Epistemological Agreement Between Eastern and Western Christian Personalisms

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The theological traditions of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches affirm a special dignity for divine and human persons. The dignity of the person is not a particularly new development in Christian theology, but its articulation over the last century or so has kept pace with contemporary developments in the philosophical conversation. In both Catholic and Orthodox theology, Christian personalism has been defended through the idiom of phenomenology. Despite this similarity between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, certain Orthodox theologians have used personalism as a particularly vehement rhetorical tool with which they have castigated the Western philosophical tradition for its inherent objectivization of the person.[1] This paper cannot cover the historical contexts in which this polemical personalism has developed, but will rather analyze the epistemological contributions of one significant thinker from each camp: Max Scheler (Germany, 1874–1928), and Christos Yannaras (Greece, 1935–). Through this analysis I hope to contribute toward a greater mutual awareness between the Christian personalisms of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions by showing significant agreement in their epistemological foundations.

Scheler and Yannaras were not contemporaries. Scheler was influential in the development of both phenomenology and personalism in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century. He influenced Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Nikolai Berdyaev, and many others, not least of whom Pope John

1. This is Berdyaev's term, though he seems the least inimical to the "West." Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, John Romanides, John Zizioulas, and Christos Yannaras are all examples, to varying degrees, of an anti-Western personalist accusation from an Eastern Orthodox perspective.

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Paul II.[2] While Scheler eventually left the Catholic Church, his influence on Catholic personalism should not be underestimated.[3] Yannaras has flourished in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. He has mounted perhaps the most virulent charges against Western objectivization while articulating the clearest philosophical expression of Eastern Orthodox personalism. He was certainly influenced by Husserl and Heidegger, but does not to my knowledge mention either Scheler or the personalist writings of John Paul II. This is most intriguing as Yannaras was educated in Scheler's homeland, Germany, and his career overlapped significantly with the late Pope. In the absence of any direct address between these two personalist thinkers, the similarity of their epistemological methods and personalist conclusions will be investigated here.

In spite of Yannaras's polemic against Western objectivization, I will show strong parallels between these two authors on three important epistemological points. First, they both reject what they call "rationalism." Second, they both affirm a phenomenological interpretation of empiricism. And finally, they both argue for what I will describe as an apophatic knowing of persons: not as objects, but through personal actions and energies.

1. The Rejection of Rationalism

1.1 Scheler

In his book *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*,[4] Scheler attempted to surpass Kant's formal ethics and assert the possibility of a non-formal ethical personalism. Scheler's primary concern with Kant's

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2. Manfred Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1997), 10, 16.

3. For Karol Wojtyla's relationship with Scheler's thought see among others: John H. Nota S. J., "Max Scheler and Karol Wojtyła," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 60 (1986): 135–147; Andrew N. Woznicki, "Revised Thomism: Existential Personalism Viewed from Phenomenological Perspectives," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 60 (1986): 38–49; Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, "The Origins of the Philosophy of John Paul the Second," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 53 (1979): 16–27; and Stephen A. Dinan, "The Phenomenological Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla," *The New Scholasticism* 55 (1981): 317–330.

4. Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*: *A New Attempt toward the Foundation of and Ethical Personalism*, trans. Manfred Frings and Roger Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

formal ethics was what he saw as the inherent depersonalization contained in Kant's rationalist assumptions. In order to establish what he called "the foundation of an ethical personalism," Scheler first critiqued Kant's rationalist epistemology to provide an alternate way of knowing that would make room for a non-objectified person as a valid content of knowledge. Scheler then made use of this phenomenological method to argue for the true being of the person and the consequent need for a non-formal ethics appropriate for personal dignity.

In his helpful book entitled *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*, Peter Spader explains the significance of Scheler's critique of Kant's epistemology.[5] The argument goes as follows: A rationalist epistemology like Kant's severs a priori rational essences from a posteriori sense data and requires the transcendental structures of the mind to unite the two in synthetic knowledge. Such an epistemology ultimately reduces reality to the set of "whats" corresponding to those a priori essences. The significance of this for many personalists, especially Scheler, is that if the person is real, it must be a particular "what," defined by its correlation to certain rational essences. Furthermore, a personal "what" of this sort could never be different from any other impersonal "what." Scheler notes the impossibility of such a distinction in Kant's system, against Kant's supposed defense of the dignity of the person. "But, logically, the homo noumenon is nothing but the concept of the unknowable constant 'thing in itself' applied to man. The same unknowable constant also pertains…to every plant and every rock. How could this constant render man a dignity different from that of a rock?"[6] In other words, any real person is essentially the rational concept "person" so that all persons are conceptually equivalent with each other.

Scheler rejected this "whatness" of personhood in the form of the Kantian "ego," which is still an "object among objects."[7] In order to do this, Scheler changed Kant's "direction of fit" regarding the identity of objects. Scheler paraphrased Kant as having argued, "Identity is not (as it is for us [Scheler]) an essential characteristic of the object…. Hence, identity is

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5. Peter Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). Throughout this paper, I am indebted to the insights of Peter Spader.

6. Scheler, *Formalism,* 373.

7. Ibid., 375.

originally in the ego, and it is from the ego that the identity of an object is borrowed."[8] Scheler rejected this claim that the identity of objects is borrowed from the identity of the ego. Instead, he argues that the ego is itself constituted as an object through its being given as the content of the act of inner perception.[9] Scheler argued that Kant's position is therefore self-contradictory. The ego's identity, like all object-identities, is derived from an act of perception. He states, "Its identity exists only insofar as identity is an essential characteristic of the object."[10] Thus the direction of fit must move rather from object to ego. If this is the case, the ego could never be elevated above objects as their unifier. "On the other hand, we can see that Kant's definition contains a contradiction. For if the object is nothing but something identifiable, the 'ego'—whose own identity is supposedly the very condition of the object—must then be an object, though the ego as a 'condition of an object' cannot be an object."[11] Here, Scheler has dismissed the Kantian ego as sufficient for personhood since the ego itself remains an object.

Kant's ethics posed an equal problem for Scheler's concern for dignity. As he argued, the rationality of the Categorical Imperative's formalism can be no safeguard for personal dignity, as neither freedom nor uniqueness are indicated by rationality itself. Rather, Kant's acceptance of the Aristotelian definition of man as a rational animal precisely precludes any free self-expression from the person by essentially reducing the person to "a logical subject of rational acts," which by their very essence are universally interchangeable. Scheler accuses Kant's formal ethics of being as depersonalizing as an ethics of goods and purposes "by virtue of its subordination of the person to an impersonal nomos under whose domination he can become a person only through obedience."[12] Formal ethics proceeds from an erroneous view of persons: "its implicit material assumption that

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8. Ibid., 374.
9. "For 'the ego' itself is still an object…." Ibid. "Nevertheless every ego is given in the form of only one kind of perception, namely, the act-form of inner perception and the form of the manifold corresponding to it by essential law…. The ego itself is, rather, only an object among objects." Ibid., 375.
10. Scheler, *Formalism,* 375.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 370.

the person is basically nothing but a logical subject of rational acts."[13] This is depersonalizing because it makes the person a logical attribute (and therefore identical and interchangeable with others) of actions instead of the primarily existent actor. "The person could not even be 'obedient' to the moral law if, as its executor, he were created, as it were, by this law. For the being of the person is also the foundation of any obedience."[14] In other words, if one witnesses rational actions, one may logically infer a rational subject of those actions, deeming this subject a person. Consequently, in order to "count" as a person, one must act rationally, as one's personal dignity is bestowed by conformity to the laws of reason. Scheler claims that this leads to the positions of Fichte and Hegel wherein the person's moral being is determined by an external and impersonal rational law.[15] Such external determination would be particularly offensive to a personalist sense of dignity, being what personalists generally preclude from requirement for personal dignity.

Scheler clarifies and counters the central threat that rationalism brings to bear against personhood: "The person must never be considered a thing or a substance with faculties or powers, among which the 'faculty' or 'power' of reason etc., is one. The person is, rather, the immediately coexperienced unity of experiencing; the person is not a merely thought thing behind and outside what is immediately experienced."[16] This concern with mental "thingness" and the importance of immediate experience in the epistemology of personhood constitutes a marked similarity between Scheler and Yannaras.

1.2 Yannaras

Yannaras's personalism is also motivated as a reaction against rationalism, but stems from a different political context. Yannaras stands in a line with other Orthodox authors responding to the political ideology surrounding the Russian Revolution and fueling the Cold War. Both

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13. Ibid., 371.
14. Ibid., 372.
15. Scheler here accuses Kant's formal ethics of depersonalizing personhood itself "by virtue of its subordination of the person to an impersonal nomos under whose domination he can become a person only through obedience." Ibid., 370.
16. Ibid., 371.

Marxism and capitalism sit squarely in his sights as depersonalizing Western philosophies recently imported into Eastern European culture. Yannaras's personalist critique is directed broadly against the whole tradition of Western rationalism, naming especially the German idealists Fichte, Hegel, and Marx[17] more than Kant himself, as well as the whole Western scholastic tradition. As mentioned above, Scheler noted Fichte and Hegel as embodying the most extreme ethical dangers of Kantian formal ethics. Yannaras's concerns are also ethical. He sees the danger of a rationalist epistemology as the subjugation of persons equally to the state, as in communism, and to the market, as in capitalism; this subjugation, for him, is the inevitable ethical demand of an epistemology that locates truth in the sublime regions of universal reason. Yannaras's arguments to this end must be the subject for another study. Of importance here are his specific epistemological critiques against rationalism directed towards the establishment of the person as a being of ultimate value.

As with Scheler's, Yannaras's work is motivated primarily by the rationalist threat of depersonalization. Yannaras is concerned particularly with the depersonalization of God by Western rational theology, and God's consequent removal from the existential relevance for human persons. Yannaras explains that the rationalist quest for objectivity, for the knowledge of things in themselves, is opposed to the very possibility for meaning: it limits the subject to one's own mental conceptions of essences, apart from empirical reality and any existential relevance for human persons.

> If the concept corresponds to the object of thought…individual comprehension of logical statements expressing truth suffices for human beings to know truth. Experiential participation, the dynamic immediacy of our relationship with what we know, becomes superfluous. The apophatic character of the expressions of truth, which the Church considered essential to an experiential knowledge of revelation is discarded…The Church's Gospel…was transformed into a rationalistic structure…able to convince the individual intellect….It was turned into a sacred science…which neglected experience and empirical evidence.[18]

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17. Yannaras includes here Marx as an idealist because his economic materialism betrays the ultimacy of rational determinism in his system. Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 284.
18. Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 35.

Similar to Scheler's criticism of Kant, Yannaras's complaint here is against the location of knowledge within the realm of concept instead of in the relatedness of knower and known. In this rationalist epistemological framework, according to Yannaras, knowledge is not the knower's relatedness to the known, but instead the knower's private mental comprehension. For the purposes of theological knowledge, this entails a drastic loss of personal relevance for the God who is now reduced to a concept.

Yannaras argues that the logically deducible concept of God is "unrelated to historical experience and the existential condition of human beings," and he agrees with Nietzsche "that logical proofs for the existence of God refute god as an objective, real presence."[19] The resulting death of God proclaimed by Nietzsche's madman in *The Gay Science* is only the inevitable fulfillment of the Western metaphysical God of conceptual certainty. This logically necessary God is "guaranteed" to exist and to be the cause of all. But the strength of this God is identical to the irrelevancy of this God. The logically necessary God is impervious to any particular experience precisely because this God resides safely among conceived essences, and is therefore impossible to experience. This is the God of rational certainty, the God of conceived truth. As conceived truth, this God is a propositional construction of the human mind in reflection upon the experience of physical causality, of natural existence. This is a God that is known in and identified with the Being of the natural world through the natural laws conceived by created minds to articulate and organize our human experiences of the created universe. This is not a God of direct empirical knowledge and could not be personal in any existential meaning of the term. As such, the ultimate question of the rational God's existence is exactly as irrelevant as it is certain.

If one related Yannaras's concerns to Scheler's, a definite agreement would be found between Yannaras and Scheler as they both reject rationalism in order to defend the dignity of persons. Scheler defends the human person against being conceived as a substance with faculties including reason,[20] and Yannaras defends the divine persons from an equally substantial and rational conception. The rationally deduced God is a mental object had by "logical subjects of rational acts." In the rationalist framework, commonly

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19. Christos Yannaras, *On The Absence and Unknowability of God* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 23–24.

20. Scheler, *Formalism*, 371.

critiqued by both authors, neither God nor humans can be in personal relation with an other as both are governed by the determinations of reason. The very dignity of persons, personal freedom, valuing, and loving, are endangered by this rationalist epistemology.

2. Phenomenology

Scheler and Yannaras both embrace phenomenology as an epistemological alternative to rationalism. Both authors defend phenomenology in order to establish an epistemological space for the knowing of persons as non-objects. Each author will be discussed in turn.

2.1 Scheler

Scheler critiqued rationalism as unable to see beings as anything but objects, and he rejected the "whatness" of this rational ontology in order to re-establish the dignity of free and unrepeatable persons. Scheler accomplished two things towards personal dignity. First, he transferred the dignity of the "a priori" from mental concept to "empirical given." Second, he expanded empirical knowledge from the exclusive domain of the quantifiable senses to include also two very significant subjective givens: the experiences of preferring values and executing acts. His first step towards this restoration was the vindication of a more authentic theory of knowledge that could account more fully for the breadth of personal experience—namely, phenomenology.

Through a less constricted openness to the given, Scheler's phenomenology could account for the realities of values and acts known non-objectively. This openness required an awareness of the "how" as well as the "what" of the given. The preferring and executing of values and acts are different from the apprehension of object-essences; nonetheless, they allow access to their respective givens just as "knowably" as does the knowledge of objects. As Spader explains, Scheler's main concern in advancing phenomenology was to relocate the prestige of the a priori from the internal mind to the whole realm of the various phenomena, without differentiation between internal and external perceptions. Scheler avoided Kant's limitation of the a priori to mental formalism and instead included all

"immediate intuitive content." The "apriorism" of the given now dignified the whole of human experience and not only the rational faculty.[21] At the same time, Scheler was reclaiming empiricism from the overly narrow confines of the quantifiable senses. Spader explains that Scheler recognizes a limiting presupposition in sense-empiricism: "As I see it, the proton pseudos of this identification is that one asks what can be given instead of simply asking what is given. One assumes in this fashion that nothing 'can' be given at all when sensory functions…for it are lacking."[22] Sense-empiricism is here called out for its self-contradictory a priori assumptions. Thus, Scheler's phenomenology is a more "radical" empiricism in its openness to what is given without the filter of what can be given.[23]

Again, Scheler's objective was to avail the whole person of participation in knowing, not just the rational aspect of the human organism. Scheler's phenomenology thus expanded to include what "counts" as given from the mere "what" to also the "how" of experience. The effect of Scheler's phenomenology was the expansion of the domain of knowledge to include not just all contents of human experience but also the manner of that experience itself, without requiring any recourse to a priori essences in order to constitute knowledge. This is why Scheler can say that a priori non-formal values can be known in the act of preferring, and that acts themselves are never given in perception but only in their execution.[24] Ultimately, this is why the person cannot be given as any object, but only in its "coexperienced unity of experiencing."[25]

By transferring the a priori from the mental to the phenomenal, Scheler allowed for experience itself to constitute knowledge, thereby expanding the realm of the known well beyond the limits of object-essences as required by rationalism's a priori assumptions.

2.2 Yannaras

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21. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 54–57.
22. Scheler, *Formalism*, 55; discussed in Spader, 51–54.
23. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 55.
24. Scheler, *Formalism*, 374–375.
25. Ibid., 371.

Yannaras relocates the domain of knowledge from proposition to relation for a purpose similar to that of Scheler, specifically to recalibrate "what counts" as personal knowledge from conceptual understanding to immediate experience. The phenomenological empiricism of Yannaras is similar to that of Scheler, although Yannaras generally uses the term "apophaticism" instead of "phenomenology." Yannaras positions this apophatic empiricism against that of propositional or rational knowledge. "Apophaticism is the denial that we can exhaust the truth in its expression, a denial that we can identify the knowledge of truth simply with an understanding of its declamatory logic."[26] And elsewhere, "Apophaticism is...an utterly consistent empiricism, an unyielding adherence to the absolute priority of experience as the way to, and possibility of, knowledge." Yannaras explicitly distances Eastern Orthodox apophaticism from the Western *via negativa*, on the grounds that Orthodox apophaticism is the rejection of the propositional statement's suitability for truth. In his view, saying what God is not is not apophaticism because this approach leaves the being of God in the propositionally defined space between our negative statements. For Yannaras, apophaticism is the recognition that saying anything at all, either positive or negative, is only a mental reflection upon the primary truth of related experience. Thus an apophatic epistemology considers truth to be only the experience of relatedness. Truth is the direct experience of relatedness, disregarding both positive and negative propositional concepts. Yannaras develops his concept of relatedness through consistent use of Heidegger's concept of "disclosure." It is our mutual relatedness to phenomena that constitutes our knowledge of truth.

Yannaras's understanding of "hypostasis" is central to his rejection of rationalism. Hypostasis in Yannaras, as in the Orthodox tradition generally, denotes what is underneath, what "gives standing" to nature. Hypostasis, as primary substance, "recapitulates" secondary substance: the whole or the universal human/divine nature. In this sense, a hypostasis is not an instantiation of a universal, as if the hypostasis were only a part "participating" in the universal whole. Rather, Yannaras is emphatic that the hypostasis constitutes the universal in itself; every hypostasis is a unique and unrepeatable expression of the universal nature. Nature as such, the essence in itself, does not exist; it is only a propositional reflection upon

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26. Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 25.

what is real, which is the hypostasis, or primary substance. Because universals or natures only exist in hypostases, propositional knowledge of natural reality can only be an abstraction from the primary reality of the hypostasis, reflected upon but not exhausted in propositional form. As such, propositional knowledge is not real knowledge, but rather reflection or verbal expression. Propositional knowledge must cede the dignity of "knowledge" to apophatic experience (phenomenological empiricism). Rationalism, therefore, seeks an abstraction from reality, not the reality of the hypostasis itself. A rational theological method uncovers a truth of a similar nature: a rational conception of God abstracted from the primary truths of experience. For Yannaras, this abstractly conceived God can only be an idol standing in place of the actual (active) divine hypostases of Father, Son, and Spirit.

The significance of Yannaras's epistemology, in agreement with Scheler's, is that real knowledge can only be considered to be the experience of relatedness with the given. Apprehension of essences does not count as knowledge. Under this framework, the person becomes knowable directly through naïve experience, and not through a rational analysis. In other words, the person is known through acts, without any requirement for essential knowledge. As further discussed below, for Yannaras, this is apophatic knowledge: a knowing of energies, but not of essence; for Scheler, this is the lack of necessity for positing the person as something "'behind' or 'above' acts, or something standing 'above' the execution and processes of acts."[27] Both authors thus use phenomenology as a way to reconstitute knowledge as the direct experiencing of the given instead of a rationalist conceptualization.

27. Scheler, *Formalism*, 385.

3. The Knowing of Persons

3.1 Scheler

Scheler worked to establish the authenticity of phenomenology in order to make room for a non-objectified content for knowledge. Scheler's phenomenological method revealed a significant new category of knowns, the act, which is known non-rationally in its direct execution. The non-objectness of acts is important for Scheler's understanding of persons. Scheler articulates the impossibility of ever conceiving of acts as objects, and specifies the same for persons as the unity of different act-essences. "We can now enunciate the essential definition in the above sense: The person is the concrete and essential unity of being of acts of different essences which in itself…precedes all essential act-differences."[28] Further,

> An act is never an object. No matter how much knowledge we have of an act, our reflecting on its naive execution…contains nothing like the objectification which marks, e.g., all inner perception, especially all inner observation. If an act can therefore never be an object, then the person who lives in the execution of acts can a fortiori never be an object.[29]

Defining the person as the unity of acts safely precluded the objectness of the person. Providing for the knowability of acts through the naïve experience of phenomenology safeguarded the knowability of the person. But this is a knowledge that is very different from the knowledge of object-essences. It is a knowledge that is immediately experienced without recourse to rational concept. As Spader explains, the person *is* the way in which acts are experienced, not any abstracted thing above or beyond the acts themselves.

> In Scheler's view, the person is not something separate from the acts—the person is in the acts. There is no need to posit something above or behind or separate from the acts. The person is the acts, but not acts abstracted. The person is the acts unified, acts of essentially different natures unified in a particular concrete way: acts *are* the person.[30]

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28. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 104; Scheler, *Formalism*, 383.
29. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 104–105; Scheler, *Formalism*, 387.
30. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 104.

Scheler contrasts the phenomenological given person with the Kantian ego discussed above. If we are given the spatio-temporal manifold in perception, we are likewise given the form of its unity in the ego, which is a content of perception and therefore an object. If we are given the experience of our own several acts, we are therein given the unity of those acts, but not as the content of inner perception. Acts are given in their execution, and cannot be objectified in subsequent reflection. The same holds *a fortiori* for persons who are given their unity in the immediate execution of these acts. This process cannot be conflated with the givenness of the ego through the spatio-temporal manifold of perception, for act and object are utterly distinct. Scheler then defines the person as this unity of the several act-essences, a non-objectifiable yet phenomenologically accessible reality. The person is known in each of the acts without being exhausted in any of them. Knowledge of persons is therefore the experience itself of their acting, whereas knowledge of the person's whatness, or objectness, is inherently nonsensical, as such an essence could neither apply to any act nor therefore to any person. According to Scheler, the knowledge of persons is accessible only through a phenomenological, not a rational, epistemology. The knowledge of persons through their acts is required to preserve the validity of ethics as a discipline without "squashing" persons into objects through formalism.[31] Without any epistemological access to the person, such an ethics would certainly be impossible.

3.2 Yannaras

The person's total knowability in, without exhaustion by, particular acts in Scheler's formulation is reminiscent of the fourteenth-century Byzantine saint Gregory Palamas's (1296–1359) distinction between the divine essence and energies, particularly as this is employed in the writings of Yannaras. There is remarkable compatibility between Scheler's position and that of Yannaras's reliance upon St. Gregory. St. Gregory had taught that God could be visibly known in the divine energies even as the divine essence remains so unknowable as to be conceptually nonexistent.[32]

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31. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism,* 105, commenting on this observation by Nicolai Hartmann.

32. "For if God is a nature then no other thing is a nature; but if all others are natures then God is not a nature; just as He is not being if other things are beings; but if He is being,

Yannaras applies this distinction to anthropology and develops the notion of ecstasy as an experiential bridge between persons. For Yannaras, the truth is only the experience of a hypostasis, taking this genitive both subjectively and objectively. While the uniqueness and incommunicability of persons would seem only to prevent persons from obtaining knowledge of one another, especially barring the admissibility of conceptual knowledge, here Yannaras develops the theme of ecstatic self-transcendence as the means by which persons are known by persons in their energies and not as abstracted essences. This is equivalent to Scheler's view that persons are known in the experience of their actions. Here Yannaras explains the dependence of his epistemology on the traditional Orthodox separation between the hypostatic essence and energies of God.

Following Gregory Nazianzen, Ps. Dionysius, and especially Gregory Palamas, Yannaras explains the ecstatic capacity of hypostases to reach beyond themselves in interaction with the other. It is here that "nothingness" proves to be the *sine qua non* of Yannaras's theological method. (Yannaras is not overly shy in his use of Heidegger, but thoroughly integrates his agreement with Heidegger into his understanding of the Orthodox tradition.) The divine hypostases, in creating the universe, call forth from the nothing all that is. In this ecstatic self-transcendence, the divine energies extend beyond the incommunicable hypostases themselves into the nothingness beyond God, in order to call into being that which is not.[33] A clear distinction between God's essence and energies is established in the Orthodox tradition through the experience of relatedness to these divine energies that call into being, enliven, and deify the Christian.

Yannaras argues that the Orthodox tradition clings to the immediate empirical God. He grounds this position in St. Gregory's defense of the Holy Hesychasts' empirical vision of the uncreated divine energies. The "what" of God, the rationally deducible first cause of Western metaphysics, is rendered epistemologically irrelevant in that it is totally unknowable. It is only the "who" of God, the energetic actions of God in relation to us, that we can truly know. We know that God reveals Godself through the invitation to love. In this ecstatic love, both the human and divine persons literally stand

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then other things are not beings." Quoted in Basil Krivosheine, *The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas* (London: Geo. E.J. Coldwel, 1954), 17.

33. Yannaras, *On The Absence and Unknowability of God*, 73–81.

beyond themselves for the sake of interpenetrating the other's energies. Their *eros* goes forth from their essence to relate with their beloved's energy. From this hypostatic ecstasy, the person's self-transcendence into relatedness with the other, there is excluded any abstracted universal such as the transcendental ego. The apophatic knowledge of hypostases requires the ecstatic potential of the person. This is predicated upon the distinction of essence and energies in God. It is the ecstatic energies of God, their "essential" nothingness, that reach outside of God to create the world as other. We therefore know both divine and human persons in relationship with their personal energies, but conceptually as "no-thing."

4. Conclusion

Despite the noticeable anti-Western polemic in Yannaras, there are significant similarities between his view of the non-objective knownness of the person and Scheler's. There is a basic parallel between Scheler's distinction between objects and acts and Yannaras's distinction between essence and energies. In both personalisms, the person is no-thing, and yet known fully in act and energy. Furthermore, in both Scheler and Yannaras, these distinctions require an equivalent replacement of rationalism by a phenomenological empiricism in order for the non-objectified person to qualify as a known content of knowledge. Both authors intentionally argue for a reformulation of epistemology along phenomenological lines. From this methodology, they both argue for the consideration of "naïve" experience as truth. For Scheler, this enables the person to be known in the phenomenological experiencing of acts; for Yannaras, this allows the person to be known in the apophatic ecstasy of energies.

The significance of this agreement is two-fold. First, it shows that both Orthodox and Catholic personalist traditions are responding to the same objectifying threats of Kantian rationalism. In other words, both traditions equally safeguard the experiential dignity of persons as irreducible to concept or essence. Second, it calls into question the validity of certain Orthodox accusations against the "Western Philosophical tradition" as a whole. The similarity shown between Scheler and Yannaras demonstrates that the "West" itself was also responding to the same objectifying

threats that Yannaras accuses the West of introducing. In Yannaras's use of phenomenology, under the guise of apophaticism, as a weapon against Western rationalism, he equally shows himself to be essentially in agreement with, not in opposition to, contemporary Catholic thinking on personhood. Hopefully, this observation is a contribution to the growing awareness among scholars that an overly strict distinction between "Eastern" and "Western" metaphysics would be seriously flawed.