

the Cretan glance

toward a theory of metaphorical responsibility

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The emotion I felt in walking over the ancient grounds of Knossos was so superabundantly rich, so embroiled with life and death, that I find myself unable to analyze it clearly. . . . I gazed at the bullfights painted on the walls: the woman's agility and grace, the man's unerring strength, how they played with the frenzied bull, confronting him with intrepid glances. They did not kill him out of love . . . or because they were overcome with fear and dared not look at him. Instead they played with him obstinately. . . . Perhaps with gratitude. For this sacred battle with the bull whetted the Cretan's strength. . . . Thus the Cretans transubstantiated horror, turning it into an exalted game . . . conquer[ing] without annihilating the bull . . . considered not an enemy but a fellow worker. As I regarded the battle depicted on the walls, the age-old battle between man and bull (whom today we term God), I said to myself, such was the Cretan Glance.

Nikos Kazantzakis

SOMETIME AROUND 1978, WAYNE BOOTH IS REPUTED TO have remarked that by the year 2039 the world would have more metaphoricians than metaphysicians and more students of metaphor than people. I am living corroboration of that claim. Never has a metaphysician been more poorly suited for the study of metaphor. I was trained to translate natural language into quantified formulae of the first-order predicate calculus and to distrust any language that resisted such treatment. But I have succumbed to the sophisticated charms and bedeviling puzzles of metaphor. As conversion experiences go, mine was unremarkable. Most of my colleagues in analytic philosophy had already converted and the path was well worn. One might even venture to say that during the last two decades the study of metaphor has become an essential part of the philosophy of language. Metaphors have become serious business.

a history of hostility

Such was not always the case. The British Empiricists, most notably Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, were champions of a view that held metaphors unworthy tools for philosophical investigation. That view dominated western philosophy until the middle of the twentieth century.

John Locke's famous condemnation of metaphor in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* is familiar to

many of us; but it is worth revisiting as a valuable reminder of the eloquent denunciation of figurative language that is so much a part of our philosophical tradition.

Since wit and fancy finds easier entertainment in the world than dry truth and real knowledge, figurative speeches and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or abuse of it. I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet, if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow, that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheat: and therefore however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them. What and how various they are will be super-

fluous here to take notice; the books of rhetoric which abound in the world, will instruct those, who want to be informed: only I cannot but observe, how little the preservation and improvement of truth and knowledge is the care and concern of mankind; since the arts of fallacy are endowed and preferred. 'Tis evident how much men love to deceive, and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and, I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality in me, to have said thus much against it. *Eloquence*, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer it self ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.

HERE IS ELOQUENCE MARSHALED IN OPPOSITION TO eloquence—trope employed against trope, sternness against fancy. Never mind that all this seems coy and oh too witty. As Paul de Man observed, there is little epistemological risk in a flowery passage like this one [Locke's] about wit, except perhaps that it may be taken too seriously by dull-witted subsequent readers. That, of course, is exactly what happened. Some theorists add Mill to the list of plainspoken Englishmen who decry the use of metaphor. Mill's grounds of opposition, however, are more mundane but only slightly more earnest. He warns his readers in *A System of Logic* that the use of metaphor is especially likely to draw one into the fallacy of equivocation, which fallacy he contends, [is a] "fog which rose from this narrow spot [and] diffused itself at an early period over the whole surface of metaphysics."

The goal of these formidable critics was not the elimination of metaphor from all philosophical discourse. That goal would have to wait a century after Mill for the zealots of Logical Positivism. These individuals were intent merely to contain metaphor within the realm of wit and fancy where it could operate pleasantly, producing its semantic instabilities without any real harm. The realm of judgment (where real philosophy is done) is thereby spared "... being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another." Their position seems unassailable. Precise philosophical discourse does not welcome the delightful vagaries of metaphor. None of our critics actually argued that metaphor is antithetical to the concerns of serious philosophical investigation. It was simply presumed to be a detriment to clear thinking and that presumption was judged to be patently obvious for a long time. Thus, this domesticated notion of metaphor as an artistic device designed for aesthetic pleasure and incidental enlightenment, reigned supreme.

The domesticated (*aka* traditional) view had its detractors, but none were able to mount a serious challenge for want of a comprehensive theory of metaphor. Aristotle's

notion of metaphors as elliptical similes (echoed by Cicero and others), truth to tell, provided a comfortable universe of discourse. Metaphors, viewed as comparisons of things, are rendered tame and merely aesthetic. "My love is like a red, red rose" presents no challenge, only a task to be performed dutifully and sensitively. There is little or no conceptual content in the metaphor or, for that matter, in the exercise of comparative analysis. According to this view, only aesthetic appreciation and emotional confirmation are to be wrest from the consideration of the likeness amidst diversity presented by metaphors.

So it seems the epistemological caché of the traditional view of metaphor is minimal and restricted. Correspondingly, its moral responsibilities are straightforward and overt. No metaphor is either good or bad *simpliciter*. Metaphors are artistic devices that can be put to good or bad use. If the construction and utilization of a metaphor is a phenomenon restricted to the aesthetic and the rhetorical domains, then good or responsible metaphors will be witty, diverting, pleasing, and sometimes beautiful. Conversely, they should not be trite, boring, unpleasant, or ugly. Creativity and taste will be the prized attributes of the successful metaphorician. Entertainment, not enlightenment, will be the goal—aesthetic values the focus. Moral values are only minimally involved, since it is difficult to see what moral harm there could be in so harmless a pursuit. It might be viewed as morally irresponsible to create less beauty than one is capable of creating. Or it might be morally wrong to pretend to be one thing and, in fact, to be another. But that is about it. Metaphors cannot really lie or defame on this view. They cannot mislead or prevaricate. All that demands conceptual content. So, the only moral dangers in the traditionalist's woods are the disregard of aesthetic values and the impudent extension of the role of metaphor into the domain of "dry truth and real knowledge." These are genuine constraints on wanton metaphor construction but not ones to long detain us.

a pragmatic turn

All this will strike the modern reader as hopelessly anachronistic and clearly indefensible. The modern intellectual climate is very different. Metaphor is seen as essential not only in literary pursuits but also in the most technical theoretical endeavors. Investigations of the role of models and metaphors in the physical sciences are among the best treatments of the tropes. The modern view of metaphor argues for its cognitive and epistemological power; a power that its traditional counterpart lacks. This modern view of metaphor is premised on two fundamental contentions. First, metaphor has meaning and makes truth claims, although its meaning is different than standard or literal meaning and its truth claims cannot be mechanized in any available theory of truth. Thus, the modern view speaks of metaphorical meaning and its contribution to metaphorical truth. Second, the bridge between literal and

metaphorical meaning is seen to be paraphrase. Paraphrase enables us to capture the metaphorical meaning of metaphor in literal language and reprocess it in mechanical truth theories. For example, when a native Chicagoan says that "the Big Lake Razor is soft today," the claim is literally false. But understood metaphorically, the statement is said to be true. Paraphrased into the literal statement, "The wind from Lake Michigan is warm and pleasant today," the metaphor is given meaning and a resultant truth value.

Metaphorical responsibility, despite the charming ambiguity of the term, quickly loses its charm to contradiction and paradox on this modern view. Metaphors seem to be duplicitous devices designed to mimic literal language without being held accountable to its rigorous analysis. But that, of course, is far too harsh a general indictment. Metaphors can be used for innovative instruction, for illustration, and for theory construction, at least in the initial stages of theorizing. But we also know of instances in our disciplines where metaphor has been enlisted to aid a struggling theory by relieving it of the obligation of precise theoretical articulation; sometimes temporarily, as in the case of Quine's "web of belief," sometimes permanently, in the case of Locke's "wax tablet." Metaphors can also be used to garner emotional support for positions that are difficult to justify rationally; and they can be used to take advantage of a confusion of literal and figurative language.

I have argued elsewhere that the paraphrastic theory of metaphorical meaning is plagued with intractable difficulties. Metaphors simply are not captured by paraphrases. If they were, we would not take the trouble to make them. This situation is, however, indicative of a problem endemic to this view of metaphors. If literal truth is the goal of metaphor, why work through the superfluous medium of metaphorical meaning? Why not seek literal truth straightforwardly through literal language? No simple answer to this dilemma is forthcoming. Perhaps the modern, cognitive content approach jettisoned the traditional aesthetic approach too soon. That seems basically right to me, and may account in part for the urge to construct metaphor; but it is not quite right. Another possibility is that paraphrase is so singularly unsuccessful in capturing metaphorical meaning because there is nothing to capture. Perhaps metaphors have no meaning beyond their patently false literal meanings (e.g., razors are not soft). Perhaps metaphors are not semantic entities at all, but rather pragmatic ones. Perhaps they do not *mean*, but *do*.

In one of the first accounts of the pragmatic character of metaphor, Donald Davidson remarks that metaphor "implies a kind and degree of artistic success; there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny

jokes." Jokes by nature elicit laughter. Jokes that do not do so, are not jokes. So it is with metaphors. They must accomplish their proximate purpose too. If they do not, they are not metaphors. They may be intended as metaphors, they may be taken as metaphors, but if they do not perform the function that gives them their existence, they do not exist.

In reality this is really no harsher an indictment of metaphor than that which we make of the other figures of speech. Screams, for example, that do not alert one to danger or express fear or evidence delight are not screams but mere feignings. The efficacy characterizing metaphor is not semantic, but pragmatic. Metaphors can (in fact always do on this view) fail to *mean*; but they cannot fail to *do*. What is at question is just how they do what they do.

Not surprisingly, promoters of the pragmatic view resort to metaphors in their attempted explanations. Metaphors are said to direct our attention like the pointing of a finger. They enable us to see something we were not in a position to see before. A delightful example is T. S. Eliot's "The Hippopotamus" in which none of its constitutive sentences are really metaphors though the whole of the poem clearly is.

*Perhaps metaphors
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The broad-backed hippopotamus
Rests on his belly in the mud;
Although he seems so firm to us
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock;
While the True Church can never fail
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err
In compassing material ends,
While the True Church need never stir
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach
The mango on the mango-tree
But the fruits of pomegranate and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea.

The poem violently assaults our conventional ways of speaking and thinking about the church and requires us to look in a different direction by the comparison it constructs. Pointings, alludings, and intimatings are the operative entities, not metaphorical meanings. Where meaning lies, truth is close at hand. Yet there is no standard sense of truth that applies to this poem.

Metaphors seem to alert us to aspects of the world by inviting us to make comparisons between the entities they juxtapose. But comparative analysis is not the point. In the metaphorical lyric "The Mississippi Delta is shining like a National guitar," we are not invited to draw up a list of similarities between the two compared objects and then to judge the metaphor good or bad depending on the number of shared characteristics. Rather the juxtaposed images, it seems to me, are meant to get us to see something else, something that is not shared by them in peaceful cooperation but emerges from them in their startling confrontation.

IT IS THE CONFRONTATIONAL CHARACTER OF METAPHOR that often gives it its "mysterious way." The image of the church is juxtaposed with the image of the lumbering hippopotamus and the result is in no way captured by a paraphrase or a comparison. The poem gets us to see things differently regarding the church and to pay attention to that which might not have been attended to in normal discourse. But it does not *tell* us anything. Metaphor is like the Delphic oracle: It does not speak the truth, it does not lie, it *intimates*. It appears to do so by putting odd, startling, baffling, or repulsive things together in instructive and profitable ways. Surprise is its power. The more startling the juxtaposition of images, the better and more effective the metaphor. But better in what way? If metaphors do not have metaphorical meaning and do not make metaphorical truth claims, what do they do on the pragmatic view? It seems to me that a *prima facie* case can be made for the contention that metaphor is a form of *explanation*.

Now that we have finally emerged from that long dormant period of explanation theory dominated by the covering-law model, we have come to understand that explanations belong to the pragmatic branch of language. They are designed to solve problems and can take as many forms as the natures of those problems. They are not paradigmatically true or false, but more often good or bad, effective or inappropriate, as they fulfill their purposes or fail to do so. Their ultimate purposes are multifarious and fundamental. Explanations are designed to solve problems and address needs. They can calm the fear of death, bring individuals closer together in a sense of community, prevent us from acting rashly, make us more attentive to issues beyond ourselves, and sometimes they bring us joy in knowing. Abstract theories are part of some specialized explanations but most often explanations do their work by telling stories, classifying data, reminding one of history, and by getting one to notice what might otherwise go unnoticed. Metaphor may differ slightly from other forms of explanation, involving as it does the intentional collision of images, but its family resemblance is unmistakable.

Whether or not this pragmatic theory of metaphor is correct in all its detail is not of principal concern here. I believe it is a creative and promising solution to a set of

theory-threatening problems. The pragmatic theory extricates modern cognitive theory from a roughly hewn paradox: If metaphors have cognitive content, it must be paraphrased. If the content is paraphrased, why use metaphors?

More interestingly, this problem brings to light an added dimension of metaphorical responsibility hitherto blurred by modern cognitive metaphor theory. If metaphors do not *mean* so much as *show*, and do not present truth claims so much as provide explanations, then the scope of metaphorical responsibility is broadened considerably. It will not be sufficient simply to present a purportedly true proposition with a metaphor. That responsibility to truth is not diminished by this new notion of metaphor. It is rather revered. Metaphor is never an epistemologically justifiable substitute for precise articulation of closely reasoned views designed for conceptual clarity. Literal language is primary. But when theory articulation is not the goal, but rather explanation, new responsibilities accrue. One will have to consider the need for the metaphor in its audience and the strategy for meeting that need. One will have to consider the conditional character of metaphors. They presuppose a level of knowledge on the part of the individuals seeking the explanation. Without that knowledge, the trust and intimacy required for a metaphor to explain will be broken. Thus metaphorical responsibility requires a respect for truth, a primary intellectual value; and it requires moral integrity.

Kazantzakis and metaphorical responsibility

Good metaphoricians must be sensitive to the need for explanation all about them. Very often that amounts to being sensitive to the need within themselves as well. This call for explanation, this need to fit the world to our experience or us to the world is the impetus for an even deeper, more subtle, variety of metaphor. The Cretan writer Nikos Kazantzakis calls this need "The Cry" and our response to it "The Struggle." These are metaphors for the life of faith in Kazantzakis's writings. In order to explain these notions, to make them other than sterile bloodless abstractions, he employed a sophisticated and powerful type of metaphor, which for want of a better term I call *living metaphors*. Let us examine this type or use of metaphor and the extraordinary moral responsibility that attends it.

In 1957, International Peace Prize winner and Nobel Literature Prize nominee Nikos Kazantzakis was laid to rest on the ramparts of his beloved Megalokastro. His was the death and burial of a radical, judged by the Greek Orthodox Church as a defamer of the official doctrines and a promulgator of new and dangerous ideas about the god-man Jesus of Nazareth. That Kazantzakis was heretical cannot be denied. That we can learn something important about the life of faith and the living metaphors he believed necessary for living faithfully is the thesis I would like to develop. I am, however, the first to admit

that I am less certain of how these living metaphors work than I am *that* they work. I have argued elsewhere that living metaphors stimulate in us a type of subtle thinking—a thinking that does not describe life but inspires one to live it a certain way. That is part of it, but there must be more. I think that more is tied to the unique responsibilities attending living metaphors. Elements of Kazantzakis's life and work give us hints.

Kazantzakis's trouble with the church began with the writing of *Askitiki* (Ασκητική), or *Spiritual Exercises*, in 1923. Critics were outraged at the iconoclastic character of this youthful work subtitled *The Saviors of God*. *Spiritual Exercises* is Kazantzakis's catechetical work and, as such, makes bold, perhaps rash, claims with little or no argument or extra-systemic support. A few examples from a section entitled "The Action" should suffice to establish this point and also serve as a foundation for a later discussion of Kazantzakis's radical religious views:

I do not care what face other ages and other people have given to the enormous, faceless essence. They have crammed it with human virtues, with rewards and punishments, with certainties. They have given a face to their hopes and fears, they have submitted their anarchy to a rhythm, they have found a higher justification by which to live and labor. They have fulfilled their duty. But today we have gone beyond these needs; we have shattered this particular mask of the Abyss; our God no longer fits under the old features.

Our hearts have overbrimmed with new agonies, with new luster and silence. The mystery has grown savage, and God has grown greater. The dark powers ascend, for they also have grown greater, and the entire human island quakes.

Let us stoop down to our hearts and confront the Abyss valiantly. Let us try to mold once more, with our flesh and blood, the new, contemporary face of God.

For our God is not an abstract thought. . . . He is not immaculate. . . . He is both man and woman, mortal and immortal, dung and spirit. . . . My God is not Almighty. He struggles for he is in peril every moment; he trembles and stumbles in every living thing, and he cries out. He is defeated incessantly, but rises again, full of blood and earth, to throw himself into battle once more.

He is full of wounds. . . . But he does not surrender; he ascends with his feet, with his hands, biting his lips, undaunted. . . . He clings to warm bodies, he has no other bulwark. He shouts for help; he proclaims a mobilization throughout the Universe.

It is our duty, on hearing his Cry, to run under his flag, to fight by his side, to be lost or to be saved with him. Within the province of our ephemeral flesh all of God is imperiled. He cannot be saved unless we save him with our own struggles; nor can we be saved unless he is saved.

My God is not All-knowing. His brain is a tangled skein of light and darkness, which he tries to unravel in the labyrinth of the flesh.

My God is not All-holy. He is full of cruelty and savage justice, and he chooses the best mercilessly. . . . He is a power that contains all things. He begets them, loves them and destroys them. And if we say, "Our God is an erotic wind and shatters all bodies that he may drive on," and if we remember that Eros always works through blood and tears, destroying every individual without mercy—then we shall approach his dread face a little closer.

This is hardly an Augustinian credo, but neither is it an alternative, heretical orthodoxy. It is not an ideology of any sort. It is something far more ethereal. It is a charter myth, a sustained metaphor for the struggle we know as the life of faith. As one of Kazantzakis's translators, Kimon Friar, has written:

His works are not solid land where a pilgrim might stake his claim, but ephemeral stopping stations of a moment where the traveler might catch his breath before he abandons them also, and again strives upward on the steep ascent, leaving behind him the bloody trail of his endeavor. The fate of all heresies is to solidify, in the petrification of time, into stable and comforting orthodoxies. It would be the deepest happiness of Nikos Kazantzakis to know that those whom his works have helped to mount a step higher on the evolutionary growth of the spirit, have smashed the Tablets of his Law. . . .

Virtually all of his later fictional works and one of the non-fictional ones (*Report to Greco*), as Kazantzakis himself contends, are properly seen as commentaries on *Spiritual Exercises*. Actually they are not commentaries so much as embodiments of his credo; living metaphors for the struggle described so graphically, yet so esoterically, in *Askitiki*. Kazantzakis uses age-old symbols and metaphors to speak about the present and, more importantly, to directly affect the future. By keeping Christ alive in our hearts, he hopes that he can aid one future [hu]man to be born one hour sooner and one drop more integrally.

This need to embody ideas in stories that live and

inspire began early in Kazantzakis' life and accompanied him throughout it.

Every one of my emotions, moreover, and every one of my ideas, even the most abstract, is made up of these four primary ingredients: earth, sea, woman and the star-filled sky. . . . Even now, in the most profound moments of my life, I experience these four terrifying elements with exactly the same ardor as in my infancy. Only then, when I succeed in re-experiencing them with the same astonishment, fright, and joy they gave me as an infant, do I feel—even today—that I am experiencing these four terrifying elements deeply, as deeply as my body and soul can plunge. . . . [T]he four joined indissolubly inside me and became one.... Within me, even the most metaphysical problem takes on a warm physical body which smells of sea, soil and human sweat. The Word, in order to touch me, must become warm flesh. Only then do I understand—when I can smell, see, and touch.

Myths and metaphors for the life of faith, once vivid, have become definitions and necessary truths. God is love. God is our Shepherd. God is our Almighty Father. God has prepared a Great Mansion for us. Faith is like a Rock. These we believe; on these we stand. But they are not guides for living a vibrant life of faith. They are dead metaphors. They are Tablets of Law to be treated with cool, confident indifference. But living the life of faith is not a matter of mastering a creed, adopting a contentious simplification, or sleep stumbling through a series of ritualized "Christ-encounters." Kazantzakis believes it is a battle. A battle that we hope, but cannot know, we will win. We can take courage from the fact that God is in the same battle, but we are terrified by the fact that God is wounded everywhere. God is not almighty, waiting with crossed hands for certain victory. God's fate is in our hands, as ours is in God's. These are the spiritual lessons we need to embody with our lives and Kazantzakis can teach us how to do so.

A careful reading of Kazantzakis's works will impress even the tyro with the depth of his religiosity. He may have been a heterodox, but he was never indifferent. He was heterodoxical because he could not be indifferent to religion. As he remarks in *Report to Greco*:

The face of Christ had fascinated me indescribably ever since my childhood. I had followed Him on the icons as he was born, reached His twelfth year, stood in the rowboat and raised His hand to make the sea grow calm; then as he was scourged and crucified, and as he called out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" After that, as one fine morning He rose from the tomb and ascended into heaven, clasping a white pennon in his hand. Seeing Him, I too was scourged, I too was crucified and resurrected. And

when I read the Bible, the ancient tales came to life: man's soul seemed a savage, slumbering beast bellowing in its sleep. Suddenly the heavens open and Christ descended. He kissed this beast, whereupon it sighed sweetly, awakened and became what it had always been: a superbly beautiful princess.

So also, in a moving description of an encounter or a dream he had during his six-month pilgrimage to Mt. Athos, he says:

[T]he only thing I found as I roamed the Holy Mountain was a veteran campaigner (so he seemed to me at first) holding out his wounded hands to the monks that passed. . . . Shivering, his eyes filled with tears, he knocked on every door, but no one admitted him. He was chased from monastery to monastery, and the dogs ran in back of his ragged cloak and barked. One evening I saw him seated on a stone gazing at the desolate sea. . . . For a while he remained silent, but then, unable to restrain himself any longer, he suddenly cried out, "The foxes have their holes, but I have not where to lay my head!" A flash tore across my mind; I recognized Him and ran to kiss his hand. I had loved Him when I was a small child and loved Him ever since. Now I searched everywhere, but he had become invisible. Feeling aggrieved, I sat down on the stone where he had been sitting. Oh if I could only open my heart to him so that He might enter it and not have to wander homeless and cold.

KAZANTZAKIS WAS NOT A RELIGIOUS MAN, BUT HE hoped he was a profoundly religious one. Religion is about comfort and reward. Profound religion is about struggle. It is about following "the bloody trail, the thin red line of ascent" as Kazantzakis so often describes it. The roots of this struggle appear everywhere in Kazantzakis but always in images and stories. I hope to make clear the reason for that directly. But for now let me simply list these roots (something Kazantzakis would never do) in the hope that the connection to the life of faith will be more apparent.

The profoundly religious person, God's struggler, is marked by three traits. First of all, such a person is committed to the truth—the truth about the world, about ourselves, and the truth about God. This truth is uncomfortable and it cannot be made more palatable by fashioning accommodating lies or self-satisfying idols. Knowing the truth is dangerous and it produces wounds, the wounds of doubt, as Kazantzakis calls them. His wounds were grievous and resulted from his despair that Christ had killed Apollo and Darwin had killed Christ, as he so cryptically put it. We all have such wounds. They will never heal but they must be ignored in order to continue the struggle.

Secondly, the profoundly religious person is committed to the power of the spirit. This commitment is evident in the struggle to transform the world, to spiritualize it in a second act of creation helping to fulfill God's creation. Faith put over knowledge does not heal the wounds. That would replace knowledge with easy religion, an all too common mistake. Faith is rather the will to struggle despite the wounds and to believe in the power of the spiritual to transform knowledge into faith sufficient to sustain the struggle. This relationship of struggling is difficult to capture in the descriptive language of "dry truth and knowledge" and it is trivialized in the abstractions of religion. Consequently, one must resort to art. Only art—the creation of images, metaphors, and myths—can point to the struggle and inspire us to fight on. This, then, is the third mark of the profoundly religious person. Such a person understands the necessity of myth, or systems of metaphors, in living the life of faith, in transforming flesh into spirit. Kazantzakis understood this necessity well. It was the only way he could write and the only thing he could write about. This transubstantiation of knowledge into faith and faith into action through the use of myth is the single greatest insight he has left us. He describes his writing in the same terms. "I swaggered as I wrote. Was I not God, doing as I pleased, transubstantiating reality, fashioning it as I should have liked it to be—as it should have been? I was joining truth and falsehood indissolubly together. No there were no longer any such things as truth and falsehood; everything was soft dough which I kneaded and rolled according to the dictates of whim, without securing the permission from anyone."

The struggle has many faces. It is the struggle of the oppressed to free themselves of their oppressors. It is the struggle of the rich to free themselves of their comforts. It is the struggle of the believers to free themselves from doubt and contradiction. It is the struggle of the pious to free themselves of their smugness. All these struggles are one according to Kazantzakis. They are all attempts to spiritualize matter—attempts to accomplish what God accomplished—attempts to save God.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION, WHICH Kazantzakis affords the highest place in his worldview, and which he characterizes as our greatest obligation, is rarely discussed and never analyzed. It is also known as "the struggle" because it must persist, even flourish, without destroying the commitment to truth. It is difficult to describe, but it is all about us. It is in the flower that blossoms from the mud. It is in the painting that embodies the experiences of the artist. It is in the laughter that explodes from the full belly of the child. Although these metaphors for the process of turning flesh into spirit do not define it; they do, however, help us to bring it into our own lives. That they do so evidences our commitment to the transforming power of the spiritual. They are

evidence of the power of metaphor to put flesh on the bleached bones of theory. Living metaphors require more than merely the interpretative action. They require changes in one's life.

Kazantzakis' works are replete with examples, but I will look at three important types, beginning with a group of rather simple and straightforward metaphors (though no less effective for their simplicity) and ending with some complicated and subtle ones. In all this the purpose is the same. Metaphors and myths alone hold the power to sustain us in the struggle, and to direct us toward our goal of saving God.

When Kazantzakis wants to describe the struggle for us, whether it is the struggle we call the life of faith, the struggle to fulfill our potential, to bear our obligation to our ancestors. . . . whatever the struggle, he very often appeals to metaphors involving his favorite creatures. Among the dozens of creatures from roosters to monkeys, from dung beetles to goats, none appears so often as the flying fish, the chrysalis, and the silk worm. These creatures serve as metaphorical, flesh and blood embodiments of the nature of that struggle. Kazantzakis claims that he has always felt a mystical unity with these three of God's creatures for he always imagined that they symbolized the route of his soul. The chrysalis, whose struggle is to transform itself into a thing of beauty, responds to the natural rhythms and harmonies that surround it and sustain it. It cannot be hurried, nor can it be helped along its ascent from mud-encrusted worm to free-floating butterfly. We too, he believed, were made grubs by God in order that we, by our own efforts, could become butterflies.

Similarly, the silk worm struggles to transform its guts into glistening strands. It does not alter its form, as does the chrysalis, but actually transubstantiates its matter into something more ethereal and beautiful. The flying fish are even more remarkable. They are not content to live in their element but strive to transcend it. If only for a few brief moments, they escape to a world beyond them, a world which cannot possibly be theirs, but which they dare to invade nonetheless. Kazantzakis says, "I experienced equal joy and excitement at seeing the flying fish on the frescoes at Knossos, seeing it soar above the sea on the wings that it developed. Now, a thousand years later, I was faithfully following in their footsteps: I too was transforming Cretan earth into wings."

Each of these creatures struggles to change, to become, to create, to transubstantiate. The change cannot be distinguished from the struggle, or the struggle from the change. This is one of the reasons why they serve as good metaphors for the life of faith. The goal of that struggle, too, cannot be distinguished from the struggle itself.

I will conclude these examples with a metaphor so powerful and so radical that I am not sure that it is a metaphor so much as a vision. Kazantzakis is describing his state of mind when he began to write the *Last Temptation*

of Christ. Perhaps the transforming power of living metaphors is even greater than I have suggested.

As I stared into the dying flames, I saw the panic-stricken Disciples gathered together in the attic. "The Rabbi is dead, he is dead." They were awaiting nightfall so they could leave Jerusalem and disperse. But a woman jumped up. She alone refused to accept His death, for Christ had risen in her heart. Barefooted, unkempt, half naked, she ran toward the tomb at the break of day. Certain she would see Christ, she saw Him; certain that Christ had been resurrected, she resurrected Him. "Rabbi!" she cried, and inside the tomb the Rabbi heard her voice, bounded to his feet, and appeared to her at dawn light, walking on the springtime grass.

Kazantzakis makes living metaphors in order to live those metaphors. He says that in creating Odysseus he made him to view the abyss straight in the eye with a Cretan glance, and "in creating him, I strove to resemble him. I myself was being created." Metaphor can be put to no more powerful use. Explanation is no longer the goal, commitment is.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES ATTENDING THIS USE OF LIVING metaphors, like those of the other types before, are rather easily deduced. If living metaphors are designed to change peoples' lives, then they ought not promote morally evil lives—lives dominated by hatred, fear, revenge, etc. The responsibilities appear to be much more overtly moral than those associated with the previous types of metaphors. Those responsibilities were predominantly aesthetic and intellectual and only by implication moral. But when one constructs and employs living metaphors the responsibility is unavoidably moral.

But the situation is actually more complicated than that. Few would construct these metaphors with an overtly evil design. The Athenians did not frame charter myths in praise of xenophobia and gynophobia as cultural virtues. They designed them as clever and subtle deceits in order to further perverse values they secretly held higher than justice or truth. It was obviously immoral for them to do so, but life does not often present itself obviously. Rarely do evil metaphors promote explicitly immoral agenda. They are more often enlisted in more covert pursuits. Living metaphors can be used to evade serious issues, utilizing myths that disregard the truth and evade the struggle the truth presents. For example, when one employs "bootstrap metaphors" to explain how the disadvantaged in our society should extricate themselves from degradation by exercising free will, one is using metaphor to disguise an abstraction that misleads and evades the truth. The truth is that moral development and reclamation require a supportive and sustaining community. Freewill does not suffice.

Similarly, metaphors that present God as a benevolent father guiding children safely through the perils of life to the ultimate reward mislead and evade the truth that the life of faith is a battle, with no assurance of victory, but only the obligation that one fight the fight. The principal responsibility of the metaphorician constructing living metaphors is to honor truth through art—art that is able to sustain the struggle truth presents.

Kazantzakis tells the story of a Cretan he once met (or dreamt of) offering this advice:

When you appear before the heavenly gates and they fail to open, do not take hold of the knocker to knock. Unhitch the musket from your shoulder and fire.

"Do you actually believe God will be frightened into opening the gates?"

"No, lad, He won't be frightened. But he will open them because He'll realize you are returning from battle."

Never did I hear from an educated person words so profound as those I heard from peasants, especially from oldsters who had completed the struggle. Their passions had subsided within them; they stood now before death's threshold, tenderly casting a final, tranquil glance [a Cretan Glance] behind them.

Kazantzakis's use of metaphor is both subtle and powerful. Because it is so, it is also dangerous, for it has the power to change us. It has the power to enable or equip us for the struggle that is the life of faith. Nothing else can put vibrant flesh on the dry bones of theodicy. Nothing else can rally us to climb following the thin red line. This is not the metaphor of fancy, nor even the metaphor of truth. It is the metaphor of action, and consequently the metaphor of moral responsibility. The Athenian charter myths were not distasteful or false. Such categories did not apply to them. They were morally evil. They changed individuals, teaching them how to hate without feeling it and how to fear without knowing it.

The defense against this misuse of metaphor is knowledge; not the knowledge of true and false propositions but the knowledge of how images can inspire and produce action. This "logic of subtle thinking" is not yet a discipline but it must become one as we come to understand and acknowledge the real power of art in our lives. ♣

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