

# SOME RECENT WORKS BY CHRISTOS YANNARAS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION<sup>1</sup>

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Christos Yannaras is not very well known in the West. This is a pity, because his work engages with Western theology and philosophy in a distinctive way, and his contribution to current theological debate could be significant. One hopes that the publication of four of his works in fine English translations will do something to remedy this neglect. For Christos Yannaras is, without doubt, one of the most important living Orthodox thinkers. In Greece, he is very well known, not to say, controversial, as a public intellectual, who, through his regular column in the newspaper *Kathimerini*, and his appearances on television, seeks to address the issues and problems of modern life in the terms and concepts of today. There are plenty of such public intellectuals in the West, but it is rare to find one who speaks from a Christian perspective. It is perhaps not surprising that, even in Greece, he is hard to place. His vision is theological, drawing on the resources of the Orthodox tradition, but he has never held a position in one of the university faculties of theology; the post from which he recently retired was a chair of philosophy in the Pantion University of Social and Political Sciences. He is very prolific as an author, and has written about thirty books, mostly still in print, that engage in dialogue with philosophical movements of the twentieth century (Heidegger, Wittgenstein), and with modern economic and political issues, as well as introductions to his distinctive approach to philosophy and theology, and major works exploring his understanding of personhood that lies at the heart of his philosophical and theological vision, and its moral and ethical implications. But, as he sometimes laments, he writes in Greek, and consequently has a much smaller audience than he would otherwise have, since

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fluency in modern Greek is not very common amongst Western Europeans, and certainly not in the English-speaking world, which becomes more and more monoglot by the year. Hitherto, Yannaras has not been very well served by translations. He has been best represented in French, with five of his books translated, though mostly his shorter works, and sometimes even these in an abridged form. Italian does quite well, too. His most important work, *Person and Eros*, has long been available in German; and there are single works translated into Finnish and Russian. Until recently, just two of his works were available in English: his brief, though compelling, *Elements of Faith*,<sup>2</sup> and earlier, his important and, when first published in Greece, very controversial work, *The Freedom of Morality*.<sup>3</sup> A few years ago, there appeared a translation of his early work, *Heidegger and the Areopagite* (an expensive edition, now out of print),<sup>4</sup> but in the last two years, there have appeared from Holy Cross Orthodox Press four volumes, all translated (in one case together with Peter Chamberas) by Norman Russell, one of the best—and seemingly indefatigable—translators from Greek into English. These four volumes are: *Postmodern Metaphysics* (2005, originally published 1993), *Variations on the Song of Songs* (2005, originally published 1990), *Orthodoxy and the West* (2006, originally published 1992), and *Person and Eros* (2007, originally published in this form in 1987, though going back to a thesis of 1970). These four very different works introduce the English reader to diverse aspects of Yannaras' vision, and together with what is already available make Yannaras more accessible in English than in any other language, save his original Greek.

If the West has neglected Yannaras, it has not altogether neglected Orthodox theology. The theology of the Russian émigrés has long been known in the West. Fr Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky are well-known names, Florovsky owing to his long residence in North America and his participation in the early—and more glorious—days of the Ecumenical Movement, Lossky, presumably, because of the power of his monograph, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Recently, Fr Pavel Florensky and Fr Sergii Bulgakov have become better known in the West through translations of their work, and have attracted the attention of Western theologians; Bulgakov seems almost on the way to becoming the theological godfather of Radical Orthodoxy! The Greeks are much less well known. John Zizioulas, now Metropolitan of Pergamon, is an exception, having taught for many years in the British Isles and having played a major role in the Ecumenical Movement, but there are many more Greek theologians—Panayiotis Nellas, Nikos Nissiotis, George Mantzaridis—who are barely names in the West, amongst whom the name of Yannaras has to be included. The history of Yannaras' reception in the West is an interesting story, which sheds some light on the cultural problems that lie behind this neglect. Yannaras' early works—once he had found his own voice—were certainly noticed in the West, but in a very specific circle. The short-lived *Eastern Churches Review* (and to a much lesser extent *Sobornost*)

carried reviews of *Honest to Orthodoxy*, a collection of his essays from the journal *Synoro*, which he edited until the accession of the rule of the colonels in 1967; the various stages of what was to become his most important work, *Person and Eros*; his controversial work, *The Freedom of Morality*; *Chapters of Political Theology*; and *Truth and Unity of the Church*. All these were reviewed in their original Greek editions; the reviewers belonged to the small circle in England who knew modern Greek (often enough through the close and friendly relationships between the Greek Church and the Church of England that existed in those days), whose reviews were read by philhellenes and philorthodox. The attitude to Yannaras found in these reviews was welcoming, but cautious about his dependence on the existentialism of Heidegger, and (sometimes, not by any means always!) critical of what was seen as his strident anti-Westernism. The demise of the *Eastern Churches Review* in 1978 is indicative of the limited audience to which it appealed. Elsewhere in England and America these works went more or less unnoticed. In the mid-1980s, a series called "Contemporary Greek Theologians" appeared, presenting in English translation works by Greek theologians Nellas, Manzaridis, Yannaras (his *Freedom of Morality*), Zizioulas, and the Athonite monk, Archimandrite Vasileios. Apart from Zizioulas' *Being as Communion*, these works were little noticed outside Orthodox and philorthodox circles and after a few years the series ceased. One possible reason for this neglect is that, while much Western theology in this period had come to feel traditional formulations as a constraint, these works manifested a confidence in the continuing power of patristic and Orthodox theology that sometimes expressed itself in an almost casual contempt (not, I think, too strong a word) for Western theology. Feeling such a lack of understanding of their own position, perhaps Western theologians responded in kind, except for those theologians who were already disillusioned about their own tradition (whose number seems to have increased as the last century approached its close). Maybe, however, there was some other reason, for the Russians were hardly complimentary about the theology they encountered in the West, and yet their voice had been heard.

Such an apparently fierce anti-Western polemic is certainly to be found in the work of Christos Yannaras. Anti-Westernism has a long history in Orthodox theology, going back beyond the sack of Constantinople by the knights of the Fourth Crusade, which left a deep-rooted resentment of all things Western amongst the Byzantines (and the Orthodox Slavs). In Yannaras' case such anti-Westernism is bound up with his own autobiography. In his youth he was a member of the renewal movement in the Greek Orthodox Church called Zoë, which was organized on Western lines. It was in rebellion against this movement, and through his encounter with the West in the 1960s, that his own distinctive theological vision was formed.<sup>5</sup> Early on he seized on Heidegger's analysis of the development of philosophy in the West as a kind of stick with which to beat the West. According to Heidegger, the "onto-

theology" of Western metaphysics, that made of God a being alongside, even if superior to, other beings, led ineluctably to the nihilism of Nietzsche and Heidegger himself. In his brief work, translated as *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, Yannaras found an answer to Western ontotheology in the apophatic theology of the East, notably that of Dionysios the Areopagite, according to which God utterly transcends being, so that none of our concepts can apply to the reality of God himself. It is only through the relationship that God has established with humankind, through the Incarnation and in the Church, that we can come to knowledge of God, a knowledge that is ineffable and inexhaustible. In that relationship with God, we encounter his love, which draws from us an answering love in which, no longer defined by the constraints of human nature, but transcending them in ecstasy, we discover ourselves as free persons, free in the love of God and other persons, defined by relationship, rather than fitting into preset patterns. According to this analysis, the West, tied to ontotheology, had abandoned this understanding of the Gospel and the Church, and settled into a rationalist and legalistic understanding of human existence, subject to law and custom, that was bound, sooner or later, to turn to the ashes of nihilism, while at the same time reducing value to price and ushering in the consumerism that is so marked in modern Western society (and one of its most successful, and baleful, exports).

These ideas, expressed here all too briefly and crudely, lie at the heart of Yannaras' analysis of the problems facing modern theology. The Western reader is likely to feel that this analysis is too simplistic, and indeed Yannaras himself is conscious of this: in his introduction to the English edition of *Orthodoxy and the West*, he remarks

Let me therefore make one thing absolutely clear. The critique of Western theology and tradition which I offer in this book does not contrast "Western" with something "right" which as an Orthodox I use to oppose something "wrong" outside myself. I am not attacking an external Western adversary. As a modern Greek, I myself embody both the thirst for what is "right" and the reality of what is "wrong": a contradictory and alienated survival of ecclesiastical Orthodoxy in a society radically and unhappily Westernized. My critical stance towards the West is self-criticism; it refers to my own wholly Western mode of life.

I am a Western person searching for answers to the problems tormenting Western people today . . .<sup>6</sup>

But even if the analysis is too simplistic, *what* it is seeking to analyse is a set of problems that is undeniable. As Yannaras continues: "the threat to the environment, the assimilation of politics to business models, the yawning gulf between society and the state, the pursuit of ever-greater consumption, the loneliness and weakness of social relations, the prevailing loveless sexu-

ality". There is no question that we need answers to these issues, nor that, for whatever reason, it is this that Western civilization has created for itself and spawns throughout the world.

The four books recently published by Holy Cross Orthodox Press present different aspects of Yannaras' vision, with varying degrees of success. *Post-modern Metaphysics* is perhaps the least satisfactory. It seeks to show how the advances of modern science have dismantled the rationalist structures of traditional Western metaphysics, leaving the way open to the personalist metaphysics that Yannaras has long espoused. In very general terms, the argument looks not unattractive, but the metaphysical implications of modern scientific approaches are hardly as univocal as Yannaras seems to suggest, and to call them "postmodern" seems odd. The term "postmodern" is generally associated with an attitude that denies any ultimate truth, not a position Yannaras himself seeks to embrace, nor one at all supported by modern science.

*Orthodoxy and the West: Hellenic Self-Identity in the Modern Age* is a remarkable book. Its purpose in general is to give an account of how Greek theology (and more generally Greek self-understanding) has, since the latter days of the Byzantine Empire, been persistently distorted by influences from the West, beginning with the translation into Greek of the works of Thomas Aquinas and the subsequent influence of rationalist scholasticism, followed by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, both alien to the vision of Orthodox Christianity, properly understood. It recalls Fr Georges Florovsky's *Ways of Russian Theology* and its indictment of what he called the "Babylonian Captivity of the [Russian] Church"; Yannaras is, indeed, fully conscious of the parallel.

As the translators explain in an introductory note (p. xi), the translation is in some respects different from the original Greek: the "luxuriant prose of the Greek original" has been pruned, the notes have been updated "with an emphasis on material available in English", and the polemical tone has been modified. There have also been some corrections (on the very first page Yannaras asserted that the Greek translation of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* was published in 1354. The English translation corrects this to the *Summa contra Gentiles*). All these changes, we are assured, have been made in consultation with the author, which makes one wonder why Yannaras makes no secret of the fact that he thinks he has been censored in the English translation. I have not noticed any substantial omissions (save for a few long quotations included in the Greek footnotes, which survive simply as references in the English endnotes); the toning down of the polemic will probably make the work more accessible in translation. Furthermore, the translators have gone an extra mile in compiling a bibliography from the notes of the original. This, however, could have been done better. There is a lot of repetition: articles and collected works are listed without any apparent awareness that the collected works include the articles. But, in the case of Zissimos Lorentzatos, whom Yannaras presents as a profound influence on his own

theological vision, there seems no awareness that a good many of his essays are available in excellent English translations: *The Lost Center*,<sup>7</sup> and *The Drama of Quality*.<sup>8</sup> The latter, translated by Liadain Sherrard, contains articles by Lorentzatos on several of the people discussed by Yannaras, not least the writer, Alexandros Papadiamandis, and both books give the English reader direct access to someone to whom Yannaras confesses that he owes a great deal in his understanding of Greek culture.

Yannaras presents a powerful case (subject to the qualification he himself makes, quoted above). It is undeniable that Greek theology felt itself overshadowed by the West during the *Tourkokratia*, and its attempts to express itself in terms understandable to the West produced a distortion of Orthodox theology, or at least produced a style of theology quite at odds with the main lines of Orthodox theology as they eventually emerged in the twentieth century. Even movements of renewal, such as the Kollyvades, do not escape Yannaras' censure. He discusses the best known of the Kollyvades, the great Athonite monk, St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, who, together with St Makarios of Corinth, compiled the great, and vastly influential, anthology of Byzantine ascetic wisdom, the *Philokalia*. His *Pidalion* (the "Rudder"), an annotated collection of the Holy Canons, distorted them by introducing Western legalistic notions and even an inept use of critical scholarship, while Nikodimos' openness to the pietism of Western devotional works ran the risk of tainting the enterprise of the *Philokalia* with a moralistic puritanism (Fr Lev Gillet once spoke of "spiritual piracy" in this connexion). What is most important about this book, however, is not so much the documentation of distortion, as its account of the springs from which a renewed theology has emerged. First, and most important, the work of various Orthodox lay-people: the writer, known best for his short stories, Alexandros Papadiamandis; the artists, Kontoglou, who played an important role in the rediscovery of traditional iconography, and Pentzikis; the architect, Pikionis; the philosophers, Tatakis and Georgoulis; the novelist, Theotokas; and the literary critic, Lorentzatos. For Yannaras, the springs of authentic Orthodox theology are found, not in the academy, but in those writers and artists who paid attention to the living traditions and rhythms of Greek life, preserved by ordinary devout Orthodox Christians through the long years of the *Tourkokratia* and the even more destructive years of Western-style "Independence". It is not surprising that one of those who welcomed Yannaras' voice in the 1970s was poet, writer and translator, Philip Sherrard, a name better known amongst those interested in modern Greek literature than among theologians. A final chapter is called "The 1960s", and presents a very different picture from what that melancholy decade meant for Western theology, giving a lively, and not uncritical, account of the recovery of a genuine Orthodox theology among theologians, such as John Romanides, Nikos Nissiotis, John Zizioulas, Panayiotis Nellas, George Mantzarides, and Archimandrite Vasileios. Amongst these, Yannaras gives pride of place to Demetrios Koutroubis, who

spent his last years in England. Despite this link with England, the collection of Koutroubis' powerful essays, called *The Grace of Theology*, is still not available in English translation.

Yannaras' fundamental vision took form early on, and the inspiration of his later works can often be traced back to earlier lectures and essays; indeed, he seems to be an inveterate reviser and re-writer. This is certainly the case with *Orthodoxy and the West*, for though it appeared in its present form in 1992, much of the argument goes back to essays written around 1970. In September that year, Yannaras gave a lecture, "Orthodoxy and the West", at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary in Boston, an English translation of which was published in 1971.<sup>9</sup> The original Greek version, with a dedication to the French Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, was published together with a longer piece, "Theology in Greece Today", as a book in 1972. These two articles contain the fundamental argument of *Orthodoxy and the West*, as outlined above, and supporting historical discussion. "Theology in Greece Today" begins with a critical account of two of the more distinguished traditional Greek theologians of the twentieth century, Christos Androutsos, and Panagiotis Trembelas, Yannaras' one-time professor (a long footnote, added at the last minute, summarizes Archimandrite [as he then was] Kallistos Ware's trenchant criticism of Trembelas in a review of the French translation of his three-volume dogmatics published in *Eastern Churches Review*); the textbooks by these two theologians continue in use to this day in the theological faculties of Greece. The essay continues with a highly critical account of the movement Zoë, and concludes with Yannaras rehearsing the criticisms of Greek culture by Zissimos Lorentzatos and of traditional (Russian) Orthodox theology by Florovsky and Schmemmann. In comparison, we may say that the later work extends and develops Yannaras' criticism, building up a more detailed historical case, while at the same time finding hope for Greek theology in what he calls "Alexandros Papadiamandis and his School", as we have already seen.

*Person and Eros* is perhaps the most important single work of Yannaras'. In this he works out his philosophy of personhood, adumbrated in his book, *Heidegger and the Areopagite*. In structure it bears some resemblance to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* ["Being and Time"], but the influence of Heidegger is not, in fact, much greater than in the earlier work. Yannaras explores much of the same territory as did Heidegger in his famous work, but with different guides—the Greek Fathers, not least St Gregory of Nyssa and St Maximos the Confessor. *Person and Eros* originally appeared in a much slimmer form as a doctoral thesis presented at the University of Thessaloniki in 1970. In the following decades it was expanded to its present form. Already Yannaras had sought guidance from the Fathers: from the Areopagite, as we have seen, and about the same time from St John Climacus, something manifest in his work, *The Metaphysics of the Body*.<sup>10</sup> Turning to the Greek Fathers would be natural in someone seeking theological resources outside the Scholastic West, but Yannaras may have been inspired by the kind of appeal to the Fathers found in

Vladimir Lossky's theology, especially his *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Lossky was dead by the time Yannaras arrived in Paris in the 1960s, but his influence was (and is) still strong there, especially in Orthodox circles. Like Lossky, Yannaras found in the Greek Fathers not so much a ready-made theology, as an inspiration: a cosmic theology, an understanding of personhood rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and manifest in the mystery of the Person of the Incarnate Christ, a theology of the Church, informed by the Holy Spirit, and ecclesial experience through the sacraments, especially the Divine Liturgy. *Person and Eros* is a quite extraordinary book—at one level rigorously philosophical, but at another level, grounded in a living experience. The West tends to keep these in separate compartments, to the detriment of both. To engage with this book at any depth would require a substantial essay of its own. Here is not the place for that. All we can do here is point to his discussions of the nature of personhood in its ecstatic character, its universality (or "catholicity") and its unity; the way the notion of the person penetrates an understanding of the cosmos, of space and time; the idea of logos, in its authentic sense, as rooted in the disclosure of the person, and closely related to the notion of image; and the long analysis of nothingness, inspired by, but quite different from, Heidegger's discussion in *Sein und Zeit*. Central to Yannaras' understanding of personhood—an idea already adumbrated in *Heidegger and the Areopagite*—is the term "mode of existence", *tropos hyparxeos*, one of the characterizations of person or *hypostasis* suggested by the Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century, and developed in the seventh by St Maximos, in contrast to (though not, I think, in opposition to) nature as characterized by the principle of being, *logos ousias*. The way of existence, which is personhood, is not predetermined, like our human nature, as a collection of properties, but is the way our human nature is lived out, or expressed, in a personal way of existence experienced as self-transcendence—an ecstatic moving beyond oneself in loving freedom. This perception is the starting point of Yannaras' thought, a notion that is explored at length in the first part of *Person and Eros*, the longest of the four parts of the book. What, in my view, makes Yannaras' thought distinctive among adherents of what could seem a fashionable "personalist existentialism" is the care and thoroughness with which he explores this notion from a philosophical perspective.

As with *Orthodoxy and the West*, we can trace the development of Yannaras' thought as found in the version of *Person and Eros* published in its "fourth edition" in 1987. Its original form was a doctoral thesis, submitted to the Theological Faculty of Thessaloniki in 1970, called "The ontological content of the theological notion of the person".<sup>11</sup> This is a short work, of less than 100 pages, written in *katharevousa* ("purified") Greek, as would have been required then for a university thesis. In contrast, the currently available edition, written in *dimotiki* ("popular") Greek, runs to nearly 400 pages, and bears the title, *To Prosopo kai o eros* ("Person and Eros"). In between there

were two other editions, one published in a periodical *Devkalion*, in 1974, with the title, *To Prosopo kai o eros. Theologiko dokimio ontologias* ("Person and Eros. A theological essay on ontology"), and another two years later in 1976. From Edward Every's review in *Eastern Churches Review*, it is evident that in 1974 the present form of *Person and Eros* was already apparent.<sup>12</sup> Comparison of the doctoral thesis with the final edition is revealing. The fundamental argument and structure of the work is there in the doctoral thesis, but expressed very succinctly. What has happened in the course of the successive revisions is that the argument has been filled out by drawing on what one presumes is Yannaras' further reading and reflection, so that the sections of the original thesis become chapters of three or four times the original length. In addition, the fourth section of chapter 2 of the thesis ("The Logos as Disclosure of the Person") has been detached and become the first section of a separate chapter called "The 'Semantics' of Personal Disclosure" (chapter 3 of the final version), and two further sections added: "The Image as 'signifier' of Non-conventional Logos", and "On Analogy and Hierarchy". The final version adds a lot more philosophy and also draws much more extensively on the Fathers (though they were not neglected in the original thesis). The concern with the person as one who communicates and gives/finds meaning is developed by extensive use of Ferdinand de Saussure. Yannaras also draws on Wittgenstein to develop his understanding of meaning (anticipating his later work, *To Rito kai to arrito* ["What can be said and what cannot be said"], 1999, which engages extensively with Wittgenstein and adopts the format of numbered and sub-numbered paragraphs of the *Tractatus*). There is a lot more substantiation of his case from classical philosophy (in the thesis Yannaras had tended to rely on Aristotle; in the book there is a lot more engagement with Plato). A great deal more is drawn from Maximos and Dionysios the Areopagite, and many more Fathers are cited occasionally. There is a lot more citation of secondary literature in the book, compared with the thesis. (There are also occasional corrections: for instance, of a passage from the poet Seferis, quoted from memory in the thesis.) One amplification that runs through the book is the engagement with scholastic philosophy and theology, which is much more thoroughly substantiated. In *To kath' eauton*, Yannaras remarked on his discovery of Gilson and Chenu.<sup>13</sup> In the additions to the thesis, we see Yannaras drawing especially on Chenu. The way Chenu portrayed the Western medieval concern for reason, *ratio*, as foreshadowing the rise of the scientific spirit in the modern period is cited by Yannaras in support of his claim that the rationalism of the West goes back beyond Descartes to the schoolmen themselves. The new section, "On Analogy and Hierarchy" (chapter 3, section 3), is a powerful and informed indictment of the way in which the scholastics altered the Dionysian notion of analogy and hierarchy, which expressed his sense of creaturely participation in God through his energies, with a kind of logical calculus concerned with matching our concepts with the reality of God.

This comparison confirms what we have already seen: namely, that Yannaras' vision was already fully formed in the latter years of the 1960s—both with the personalist ontology of *Person and Eros* and his analysis of the current situation of Greek theology in *Orthodoxy and the West*—but that he continued to read, think and reflect, and this is manifest in the way both *Person and Eros* and *Orthodoxy and the West* developed in the 1970s (and the 1980s, in the case of the latter book). The 1960s were truly the crucial period in the development of Yannaras' thought; the basic principles he developed then have remained with him and have proven enduring.

*Variations on the Song of Songs* is a work that is nonpareil. The English title seems modelled on the French and Italian translations; the Greek original is “commentary”, *scholio*, and though the chapters are given musical terms, only a few of them could designate “variations” of a traditional “Theme and Variations”—most are simply musical terms: *modulatio*, *appoggiatura*, and so on. Each of the chapters is prefaced by a verse from the biblical Song of Songs, and the different musical titles suggest that we are passing through a succession of moods or approaches, rather than a sequence of ordered chapters. The language is lyrical, and Norman Russell captures this well in his exceptional translation. What we have here is a series of poetical meditations on the mystery of love, the love in which we experience freedom and attain the way of existence in which we discover what it is to be a person. In his work, *Elements of Faith*, Yannaras remarked,

The apophatic attitude leads Christian theology to use the language of poetry and images for the interpretation of dogma much more than the language of conventional logic and schematic concepts. The conventional logic of everyday understanding can very easily give man a false sense of a sure knowledge which, being won by the intellect, is already exhausted by it, completely possessed by it. While poetry, with the symbolisms and images which it uses, always exhibits a sense from within the words and beyond the words, a concept which corresponds more to common experiences of life and less to cerebral conceptions.<sup>14</sup>

In *Variations on the Song of Songs*, more than anywhere else, Yannaras explores this understanding of the apophatic attitude. Note, too, how it ties up with his sense of the true springs of Orthodox theology he detects in *Orthodoxy and the West* in the attention to “common experiences of life” in the stories of Papadiamandis. Not at all in a sentimental way: the very first sentence—“We come to know love only in the context of failure”—both marks a contrast with conceptual theology (argument works by succeeding) and presages the realism of Yannaras' analysis of love. As chapter succeeds chapter, we are drawn to meditate on the mystery of the person and the mystery of love. It is full of startling insights.

We fall in love not only with the person of the Other, but with everything that is his . . . with the music that he loves, the streets he walks, the

landscapes we have looked at together. If you happen to fall in love with God himself, even for a fraction of a second, the quivering of yearning remains in every cool drop of spring rain, . . . in the smell of autumn. Every aspect of beauty, every skilful artefact is a gift of erotic joy granted to you . . . We call a fool in love with every work of God a "saint".<sup>15</sup>

Yannaras goes on to quote from St Isaac the Syrian, with his prayer even for the demons, who are also created by God.

It is an interesting feature of *Variations on the Song of Songs* that from about halfway through Yannaras begins to make allusive quotations (marked out in the original Greek text either in italics or by guillemets). These are quoted without attribution (which would be too "academic" for such a lyrical text). Some are easily identifiable: the first on pages 67–68 of the English translation is from Isaac the Syrian, ending with some words from James 1:27; others are from liturgical texts (p. 90), the holy canons (p. 130: Gangra?); the *Epistle to Diognetos* (p. 140). There is a series towards the end from some patristic sermon; there is a quotation from Sartre (p. 100). Others sound like Dionysios the Areopagite, but most have escaped me. At one point (p. 119), he refers to the "poet", who turns out to be T.S. Eliot, the allusion being to the "three white leopards" of *Ash-Wednesday*, and reference to the valley of the dead bones in Ezekiel, developed by Eliot and followed up by Yannaras. In the final chapter, Yannaras quotes (in English in the original Greek version) from *The Waste Land*, and the work concludes with a quotation from "East Coker" (again in English in the original). There is perhaps some irony in the fact that the concluding passage from "East Coker" is that passage which, when the poet "say[s] it again", becomes a quotation from St John of the Cross, whom Yannaras, to my knowledge, only mentions in his works disparagingly as an example of the spurious (pietistic) apophaticism of the West!<sup>16</sup> These quotations seem to me to function by lifting the text into a realm of symbol and allusion, and so underlining its fundamentally lyrical nature. It is interesting that it is T.S. Eliot who assumes the culminating role, for the use of allusive quotation was characteristic of his own poetry.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Eliot, too, was a poet of love—and one without any sentimentality. *Variations* is a book impossible to summarize, but we find here all the themes dear to Yannaras' philosophy, presented both seriously and playfully, through images rather than concepts.

Norman Russell has put the English-speaking world deeply in debt with his translation of these four important works by Yannaras. One hopes that they will be eagerly read, and that the name of Christos Yannaras will become known, not only in the English-speaking Orthodox world, where his insights may do something to dispel the dreary puritanism too often found there, but also among English-speaking theologians in general, who have been deprived too long of the inspirational Orthodoxy of Christos Yannaras.

## NOTES

- 1 Christos Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, translated by Norman Russell, (Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). Pp. 200. ISBN 1-885652-80-1. Pbk. £11.95 *Variations on the Song of Songs*, by Christos Yannaras, translated by Norman Russell, Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005. Pp. 157. ISBN 1-885652-82-8. Pbk. £11.95. Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, translated by Peter Chamberas and Norman Russell, (Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006). Pp. xii + 379. ISBN 1-885652-81-X. Pbk. £14.95. Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, translated by Norman Russell, (Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007). Pp. xx + 395. ISBN 978-1-885652-88-1. Pbk. \$24.95.
- 2 Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, translated by Keith Schram, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991).
- 3 Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, translated by Elizabeth Brière, (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).
- 4 Christos Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, translated by Haralambos Ventis, edited and with an introduction by Andrew Louth, (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005).
- 5 Yannaras himself has written two autobiographical works, *Katafygio ideon* [Refuge of ideas] (1987), and *Ta kath' eauton* [According to himself] (1995). In what follows I am indebted to the remarkable thesis recently successfully defended by Evaggelia Grigoropoulou, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras* (Durham Ph.D. thesis, 2008), which it is hoped will soon be published in a slightly revised form.
- 6 Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, pp. viii–ix.
- 7 Zissimos Lorenzatos, *The Lost Center and Other Essays in Greek Poetry*, translated by Kay Cicellis, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- 8 Zissimos Lorenzatos, *The Drama of Quality. Selected Essays*, translated by Liadain Sherrard, Limni, (Evia, Greece: Denys Harvey Publisher, 2000).
- 9 *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1971), pp. 286–300.
- 10 Christos Yannaras, *I Metaphysiki tou Somatos. Spoudi ston Ioanni tis Klimakos* ["Metaphysics of the Body. A Study in John Climacus"], (Athens: Ekdoseis Dodoni, 1971).
- 11 *To ontologikon periechomenon tis theologikis ennoias tou prosopou*, Athens 1970. I am grateful to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, for the loan of this rare book.
- 12 *ECR* 7 (1975), pp. 199–201; 9 (1977), pp. 134–135. By this time, the work consisted of four parts, divided into chapters, with the titles of the present edition, in contrast to the four chapters of *The ontological content*, only corresponding for the most part to the four parts of *Person and Eros*. I have not been able to discover anything about the 1976 edition.
- 13 Christos Yannaras, *To kath' eauton*, pp. 72–74.
- 14 Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, p. 17.
- 15 Christos Yannaras, *Variations on the Song of Songs*, p. 67.
- 16 Cf. Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 2005, p. 119, n. 21.
- 17 T.S. Eliot is listed among other things that Yannaras discovered with delight in the West, along with the paintings of Van Gogh and Turner, Kierkegaard, and the films of Bergman: *To kath' eauton*, p. 60. Although there is no section on Eliot in Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), there are frequent references to him in the course of the book.