



# St Mark's Review

A journal of Christian thought & opinion

No. 233, October 2015 (3)



## Life together in a digital age

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# Personhood in the digital age: the ethical use of new information technologies

Jonathan Cole

We find ourselves living in the midst of one of history's rarities: an epoch-making cultural and technological revolution. Our age will likely be remembered in the history textbooks of future generations as the 'age of the digital revolution' or a variation thereof. Innovations in the way we transfer, share and access information are transforming our personal, professional, recreational and intellectual lives at a bewildering pace.

It seems self-evident at this juncture that the new information technologies that have entered our personal and social lives cannot be characterised simply as *either* unmitigated social goods or unmitigated social evils. The very same technology invariably seems capable of both beneficial and harmful uses and impacts. On the one hand, new digital technology allows us to stay in contact with loved ones who are not physically present (e.g. Skype), to reconnect with those we have lost contact with (e.g. Facebook), to participate in public debate and the political life of our societies (e.g. Twitter), to share our art and ideas with wide audiences (e.g. YouTube) and to engage in more efficient and effective work practices (e.g. email). On the other hand, the very same technology is used to provide more efficient and effective ways for paedophiles, criminals, terrorists and racists to organise

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and pursue their goals; the creation of new and potent military weapons; cheap and easy access to pornography; public and instantaneous means of anonymously abusing public figures; and endless distractions that divert our attention. One need merely survey the new terms that have entered the lexicon in order to grasp the breadth of new harms that this technology has ushered into our social life: trolling, sexting, cyber bullying, cyber crime, cyber warfare, cyber espionage.

The fact that new information technologies can be so evidently used for positive and negative ends suggests that the technology itself might best be considered morally neutral. In this sense a technology such as Twitter, for example, differs fundamentally from the Hellfire missile, which has been designed for a single purpose, to kill and destroy, and therefore has no other uses. The fact that it is ostensibly human agency that determines whether a technology such as Twitter has a positive or negative effect on both persons and societies brings in to view the question of ethics. Thus we can pose the following question: what constitutes the ethical use of new information technologies? This question in fact depends on an antecedent question: on what basis might we determine what constitutes the ethical use of new information technologies? What is required, then, is some objective criterion that might facilitate the discernment of appropriate and inappropriate uses of new information technologies.

There is surprisingly little discussion about the ethical use of information technology in our society. This is possibly due to two important facets of contemporary Western culture. In the first place, this culture often equates ethics with mere legality. In this vein, anything that is legal is deemed ethical and anything that is illegal is deemed unethical. Thus we have become accustomed (inured?) to hearing the tedious refrain in defence of unethical behaviour: 'it wasn't illegal'. While accessing pornography on the internet or abusing someone on Twitter, for example, might be odious or harmful, as neither is illegal, for many people there is no ethical question to be answered here. Second, the prevalent philosophy of our time is individualism, which elevates personal autonomy, choice and control as the supreme values of life. Thus any technology that facilitates or creates *more* personal freedom, choice and control is to be applauded, even if it has nefarious side effects. The side effects do not call into question the value of the technology because just about any price is worth paying in the name of individual freedom, choice, power and ultimately satisfaction. Moreover, as each individual is

only responsible for his or her *personal* behaviour, and need only ensure that their behaviour remains *legal*, we need not worry about ethical questions pertaining to the actions of others or the community as a whole provided they do not affect us personally.

For the Christian, however, mere legality and personal autonomy do not form sufficient grounds for making ethical decisions about how to use information technologies. In fact, Christian theology has a distinct contribution to make in this regard: first, by posing the ethical question as a way of making society think more deeply about how our uses of information technology might be harmful in ways not immediately obvious to our individualistic outlook; and second, by offering some guidance as to how such ethical questions might be navigated. This brings us back to the issue of a criterion, and not just any criterion, but specifically a theological criterion. It is my intention to demonstrate that the Eastern Orthodox theology of 'personhood' can serve as a productive criterion for helping Christians, and secular society, to navigate the ethical dilemmas produced by the digital revolution.

The concept of 'personhood' is perhaps most closely associated in the minds of many English-speakers with the name John Zizioulas (b.1931), the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamon. However, the name most closely associated with the concept in Greece, and Eastern Orthodoxy more generally, is the lesser-known (in the West) Christos Yannaras. Yannaras (b. Athens, 1935) must rank as one of the most prolific living theologians in any language.<sup>1</sup> He has written an impressive 51 books in Greek (the most recent published in 2014)<sup>2</sup> and he has been a regular commentator on Greek political and social affairs in *Newsprint* since the early 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Louth describes him as 'one of the most important living Orthodox thinkers.'<sup>4</sup> Part of the reason he is not well known in Western theological circles is the fact that many of his books have only begun to be translated into English relatively recently, with most remaining untranslated.<sup>5</sup>

Yannaras is a high profile and controversial public intellectual in Greece<sup>6</sup> and is much better known than Zizioulas amongst the general public,<sup>7</sup> though some regard Zizioulas as the more important theologian within Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>8</sup> Yannaras is perhaps best known in the West for his trenchant criticism of Western culture and Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant).<sup>9</sup> Yannaras contends that Western Christianity and, by virtue, contemporary Western civilisation, turned its back on the theology of

personhood so central to the Greek Patristic tradition in favour of individualistic and legalistic conceptions of God, humankind, society, politics and philosophy. His criticism is not purely sectarian. He is also a strident critic of contemporary Orthodoxy. He views his native Greece and its church, for example, as essentially 'Western' in outlook and culture.<sup>10</sup>

Yannaras' criticisms of the 'West', which Western critics have rightly noted as often overdrawn, too sweeping and lacking in nuance, are not characteristic of the substance of his work more generally, which has been devoted to what he calls the 'ontological question'.<sup>11</sup> The answer Yannaras develops in response to the 'ontological question' is what he characterises as 'relational ontology', built on the trinitarian understanding of personhood.<sup>12</sup> Most of his books seek to apply his relational ontology and theology of personhood to different ontological questions. We will use Yannaras' conception of personhood as the basis for our criterion of ethical usage of information technology.

Drawing on the Greek Patristic tradition (especially Dionysius the Aeropagite and St Maximus the Confessor), Yannaras defines 'person' as the capacity to form relationships.<sup>13</sup> The Greek word for 'person' (*πρόσωπο* - *prosopo*) is a compound of the preposition 'προς' (towards) and the noun 'ἴπov' from 'ὄψ' (eye or sight).<sup>14</sup> The term 'person' therefore connotes what Yannaras terms a 'referential reality',<sup>15</sup> which is to say, 'I have my sight turned towards someone or something, I am opposite someone or something'.<sup>16</sup> The relational definition of person in Greek stands in contrast to the definition of person in Western European languages, such as English, which connote an autonomous individual.<sup>17</sup> The English adjective 'personal' illustrates the point. It points towards 'me' and 'mine'. Yannaras' argument is that 'person' in Greek is the very antithesis of this inward reference, and rather denotes the relationship between 'me' and 'mine' to 'you' and 'yours', or 'her and hers', or 'them' and 'theirs'.

Personhood is the essence of *Imago Dei* for Yannaras.<sup>18</sup> A loving communion of free persons is God's mode of being (the Trinity).<sup>19</sup> The primordial sin of the fall was the rejection of what Yannaras describes as the 'trinitarian prototype' of our nature, namely personhood. Instead of life lived as a communion of loving relationships between God and humankind, and humankind with each other and nature, the first man and his descendants turned their back on this communion in favour of life lived as a 'natural



individual'<sup>20</sup> i.e. the selfish focus on the self and its egocentric physical and psychological needs.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that we have been created persons in the image of the persons of the trinity explains how it is possible for humans to enjoy communion with God, as both God and humans are relational. God became incarnate in the *person* of Jesus Christ to both reveal God's mode of being—loving communion of persons—and to provide a means of salvation through which humans can again become partakers in the divine life.<sup>22</sup> This restored mode of being is exemplified in the life of the church.<sup>23</sup>

Constituent characteristics of personhood, both divine and human, are love and freedom. Love, for Yannaras, is the impulse, motivation and drive for the formation of relationships. But love cannot be coerced or compelled. It is an act of freedom. God created us as a free act of love.<sup>24</sup> He has further offered us a means of redemption as a free act of love. Our responses are similarly predicated on a free act of love. Forming relationships with other persons as free acts of love becomes the basis for community as a restoration of humankind's trinitarian image, restored creation and a sign of our eschatological future. Ultimately, as Yannaras sees it, humans are faced with two choices: to respond to God's love and become restored 'persons', or to reject God's love in favour of life for the individual self and hence alienation from God and fellow humans.

Yannaras' aim is not to dissolve the individual into the community. Quite the opposite, his contention is that individuality can only come into view and acquire meaning and value *in relationships* i.e. community.<sup>25</sup> Again drawing on the Greek Patristic tradition, Yannaras uses the term 'hypostasis' to denote the 'unique', 'dissimilar' and 'unrepeatable' instantiation of each person.<sup>26</sup> Each hypostasis is characterised by what he terms 'absolute heterogeneity'.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the 'individual', construed as an autonomous, self-defining entity, the hypostasis can only assume meaning and value in relationship with other hypostases (as well as with the natural world): it 'has its being and is experienced only as a fact of communion and relationship'.<sup>28</sup> The isolated 'individual' posited by the philosophy of individualism is thus a fiction in Yannaras' view. Individuality and community are inextricably linked and cannot be decoupled without doing damage to both.

Hypostasis, like person, is construed as an aspect of *Imago Dei*. God is three unique hypostases in free loving communion by virtue of the fact that they are persons i.e. relational and in relationship with each other. This

formula, according to Yannaras, accounts for the diversity (hypostases) and unity (personhood) of the Trinity. The father, for example, only makes sense when viewed through the prism of his relationship with the son, both terms that denote relational roles.<sup>29</sup>

This brings us back to the notion of relational ontology. Yannaras' argument is that it is our personhood that allows us to create community, understood as relationships formed in freedom and love. The formation of community in turn provides the context in which our individuality can emerge and develop. In this context, individuality—the uniqueness of each human life—is to be nurtured, celebrated and developed. The wellbeing of a community thus consists in its ability to foster and maintain loving relationships in which each person's uniqueness can surface and be appreciated. Yannaras describes this as 'interpersonal communion'.<sup>30</sup>

The relevance of Yannaras' conception of personhood for our thinking about the digital revolution, which is fundamentally changing the way we communicate and relate (our relationships) begins to come in view. There is a clear tension between Yannaras' trinitarian conception of personhood and community, in which the individual focuses on developing and nurturing relationships of love with other people as a means of realising their individuality, and the prevalent Western culture of individualism which focuses on personal autonomy, choice, control and ultimately personal gratification as the end of communal life.

One need only examine the commonalities of new information technologies to perceive the individualistic philosophy of their creators, the consumers who have embraced them and the uses to which they are put. They are designed to *personalise* our social interactions by maximising personal time, obviating social interactions that are inconvenient or tedious, enhancing personal control over when, where and how we interact with government, business, friends and family, minimising the risk of having to associate or interact with strangers and amplifying our personal voice, opinions, beliefs and preferences.

This amounts to the somewhat oxymoronic *personalisation* of social life. It is difficult to think of a more apposite epitome of the individualistic roots of the digital revolution than the phenomenon of the 'selfie', the narcissistic use of a piece of technology (digital photography) that is eminently capable of being used to capture *interpersonal* moments. There is another word for this phenomenon and all that it represents: *selfishness*.

At the heart of the tension between the trinitarian conception of personhood and the Western conception of the individual are rival conceptions of community. In Yannaras' view, community consists of unique hypostases in mutually dependent and enriching relationships of love, both with the trinitarian God, each other and nature. In contrast, the prevalent conception of community in the West, reflected in the digital revolution, is a means of guaranteeing, securing and fostering individual freedom, choice, control and ultimately satisfaction.<sup>31</sup> In this conception community serves to generate the wealth and legal protections required for individuals to pursue their own interests and desires with minimal hindrance and maximal protection. This view constitutes a travesty of personhood, in Yannaras' eyes, of our created and redeemed nature and our destiny (*telos*).

This observation helps to place the challenge of the digital revolution in perspective. The tension is not between personhood and the technologies in and of themselves. Rather, it is between the Christian conception of community, built on personhood, and the philosophy of individualism which has led to both the design of and desire for new information technologies, and which governs the way people use those technologies (e.g. the selfie). New information technologies are therefore symptomatic of contemporary Western conceptions of the human being and community. They are a consequence of, not the cause of, individualism. In this sense they function as mirrors, reflecting back to us the image of who we have become.

Returning to the issue of a theological criterion which might serve as a basis for making ethical judgments about the use of technologies produced by the digital revolution, we can adapt Yannaras' conception of personhood into the following criterion: the fostering, maintenance and facilitation of free, loving personal relationships. Uses of information technology that foster, maintain and facilitate loving relationships can be affirmed on theological grounds. Conversely, any usage that hinders, prevents or undermines loving relationships can be condemned.

It is important to bear in mind at this point that Yannaras' conception of personhood is not merely theoretical. His argument is that personhood is an aspect of our ontology. Personhood is in our nature. We have the physical capacity to see and interact with other human beings, animals, objects and nature. Moreover, we have the physical capacity to produce and hear sounds that make language possible and we have the ecstatic ability to think in ways that transcend our subjectivity i.e. the ability to recognise

our hypostasis and that of other persons through interaction with them.<sup>32</sup> Yannaras is fond of pointing to the relationship between a newborn and its mother as the archetype of our nature as persons, not just in the sense of the newborn's desire and dependence on the mother for its basic needs (e.g. nourishment) but the innate desire of the infant and mother to form a bond of love that transcends mere physiological need. Physical space, therefore, is constituent of personhood along with love, freedom and ecstasy.<sup>33</sup>

Yannaras' conception of personhood and the criterion we have developed from it allows us to make an important distinction between physical interpersonal relationships and virtual interpersonal relationships. The latter can, by definition, never be a true *substitute* for the former. The human touch, whether in the form of an embrace between lovers or a handshake between two people meeting for the first time, cannot be replicated in the digital world. Nor can concrete 'things' and complex 'experiences' be shared in the same immanent way, such as sharing a meal, taking a walk with another person, worshipping together. Furthermore, the incarnation is a seminal event in Yannaras' theology of personhood. God became a physical man and entered into real physical interpersonal relationships with other men and women, and inaugurated a new physically embodied communal life amongst his followers (the church). For Yannaras, the Eucharist is the archetypal act of community, the sharing of bread and wine together as an act of union with each other and with God, again in freedom and love.

Thus we can further refine our criterion as follows: instances where digital technology is used as a substitute for physically present interpersonal relating, where that is a possibility, cannot be affirmed. In cases, for example, where two friends are located in the same city, SMS, email and Facebook ought not to be used as *substitutes* for a physically embodied relationship. They should not be allowed to become the primary mode of being together. They can, on the other hand, serve as useful and efficient means for organising social life, getting in touch with friends and facilitating face-to-face encounters, or updating and sharing information at moments where physical connection is not possible or practicable.

As a general rule, we might say that the use of new information technologies in instances where physical connection and relating is simply not possible by virtue of infirmity, disability or distance is to be joyfully affirmed. For such usage is not undermining real, physically present relationships. Rather, in these instances technology is being used to facilitate

communication, connection and relationship where no other means is possible—in other words, where communication and relationship otherwise would not exist. It is possible, therefore, to envisage many types of usage that are not only *permissible* under the criterion that we have developed, but that can be positively welcomed as promoting and extending relationships into new frontiers.

These are relatively straightforward cases, and there is an unavoidable element of casuistry involved as we move our focus to more complex cases. Distance education is a case in point. Taking as axiomatic that learning is ideally conducted in a communal environment, with real personal relationships between students and lecturers, students and students, and lecturers and lecturers, we can ask, using our criterion of personhood in what circumstances distance education might be appropriate. Where electronic participation in the communal activity of higher education is the *only* possibility for a student (e.g. located in a remote location with no accessible universities) then distance education can be affirmed as serving the needs of personhood. The alternative would seem to be isolated self-study without any of the benefits accruing to communal study and without the capacity to obtain the professional qualifications required to participate effectively in the modern economy. Once again, technology is not serving as a *substitution* in such cases, but as a means of fostering relationships to the benefit of personhood where such a relationship is simply impossible in the absence of the technology.

On the other hand, where a person lives in the same city as the university or institute at which she or he wishes to study, distance enrolment could be construed as an attempt to *substitute* physical communal study with virtual participation. This might be personally convenient. But, if we take Yannaras' view of personhood seriously, personal convenience alone is not an ethical ground for substituting real physically present interpersonal community. This is not to suggest that there might not be circumstances in which virtual study might conceivably become a necessity for someone living within accessible proximity to the institution at which they are studying.<sup>34</sup> Balancing the requirements for extending the learning community to those living in remote locations, while also encouraging and fostering an embodied campus community, presents a unique challenge for educators and educational institutions.

Space unfortunately prohibits further development of Yannaras' theology of personhood and its applicability to actual ethical dilemmas relating to the use of new information technology. Consequently the conclusions I can draw must be cast as provisional. I have sought to demonstrate that the emergence of new information technologies as a result of the digital revolution poses real ethical questions that secular society seems inadequately equipped to answer (or even capable of asking). I have contended that Christian theology can provide an objective criterion for distinguishing beneficial and harmful uses of new information technologies, and have proposed that Christos Yannaras' conception of personhood is just such a criterion.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, as the conception of personhood is grounded in our ontology, and thus purports to explain our nature (*Imago Dei*) our redemption (incarnation) and our destiny (communion with the trinitarian God in the new creation), it can do more than merely serve as a basis for making ethical judgments about how to use new information technologies. It can serve as a much-needed challenge to the modern fiction of the autonomous, self-fulfilling, self-determinate individual (an *ersatz* god) which, if not the very cause of the digital revolution, is the governing principle for how the technological innovations arising from the revolution are all too often being used.

## Endnotes

1. Yannaras is often classified as a 'philosopher' rather than a 'theologian.' However, as Kallistos Ware notes in the forward to the English translation of *The Freedom of Morality*, Yannaras is both a philosopher and a theologian, and sees no 'sharp dichotomy or conflict between the two roles.' See Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* trans. Elizabeth Briere, New York, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, p. 10.
2. Norman Russell, 'Christos Yannaras,' in Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (eds), *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2013, p. 726.
3. Christos Yannaras, *Τὰ καθ' ἑαυτὸν*, 4th edn, Athens, Ἰκαρος, 2005, p. 69. This is the shorter of two autobiographies that Yannaras has written. It has not been translated into English. The other autobiography, *Καταφύγιο Ἰδεῶν* (Refuge of Ideas), published in 1987, focuses exclusively on his involvement in the Zoi movement in Greece in the 1950s and 60s, a

rigorous pietistic protestant-like movement that Yannaras ultimately fell out with. Most of the references to Yannaras' works in this essay are to the Greek editions. Where an English translation is available, details are provided in brackets after the first citation of the Greek work.

4. Andrew Louth, 'Some Recent Works by Christos Yannaras in English Translation,' *Modern Theology*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2009, p. 329.
5. Eleven of Yannaras' books have been translated into English, mostly by the indefatigable Norman Russell. Some of his books have also been translated into French, Italian, German, Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Slovenian (see the list provided in 'Ενάντια στη θρησκεία, 4th edn, Athens, 'Ικαρος, 2010; Christos Yannaras, *Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*, trans. Norman Russell, Brookline, Mass., HC Orthodox Press, 2013. Russell, 'Christos Yannaras,' p. 733, thinks Yannaras' influence will grow in the West as more of his work becomes available. Louth, 'Some Recent Works by Christos Yannaras in English Translation,' p. 339, has expressed the hope 'that the name Christos Yannaras will become known ... among English-speaking theologians in general, who have been deprived too long of the inspirational Orthodoxy of Christos Yannaras.'
6. Russell, 'Christos Yannaras,' p. 725.
7. On a recent visit to Athens, the author observed that the two biggest book shops in the city both contained an entire shelf in the philosophy section devoted to Yannaras and contained no books by Zizioulas. The author also observed that in discussions with educated Athenians, people had heard of and sometimes read books by Yannaras, but hadn't heard of Zizioulas. Yannaras, unlike Zizioulas, makes regular appearances on Greek TV as a commentator on current affairs.
8. Aristotle Papanikolaou, for example, ranks Zizioulas as the most 'influential' of the three key Greek theologians influenced in the 1960s by the thought of Russian theologians Vladimir Nikolaevich Lossky and Georges Florovsky. The other two are Yannaras and Nikos Nissiotis. Interestingly, however, Papanikolaou asserts that Zizioulas received his theology of personhood from Lossky 'via Yannaras.' See Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Contemporary Orthodox Theology,' in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodoxy Volume 1*, edited by John Anthony McGuckin, Chichester, UK, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, doi:10.1002/9781444392555.

9. Louth, 'Some Recent Works by Christos Yannaras in English Translation', p. 331.
10. Christos Yannaras, Ἀλφαβητάρι τῆς πίστεως, Athens, Δόμος, 1983, p. 241. (Christos Yannaras, *Elements of the Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991).
11. ὀντολογικὸ ἐρώτημα' (*ontologiko erotima*). Christos Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, 4th ed., Athens, Δόμος, 1987, p. 10. (Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell, Brookline, Mass., HC Orthodox Press, 2007).
12. ὀντολογία τῆς σχέσης (*ontologia tis schesis*).
13. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 21.
14. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, 21. This view is based on an etymological analysis of the term 'prosopo'. In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas maintained that 'prosopo' appears to have meant the part of the head below the cranium in Ancient times. Yet he also noted in that book that 'a reference of relationship could perhaps reasonably be put forward as the original concept of the term on the basis of some kind of etymological analysis of it.' See John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985, p. 31. Zizioulas later maintained that 'prosopo' meant 'mask' in ancient times and in that sense did not differ substantially from its Latin counterpart 'persona'. See Zizioulas, *Ορθοδοξία και Σύγχρονος Κόσμος*, Nicosia, Research Centre of the Holy Monastery of Kykkou, 2006, p. 87. (*Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World*—untranslated). Zizioulas credits 'patristic theology' with developing the Christian concept of person in the sense meant by Yannaras. See Zizioulas, *Ορθοδοξία και Σύγχρονος Κόσμος*, p. 86.
15. ἀναφορικὴ πραγματικότητα (*anaforiki pragmatikotita*).
16. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 21.
17. This is the Greek of the Patristic Tradition. Interestingly, in colloquial modern Greek the term πρόσωπο primarily means 'face' in the physical sense. We must bear in mind that Yannaras is writing in Greek for a Greek-speaking audience, and is asking Greeks to recapture the patristic meaning of πρόσωπο, and to discard the Western-influenced modern meaning of the word.
18. In theological discourse the Greek term πρόσωπο is sometimes translated as 'personhood' in order to differentiate the term from the normal English



- meaning of 'person' as an individual. For example, Russell's translation of the first chapter of Zizioulas' *Being As Communion* renders πρόσωπο as 'personhood'. I follow this practice, as it is a useful way of disassociating the Greek term from the English term, with which it has little in common. Some translators have rendered πρόσωπο in Yannaras' work as 'person'. See, for example, Keith Schram's translation of *The Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991.
19. Christos Yannaras, Τὸ ρητὸ καὶ τὸ ἄρρητο: Τὰ γλωσσικὰ ὄρια ρεαλισμοῦ τῆς μεταφυσικῆς, 2nd edn, Athens, Ἴκαρος, 1983, p. 212 ('The Spoken and the Unspoken: The Linguistic Limits of Metaphysical Realism'—untranslated) and Yannaras, Ἀλφαβητάρι τῆς πίστεως, p. 93.
  20. φυσικὸ ἄτομο (*fisiko atomo*).
  21. Yannaras, Ἀλφαβητάρι τῆς πίστεως, pp. 119–120; idem, *The Freedom of Morality*, pp. 39–40.
  22. Christos Yannaras, Ὀντολογία τῆς σχέσης, Athens, 2nd edn, Ἴκαρος, 2008, p. 114 (Christos Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, trans. Norman Russell, Brookline, Mass. HC Orthodox Press, 2011) and Christos Yannaras, Ἡ ἀπανθρωπία τοῦ δικαιώματος, Athens, Δόμος, 1998, pp. 113–14 ('The Inhumanity of Right'—untranslated) and Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, p. 41.
  23. Yannaras, Ἡ ἀπανθρωπία τοῦ δικαιώματος, p. 114.
  24. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, p. 19.
  25. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 35.
  26. μοναδικό (*monadiko*), ἀνόμοιο (*anomio*), ἀνεπανάληπτο (*anepanalipto*). See Yannaras, Τὸ ρητὸ καὶ τὸ ἄρρητο, p. 66, 174–76; and Yannaras, Ἀλφαβητάρι τῆς πίστεως, p. 141.
  27. ἀπόλυτη ἐτερότητα (*apoliti eterotita*). See Yannaras, Τὸ ρητὸ καὶ τὸ ἄρρητο, p. 66.
  28. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 34; idem, *The Freedom of Morality*, p. 22.
  29. Yannaras subscribes to a type of apophaticism in which knowledge, i.e. the essence of a being (ὄν), is not exhausted by its linguistic articulation. Thus terms like 'father' and 'son' ought not to be construed as describing the essence of God, but rather his mode of being, i.e. the relationality of the Godhead. Yannaras, Ὀντολογία τῆς σχέσης, p. 26.
  30. διαπροσωπικὴ κοινωνία (*diaprosopiki koinonia*). Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 35.

31. Yannaras, Ἡ ἀπανθρωπία τοῦ δικαιώματος, p. 206.
32. ἔκσταση (ecstasy) is another constituent of personhood in Yannaras' conception. It means literally to stand outside or apart. By this term Yannaras means the fact that we can transcend the self. It is this ecstatic ability that is the key to understanding how we can form relationships and how individuality can arise. Love is the driving force of ecstasy. See Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, pp. 37–38.
33. Yannaras, Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ, p. 147.
34. Fulltime carers' duties might, for example, make attendance of classes infeasible.
35. The contention is not that personhood or Yannaras' specific conception of personhood is the only theological concept capable of serving as such a criterion. It is worth observing, for example, that Zizioulas' conception of personhood mirrors in many aspects Yannaras'. It is also worth noting the convergence of the definition of person at the heart of the Catholic Church's *Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church* with that of Yannaras'. Anglican theologian Oliver O'Donovan's conception of communication as the holding of common possession is an example of another conceptual approach to community, though on close examination it is rather complementary to Yannaras' conception of community. See, for example, Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment: The Bampton Lectures, 2003*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005, ch. 14.