence, as Marion later states, "God is not because he does not have to be," but *because* he loves.[803]

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799 This is also noted in the fact that Marion, a thinker of Revelation, explicitly understands Christian Revelation in a Trinitarian manner. This is noted especially in his Gifford Lectures from 2014, published in English as *Givenness and Revelation*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
800 See Marion, *God without Being*, 47.
801 See Marion, *God without Being*, xx.
802 See Marion, *God without Being*, xx.
803 See Marion, *God without Being*, 47.

What must first be noticed here is that Marion is indeed signifying the existence, or being, of God. Yet he wishes to do so not by employing the metaphysical language of Being, but through the name of love alone. In this manner, God *is* because he loves—a statement which, for Marion, enacts a radical "reversal" between the relations of Being and loving. But is Marion doing metaphysics here, or does he remain within the realm of pure phenomenology? While I would like to believe the former, Marion gives no further evidence of allowing us to make this interpretation. Rather, as noted in the later chapters, there is good reason to believe that this statement must be understood phenomenologically, strictly in relation to the manner in which God *gives* himself in the mode of revelation, which is not given in accordance with the horizon of Being, but which "is" (phenomenologically: is *given*) completely from itself, outside the play of Being altogether.[804] Thus when Marion states that God "is" love," he is not signifying God's being in traditional, metaphysics sense of the word. Rather, for Marion, God *is* love in the sense that He is given and experienced as such, implying that the "is" signifies nothing more than his phenomenological mode of manifestation through God's own self-revelation. To imply anything more would be to transcend phenomenology and enter into the territory of metaphysics.

In the work of Yannaras, coincidently, we have an almost identical statement. However, because of Yannaras' alternative starting point, its meaning is radically different. As we have seen, Yannaras also wishes to avoid an metaphysical talk of God concerning his being as *ousia*, and thus, like Marion, chooses to signify God only in relation to his revealed activity; i.e., as love. However, for Yannaras, the expression "God is love" is not simply read here in a subjective manner of experiential reception (thus referring merely to revelatory experience), but *ontologically* as well. For according to the trinitarian ontology the Church Fathers, as we have seen, God's being is grounded not on the determinacy of his *ousia*, but through the freedom or love of the persons. Thus for Yannaras, like Marion, "God is" not because he is determined to do so, but *because* he loves. The difference, however, is that this statement does not simply refer, like Marion, to humankind's experience of God's self-revelation that gives itself outside the play of Being/beings. When understood ontologically in light of the Trinity, it also becomes an ontological statement of metaphysical import: that is, it reveals what it means to truly "be" outside the limitations of space, time, finitude, and death.

Here we have, in my reading, a wonderful example of how the work of Marion, if guided more fully by Yannaras' interpretation of the Greek Church Fathers, could supplement and strengthen his insights—many of which would be read here not as *wrong* in as much as incomplete.[805] For the Church Fathers, per Yannaras and Marion, did indeed refer exclusively to their revelatory experience of God's loving, personal disclosure when using the signifier "God." Yet as Yannaras points out, the Church Fathers ontological rendering of the Trinity allowed for

804 On this point see Marion, *God without Being*, 100-107.

805 In God without Being, for example, Marion's promotion of "the icon"—which represents the givenness of God's disclosure from himself— is explicitly based upon the *persona*, or *hypostasis*, of the Greek Church Fathers. The point, however, is that Marion does not seek to emphasize the metaphysical ontology of this term, whereas Yannaras uses it as a ontological foundation for Christian experience. On the former point, see Marion, *God without Being*, 18.

said experience to be understood from a metaphysical register as well—as speaking to that which "truly is" *beyond* the phenomenicity of phenomena. When understood from a trinitarian ontology, then, Marion's insightful statement that "God is not because he does not have to be, but *because* he loves" would not simply phenomenologically refer to the fact that God's self-revelation gives itself outside the play of Being. Rather, with Yannaras, this would also be understood as a metaphysical statement—an answer for what it means for anything to *be* at all.

Which means, furthermore, that any and all phenomenological accounts which Marion offers of God as love would also, in theory, have the chance to signify and bear witness to an ontological reality, to Being itself. Here Marion's insightful phenomenological analyses of God's givenness as charity—which as noted above, is a driving force for almost the entirety of his corpus—would not simply be understood, theologically, as a phenomenological (counter)-experience of the transcendent breaking in upon the immanent. For if his phenomenological analysis here were thematically brought forth in light of the trinitarian ontology of the Church Fathers which they are based upon, then they would be able to be understood, most fully, as humankind's participation in "*to ontos on*," or *Sophia*: the divine *tropos* of existence which is not susceptible to change, death or decay.

The Adonné and the Prósopon

As I have argued above, Marion's phenomenology is foundationally based upon the Christian's revelatory experience of triadic deification, especially in light of the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology. Because of this, I have attempted to show how one could easily make the transition from reading his phenomenological analysis not simply as signifying mere phenomena, but also as signifying a metaphysical reality, or Being itself. However, the possibility of this transition runs much deeper than equating, as Yannaras believes the Church Fathers do, the revelatory experience of God's love with an experience of God's very Being. Even more precisely, this transition could also be made in relation to Marion's phenomenological analysis of the human subject (the *adonné*), which as noted by Carlson, is based in *The Idol and the Distance* upon the relational, "Christic" subject. Which means, if Marion's reading of the Christic subject's being in *The Idol and the Distance* were recognized, in relation to the Church Fathers' ontology, as a metaphysical *logos* which reveals what it means for the human person to "be truly," then his later phenomenological analysis on the *adonné* could also be read as signifying more than a purely phenomenological reality.

In order to argue this, I will attempt to bring Yannaras understanding of the *prósopon*, or *hypostases*, into dialogue with Marion's phenomenological understanding of the *adonné*, with the further intention of revealing how, in an almost uncanny manner, they are once more signifying the same event, albeit with different methods of interpretation; i.e, one phenomenological, the other phenomenological *and* metaphysical.

For Yannaras, as we have seen in chapter VI, the Church Fathers understand the *prósopon* in two ways: first, phenomenologically, it is understood as the personal "horizon" for Being's

disclosure; second, it is understood ontologically as the "absolute otherness" of nature. In relation to the second use of the word, the *prósopon*/*hypostasis* is understood by the Church Fathers as the *tropos* in which both human and divine nature exists. From this perspective, the *ousia* only "is" through the hypostatic activity of being-in-communion. Understood in light of the Trinity, then, this becomes a metaphysical statement in response to the ontological question: made in the trinitarian image of God, for the human person to truly be is for the human person to be in relation, and to be in relation, as revealed by Christ, is to kenotically exist in the perichoretic act of mutual self-gift, such that one's being is not grounded on nature, but on the loving dynamism of relation. Here the human person's existential participation in the *ekklēsia* is recognized as a participation in the eternal and divine mode in which God triadically is, such that one's self-actualization as *hypostasis* in the ecclesial event is recognized, phenomenologically, as an imminent, participatory, first-person experience in Being—that which triadically "truly is" (*to ontos on*).

Marion, unsurprisingly, offers a very similar analysis of the human person throughout his corpus. First, as noted in *The Idol and the Distance*, we have the responsorial, kenotic self that likewise participates in the Son's kenotic relation to the Father through a deified participation in the Church's hierarchy. In Marion's later works, as Carlson hints at, we see a very similar promotion of the self, albeit from a strictly phenomenological (philosophical) perspective: first as the *l'interloque*, then *l'adonné* (the gifted/the devoted), and finally *l'amant* (the lover). In *Being Given*, for example, we find almost the exact logic of the kenotic self that participates in the *tropos* of the Trinity now being applied to being of the *adonné*. Just as the being of the Son is recognized in *The Idol and Distance* as receiving himself wholly as gift from the Father in a "filial poverty," so now does the *adonné* (as the *gifted*), in *Being Given*, receive himself (his alterity/facticity) wholly as gift from the anteriority of that which precedes him.[806] In addition, just as in *The Idol and the Distance*, the Son must actively and continually choose to receive himself through humbly accepting the poverty of his dependence on the gift,[807] so too, in *Being Given*, must the *adonné* become "devoted" and "surrender himself over too" the prior appeal of the giftedness of the given in order to keep his individuation and singularity.[808] And finally, just as this kenotic response of the Son to the Father is recognized as the very movement of charity in *The Idol and the Distance*,[809] so too in *Being Given* is the responsorial movement of the *adonné* promoted most fully as the lover (*l'amant*), or the "erotic self," such that it is only through a self-sacrificial form of ecstatic love that one's self is fully realized (which as it turns out, in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, is only possible if one has first been loved by God).[810]

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806 On this point, see Marion, *Being Given*, 268-270.

807 "The Son receives himself and saves his life—as the life of the Son—only if he receives it all the way, and therefore only if he does nots subsists outside the anterior gift that constitutes him from all eternity as the Son." *The Idol and the Distance*, 175.

808 See Marion, *Being Given*, 302-316.

809 See Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 248-49.

810 On the necessity of love for the proper reception of the given, see Marion, *Being Given*, 307, and most fully *The Erotic Phenomenon*, wherein the promotion of love, or choosing to love, is promoted philosophically not only as that which allows me to become "myself," (thus overcoming the metaphysical subject), but also that which allows me to receive the world in a truthful manner (thus overcoming onto-theological metaphysics). See Marion, *The Erotic*

From this perspective, it is tempting to understand Yannaras' *prósopon* and Marion's *adonné* as two names which seek to signify the same experiential event; that is, the relational, responsorial, and kenotic being of the human person that exists in and through its loving communion with God and the other. And insofar as both seek to accomplish this feat by establishing their view of the human person in light of Christ's hypostatic relation with the Father, then the above intuition would in many ways be correct. However, their radically different hermeneutical points of departure once more demands the meaning of said phenomena be poised in a contrasting light.

First, and most obviously: after *The Idol and the Distance*, Marion limits his discourse, both theological and philosophical, to the realm of phenomenology. For this reason, Marion's later phenomenological analysis of the self—whether as the gifted or the lover—cannot be understood in metaphysical manner, strictly speaking. In the same way that Marion's statement "God is love" must be understood purely from a phenomenological horizon (such that the "is" identifies God's being solely with his givenness), so too must Marion's phenomenological analyses of the self be understood in the same way. For even if one were to "cross the Rubicon" between theology and philosophy here, such that Marion's philosophical analysis of the loving self were read explicitly in light of its trinitarian foundation, Marion would still be unable to claim his work as offering knowledge of what it means the human person to "truly be," metaphysically speaking, since his project is incessant upon overcoming the language of both metaphysics and Being through the proposal of a pure phenomenology.

Yannaras, however, in staring with a trinitarian understanding of Being, is able to take the very same phenomena of Christian experience that Marion's work is engaging with—such as their understanding of the person, or self, as a kenotic, erotic response to a divine call—and now read them metaphysically. With Yannaras, for example, we have seen how the human person's existential participation in the *ekklēsia* is explicitly recognized, with the Church Fathers, as a participation in the eternal and divine mode in which God triadically is. In this manner, the constitution of the self "as a response to loving and being loved" which Marion's work seeks to reveal is able to be promoted by Yannaras not simply in a phenomenological manner, but even more fully, as an imminent, participatory, first-person experience in Being itself.

Thus we see once more how Yannaras and Marion are, in practice, often signifying the same event and/or phenomena with the same intention: both seek to offer the trinitarian, relational being of Christian practice and experience as a means to overcome onto-theological metaphysics and the death of God. However, because of their juxtaposed hermeneutical starting points, they end up saying very different things. Or, more specifically, Marion ends up having to say much *less*, therein restricting the potential and fecundity of his response. Yet insofar as this difference, as I have attempted to argue, is nothing more than unnecessary hermetical distinctions that have resulted from Western Europe's mode of philosophical discourse, I find there no reason why Marion's phenomenological analyses of the Church Fathers' "theology" should not be read, along

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Phenomenon, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 125, as well as Gschwandtner analysis of this event in *Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, 220-223.

with Yannaras, from the philosophical presuppositions of Hellenism rather than those of Modernity. For in doing so, the restrictions which Marion imposes on his work could, in theory, be dissolved, therein allowing his response to Heidegger and the problematic of metaphysics to reach its fullest potential.

Towards a Christian Philosophy

At this point, however, we must deal with a natural question: if one were to read Marion and other Christian phenomenologist from the perspective I am proposing, in what way would we still be able to consider their work "phenomenoglical" in the strict sense? More specifically, what would the practice of phenomenology then look like if renewed as such? In seeking to answer these questions, we may look at the work of Yannaras once more as a guide, as he has already revealed in his response to Heidegger what such a model might look like.

The first question which must be asked here is whether Yannaras, who brings the philosophy of the Church Fathers into dialogue with phenomenology in *Person and Eros*, can still be considered to be offering a genuine form of phenomenological discourse. Of course, the answer to this question will depend upon one's definition of what phenomenology is. However, if we define phenomenology in the manner in which it is commonly used by thinkers within the "theological turn," then I believe we could answer in the affirmative.

The mode of phenomenological discourse which one finds in the "theological turn" may, at first glance, appear starkly different than the form of phenomenology which one finds in Husserl. Even more so, there exists fundamental differences in each thinker's own unique mode of phenomenological inquiry, as noted earlier (Falque and Lacoste's starting points are fundamentally different to that of Marion, for example). However, there can still be noted a common thread which unites all thinkers within the "theological turn." According to Christina Gschwandtner and others, we can understand this common thread as follows: 1) all thinkers within the "theological turn" use the method of phenomenology to interpret the universal structures of human consciousness that make human experience possible, while also 2) only analyzing the intersubjective experiences/phenomena from said universal structure, as opposed to analyzing the particular, "horizonless," empirical experiences of the individual.[811] Thus for those who wish to apply the rigorous method of phenomenology in the discipline of theology, for example, it is generally these attributes which compose the foundational structure that must be followed.[812] So

811 See Gschwandtner, "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II). This is also the structure which Gschwandtner offers in her phenomenological analysis of the Orthodox Liturgy, and it is a structure which I believe rightly summarizes the basic tenets of the phenomenological method in its multifarious uses as it has developed since Husserl. For Gschwandtner's discussion on the topic, see *Welcoming Finitude: A Phenomenology of Orthodox Liturgy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 2-5. See also chapters three and four of Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*, wherein they will make a similar argument to Gschwandtner.

812 This would be noted, for example, in the work of Falque, who often deals with explicitly theological topics (the incarnation, the eucharist, the resurrection, etc.) from a phenomenological horizon. See for example Falque's *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. by George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

too, as Gschwandtner notes, it is also this basic structure that allows thinkers in the theological turn to separate their *philosophical* phenomenology of Christianity or religion from a vague "phenomenology of religion" (the latter of which would be a sort of uncritical examination of particular religious experiences).[813]

In my reading of *Person and Eros*, Yannaras' phenomenological analyses of the Church Fathers' philosophy indeed fits within this basic foundational structure—even if at times Yannaras work attempts to transcend or critique the limitations of Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenology at large. For example, we see that Yannaras begins by offering the *prósopon*, or *hypostasis*, as the underlying cognitive capacity of humanity which makes possible the reception of Being/beings primordial disclosure. More specifically, this hypostatic reception is argued by Yannaras as *preceding* the constituting aims of intentional consciousness and the intuition of transcendental consciousness, and thus is regarded as the universal "horizon" which allows for the experiential reception of that which wholly transcends the determinate structure of thought.[814] Such would be, phenomenologically considered, the universal "structure" and/or logic which allows for the manifestation of God's self-revelation to man, which the "common logos" of Christian experience bears testimony to. So too, as we have seen, it is this universal structure of underlying reception which allows Yannaras to regard such inter-subjective experiences of God and the world as the primordial, universal phenomenon, such that what Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenology discloses is recognized as being *derivative* of this primary disclosure. Thus while Yannaras will in the end distance the Church Fathers' philosophy as being different from this current expression of phenomenology, Yannaras own engagement with the Fathers' philosophy still remains within the foundational parameters of phenomenology as it has been advanced by Christian thinkers in the theological turn.[815]

Not only does Yannaras therefore share an affinity with said thinkers in relation to a common methodology, but in relation to the work or Marion especially, we have an uncanny resemblance in the form, results, and practice of which said methodology takes shape. As we have already reviewed, for example, Marion's radicalized promotion of Husserl's conception of givenness (*Anwesenheit*) also attempts to assume a form of phenomenological research that would leads us back to the self-giving of phenomena *before* they are made into objects or beings through the active dimensions of intentional consciousness. Thus whereas Yannaras speaks of the *prósopon*, Marion speaks of the *adonné*: both are being posited as the cognitive potential of universal receptivity which comes "before the subject," thus making possible a more primordial form of existential disclosure that is given before the mediating nature of intentional consciousness. With both the *prósopon* and the *adonné*, then, one would be able to account for the types of experiences which the Church Fathers wish to promote: that is, a wholly receptive

813 See Gschwandtner's "What is Phenomenology of Religion? (Part II).

814 See Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 18.

815 This means that Yannaras does not have a specific "phenomenological method" *per se*, as one would find in the work of Husserl, Heidegger, or Marion. Rather, it would be more appropriate to claim that he is working within the general parameters of phenomenological discourse, such that his work is grounded in a phenomenological light. Beyond Marion, then, I would label Yannaras' phenomenological discourse as being close to the work of thinkers such as Chrétien, whom also works within a generally accepted phenomenological lens, even if said lens or method is not clearly articulated or defined. For a more engaged reading of Yannaras' more explicit phenomenological discourse, see also Part Two of *Person and Eros*, wherein Yannaras offers an impressive phenomenological analysis of both God and the world in relation to the phenomenological themes of space and time.

experience of God and the world which precedes (and thus transcends) any conscious-intellectual determination.

Also worth noting is the similar logic which, according to both thinkers, makes such forms of knowing possible. For Yannaras, such reception is only made possible through the hypostatic actualization of relation, or the ecstatic freedom of loving self-gift. In other words, Yannaras attempts to reveal through his engagement with phenomenology how, for the Church Fathers, knowledge of God and the world is recognized exclusively as a loving event of existential experience, wherein it is the kenotic response of my will, rather than my intellect, which allows me to encounter God's being in a non-determinate, apophatic manner. So too with Marion, also inspired by the Church Fathers, the primordial disclosure of the given is only made possible to the degree that the *adonné* responds to the given with a kenotic hospitality of self-emptying and self-gift. In this manner, the primary "reduction" that allows for an experiential awareness of the given is primarily enacted through the will, such that the manner in which I receive the given is wholly contingent upon my response to it.[816] Theologically, this "logic" of the will is further explained in what Marion refers to as the logic of charity, wherein the "*logos*" which allows for the fullest reception of the given is revealed most fully as *agape*.[817] Thus like Yannaras, it is only when one chooses not to love—or at the very least, to "give oneself over" to the given—choosing instead a form of mastery or control, that one identifies and experiences the world solely as object and/or beings that exist solely in relation to my being.

Here we find Yannaras and Marion, once more, playing the same notes. Both are performing a phenomenological analysis of the universal structures that make human (and Christian) experience possible, while also offering acute descriptions of said experience in light of the common testimony of Christian literature and experience—especially the Christian philosophy/theology of the early Church. Yet once more, due to their juxtaposed philosophical paradigms, Yannaras and Marion will move forward with this analysis in fundamentally different manners.

For example, not only will Yannaras go on to read his phenomenological analysis in light of a Trinitarian ontology, but also, and because of this, Yannaras will go on to read this phenomenological analysis holistically in light of the Church Fathers' ontological understanding of the Fall and deification. As noted in chapter VIII, the Fall is offered by Yannaras as a narrative which is capable of explaining why and how phenomenon are no longer received *hypostatically*, but have rather been reduced to mere objects or beings, both of which are constituted as existing for and in reference to my being. So too, and perhaps even more importantly, deification is then offered by Yannaras as explaining more fully the ecclesial *tropos* of being, or "way of life," one must take on in order to receive God and the world in the manner which both Yannaras and Marion seek to promote. The only difference, of course, is that Marion's work does not take these extra steps, choosing instead to stop at the limits of his phenomenological methodology.

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816 See Marion, *Being Given*, 268-270.

817 From a theological perspective of this event, see especially Marion's writings in *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

Ancient Philosophy and the Phenomenological Method

But what is the reason for this lack of wholistic reference in the work of Marion? Why does Yannaras, for example, find it necessary to bring his phenomenology into dialogue with the Church Fathers' writings on the Trinity, the Fall, and deification, whereas Marion does not? The answer to this question is simple, but it reveals to us quite clearly the difference between Yannaras and Marion's use of phenomenology. So too, this difference also reveals to us the manner in which phenomenology would need to be performed if it is to be renewed in the Hellenistic mode of philosophy that we find with the Church Fathers.

As we have seen in Part One of this work, it must be remembered that the Hellenistic *tropos* of philosophy that Yannaras ascribes to the Church Fathers is by definition more than its rational discourse. Rather, "philosophy" was understood holistically as a way of life, a dynamism that existed between a school's *theoria* and its spiritual disciplines, of which the rational discourse is only a part. Thus in *Person and Eros*, wherein Yannaras attempts to promote the Hellenistic *philosophia* of the Church Fathers in relation to phenomenology, we should understand Yannaras' appropriation of phenomenology from within this very structure. In this manner, we would understand Yannaras' engagement with the phenomenological method as a form of "rational discourse" that in itself must be understood in reference to the larger whole of that which it is apart. Meaning, his "rational discourse" of phenomenological analysis in *Person and Eros* is not promoted as autonomously "standing on its own feet," but is rather promoted by Yannaras as complimenting and supporting the larger whole that is the Church Father's *philosophia*; i.e., the Church Father's philosophical *theoria* and praxis, which by definition includes their ontological understanding of the Fall and *theosis*.

Marion, however, along with the rest of his contemporaries in the theological turn, does not work within the Hellenistic model of philosophy. Rather, in continuation with the contemporary model of Modernity, the rational discourse of phenomenology is not understood as a part of a larger whole, but is recognized as the whole unto itself. In other words, phenomenology for such thinkers simply *is* philosophy. Thus for Marion and other Christian thinkers in the theological turn, there is made no reference to Christian *theoria* and praxis when working from the strict discipline of philosophical phenomenology. To do so, as we have seen, would be to leave "philosophy" and enter into the academic discipline of theology.

From this perspective, then, if one were to attempt to rethink the phenomenology of post-Heideggerian Christian thinkers such as Marion in light of the philosophy of Christian Hellenism as it has been advanced in this work, then it is here, with said structural foundations, that the biggest change would be made. For what would need to be changed, as we have attempted to reveal thus far, is not so much the methodological practice of phenomenology. For it would remain, most fundamentally, a method of interpretating the universal structures that make human experience possible, while offering an analysis of intersubjective experiences/phenomena from said structure. Rather, what would need to be changed is simply the foundational framework from which said

practice is built upon and understood, such that phenomenology is no longer exhaustively understood *as* philosophy, but as a particular form of philosophical discourse within the larger whole that is "Christian philosophy." By way of analogy: similar to how logic, dialectic, and other philosophical discourses in Antiquity were not exhaustive of philosophy as a whole, but were rather understood and actualized in reference to a school's *theoria* and praxis, so too would the phenomenological method be understood here as a particular mode of critical discourse that exists in reference to the larger whole from which it is a part. In this sense, it would be understood in reference to A) Christianity's unique vision of Wisdom, as well as B) Christianity's particular way of life.

Concerning thinkers in the theological turn, then, the actual use of the phenomenological method would not change in any substantial manner. The primary thing that would change, quite simply, is the lens from which the method and its results are understood. For example, as noted in the work of Yannaras, one would still be performing a phenomenological analysis of the universal structures that make human (and Christian) experience possible, while also offering acute descriptions of said experience. However, in so far as this would be understood as a method, or mode of philosophical discourse, rather than being understood *as* philosophy in itself, then the experiences and phenomena which are being engaged with would be understood as working in harmony with, rather than in contradiction to, the *theoria*, praxis, and way of life which is Christianity. Most importantly, and for this reason, the phenomenon would then be understood/interpreted in light of the whole which is "Christian philosophy," such that they would not simply be understood *merely* as phenomena, but as phenomena which testify to the Christian's metaphysical vision of Being.

Here Marion's phenomenological account of Christian experience, for example, as well as his promotion of Christian gnoseology, would not change in any substantial manner. What would change, quite simply, is how one then interprets the phenomena as such. For what Marion's "theological" and phenomenological work accounts for, quite brilliantly at times,[818] is indeed a different form of knowing that is unique to Christianity, a different phenomenon which is not known by onto-theological metaphysics. But according to the Church Fathers, this different mode of knowing God and the world is not anti-philosophical, private, or purely theological/religious. Rather, it is simply *their* philosophy. What I am proposing in this chapter, quite simply, is that Marion and other Christian phenomenologists' responses to Martin Heidegger and the death of God/metaphysics would be all the stronger if they were to return, with Yannaras, to this philosophical paradigm.

Phenomenology and Spiritual Disciplines

Once more, it should be noted that reading Marion's work from this alternative philosophical paradigm would be an easy hermeneutical transition insofar as the logical structure of Marion's phenomenology is already working from this alternative framework, albeit implicitly—that is, in

818 Indeed, Marion's phenomenological analysis could in many ways substantiate Yannaras' own work. As has been shown above, Marion's phenomenology often offers a much more rigorous and substantial phenomenological analysis of the Church Fathers' philosophy which Yannaras himself attempts to phenomenologically account for. In this way, we should also recognize the potential in which Yannaras' response to Heidegger could be greatly strengthened by the work of thinkers in the "theological turn," such as that of Marion.

a "masked manner." So far, we have attempted to explain this by revealing how Marion's phenomenology is in harmonious continuity with the Church's ontological vision of the Trinity. In this section, however, I would like to close by revealing how his phenomenology is also in continuity with the Church's philosophical praxis, or way of life. Indeed, such would be the case with most—if not all—Christian thinkers within the theological turn.

In order to recognized this, we must first understand that a large portion of post-Heideggerian thinkers are not simply attempting to overcoming "metaphysics," but also the being of the metaphysical subject, which is ultimately recognized as that which makes such value-laden, violent forms of thought possible. For this reason, it is not uncommon for the philosophy of post-Heideggerian thinkers to have some form of ethics, or moral practice, configured into their phenomenology—a fact which is no different for thinkers in the theological turn.[818] In the work of Lacoste, for example, this is found in the kenotic state of liturgically being-before-God.[819] For Jean-Louis Chrétien, it is found in seeking to live as a responsorial, "wounded subject."[820] For Marion, it is found in the attempt to enact the erotic reduction, which is also kenotic by nature. Thus what unites most thinkers in the theological turn, as Joseph Rivera points out, is that their phenomenology "prompts a way of life" that allows for the otherness of primordial phenomenological disclosure (whether of God, the world, or the other) to be given through "a means of spiritual practice."[821] More specifically, one could say that their philosophy is promoting an explicitly Christian way of life, full of Christian spiritual practices, for both mystagogical and heuristic purposes.

In regards to the work of Chrétien, for example, Graham Ward also argues that the genre which best suits Chrétien's writings would be that of French meditations, a form of spiritual praxis which, in their Christian form, should be understood liturgically, and thus from the Ancient practice of Christian mystagogy.[822] And perhaps most explicitly in Marion's theological work, his promotion of Christianity's "logic of charity" must ultimately be recognized as seeking to prompt an entirely different mode of existing—that is, a self-emptying mode of responsorial *kenosis*, which not only seeks to overcome the being of the metaphysical subject, but more specifically, seeks to help transform the subject into an icon of its divine archetype.

Thus we see, once more, how Marion and other Christian thinkers within the theological turn are already following a similar structure to Yannaras' promotion of the Church Fathers' Hellenistic philosophy. That is, their phenomenology is offering a more holistic account of knowing which 1) presupposes the identification of a particular *tropos* of living which is untruthful (e.g., the violence of the inhospitable subject), 2) presupposes the conversion to a mode of existence that is in accordance with truth (e.g., a mode of self-emptying hospitality), and 3)

819 As such, following in the path of Heidegger, Levinas, and even Derrida, the work of thinkers within the theological turn also can be recognized as attempting to offer a hospitable form of philosophical praxis that can "decenter" and transform the being of the violent subject.

820 See Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man.*

821 See further my article on Chrétien, "The Prelude of Silence," in *Finitude's Wounded Praise: Responses to Jean-Louis Chrétien*, edit. by Philip John Paul Gonzales and Joseph Micah McMeans (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023), 41-65.

822 See Joseph Rivera, *Phenomenology and the Horizon of Experience: Spiritual themes in Henry, Marion, and Lacoste* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 4-5.

823 See Graham Ward, "Jean-Louis Chrétien: A Mystagogy for Today," in *Finitude's Wounded Praise*, 144-145.

presupposes ascetical participation in spiritual exercises/practices that allow one to acquire knowledge of that which has originally disclosed itself (e.g., the erotic reduction). The major difference, however, is once more the different hermeneutical distinctions from which each thinker seeks to present their work.

According to the above thinkers, for example, the disclosure of phenomena which result from participation in explicitly Christian spiritual exercises/practices are proclaimed as actual only when working from the discipline of theology, and thus have nothing to do with philosophy or ontology. Yet on Yannaras' reading, these very "spiritual exercises" were seen by the early Church Fathers, and still in the East today, as being one with, rather than segregated from, the *philosophy* of the Church; that is, they were understood quite simply as being a part of the Christian philosopher's way of life that allowed for participation in the divine *Logos*. Thus for Yannaras, contrary to the contemporary Christian phenomenologists, the intersubjective experiences of the Christian that come from participation in Christian praxis are explicitly read in an ontological, and thus philosophical, horizon; that is, as bearing metaphysical testimony to that which "truly is" beyond the ontic givenness of phenomenal presence.

Thus we see, once more, how it is largely Marion and other's allegiances to the scholastic/modern paradigm that their interpretation of Christian experience and praxis exists in opposition to, rather than in accordance with, that of the Church Fathers. Yet in so far as this modern paradigm is, as Yannaras has shown us, simply one *tropos* of philosophical practice which in itself has no authoritative claim over its Hellenistic counter-part, then there should be no reason why one would be unable to read the phenomenology of thinkers within the theological turn from the Hellenistic philosophical paradigm of the Church Fathers once more.

A Return to Christian Wisdom

In closing, I would like to emphasize that this proposal is not as controversial as some might have it. Indeed, perhaps surprising to many, this is a view which is likewise affirmed by Marion himself. In a very enlightening article entitled "Christian Philosophy: Hermeneutic or Heuristic?", Marion seeks to articulate what he believes a Christian philosophy might be able to offer the world today. In this essay, he spends the majority of this time explaining how a Christian philosophy should not be understood simply as offering a theological interpretation of philosophical concepts, and thus simply as an arbitrary hermeneutic, but as a discipline which takes the revealed phenomena that have been manifested through faith (such as charity), and then attempting to study and promote said phenomena in a purely philosophical light. In this manner, the point of a Christian philosophy would be to produce "knowledge that would discuss with natural lights facts discovered under supernatural light."[823] And it is in indeed this proposed model of Christian philosophy, which naturally presumes a strict division between "philosophical

824 See Marion, "Christian Philosophy: Hermeneutic of Heuristic?" in *The Visible and the Revealed*, 72.

knowledge" and "theological knowledge," that a large majority of Marion's work must be understood as attempting to work within.

However, on the last page of this essay, Marion surprisingly offers a second proposal which he believes could also justify the use of a Christian philosophy in the modern world. And this second proposal, Marion states, is one which goes back to the tradition of the Church Fathers, all of whom understood Christianity primarily as a revealed Wisdom, and thus as a philosophy in the Hellenistic (rather than Modern) sense of the word. Thus even though, as Marion admits, this later understanding of philosophy "finds no echo in recent uses of the term," it should not be disqualified from use. For the sake of emphasis, I will quote the remainder of Marion's discourse in full:

> [i]t is one of the most evident shortcomings of modern philosophy to have lost almost completely one of the original dimensions of ancient pagan philosophy, from Socrates to Iamblichus. One ought to do philosophy in order to attain the highest good, beatitude, even the immortality of the gods. Except for some rare exceptions, metaphysics has renounced this ambition, at the risk of losing one of the primordial justifications for philosophy. When "Christian philosophy" restores the principle that it knows not only from Christ but also in order to attain him and beatitude, rather than turn way from philosophy as it has done, it rediscovers, after the long meandering of metaphysics, the awareness that original philosophy had as its purpose. At a time of nihilism, "Christian philosophy," taken as a heuristic of charity, would call any thought that would want to constitute itself as a philosophy back to its forgotten ambition of loving wisdom. Beyond other arguments, it is for these two reasons that I would suggest that the concept of "Christian philosophy" today may neither be obsolete nor contradictory—nor without a future.[824]

In other words, for Marion, not only modern Christian philosophy, but all modern philosophical discourse has turned away from this original impetus of philosophy. Such was its participation in (onto-theological) "metaphysics." So too, it is this this very understanding of philosophy which Marion claims philosophy *ought* to follow once more. Thus by leading Christian discourse back to this participatory approach of philosophy—that is, as a participation in Wisdom, which for the Christian, on Marion's reading, is "a heuristic of charity"—one would find a rightful and advantageous place for Christian philosophy to make a difference in our current time of nihilism.

The only problem with this inspiring proposal, of course, is that Marion's own work does not follow suit—at least, not fully. As I have attempted to show in this chapter, this is indeed what Marion is attempting to do *in practice*, yet his allegiances to the paradigms of modern thought withhold him from explicitly promoting his work from this alternative horizon. For if he were to follow his own advice here, Marion would be promoting his phenomenological prescription of Christian *theoria* and praxis not from the discipline of theology, but from the discipline of philosophy proper. Yet as he has made clear time and time again, this is not how he wishes us to read his work. Rather, he continues to defend his work on the grounds of the scholastic

825 See Marion, "Christian Philosophy: Hermeneutic of Heuristic?", 79.

interpretation of philosophy and theology as distinct and counterposed sciences—or, as this distinction has come to be understood in Modernity, two distinct "domains" of thought whose "objects and methods" must remain separate.[825]

Thus Marion, ironically, is critiquing even his own work in the above excerpt, as Marion himself holds fast to the very thing which he recognizes as "one of the most evident shortcomings of modern thought." For while Marion, I believe, has attempted to return to this Ancient form of philosophy in practice, his incessant desire to also present his phenomenology within the academically credible paradigms of Modernity has ultimately disallowed him from fully making this move. However, as this dissertation has attempted to reveal, we have in the work of Yannaras a fulfillment of what Marion's work is seemingly pointing us to, yet in the end falls short of accomplishing. For with Yannaras, we have not only a promotion and example of doing philosophy "in order to attain the highest good…the immortality of the gods," but also we have the proposal for Christian philosophy, after its long meandering of metaphysics in "the West," to be called back to its original and forgotten ambition of seeking to participate in divine Wisdom.

For this reason, then, as I have attempted to reveal in this chapter, if Marion and others were to likewise present their phenomenology from within the Hellenistic philosophical paradigm which Yannaras proposes, then their response to the death of God/metaphysics and the problematic of Western nihilism would reach its fullest potential. For rather than offering the mere possibility of religious phenomenon than can only be known theologically through faith, their phenomenological analysis of Christian experience and praxis would be capable of being promoted within the discipline of philosophy proper. Meaning, even their "theological" phenomenology would, with Yannaras, be promoted as bearing reference to Christian Wisdom, and thus would be further promoted philosophically from an ontological horizon. So too, as we have argued, their work would also be recognized as offering an illuminating analysis of the universal means, or philosophical way of life, which one must covert to in order to verify, with one's own experience, the revealed Wisdom of the *ekklēsia*; or, as Yannaras states, the Church's answer to the ontological problem.

Of course, after the death of God/metaphysics in the West, such a move within the discipline of phenomenology would imply a large undertaking which would have to re-examine many presumed practices, concepts, and teachings concerning the Western Church's philosophical/theological traditions. For example, how ought we understand this Ancient understanding of doing philosophy which the Church Fathers' partook of in contrast to its more rational development in the Latin West? What of our current philosophical understanding and practices should be set aside, and with what should they be replaced? Likewise, can we truly understand the Church's proposal of Wisdom, and thus its metaphysical response to the ontological problem, without recourse to a metaphysics of presence? How and in what way must we then signify "Being" in relation to Christian experience? And if we do wish to promote such a form of Christian Wisdom which escapes the determinative structure of onto-theological metaphysics, how

826 On this point ,see Marion, *In Excess*, 28.

ought we understand the Church's use of language/*logos* as a means to speak of and pass on knowledge of Wisdom as such?

Yet such are the very questions which Yannaras' response to Heidegger has already answered for us in an extremely nuanced and subtle way. For what Yannaras has offered, as we have attempted to make clear, is not simply a theoretical vision of Being which he believes capable of overcoming the problematic of metaphysical nihilism. What he has also offered is a blue-print, if you will, of a renewed, universal *tropos* of doing philosophy for the "post-metaphysical" Christian in the twenty-first century. A blue-print, it must be emphasized, which is not new or speculative, but which is based upon the embodied praxis and *theoria* of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy as Yannaras claims it has been preserved in the Eastern Church's *ekklēsia*. In this manner, as post-Heideggerian Christian thinkers in the West continue looking to their Christian past—as well as to their counter-part in the East—as a means to overcome the current impasse of Western nihilism, I believe Yannaras' response to Heidegger which I have explicated in this work could prove invaluable to this endeavor.

Conclusion

In Part One and Two of this dissertation, we have attempted to respond to the first question which this thesis proposed—namely, how and in what way can Yannaras' interpretation of the Greek Church Fathers' philosophy overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism as illuminated by Martin Heidegger? This has been the primary question which has guided the entirety of my engagement with Yannaras, wherein I have attempted to offer an elaborative and supportive synthesis of Yannaras response to Heidegger throughout his three major works on the topic: *On Heidegger and the Areopagite, Person and Eros*, and *The Schism in Philosophy*.

In Part One, we have argued that Yannaras' response to Heidegger's critique is able to overcome the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism insofar the historical unfolding of nihilism, on Yannaras' reading, is an event that must be restricted to the Latin (Western European) philosophical tradition *alone*. For this reason, Yannaras believes that it neither accounts for nor applies to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism or the Church Fathers. The point of this, as we have noted, is two-fold. First, insofar as Yannaras wishes to present the Hellenistic philosophy of the Greek Church Fathers as a way forward from the metaphysical impasse of Western nihilism, Yannaras needs to reveal how the Church Fathers' philosophy does not fit within nihilism's historical unfolding in Western Europe, thereby revealing it as a legitimate way forward from the death of the latter tradition. The second point of this narrative, then, was to reveal the "inner logic" of this other, non-Western tradition as another mode of *doing* philosophy. Here the "fundamental attributes" of Hellenism as they were adopted and continued by the Church Fathers, were not presented merely as being different from the inner logic of the Western metaphysical tradition, but were also presented as a fundamentally different *tropos* of philosophical thought and practice which Yannaras invites his reader to partake of now that the Western philosophical tradition has reached a nihilistic end.

This then led us to Part Two, which attempted to further reveal the potential of the Church Fathers' philosophy by showing more concretely how its alternative *tropos* of thought is capable of successfully overcoming the nihilistic implications of Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Most especially, as we have pointed out, it needed to be revealed how the Church Fathers' answer to the ontological question is 1) not rationally constituted as a *value*, and 2) does not unfold within the violent logic of onto-theology. As we have argued for in Part Two, Yannaras believes that the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology is capable of accomplishing this insofar as it offers a non-essentialist ontology that signifies what it means to truly be *beyond* the ontic givenness of phenomenal presence, all the while remaining grounded in the horizon of revelatory experience and inter-subjective verification. In this manner, we see how the person's knowledge of Being for the Church Fathers remains outside of both the value-laden workings of intentional consciousness as well as the onto-theological horizon of "metaphysics." However, in relation to Part One, Yannaras stresses that one can only come to know Being *as such* through the process of converting to the Church's ecclesial way of life, an act that presupposes the leaving behind one's "natural" and untruthful world of error and delusion and learning to "become true" through

communal participation in the ascetical (kenotic) *tropos* of ecclesial being. In this manner, Yannaras emphasizes how the Church Fathers' response to the ontological problem is not only capable of theoretically overcoming the problematic of Western nihilism. So too, the philosophy of the Church Fathers also reveals the *way of life* one must partake of in order realize this potential.

This presentation of Yannaras' response to Heidegger then led us to our closing chapter, wherein we have attempted to reveal how this response could contribute to contemporary post-Heideggerian discourse. In doing so, I argued that Yannaras' understanding of the Church Fathers' philosophy offers a key methodological hermeneutic which would allow for richer discourse amongst Christian thinkers within the post-Heideggerian field of Continental philosophy of religion—most specifically, for Christian thinkers in the "theological turn." And the reason for this, I further argued, is that Yannaras' philosophical interpretation of the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology would open the possibility, once more, for Christian experience to be discussed ontologically within the discipline of philosophy proper, rather than, as Christian phenomenologists currently do, restrict the discussion of Christian experience and praxis to the academic discipline of theology.

In relation to Part One, then, I argued in the closing chapter that the hermeneutic which would make such a move possible is Yannaras' "Hellenistic" interpretation of Ancient philosophy and Christianity as a *way of life* that seeks participation in Wisdom, and which likewise understands Christianity as a philosophy in and of in itself. Thus for Yannaras, starting from this alternative paradigm of the Church Fathers, Christianity is not viewed as a "religion," nor is its discourse restricted to mere theology. Rather, Christianity is recognized by Yannaras and the Church Fathers as a philosophy in its own right. Thus when beginning from this alternative starting point we are offered a radically different perspective from which a Christian philosophy, especially in light of the Church Fathers' trinitarian ontology, can seek to overcome the death of God/metaphysics and the problematic of Western European nihilism.

Yet for Yannaras, this alternative response to the ontological question which Yannaras believes is found in the philosophy of the Church Fathers must not simply be understood as "one" response amongst many competing responses. On the contrary, after the death of metaphysics, Yannaras believes there are only two viable ontologies from which one may choose from today. Most prominently, there is the nihilistic ontology of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and others whom, after the deconstruction of all metaphysical idols, recognize the Being of beings as having no inherent purpose, or *telos*. Second, there stands the ontological vision of triadic being offered by the Church Fathers, which is grounded primarily on the disclosure of revelation of ecclesial experience. Thus for Yannaras, it is either nihilism or love, nothingness or personal relation, as it is only these to ontologies which are left standing after the nihilistic end of onto-theological metaphysics in the Western traditions. So too, as Yannaras has argued, the only manner in which one can truly know which ontological vision is true is not through mere philosophical speculation, but ultimately through participating in each responses proposed way of life; that is, it is left to each individual to "come and see," in a rational and participatory manner, whether each philosophy's ontological vision of Being accurately bears witness to the fullness of what has been given.

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In closing this work, I would like to conclude by emphasizing that this understanding of Christianity, philosophy, and Being which is promoted by Yannaras is neither idealistic nor purely

theoretical. In other words, I wish to emphasize that this philosophical vision of Christianity should not be regarded simply as a speculative proposition which, while promising in theory, has no actual or potential bearings in the real world. For as we noted in chapter one, what Yannaras is attempting to promote is ultimately a testimony to the mode of philosophical thought and practice that already exists in the Christian East (while also being more scattered in the West), which according to modern scholarship and consensus, has always understood the teachings and praxis of Christianity in light of its *filial* promotion of deification.

This is a fact which I believe can be most clearly revealed in reference to the life and theology of St. Sophrony, whom as Rowan Williams points out, is in many ways the most important and critical Orthodox figure for "personalist" Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century.[826] For within the life and philosophical writings of St. Sophrony and his monastic contemporaries, what we have is ultimately a living witness to the form of Christian philosophy which Yannaras seeks to bear witness to throughout his writings. In St. Sophrony's auto-biography, which at the end of his life was written as an attempt to summarize and give testimony to his experience in the Church, he states the following:

> Our dogmatic cognition can be summed up as follows: 'I AM THAT I AM,' 'I am Being," I AM THE TRUTH.' The personal Principle in Divine Being is its *ontological kernel*. It is He Who verily lives. The First and the Last, Alpha and Omega. Thus do we interpret Sinaitic revelation…which was reiterated more than once in His appearance in our flesh…Truth is Self-Being. It is revealed to us as Personal Absolute—One Being in Three Persons[827]

Thus based upon his own experience and participation in the *ekklēsia*, St. Sophrony affirms with Yannaras that we must understand "St. Paul and the other Apostles, such as Peter and John, as well as all the subsequent theologians of the Church" to be relating facts not of religious experience, but "facts of Being."[828]

As St. Sophrony goes on to state, once more reflecting Yannaras' own emphasis, the fundamental witness of Christianity is that in and through the incarnate *Logos*, humanity now has the potential to fully participate in God's life—in "the eternal "I AM" of Absolute Being as it had first been revealed to Moses"—such that "[u]nion with Him [the Father] imparts to us, too, the Divine form of Being, immutable for all time."[829] In this manner, for St. Sophrony, the human person comes to know Truth in the radical immanence of experience, through a first-person participation in the self-giving *energeia* of the *Logos* as it kenotically exist in relation with the Father, wherein "there is neither death, nor beginning, nor end."[830] Speaking of his own witness to this event, which in many ways reveals the existential excitement of the Church Fathers whom recognized Christianity as a fulfillment of Hellenism's metaphysical endeavor, St. Sophrony writes the following:

> Through His coming within me, therefore through union with Him in the very Act of Being, I live as He does. He is my life. His life is mine…in such moments, the soul knows

827 See Williams analysis of St. Sophrony's influence and work in *Looking East in Winter*, 98-112.

828 Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He is*, trans. by Rosemary Edmonds (Plantina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2021), 209,

829 Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He is*, 182.

830 Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He is*, 158.

831 "We in the Church existentially, by actual experience, know the Self-emptying of the Son…we are taught in the Church to live the birth of the Son in the Holy Trinity as the self-emptying of the Father giving all of Himself, in the whole plenitude of His eternal Being, to the Son." Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He is*, 139, 183.

> what is happening to her and declares: 'NOW, O MY CHRIST, IN THEE AND BY THEE…Now—*I* am *[ego eimi*].[831]

In many ways, then, we find in St. Sophrony a paradigmatic example of Yannaras' Christian philosopher *par excellence*: someone who, in continuing in the tradition of the Greek Church Fathers, understood and lived the *philosophia* of Christ, shown not simply in his writings, but in his very mode of existence. And this very mode of existence, as both St. Sophrony and Yannaras wish to reveal, is not a strictly "Eastern" or "Orthodox" mode of Christianity. It is, rather, bearing testimony to the universal truth, or Wisdom, which the Church attempted to bear witness to in her earliest philosophical writings. It is, quite simply, a call to return to the "eternal" *philosophia* of Christ, which as Marion agrees in his own work, has been regrettable overshadowed in the West with the prevailing dominance of rationalism and (onto-theological) metaphysics.

Thus with Marion, Yannaras is likewise promoting—in a much more explicit manner—that it is only this original mode of Christian thought and praxis that can be offered to the West today as a means towards overcoming the death of God/metaphysics. And for Yannaras, a return to this form of Christian philosophy is *paramount*, as he believes that Christianity, after the death of God/metaphysics, contains the only tenable alternative to the nihilistic philosophy that pervades Western culture, since it is only in Christianity that we find an non-nihilistic response to the ontological problem which is capable of being affirmed through the common *logos* of experience rather than the private *logos* of the value-laden idea. More fully, it is only in Christianity that one can convert to a new way of life, and in so doing, "come and see" whether if to truly be is to be in reference to the Other—face to Face, *prósopon* to *Prósopon*.

832 Saint Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He is*, 234.

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