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Either/Or: The Question of Identity and Eastern Orthodoxy in the Thought of Christos Yannaras

Introduction

The publication of Vladimir Lossky's *Essai* established the paradigm of Eastern Orthodox articulation of identity as antinomial to the West: a tropological form that has proven virtually insurmountable.¹ Lossky's paradigm pivots on a double-sided narrative that posits a theological failure of the West characterized as 'rationalist' and 'philosophical,' the antithesis of which is the unbroken Eastern theological tradition of pure apophaticism and mystico-ecclesial experience.² Ingredient to this is a genetic mapping that tags the hallmarks of the West-East *diastasis* on central figures: Augustine and Aquinas as the progenitors of the supposed Western deficiency, and the Cappadocians and Gregory Palamas as the fountainheads of Orthodox theological identity. While neither the paradigm nor the genealogy were original to Lossky,³ his

¹ Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'église d'orient* (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Mouton, 1944); ET: *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1957).

² Ibid, 8-10, 14-17, 26ff., 84-88.

³ The formal shape of this paradigm can be traced back, at least, to the nineteenth century studies of the doctrine of the Trinity conducted by Theodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1892). Lossky's unique contribution lies in his appropriation of Régnon's thesis, widening the lens of a distinction in 'Trinitarian models' to theology proper so as to indicate a fundamentally irreducible (and irreconcilable) differentiation between East and West *in toto*. Additionally, Lossky was instrumental in the elevation of Gregory Palamas as the *figure célèbre* of Eastern Orthodoxy, assimilating the studies produced by his fellow Russian exiles into the fabric of his overarching narrative. For extensive treatment of these elements in Lossky, see Rowan D. Williams, 'The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky: an Exposition and Critique,' (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1975). Also, Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 9-20, 24-30, 50-71. It should be noted, here, that these features were not isolated to the thought of Lossky, but rather the constructive consensus of the émigré working group gathered at St. Sergius in Paris [e.g., Georges Florovsky, John Meyendorff, Alexander Schmemmann, Sergii Bulgakov -- Bulgakov represents an anomaly in the theological trajectory of the exiles, most notably on the relation of philosophy to theology and the continuity of his thought with the 'Idealist' strand of nineteenth century Slavophilic philosophy]; however, Bulgakov shares many of the pivotal

account made accessible this narrative outside the domain of ‘textbook’ theology (à la Régnon) and instituted a reading constitutive for modern Eastern Orthodoxy; Lossky’s reading, in fact, not only achieved ‘canonical’ status in Orthodox theology,⁴ but shaped the reading and agenda of the post-Barth Trinitarian revival of modern Western theology in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵

concerns of Lossky and Florovsky, particularly the centrality of the Palamite doctrine, which is funneled by Bulgakov through his sophiology. On the work of the exilic theologians in Paris, see Donald Lowrie, *St Sergius in Paris: the Orthodox Theological Institute* (London: SPCK, 1954); Nicholas Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance in the Twentieth Century* (London: Dartmon & Longman, 1963); Alexis Kniazeff, *L’Institut Saint-Serge. De l’Académie d’autrefois au rayonnement a’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974); Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 55-61; Daniel P. Payne, ‘The Political Revival of Hesychasm in Greek Orthodox Thought,’ (Ph. D. diss., Baylor University, 2006), 1-18, 321-382. Concerning the disagreement between Bulgakov and his Paris compatriots, see Williams, *op. cit.*, 32-63; Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.), 272-290. The imbricate nature of Bulgakov’s sophiology and Palamism can be seen most acutely in *Sophia the Wisdom of God: an Outline of Sophiology*, trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke, and Xenia Braikevtic (London: Lindisfarne, 1993); and, *idem.*, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 89-156, 193-210.

⁴ Following the work of Lossky, Florovsky, and Meyendorff: John Romanides, *Tò Προπατορικόν Ἀμαρτημα* (Athens: 1959), 1-27, 153-175; *idem.*, *Rominosyni-Romania-Roumeli* (in Greek; Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 1975); *idem.*, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμας Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν θεολογίαν καὶ πνευματικότητα τῆς Ρωμῆσίνῃ* (Thessaloniki, 1984), 53ff.; Ioannes Karmires, *Τα Δογματικάκαὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς*, 2nd ed. (Graz, 1968) I: 348ff.; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); George Dragas, *The Meaning of Theology* (London: SCM, 1980); Constantine Tsirpanlis, ‘Epistemology, Theognosis, the Trinity and Grace in St Gregory Palamas,’ *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 13/1 (1994): 5-27; John Chyrssavgis, ‘Ἡ ἀναγνώρισῃ τῶν mystērīōn τῶν heterodoxōn stis diachronikes scheseis Orthodoxias kai Rōmaikokatholikismou,’ *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 41/1 (1996): 84-105. This reading is even represented as the official form of Eastern Orthodox theology in an entry in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Band 33: *Technik-Transcendenz*, redaktion: Albrecht Döhnert (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), s.v. ‘Theologie, 2.3: Grundzüge des orthodoxen Theologieverständnisses.’ Two Eastern Orthodox theologians stand out, however, for their attenuation of this reading: Dumitru Stăniloae and Nikos Nissiotis.

⁵ A panoply of Western theologians, in the era immediately following Barth, expropriated the tropes from Lossky’s pages, eliciting solvency for the Trinitarian deficiency inherited from Augustine and Aquinas (redeployed in Barth) by raiding the supposed ‘social’ Trinitarian construction of the Cappadocians. Attenuation of the Western ‘problem’ was supposed to be had by recourse to the East, insofar as the East is as tailored by the narrative in Lossky, et al. The list of Western exponents is now commonplace: Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jenson, Torrance, LaCugna, Gunton, etc. Intriguingly, all of the modern Western revivalists, with the exception of Rahner as a predecessor (e.g., ‘Theos in the New Testament,’ *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), 79-148 and *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1970)), fail to note the primogenitureship of the thesis with Régnon, thus its status as an already Western reading of the West and, concomitantly, a Westernization of the East – the same can be said of Lossky and the Paris exiles. Michel Barnes has trenchantly exposed this *lacuna* in the reading of the Trinity within modern theology, and has attempted to correct the corresponding anachronisms in treatments of Augustine. See Barnes, ‘De Régnon Reconsidered,’ *Augustinian Studies* 26/2 (1995): 51-79; ‘Augustine in Contemporary Theology,’ *Theological Studies* 56/2 (1995): 237-250; ‘Re-reading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity,’ in *The Trinity*, ed. Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford

An attendant set of problems persists in the wake of Lossky's work, namely the seeming inability of Eastern Orthodoxy in a 'post-diasporic'⁶ era to think itself without recourse to a strict binary narrative of identity and relation or the superimposition of a singular doctrinal litmus standard (i.e., Palamism);⁷ such is the case in the thought of Christos Yannaras, as this essay will argue. Understood this way, Eastern Orthodoxy does not possess a qualitative identity of its own outside of a contrastive 'otherness' to the West. Ironically, this move results in an Eastern Orthodox identity that is not only

University Press, 1999), 145-176. See also the now essential work by Lewis Ayres on fourth century Trinitarianism, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. Parts II and III. Corollary to Barnes and Ayres on Augustine, an attempt to acquit Aquinas is made in Herbert McCabe, 'Aquinas on the Trinity,' in *Silence and the Word*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 76-93; Charles André Bernard, 'Mystère trinitaire et transformation en Dieu,' *Gregorianum* 80/3 (1999): 441-467; Bruce Marshall, 'Ex Occidente Lux? Aquinas and Eastern Orthodox Theology,' *Modern Theology* 20/1 (2004): 23-50; Gilles Emery, O.P., *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). I wish to acknowledge Travis Ables and Joshua B. Davis for discussion on the question of the Trinity in post-Barthian modern theology.

⁶ I borrow this term from Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1997), 126f., 178-187. The term 'diasporic' has been applied to the set of texts produced by the Russian émigré community of Eastern Orthodox theologians, often characterized by concerns for the peculiar ecclesial situation faced by those in exile from post-Revolutionary Russia. As these communities have established roots in their exilic turf, the particular theological content of these texts has proven insufficient to address the changing issues and demands in conjunction with heightened visibility and engagement. On 'diasporic' Eastern Orthodox theology, see Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora*; Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*; T. Allan Smith, 'A Century of Eastern Orthodox Theology in the West,' *Religious Studies and Theology* 16/1 (1997): 60-77; Bernard Dupuis, 'After the Bolshevik Revolution: Theologians in the Russian Diaspora,' in *The Twentieth Century: a Theological Overview*, ed. Gregory Baum (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 23-37. The background to this movement is cogently articulated by George Kline in his article 'Russian Religious Thought,' in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, eds. Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Steven Katz and Patrick Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2: 179-238.

⁷ As the effect of the Palamite 'renaissance,' initiated by the Paris 'school': Meyendorff and Florovsky produced studies of Palamas' theology, which Lossky assimilated into his own larger theological works; the texts eventuated in the claim of Palamism as both the apex and distinct representative of Eastern Orthodox theology: both Lossky and Florovsky, in fact, aver that the Palamite essence-energy distinction is the doctrine of the Eastern Church. Cf. Meyendorff, *St Gregoire Palamas et la Mystique Orthodoxe* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1946), 174-175; idem., *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris, 1959) Lossky, *The Vision of God*, trans. Ashleigh Moorhouse (London: Orthodox Press, 1963), 128f.; idem., *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 45-70; Florovsky, 'St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,' *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5/2 (1960): 119-131, esp. 124-125, 130-131. For commentary and criticism, see Rowan Williams, 'The Philosophical Structures of Palamism,' *Eastern Churches Review* 9/1 (1977): 27-44; and idem., 'The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky,' 7-8, 21-24, 117-118, 157-190.

inseparable from the West, but is, in fact, an identity *assigned* by the West – an irony compounded by the unreflected upon importation of a Western reading of the East in Orthodox texts. Concomitantly, the binary relational construct forces Orthodox theologians into performing anachronistic readings of history and theological texts. Not only is there a failure to read Western texts in more than a superficial manner (e.g., Augustine and Aquinas), but the attempt to portray a pristine Eastern Orthodox other unsullied by Western contamination in the texts of Palamas ignores the complex cross-pollination embedded in the fabric of both traditions.⁸

Yannaras, a pivotal Greek theologian of the second-wave (or ‘neo-Orthodox’) movement of Orthodox theology,⁹ ultimately fails to secure a stable articulation of Eastern Orthodox identity, as he is unable to overcome the Lossky paradigm. Though Yannaras’ project unfolds in wide-ranging engagement and conversation with pivotal Western texts, his reading at the critical juncture succumbs to flaccid generalization and sharp stereotyping of the Latin tradition. Corollary with this, Yannaras hardens the

⁸ Numerous monographs in patristic studies have engaged in genealogical analyses that have uncovered the influence of one tradition upon the thought of figure(s) in the other. E.g., Fran O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); I. Chevalier, *Saint Augustin et la pensée grecque. Les relations trinitaires*. (Fribourg, 1940). Two important studies by Reingard Flogaus re-examine the question of Palamas and the Hesychast controversy. Flogaus argues that the thesis put forward by Lossky (and especially Romaindes), which contends that the Hesychast controversy involved a stark decision between Latin (Augustinian) and Aristotelian influenced thought represented by Barlaam and pure Orthodox Byzantinism upheld by Palamas, is untenable. Herein, Flogaus demonstrates that this controversy was not only strictly inter-Byzantine, but also that Augustine had the most direct influence on Palamas. Most notably, Flogaus traces exhaustively allusions to and even wholesale reduplication of lengthy passages from Maximos Planudes’ thirteenth century Greek translation of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* throughout the works of Palamas, as well as Palamas’ redeployment of Augustine’s conceptions of the procession of the Spirit and notions of grace. See Flogaus, ‘Der Heimlich Blick nach Westen. Zur Rezeption von Augustins De Trinitate durch Gregorios Palamas,’ *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 46 (1996): 275-297; idem., *Theosis bei Palamas und Luther. Ein Beitrag zum ökumenischen Gespräch* (Göttingen, 1997), 50-284.

⁹ The second-wave movement (ironically labeled ‘neo-Orthodox’) refers to the generation of Orthodox theologians who proceeded the renaissance of Eastern Orthodox theology initiated by the émigré community in Paris. For more on the second-wave, see Iōannes Karmires, ‘Contemporary Orthodox Theology and its Tasks,’ *Istina* 10 (1979): 11-32, esp. 14-19; Vassilios Makrides, ‘Byzantium in Contemporary Greece: the Neo-Orthodox Current of Ideas,’ in *Byzantium and Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 141-159; Payne, ‘Political Revival,’ 1-68.

genealogical dichotomy, postulating Palamas – particularly the so-called Palamite distinction of essence-energy in God – as *the* arbiter of a univocal Eastern Orthodox theological identity. Yannaras articulates this position through three tightly imbricate components: 1) a descriptive and critical analysis of modern Eastern Orthodox theology; 2) a critique of Western theological discourse; and, 3) a constructive portraiture of Eastern Orthodoxy. These three conceptual elements, distinct yet inseparable, are corresponding movements: the first two represent a ‘deconstructive,’ negative vector, while the third represents a constructive, positive vector. This essay will examine these steps in turn, attending to the concerns of Yannaras’ project at each stage. Though Yannaras does not finally achieve independence from the either/or identity construct baptized by Lossky, reading the interstices of Yannaras’ pages may unleaf the possibility of an alternative account of what is constitutive of Eastern Orthodoxy.

(α) Deconstruction I: Modern Greek Orthodoxy

Already in his earliest writings the ligaments of Yannaras’ overarching theological project are in place. When read conjointly, his two doctoral dissertations¹⁰ reveal the chief concerns and methodological procedures that are played throughout Yannaras’ *corpus*. In his Sorbonne dissertation, Yannaras engages in a reconstruction of the mystical-ascetical tradition of the Eastern Church, focusing in upon the work of John Climacus. His reading of Climacus is directed toward an attenuation of the regnant interpretation of the mystical and ascetic literature found in the textbooks and theological faculties of the Orthodox world. In the interpretation of the academy, Yannaras finds a sharp dualism imposed between soul, body and nature; this dualism, Yannaras contends,

¹⁰ Yannaras, ‘La Metaphysique du Corps. Étude sur S. Jean Climique’ (Ph. D. thesis, University of Paris-Sorbonne, 1968; published by Cerf, 1970); ‘Ν Ὀντολογικά ἰδέε η θεολογικά πρόσωπου’ (Ph. D. thesis, University of Thessaloniki, 1970; published by Δόμος, 1971).

is a reflection of a theological impotency in the imagination of modern Orthodoxy: the result of a process of Western influence on Eastern Orthodox thought.¹¹

Over against this, Yannaras argues that the mystical texts of the Eastern tradition are constitutively readings of the transfiguration of existence that just is bodily and material.¹² Asceticism is, according to Yannaras, not about flight from the body or legalistic proscriptions, but the reintegration and unification of persons on the register of *eros* and *koinonia* through the liberative transformation that arrives within participation in the love that is the life of God.¹³ The denunciatory language concerning the body or the world that riddles the texts of ascetics, such as Climacus, functions paradoxically, reflecting the tragic nature of human existence under the conditions of sin; in Yannaras' analysis, this tragic element is the fall into individualism and autonomy – which results in dualistic thinking – overcome in the personal and universal communion of the divine *eros*. The move to be made is away from the impersonal and the dualistic, which positions the interior against the exterior and isolates persons from nature and others, towards the embrace of embodiment and the freedom to live with and for others in their bodies, given that it is the body that is loved erotically by God and is eschatologically oriented toward deification in God's own erotic communion.

The lynchpin of Yannaras' argument is Christology. Yannaras exposes the Christological strata in the pages of Climacus, which he sets in contraposition to dualistic readings. The transfiguration of human existence under the conditions of fallenness – the tendency towards individualism and isolation – turns upon the openness and communal

¹¹ Yannaras, *La Métaphysique du Corps*, 4-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 162, 196.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 117-132.

desire constitutive of the life of God extended *ad extra* in the incarnation. Here, the personal shape of the being of God as Trinity is manifest in *eros*, in a giving over and an opening for the other; as well, the incarnation is the revelation of our own being as fundamentally communal and ontologically oriented toward life in the divine. That the shape of this life *is* bodily is demonstrated, in Yannaras' reading, by the pivotal place held by the incarnation and the resurrection in Climacus. In the incarnation, God takes *on* a body (descent), and in the resurrection God takes *up* this same body (ascent), which is to be the course of all human bodies.¹⁴

Yannaras' reading of Climacus not only involves a reconstruction of the relation of the body to communion and transfiguration, but also an appropriation of German philosophy in the figure of Heidegger. In his treatment of the tragic condition of humanity and his analysis of death, Yannaras is dependent on Heidegger's *Umheimlichkeit das Daseins* and *Freiheit zum Tode*. Moreover, embedded within Yannaras' criticisms of the dualistic readings of Climacus and the mystical-ascetic literature are traces of Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics. Yannaras' target is not the West *per se*, at this point, but rather the dependence of the Orthodox theology propagated at Greek universities upon the Western categories and tropes that are the subject of Heidegger's critique.

Both the usage of Heidegger and this critique of academic Orthodox theology are pushed further in Yannaras' Thessaloniki *habilitationshrift*. Here, Yannaras engages in a

¹⁴ Ibid., 124, 126-128. Yannaras' Christological construction is highly dependent upon St. Maximus the Confessor, particularly *Ambig.* 7 [PG 91: 1068D-1101C], 41 [PG 91: 1304D-1316A], and *Opusc.* 6-7 [PG 91: 65A-68D, 69B-89B]. I register, here, a slight disagreement with Williams, who argues that Yannaras develops a 'cryptic and rather unsatisfactory' Christology; Williams, I think, has missed the decisive role of St. Maximus in this section, which serves as the archstone for Yannaras' argument against dualistic interpretations of ascetic literature. It should be noted, though, that Yannaras' Christology in later works, as he traffics much more emphatically in Palamism, succumbs to the problem of crypticism. Williams, in this wise, was perhaps a prescient reader of Yannaras. See Williams, 'Theology of Personhood,' 426.

two-pronged analysis that seeks symmetry between the patristic understanding of ontology (e.g. the personal character of existence and knowledge) and Heideggerian philosophy of existence.¹⁵ Yannaras' contention is that the writings of Heidegger open the possibility of redescription and translation of the content of the patristic, Orthodox tradition of faith, which refuses intellectual abstractness and dichotomization in favor of existential experience.¹⁶ In this, Yannaras builds upon his previous reading of personhood as relational and communal, marked by the erotic constitution of God and humanity.¹⁷ This is argued, contrastively, against the static categories of being, existence and knowledge regularly deployed in the dogmatic textbooks and teachings of the Orthodox faculties.¹⁸ Yannaras expostulates against the presence of rationalist epistemology and the conceptualization of being, formulated in the Greek manuals, along the lines of an analogical continuum, whereby the nature of and relation between God and humanity are derived from the principles of causality. Utilizing the apparatus of phenomenological and existential critiques of metaphysics, Yannaras demonstrates not only that Greek university theology traffics in the stagnant and outmoded conceptual structures of scholasticism and the Enlightenment, but also that it stands at a critical disjunction to the life and content of its tradition.

¹⁵ Yannaras, "Ν Ὀντολογικά ἰδεε ἡ θεολογικά πρόσωπου," chs. 3-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷ Yannaras' understanding of personhood as erotic – that is, ontologically constituted by attraction, openness, freedom and communion – will bloom most fully in his book *Τὸ Πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ Ἔρως* (Athens: Δόμος, 1971); ET: *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell (Boston: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008). For the influence of Heidegger on Yannaras' concepts of being and personhood, see Williams, 'Theology of Personhood,' 416-419.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, chs. 1-2.

The *diastasis* between Yannaras and the ‘school’ theology comes fully to the fore in an essay from 1971 on contemporary trends in Greek theology.¹⁹ In this essay, Yannaras levies the charge that theology, as taught in the Greek university system, is divorced entirely from ecclesial life and experience.²⁰ Yannaras identifies two sources for this disjunction between theology and the ecclesial: the operative principles and function of the university in Greece, and the content of the theological and dogmatic texts of the theological schools. Theology is severed, in effect, from the church in virtue of its transference to the domain of an independently established, state governed university system; within this context, according to Yannaras, “theology is no longer the vision and experience that is the *ethos* and mystery of the church but a body of concepts sponsored by an authority separate from the church.”²¹ The Greek theological faculties, rather than being supervised and regulated by the church (e.g., the bishops), are replicas of the German university system, and thus operate on the principle of theology as an autonomous science.²² The principle of autonomy and the vision of theology as a purely academic, ‘scientific’ discipline are the constitutive result of the establishment of the Greek faculties in the nineteenth century, as Greece emerged from Ottoman rule, by Greek academics trained in European universities. By modeling itself on the European system, the Greek academy imported the vision of the West. According to Yannaras,

The establishment of theological faculties in the Greek academy brought to Greece the fundamental ideas of the religious problematics of the West: pietism, natural theology, the religion of sentiment, theological Enlightenment, and Christian civilization (*kultur-christentum*). The moral categories of Wolff and the

¹⁹ Yannaras, ‘La théologie en Grèce aujourd’hui,’ *Istina* 2 (1971): 129-167.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130-131, 137. Yannaras’ resistance here is strikingly similar to that struck by the *nouvelle théologie* figures, Balthasar, Congar, Lubac, against the arid neo-Thomism of Catholic seminary theology in the 1930s and 1940s.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

²² *Ibid.*, 132-134.

religious categories of Schleiermacher dominated the classroom. *Dogmas remained a body of theoretical principles without any immediate relationship to the spiritual life of the faithful.* Morality was based on rationalistic concepts, and, in particular, on the juridical conception of the relationship between God and humanity, which has always been the hallmark of Western piety. It was, therefore, in the natural order of things that Greek academic theology, from its introduction into the universities, had Western theological problematics imposed upon it, as well as the mentality of the specific theses of Western theology.²³

Yannaras' critical conclusion is that theology in the Greek academy is *not* Orthodox, but a chimera reconstituted from Western sources.

The second site of abdication of Orthodox theology to the West is located by Yannaras in the dogmatic manuals of the Greek academy. Yannaras fomented against a fleet of dogmatic texts: Trembelas, Panayiotis, Chrestou, Mouratidis, Moralitis, Balanos, Stephanides, and Androustos. The *Dogmatics* of Androustos receives the brunt of Yannaras' criticism due to its prevalent influence on subsequent generations of Greek theology, and its status as an exemplar of the "transfer of Western rationalism and the worst kind of scholasticism to the realm of Orthodox theology."²⁴ In these manuals, the 'criteria of Orthodox patristic and liturgical tradition' are replaced by the categories and organization of the theological textbooks of the Western Thomistic tradition and the post-Reformation Protestant scholastics.²⁵

In the case of Androustos, the layout of his dogmatics not only reprises the format of Western scholastic manuals but also directly interpolates a large number of theses and formulations. Orthodox theology, in Androustos and the manuals following his, is reorganized into a 'system' and proceeds according to the dictates of scientific, rationalist methodology, in contrast to the spiritual, mystical texts of the Byzantine tradition: these,

²³ Ibid., 136f.

²⁴ Ibid., 142-143.

²⁵ Ibid., 144-149.

according to Yannaras, exemplify an unsystematized, experiential form of theology as liturgical and prayerful expression of the faith of the ecclesial body. Under the influence of Androustos' manual dogmatics, Orthodox theology is not only reorganized and given a discursive form imprinted by Western principles, but is rewritten in dogmatic content. Yannaras argues that the theology of the dogmatic manuals imports wholly 'foreign' elements constitutive of Western theology: penal theories of satisfaction and atonement, forensic categories of guilt, justification, and original sin, Protestant elements of worship, and rejection of Palamism and hesychasm.²⁶ By rejecting Palamism, the theologians of the manuals depart from that very thing that, according to Yannaras, *is* "the specific difference that separates Orthodoxy from every other theology, and that is of vital importance in safeguarding this theology from the dangers of scholasticism and rationalism."²⁷ The manuals, hereby, express a form of theology that deviates from the tradition, grounding itself not in the ecclesial experience constitutive of Orthodoxy but in anthropology – in the rational structures of human thought and the capacity of the human person to know and deduce the principles of God and religion.²⁸

However, Yannaras does not indict Androustos as the sole progenitor of an Orthodox theology restructured and reformulated according to Western standards and

²⁶ Ibid., 140f.

²⁷ Ibid., 147.

²⁸ Ibid., 147-149. Yannaras' essay parallels, to a great degree, pieces by Georges Florovsky and Alexander Schmemmann, who offer highly critical accounts of the influence of Western theology (particularly German idealism) on the theology of Russian Orthodox thinkers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both Florovsky and Schmemmann understood their work as a contest against Western philosophical influence through a retrieval of Byzantinism. See Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, trans. Robert Nichols (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1979); Schmemmann, 'Russian Theology: 1920-1972, an Introductory Survey,' *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 16/4 (1972): 172-194, esp. 172-176 [Schmemmann's article was originally given as a lecture in Paris in 1967]. One may also note an apt parallel between Yannaras' criticism of modern Greek theology and Barth's critical reaction to the liberalism of his student days, notably the contestation of anthropocentrism and rationalist deductionism.

tropes; Androustos' manual was a textual support necessitated by the curricular design and demands of the Greek academy. The precedent for a theological manual like Androustos' was fashioned already a century prior. Yannaras' most controversial claim, in the Orthodox world, lies in his identification of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite – the eighteenth century Mount Athos anthologist of the Greek *Philokalia* – as producing the archetype of later 'Westernized' Greek dogmatic manuals.²⁹ For, in addition to compiling the *Philokalia*, St. Nicodemos penned two works – *Exomologetarion* and *Pedalion* – that were entirely dependent on Catholic manuals. These titles were, in fact, pastoral texts based upon Catholic canon law and casuistry that organized the vision of salvation around forensic and legal notions of guilt, penance and satisfaction, dependent upon “an individualist metaphysics of exchange between God and man – precisely as defined by Augustine and Anselm, and as enshrined at the Council of Trent.”³⁰ Alongside these, which were attempts to restructure Orthodox pastoral theology, St. Nicodemos translated into Greek a number of Latin spiritual texts (e.g., the Ignatian rules, Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, Jesuit biblical commentaries, and clerical handbooks). Yannaras argues, hereby, that the erasure of Orthodoxy is not merely located in the academy, but is a widespread pandemic which could already be seen at the summit of Greek Orthodox spirituality: in the monasteries of Mount Athos.

If there is a wholesale loss of true Orthodoxy at these pivotal points, the questions of what accounts for this loss and whether any remnants of Orthodoxy *qua* Orthodox

²⁹ Ibid., 135, 153-156.

³⁰ Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Λησι -- Θεολόγια στὴν νεότερη Ἑλλάδα* (Athens: Δόμος, 1992), 132; see esp., 122-134.

remain are opened up.³¹ Yannaras takes up these queries, rewriting the narrative of the disappearance of Orthodoxy in a theo-political archaeology of Greek Hellenic culture.³² Yannaras sets the starting-point of a hybrid Orthodoxy at 1343 CE: the date of the publication of a Greek translation of Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles*. It is not the case that there was an immediate effect upon the whole of Orthodox theology; rather, from Yannaras' perspective, the translation of Aquinas initiated a pattern of cultural, intellectual, and spiritual borrowing from and dependence upon the West that triggered a loss of confidence in the Greek way of life, thought, and faith, setting in place conditions which would prevail through the twentieth century.³³

Yannaras avers that from the close of the fourth century, in the era of the undivided church, the Eastern and Western regions of the church developed progressively in sharply differentiated trajectories, eventuating in the schism of the eleventh century. The West, from the opening of the fifth century (e.g. Augustine) onwards, unleashed a theology embodying 'Frankish' pretenses of "intellectualism, individualism, totalitarianism, and legalism," which paved the way for a conversion of the church and theology to a feudal vision.³⁴ The East, in contrast to this, "guaranteed the primitive

³¹ A corollary question of just what *is* Orthodoxy will be examined in a later section of this essay. What should be clear from the foregoing is the *a priori* assumption by Yannaras that Orthodoxy can be identified as a discourse wholly other to the West: therefore where the West is seen in Eastern discourses, those discourses are discounted as Orthodox.

³² This volume, cited in n. 30, is a large-scale study of the political, cultural, and theological history of Greece from the Byzantine patristic era through the present day (circa 1980s).

³³ *Ibid.*, 1, 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ix, 12, 16-18. Yannaras claims that, beginning with Augustine, "a new version of the Church's gospel appeared. This was influenced by the new peoples who entered the western part of the Roman Empire and settled in its territory. These peoples, who were culturally far less advanced than those they conquered, finally produced the first truly global culture, and an attendant theological vision, in human history. Today this culture, which we call western, has prevailed everywhere" (ix). Ironically, Yannaras is dependent upon a Western reading of Augustine and the emergence of an imbrication of theology and imperialism in the feudal era of the Holy Roman Empire. Yannaras' source: H.-X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique* (Paris: Vrin, 1972), 99, 105, 154ff.

ecclesial experience, preserving it unchanged.”³⁵ From the formative vision of the Cappadocians, all the way through the works of Dionysius, Maximus, John of Damascus, and, especially Palamas, the Orthodox East continued within itself the original vision of the gospel in the form and content of the Byzantine culture and its ecclesio-centric way of life, even fiercely contesting, at times, Western encroachment (e.g., the Palamite controversy).³⁶

But this disjunctive relationship between the East and West is altered drastically in 1343 by the appearance of Aquinas in Greek translation, conducted at the behest of the Byzantine emperor John Kantakouzenos. Why the Aquinas translation is so pivotal to Yannaras is that it marks a shift in the theological and political dynamics of Greek culture, effectively ending the era of a distinct, independent Orthodox culture. The loss of the Byzantine empire, just over a century later, delivers the terminal blow. With Hellenic culture under political domination by a foreign, non-Christian power, Greek ecclesial and cultural survival would depend upon support from the West. Greek Orthodox priests and theologians would now train at Western European universities; and, concomitant with this, support for the theological structure of the church and the spiritual direction of the laity would come in the form of translations of Western texts into Greek. Western modes of thought and ways of life were inducted full force into the very centers of Orthodox culture.³⁷ The influence of the West was also notably present in the strategic

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 23-32, 61, 276-279.

³⁷ The work of translation and the writing of theological texts modeled on the Western volumes would eventually become the domain of the spiritual centers of the monasteries, as noted previously; see pp. 139-156. The open channels between Greek society and Western Europe not only created the conditions for the ‘translation’ of Western thought into the fabric of Orthodoxy, but also bred an open space for the establishment of Catholic centers (e.g., schools, missions, monasteries, and churches) in Greek regions. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a high level of cooperation between Orthodox

political maneuvering by which the West propped up the Greeks financially and militarily, eventuating in the overthrow of Ottoman rulership.

Alliance with the West brought radical restructuring of Greek life. Under this alliance, the chimera of a Westernized Orthodoxy comes into full fruition. Yannaras argues that everything, from architecture to education, infrastructure, and government, was remodeled in the image of the West.³⁸ The razing of Byzantine church edifices, in the reconstruction effort following the destruction of Greek infrastructure in the revolution, and the erection of ‘neo-classical’ basilicas replete with “anachronistic Renaissance domes, fake columns, pseudo-metopes over the doors, and naturalistic paintings paired with Italian and Spanish iconography on the interiors,”³⁹ paralleled the internal theological remodeling of Orthodoxy in the universities and monasteries under the imprint of the West. Just as the churches no longer *visibly resembled* Orthodox

and Catholic bishops and priests, including dual services and the appropriation of Catholic liturgies in Orthodox churches; Orthodox bishops even permitted Jesuit and Capuchin priests to be catechists in the Greek churches and serve as confessors to Greek monks and clergy (pp. 54-69). Yannaras’ account is supported by Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: a Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 230-233. Also, Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: a Study of the Greek Church Under Turkish Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 22ff.; Z. Tsirpanlis, *Ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία καὶ ὁ καθολισμὸς μετὰ σὲν ἱστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους* (Athens: Εκδοτικὴ Αἰθρῶν, 1974), 124-126. Gerhard Hofmann, additionally, substantiates these reports, noting that during this period Greek bishops, in written letters, addressed the pope as ‘faithful head and guardian of the Apostolic Church,’ ‘equal to the angels and superior to all bishops,’ ‘pastor of the true flock,’ ‘boast of Orthodox Christians,’ and ‘vicar of our Lord.’ See Hofmann, “Byzantinische Bischöfe und Rom,” *Orientalia Christiana* 22/70 (Rome: Instituto Pontificio Orientale, 1938), 19-21; idem., “Griechische Patriarchen und Römische Päpste,” *Orientalia Christiana* 15/52 (Rome: Instituto Pontificio Orientale, 1931), 44-46.

³⁸ Ibid., 158-194. Yannaras writes that given the expediency of having what was to become ‘Greece’ as an extension of Western power at the edge of the Mediterranean, the West bankrolled the Greek struggle for independence and in so doing created a situation in which the Greeks were politically and economically dependent on the West in the space following ‘liberation.’ Under these conditions, the West completely reinvented Greek culture from the top-down: in the immediate aftermath of the Greek revolution, given the instability of the newly emergent ‘state,’ and the possibility of reincursion by Turkish forces, Bavarian rulers, supported by Franco-Prussian forces, were installed as interim leaders; Greek political and social institutions were completely remodeled along the lines of German-Prussian society (e.g., universities, governmental bodies) – both the Greek state constitution and the charter for the state-ecclesial complex were drafted in identical form to German archetypes (the former was based upon a German law code composed by Ludwig Feuerbach and the latter upon the 1818 Bavarian Church Consistorium, the effect of which placed the Greek Church literally under the control of the Catholic Bavarian king.

³⁹ Ibid., 167-168.

churches, so they ceased to be truly Orthodox in two fundamental ways. *Theologically*, Orthodoxy was under a state of ‘captivity’ to the West in the reconstitution of its universities according to German fashions and trends, whereby Orthodox faculties not only “mimicked the style and content of the Enlightenment” but undertook a “grand effort to synthesize Hegel and Schelling with Orthodox theology to produce a dogmatics written as a positivist science.”⁴⁰ This, coupled with the Thomistic and Catholic shape of the productions emanating from the monastic centers, spelled a wholesale ‘reform’ of Orthodox theology that *cannot* be called in any way Orthodox, but an isomorph inhabiting the space between liberal Protestantism and scholastic Catholicism.⁴¹ *Structurally*, the creation of an autocephalous Greek Church, a ‘gift’ of the newly established independent state under Bavarian monarchy, severed the apostolic continuity of the Orthodox hierarchy in Greece by sundering the connection with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Under the provisions of the new ecclesiastical charter, the Greek Church, rather than being a part of the body of Eastern Orthodoxy under the patriarchal see, would be governed by a synod of Greek priests and bishops and a secular ‘head’ in the Greek (or Bavarian) monarch. On this count, according to Yannaras, there is *no Greek Orthodox Church*, but a Greek Church which just is ‘a Reformed national church’ – a fabricated ‘German-British construct.’⁴²

Under the conditions of such a sharp negation – an *apophysis* – of Orthodoxy at its centerpoints (e.g., the theological and ecclesial forms of its identity and existence), it is only appropriate that Yannaras looks to the margins – to liminality – for signs of life.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 140f.

⁴¹ Ibid., 147-148.

⁴² Ibid., 171-175.

Orthodoxy *qua* Orthodox persists in “popular poetry, the people’s ethos, their way of building churches and decorating them with icons in even the most remote Greek mountain communities.”⁴³ In other words, Orthodoxy is located in the cultural practices and rhythms of life that are continued at the very fringes of Greek society even in the wake of massive structural loss and erasure. Yannaras gestures to this as the shape of the perdurance of that which is genuinely Orthodox under the oppression of Ottoman domination and persecution: “under Turkish rule, Orthodoxy *was a way of life and expression: it was the practice of fasting, celebrating church festivals and dancing at the panegyreis; it was the burning of the vigil lamp on the family icon stand; it was the baking and offering of bread for the Divine Liturgy.*”⁴⁴ When the visible centers of the church (e.g., bishops’ churches, monasteries, seminaries) were shut down by Turkish forces, Orthodoxy was perpetuated by sets of practices and rituals constitutive of a mode of life. Fundamentally, when put in the winepress of domination and erasure (whether from the side of Eurasia or Western Europe), Orthodoxy is that which animates the life of the rustic Greek people. Yannaras identifies the nature of Orthodoxy just as the Greek people and their practices:

Not theory but daily *praxis* preserved the Greek people’s Orthodox identity, differentiating them from the Muslim Turk and the heterodox Frank. Daily life conformed to the Church calendar’s liturgical time; ecclesiastical praxis – prayer, contemplation, fasting, eating, drinking, celebrating – informed social relationships and transactions. The osmosis of monastic asceticism and family morality united church and popular piety in the habit of daily liturgical prayer, the family icon stand, the vigil lamp burning in every home, the chotki, the bread offered for the Eucharist.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 112. The repetition in Yannaras’ words, I think, captures the emphatic quality of the point.

Based upon this reading, the lamentable status of Orthodox theology in the modern era is the result of a long process in which the East has attempted to stabilize itself through a solvency perceived in the West. The price of shoring up Orthodox theology by recourse to the West cost an extirpation from its roots and tradition; Yannaras contends that this was an exchange “oblivious to the most basic historical facts: the comparative antiquity of Greek culture, whose achievements were already outstanding when European civilization was just starting.”⁴⁶

(β) Deconstruction II: The West as Heresy

Yannaras’ analysis of the contemporary situation of Eastern Orthodoxy involves not only a lamentation regarding the hybridization of Orthodox theology, at the cost of a severance from the depth of tradition, but also the deployment of a sharply contrastive portraiture of identity – an idealized polar construct of East and West. The tragic element of the situation, from Yannaras’ position, is that the East, under the conditions of duress, capitulated to that from which it is inherently different – opposite – and thereby imported the nexus of problems that characterize the fundamental distinction between the two. It is not the distinction itself that is a problem, for Yannaras, but the failure to recognize and adhere to the distinction; the solvency of Orthodoxy, in fact, resides in the elevation of an irreconcilable distinction between East and West, as it marks the boundary between truth and heresy.⁴⁷

The binary character of the identities of the East and West, rendered as the contrast between verity and heresy, is constructed in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of an appeal to the tradition of the undivided Church. Expropriating the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 245-247; see also Yannaras, *Ἀλφαβηταρί της πίστεως* (Athens: Δόμος, 1983), 154-155.

rhetoric of Romanides, Yannaras contends that the West, from the generation following the close of the Council of Constantinople, abdicated the claim to a truly Christian, orthodox identity; in other words, from the time of Augustine forward, the West is a heretical entity.⁴⁸ Yannaras constructs a negative genealogy of Western deficiency with the thought of Augustine as the source, which moves like a riptide through the course of European history. Augustine, in Yannaras' account, initiated a manifold set of theological innovations that changed the entire fabric of ecclesial thought and life. Pivotaly, Yannaras perceives Augustine's theology as having deviated radically from the received tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity, taking as the point of departure Augustine's purported prioritization of the unified essence of the Godhead over the threefold relations, and thus the intellectual and conceptual over against the relational and

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33-34. The language of heresy in reference to the nature or identity of the West, as deployed by Yannaras, follows in the train of the work of the Greek theologian John Romanides. Two works of Romanides, in particular, are formative to the thought of Yannaras: the early monograph, *Tó Προπατορικόν Ἀμαρτημα*, and a later volume, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine*. In the former, Romanides develops a highly polemical account of the influence of St. Augustine's doctrine of original sin, and the concomitant relationship of the doctrine to the nature and operation of the human will; Romanides argues, in quite strong terms, that the ideas of St. Augustine mark the point at which the West embarked on a course sharply at odds with the apostolic tradition, and thus in a direction of heresy. The latter volume is a full-scale 'heresiology,' in which Romanides catalogs the grand failures of the West in theological, philosophical, political, and ideological terms; in the estimate of Romanides, the West represents a massive heretical collusion of ecclesial and political bodies underwritten by a bankrupt (and rather insidious) philosophically oriented theology, the result of which is unblinkered abandonment of the gospel in thought and practice. The influence of Romanides on the thought of Yannaras is acknowledged explicitly in Yannaras' early work (see, for instance, Yannaras' essay 'La théologie en Grèce aujourd'hui,' 163-164); in his later work, engagement with Romanides moves to the background, but the level of appropriation is much higher, particularly in the crafting of a genealogy of a 'Western heresy.' Yannaras, in his own volume on the West, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δησι*, does articulate the express influence of Romanides on his thinking upon this point, gesturing toward the publication of *The Ancestral Sin* as a pivotal turning point: "Romanides' ecclesial view of sin and the Fall, salvation and deification, broke with the Western juridical model. Using patristic texts that elucidate the experiential character of theological expressions, he established – for the first time in Greek – that the legalism of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, officially adopted by the Western Christian denominations, was not just an isolated heresy but the root of successive misinterpretations of every Christian doctrine, radically distorting the Church's gospel. By contrast, the Orthodox Church's version presupposes and summarizes all the fundamental points of the Church's theology and experience" (276). For an extensive treatment of Romanides' influence on the thought of Yannaras, see Payne, "Revival of Political Hesychasm," 390-399, 447-465.

experiential.⁴⁹ It is this Trinitarian ‘aberration’ of Augustinian theology that unleashes in Yannaras’ eyes a panoply of errors by remolding Christianity and the expression of faith on the register of cognition and individuality. The Western model of God put forward by Augustine, which Yannaras claims rests in the line of Sabellius, reduces God and the human person to discrete, objective units related only by the movement of thought – mind to Mind.

The ‘rationalization’ of the doctrine of God, according to Yannaras, had the consequent effect of rendering ecclesial life and experience in terms of legalism and moralism. Logical principles utilized to deduce the being and existence of God were appropriated as a science of regulation of behavior, in which the relationship of the individual to God was “calculated according a metaphysics of exchange.”⁵⁰ In this is the loss of the vision of God as fully personal and relational, as well as the communal dynamic of ecclesial experience. The Church in Western theology becomes “simply a mechanism for controlling the individual fidelity to dogma and morality, based upon the abstract conception of God as supreme essence which entails and exclusively individualistic approach to divine truth and is assessed by the standard of individual consent to formulas and their moral demand.”⁵¹ Christian practice is hereby no longer a set of shared, embodied communal rituals, but rather is transformed into rational forensic

⁴⁹ Ibid, 35-36. Yannaras’ reading of Augustine is fully indebted to the interpretation commonly deployed in Lossky, Florovsky, and Romanides; ironically, this reading of Augustine is dependent upon the paradigm developed in late 19th and early 20th century German scholarship, most notably Régnon.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 36. See also Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 35-45, 119-136.

⁵¹ Ibid., 33.

categories which control individual persons in an isolable relation to a divine monarch or jurist.⁵²

The full transformation of the West into a heretical entity occurs, according to Yannaras' genealogy, in the works of Anselm and Aquinas. Within the former, not only the rational conceptualization of God but also the doctrine of original sin and the structure of the divine-human relationship are developed further along the trajectory begun under Augustine. In Yannaras' reading, Anselm fashions a feudalistic, and rather brutal, forensic Christology correspondent with Augustine's doctrine of original sin, whereby redemption is predicated upon an individualistic, transactional model of penal justice extracted from a tortured and executed Christ.⁵³ Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement is perceived by Yannaras to be a theologically and politically imbricate doctrine, wedding the rationalism and individualism of Augustine's theology with the political, imperial Franco-Roman vision of life.⁵⁴ The ecclesial person is hereby set in the same relationship to God as to the Emperor, in which favor or disfavor is parceled out according to acts freighted with credit. Yannaras argues, further, that the 'ontological' argument for the existence of God in Anselm and the opening articles of Aquinas'

⁵² In his *'Αλφαβηταρί*, Yannaras argues explicitly that the Christian West falls into heresy and failure on account of the "inability to exist and to express themselves ecclesially, to realize life and the expression of life as a shared event of communion. They have separated the church from the triadic mode of existence, they have changed it into a religion which each accepts individually and to whose dogmas, organization, and rules he [or she] decides to submit himself [or herself] to as an individual... The changes which this occasioned in the faith of the church is literally incalculable. It changed the truth of God by subordinating the freedom of his love to the relentless necessity of an egocentric and savage justice which demanded satisfaction. The God of the Church, from being a father and passionate lover of humanity, was transformed into an implacable judge of individuals and a menacing avenger whose justice rejoices – according to the view of Augustine – when it sees the sinners who are being tormented in hell" (116, 118).

⁵³ Yannaras, *'Ορθοδοξία και Δησι*, 40.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17, 41-42.

Summa Theologiae provided a fully systematic philosophical underpinning for this enterprise.⁵⁵

Such ‘innovations,’ however, did not remain isolated to the realm of theological and philosophical ideas, or to the high world of political and ecclesial affairs; rather, in Yannaras’ understanding, there was a wholesale ‘renovation’ on the ground corresponding to these changes. Within the Church, the basic shape of ritual and practice was fundamentally altered:

By the eleventh century [with the close of the work of Anselm and Aquinas], Western Christianity had changed its custom and external forms of ecclesiastical practice, which had been invented by the Franks under the influence of Augustine, to make the particularity of Western Christianity and its manifest difference from the Greek East – the obligatory celibacy of the clergy, the celebration of the Eucharist with unleavened bread, the exclusion of the laity from the chalice, the abolition of baptism by immersion and its replacement by sprinkling, the tonsure of the clergy. These changes articulated a profound mutation in the Church’s proclamation of religious truth, and how it made sense of the world. For ordinary people these changes were only the external marks of the attempt to create a new world independent of the cultural legacy of the Greeks.⁵⁶

The character of the everyday experience of Christian laity in the Western Church resembled, and was shaped by, the theological and cultural conditions created by Augustine and his followers. Concretely, this is seen, in addition to the liturgical and ritual alterations, in the establishment of the casuistic system of confession and penance, which Yannaras describes as a psychologized network of hierarchically imposed regulations that reify the principles of individuality, rationalist conceptions of God and personhood, egocentrism, and domination.⁵⁷ This structure, in fact, operates on a complex of guilt and transaction which locks women and men into an artifice of relation

⁵⁵ Yannaras, *Ἀλφαβηταρί*, ch. 2; see also his *Philosophie sans Rupture*, 152ff.; and *Person and Eros* §80, 86.

⁵⁶ Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δησι*, 18.

⁵⁷ See Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 30-35

predicated on the psyche of the individual and the perceived idea of a logical scale by which a rational being (God) can be placated, and which is divvied-out by an institutionally authorized agent.

Yannaras perceives in all of this, which he takes to be constitutive of the West, the hallmarks of totalitarianism.⁵⁸ Ecclesial life is fashioned and controlled by a guilt-producing mechanism through which “authoritarian institutions and a single ideology dominated thought and daily social and personal life.”⁵⁹ But this itself was underwritten by a rationally and philosophically conceived understanding of God, which likewise provided the paradigm for imperial control and undergirded the social and cultural structures of medieval Western culture.⁶⁰ Rather pointedly, Yannaras argues that the violence of European history – with wars and the ‘rape of the natural world’ – is the direct fruit of a religious vision subtending the quest for power and autonomy.⁶¹

The progression from an Augustinian religion of individuality to a ‘metaphysics’ of nihilism and violence is laid out in Yannaras’ blistering work *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*,⁶² which also brings both the negative Western genealogy and the binary quality of the identities of the East and West to a climax. Yannaras, in this

⁵⁸ Yannaras, *‘Ορθοδοξία και Δησι*, 12. See also Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, trans Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992), 154-155.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁰ Yannaras offers up Aquinas’ *ST* as a paradigmatic illustration: “Westerners admired scholasticism, transforming faith into an ideology consisting of a strictly determined worldview and obligatory methodology. The Scholastics grounded truth in the syllogism. This technology of truth, based on intellectual dexterity and methodological effectiveness, measured every aspect of Western European life. The *Summae* articulated the Gothic structure of society, *strengthening its authoritarian hierarchies*. A syllogistic system balancing theses and antitheses, and excluding all doubt, refutation, or risk, lay behind this Western culture. The method employed by Aquinas controlled everything. Life and culture were polarized between an intellectual individualism and an authoritarian objectivism, reversing the Greek terms.” *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶¹ Yannaras, *Freedom of Morality*, 261ff.

⁶² Yannaras, *‘Ηϊδδεγερ και ‘Αρεοπαγίτις*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Δόμος, 1988); ET: *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, trans. Haralambos Ventis, ed. Andrew Louth (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005). Unless otherwise noted, references will be to the English edition.

volume, follows Heidegger's critique of western metaphysics, particularly his reading of Nietzsche. The philosophical claim of the death of God, announced in Nietzsche's parable of the mad man, is the terminal point of the religious tradition of the West; in Yannaras' estimate, Heidegger rightly sees in the Nietzschean parable the proclamation of the fulfillment of the "what the Churches of the West themselves have brought about."⁶³ Yannaras, through his exposition of Heidegger, lays out a clear, linear trajectory running from Augustine and his scholastic inheritors to Nietzsche's 'prophetic' pronouncement. Rather than perceiving the Enlightenment, and its attendant critiques of pre-critical epistemology, as a backlash against the Western ecclesial tradition, Yannaras argues that it represents a heightening of the very presuppositions of the period – that the West, in fact, perfected its project. The principles of rationality and the ability of the subject to not only establish itself but to define its object lie at the base of the West all the way through:

From Augustine and the Carolingian Renaissance, but most especially with the radical distortion of Aristotelian epistemology by scholasticism, European metaphysics has been built upon the presupposition of God's existence, while progressively excluding his presence from the world. God is either identified with conceptual notion of an impersonal and abstract 'first cause' of the universe, or of an absolute authority in ethics. In both cases, the existence of God is a conceptual necessity, secured by demonstrative argument, but unrelated to historical experience and the existential condition of the human being. Precisely because it offers an absolutized rational affirmation of God, European metaphysics prepares for the possibility of its own rational refutation. The death of God is but the end-result of the historical unfolding of this absolutized and double-edged rationalism.⁶⁴

What Yannaras sees in this is a shift, beginning with Augustine and the later scholastics, in which God is made the subject of rational thought and scrutiny, and which can only

⁶³ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 22.

lead, naturally, to the displacement of God entirely in the coming to autonomy of the ‘European subject.’⁶⁵

Yannaras’ exposition unfolds along two divergent trajectories. On the one hand, Yannaras provides a grand renarration of the tradition of the Christian West in the form of a heresiology. Essentially, the ‘essentialism’ of the West’s methodological approach to the doctrine of the Trinity opens out to rationalist scientism, empiricism, pietism, and individualism, eventuating in the twin poles of nihilism and atheism. A facile, though not disingenuous, way of stating Yannaras’ thesis is that the Western doctrine of the Trinity contains within itself the seeds of its own collapse and eclipse (hence, it is not incidental, to Yannaras, that the schism of the Church occurred over this issue); even more, it is the impersonalism underlying the abstract essentialism of the West that germinates into an individualism undefined by the divine or community, which violently determines its own existence.⁶⁶ Within such an overarching schematic, Yannaras is enabled to catalog the

⁶⁵ Yannaras’ treatment of the phenomenon of the ‘coming of age’ and the achievement of autonomy of the thinking subject bears striking similarity to the opening disquisitions of Jünger’s classic treatise *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*; Yannaras, in fact, provides something of a sympathetic treatment of the early lineaments of the ‘death of God’ sentiment in Luther and Hegel, whereby there is an attempted negation of abstract, rational metaphysics. Yannaras, ultimately, closes the door on this trajectory on account of what he perceives as a “monism of the subject,” “an elevation of faith and subjective achievement in the individual,” and a fostering of “pietism [that results in] a mentality of efficiency and productivity, which is in effect consumerist and ethically bound” (31-32). Even more, Yannaras perceives in Hegel a fully orbed anthropocentrism, in which Hegel’s identification of human self-consciousness with the realization of the absolute tends the logical result “that without human self-consciousness God is in fact dead” (35f.).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 30, 45-46. In a statement of epic scope, Yannaras traces this process: “The replacement of ecclesial experience and personalism with essentialism and intellectual certainty prepares the way for rational argument over even this certainty. Rationalism, freed from the metaphysical guarantees provided by scholasticism, assumes the role of the historical preparation for the dominance of an empiricism centered on the individual, and an empiricism centered on the individual is the open door at which nihilism appears; at the same time, the irrationalism of Roman Catholic fideism and Protestant pietism sets the scene for the historical emergence of utilitarianism – and the utilitarian justification of value leads ineluctably, by casting doubt on the traditional hierarchy of values, to skepticism, and finally to amorality: the overthrow of all values” (46). Yannaras argues, more at length, on the ‘catastrophic’ effects of the Western approach to the doctrine of the Trinity and the manifold implications in “Consequences of an Erroneous Trinitology in the Modern World,” in *La Signification et L’actualite du IIe Concile Oecumenique pour le Monde Chretien D’Aujourd’hui* (Geneve: Editions du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Oecumenique, 1982), 497-502.

constitutive failures of Western culture as the immediate effects of its philosophical theological discourse: individualistic autonomy, consumerism, amoralism, imperialism, violence towards others and nature, fascism, and atheism. In this way, Heidegger's Nietzsche is engaged in a prophetic exposure, an uncovering, of "the deviation from the original fact of the church... the fundamental heresy ... [such that] the proclamation of the death of God is revealed as the historical outcome that makes clear the whole theological development of western Christianity."⁶⁷

On the other hand, the second line of argumentation is a perception of a radical opening in the claim of Nietzsche and Heidegger that pushes against this edifice. As we have seen, atheism, in the nihilistic sense, which Yannaras perceives as the pervasive condition of modern European culture, is the full realization of the Western Christian tradition, and which spells the end of the Church in the West – that is, the West is evacuated of all claims of an identity correspondent with the received apostolic tradition. However, within the denial of God, as read by Heidegger, is the rejection of the deity of Western metaphysics and the concomitant constructs at the root of European society. Such a rejection involves not merely an acceptance of the final absence of a metaphysical signifier, but rather leads to a question that is in surplus of ratiocination – it is a matter of unknowability.⁶⁸ Here, Yannaras reads the Heideggerian critique as reopening a path via apophaticism back towards the genuine expression of Christianity – to the Eastern Orthodox tradition.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., 46, 50. See also *Philosophie sans rupture* §19-21, 25, 31-32.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 54-55.

⁶⁹ Yannaras appears to have in mind Heidegger's own asseveration that the existential critique of metaphysics and the agnosticism generated in the wake of the collapse of classic metaphysics is a more genuine expression of Christianity: "To this God [of rationalism and utilitarianism] man can neither pray nor offer sacrifice. Before the *causa sui* man cannot fall on his knees in reverence, nor can he hymn or

(γ) *Constructive Alterity: Eastern Orthodox Identity*

Heidegger's critique and the concomitant drawing of a parallel between philosophical atheism and apophaticism provide a platform, or springboard, from which Yannaras is able to construct a vision of Eastern Orthodoxy in alternative terms. In this, however, Heidegger is less a true partner to Yannaras' genealogy of Orthodox identity, and functions more as a heuristic through which to read the West in such a way as to establish Orthodoxy as a foil. Yannaras' positing of Orthodoxy as the genuine other to the West – a genealogy of alterity – is indebted more to the efforts of Lossky and Florovsky. Yannaras' version of this identity construct, though, totalizes the distinction all the way down, and hardens the binary character of the relationship. The difference is the definition and character of their identifiability, and it is the boundary between truth and falsity.⁷⁰

The first element of differentiation, which fundamentally distinguishes the discourses of East and West, is apophaticism. Apophaticism, for Yannaras, is a safeguard – a rearguard action – that precludes totalizing theological claims; in Eastern modes of theological discourse, apophaticism is “the refusal to ascribe all the determination of being – a refusal to subject the reality of God and the mode of being to conceptual constructs.”⁷¹ This is not, however, a method or a rule of speech regulation, whereby theological claims or statements are modulated through a set of negatives, as in the *via negativa* of Western theology, which Yannaras understands to be still a ‘logic’ or rational system. Rather, apophaticism is a theological attitude – an ethos – in which there

worship such a God. For this reason, atheistic thought that denies the God of philosophy, the God as *causa sui*, is perhaps closer to the divine God (*ist dem göttlichen Gott vielleicht näher*).” Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 70-71.

⁷⁰ See Yannaras, *Προτάσεις Κριτικής Οντολογίας*, 3η (Athens: Δόμος, 1995), 42.

⁷¹ Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 59.

is recognition that there are no conceptual strategies or schemas that bear correspondence with or can carry the freight of real reference to God.⁷² Orthodox theology, as apophatic, denies the possibility of conceptualization and intellection of God; even more, it is the refusal of relation or union on the basis of cognition. Through a kind of Losskyan reading of Dionysius, Yannaras avers that Orthodox theology *qua* Orthodox is a discourse of ‘unknowing,’ by which is meant that God is not a being known by us as a subject of our thought or speech; Orthodoxy is a theological expression of God’s radical unknowability.

However, Orthodoxy differs significantly from a claim of agnosticism or the rejection of the classical Western metaphysical tradition – it is, in other words, not identical with critical philosophy. What further qualifies the identity of Eastern Orthodoxy is an epistemology that just is a personalist ontology. For Yannaras, this means that the primary grammar of theology is personhood, in which ‘person’ – as a being-in-relation constituted by the nexus of relations – is not discovered through or set in distinction from ‘nature’ as a baseline unit.⁷³ In this, Orthodoxy operates on the basis of a directly opposite set of premises from the West, whose rational and abstract procedure, according to Yannaras, reinscribes the ‘sin’ of Adam – the fall into individualist autonomy – into the very fabric of their thought.⁷⁴ By contrast, Orthodoxy

⁷² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, ch. 3; idem., *Προτάσεις Κριτικής Οντολογίας*, §18, 30. It is ironic that Yannaras’ criticism of Western speech on the register of analogy and negativity shadows that of Barth [*CD* I/1: §6.1, 3; II/1: 347] and Schmaus [*Katholische Dogmatik* I: 306ff.], yet his deployment of the critique is performed in such a way as to draw an absolute distinction between Eastern theology and the West as a whole.

⁷³ It is pertinent to note that Yannaras’ personalist ontology is dependent on Levinas (and to some degree Zizioulas, though Yannaras’ work in this area predates the major pieces in Zizioulas’ *oeuvre*) as opposed to the Orthodox theological tradition; or, rather, Yannaras reads the patristic texts through Levinas. Key is Levinas, *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l’extériorité* (Paris, 1961), 161-225, 229-261; and, idem., *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* (Paris, 1978).

⁷⁴ Yannaras, *Προτάσεις Κριτικής Οντολογίας*, §26.

is an ontology of personhood, a mode of being in which experience and relation constitute, or give rise to, theological language and thought. What Yannaras means by this is to say that Orthodox theology describes an anterior set of conditions of the living person in terms of related immediacy; in other words, Orthodoxy, as a genuine discourse, is about relationality to God and others, in which personhood consists and in which genuine knowledge arises.⁷⁵

Orthodox theological speech, hereby, is oriented in two directions. First, Orthodoxy is both a mode of living and speaking that is generated and shaped by the ecclesial community. For Yannaras, true personhood, and the attendant theological speech that describes it, is realized and manifest only within the context of the Orthodox ecclesial body. Unlike the West, in which theology may function as a free science or proceed according to principles found completely external to the Church, Orthodox theology is bound to the Church as that which articulates the coming into being of true, genuine personal existence through participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, and, even more, participation in the life of God.⁷⁶ As such, Orthodox theology is about “ecclesial knowledge of God,” which just is “a common mode of life [and] participation in a new mode of existence.”⁷⁷ This is, second, to indicate a Christological structure through which personhood and language are funded. The Incarnation is that which makes participation possible by the fundamental reorientation of human existence to the otherness and life of God: the Incarnation makes the life of God accessible and is that which is the life in community. Orthodox theology, then, for

⁷⁵ Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 77-78.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 94-96.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

Yannaras, is possible on the basis of Christ's transformation of human existence in community, as it is oriented around this dynamic.

The Christological element, however, does not resolve the apophatic claim. For Yannaras, theological speech, on account of the Incarnation, has real reference to the genuine set of relations opened up between God and humanity as it occurs on the ground within the context of the ecclesial body; that is, theology describes the transformed mode of existence that is given in an immediate, personal relationship to God (an immediacy based upon the personal, relational nature of God in Godself). But, it does not rise above this to describe God in any way touching the essence of God. Even more, the Incarnation itself does not create a relation between God's essence and the created world; God, in God's essence, for Yannaras, is absolutely unknowable and incommunicable.⁷⁸ Only through the energies, as a personal operation of God, is God knowable and relatable, whereby in Christ the divine energies have become historically manifest and mediated for participation.

For Yannaras, the Palamite doctrine of the distinction of the divine essence and energies grounds the whole framework of Orthodox theology and is *the* ultimate boundary between East and West. In fact, Yannaras claims, in a 1975 book review of the French Catholic Juan-Miguel Garrigues' monograph on Maximus the Confessor, that this doctrine sums up the Orthodox faith *in toto*, and that acceptance or rejection of it arbitrates the truth of theology.⁷⁹ This doctrine is made to bear the entire weight of Orthodox identity in Yannaras, being that which is supposed to refuse *all* the ills and

⁷⁸ Ibid., 60, 62-63.

⁷⁹ Yannaras, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies and its Importance for Theology," *St. Vladimir's Quarterly* 19/4 (1975): 232, 241. Elsewhere, Yannaras puts forward Palamism as "the criterion that marks Orthodoxy from the West." Idem., *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δησι*, 276.

errors of the West. Yannaras, here, builds upon the groundwork laid by Lossky and Florovsky, who perceived in Palamas the culmination of the Orthodox tradition in which the Palamite distinctions preserved intact the approach to the doctrine of the Trinity through the set of relations as established in the Cappadocians – protected against the abstract essentialism of the West and its corollary doctrine of the filioque – and the distinction of God from creation, which underwrites both a divine simplicity and a personal relationality while hedging the mystery of God *in se*.⁸⁰ The essence-energies distinction performs these functions for Yannaras as well, in addition to being raised to the level of a historical icon of the division between the East and West.

Palamas serves as the point around which Yannaras rewrites the entire tradition in a grand identity-construct. On the one hand, Palamas historically, in Yannaras' account, represents the bastion of the Orthodox *theological* tradition and identity over against the *philosophical* accretions of the West (represented as a bad Aristotleanism imbricate with Augustinian Neoplatonism). The two figures of Palamas and Barlaam, in their disagreement over the uncreated divine light, are taken as stand-ins for the two traditions, in which the Cappadocian-Augustinian divide is replayed; the vindication of Palamas by the synod of Jerusalem is taken as the triumph of a distinctly pure Orthodoxy over the heretical deviation of Augustinianism.⁸¹ On the other hand, Palamism is read *back* into

⁸⁰ E.g., Lossky, *A l'image et à la Ressemblance de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), 9-28, 41-68; Florovsky, *Collected Works* I:105-120, 127; and, idem., "Saint Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5.2 (1959): 119-131. In this way, the reading of Palamas by Lossky and Florovsky is inflected by the Trinitarian paradigm of Régnon; see Barnes, "De Régnon Rediscovered," 57f., and "Augustine in Contemporary Theology," 245.

⁸¹ Yannaras, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies," 242; see also J. Panagopoulos, "Ontologie oder Theologie der Person? Die Relevanz der patristischen Trinitätslehre für das Verständnis der menschlichen Person," *Kerygma und Dogma* 39 (1993), 30. This reading pivots around the assumption that Barlaam, as a philosophical theologian, adhered strongly to the work of Augustine, particularly the latter's *De Trinitate*, whereas Palamas, as an 'unschooled monk,' put forward the invariable spiritual, mystico-experiential form of Orthodox theology. Perhaps the most extreme version of this narrative is

the tradition as a whole, such that the doctrine of the distinctions is the golden thread unifying Orthodoxy across the centuries.⁸² This is to say that the theological teachings of Palamas are *not* the flowering or unfolding of the doctrinal implications of the past tradition, but rather are the form of what Orthodoxy has always taught and believed explicitly; Yannaras finds the Palamite distinctions in the Cappadocians (like a palimpsest) and even beforehand. For Yannaras, Orthodoxy just is that truth and mode of being articulated in the designation of the essence-energies distinction – always has and always will be.

(δ) Critique

One of the crucial problems in Yannaras' project is the deployment of a totalizing identity schematic. An immediate consequence of this is a rhetoric that unavoidably underwrites a 'clash of civilizations' posture, in which coexistence – enabled by a kind of hostile truce – merely defers the inevitable necessity of one vanquishing over the other. Responsible theology, governed by this rubric, does not seek repair of disunity, but rather requires amplification of the divide in order to quarantine exposure or infection; in fact, the metanarrative of a binary identity – involving both a genealogy of heresy and purity – rules out the possibility of reconciliation except under the conditions of conversion (*viz.* reconciliation with heresy is not possible without renunciation and penance on the part of the indicted party, and then only through conversion to the 'pure' faith). This paradigm, then, amounts to a theological rewriting of the imperial ideology that is the subject of the Orthodox critique of the Augustinian tradition (particularly the medieval version).

found in Romanides, *'Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμας Εισαγωγή εις την θεολογίαν και πνευματικότητα της Ρωμησίνης* (Thessaloniki, 1984), 53ff.

⁸² Yannaras, *op. cit.*, 242, 244; *idem.*, *'Αλφαβηταρί*, 42-43, 46.

Even more, the construction of identity in such antinomous terms is enabled only through a superficial and sweepingly generalized reading of both traditions. There is no attention to or feel for the nuances of the Western texts of an Augustine or Aquinas, let alone the cross-traditional influences under the surface.⁸³ This is compounded by a polemic against an outdated foe; the main subject of Yannaras' critique is a Western Catholic theology essentially defunct in the wake of *nouvelle théologie* and the Second Vatican Council.⁸⁴ Yannaras' theological portraiture of the West operates virtually in absence of an awareness of twentieth century Catholic critiques of itself, such as in Rahner, Lubac, or Balthasar. Also, though Yannaras appears to know the work of Barth, he misses the opportunity of critical engagement with a thinker who shares sets of concerns vis-à-vis the nature of scholasticism, theological knowledge, and relationality. This would, of course, attenuate the hardened set of boundaries that are supposed to distinguish the traditions in an antiseptic fashion. On the other side of the equation, the patristic texts of the East are forced into a heuristic device that makes them say what is required for the construction of an invariable identity. Hence, the Cappadocians just are Palamite. This is performed by Yannaras without any explicit recognition of the fact that the structure of the heuristic owes its existence to the West, as generated by the French Catholic Régnon; Yannaras assumes its Orthodox pedigree through Lossky, Florovsky, and Romanides. Besides being a paradigm by which the East is categorized by the West (i.e., an already Westernized reading of the 'East,' the appropriation of which means the East reads itself through Western lenses), the very nature of it binds the East to the West

⁸³ As opposed to, for instance, the reading of Aquinas found in McCabe or Lash (or, even, in Andrew Louth: e.g., *Discerning the Mystery: an Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983)).

⁸⁴ The theological shape of the West constructed in Yannaras' portrait is really that of a Catholicism found in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much like that which is the subject of the first chapter of Fergus Kerr's *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 1-16.

in such a way that its identity is dependent upon a relationship in which it cannot be defined, identified, or exist without the other; and, it is only through the other, in its antinomy, that the texts of the East can be read.

It is the Palamite requirement inherited from Lossky that entangles Yannaras in a further set of complications. As already seen, the absolutization of Palamas enforces an anachronistic reading of texts, ignoring the nature of doctrinal development or the use of texts and ideas across lines of tradition, and bypasses the vicissitudes of history (e.g., it involves, to a degree, a docetic conception of tradition and history). Yannaras' Palamism also traffics in a degree of *theological* ambiguity; that is, in Yannaras' ascription of the essence-energies distinction, the essence appears to be, in the words of Williams, "a member of a class of essences, closed essences."⁸⁵ This, of course, raises again the question of divine simplicity and leads to the problem of hybridity in the doctrine of God (e.g., subscribing something that is not-essence in God in order to fund relationality). Even more, the essence, as prophylactically sealed from involvement *ad extra*, threatens to become an insular thing above and beyond the persons.⁸⁶ In other words, there is a divinity behind the *hypostaseis*, which just are the *ousia*, creating a *hyperousiotes* as a God beyond God.⁸⁷ The deployment of the schematic, additionally, traps Yannaras in a *rhetorical* contradiction. One of the premiere functions of the distinction in Yannaras is to preclude God from being the subject of conceptualization or logic – a syllogistic

⁸⁵ Williams, "Theology of Personhood," 424.

⁸⁶ See Garrigues, "L'énergie divine et la grâce chez Maxime le Confesseur," *Istina* 19/3 (1974): 275.

⁸⁷ Barth expresses a trenchant reservation against the distinction on the grounds of it leading to either an affirmation of "a further divine hypostasis and therefore to a quaternity in God, or else to the supposition of a divine power in the world without subject, to a doctrine of two gods, an *υπερκειμενος* and an *υφειμενος*." He was, of course, equally aware of the problems in the Western scholastic and nominalist tradition. *CD* II/1: 331-332.

idea.⁸⁸ However, the Palamite distinction itself becomes a conceptual conclusion – a schematic – logically deduced from the perceived need to differentiate the internal divine processions from the external act of creation and the necessity of demarcating what is participatable and what is not in God. Yannaras’ defense of Palamas, in fact, turns upon a series of demonstrations that are syllogistic in nature (i.e., how the East solves the equation adequately).⁸⁹ *Syllogism redivivus!* Palamism is, in the final analysis, an Eastern syllogistic alternative to the West. By imposing the weight of the identity of Orthodoxy entirely upon the shoulders of this edifice, the entire superstructure is in danger of falling to the ground.⁹⁰

Yannaras does, however, open up the possibility of thinking the question of Orthodoxy unencumbered by a strict binary apparatus; these spaces often occur in asides or offhand comments on his pages. Orthodoxy is seen by Yannaras, for instance, as that indescribable quality or ethos suffused throughout the writings of Greek novelist Alexander Papadiamantis, in his storied descriptions of the Greek land, the people, and their lives (especially in relationship to the Greek Church).⁹¹ In other places, Yannaras finds Orthodoxy *as* the way of life of a people; that is, Orthodoxy is in how the people pray, work, eat, drink, and live together. Most especially, Orthodoxy is life lived in the ecclesial body – an ecclesial existence – wherein lives are patterned or ordered by the rhythms of the Church calendar (‘the ecclesial experience of time’), the liturgy, and the

⁸⁸ Yannaras, *‘Ορθοδοξία και Αησι*, 12, 36.

⁸⁹ E.g., Yannaras, *Philosophie sans rupture*, 256ff.

⁹⁰ This is not to deny that the doctrine is not a piece of Orthodox history and theological tradition – it is, and given the synodal affirmation, should be supposed as *a* way of articulating Orthodox theological possibilities; the real problem is freighting it with the responsibility of being the litmus test of identity or elevating it to the level of being *the* singular pillar – the lodebearer – of truth.

⁹¹ Yannaras, *‘Ορθοδοξία και Αησι*, 254-256.

Eucharist.⁹² Orthodoxy is an ecclesial life lived as *epiclesis*, as an invocation and gift of the Spirit expressed as a kind of rhythmic ordering throughout shared, daily life. Perhaps Orthodoxy is this set of actions, practices, bodies, and liturgies – and not just in a state of exception (i.e., the parenthetical space where Orthodoxy survives between the ellipses of the political suspension of professional theological centers and Western stylizings – as seen in our first section).⁹³ Within this, Orthodoxy is not identifiable by a set of axioms or propositions (e.g., Palamism) and is not dependent upon a contrastive entity to locate itself or provide the shape of its polar existence. That differences do exist on the register of articulation of sets of ideas and tropes within the traditions is not denied, but are refused as absolutized boundary markers. Understood this way, Orthodoxy – or the West – does not exist as a demarcated other that necessarily calls into question all other forms of existence, but is a specific way of a living, alongside others, in response to the mystery of God that is the dynamic energy under the surface of all performances.

Conclusion

Lossky, and the exiled theologians at Paris, in the years between and immediately following the wars in Europe, made Eastern Orthodoxy again a vital contributor and participant in theological discourse, enabling it to articulate itself within and engage with the West. The scaffolding that allowed their projects to get off the ground, however, became the very foundation upon which successive generations of Orthodox theologians built. Yannaras, and his contemporaries (e.g., Zizioulas and Romanides), expanded the

⁹² Yannaras, *Ἀλφαβηταρί*, 18, 129-130.

⁹³ This is to extend the point of Yannaras' exposition of Orthodoxy under Ottoman rule; but it is also to lift up the fact that Orthodoxy under Turkish rule was not perpetuated by exact expressions of Palamite distinction or an appreciation of the difference between Western 'rational' discourses and properly Orthodox apophaticism – but rather by the practices and rituals performed by the common people. If this is so, then it is so beyond the conditions of empire.

scope of the vision of Orthodoxy established by the exiled Russians, bringing to it a depth of philosophical rigor and grand breadth of reading, but hardened the rhetoric and overburdened the interpretative artifices to the point of total inflexibility and irreconcilability. In the current context of globalism and a rather pronounced, influential presence of Orthodoxy in the West (i.e., post-diasporic), the theological construction in Yannaras leaves Orthodoxy in the exposed position of either being that which checks the West (viz. one must dominate the other), or that which is the exotic other alluring the West to itself. But in this there is no real dialogue or encounter, only totalizing gazes. Where Yannaras describes Orthodoxy without the need of identity-constructs, polarities, or axiologies, contains the possibility of a way forward: of understanding Orthodoxy as a distinct denizen within the West whose practices and patterns disclose its communally responsive nature, and who shares, albeit with difference, sets of texts and influences which shape the manner of life of fellow way-travelers.