

PETER BIEN



Selected Lectures,
Shorter Writings,
& Translations

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- A Century of Greek Poetry 1900-2000* (edited, with Peter Constantine, Edmund Keeley, Karen Van Dyck). Cosmos Publishing, 2004.

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- From 18 to 85: Chronicling a Fortunate Life*. Dartmouth Digital Publishing, 2015.



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INTRODUCTION

I spent my teaching career at Dartmouth College from 1961 to 1997, beginning at age 31. Fortunately, Dartmouth is not too far from the Adirondack town of Riparius, New York, where in my twenties I built the log cabin pictured on the cover of this volume. Since then I have written many books in my Adirondack lean-to, observed by munching deer and by turtles dawdling toward the pond. Dartmouth has been a good location for me. Its pronounced value-system, favoring “scholar-teachers,” is not just empty rhetoric. We are expected to teach well and are helped to do so; we are given sufficient time, incentives, and resources to write well. I enjoyed the added advantages of lecturing on seven Alumni College cruises in Greek waters and of being granted an office in Dartmouth’s substantial library during my two decades (so far) of retirement. Furthermore, Dartmouth’s gracious Open Access system enables books like this to appear.

Although trained in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University under the guidance of Professor William York Tindall, my interests took a major turn toward Greece owing to my marriage in 1955 to Chrysanthi Yiannakou and my attraction to the magic of Modern Greek life, culture, and literature, then very sparsely known in the United States. Bill Tindall commissioned me while I was still a graduate student to introduce both Cavafy and Kazantzakis in the *Essays on Modern Writers*, which he edited. He probably could not find anyone else; there was no organized study then of Modern Greek literature anywhere in the United States. (We fixed that — see my “Introduction to *Modern Greek Writers*” in this volume.) Dartmouth accepted my early translations of Kazantzakis novels as a proper accomplishment for tenure, although translation is generally downgraded in the academy. Dartmouth’s Comparative Literature Program added a welcome resource enabling me to teach Greek materials while on loan from the English Department. Imagine a seminar on Homer’s *Odyssey*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Kazantzakis’s *Modern Odyssey*!

This volume meanders toward Greek subjects presented in the classrooms of various universities or in the lounge of a cruise ship, a restaurant in Greece, or illegally in the Delphic stadium. The book also touches on other literatures and on non-literary subjects such as Dartmouth's student revolution in 1969, a Scorsese film, Quakerism, and prostate cancer. There is even a teeny mock epic called "Dartmouthiad." If I was unable to resist including a few items in the Greek language, I trust that Anglophone readers will forgive.

Peter Bien
"Terpni," Riparius, N.Y.
August 2018

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KAZANTZAKIS

Report to Nikos

February 2016

DEAR NIKOS,

I've been close to you quite steadily since 1958 — fifty-eight years — and it's time now for some reckoning. I am often embarrassed when asked about my life and I reveal that I've had only one wife, one job, and have spent my professional career essentially (but not entirely) with a single author — you. I should add, of course, that all three of these extended connections have been so wonderful that only a fool would have left them. Nevertheless, perhaps such a mono-professional and mono-gamous life will strike some people as stodgy. Didn't I get bored, investigating and translating you for more than half a century? Didn't I long to venture elsewhere? Yes, to some degree. And of course I did venture elsewhere, but you were always present as a constant that the others interrupted. The most curious thing, perhaps, is that I really never got tired of you.

Why? Three reasons, probably. First, I felt compatibility between your vision of life and my own. Second, I found your language and your thought difficult and was therefore intellectually stretched by both. Third, I was forced by you to explore a huge range of literary, historical, religious, linguistic, and political movements and personalities from Ancient Greek times to the mid-twentieth century.

Interest in your religious element came first and also last. When asked how I initially encountered your work I reply with a curious story involving religion. In 1958 I was in graduate school working toward a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature, which meant that I needed to read lots of second-rate and third-rate British novels written between the two world wars. One day along came a fellow student and friend, a devout all-too-Irish Roman Catholic with a sister in a nunnery and a brother in the priesthood. He was holding a book in his hand. "I want to give this to

you,” he said. “It’s by some Greek, Nikos Kaz . . . Kaz . . . Kazatsios. Please take it. I don’t want it on my shelf, because its treatment of Christianity and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary disgusted me so much that I vomited. Take it, *please!*” That’s what he said: “vomited”! The book was of course *Ο Χριστός ξανασταυρώνεται* in the English translation entitled *The Greek Passion*. I figured that an author who makes his reader vomit must have remarkable powers of effusion, so I read the book and found it to be infinitely superior to the British junk I was being forced to read at that moment for my degree. I had never heard of you, but 1958 was the year when Kimon Friar’s translation of your *Odyssey* was published, so I was able to find some reviews that spoke somewhat generally of your life and work. That summer my wife and I went to Thessaloniki. In a bookstore there, I asked if this author — you — had written anything that was not already translated. I was shown a whole shelf full of titles. Because of its religious theme, I purchased *Ο τελευταίος πειρασμός* and tried my best to read it with my limited Greek.

Living in Thessaloniki with my wife and her family, none of whom spoke a word of English, I was learning Greek in the best possible way — not in school, but in bed. I was helped by the schoolbooks my father-in-law brought me. Thus I was able to say things like Η Νίνα έχει ένα τόπι. Πάει στη γιαγιά και παίζει με τη γίδα της. But I was also struggling, dear Nikos, with your marvelous Greek in *The Last Tempataion*, for example with language like «Μα εκεί που μιλούσαν οι τρεις γυναίκες και κόντευε ο πόνος να τις σμιξεί, φωνές ξεχύθηκαν από τ’ αμπέλια: Έρχονται! Έρχονται! Νά τους! κι ως να κατρακυλήσει ο γέρο Ζεβεδάιος από το πατάρι του, ξαγριεμένοι αντρακλαράδες πρόβαλαν στην ξώπορτα. . . .»¹ Oh my, that was difficult for a beginner, but challenging, energizing. I think it was certainly language that energized *you*. It clearly did me; indeed my interest moved from religion to Greek linguistics. I found, for example, that in 1906 you stated the following in a letter (of course I am translating): “Do not forget . . . that the languages receiving support are chiefly three: (1) puristic, (2) demotic, (3) Psiharistic. (1) and (3) are equally horrible. I support 2 and adore it.”² Let’s remember that most people nowadays are aware of what you wrote only toward the end of your career, in the 1950s and beyond. But in 1906, when you were in your early twenties, you were a prodigy — a linguistic prodigy, if nothing else. The letters you wrote even in 1902, when you were nineteen and had just left Crete for the first time

to attend law school in Athens, are so revealing. I especially like one sent to a high school friend still in Crete:

I just returned from the University. . . . One of my strangest moments is when I sit at one of the desks in law school with my eyes pinned on the professor and my mind fluttering through a thousand and one things . . . except the lesson. . . . I try to drive poets away from my desk, poetry away from my heart. . . . Yet! Open in front of me now that I'm writing you are Dante and Manzoni, while my desk is adorned with Hugo and Solomos. . . . Poetry bewitches me. It's like a marvelously beautiful enchantress and mistress in whose breast one forgets every pain and in whose glance one feels the shudder of voluptuousness.³

Part of the reason that Greek poetry delighted you so much was that by 1906 it was already in demotic. You were a fanatical, uncompromising demoticist then and all your life—a demoticist, to be sure, not a Psiharist. You realized, of course, that the language question was, in your own words, “not just linguistic but also social, and aspiring to become political.”⁴ Few people, now, remember that in 1909 you headed in Crete the Solomos Demoticists' Society, whose purpose, as you expressed it in a letter, was to conduct a “sacred Struggle to emancipate Greeks from their slavery to pedants” even though “all the ignoramuses and nonentities have lashed out against us.”⁵ Your plan was to “see what we need to do in order for the language question to enter the Cretan parliament so that our educational renaissance will start first in Crete since the homeland of Hortatsis and Kornaros certainly must possess the claim and the obligation to be the first to open the Great Road of Deliverance. . . .”⁶ You enlisted the help of Palamas and you published a manifesto for the Society in the demoticist periodical *O Nouvázis* in which you delineated the adverse effects of *katharevousa* on education, society, and the nation, concluding:

Katharevousa is unable to mold the child's spirit; it suffocates the mind and distorts the child's natural development. It makes us into superficial people full of hollow words and braggart phraseology; prevents us from loving books, study, everything serious and researched; breaks the nation's linguistic unity and little by little our very national integrity.⁷

Strong words, Nikos, but you were fired up; indeed you were a sort of demoticist zealot. Thus you wrote your first play, *Ξημερώνει*, in a demotic idiom that, along with its “shocking” Ibsenesque theme, prevented it from receiving the coveted dramatic prize. As the editor of *O Noumas* wrote à propos: to win a dramatic prize one had to compose iambic twelve-syllable verse in *katharevousa* and include a pseudo-Aristotelian catharsis.⁸ But your play was at least praised by the judges, which helped break the hold of the past on Greek dramatic literature and to advance the struggle for demotic even though the prize was withheld.

I said, Nikos, that you were an uncompromising demoticist all your life, and I really do believe that this was one element — along with one other, your Bergsonism — that remained steady throughout a career whose diverse elements frequently did not remain steady. You were a disciple of Dante’s, and indeed translated the entire *Divine Comedy* into a demotic Greek that was attacked as too radical because it contained (according to the critics) unknown words, perhaps from Cretan dialect, perhaps arbitrarily coined by yourself. You responded in 1937, saying: “Our demotic tongue is in a period analogous to that of the Italian demotic of Dante’s time. What Dante did, we ought to do also. He said, ‘Sixteen great linguistic idioms exist in Italy. The poet must collect words . . . from all these regional dialects . . . and use them, in this way composing the living, pan-italic, written language.’ . . . In translating Dante,” you continued, referring to your own campaign, “I attempted the same task. . . . In the *Divine Comedy*, all the . . . words that seemed rare and unknown became commonplace . . . I hope that the same will one day happen in our demotic, and that all the words . . . in my translation that now provoke astonishment will . . . become pan-Hellenic . . .”⁹ Alas, poor Nikos, your wish has not been fulfilled. The proof comes in your elephantine epic, the *Odyssey*, published in 1938 when you were 55 years old. A young scholar, Nikos Mathioudakis, who examined your epic precisely for words that provoke astonishment, found over five thousand — *five thousand!* — that are not recorded in any Modern Greek dictionary. Only an uncompromising demoticist zealot or maniac could have expended the energy that you did, Nikos, to discover (and sometimes invent) these words that you hoped would become pan-Hellenic. But I know, because your friend Prevelakis told me, that as early as 1927 you were systematically collecting nautical terms for your epic and that as you completed various drafts you went through your word

lists systematically to make sure that every item had been utilized in the poem and therefore, you hoped, preserved. Some of the words are great fun — for example *κωλοτριβίδιζω*, which means “to wiggle the backside,” a word that surely Alexis Zorbas would appreciate; some of the words are readily comprehensible, such as *βορράστρι*, the “north star” or “Pole Star.” I wish I could comfort you by saying that you were as successful as Dante in enriching your language; you were not. A few years after your *Odyssey* was published you were still fighting the same battle, this time in connection with your translation of Homer’s *Iliad* with Professor Yannis Kakridis. Your letters to him are all too clear. On February 15, 1943, for example, you worried about what to do with Homer’s proper names. “The full version of all the names is *impossible* to be retained,” you wrote him. “Idomeneas, despite the fact that he’s Cretan . . . , needs to be decapitated by us and, in addition, to have not just his feet cut off but the buskins, in order for him to become Domenias. This doesn’t bother me at all. . . . The opposite in such a demotic text would make a bad impression on me, as though I were seeing poor Eva Sikelianou frequenting our villages.”¹⁰ I happen to know, dear Nikos, that poor Eva campaigned for the retention of authentic ancient Greek costumes in contemporary demotic productions of the ancient plays, so you are right to feel that she would have advocated authentic Ancient Greek names in your demotic *Iliad*. In the same letter, you spar with your more conservative collaborator. For example, you assure Kakridis that the word *λιθοπέτι* (the throwing of a stone) is not Cretan but pure demotic: “It is also used by Karkavitsas,” you assure him. At the end of the letter, in a P.S., you write, “It seems that I’ll be doing a supplement to the Academy of Athens’ dictionary. It lacks *αντράλα*, *αντικνήμη*, *ακριβοκάμαρα*, *αναζεβλίζω*, *αρχοντονήσι*, *αβλονιά* (female octopus . . .), *ανεμάρπαστος* (which I found in a folksong), *απάλε*.”¹¹ Sorry to report that when I looked up these eight words in the new 811-page volume 1, “alpha,” of the Georgacas dictionary,¹² which is meant to include everything, I found only four. So, your success rate is about 50 percent, at best. Furthermore, I’m told that the Kazantzakis-Kakridis translation of Homer is not used in schools because your language is “too difficult.”

For me, however, your language has always been a pleasure even when a challenge. Translating the prose in your novels, I felt that I was translating poetry and I therefore struggled to create something resembling poetry in English. My favorite story about my own adventures with one of your

words concerns the imperative *ὄρτσα*, which you use in the *mantinada* you cite in your *Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο*: 'Ὄρτσα, διάλε την πίστη του κι όπου το βγάλει η βράση, / για που θα σάσει μια δουλειά για που θα σοχαλάσει!¹³ When I was translating this book in the late 1950s I could not find *ὄρτσα* in any of the rather deficient dictionaries available at that time, most of which concentrated on *katharevousa*. I asked everyone I could and always received the same answer: "It has something to do with the sea." Yes, but what? Finally, one day I was stretched out on the beach in a village outside of Thessaloniki when a fierce storm suddenly broke out — a *μπόρα*. There were some tourists in a rented sailboat who obviously didn't know what to do and looked like they were about to capsize, whereupon one of the local inhabitants, a fisherman when he wasn't serving ouzo in a summer café, rolled up his trousers, rushed out as far as he could into the water, cupped his hands over his mouth, and shouted ΟΡΤΣΑ! ΟΡΤΣΑ! I jumped up, ran out to him and screamed, «Δεν πειράζει αν βουλιάξουν, τι σημαίνει ὄρτσα;» His look conveyed his disdain, but he told me: "Turn into the wind, you idiot." Who cares about the fate of those landlubbers in the boat — I now possessed my translation. But I still needed to discover how to say this in English. Some yachtsmen friends helped me. Our word is "luff," which practically no one understands in English, but no matter. So I rendered the *mantinada* "Luff the helm, embrace your faith come what come may, / Who cares if a project thrive or if it decay!"¹⁴ Of course one luffs not the helm but the bow, turning it directly into the wind, but I learned that only after publication, too late. I also learned that the word is not Greek at all, but Italian, like many other supposedly Greek nautical terms. The verb *orzare* is listed in every Italian-English dictionary, none of which I had thought to consult.

I said at the start that concentrating on you, dear Nikos, forced me to explore a huge number of literary, historical, religious, linguistic, and political movements and personalities from Ancient Greek times to the mid-twentieth century, also that I both started and ended with interest in your religious element. How could I possibly become bored with you when, in order to try somehow to catch up with your astonishing rush from interest to interest, I met so many attractive people, places, and ideas. Let me name just a few of them. For your demoticism, which I've highlighted so far: Koraïs, Psiharis, Hatzidakis, Soutsos, Solomos, Triantafyllidis, Pallis, Delmouzos, Glinos, Vlastos, Dragoumis, Makriyannis,

Ptohoprodromos, Roïdis. For your political involvements and interests: the Asia Minor Disaster, Venizelos's various success and failures, Zahariadis versus Vafiadis, the fall of Constantinople, Mussolini (whom you interviewed), Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Victor Serge, Whites versus Reds in Soviet Russia, the atom bomb (which you feared would be used a third time), Capodistrias and his assassin, the Trojan War with all its Homeric personalities, Julian the Apostate, Prince George and everyone else associated with the struggle for Cretan independence, including of course the very real and redoubtable Kapetán Kórakas, a model for your fictional Kapetán Mihális. For your philosophical and religious studies: Henri Bergson first and foremost—you never departed from his teachings about the *élan vital*. I especially value the letter you wrote from Paris in January 1908, when you were twenty-five years old:

I am pursuing philosophy and literature at the Sorbonne, the Collège de France, and the École des Hautes Études. I wish to formulate my own personal conception of life—a theory of the cosmos and of humanity's *raison d'être*—and, in accord with that, systematically and with a fixed purpose and program, to write whatever I write. Fortunately, I am auditing the lectures of Bergson, the famous psychologist, and I feel that I am not wasting my time.¹⁵

No, you definitely were not wasting your time. Of course Nietzsche, the subject of your doctoral dissertation, was another favorite of yours, but not a continuing, consuming influence to the degree that Bergson was. I must add Plato, Aristotle (whom you loved to quote, sometimes not quite accurately), Gemistos, Buddha, various Sufi mystics, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, and of course your true obsession, Jesus Christ.

That's a good place to end the list, because this obsession of yours leads so clearly back to my own religious interest. I emphasized the linguistic element up to now because it was omnipresent throughout your career. But the religious element was also omnipresent for you, indeed perhaps another mania, and it has been pervasive throughout my own long apprenticeship to you, starting with my university friend's vomit, continuing with my own interest in Bergsonian vitalism, my translating of *The Last Temptation* and *Saint Francis*, and then my belated discovery of your pioneering role as an advocate of process theology. For this I must thank Darren J. N. Middleton, a British theologian whose Ph.D. dissertation was on

Kazantzakis and the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. I sat on Middleton's dissertation committee and then collaborated with him on a book entitled *God's Struggler: Religion in the Writings of Nikos Kazantzakis*, published in 1996. You, dear Nikos, never studied Whitehead so far as I know, nor did you ever use the term "process theology"; thus I must try to define it. Based largely on Whitehead and the American professor Charles Hartshorne, not to mention Bergson and of course Darwin (the cause of your own flight from traditional dogmatic Christianity), it teaches that temporal process, which governs our life on earth, also governs divinity. Thus God can no longer be considered either unchanging or unaffected by the world. Instead, God in process theology is considered "relational" — related to, affected by, our own lives. The universe as a whole is considered interrelational, dynamic, a giant ecosystem. No, you never spoke of "process theology" by name or used this sort of language, but nevertheless you were a process pioneer. Let me remind you of some of your own language, as found in letters: "Fine art is beautiful, and so are music, poetry, Dante, Homer. . . . But now all these seem to me like empty cast-off snakeskins. . . . I say to myself: I will complete . . . a commentary on our religion."¹⁶ "My God . . . is not pure, not spotless, not just, not omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent. He is not light. Struggling . . . , he transubstantiates the night in his heart of hearts and turns it into light. . . . He does not save us; we save him. . . . What does 'we save him' mean? We save the eternal breath inside the ephemeral clay of our existence. . . . We fabricate spirit from the matter within this workshop of our body, liberating God."¹⁷ "When you wish to apprehend the features of our God, avoid whatever you have learned about the Christian God. Our God is not all-good, all-powerful, all-wise, all-beautiful. . . . If he were, how could He feel pain, how could He struggle, how ascend?"¹⁸ "I have passed through three great theological stages: 1. O God, you shall save me. 2. O God, I shall save you. 3. O God, working together we shall be saved together."¹⁹

This last theological stage, humanity working together with the relational God of process theology, explains why you could have written so assuredly to your first wife, Galatea, the following pronouncement that might appear to the uninformed as self-congratulatory, if not a bit mad:

I give my entire life exclusively to something above my individuality. I believe . . . in the . . . power of a Spirit that suffuses plants, ani-

mals, people, and that is now . . . desiring to surpass me, to liberate itself from my unworthy nature, to escape me. I am battling to serve this spirit because I know that it — and not this sack I carry of bone, meat, brain, and passion — is my soul's essence.²⁰

You understood clearly the beauty of process philosophy — that it enables each of us to see ourselves as part of a vast universal interrelational ecosystem; you understood it as early as the 1920s whereas Hartshorne's classic statements about process religion do not come until the 1960s and 1970s.

What does all this add up to? In many ways, not much, alas. Your program to enrich the Modern Greek vocabulary leaves five thousand of your cherished words unrecorded in dictionaries, not to mention Greece's total rejection of your attempted spelling and accentual reforms. Your favorite guru, Henri Bergson, is pooh-poohed by contemporary philosophy, not owing to his doctrine of eternal process but owing to his belief that this process leads in a predetermined direction to a predetermined end. Process theology is anathema to Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Yes, it is routinely taught in Protestant seminaries, but is marginalized even there, and left to a few Quaker crackpots like me and to ultraliberal theologians like the marvelous Don Cupitt, who advises, "We must now leave behind us a world in which the mind found rest in contemplating eternal reality and embrace instead a world of endless exchange and change. We need to learn to love transience, because it's all there is, and we are part of it."²¹ More and more people seem to be reading your religious treatise *Ασκητική*, but I wonder how many truly understand it, especially the strange "Silence" at the end. There are some successful movies of your works, yet *Zorba the Greek* was directed by a man who told me in person that the homonymous novel conveys how very much you hated the Greeks. In sum, your extraordinarily varied and energetic career has led all too often nowhere or to misunderstanding. And yet . . . and yet . . . you are rarely boring, rarely tedious; you project an invigorating energy even in despair. You sum this up, I think, in two stanzas from your first *terzina*:

Αχ, νά ταν θέ μου, εγώ πηλό να πάρω,
φλόγα και νου κι αγέρα, να σε πλάσω!
Θά'σουν αγνός, καλός, κι η κρουσματάρω

θα γλύκαινε καρδιά, κι το άγριο δάσο
 θα ρόδιζε της αδικιάς μια μέρα.
 Μα τώρα, Θεέ μου, πια πού να προφτάσω!²²

Here's an attempted translation, maintaining the *terzina* form:

Oh God, my God, could I but swarthy clay
 Enfold to make you mind and air and flame,
 Chaste and good you'd stand, all anger would away

 With sweetened heart; of wrong the forests tamed
 One day a rosy face would show; but now,
 Oh God, my God, it's late to voice your name.

In sum, the really important, impressive thing about your career, dear Nikos, was that despite all your disappointments, all the neglect and misunderstanding, all the nastiness that kept you from winning the Nobel Prize, you never lost your amazing energy and always maintained what I like to call an *eschatological hope* not only for yourself but for all the rest of us. You said it yourself in 1954 as follows: “My particular path has been to formulate and save my soul by means of words — by writing. I have done this throughout my life and am doing it now by working day and night without becoming discouraged, and with the unshakeable faith that in this way I am collaborating with God.”²³ Thus of all the virtues that one might ascribe to you — fierce intelligence, openness to innovation, a balance of repugnance and forbearance concerning human failings — the virtue I consider prime is *αντοχή*, endurance. Thank you for that, and for passing a modicum of it on to some of us lesser mortals.

Hanover, New Hampshire
November 2012; February 2016

Notes

- 1 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Ο τελευταίος πειρασμός* (Athens: Difros, 1955), σελ. 169. “But as the three women talked and were about to be united by pain, cries of ‘They’re coming! They’re coming! Here they are!’ flowed forth from the vineyards, and before old Zebedee could slide down again from his platform, huge incensed men appeared at the street door . . .” *The Last Tempta-*

- tion of Christ*, trans. P. A. Bien (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. 171–172.
- 2 Μάρθα Αποσκήτου-Αλεξίου, «Τριάντα τέσσερα άγνωστα γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη», *Αμάλθεια* 9, αρ. 35, Απρίλιος-Ιούνιος 1978, σελ. 134; Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis*, edited by Peter Bien (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 31.
 - 3 Μινάς Δημάκης, *Ανέκδοτες επιστολές Καζαντζάκη από τα νεανικά έως τα ώριμα χρόνια του* (Αθήνα: ώκδοση Μουσίου Καζαντζάκη, 1979), σελ. 33–34; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 8.
 - 4 Κ. Γ. Κασίνης, «Κωστής Παλαμάς_Νίκος Καζαντζάκης», *Εκρήβολος* 14 (Άνοιξη), 1986, σελ. 1300; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 44.
 - 5 Κασίνης 1986, σελ. 1302; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 46.
 - 6 Κασίνης 1986, σελ. 1299; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 44.
 - 7 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, «Σύλλογος Δημοτικιστών Ηρακλείου Κρήτης Ό Σολωμός'» Ο Νουμάς, 7 Ιουνίου 1909, σελ. 11. Έλλη Αλεξίου και Γιώργος Εμμ. Στεφανάκης, Για τον Νίκο Καζαντζάκη είκοσι χρόνια από το θάνατό του (Αθήνα: Κέδρος, 1977), σελ. 132; Peter Bien, *Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 164–165.
 - 8 Δ. Π. Ταγκόπουλος, «Ο Παντελίδειος κι' ο λόγος του Λάμπρου», *Ο Νουμάς*, 13 Μαΐου 1907; *Νέα Εστία*, 15 Μαΐου 1958, σελ. 756; Bien 1972, p. 154.
 - 9 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, «Γράμμα στον Λεφτέρη Αλεξίου», *Τό Κάστρο*, Ιουνίου 1937, σελ. 3–10; Έλλη Αλεξίου, *Για να γίνει μεγάλος* (Αθήνα: Δωρικός, 1966), σελ. 322–323; Bien 1972, pp. 30–31.
 - 10 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, «84 γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Κακριδή», *Νέα Εστία* 102, Χριστούγεννα, 1977, σελ. 265; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 562.
 - 11 Καζαντζάκης, «84 γράμματα . . .», σελ. 266; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 564.
 - 12 Demetrius J. Georgacas, *A Modern Greek-English Dictionary*, volume 1, Alpha (New York & Athens: Aristide D. Caratzas, 2005).
 - 13 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο* (Αθήνα), σελ. 601.
 - 14 Nikos Kazantzakis, *Report to Greco*, tr. P. A. Bien (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 498.
 - 15 Πέτρος Μαρκάκης, «Ανέκδοτα γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη: το περιοδικό 'Πινακοθήκη' κι ο Δημ. Καλογερόπουλος», *Καινούρια Εποχή*, Φθινόπωρο 1959, σελ. 35–36; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 39.
 - 16 Κυριάκος Μητσστάκης, *Ο Καζαντζάκης μιλεί για Θεό* (Αθήνα: Μινώας, 1972), σελ. 53–55; Kazantzakis 2012, pp. 108–110.
 - 17 Μητσστάκης 1972, σελ. 97; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 143.
 - 18 Μητσστάκης 1972, σελ. 85; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 184.

- 19 Μητσστάκης 1972, σελ. 23; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 757.
- 20 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Επιστολές προς τη Γαλάτεια* (Αθήνα: Δίφρος, 1958), σελ. 222; Kazantzakis 2012, pp. 186–187.
- 21 Don Cupitt, *Emptiness and Brightness* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2001), p. 120.
- 22 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Τερτζίνες* (Αθήνα 1960), σελ. 16 (στοίχοι 121–126). Kazantzakis defines κρουσματάρης in his «Λεξιλόγιο της Οδύσειας» as equal to στοιχιομένος, που έχει φαντάσματα (haunted, seeing ghosts, apparitions).
- 23 Μητσστάκης 1972, σελ. 23; Kazantzakis 2012, p. 757.

Η εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία: η αμετάβλητη φιλοσοφία του Καζαντζάκη

Ήταν τόσο ποικίλη η σταδιοδρομία του Καζαντζάκη που πολύς κόσμος λέει πως άλλαζε τη βασική του φιλοσοφία αρκετές φορές. Είναι πασίγνωστος που μια φορά ομολόγησε ο ίδιος, «Έως το 1923 περνούσα όλος συγκίνηση και φλόγα το Νασιοναλισμό. . . Από το 1923–1933 περίπου περνούσα με την ίδια συγκίνηση και φλόγα την αριστερή παράταξη. . . Τώρα περνώ το τρίτο — θα 'ναι το τελευταίο; — σταδιο: το ονομάζω ελευτερία.»¹ Ήταν τότε το 1936· έζησε ακόμα δυο δεκάδες· αναρωτιέται κανείς αν το τρίτο στάδιο βάσταξε. Εγώ ισχυρίζομαι ότι ναι, βάσταξε. Επίσης όμως πιστεύω ότι είχε αρχίσει σχεδόν τρεις δεκάδες νωρίτερα και ότι εξηγεί πώς ο Καζαντζάκης κατάφερε να μείνει αισιόδοξος παρ' όλα τα φρικτά πολιτικά γεγονότα της Ελλάδας και της Ευρώπης. Η ώθηση έγινε αναμφίβολα με το έργο *Κωμωδία*, που δημοσιεύθηκε το 1909. Συνιστά την πιο ξεκάθαρη δήλωση του Καζαντζάκη σχετικά με το τέλος, χάρη στον δαρβινισμό, της πίστης του στον παραδοσιακό Θεό και στη μεταθάνατη ζωή. Πάει αυτό το μπάλαμο! Είδαμε ότι το νέο μπάλαμο που πήρε αργότερα ονομάστηκε «ελευτερία». Εγώ θα τ' ονομάζα «εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία» και λέω ότι βρίσκεται ως την αμετάβλητη φιλοσοφία του Καζαντζάκη σχεδόν συγχρόνως με την *Κωμωδία* επειδή βασιίζεται στην φιλοσοφία του Ανρί Μπερζόν. Όπως δήλωσε ο Καζαντζάκης σ' ένα γράμμα τον Ιανουάριο του 1908, «Για το παρόν ακολουθώ φιλοσοφία και φιλολογία στη Σορβόνη. . . Θέλω να σχηματίσω μια ατομική, δική μου αντίληψη της ζωής. . . και σύμφωνα μ' αυτή. . . να γράφω — ό,τι γράφω. Ευτυχώς ακούω εδώ τον περίφημο ψυχολόγο Bergson και αισθάνομαι πως δεν χάνω τον καιρό μου.»² Δεν αναφέρθηκε συχνά ύστερα στον Μπερζόν ο Καζαντζάκης σε σύγκριση με το Νίτσε, αλλά σε μια βιογραφική περίληψη που ετοίμασε για τον Παντελή Πρεβελάκη το 1957 έγραψε για τις σπουδές στο Παρίσι 1907–9 έτσι: «Μαθητής του Bergson» χωρίς μια λέξη για τον Νίτσε.³ Και λέει σε μιαν επιστολή γραμμένη στο Παρίσι το 1946, «θυμούμαι τον καιρό της μελετητής νιότης

μου, όταν, όλος θαυμασμό, παρακολουθούσα τα μαθήματα του σεβαστού μου δάσκαλου Henri Bergson».⁴

Άρα, για να καταλάβουμε τι σημαίνει η «εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία», ως εξετάσουμε λιγάκι πρώτα τη φιλοσοφία του Μπερξόν και ύστερα την καζαντζακική σημασία του όρου «ελευθερία». Ο Δαρβίνος, λοιπόν, είχε δολοφονήσει τον Χριστό για τον Καζαντζάκη. Από τον Μπερξόν έμαθε ότι η δύναμη που κινεί το σύμπαν είναι μια ζωική ορμή (élan vital) που μετουσιώνει τη σάρκα σε πνεύμα. Η βάση αυτής της καινούργιας θρησκείας είναι η κίνηση. Ο παραδοσιακός θεός είναι ακίνητος, αιώνιος. Ο μπερξονικός θεός — δηλαδή η ζωική ορμή — είναι αεικίνητος. Σε μια διάλεξη που έδωσε ο Καζαντζάκης ο ίδιος το 1912 στην Αθήνα, εξηγεί: «Το élan vital ο Μπερξόνος το φαντάζεται σαν ένα ανάβρυσμα ατμού που στο αναπήδημά του συμπυκνώνεται σε σταγόνες που πέφτουν. Οι σταγόνες αυτές αποτελούν την ύλη... Τα ενόργανα όμως όντα διαρκώς... αφομοιώνουν élan vital, διαρκώς δηλ. δημιουργούνται...».⁵ Απ' αυτόν τον ορισμό, πρέπει να είναι εύκολο να καταλάβουμε γιατί «η εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία» μπορούσε να γίνει η αμετάβλητη φιλοσοφία ενός οπαδού του Μπερξόν και γιατί επιπλέον αυτός ο οπαδός μπορούσε να ονομάσει το τελευταίο στάδιο «ελευθερία». Ο Μπερξόν ο ίδιος γράφει πως το επίτευγμα της συνειδησης είναι «να δημιουργεί με την ύλη... ένα όργανο ελευθερίας».⁶ Ο δε Καζαντζάκης, όταν ονομάζει το τελευταίο του στάδιο «ελευθερία», σημαίνει η κατάσταση μιας δημιουργικής ψυχής που εκφράζεται στο αισθητικό κι υποκειμενικό επίπεδο. Χάρη στο επίπεδο αυτό, μπορούσε ο Καζαντζάκης να γράψει στην *Ασκητική* του, «Ξέρω τώρα... ανέβηκα πιο πάνω, είμαι λυτερός. Αυτό θέλω. Δε θέλω τίποτα άλλο. Ζητούσα ελευθερία.»

Η «εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία» έγινε το αμετάβλητο δόγμα της καζαντζακικής ψυχής επειδή είχε γίνει ο Καζαντζάκης ο απόστολος όχι πια του Χριστού αλλά της «ζωικής ορμής», του καινούργιου δαρβινικού θεού, που σημαίνει ότι στα γραψίματά του ο σκοπός του, καθώς λέει ο Μπερξόν ο ίδιος, ήταν «να δημιουργεί με την ύλη... ένα όργανο ελευθερίας».⁷

Έπρεπε συνεπώς κανείς να εξετάσει τώρα όλα τα συγγράματα για να δει πως αντανakλούν τη διδασκαλία του Μπερξόν, μα φυσικά δε γίνεται. Θα προσπαθήσω εγώ όμως να δείξω την παρουσία της λεγόμενης φιλοσοφίας εδώ κι εκεί στα μυθιστορήματα και στην *Οδύσεια*. Η τυπική πλοκή πάει έτσι: τα «καλά» στοιχεία προσπαθούν, επιδιώκουν, ίσως πετυχαίνουν κατιτί, αλλά στο τέλος αποτυχαίνουν. Γίνεται έτσι στην *Οδύσεια*, η σπουδαιότερη επεξεργασία του καζαντζακική φιλοσοφία. Ο Δυσέας είναι δραστήριος σωματικά και πνευματικά και σε ραψωδία 15 φτάνει στο πολιτισμένο επίπεδο όπου μπο-

ρεί να κτίσει μια τέλεια πολιτεία. Αλλά αυτό το ύψιστον σημείον της δικής του σταδιοδρομίας καταστρέφεται αμέσως. Στο μυθιστόρημα *Το συναξάρι του Αλέξη Ζορμπά* (που είναι ο γνήσιος τίτλος του έργου) οι προσπάθειες του αφεντικού και του Ζορμπά στο ορυχείο και στο δάσος καταστρέφονται εντελώς. Στο *Ο Χριστός ξανασταυρώνεται* οι πρόσφυγες στο τέλος αναγκάζονται να φύγουν ξανά να ψάξουν καινούργιο καταφύγιο. Στο *Ο φτωχούλης του Θεού* όλα τα κατορθώματα του Φραγκίσκου αντικατασταίνονται από το πρόγραμμα του αδερφού Ηλία που, όταν ο Φραγκίσκος κηρύσσει αγάπη και φτώχεια, φωνάζει, «Δε φτάνει η αγάπη, αδερφοί, μην τον ακούτε, πόλεμος! . . . Κι όχι φτώχεια . . . Σπαθί παντοδύναμο ο πλούτος . . .».⁸ Υπάρχουν αρκετά άλλα έργα στα οποία τα καλά στοιχεία προσπαθούν, επιδιώκουν, ίσως πετυχαίνουν κατιτί, αλλά στο τέλος αποτυχαίνουν, μα θα κλείσω τον κατάλογο εδώ με την διαβεβαίωση ότι στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις θα βρούμε τη μπερζονική μέθοδο να δημιουργεί στο τέλος της πλοκής ένα όργανο ελευθερίας.

Στην *Οδύσεια*, ο Καζαντζάκης μας βοηθεί να καταλάβουμε το έπος χάρη στο επτακέφαλο τοτέμ από φιλντίσι που αγοράζει ο Δυσέας, επειδή τα επτά κεφάλια διαγράφουν την ολόένα μεγαλύτερη εξαύλωση που χαρακτηρίζει την εξέλιξη που πάει προς τον εξευγενισμό της ύλης. Αρχίζει ακόμα στο τέταρτο κεφάλι (μάλλον σε ραψωδία 17) όπου το κρέας γίνεται «νους αγνός».⁹ Μας βοηθεί και ο Παντελής Πρεβελάκης που, χρησιμοποιώντας μπερζονική λαλιά, γράφει στο βιβλίο του για την *Οδύσεια* ότι ο Δυσέας, ύστερα από την καταστροφή της ιδανικής του πολιτείας, «βυθίζεται στην απελπισία, . . . ξεκόβει από τ' ανθρώπινα. Τη στάση του θα την πούμε τώρα *μεταφυσική*: δεν ενδιαφέρεται παρά για τις ουσίες . . . [που φέρνουν] τελικώς τον Οδυσσέα στην *απόλυτη ελευθερία*».¹⁰ Εις *Το συναξάρι του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, το αφεντικό, όταν οι υλικές προσπάθειές του πάνε χαμένες, φωνάζει, «Έλα, Ζορμπά, . . . μάθε με να χορεύω!».¹¹ Στην ολική φιλοσοφική δομή του βιβλίου, αυτό σημαίνει ότι το αφεντικό γίνεται Διονυσιακός, μια και ο χορός είναι στο κέντρο της λατρείας του Διονύσου. Την ώρα που έχει χάσει τα πάντα, κατακλύζεται από «ένα αψηλό παράλογο, αδικαιολόγητο κέφι».¹² Λέει, «Κι ίσια ίσια ένιωθα απροσδόκητη λύτρωση. Σα ν' ανακάλυψα μέσα στο σκληρό, αγέλαστο κρανίο της Ανάγκης, σε μια μικρή γωνία, τη λευτεριά να παίζει· και παίζω μαζί της».¹³ Να κοιτάξετε τη μαγική λέξη: τη λευτεριά. Μπήκε το αφεντικό στη δικαιοδοσία του μπερζονικού έlan vital που πάντα δίνει κάποια λευτεριά ύστερα από την υλική καταστροφή, πάντα δημιουργεί με την ύλη ένα όργανο ελευθερίας. Μα το αφεντικό πηγαίνει και πέρα. Στην αρχή του μυθιστορήματος, ζητάει λευτεριά στην βουδιστική άρνηση. Στο τέλος βρίσκει τη λευτεριά στη

τέχνη, μετουσιώνοντας και την υλική περιπέτεια και τον μη-υλικό χορό σ' ένα μπερξονικό Συναξάρι.

Δεν ανάφερα πριν *Ο τελευταίος πειρασμός*, μα εδώ θα προσθέσω ότι ο Aziz Izzet ανακαλύπτει μιαν σπουδαία παρουσία του Μπερξόν στο μυθιστόρημα αυτό.¹⁴ Συμφωνώ εγώ ότι η βασική κατεύθυνση του μυθιστορήματος πάει προς την εξάυλωση. Η δύναμη η οποία σπρώχνει τον Ιησούν στον στόχο του είναι η αικίνητη δυναμική ζωική ορμή, που κυβερνάει ολόκληρη τη διαδικασία. Έτσι μπορούμε να δούμε και σ' αυτό το έργο τον Ισκίο του Μπερξόν.

Μα η δική μου άποψη είναι ότι η ολική παρουσία του μπερξονισμού βρίσκεται με περισσότερη σαφήνεια στο *Ο Χριστός ξανασταυρώνεται* και στο *Ο φτωχούλης του Θεού*. Στην πρώτη, οι πρόσφυγες — πάντοτε κινούμενοι, πάντοτε δημιουργώντας αποτελέσματα που επεκτείνονται — είναι οι εξελιγμένοι οργανισμοί μέσα από τους οποίους η συνέχεια της γενετικής ενέργειας περνά σαν ρεύμα προς τη σύνθεση, ενώ οι εγκατεστημένοι πολίτες που τους εναντιώνονται στο χωριό αντιπροσωπεύουν την αντίστροφη εξέλιξη της ύλης προς την αποσύνθεση. Η συνάντηση αυτών των δύο ρευμάτων είναι το φωτεινό διάστημα που λέγεται ζωή, δηλαδή το διάστημα ανάμεσα στην αρχική σκοτεινή άβυσσο, από την οποία οι πρόσφυγες κάνουν την είσοδό τους στο βιβλίο, και στην τελευταία σκοτεινή άβυσσο, από την οποία φεύγουν με την υλική τους υπόσταση ηττημένη αλλά με το δημιουργικό τους δυναμικό ακέραιο, όπως διάσκει ο Μπερξόν.

Στη περίπτωση του *Φτωχούλης του Θεού*, ο Καζαντζάκης βρήκε μιαν άλλη μέθοδο να πραγματοποιήσει κάτι παρόμοιο, επιτρέποντας στον Άγιο Φραγκίσκο να πετύχει με απόλυτον τρόπο μέσα στη ζωή αυτό που ο Χριστός πέτυχε μόνο με τη μεταθανάτια κραυγή που άφησε πίσω του και οι πρόσφυγες μόνο με την εσχατολογική τους ελπίδα. Ενώ ο μεν Ιησούς βρίσκει τέλεια ελευθερία μονάχα σε θάνατο, ο δε Φραγκίσκος μας δείχνει ότι ο θάνατος μπορεί να προηγηθεί του θανάτου, αφού συμμετέχει στη σταύρωση του Ιησού όταν δέχεται τα στίγματα. Αλλά ζει για κάμποσα χρόνια ακόμα και κατά τη διάρκεια της περιόδου αυτής κατακτά την απόλυτη ελευθερία. Όπως ο Δυσέας με την πολιτεία του, όπως το αφεντικό με τις επιχειρήσεις, όπως οι πρόσφυγες, όπως ο Ιησούς, ο Φραγκίσκος αποτυγχάνει στη ζωή του. Αλλά καταφέρνει να ξεφύγει από όλα αυτά μέσω ενός στρατηγήματος: δηλαδή της παραίτησής του ύστερα από τα στίγματα. Παύει τότε να ενδιαφέρεται για τα κοσμικά πράγματα. Όπως πάντα, ο ζωική ορμή φέρνει εσχατολογική λευτεριά. Στην περίπτωση αυτή, κατά παράδοξο τρόπο, η αφοσίωση στον άλλο κόσμο επηρεάζει σημαντικά τον γήινο κόσμο.

Ο *Φτωχούλης του Θεού* ήταν το τελευταίο μυθιστόρημα που έγραψε ο Καζαντζάκης· επίσης, όλα τα άλλα μυθιστορήματα γράφτηκαν κάπως αργά στη σταδιοδρομία του. Δεν πρέπει όμως να συμπεράνουμε ότι ενδιαφέρθηκε μονάχα τότε στην εσχατολογική αισιοδοξία και στη λευτερία. Είναι ενδιαφέρον ότι γράφει στα σημειωματάριά του το 1924: «Το ιδανικό πρέπει να κηρύχγεται απόλυτα, αψηλότερα από τη δύναμη του ανθρώπου (σ' αυτό έγκειται η μυστική του δύναμη . . .)»¹⁵ Μιλάει έτσι εδώ ο Καζαντζάκης για τη λευτερία και τη ζωική ορμή, που πάντα επέστρεψε ότι θα ερχόταν, αν και εσχατολογικά. Βλέπουμε τη διαδικασία στον Φραγκίσκο, που ύστερα από την παραίτησή του αποτελεί μια μεγάλη πολιτική επιτυχία. Μου φαίνεται ότι θέλει εδώ να μας δείξει ο Καζαντζάκης, παρ' όλα τα φρικτά πολιτικά γεγονότα της Ελλάδας και της Ευρώπης, ότι μια «μεταφυσική» αφοσίωση στον μη-γήινο κόσμο θα επηρεάσει κατά παράδοξο τρόπο τον γήινο κόσμο σημαντικά για το καλό. Πρέπει όμως ν' έχουμε υπομονητική αισιοδοξία επειδή αυτό το καλό δεν θα 'ρθει παρά . . . εσχατολογικά.

Σημειώσεις

- 1 *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Αθήνα, 1965), σελ. 464–465. 12 Οκτώβρη 1936.
- 2 Πέτρος Μαρκάκης, *Ανέκδοτα γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη: το περιοδικό «Πινακοθήκη»* κι ο Δημ. Καλογερόπουλος. *Καινούρια Εποχή*, Φθινόπωρο 1959, σελ. 35.
- 3 *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Αθήνα, 1965), σελ. 721.
- 4 Ελένη Καζαντζάκη, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο ασυμβίβαστος* (Αθήνα, 1977), σελ. 537.
- 5 «H. Bergson», *Δελτίο Εκπαιδευτικού Ομίλου Β'*: 310–314, Οκτώβριος, 1912. *Καινούρια Εποχή*, Φθινόπωρο 1958.
- 6 Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice* (Paris, 1907), σελ. 286.
- 7 Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice*, σελ. 286.
- 8 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Ο φτωχούλης του Θεού* (Αθήνα, 1956), σελ. 193–194.
- 9 *Οδύσεια* Ε 610.
- 10 Παντελής Πρεβελάκης, *Ο ποιητής και το ποίημα της Οδύσειας* (Αθήνα, 1958), σελ. 128.
- 11 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά* (Αθήνα, 1981), σελ. 251.
- 12 *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, σελ. 253.

- 13 *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, σελ. 253.
- 14 Aziz Izzet, *Nikos Kazantzaki. Biographie* (Paris, 1965), σελ. 107–108:
 Jésus “est le symbole de la creation toujours créatrice . . . , la manifestation la plus pure de la ‘réalité toujours jaillissante’ de l’éternelle creation.” Ο Ιησούς «είναι το σύμβολο της δημιουργίας της πάντοτε δημιουργικής . . . , η πιο καθαρή έκφραση της “πραγματικότητας της πάντοτε αναβρύζουσας” στην αιώνια δημιουργία»
- 15 Ελένη Καζαντζάκη, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο ασυμβίβαστος*, σελ. 136.

Περίληψη

Η σταδιοδρομία του Καζαντζάκη ήταν ποικίλη· γι’ αυτό πολύς κόσμος πιστεύει ότι άλλαξε τη βασική του φιλοσοφία αρκετές φορές. Εγώ όμως πιστεύω πως κράτησε από 1908 μέχρι το θάνατό του τη φιλοσοφία του Henri Bergson, που διδάσκει ότι μια ζωική ορμή (*élan vital*) «δημιουργεί με την ύλη . . . ένα όργανο ελευθερίας». Παρ’ όλες τις δυσκολίες της υλικής ζωής του στα πολιτικά και άλλα γεγονότα, ο Καζαντζάκης ήταν τελικά πάντα αισιόδοξος, τουλάχιστο «εσχατολογικά». Η απόδειξη βρίσκεται στα μυθιστορήματά του και στην *Οδύσεια*.

*Hanover, New Hampshire
 January 2018*

Renan's *Vie de Jésus* as a Primary Source for *The Last Temptation*

From *Scandalizing Jesus: Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation of Christ Fifty Years On*, ed. Darren J. N. Middleton (New York & London: Continuum, 2005)

ABSTRACT

Kazantzakis set himself to school in order to write *The Last Temptation*. There is some likelihood that this schooling gave him the book's central trick of having happiness emerge as a last temptation at the time of Jesus's death. If so, then the precise source for this treatment is Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863), which Kazantzakis read carefully in October 1950, copying long passages into the notebook that he was using for his new project. But Renan's influence was even more pervasive. It seems that Kazantzakis took from him the physical characteristics of Saint Paul, the motif whereby Simeon cannot die until he is certain that the messiah has come, the inability of Mary to understand her son's mission, the ambition of Zebedee's sons to be rewarded in heaven, the psychosomatic basis of Jesus's miracles, Jesus's momentary doubt on the cross, the emphasis on the vision of Daniel, the Zealots' characteristics, the primacy of Matthew's gospel, Jesus's lack of perfection, Jesus's conception of inward rather than outward freedom, the possibility of eschatology even if one cannot believe in an afterlife. However, we must not overstate Renan's influence. Perhaps Renan merely reinforced ideas that Kazantzakis had already developed on his own. What we should marvel at is not so much the industry that this self-schooling manifests as Kazantzakis's ability to avoid becoming a slave to his sources.

KAZANTZAKIS had been concerned with the Christ theme throughout his career.¹ By the time he determined to write a novel on this theme, he

already had many possible approaches in mind; nevertheless, with his accustomed diligence he set himself to school afresh in order to discover the best treatment, and there is some likelihood that this schooling gave him the book's central trick of having happiness emerge as a last temptation at the time of Jesus's death. If so, then the precise source for this treatment is Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863), which Kazantzakis read or reread very carefully in October 1950, copying long passages into the special notebook he was using for his new project. My suspicion that Renan gave him the central idea, or at least activated something earlier that had remained in Kazantzakis's subconscious, is strengthened by the fact that it was not until November 1950 — that is, directly after reading Renan — that Kazantzakis designated “the last temptation” as the “probable title” of his work in progress.² In any case, he was attracted by the following passage in Renan (I quote the authorized English translation; Kazantzakis obviously read the original French):

All the recitals agree, in attributing to him, before his arrest, a moment of hesitation and of trouble, a kind of anticipated death-agony. . . . Human nature awoke for a moment. He began perhaps to doubt his work. . . . Terror, hesitation seized upon him and threw him into a dejection worse than death. The man who has sacrificed repose and the natural compensations of life to a great idea experiences a moment of sad reflection, when the image of death presents itself to him for the first time, and seeks to persuade him that all is vanity. Perhaps some one of those touching recollections which even the strongest souls preserve, and which at times pierce them like the sword, came to him at this moment. We know not.

Renan goes on to wonder:

Did he recall the clear fountains of Galilee . . .; the young maidens who might perhaps have consented to love him? Did he curse his bitter destiny, which had forbidden to him the joys conceded to all others? Did he regret his too lofty nature, . . . did he weep because he had not remained a simple artisan of Nazareth?

We cannot be sure, Renan admits. But one thing is sure: “his divine nature soon resumed the ascendancy. . . . The love of his work gained the victory.”³

Renan's speculations include the entire kernel of Kazantzakis's novel. Kazantzakis copied out most of the passage in a mixture of languages, turning the questions into affirmations and omitting Renan's cautious "perhaps" each time it occurred. Then, presumably during a subsequent review of all his notes, he underlined the following portion of the above passage:

Les ordres pour l'arrêter étaient donnés. Tous les récits s'accordent pour lui prêter avant son arrestation un moment d'hésitation et de trouble, une agonie. . . . La terreur, l'hésitation s'emparèrent de lui, il se prit à douter de son oeuvre. *Thimíthike tin ómorfi Galiláia, . . . Magd., metániouse pou trop grand ki ékbase tóses harés.*⁴

But Renan's influence, in the areas of both specific points and overall attitude, was even more pervasive than what I have suggested. I should add that Kazantzakis's reading notes for *Vie de Jésus* are by far the most extensive in the notebook devoted to his schooling for *The Last Temptation*, and that he digested the same author's *Les Apôtres* as well. It is worth remembering that he had been affected by Renan ever since the very start of his career in Athens; nor was he alone in his admiration. Renan, whose daughter Naomi had married the influential demoticist Yannis Psiharis, was well known in the intellectual circles of Athens, and in particular was an important figure for the generation active around the turn of the century — for Theotokis and Hatzopoulos, for example — because of his skepticism.⁵ Thus it is no surprise to find Kazantzakis citing him as early as 1909 in his essay "I epistími ekhreokópise?" where he calls Renan an "*ipérobos skeptikistís*" (superb skeptic) and shows evidence of having followed the evolution of the Frenchman's intellectual position from a "premature and juvenile enthusiasm for science" to the calm skepticism of the final years.⁶ Closer to the years we are considering, we find Kazantzakis citing Renan again — this time his *L'Avenir de la science* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890) — in his own plans for "Faust, Part III" (Prevelakis, 400 *Grámmata*, 625). It was natural for him to feel especially attracted to Renan's famous series of religious biographies when he embarked on his systematic research for *The Last Temptation*. He may have discovered the kernel of his novel there, as we have just seen. Among other points that were either derived in the first instance from Renan or, if Kazantzakis had thought of them earlier, were reinforced by Renan's views, we may list the following ten:

1. The physical characteristics of Saint Paul. In Jesus's final hallucination in *The Last Temptation*, Paul appears as a squat hunchback with bald head, fat belly, and crooked legs.⁷ These repulsive characteristics seem to derive from Renan's *Les Apôtres*, from which Kazantzakis copied into his notebook: "La mine de Paul était chétive; il était laid, de court taille, épais et voûté. Ses fortes épaules portaient bizarrement une tête petite et chauve" (Paul was puny in appearance; he was ugly, short in stature, heavy-set, stooped. His strong shoulders bizarrely supported a small bald head).⁸ Paul's source is the apocryphal "Acts of Paul and Thecloe" (1.7): "And he saw Paul coming, a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed . . ."

2. The motif whereby Simeon, the old rabbi, cannot die until he has been assured that the messiah has come (Kaz., *Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 317; Kaz., *Last Temptation*, 317). This derives from Luke 2:25–26 and is emphasized by Renan (*Vie de Jésus*, 18; *Life of Jesus*, 63–64).

3. The inability of Jesus's family, including Mary, to understand his mission. Renan (*Vie de Jésus*, 134; *Life of Jesus*, 145) cites Matthew 13:57, Mark 6:4, and John 7:3ff.

4. The ambition of Zebedee's sons, James and John, as well as the other disciples, to be rewarded in heaven (Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 159; *Life of Jesus*, 162; Kaz., *Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 335, 338, 439; *Last Temptation*, 335, 337–338, 439).

5. The psychosomatic basis of Jesus's miracles (Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 259–260; *Life of Jesus*, 232–233). Kazantzakis follows this most closely in his treatment of the healing of the centurion's daughter. (Later, we shall see incontrovertible evidence that he considered the daughter's paralysis to be hysterical in nature.) He follows Renan as well when he places the walking on the waves in Peter's dream (*Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 342–343; *Last Temptation*, 341–343). Renan (*Vie de Jésus*, lii; *Life of Jesus*, 45) declares that a miracle "always implies gullibility or deception." The only miracle that Kazantzakis seems to take at face value is the raising of Lazarus, contrary to Renan's efforts (*Vie de Jésus*, 361–362; *Life of Jesus*, 305–306) to imagine a moribund but still living Lazarus, wrapped prematurely in his winding-sheet and shut within the family tomb, emerging in this garb when Jesus called him forth. "This appearance," concludes Renan, "would naturally be regarded by everyone as a resurrection." On the subject of miracles, however, we must remember that Kazantzakis desired a certain

“madness” or “delirium” to govern his book, and therefore resisted Renan’s thoroughgoing skepticism. Indeed, one of the novel’s strongest points is its ability to allow fantastical intrusions at the same time that it continues to be convincingly naturalistic.

6. Jesus’s momentary doubt on the cross, followed at the very end by a reaffirmation of his mission. Renan’s formulation (*Life of Jesus*, 349–350; *Vie de Jésus*, 424) glosses Kazantzakis’s final chapters perfectly:

for a moment . . . his heart failed him . . . and he cried out: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But his divine instinct resumed its sway. In proportion as the life of his body was extinguished, his soul became serene and gradually returned to its celestial source. He regained the consciousness of his mission.

7. Nazareth, not Bethlehem, as Jesus’s birthplace. Renan shocked the readers of his day by opening his second chapter with the blunt assertion, “Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town in Galilee” (*Life of Jesus*, 65; *Vie de Jésus*, 19). Later (*Life of Jesus*, 218; *Vie de Jésus*, 239–240) he explains the “grave difficulty” of Jesus’s birth in Nazareth and the substitution of Bethlehem so that Jesus’s life could conform to the messianic prophecies. Kazantzakis (*Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 349; Last Temptation, 349–350) has Matthew worry about the same problem. Jesus grows furious at Matthew when he reads what the publican has been writing about him: “‘What is this?’ he screamed. ‘Lies! . . . I was born in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem; I’ve never even set foot in Bethlehem . . .’” (*Last Temptation*, 391; *Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 392).

8. Emphasis on the Daniel’s vision as the ultimate expression of the messianic idea. Kazantzakis seems to have responded to Renan’s claim that Daniel “furnished the staging and the technical terms of the new messianism” (*Life of Jesus*, 61–61; *Vie de Jésus*, 15). Summarizing in his notebook Renan’s ideas on Jesus’s definitive view of the kingdom of heaven, Kazantzakis copied out “l’accomplissement littéral [des visions apocalyptiques] de Daniel et d’Hénoch” (the literal accomplishment of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and Enoch) (*Vie de Jésus*, 271; *Life of Jesus*, 240). Kazantzakis’s interest in Daniel was stimulated by his other researches as well. In his notes for P.-L. Couchoud’s *Jésus, le Dieu fait homme* (Paris, 1937), for example, he copied and underlined: “Quand le Fils de l’Homme de Daniel aura assimilé l’Homme de douleurs d’Isaïe, le Christianisme

sera né” (When Daniel’s Son of Man will have assimilated Isaiah’s Man of Sorrows, Christianity will be born).

9. Treatment of the Zealots. Kazantzakis copied out into his notebook and underlined Renan’s characterization of the Zealots as “pious assassins who imposed upon themselves the task of killing whoever disobeyed the Law” (*Life of Jesus*, 92; *Vie de Jésus*, 59). He also seems to have noticed Renan’s detail that these political agitators harassed the authorities by acts such as pulling down the Roman eagles set up by Herod (*Life of Jesus*, 92; *Vie de Jésus*, 58). Compare *The Last Temptation*:

This Zealot was the last of the long lineage of the Maccabees. . . . One night Herod . . . had smeared forty adolescents with tar and ignited them as torches because they had pulled down the golden eagle he had fastened to the . . . lintel of the Temple. Of the forty-one conspirators, forty were caught, but the leader escaped . . . and this was this Zealot. (*Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 38; *Last Temptation*, 36)

In addition, Kazantzakis copied out Renan’s long passage on the insurgent known as Juda[s] the Gaulonite, and later added a line in the margin of his notebook, showing his particular interest in this material. What appears in his notebook (VI.15) is:

Un mouvement qui eut beaucoup plus d’influence sur Jésus fut celui de Juda le Gaulonite ou le Galiléen. *Ekhtroi tou cens, tou impôt*. . . . Dieu est le seul maître que l’homme doit reconnaître, payer la dîme à un souverain profane, c’est en quelque sorte le mettre à la place de Dieu. . . . Juda fut le chef d’une secte galiléenne, préoccupée de messianisme, et qui aboutit à un mouvement politique . . . Jésus vit peut-être ce Juda qui conçut la révolution juive d’une façon si différente de la sienne; Jésus rêva un autre royaume et une autre délivrance. (*Vie de Jésus*, 59–61)

A movement which had much more influence upon Jesus was that of Juda the Gaulonite or the Galilean. Enemy of the census, of taxation. . . . God being the only master whom man should recognize, to pay tithes to a mundane sovereign is in some sort to put him in the place of God. . . . Juda was . . . the chief of a Galilean sect, which was full of Messianism, and which ended in a political movement. . . . Jesus, perhaps, saw this Juda who had so different a conception of the Jewish

revolution from his own; Jesus . . . looked to another kingdom and another deliverance. (*Life of Jesus*, 93–94)

It is clear that Kazantzakis used this, conflating these insurgents with the Zealots. For example, he makes the Zealot who pulled down Herod's eagle speak words taken almost verbatim from the passage in Renan just cited: "We have only one master — Adonai," he used to proclaim. "Do not pay poll tax to the earthly magistrates . . ." (*Teleftaios Peirasmós*, 38; Last Temptation, 36). This Zealot is executed at the novel's start, but Kazantzakis then conflates Judas Iscariot, in a general way, with Judas the Gaulonite, who, as Renan says, "conceived of the Jewish revolution in a fashion so different from [that of Jesus]."9

10. Primacy of Matthew's gospel. Renan (*Vie de Jésus*, xxi, xxxvii; *Life of Jesus*, 22, 34) believed (erroneously, as we now know) that of all the evangelists Matthew is the most authentic, and that in his gospel we have recorded the actual speeches that Jesus made. Kazantzakis, accepting this view, makes Matthew follow Jesus with pad and pen in hand, recording on the spot or soon afterward, like a journalist.

OBVIOUSLY, some of these ten points are more important than others; but as we extend the list — and many more could be added — we construct by accumulation a convincing case for Kazantzakis's indebtedness to Renan, an indebtedness that extends well beyond the specific borrowings dealt with above to generic attitudes that sit at the heart of Kazantzakis's definitive treatment of the Christ theme. Let us now list at least five of these:

1. Jesus was truly and fully a man in the sense that he was not perfect. For Renan, this is a central axiom: "He was not sinless; he conquered the same passions that we combat" (*Life of Jesus*, 375; *Vie de Jésus*, 458).¹⁰

2. The "divinity" of Jesus must be understood wholly in natural rather than in supernatural terms, in that Jesus — more than any other person — progressed toward the realization of an ideal conception of all that is most elevated in human nature. "We may call [him] divine," says Renan, ". . . in this sense that Jesus is that individual who has caused his species to make the greatest advance towards the divine. . . . In him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature" (*Life of Jesus*, 375; *Vie de Jésus*, 457–458).

3. Jesus's unique contribution to the political realm was his conception

of inward rather than outward freedom. Elsewhere, I have tried to show Kazantzakis's own increasing recourse to this view as he matured and was repeatedly frustrated in the outward realm, although not in the inward. In *The Saint's Life of Zorba*, *Christ Recrucified*, and *The Last Temptation* we see inward strength replacing outward, individual integrity replacing political liberation. Of course Kazantzakis did not derive this conception from Renan, or even from Jesus. But Renan reinforced his mature view, and encouraged him in his increasing certainty that the Christian myth was the most paradigmatic for him in the final stage of his own career. Jesus, says Renan "revealed to the world the truth that country is not everything, and that the man is anterior and superior to the citizen. . . . The idea of omnipotence through suffering and resignation, of triumphing over force by purity of heart, is indeed an idea peculiar to Jesus" (*Life of Jesus*, 137–138, 141; *Vie de Jésus*, 123, 128). That Kazantzakis responded positively to this kind of assertion is shown by the passage he copied out and then marked with a line for emphasis, characteristically omitting Renan's cautious "peut-être" (perhaps): "Many times perhaps this supreme question was presented to him, Shall the kingdom of God be realized by force or by gentleness, by revolt or by patience?" (*Life of Jesus*, 135; *Vie de Jésus*, 120). Most interestingly, although Renan presents this "doctrine of the liberty of souls" (*Life of Jesus*, 136; *Vie de Jésus*, 121) as foreign to the ancient Greek,¹¹ Kazantzakis—certainly from *The Saint's Life of Zorba* onward—places it at the core of the modern Greeks' ability to survive. Insofar as it is valid to distinguish the ancient Greek and the Christian view of liberty in this way, we can consider Kazantzakis the inheritor of both, veering toward the ancient conception in *Kapetan Mihális*, to be sure, but attempting in *The Last Temptation* to synthesize the two within the larger context of his Bergsonian worldview—i.e., within an evolutionary process in which the union of the Christian with the Hellenic (figured, say, in Judas because of his desire for outward liberation) impels the spirit to a still higher level of freedom that we must call eschatological even though Kazantzakis's worldview admits of no supernatural kingdom in the orthodox sense.

4. Jesus's doctrine of inner freedom brought him inevitably into conflict with the official world of power, making him a champion of the dispossessed. Once again, Kazantzakis copied out a relevant passage from Renan:

Jésus comprit bien vite . . . que le monde officiel de son temps ne se prêterait nullement à son royaume. Il en prit son parti avec une hardiesse extrême. Laisant là tout ce monde au coeur sec . . . , il se tourna vers les simples. . . . Le royaume de Dieu est fait 1^o) pour les enfants et pour ceux qui leur ressemblent; *kai tous ómoioús tous* 2^o) pour les rebutés de ce monde . . . ; 3^o) pour les hérétiques . . . , publicains, samaritains, païens . . .

Le pur *ébionisme* . . . la doctrine que les pauvres (*ébionim*) seuls seront sauvés, que le règne des pauvres va venir, fut . . . la doctrine de Jésus. (*Vie de Jésus*, 178–179)

Jesus, indeed, soon comprehended that the official world of his time would give no countenance to his kingdom. He resolved upon his course with extreme boldness. Leaving all this world to its hardness of heart and its narrow prejudices, he turned towards the simple. . . . The kingdom of God is: first, for children and for those who are like them; second, for the outcasts of this world . . . ; third, for heretics . . . , publicans, Samaritans and pagans . . .

Pure Ebionism, . . . the doctrine that the poor (*ebionim*) only shall be saved, that the reign of the poor is at hand, was . . . the doctrine of Jesus. (*Life of Jesus*, 176–177)

5. The ministry and passion of Jesus cannot be understood without their eschatological component. We must not subtract this component simply because we ourselves cannot believe in an afterlife. This point was extremely important for Renan and also for Kazantzakis. Of the various overall attitudes that sit at the heart of *The Last Temptation*, it is the most complicated. Kazantzakis found Renan helpful in this regard, I believe, because of the latter's attempt to confront and master the eschatological complexity instead of banishing it by retreating to a wholly ethical perspective. In other words, Kazantzakis felt such a close affinity to Renan because here was a skeptic whose doubt was not so doctrinaire that it excluded mysticism. Renan clearly expounds both sides of the paradox. On the one hand, Jesus was a moralist keenly interested in improving this world as opposed to ending it in favor of a heavenly kingdom. Jesus, he writes,

undertook to create a new condition of humanity, and not merely to prepare for the end of that which existed. . . . He often declares

that the kingdom of God has already commenced, that every man carries it in himself, and may . . . enjoy it; that each creates this kingdom . . . by the true conversion of the heart. The kingdom of God is then only the good, an order of things better than that which exists. . . . Jesus . . . had . . . faith . . . in the reality of the ideal. (*Life of Jesus*, 249–250; *Vie de Jésus*, 283–284)

The revolution which he desired to bring about was always a moral revolution. . . . A visionary who had no other idea than the proximity of the last judgment would not have had this care for the amelioration of man . . . (*Life of Jesus*, 135; *Vie de Jésus*, 120–121)

On the other hand, and in apparent contradiction to this moralism, Renan stresses Jesus's conviction that the present state of human existence was about to terminate in a great cataclysm ushering in a supernatural kingdom. Kazantzakis copied Renan's view into his notebook as follows, adding in a parenthesis his own sense that the cataclysm imagined by the ancient apocalyptic writers (Daniel and John) might very well be at hand because of the atomic bomb:

Les idées apocalyptique de Jésus:

L'ordre actuel de l'humanité touche à son terme. Ce terme sera une immense révolution, "une angoisse" semblable aux douleurs de l'enfantement; une *palingenesis* précédée de sombres calamités et annoncée par d'étranges phénomènes; . . . un grand orage déchirant la nue, un trait de feu d'Orient en Occident (bombe atomique). Le Messie apparaîtra dans les nuages, revêtu de gloire au son des trompettes, entouré d'anges. . . . Les morts ressusciteront et le Messie procédera au jugement. (*Vie de Jésus*, 272–273)

The apocalyptic ideas of Jesus:

The end of the present order of humanity is at hand. This end will be an immense revolution, a *palingenesis* preceded by sombre calamities and announced by strange phenomena. . . . a great tempest rending the sky, a bolt of fire from the East to the West (atomic bomb). The Messiah will appear in the clouds, clothed in glory, with the sound of trumpets, surrounded by angels. . . . The dead will then arise, and the Messiah will proceed to the judgment. (*Life of Jesus*, 242)

The paradox appears most blatantly, of course, in the full contradictoriness of Jesus's sayings that (a) the kingdom of God is at hand and (b) the kingdom of God is within us. The first assumes that the world as we know it is about to end; the second, because it implies the need for and possibility of moral regeneration, assumes that the world as we know it is going to continue.

Kazantzakis refused to ignore, reject, or explain away Jesus's eschatological mysticism in favor of his moralism. I believe that he was helped in this by Renan, who likewise refused. Indeed, Renan, having expounded the contradiction so clearly, rejoices in it and argues for its need. It was precisely this contradiction, he declares, "that assured the success" of Jesus's work:

The millenarian alone would have possessed no power. The millenarianism gave the impulsion, the morality secured the future. In this way, Christianity united the two conditions of great success in this world, a revolutionary starting-point, and the possibility of life. Everything which is made to succeed must respond to these two needs; for the world demands at the same time to change and to endure. Jesus, while he announced an unparalleled revolution in human affairs, proclaimed the principles upon which society has reposed for the last eighteen hundred years. (*Life of Jesus*, 140; *Vie de Jésus*, 126–127)

Kazantzakis goes well beyond Renan in the complexity of his explanation, because he sees biblical millenarianism in evolutionary terms in ways that could never have been imagined by Renan, writing as he did only a few years after Darwin published his *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859), and decades before Bergson. But Kazantzakis in his general attitude toward the eschatological problem, as in so many other areas, found support from Renan.

ALL IN ALL, then, we ought now to be able to recognize and acknowledge Renan's influence on *The Last Temptation* in both individual points and overall attitudes that sit right at the heart of Kazantzakis's definitive treatment of the Christ theme.

But, central as Renan is to Kazantzakis's thinking, we must not over-

state his influence or treat *The Last Temptation* as a fictionalization of *Vie de Jésus*. First of all, Renan merely reinforced many ideas and attitudes that Kazantzakis had developed on his own in the course of his obsessive concern with Christ over six decades. Second, although the reading notes on Renan are more extensive by far than those on any other single author, Kazantzakis's self-schooling for *The Last Temptation* involved dozens of additional sources, many of them very different from Renan. Third, Kazantzakis was never content with redoing what someone else had already done. He aspired to absorb his many sources in all their diversity, to assimilate them into his own system, and then, synthesizing everything, to create something new and entirely his own that, at the same time, would be recognizably rooted in tradition. His statement to Börje Knös in November 1951, after he had finished the novel, is relevant to everything I have just been stressing:

For a whole year I took out of the library at Cannes all the books—those written about Christ, about the Judaeans of those times; the chronicles, the Talmud, etc.—and thus all the details [in *The Last Temptation*] are historically accurate, although I recognize the poet's right not to follow history slavishly; “*poïsis filosofóteron istorías*” [poetry is more philosophic than history] . . . (Helen Kaz., Biography, 505; Eleni Kaz., *Asymvívastos*, 591; Selected Letters, 725)¹²

The extent of this reading is prodigious in both amount and variety. As he indicated to Knös, his main objective was to immerse himself in the “facts” of the time, insofar as they are known. Thus, for example, he paid particular attention to geography, recording precise distances between towns, figuring how long it would have taken Jesus and his disciples to walk, say, from Galilee to Jerusalem, etc. He noted climatic conditions, topography, and the dominant characteristics of the landscape as seen from the towns that Jesus frequented. Much of this came once again from Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, since Renan had written this book while on a visit to the Holy Land and was meticulous in his eyewitness descriptions. But Kazantzakis read as well Adolphe Lods's *Israël, des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1930), taking notes on rainfall and prevailing winds, and also André Louis Chevrillon's *Terres mortes: Thébàide-Judée* (Paris, 1897) and Pierre Loti's *Jérusalem* (Paris, 1895). His research on Jewish history included more Renan (volume 5 of his *Histoire du peuple d'Israël* [Paris,

1887–1894]), covering the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Roman occupation and the beginning of Jesus's ministry, Charles Guignebert's *Le monde juif vers le temps de Jésus* (Paris, 1935), and Adolphe Lods's *Historie de la littérature hébraïque et juive, depuis les origines jusqu'à la ruine de l'état juif (135 après J.-C.)* (Paris, 1950). As for Jesus himself, besides Renan's *Vie*, Kazantzakis read Marius Lepin's *Le Problème de Jésus, en réponse à MM. A. Loisy et Ch. Guignebert* (Paris, 1936), Charles Guignebert's *Jésus* (Paris, 1933), and studies by Paul-Louis Couchoud and Alphonse Siché — viz., *Jésus: le Dieu fait homme* (Paris: 1937) and *Histoire merveilleuse de Jésus* (Paris: 1926), respectively. For the early church, his source was Henry Daniel-Rops's *L'Eglise des apôtres et des martyrs* (Paris, 1948).

However, Kazantzakis did not confine himself to an investigation of the facts about Jesus, his times, and his land. From this center he branched out in many directions. For example, he read Solomon Reinach's *Orpheus: Histoire générale des religions* (Paris, 1909) on the reliability of the Gospels. He also read in gnostic literature, recording in his notebook that this heresy claimed that Christ survived eighteen months after the crucifixion and in this time conveyed all of his major teachings to the disciples. In addition, Kazantzakis perused Henri Delacroix's *Etudes d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme: les grands mystiques chrétiens* (Paris, 1908) and dipped into the original writings of Boehme, Meister Eckhart, Gerlach, Saint Teresa, Ruysbroeck, and Maria Magdalena dei Pazzi. From these Western mystics he proceeded to Symeon the New Theologian, Cabasilas, and Maximos the Confessor in the Greek Orthodox tradition. The purpose — or at least one purpose — for this extensive investigation of mystical experience becomes apparent when we read his notes drawn from an article in the *Revue Bleue* of 15 March 1902 on the relation between mystical ecstasy and eroticism: “Une question est posée: l'extase ne serait-elle pas comme une équivalent épuré, une sublimation de la vie instinctive la plus profonde?” (A question is posed: Would not rapture [sexual climax] be like a purified equivalent, a sublimation of the profoundest instinctive life?). He learned more about this subject from René Allendy's *La Justice intérieure* (Paris, 1931), copying out statements such as: “flagellation = symbole de l'amour renversé par autopunition” (flagellation = a symbol of sex turned upside down by self-punishment). Allendy helped him as well on the relation between psychosomatic symptoms and miracles. “Le soulagement de la culpabilité pour la prison” (the relief of guilt for prison),

Kazantzakis entered in his notebook (VI:31), with a line for emphasis in the margin, “est comparable à l’apaisement de l’angoisse pour le symptôme somatique de conversion hystérique: paralysie, cécité, aphasia, etc.” (is comparable to the allaying of anguish for the bodily symptom of hysterical conversion: paralysis, blindness, aphasia, etc.), after which he added in a parenthesis, “(= *tháma KHS:kóri 100arkhos*),” in other words Christ’s miracle [with the] daughter [of the] centurion (*ekatóntarkhos*), referred to earlier as evidence for Kazantzakis’s agreement with Renan that the miracles have a psychosomatic basis. From these concerns about the relation of religious behavior to sexuality and the connection between miracles and abnormal psychological states, Kazantzakis branched out more generally to a review of basic psychoanalysis, reading C. G. Jung’s *Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Ich und dem Unbewußten* (Zurich: Rascher Verlag, 1945) and Sigmund Freud’s *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (Leipzig & Vienna: Heller, 1917) both in French translation. In *L’Homme à la découverte de son âme: structure et fonctionnement de l’inconscient*, the translation of Jung’s book, Kazantzakis concentrated once again on the relation between psychology and religiosity, noting (Notebook VI:35) and marking with emphasis ideas such as:

Accès s’incon[s]cient] exon apo ta óneira = k’i activité religieuse de l’esprit. Elle est dans l’homme moderne encore plus profondément enfouie que la sexualité ou l’adaptation sociale. Il y a des personnes pour lesquelles la rencontre intér[ieur] avec la puissance étrangère en elles = Dieu. Dieu et une image que crée l’esprit humain dans son insuffisance pour exprimer l’expér[ience] intime de quelque chose d’impensable et d’indicible.

Access to the subconscious apart from dreams = also the soul’s religious activity. It is more deeply buried in modern man than is sexuality or social adaptation. There are people for whom the inner encounter with the external power in themselves = God. God is an image created by the human spirit in its inadequacy in explaining the intimate experience of something unbelievable and ineffable.

The notes (Notebook VI:73–74) on Freud’s lectures concentrate (a) on the role of the unconscious, (b) on the suppression of sexual passion, (c) on artistic creativity as a conscious elaboration of unconscious drives,

and (d) on myths, legends, and fairytales as expressing the same persistent desires that are expressed in dreams, after which Kazantzakis added, in Greek, “This is the source of religion,” and then, in French:

- 1 individual unconscious (Freud)
- 2 collective unconscious (Jung)
- 3 universal unconscious (Christ)

So far, we have seen Kazantzakis setting himself to school with the dual purpose, first, of acquiring factual knowledge so that his novel could be convincingly rooted in the known accounts (the gospels, of course, and in parallel sources such as Josephus, which he mined indirectly through Renan and other scholars), as well as in the geography and topography of the Holy Land, and, second, of acquiring a wider perspective vis-à-vis later Church history, mysticism, and psychology. I should add that he was also interested in how others had done what he hoped to do. Thus he read Giovanni Papini's *Storia di Cristo* (Florence, 1921) in a French translation, and may have absorbed some (but not too much, thank goodness!) of the gushiness seen in passages like the following, which he copied out in French (Notebook VI:52) and which I give (freely) in Dorothy Canfield Fisher's translation (*Life of Christ* [New York, 1923], 221):

Overcome by joy, Martha rushes to meet him, to see what He needs, if He wishes to wash, eat, lie down; she goes to the well, lights a fire, fixes dinner; she borrows some fresh fish, eggs, figs, olives. . . . Mary, motionless, has fallen into an ecstasy. She sees and hears nothing but Jesus.

As if this weren't enough, he took time out in late February or early March 1951, when he was about halfway through *The Last Temptation*, to read Pär Lagerkvist's *Barabbas* (Stockholm, 1950), his disparagement of which reveals what he felt he was accomplishing better in his own book:

I've read *Barabbas*. It's well written, the theme is very interesting. But no lofty creative invention. A “tidy” work, as we say in Greek — that is, one produced by a tidy person. The work of a good artisan, full of good sense, devoid of madness.¹³

All this reading—which continued, as we have seen, even after he had begun his novel—is truly prodigious. I have tried to convey both its ex-

tent and its breadth, starting with the various books by Renan, Kazantzakis's major source. What we should marvel at, however, is not so much the industry that this self-schooling manifests but instead the fact that Kazantzakis, when all was said and done, did not become a slave to his sources but assimilated them and produced something that is recognizably his own (*poúisis filosofóteron istorías!*) while at the same time also recognizably "factual." If we want to think of the Christ-story as a myth (which Kazantzakis certainly did), then we can say that, stretching the orthodox material, he deepened and broadened this myth into a new version that still functions as the original does, proving once more that a myth is really the sum of all its versions and may be renewed by being "supplemented." Let us recall again Kazantzakis's statement of intent: "I wanted to renew and replenish the sacred story on which the great Christian civilization of the West is based" (Eleni Kaz., *Asymvívstos*, 591; Helen Kaz., *Biography*, 505; *Selected Letters*, 725).

If we marvel at his assiduity, we should do so out of the realization that Kazantzakis had already associated with the Christ-story all his life, that he knew the Bible and the Apocrypha intimately, had written repeatedly about Christ in the past, and — in addition — that he lived in a culture whose folklore and also sophisticated literature were suffused with Christianity. Thus he could easily have embarked on this new novel with only a minimum of further preparation.

Let me elaborate on this cultural background in an attempt to demonstrate the extent to which Kazantzakis, even without individual effort, was immersed in the Christ theme simply because he was part of Greek culture. Treatments of Christ in the sophisticated literature of Greece are so legion that we cannot even begin to survey them in a short space. So I will cite just one because of its marked similarity in certain respects to *The Last Temptation*. This is Kostas Varnalis's *To fós pou kaíei* (1922), a work that Kazantzakis most certainly knew.¹⁴ In it we already find, for example, the attitude toward Mary that orthodox Christians considered so shocking when Kazantzakis's novel appeared three decades later. Varnalis's Mary, like Kazantzakis's, objects to her son's role as a public figure and wishes that he had remained an anonymous carpenter so that he could have been a respectable paterfamilias returning home each evening to his smiling wife and adorable children! But Varnalis's audacity, like Kazantzakis's, is rooted in a much older tradition. In Romanos's *kontákion* "Mary at the

Cross," for example, which dates from the sixth century, the mother of God is shown acting like a very ordinary Greek mother.¹⁵ This perception of Mary is surely at the deepest level a folkloristic one surfacing here and there in sophisticated texts. If we turn to folklore proper, we find in the demotic ballads the curious detail employed by Kazantzakis whereby it is gypsies who forge the special nails used in crucifixions. A vagrant blacksmith who makes crucifixion nails appears as well in the medieval passion play *Christos Paschon*.¹⁶ Many of these folklorist traditions must go back, in turn, to the apocryphal gospels, which we know that Kazantzakis re-read in 1942 in connection with his plan to write the "Memoirs of Jesus" (Helen Kaz., Biography, 407; not in Eleni Kaz., *Asymvivastos*). Again, to trace just one detail employed by Kazantzakis, that of Joseph's flowering rod, we find in Chapter 8 of "The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew" the tradition of Joseph being chosen to receive Mary and keep her in his house because a dove flew out of his rod.¹⁷ Then, in Chapter 7 of "The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary," a later adaptation of Pseudo-Matthew, this is modified to include the flower. The story goes that the high priest heard the Lord's voice say that

according to the prophecy of Isaiah, a man should be sought out to whom the virgin ought to be entrusted and espoused. For it is clear that Isaiah says: A rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall ascend from his root; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. . . . According to this prophecy, therefore, [the high priest] predicted . . . that he whose rod . . . should produce a flower, and upon the end of whose rod the Spirit of the Lord should settle in the form of a dove, was the man to whom the virgin ought to be entrusted and espoused.¹⁸

Kazantzakis could have picked up his detail of Joseph's flowering rod from this source, but it is just as likely that the story was "in the air" because of folkloristic analogues and that he simply knew it, as he knew about the gypsy blacksmiths, without effort, simply because he had grown up in the Greek culture.

Thus I return to my point that Kazantzakis could easily have embarked on his new novel in 1950 without the systematic self-schooling that we have observed—something that makes his assiduity all the more remarkable. But perhaps we ought not to separate the prodigious program of

reading in 1950–1951 from what had gone before, and should consider it simply the final phase of a recurrent preparation that (1) had begun with Kazantzakis's exposure to the *synaxária* (saints' lives) when he was scarcely more than an infant, (2) had continued in negative form through the 1908–1910 period when he was absorbing the Nietzschean critique of Christianity, (3) had turned positive again in 1914–1915 with the visit to Mount Athos and the sketching out of *Nikifóros Fokás* and *Christós*, then (4) negative once more in the anti-Christian polemics of 1924–1925 and the regretful dismissal of Christ in his *Odyssey*, then (5) positive anew in 1942 when the theme returned to tempt him, and in 1948 when he wrote *Christ Recrucified*—coming to a boil, one might say, when, (6) having completed *Kapetán Mihális*, Kazantzakis decided in July 1950 to embark on his new novel, which he described to Prevelakis (*400 Grámmata*, 627; Selected Letters, 700) as the one *me théma ókhi ellinikó, pio fardhí* (with a non-Greek theme, a broader one).

Notes

- 1 See my chapter “Kazantzakis's Long Apprenticeship to Christian Themes” in Darren J. N. Middleton and Peter Bien, *God's Struggler: Religion in the Writings of Nikos Kazantzakis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 113–131.
- 2 Pandelis Prevelakis, *Tetrakósia grámmata tou Kazantzáki ston Preveláki* (Athens: Ekdhóseis Elénis N. Kazantzáki), 630. Subsequent references will be included in the text as Prevelakis, *400 Grámmata*. Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis*. Edited and translated by Peter Bien (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 704.
- 3 Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus*. Translated by Charles Edwin Wilbour (New York: Carleton, 1864), 317–318. Subsequent references will be included in the text as Renan, *Life of Jesus*. The French original is *Vie de Jésus*, 2nd edition (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1863). Subsequent references will be included in the text as Renan, *Vie de Jésus*.
- 4 Nikos Kazantzakis, Unpublished Notebook VI, p. 22. Subsequent references will be included in the text as Kaz., Notebook VI. Compare the translation of the passage in question from Renan 317–318, cited above. The Greek at this passage's end means: “He remembered beautiful Galilee, Magdalene, regretted that, too lofty, he had lost so many pleasures.”

- 5 Kleon Paraschos, "To révma tis apaisiodhoksías sti néa ellinikí logotekhnía," *Kainouria Epohí* (Spring 1956): 142–145.
- 6 Nikos Kazantzakis, "I epistími ekhreokópise?" *Néa Estía* 64 (September 15, 1958): 1377.
- 7 Nikos Kazantzakis, *O teleftaíos peirasmós* (Athens: Difros, 1955), 453, 474. *The Last Temptation of Christ*, translated by Peter Bien (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 453, 473. Subsequent references will be included in the text as Kaz., *Teleftaíos Peirasmós* and Kaz., *Last Temptation*, respectively.
- 8 Ernest Renan, *Les Apôtres* (Paris 1866), 170.
- 9 Kazantzakis was encouraged in the conflation of the two Judases and the Zealots by what he read in Charles Guignebert's *Des prophètes à Jésus, le monde juif vers le temps de Jésus* (Paris, 1935): 221: "Une certain Galiléen, nommé Judas . . . , se met en révolte; il cherche à soulever le peuple et ne réussit qu' à former quelques bandes. . . . Toutefois le sentiment et la tendance d'où procédait leur initiative auraient persisté après eux et la faction des zélotes en serait issue . . ." (A certain Galilean named Judas, began to revolt; he sought to arouse the population and succeeded only in forming some bands. . . . Nevertheless, the feelings and sympathies from which their initiative originated would persist after them and the faction of the zealots would be the outcome). Guignebert's subsequent description, taken from Josephus, of the Zealots' tactic of knifing their opponents seems to have been used by Kazantzakis in the encounter between Judas and Jesus in the desert (Chapter XI). In Chapter VIII we see Judas trying to gather together his rebel band.
- 10 In a letter to Tea Anemoyanni written after *The Last Temptation* was published, Kazantzakis recounts how some theologians in Holland were shocked that his Christ had real temptations. He comments: "but . . . I knew definitely that great temptations, extremely enchanting and often legitimate ones, came to hinder him on his road to Golgotha. But how could the theologians know all this?" (Eleni Kazantzaki, *Nikos Kazantzákis, o asimvívastos* (Athens: Eleni. N. Kazantzaki, 1977): 604 [subsequent references will be cited in the text as Eleni Kaz., *Asimvívastos*]; Helen Kazantzakis, *Nikos Kazantzakis, a Biography Based on His Letters* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], 515–516 [subsequent references will be cited in the text as Helen Kaz., *Biography*]; see Minás Dimákis, *Kazantzákis, Epistolés Kazantzákis ston Miná Dimáki* (Athens: To Ellinikó Vivlío, 1979, 92.) Those who were so scandalized by this aspect of Kazantzakis's treatment of Jesus and who called the author blasphemous for having dared to make Jesus imperfect seem to have forgotten Heb 5:9, which implies that

Christ was made perfect only through the crucifixion. Similarly, Heb 2:18 shows the ancients' assumption that Jesus's temptations were real. Heb 4:15 ("For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning") is also relevant. Finally, we should remember John Milton's famous solution to this problem in *Paradise Lost* (V.117-121), where Adam instructs Eve:

Evil into the mind of God or Man
 May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
 No spot or blame behind; which gives me hope
 That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream
 Waking thou never wilt consent to do.

- 11 It is true, says Renan, that in Greece "[m]any stoics had found means of being free under a tyrant. But, in general, the ancient world had imagined liberty as connected with certain political forms . . ." (*Life of Jesus*, 136).
- 12 The phrase in Ancient Greek is slightly misquoted from Aristotle's *Poetics*, chapter 9: "Διό και φιλοσόφτερον και σπουδαιότερον ποιήσις ιστορίας ἐστίν. Ἰ μέν γαρ ποιήσις μάλλον τα καθόλου, ἰ δ' ἱστορία τα καθ' ἑκάστον λέγει" (Poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars).
- 13 Letter of 3 March 1951 to Börje Knös, printed in Eleni Kaz., *Biography*, 495. This paragraph is curiously omitted from Eleni Kaz., *Asimvívastos*, 578–579, and also from Eleni N. Kazantzaki, *Le Dissident: Biographie de Nikos Kazantzaki* (Paris: Plon, 1968), 503.
- 14 He commented on Várnalis's work in general in his 1929 article "La Littérature grecque contemporaine" (*Monde* [16 March 1929]: 5), planned to include him in an anthology he hoped to produce in 1930 (Prevelakis, 400 *Grámmata*: 172–173), and cited him as one of Greece's best poets in a 1949 letter (Eleni Kaz. *Asimvívastos*, 558; Helen Kaz., *Biography*, 479). In addition, Kazantzakis and Várnalis traveled in the same circles in the early years. In Várnalis's work, see especially the section called *I mána tou Khris-toú*. This was brought to my attention by Theano Michailidou's M.A. thesis "Tradition and Symbolism in Varnalis' Work" (University of Birmingham).
- 15 Margaret Alexiou, "The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk-Song," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1975): 113–114.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 135–136, 134.
- 17 Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Christian Li-*

- brary, vol. 16, *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), 26–27.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 57–58. Isaiah's prophecy occurs at XI.1–2 in the Vulgate and Septuagint translations. Protestant bibles have a branch instead of the flower. Other apocryphal writings that seem likely to have provided Kazantzakis with individual details are the "Protevangeliium of James" and "The History of Joseph the Carpenter." The "Index of Principal Matters" at the end of the Roberts/Donaldson volume (note 17, above) is most helpful.

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Op-Ed Statement

Defending Scorsese's Film

On August 11, 1988, the Day Before Martin
Scorsese's Film of Nikos Kazantzakis's Novel
The Last Temptation of Christ Opened
(in a Single Theater) in New York City

BIGOTRY IS particularly ugly when practiced by Christians, who are supposed to be humble and compassionate, like the founder of their religion. The current campaign by fundamentalist Protestants against Martin Scorsese's film of Nikos Kazantzakis's novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* conforms precisely to the dictionary definition of bigotry: intolerant narrow-mindedness in defiance of reason or argument.

Kazantzakis's book was attacked in the same unreasonable way. When it appeared in Greece in 1955, the Orthodox Church sought to prosecute its author. When translations came out in various Western European languages, the Roman Catholic Church placed the novel on its Index of Forbidden Books. In the United States, fundamentalist Protestants attempted to remove the English translation of the book from libraries. That was in 1960.

Nevertheless, for the past three decades *The Last Temptation of Christ* has been widely admired in Europe, Greece, and America by people eager to deepen their religious commitment. This is because Kazantzakis's version of the Gospels does not undermine Christianity but rather makes Jesus's ministry more meaningful to modern humanity.

Martin Scorsese is among those who understand the novel's purpose. Yet on July 15, Mr. Bill Bright of the Campus Crusade for Christ offered to reimburse the distributor, Universal Pictures, for its expenses if it would turn over all copies of the offending picture so that he could destroy them.

Universal replied eloquently in a full-page advertisement that freedom of thought is not for sale.

The film (which I have not seen) was released on August 12. Will it reach a wide audience despite the fundamentalists' machinations to convince theater chains to boycott it?

What a paradox that Christian ministers are opposed to a version of Jesus's life that is so reverential! Focusing on certain liberties that Kazantzakis has taken, they accuse him of demeaning Jesus.

But the aim of his novel is to offer Jesus as a model for all of us at a time when Western civilization is declining because of its choice of happiness over spirituality.

Kazantzakis's Jesus is supremely devoted to the service of others, to reconciliation, and to disinterested love. I'll put that idea in the fundamentalists' own language (language that Kazantzakis shares): Jesus is supremely devoted to God's will.

What Jesus does — and what Kazantzakis hopes all of us will do, inspired by Jesus's example — is to resist the "last temptation," the final and most serious impediment to the spiritual life.

In defining this last temptation as happiness, Kazantzakis departs from the letter — but not from the spirit — of the Gospels. Happiness in his version, since it comes through materialistic wellbeing, is not essentially different from the Gospels' account of Jesus's temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4.1–11, Luke 4.1–13), all of which involve materialistic power.

Kazantzakis merely relates materialism to Everyman, making Jesus resist the universal temptation to place comfort, security, reputation, and progeny above the pain, loneliness, and martyrdom of a life devoted to the spirit.

For an instant, Jesus *imagines* a different career, a happy one. He *imagines* that he experiences sex, begets a family, is respected as the best carpenter in Nazareth, and remains close to his mother. He *imagines* that he is happy. Then, however, he rejects this vision and reaffirms the spiritual vocation that has led to his painful crucifixion.

All this, condemned as blasphemous by the fundamentalists, is Kazantzakis's way of dramatizing the Bible's conclusions about Jesus's temptations: "For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in

every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2.16–18). "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Hebrews 4.15).

I do not wish to claim that Kazantzakis was an orthodox Christian. He lost his faith while still a teenager because he could not reconcile Darwin's teachings with Christianity's promise of an afterlife. But he never lost his admiration for Jesus or his conviction that idealistic service leading to suffering, death, and resurrection remains for us today, as for the early Christians, the quintessential shape of a spiritual career.

Of course he interprets and takes liberties. But his aim, as so many readers have discovered, is to make Jesus accessible to the twentieth century.

Thus, I am both dismayed and perplexed by the fundamentalists' anger. Their opposition, so strangely contrary to their own professed aims, derives from pharisaical literalism — precisely what Jesus himself opposed. They are horrified by interpretation. Yet the major purpose of Jesus's ministry was to prod the descendants of Abraham to seek the spirit rather than the letter of traditional doctrine, thereby making that doctrine relevant to their own condition.

If Kazantzakis were alive to witness the nature of this opposition, he would doubtlessly reply to Mr. Bill Bright with Jesus's scathing words during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7.3): "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

*Peter Bien
Riparius, N.Y.*

Note

Peter Bien, Professor of English at Dartmouth College, translated into English *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which was published in the United States in 1960.

Kazantzakis and the Language Question

PERHAPS THE BEST WAY to begin this examination of diglossia and Kazantzakis is to cite the letters he wrote to his parents when he left home for the first time in 1902, at age 19, to go to the University of Athens ostensibly to study law. He wrote to his father in *katharévousa* because that is what educated people were supposed to do (although not in an extreme *katharévousa*, which his father, not a very educated person, might have been unable to understand). To his mother he wrote in precisely the sort of demotic favored by Psiharis. Here are some snippets of each type:

Ἀγαπητέ μου πατέρα,

Σήμερα λυπούμαι περισσότερο από τās άλλες ημέρας διότι είμαι μακράν Σας και δέν μπορώ νά Σās εύχηθώ εγώ ό ίδιος τό χρόνια πολλά.

In today's demotic, this would be,

Αγαπητέ μου πατέρα,

Σήμερα λυπούμαι περισσότερο από τις άλλες μέρες γιατί είμαι μακριά από Σας και δε μπορώ να Σας ευχηθώ εγώ ο ίδιος το χρόνια πολλά.

To his mother he writes in an entirely different spirit, not to mention language (but still with polytonic accentuation):

Ἀγαπητή μου μητέρα,

Ἐσεῖς πώς περνάτε αὐτοῦ;

Note the colloquial αὐτοῦ (there) instead of εκεί. He signs the letters to his mother Σās φιλῶ (I kiss you, using the familiar word) whereas he signs the letters to his father Σās ἀσπάζομαι. Both words hail from ancient Greek, but since ἀσπάζομαι was already a formula for ending letters in ancient times, it obviously was preferred in *katharévousa*.

These snippets should show how Kazantzakis, and of course all other educated people at this time, existed in two different linguistic worlds. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in his first novel, *Snake and Lily* (1906), he employed both demotic and puristic forms. The crusading demoticist periodical *O Noumas* gave it a bad review, since it favored only those authors who idolized Psiharis. Thus Kazantzakis gravitated to another periodical, *Pinakothiki*, which was less doctrinaire in its linguistic preferences. His next major work, the play *Day Is Breaking*, also 1906, was again in a modified demotic, still not radical enough for *O Noumas* but acceptable to the editor of *Pinakothiki*. It is interesting that his letters to this gentleman were in *katharévousa*, yet in one of them he employs the puristic spelling $\nu\acute{\alpha}$ γίνῃ in the same sentence with the demotic spelling $\nu\acute{\alpha}$ γίνει. He was clearly edging toward demotic. Even some of the letters to his father, originally in rather stiff *katharévousa*, were in full demotic by 1908. Perhaps the turning point was his commission to review a new book by Manolis Triantafyllidis. Kazantzakis turned this into the first of his demotic manifestos. Arguing the problem of whether so-called foreign words ought to be expelled from Greek, he asked quite sensibly: How can we know which words are “foreign” and which are not? He replied in what he called the only rational manner: “Greek” words are those that live on the lips of the Greek people. By this definition, living words of foreign derivation are Greek while impeccably Ancient Greek words that have fallen out of use are foreign.

The play *Day Is Breaking* became the *cause célèbre* of the season, chiefly owing to its Ibsenesque subject matter — in it Kazantzakis had proclaimed the right of a Greek woman to slam the door against a doting husband she does not love in order to consummate an illicit affair with a romantic suitor. To complicate matters, this libel against Greek womanhood was written in demotic — not a demotic radical enough for *O Noumas*, to be sure, but nevertheless clearly demotic. One newspaper castigated the judges for praising it since other submissions to their contest had been written in *katharévousa*. But *O Noumas* was willing to editorialize enthusiastically, saying that to win a dramatic prize until this moment you had to compose iambic twelve-syllable verse in *katharévousa* and include a pseudo-Aristotelian catharsis. Finally, those requirements were ignored (even though the judges, while praising Kazantzakis’s play, denied it the actual prize).

In September 1907, the young author, already famous or notorious in Athens, left for graduate studies in Paris. He was 24 years old. There, while ostensibly studying political philosophy, he completed a second novel, *Broken Souls*, and a major play, *The Masterbuilder*, besides writing his doctoral dissertation on Nietzsche's political thought in the obligatory *katharévoussa*, all the while sending journalistic dispatches to an Athenian newspaper. In these dispatches he was extremely outspoken. In one, for example, he castigated the Greeks for scorning modern civilization: Greece, a young and vigorous nation, should take its place in the world community. When he returned to Greece in April 1909, he was clearly a disciple of Psiharis, subscribing of course to Psiharis's dictum that fatherland and language are one and the same. *Broken Souls* was serialized now not in *Pinakothiki* but in *O Noumas*. In this text, the word "snake" is rendered no longer by the word ὄφις, used in *Snake and Lily*, but by the demotic φίδι, which derives, interestingly, from ὀφίδιον, the diminutive of ὄφις, characteristically losing its first and last syllables. Let me add, by the way, that Ancient Greek ὄφις is still in the demotic dictionary because of Eve in the book of Genesis, who couldn't possibly have been beguiled by a mere φίδι. And there's a saying in demotic, obviously quoted from *katharévoussa*: ο ὄφις με ηπάτησε (the serpent trampled me), meaning I did something bad but it really wasn't my fault.

Let's return now to *Broken Souls*. Even before its serialization was complete, it was praised by Psiharis himself. This placed Kazantzakis in the "inner circle" of the demoticist forces — or perhaps I should say the "joint chiefs of staff," since the demoticists were extremely militant. During the decade 1909–1919 he was involved in all facets of the struggle: political, religious, educational, and literary. However, he was so active during these years that he actually wrote very little imaginative literature.

Soon after he returned to Crete from Paris, he was elected president of the Solomos Society for the National Language. This made life difficult for him. One report says that the only person willing to be seen with him in the streets was a Turkish boatman convinced that anyone who worked so clearly "against the national interest" must be a secret ally of the Sultan; another report claims that he was imprisoned briefly for desiring "to make us all speak and write like peasants." As president of this society, he wrote its manifesto, which was published in *O Noumas* on June 7, 1909. The tone is vituperative. He begins by stating that the society's aim is to convince

Greeks that their written language should be based on the language they speak. As soon as a child enters school, he claims, he is taught to scorn the spoken language. He must never write ψωμί, νερό, κρασί, σπíti, but instead ἄρτος, ὕδωρ, οἶνος, οἰκία. The problem is that the teachers, blinded by the splendor of the ancient tongue, have forgotten that languages develop. The worst aspect of the problem is that the words we are told to suppress are the most living and common: terms for clothing, for tools, for parts of our body. The consequences are catastrophic. The child is forced to learn words he will never hear. Furthermore, instead of learning something of practical value in school, children learn Ancient Greek — that is, learn to hate it, because Homer, Plato and the others are connected with the terrors of syntax — parsing declensions. Diglossia in addition creates a split between the learned and the people; the books that the professors write can never be read by the ordinary person. In his peroration, Kazantzakis exhorts his countrymen, claiming that Greece needs workers who will make demotic triumph just as a common idiom triumphed in Dante's Italy, Luther's Germany, and Lomonosov's Russia.

Kazantzakis was obviously a Youth Doing His Duty, and was calling on others to do theirs. At this time he liked to sign his name using the first two letters of Nikos and of Kazantzakis, Ni and Ka, because they form the imperative Νικά (be victorious). Demoticism was a real crusade, a cultural war.

His next manifesto, which appeared in April 1910, is called "For Our Youth." In it, he states that the nation is drowning in an "ancestor-worshipping marasmus." Greece's youth can make a difference if they believe in the people of the present, not the past.

I mentioned earlier that Kazantzakis, while in Paris, wrote *The Master-builder*. I have delayed further discussion of this until now because it wasn't until 1910 that the play was produced. Indeed, it won not only praise in the dramatic contest of 1910 but the prize as well, unlike *Day Is Breaking*. The original title was *Sacrifice*, but this was changed to the Ibsenesque *Masterbuilder*. It deals with peasants and with their need to be constantly on the move toward future challenge and never satisfied with past achievement — precisely the main theme of demoticism. In all this it is important to note that Kazantzakis was probably the leading Darwinian in Greece at the time, convinced as he was of the central reality of evolution in all areas, including, of course, language. Naturally, *O Noumas*

rejoiced at the prize, praising the judges for selecting Kazantzakis's play "even though it was written in genuine demotic, even though it was made in a manner antithetical to the classical molds of the contest, even though blowing over and through it was an orgiastic breath that invariably frightens and enrages the shy bald pates of critics." Strangely, however, the projected production of the play never took place. Kazantzakis was furious, and resolved not to write again for the stage, which was then one of the only ways a Greek writer could make a living from imaginative literature. Desperate, he completed an ambitious series of translations—Plato, Darwin, Bergson, William James, Nietzsche—all in *katharévousa*, and then turned to writing schoolbooks in demotic.

An important development at this time was the founding of the Educational Association in 1910, with Kazantzakis as one of the charter members. This was in effect a pedagogical lobby arguing for new laws permitting the use of demotic in school while in the meantime it helped to build up a collection of linguistically appropriate texts, primers, histories, and workbooks. Although the Association failed to have the linguistic clause in the 1864 constitution changed during the Revisionary Assembly of 1911, Venizelos appointed a demoticist to the Ministry of Education and another as director of the training college for secondary schoolteachers. In 1913 the Ministry introduced a bill into parliament calling for demotic. The parliamentary committee that reported on it supported it enthusiastically, stating that elementary education destroys a child's intellectuality, and calling for demotic as the medium of instruction in the first four grades. The bill was defeated, but the extensive debate it stimulated sowed a seed that was to germinate four years later.

In 1914 the Ministry announced a competition for new textbooks. The financial rewards were great, since any book accepted would remain in use for four years in all Greek schools in Greece and also abroad. Kazantzakis collaborated on texts with his first wife, Galatea. One of these was sanctioned for 1914–1918, and five additional books won prizes in 1915. Kazantzakis relaxed in a spa in 1914, writing in a letter to a friend, "I'm taking the baths because I'm a bit tired, or rather because I can afford 200 drachmas. . . . You should write schoolbooks. . . . I told you so years ago, but my idea will seem less chimerical to you now that 60,000 drachmas have filtered their way into my pocket."

The seed sown in 1913 germinated in May 1917 when Prime Minister

Venizelos sanctioned demotic for the first four grades and as a partner with *katharévousa* in the fifth and sixth grades. New textbooks needed to be hurriedly prepared. Here, for comparison, are the new and old translations from the *Odyssey*—the swineherd addressing Telemachus in Book 16:

Ἐλα, παιδί μου, ἔλα μέσα, να χαρεί η καρδιά μου, που ἦρθες στην καλύβα μου μόλις γύρισες από το ταξίδι σου . . .

Ἐλα, εἴσελθε, προσφιλὲς τέκνον, ἵνα χαρῶ ὀλοψύχως βλέπων σε ἐλθοντα εἰς τὴν καλύβην μου ἀμέσως μετὰ τὴν ἐπιστροφήν σου ἐκ τῆς ξένης χώρας . . .

However, the entire experiment instituted by Venizelos was overturned in November 1920 owing to his fall from power. The royalist opposition saw this as a victory against what they termed the demoticist clique that, with the protection of the Venizelist “tyranny,” had inserted the spoken tongue into the schools by force. All schools were affected. Demotic as a medium of instruction was forbidden, demotic textbooks prohibited, with the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Athens seeking to have them publicly burned. In the name of religion, fatherland, and morality, attempts were made to strengthen the sanctioning of *katharévousa* in the 1911 constitution by means of an amendment that would specifically prohibit the use of demotic in schools and would grant the government the right to dissolve organizations like the Educational Association whose aims were “contrary to the official language stipulated in the constitution.” These attempts were unsuccessful, but I cite them to show how bitterly political the language question had again become.

Kazantzakis’s situation was dismal after Venizelos’s defeat. He determined to leave Greece but needed to find some way to make a living abroad. An opening came early in 1922 when he signed a contract with the publisher Dimitrakos for a series of history textbooks for elementary schools for which he would be paid a regular stipend in advance. The language, of course, was demotic. Both author and publisher hoped for some change in official policy in the future. Under these circumstances, Kazantzakis became increasingly intransigent in his demoticism, a circumstance that I believe to be a remote but determining factor in this intransigence’s most crucial manifestation: the language of his epic retelling of the *Odyssey*. In reviewing his efforts to apply his demoticism in the years 1922–1936, we

will see that almost all of his other outlets brought him complete or partial frustration. This is one of the chief reasons that determined him to make his *Odyssey* a demotic dictionary as well as a work of art.

Let me elaborate somewhat on the frustrations before returning to his demotic epic. One of the history textbooks written for Dimitrakos vanished in the mails when Kazantzakis sent it from Vienna. He rewrote it from memory in a few days. The stipend sent for such work became useless because of the horrendous inflation in Berlin, where he had moved. He figured that the drachmas sent him amounted to one British pound a month. He was even having trouble with the demotacist periodical *O Noumas*, which found his spelling too radical. Things got much better after 1928, when Venizelos was returned to power and Kazantzakis's friend George Papandreou became minister of education for two years. Perhaps the suppression of demotic in 1920 had served a useful purpose, for many teachers who had resisted demotic in 1917 now — having experienced their pupils' apathy when *katharévousa* was reinstated — tended to change sides. Actually, demotic made inroads in all six grades of primary school and even as an accompaniment to *katharévousa* in the first two grades of middle school. This new climate stimulated Kazantzakis to an explosion of activity. A 1929 law permitted the classics to be taught in translation. Kazantzakis applied to Papandreou for permission to translate Plato, but was not successful. Then he contracted with Dimitrakos for a French-Greek dictionary in which he would take every entry in the *Nouveau Petit Larousse Illustré* and add all the corresponding Greek words in both demotic and *katharévousa*. Kazantzakis purchased 40,000 file cards and set to work, but almost immediately began to dream of a dictionary exclusively in demotic. "I'm now at B," he wrote to Pandelis Prevelakis, his friend and collaborator. "Absorbing and passionate work. I labor more than fifteen hours a day, but progress is slow. This entire job can really be nothing more than a preparation for our future dictionary. Otherwise, if I had to stop at every word in order to find the demotic equivalent, etc., not even three years would be enough. I record as many terms as I have ready-to-hand. I'm doing fine with the plants . . . and with the nautical terms . . . [but am] having trouble with the birds and fish. I'm doing the text in *katharévousa*, and suggest that we leave the demotic text for our own dictionary." Alas, neither this dictionary nor the projected one came to fruition. Kazantzakis's labors came to naught. Years later, in 1951, André

Mirambel suggested that he collaborate with Kazantzakis on a dictionary, and for a moment it seemed that Kazantzakis's 40,000 entries might see the light. But nothing came of that plan either. It should be evident that this lexicographical work undertaken by Kazantzakis in the 1930s was pioneering. There was no fully adequate, comprehensive Demotic Greek-Purist Greek dictionary written in demotic until about 1970 and no truly good Greek-English dictionary of demotic until Stavropoulos's Oxford Learner's Dictionary, published in 1988. Since 2008, happily, we have had a splendid, very large Greek-English dictionary: the *Koraïs Printed & Electronic Greek-English Dictionary*, published by Patras University Press.

In 1933, still desperately attempting to make a living outside of Greece, Kazantzakis experimented with a scheme in which he would translate Spanish poets and write about Spanish cultural life. These materials would be offered free of charge to Greek newspapers, since he would be paid by the Spanish government. After a Greek publisher had accepted, Kazantzakis wrote to his friend Prevelakis, "This bothers me, because he'll doubtlessly alter the language. I'll write him to accept a pseudonym if he refuses to publish unadulterated demotic." This deleterious situation continued. In 1935, for example, when he was publishing travel articles about Japan, he begged Prevelakis, who was acting as his agent, to insist that the newspapers stop correcting his language. "Today they had τῆς χωνεῦσεως, which is disgusting," he wrote. "We had agreed that they were to keep hands off." (The demotic genitive is, of course, τῆς χώνευσης, although τῆς χωνεῦσεως is still listed as an alternative in some, but not all, demotic dictionaries.) Once, a Chinese purist he was interviewing asked, "How is it possible . . . for educated men to write the way the people talk? It is as if someone appeared in your country and supported the idea that you must write not in the language of Plato but in the language that the peasants and fishermen speak. What would you do to him?" To this, Kazantzakis replied with a bitter laugh: "What would we do to him? We would send him into exile far away from Greece. We would call him 'bought' and 'traitor.' And we would do whatever we could to make him die of starvation!"

I trust that I have sufficiently conveyed the difficulties experienced by Kazantzakis after 1922. The only instances in which he managed to publish "uncorrected" demotic were in his translations of Spanish poetry and of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Under the Metaxas dictatorship, established in August 1936, conditions became more difficult for the linguistic reform-

ers even though the dictator himself had demoticist tendencies. Officially, *katharévoussa* reasserted itself to such a degree that a high-school teacher, for example, was forced to apologize publicly for lecturing on the demotic poet Solomos “in a language contrary to the linguistic policy of the government.” Having reviewed Kazantzakis’s own frustrations and the general situation in the 1920s and 1930s, we should remember that these were precisely the decades when he was composing his *Odyssey*. It was begun in 1925. In the second draft, commenced in 1929, Kazantzakis began systematically to make the epic a receptacle for his demotic zeal. Subsequent drafts date from 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, and 1938. When the poem was published at the very end of 1938, having passed the Metaxas censorship, Kazantzakis was still endeavoring to eke out an income from schoolbooks whose language would naturally be “corrected” before publication.

What I am suggesting is that the disappointments during these decades were too various and unrelenting to leave Kazantzakis unaffected. He did not give up; on the contrary, as I indicated earlier, he became increasingly intransigent. If he could not succeed in public ways — journalism, schoolbooks, dictionaries — he would succeed in a private way: poetry. He would make his *Odyssey* a textbook of demotic, a thesaurus, a dictionary. Like Dante after his exile from Florence, Kazantzakis would have his revenge, not by placing his enemies in appropriate circles of hell, as Dante did, but by composing what he hoped would be a major Greek epic in a language repugnant to the hated intellectuals of Athens, and perhaps incomprehensible to them as well.

His demoticism resulted in certain improvements of individual lines in the poem in cases in which he replaced trite and bookish tropes with living ones very demotic in flavor. Yet by the time he had completed the epic and had poured into it all the words (not to mention the spelling) that he could not use elsewhere, he still had not fully solved the problem of where and how to apply his linguistic zeal — still had not found the best literary vehicle for his demoticism. This came after 1940 in his translation, with Professor Ioannis Kakridis, of Homer’s *Iliad* and in the novels that brought him worldwide fame.

But let’s continue to look at his *Odyssey*. By 1927 he was already collecting nautical terms, since the *Odyssey* is obviously a sea-epic. Collecting continued throughout all the drafts. In the later stages he went through his lists systematically to be sure that each and every item of this lexical

treasure had indeed been included in the poem. We have ample information about all this in his letters to Prevelakis, who often supplied many of the words. Here are some excerpts: “I have leafed through all the Bulletins [of the Archive of Medieval and Modern Greek] and have used a great deal. . . . Maybe we can take a long trip together . . . to the islands, Epirus, the Mani, Roumeli — and pillage.” “Don’t forget me. . . . I must have a new crop of words.” “Find me some exorcisms and interesting curses, especially exorcisms against malaria.” “Can you find the demotic names for the enclosed list of birds? It’s difficult, but I need them so much.” “Thanks for ζερβοδεξοχέρης [ambidextrous]. I used it immediately.”

These same letters also convey his basic principle, which was to use only those words that were alive on the lips of the people. Thus instead of the international term γκέτο (ghetto), he employed Οβριακή (Hebrew quarter), because that’s what the Jewish neighborhood was actually called in Iraklio. He opposed all non-living words, not only those from *katharévoussa* but even some that had been invented by Psiharis himself. He opposed abstractions, preferring concrete terms drawn from the everyday life of people in Greece. Thus in the second draft he rewrote

Καλή ’ναι ετούτη η γης, αρέσει μας, σαν το φιλντίσι λάμπει
τι να σκαλίσουμεν απάνου της, πρι να μας πάρει ο Χάρος;

This earth is good, it pleases us, shining like ivory.

What shall we carve on it before we are fetched away by death?

In the second draft, this became

Καλή ’ναι ετούτη η γης, αρέσει μας, σαν το σγουρό σταφύλι
στον μπλάβο αγέρα, Θέ μου, κρέμεται, στον άνεμο κουνιέται
κι αργάζεται μες στην ερμιάν, αργά, την αγουρίδα μέλι.

Now the earth, instead of shining like ivory, has become a curly cluster of grapes hanging in the air, swaying in the wind, and slowly “working” the unripe grapes into honeyed ripeness. Subsequently, he decided to change the colorless abstraction *άνεμος* (wind) to the admittedly rare concretion *δρόλαπας*, a specific term for a violent, icy windstorm with rain. He abandoned the line about working unripe grapes into honey, and replaced the abstraction “working” with a very concrete term meaning “peck at” or “nip”:

Καλή 'ναι ετούτη η γης, αρέσει μας, σαν το σγουρό σταφύλι
στον μπλάβο αγέρα, Θέ μου, κρέμεται, στο δρόλαπα κουνιέται
και την τσιμπολογούν τα πνέματα και τα πουλιά του ανέμου.

This earth is good, we like it, like the crisp grape
in the dark blue air, O God!, it hangs, it sways in the blizzard
and is pecked at by the wind's spirits and birds.

Compare Kimon Friar's published translation, which captures Kazantzakis's intent very well, even though it mistranslates the word *σγουρός*:

Good is this earth, it suits us! Like the global grape
it hangs, dear God, in the blue air and sways in the gale,
nibbled by all the birds and spirits of the four winds.

Apparently the benighted intellectuals of Athens did not understand *δρόλαπας*, seeing that Kazantzakis included it in the glossary of about 2,000 words that he was forced to prepare for such people after the epic was published. And notice that he chooses *πνέματα*, a very Psiharian form of the impeccably ancient Greek *πνεύματα*. This is the sort of demoticist “excess” that was always “corrected” in his prose writings submitted to newspapers. Most remarkably, as the scholar Nikos Mathioudakis documented in his 2012 Ph.D. dissertation *Νεολογικά αθησαύριστα στην Οδύσεια του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη*, the text contains 5,415 words that cannot be found in any Modern Greek dictionary!

The published epic elicited quite a lot of commentary, much of it concerned with the work's supposed nihilism, anti-Hellenism, and so forth. I'll confine myself to comments about its language, both pro and con. One critic admired Kazantzakis's ability to exploit nuances that words have gained in the spoken language—for instance, when he applies to Mount Olympus the epithet *θεοβάδιστος*, a word meaning “trodden or frequented by God” that is normally applied to Mount Sinai and/or the Holy Mountain (Athos) in the everyday speech of Greeks. By applying it to Olympus, Kazantzakis transfers to the ancient home of the pagan gods the sense of something wholly other yet at the same time the entirely familiar and all-too-human sense that the word has gained through its customary usage. A middling critic who generally approved of Kazantzakis's linguistic program nevertheless confessed that, although she had the glossary next to her as she read, she “neglected many times to open it, with the

certainty that I would not lose much if I lacked the name of a certain kind of buffalo.” Another generally favorable critic disputed the analogy with Dante and Tuscan: “The case of a language that is spoken but not written is one thing; that of a language that requires a special . . . glossary in order to be comprehended is quite another thing.” Kazantzakis had written the following about Dante’s accomplishment: “In the *Divine Comedy*, all the demotic words that seemed rare and unknown became commonplace and well-worn in time. . . . I hope that the same will one day happen in our demotic.” Unfortunately, this still does not seem to have happened although almost sixty years have passed since the publication of his *Odyssey*. Indeed, educated Greeks with a fondness for hyperbole like to claim that they find the epic easier to read in Kimon Friar’s English translation than in the Greek original.

Without belaboring the point, I, too, must agree that Kazantzakis’s *Odyssey* is a failure — a noble one, to be sure. Perhaps the reason is that the language is not congruent with the subject matter. It is rich in metaphors drawn from nature and the most basic experiences of the Greek peasantry, yet at least half of the poem is about Odysseus’s rejection of the soil and his belief that nothing is real except the imaginings of the mind. Abstractions are made concrete, linguistically, yet the poem treats a man who always looks beyond the concrete person or event to the abstract and metaphysical. Still, it was good that Kazantzakis wrote the *Odyssey* — good that he got it out of his system, one might say, so that he could move onward to things like *The Saint’s Life of Alexis Zorba*, the subsequent novels, and his translation of Homer’s *Iliad*. It was in these endeavors that he finally encased his linguistic fervor in a proper context. In the novels, which thrive on realism and especially on realistic dialogue, he was able to take his peasant language and put it where it belonged: in the mouths of peasants. He was also able to match demotic to the concreteness of everyday life that is the novel’s particular forte as a genre. In the Homeric translation he was stimulated to ransack demotic’s concreteness in order to express the visual and auditory concreteness of the ancient text. Furthermore, since every Greek is (or at least used to be) familiar with the plot and characters of the *Iliad*, it did not matter so much if some of the translator’s words were not immediately intelligible. In addition, Kazantzakis was reined in by his collaborator, the distinguished Homeric scholar Yannis Kakridis, who shared Kazantzakis’s love of demotic — and was himself a hero in the

history of demoticism — but did not share Kazantzakis's pugnaciousness. As Kazantzakis complained to him at one point, Kakridis seemed to be asking their readers to forgive them for using strange words instead of castigating the readers for being ignorant of the richness of the demotic language.

Kakridis, by the way, was a hero of demoticism because in the early 1940s he published a book in which accents were omitted. He was brought to trial in a court of law, and fired from the University of Athens. But he took his demoticism with him to the University of Thessaloniki, where demotic became an accepted medium of instruction although not the exclusive medium. I remember my late sister-in-law, who studied Ancient Greek there in the 1950s, being frantic at exam time because, not knowing which professor would read her paper, she did not know whether to write in *dimotiki* or *katharévousa*.

The *Iliad* translation was undertaken during the German occupation of Greece during World War II. Kazantzakis was under a sort of house arrest on the island of Aegina, but the German commandant allowed Professor Kakridis to visit him for a few days. Kakridis tells us what happened: "We rose at six in the morning and worked until nightfall. We discussed the meter we would choose, the archaic coloring, the high tone; we talked about proper names, compound epithets, about whether we would replace elements of Homeric culture with those of modern culture. We read excerpts from Pallis and other translators, and naturally from Homer himself." Their agreement was that Kazantzakis would compose a first draft to which Kakridis would respond with a list of places where he differed, a list that eventually filled 2,000 pages. Kazantzakis worked furiously, as was his custom, finishing his first draft in three and a half months. To mine the wealth of Modern Greek, he studied folk ballads, proverbs, enigmas, and all previous demotic translations.

Homer's compound epithets were a special challenge. Only infrequently was one replaced by a periphrastic locution, for example ἠχῆεσσα θάλασσα by θάλασσα ὄλο λάλο. The popular ballads provided many solutions, for example κρουσταλλοβραχιονάτε μου for λευκώλενος Ἡρη, and εικοσαπήχινο σπαθί for δυωκαιεικοσίπηχυ ξυστόν, which cut two πῆχες off the Homeric sword, but no matter. Another ballad gave them μακρολαιμουδάτα, applied to water-jugs in the original, but just as appropriate for Homer's swans, the δουλιχόδειροι κύκνοι. The case that stumped both authors was

the famous “well-greaved Achaeans.” There are no greaves in modern warfare; nevertheless Kazantzakis found seven possible terms, none of which, however, yielded a compound that satisfied him. “I can’t sleep because of *εὐκνήμιδες*,” he wrote to Kakridis. “Couldn’t you ask someone? Or perhaps we should advertise in *Néa Estía*.” In the end he gave up. The Achaeans became simply *καλαντρειωμένοι* (excellently courageous).

One of the new translators’ aims was to improve upon Pallis, whose pioneering work I describe to some small degree in my lecture “The ‘Language Question’ in Greece.” I note there that Pallis, an uncompromising disciple of Psiharis’s, modernized even the proper names, for example converting *Ελένη* (Helen) to *Λενιώ*. Kazantzakis and Kakridis were less radical. They chose to preserve the details of Homeric culture as far as possible, and to approximate Homer’s high tone. Thus they tried not to alter proper names. Nor did they choose, like Pallis, to repeat the fifteen-syllable verse line of the demotic ballads. Instead, they favored the seventeen-syllable line that Kazantzakis had employed in his own *Odyssey* in order to suggest the Homeric dactylic hexameter. This, alas, may be the major reason why the Kazantzakis-Kakridis translation has really not caught on in Greece. The translation remains something of a literary curiosity owing mostly, perhaps, to its strange combination of sometimes ultra-demotic vocabulary with a meter very foreign to the demotic poetic sensibility. Pallis’s translation, because it employs the fifteen-syllable line of the folk ballads, a line just as normal for Greek as iambic pentameter is for English, sits more easily on the tongue. In any case, Kazantzakis valued this project immensely. In an interview given in 1957 shortly before his death, although citing his own *Odyssey* as his major work, he placed his *Iliad* translation second.

A few excerpts from his letters as the translation progressed will convey his feelings:

1952: “On returning home, I found the manuscript of the *Iliad* translation. . . . A great temptation. I plunged at once into the Homeric verses as I might into the cool sea on a sweltering day.”

1955, to Kakridis: “How wonderful to see the *Iliad* published. . . . The other day I had a dream. I was . . . saying to you, ‘Ah, when will the second edition come out, so that we can correct that *καλόγνωμος*?’ You see, this term won’t leave me in peace. In the morning, I looked

it up in the big Dimitrakos dictionary and I found— Enough of that! I shan't say a word until the second edition.”

1955, a month later, again to Kakridis: “I believe this day has been one of the happiest of my life. Eleni came leaping up the stairs four at a time, hiding her hands behind her. ‘Close your eyes!’ she called to me. And I understood at once. The *Iliad!* . . . Now let's roll up our sleeves. The *Odyssey* comes next!”

Kazantzakis actually did complete most of the *Odyssey* in Modern Greek translation before he died in 1957. I could stop here and give the impression that these translations, plus his own *Odyssey*, were the culmination of his long involvement with the language question. But that would be quite wrong. This man of extraordinary energy had the capacity to struggle on many fronts at once. The dates of the letters just quoted indicate that even before his labors with Kakridis came to fruition with the publication of the *Iliad*, he had already completed all the novels for which he is best known. I think it fair to say that it was even more in the novels than in the *Iliad* translation that he fully accomplished his linguistic program.

To understand this adequately, we need to remember that he also wrote novels in French. The principal reason was financial—his anguished desire to be able to make a living outside of Greece. Added to this was his reputation in right-wing Greece as a leftist, not to mention the nuisance of having his language customarily “corrected” in Greece. He even wrote a novel about Crete in French. “Yesterday,” he complained to a friend, “I finished my novel on Crete, about 500 pages, but written in French. This is where I've ended up. I, the fanatic lover of our language, am forced to write in a foreign tongue. In Greece, I have not a single publisher, and elsewhere I have three.” But the two novels he published in French were flops. He returned to Greece, spent the war years in Aegina, as we have seen, and in 1941, prodded by his wife to write something that might actually sell, began *The Saint's Life of Alexis Zorba*. When he was forced to live outside of Greece again because of the Greek civil war and knew that chances of returning were small, he once again faced the problem of earning a living abroad. His decision not to write the final novels in French was a crucial one. It would be nice to say that he was motivated entirely by self-critical insight, but this is probably not the case since an external factor played a

role — namely, the good fortune of *Zorba*, which had been translated already into Swedish and French, and was being sought by an English publisher. In 1947, Kazantzakis was able to write to his Swedish translator, “I love the Modern Greek language with such a passion that I didn’t want to sign a contract for a series of books with a large Paris publishing firm. . . . My post is in Greek literature. The evolution of our language is passing a decisive, creative moment, and I do not want at any cost to desert my post.” He was obviously repeating the conviction of Yannis Psiharis that it is unthinkable to treat the Greek people and their customs naturalistically unless you employ the words the people actually speak.

The novels are unthinkable apart from the language in which they are written. What they project is a specificity and earthiness, a metaphorical richness, a wealth of anecdote and fable, an almost animistic attitude toward sea, sun, and stars. His artistic vision led him to exaggerate the physical and spiritual power of his characters without at the same time making those characters essentially different from the human norm. His language allows this. The normal words are distorted by means of demotic’s power of augmentation, yet the normality remains. Thus his men are *αντρακλαράδες*, their hands are *χερούκλες*. Even ordinary actions possess an intensity for which accustomed locutions are too pale. His people *δρασκαλίζουν* (stride across) their thresholds instead of simply entering the house; they *μοχτούν* (slog away at something) instead of just trying. Abstractions are scrapped in favor of concretions drawn from village life. A writer is a *χαρτοπόντικας* (paper-mouse), the horizon is the *ουρανοθάλασσα* (sky-sea), an adolescent is *χνουδομάγουλος* (fuzzy-cheeked), fratricides are *αδερφοφάδες* (brother-killers). The natural world is ever-present. Thus when a person huddles or crouches, he *λαγάζει* (makes like a rabbit, since apparently rabbits — or at least Cretan rabbits — do this when they are threatened).

In Kazantzakis’s *Odyssey*, which was meant, let’s remember, to be a demotic dictionary, the linguistic richness is all too often simply an embellishment; in the novels it is generally organic rather than decorative. This of course does not mean that Kazantzakis’s style will be pleasing to everyone. It seems to be too lush for the taste of many Anglo-Saxons accustomed to Hemingway, and Greeks too have found it repulsive. One influential critic, claiming that every page of Kazantzakis’s prose exhibits the identical tone of “epic bombast,” describes the language as containing

“a vocabulary of immeasurable richness, a daring . . . inventiveness that surpasses every measure of good or bad taste.”

If he is right and if Kazantzakis's style is repulsively excessive, then we can place the blame in large part on the language question. Conversely, if the novels are successful, then in part we can also attribute this to the language question. Kazantzakis, at the end of his career, was eloquent about what he had done for demotic, but perhaps did not think sufficiently about what demotic had done for him. Psiharis's beloved language of the people gave the novels a special flavor that distinguishes them. After a decade of crusading demoticism and another two decades of frustrations that drove him to impose his linguistic zeal upon the perhaps somewhat inappropriate material of his *Odyssey*, he finally succeeded in wedding language and material in an aesthetically justifiable manner in his translation of the *Iliad* and in at least three of the late novels. At long last, Kazantzakis and demotic became fellow-workers, each adding stature to the other.

Hanover, New Hampshire
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Kazantzakis in Berlin, 1922–23

MOVING FROM VIENNA, Kazantzakis settled in Berlin on September 1, 1922. He remained in Germany until December 31, 1923, chiefly in Berlin except for some brief sojourns elsewhere, for example a pilgrimage to sites identified with Nietzsche. In this total period of sixteen months he began a second draft of the play *Βούδας* after destroying the first draft, and he completed *Ασκητική*. He frequented symposia dedicated to educational reform, attempted to found a communist journal called *Nova Graecia*, met significant Russian exiles such as the philosopher Lev Shestov and the author Aleksei Remizov, local artists such as Käthe Kollwitz,¹ and became close friends of some young Polish-Jewish communist women — Rahel Lipstein, Itka Horowitz, Dina Matus, and Rosa Schmulewitz — consummating a love affair with Itka.² Despite the political unrest and the inflation, he came at a very good time. «Η ταραχή κ' η ζύμωση που υπάρχει εδώ στο Βερολίνο», he wrote, «είναι καταπληχτική. Στην τέχνη αναζητούνε νέους τρόπους και προστρέχουν στους άγριους Θεούς μου Μεξικού και της Αφρικής. Ζητούν μια spontanéité νέα, άμεση επαφή με τις σύγχρονες ανάγκες, τη σημερινή ψυχή γυμνή χωρίς ξόμπλια . . . Στην παιδαγωγία, στα ζητήματα τα *sexuels*, της υγιεινής, νέες άποψεις, επικίντυνες και μεθυστικές. Χάος ακόμα, μα γόνιμο, γεμάτο δημιουργία».³

During his residence in Berlin he conducted a tempestuous postal exchange with his wife, Galatea. She had remained in Athens, ignoring his repeated invitations, but finally arrived for a short, disastrous stay in November 1923. Despite all these activities, acquaintances, and friends, Kazantzakis was sadly — almost pathologically — lonely during his months in Berlin, a condition that he assuaged by writing an extraordinary number of letters; thus we know what he was thinking, doing, and feeling almost every minute of every day. Aside from the impassioned epistles to Galatea begging her to come but also to stay in Athens in order to facilitate the new journal, there are equally impassioned letters to his childhood friend

Papastefanou, now a priest, whom Kazantzakis had assumed (incorrectly) might be as equally post-Christian and Darwinian as himself. All in all, the letters reveal a man in crisis, feeling unwanted, unloved, unappreciated, and desperately struggling to discover a new direction after the impasse created by the Asia Minor Disaster. By quoting from the letters and commenting on their circumstances, I hope to convey with some vividness the conditions under which Kazantzakis did manage, after all, to write the major moral-*cum*-theological tract that was to govern the rest of his creative output as he weathered the vacuum that existed for so many Greeks after September 1922.

Kazantzakis settled in Lichterfelde West, a Berlin suburb fifteen minutes by train from Potsdamer Platz. He likened it to Kifissιά.⁴ His address was Unter den Eichen 63: «Έχω λαμπρό δωμάτιο σ' ένα σπίτι με δυο παχύτατες γριές, που με περιποιούνται και με θρέφουν με μεγάλη τρυφερότητα».⁵ Inflation was rampant; he wanted to buy an album about Van Gogh but couldn't because it cost 90,000 marks. In 1923 he couldn't afford a Baedeker, which cost 100,000 marks. «. . . κάθε μέρα όλα ακριβαίνουν, τα κάρβουνα, τα ξύλα για τη θέρμανση είναι απρόσιτα. Μόνο οι ξένοι εδώ εταλάρουν ντυμένοι σα mannequins . . . Ενώ καθηγητές του Πανεπιστημίου, περίφημοι . . . πάνε στο Πανεπιστήμιο να διδάξουνε και τα δάχτυλά τους προβαίνουν απ' τα παπούτσια. Χειρότεροι οι καλλιτέχνες, ιδίως ζωγράφοι και μουσικοί».⁶ But he managed: «οι δυο γριές μου μου δίνουν το μεσημέρι ό,τι μαγερεύουν (μόνο την Κυριακή κρέας, τις άλλες μέρες νηστήσιμα, μα άφθονα, ιδίως πατάτες). Το βράδι τρώγω: κακάο, βούτυρο, μαρμελάδα. Το ίδιο και το πρωί. Επίσης άφθονα μήλα, αχλάδια και δαμάσκηνα».⁷

From the very start, helped by the journalist Demosthenes Daniilidis,⁸ he came in touch with leading local communists—mostly Russians—whom he wished to enlist as supporters of the proposed periodical. One of the incentives he offered Galatea when begging her to visit him was the chance to meet these Russians in Berlin. He wrote to her, «νά 'ρθεις να δεις τους πιο εξαιρετικούς ρούσους και ρούσες: κομμουνιστές, χορεύτρες, τραγουδίστρες, μεγίστη κίνηση, τόσο που ένας ρούσος έγγραφε προχτές: “Ωραιά πολιτεία το Βερολίνο, μα έχει πολλούς . . . γερμανούς!”»⁹ Regarding the proposed periodical, what he worried about was Greek supporters. He planned to write to Papanastasiou, Farmakidis, Andreadis, Papandreou, Doxiadis, Anastasiadis, Skouriotis, Dimitriadis, Koutoupis, K. Rados,¹⁰ asking them to allow their names to be used (by late December, not

a single one of them had replied). «Το περιοδικό . . . θα ονομαστεί Nova Graecia (απαραίτητος τίτλος για την εμφάνισή του στην Ευρώπη και για τη μελλούμενη εξέλιξη), όργανο του Συνδέσμου “Όσοι ζωντανοί”. . . . Θα εκδίδεται μια φορά το μήνα, 120 σελίδες, πρωτότυπη, λαμπρή ύλη. . . . Μέρος θα γράφεται και στα γαλλικά και γερμανικά για να επικοινωνούμε με την Ευρώπη που έχει εξάισια στοιχεία. Αρχίζω και μεταφράζω μερικά ποιήματα ενός νέου ποιητή γερμανού, του Klabund, όλο σπαραγμό, αγανάχτηση και δύναμη. Ο Καστανάκης θ’ αρχίσει να μας μεταφράζει τα περίφημα τραγούδια του Ρούσου ποιητή Blok, που πέθανε περίσου, απ’ την πείνα, στη Ρουσία».¹¹ About Daniilidis, Kazantzakis commented at another time: «Είναι σοσιαλιστής, δηλ. θέλει τη δίκαιη διευθέτηση του πλούτου, χωρίς βιαιές κομμουνιστικές ανατροπές. Σ’ αυτό πάντα διαφωνούσαμε: εγώ μπολσεβίκος των άκρων κι αν ακόμα η ορμή μας μπορεί να μην είναι τέλεια λογική και δίκαιη. . . . Είναι Ευρωπαίος, θαμάζει την ευρωπαϊκή οργάνωση, πρόοδο, λογική, τάση. Εγώ είμαι Ανατολίτης . . . Υπάρχει κάτι άλλο βαθύ, φλογερό, πέρα από τη λογική, που κατευθύνει την εσώτατη επιθυμία μου».¹² But Kazantzakis was “European” enough to worry about financial support for his projected journal. It also is apparent that this ardent Bolshevik was simultaneously a capitalist. To help the journal get started he says that he’ll give coupons worth fifty English pounds. Later, he cautioned Galatea that there was no need for her to worry about their investments going up or down because the income always remained the same: one English pound per clipped coupon. On the other hand, he emoted in the same letter: «Είμαστε άναντροι, μωλωματήδες, υποκριτές. Μια μόνο γενναία πράξη υπάρχει: να ρίξεις ό,τι έχεις, περιουσία, βολικάδα, συνήθειες και να βγείς στου δρόμους να φωνάξεις! Πώς ξεχωρίζουν οι μεγάλες ψυχές απ’ τις μέτριες; Μόνο έτσι. “Άφελε πάντα!” όπως πρόσταζε ο Πλωτίνος, “Γδύσου”, όπως ο Άγιος Φραγκίσκος. Η ιδιοκτησία είναι η πηγή κάθε αθλιότητας. Γιότε θα μπορέσω να το κάμω;»¹³

To support himself he had contracted with the Athenian publisher Dimitrakos to oversee the translation of numerous European books for which he would be paid a monthly stipend. This was pure hack work for him at a time when his interests were clearly elsewhere. He confessed to Papastefanou¹⁴ concerning all art — music, poetry, Dante, Homer — «μου φαίνονται σαν ντύματα φιδιού αδειανά».¹⁵ Western Europe was rotting; his first duty was to cry out in the wilderness. But he was consumed by the realization that «δε μπορώ να κάμω το φοβερό πήδημα»¹⁶ — was unable, that is, to go out in the streets and shout. «Είμαι καλός για να βρω το σωστό,

για να φλογίσω μερικές ψυχές, για ν' ανάψω μερικά μυαλά. Μα εγώ μόνος μου να 'ρθω σ' επαφή με τους ανθρώπους, να παλέψω με την αδιαφορία, τη γελοιοποίηση, την καθημερινή μικρολογία, δεν μπορώ. . . . Κ' έπειτα: Δε μπόρεσα ακόμα να νικήσω την Τέχνη. Με γοητεύει θανάσιμα η ωραιότητα, η καλή εικόνα, η πιστή παρομοίωση, το όραμα το τραγικό της ζωής διατυπωμένο σε λέξεις.»¹⁷ There was always another piece of writing that had to be finished, despite everything. In September it was «Συμπόσιον», which he calls «σχόλια στη θρησκεία μας»¹⁸ — the religion he assumed he shared with Father Papastefanou. The idea was that Kazantzakis himself, Papastefanou, Angelos Sikelianos (still the aesthete in Kazantzakis's view), Lefteris Alexiou, and Sfakianos would converse about God «όπως ο Πλάτωνας για τον έρωτα».¹⁹ We see here the beginning of some basic ideas realized subsequently in *Ασκητική*, for Kazantzakis says that he will divide the conversation into substance of divinity, relation between God and man, relation between man and man, relation between man and nature. He also tells Papastefanou more about the projected journal: «Θα ετοιμάζει κοινωνιολογικά το δρόμο μας. Θάναι κομμουνιστικό, θα ζητά την ανατροπή του αστικού καθεστώτος, θα θέλει όπως έλεγαν οι Στοϊκοί την “εκπύρωση” — να καθαρίσει δηλ. η γης με τη φωτιά».²⁰ Finally, we get the first of a plethora of sighs and moans from Berlin. He is suffocating with anguish; he desperately needs long letters, regularly sent. When Galatea neglected to write, as often was the case, he gushed repeatedly, «Σύντροφε, πώς περιμένω, Θέ μου, το γράμμα σου!»²¹ And he complained to her when she did respond, «Εγώ πάντα Σου γράφω τεράστια γράμματα· εσύ, δυο λέξεις. Έπειτα γράφεις τόσο χοντρά στοιχεία! Τρεις Σου σελίδες χωρούνε σε μια δική μου».²²

In a letter to her dated September 9 (which would be August 27 in Greece, which used the Julian calendar until February 16, 1923) we find his first reaction to the Asia Minor Disaster:

Τρομαχτικά μας έρχονται εδώ τα νέα από την Ελλάδα. Άραγε θα βάλουν γνώση τώρα οι άθλιοι Ρωμιοί; Άραγε θά 'ναι, η καταστροφή τούτη, η απαρχή μιας αναγέννησης; Έτσι την παίρνω και την παραδέχομαι μ' ευγνωμοσύνη. Η νική στο τωρινό καθεστώς θα 'ναι ολέθρια για την Ελλάδα. Θα θεμέλιωνε τους σημερινούς άτιμους και θα νάρκωνε το λαό, που άλλο τίποτα δε ζητά. Τώρα, όμως, η μεγάλη δυστυχία θα τον τονώσει ή θα τον εξαφανίσει. Και τα δυο καλύτερα από την άθλια φτωχή ζωή τη σημερινή του. Έτσι, με την καταστροφή, αναγεννήθηκε η Ρωσία κ' η Γερ-

μανία. Η Γαλλία με τη νίκη της έφτασε στην κορφή της ατιμίας, γιατί η νίκη εστερέωσε το καπιταλιστικό καθεστώς που την κυβερνάει. Η σημερινή αυτή πικρή δοκιμασία της Ελλάδας μας μεγαλώνει την ευτύχη και κάνει πιο απαραίτητη μια έντονη προπαγάντα.²³

In the same letter, presumably anguished owing to the disparity between the urgent political needs in Greece and his own inability to renounce the pen in order to wield the sword, he emoted at length to Galatea, bemoaning her coldness toward him, declaring a good simile or a decent play to be sins, acts of cowardice, agreeing with her assessment of him as a dismal failure who has never done anything and never will do anything: «Θα χαθώ ετοιμάζοντας υλικό για άλλον. Ίσως — κι αυτό 'ναι το πικρότερο — για κανένα. . . . Και κανένα, άμα πεθάνω, δε θα μαντέψει απ' τη ζωή μου κι απ' τα ελεεινά γραφτά μου, την αγιάτρευτη, ανώτατη ανάταση της ψυχής μου».²⁴ This sounds megalomaniacal, perhaps, but I think it really is not. What it is, as indicated here and in so many other places in Kazantzakis's writings, is a deep conviction that we may call religious because it is a conviction that as a self he is nothing — a conviction that his ephemeral self is the carrier of something non-ephemeral. Here he calls it simply «ανώτερο απ' το άθλιο εγώ, πλατύτερό μου». Later, in October 1923, he was more explicit: «Ξέρω μονάχα . . . πως τίποτα ατομικό δε μ' ενδιαφέρει, πως δίνω όλη μου τη ζωή, ένα και μόνο, πέρα από το άτομό μου, ζητώντας. Πιστεύω ακλόνητα στην ευγένεια και στη δύναμη μιας Πνοής που διαπερνάει φυτά, ζα, ανθρώπους και τώρα μάχεται συνειδητά μέσα μου και θέλει να με ξεπεράσει, να λευτερωθεί από την ανάξια φύση μου, να γλυτώσει από μένα. Την πνοή αυτή μάχομαι να υπηρετώ, γιατί ξέρω πως αυτή, κι όχι το σακί αυτό τα κόκκαλα, το κρέας, το μυαλό και τα πάθη, που κουβαλώ, είναι η ουσία της ψυχής μου».²⁵ He might have called it Bergson's *élan vital*. Richard Dawkins would call it “the self-ish gene.”²⁶ Kazantzakis at this point wants to call it *Βούδας* and to express it (as he finally did, many years later, in the final draft) in the play then on his desk. There was always one more work — first «Συμπόσιον», now *Βούδας* — keeping him from the active political life he craved — craved not only for himself, or for the cause of Bolshevism, but also, and primarily, to help “save” the something higher. Here, once again, we see the germ of *Ασκητική*.

During his stay in Berlin, Kazantzakis became very interested in educational reform. One reason was that he and Galatea had been making

money by writing school books. They hoped to make more. In October 1922 he attended an educational conference with great interest. In November, he wrote to Galatea: «Έπρεπε να δεις τους αρχηγούς. Είναι τρεις. Ξεχωρίζει ένας, ο Destereich. Μορφή ασκητική, στεγνή, ως 45 ετών, αψηλός, άγριος, φτωχότατος. Φορεί ξεφτισμένα ρούχα από peau de diable, κι όταν μιλά ξεχνά πως μιλά για σκολιά κι αρχίζει με ορμή και μίσος να γκρεμίζει την έννοια της σύγχρονης άθλιας κοινωνικής ζωής. Χιλιάδες νέοι, ξανθά κεφάλια, αφελέστατα, μα εργατικά, τον ακούνε, κι άλλοι κλαίνε, άλλοι οργανώνονται και εκπορεύεται από τις ενέργειές τους η φορβερή Jugendbewegung (οργάνωση της νεότητας), που κυριαρχεί όλη τη Γερμανία. Πρέπει να δεις τους νέους αυτούς (δεν επιτρέπεται πέρα από 35 ετών) πώς τραγουδούν, πώς πάνε εκδρομές, πώς δουλεύουν, πώς είναι ντυμένοι, πώς σκέφτονται — αγόρια και κοπέλλες. Νέος αέρας, αγωνία να λυτρωθεί, όχι ο Γερμανός μόνο, και μόνο ο εργάτης, μα ο Άνθρωπος. Υπάρχει μέσα στην οργάνωσή τους μεγάλο ρέμα θρησκευτικό, εκδίδουν βιβλία, εφημερίδες δικές τους, βοηθούνται, είναι ένας στρατός πνευματικός των μελλούμενων επιστρατέψεων».²⁷

Looking forward to April 1923, he reports that he attended

μια συνεδρία των “Αποφασισμένων”. Είναι ένας θαυμαστός πολεμιστικός όμιλος ανθρώπων, κυρίως παιδαγωγών, που επίζητούν την ολική αναμόρφωση του Σκολείου. Όχι ν’ αλλαχτεί η μέθοδο, μα ν’ αλλαχτεί ο Σκοπός της παιδαγωγικής. Είναι όλοι κομμουνίστες και άκρο σοσιαλιστές. Άλλοτε θα Σου γράψω για τους τρεις εξαισίους τύπους που διευθύνουν τον αγώνα. Κάνουν συνέδρια, μιλούνε σε όλες τις πολιτείες, είναι φτωχοί, φορούν peau de diable, ανοιχτά σκούρα πουκάμισα προλετάρικα. Εκδίδουν περιοδικό, βιβλία, μανιφέστα. Είμαι μέλος του Συνδέσμου αυτού και από τους ακρότατους. Στην προχτεσινή συνεδρία ένας νέος δάσκαλος μίλησε για το Σκολείο του Wyneken. (Ο Wyneken είναι από τους πιο προχωρημένους σκεπτόμενους και παιδαγωγούς, σήμερα, του κόσμου. Έχει ιδρύσει ένα περίφημο σκολειό σ’ ένα δάσο με νέα παιδαγωγία. Κατηγορήθηκε ως homosexuel και τον έβαλαν φυλακή. Είναι ακόμα στη φυλακή.) Ο ομιλητής εξεθείασε το λαμπρό σκολειό-δάσος, μουσική, ελευτερία, αγάπη θερμή στο σώμα, έρωτας του μυαλού, πάθος για την ωραιότητα.

Δε βαστούσα. Φώναζα, δέκοφτα, δε μου άρεσε καθόλου. Κι όταν άρχισε η συζήτηση είπα πως το Σκολείο δεν πρέπει να ’ναι σήμερα: Καταφύγιο, ένα νησί ωραιότητας μέσα στον ωκεανό της σύγχρονης ασκήμιας.

Δεν πρέπει να 'ναι τέχνη, ιδανικό, ιερό ερημητήριο. Σήμερα το σχολειό πρέπει ένα και μόνο να 'ναι: Προετοιμασία. Προετοιμασία για τον άμεσο, σύγχρονο, που άρχισε κιόλας, αγώνα. Δεν πρέπει να 'ναι μακριά σε δάσος και να οργανώνεται σαν ειδύλλιο. Το σχολειό σήμερα (αργότερα, άμα νικήσουμε, γονιολογούμε για ωραιότητες) πρέπει να 'ναι στο περιβάλλον το κοινό το άσκημο, όπου μέλλεται να ζήσει και να δουλέψει ο μαθητής μεγαλώνοντας. Το άσκημο αυτό περιβάλλον πρέπει οι μαθητές με το δάσκαλο καλά να το δύνε, να το μισήσουνε, να προσπαθήσουνε να το αλλάξουν. Όχι να το κάμουν ιδανικό — τέτια μάταιη ελπίδα που καταντάει πάντα σε αποκαρδίωση, πρέπει να την αποφεύγουνε. Να το αλλάξουνε λίγο, όσο μπορούνε. Ναι, να κάνουν εκδρομή στο δάσος, να επιθυμούν τη θάλασσα, τον αέρα, μα να ξέρουν πως σήμερα δεν έχουν καιρό. Κι ακόμα θα 'λεγα: Δεν πρέπει, όπως στο σχολειό του Wyneken, όλα να 'ναι δίκαια, κανονικά, τέλεια. Να μάθουνε ν' αδικούνται οι μαθητές και να μάθουνε ν' αντιστέκονται στην αδικία και να φωνάζουν. Να μην τρώνε έτσι κανονικά, μα συχνά να πεινούν, να διψούν, να υποφέρουν. Γερά κορμιά, μα όχι γιατί έτσι γίνονται ωραία, μα γιατί έτσι γίνονται δυνατά. Και σε τι θα χρυσιμέψει η δύναμή τους; Να μάθουν ενωρίς πως όλα αυτά που διδάσκονται, όλες οι δυνάμεις που μαζεύουν, όλη η μάθηση, η αντοχή, η λαχτάρα, ένα και μόνο έχουν σκοπό: να καταστρέψουν τον παλιό (τον κόσμο των γονιών τους) και να δημιουργήσουν καινούργιο.

Σαφής, αμείλιχτος, στενός πρέπει τώρα να 'ναι ο σκοπός του Σχολειού. Αργότερα, αργότερα, σα νικήσουμε, με τη δύναμη του Θεού μας, τότε βλέπομε. Τότε θα 'ρθει η τέχνη, η μουσική, το ειδύλλιο. Κι αν ζούσαμε τότε, εμείς πρώτοι θα βάζαμε πάλι μίνες για νέα καταστροφή και δημιουργία. Μα η ζωή μας είναι λίγη. Στην ορισμένη μικρή γραμμίτσα που διατρέχομε ζώντας, πρέπει να δουλέψομε. Να δούμε ποια είναι η εποχή μας, ποια είναι η πρωτοπορία της εποχής μας κ' ευτύς, αποφασισμένα, χωρίς συμβιβασμούς, να τοποθετήθουμε στα ακρότατα φυλάκια της μάχης. Άλλο χρέος, άλλη αρετή, άλλη ευτυχία δεν πρέπει να γνωρίζομε.²⁸ ...

... Αν σε κανένα μέρος του κόσμου με αφήναν, το πρώτο έργο που θα 'ρχιζα θα 'τανε να ιδρύσω ένα σχολειό. Να ετοιμάσω τους αγωνιστές, να τους διδάξω, σύμφωνα με τη φλόγα που με καίει, την Ιστορία της Ελλάδας, της Ρώμης, τη σύγχρονη. Να τους μάθη γιατί πρέπει να γίνουν καλοί αργάτες, καλοί δασκάλοι, καλοί επιστήμονες, καλοί και γόνιμοι πατέρες. Να τους μάθω πώς πρέπει να επιθωρούν τ' αστρα, τα ζώα, τους

αθρώπους, τις ιδέες. Μονομέρεια, μονομέρεια, συνειδητή, αμείλιχτη, αδι-
 άλλαχτη. Όχι περιττές θεωρίες, γενικές επισκοπήσεις, καλό είναι τούτο,
 καλό είναι και το αντίθετό του, όλα είναι καλά, ή όλα είναι κακά. Όχι,
 ο κόσμος διαιρείται σε δυο: καλό και κακό, απάνου και κάτω, Θεό και
 αντίθεο. Είμαστε στρατιώτες του Θεού, τι θα πει αυτό; Χρέος έχομε να
 μισούμε την εμισή κατεύθυνση του κόσμου και ν' αγαπούμε την άλλη.
 Αργότερα, όταν θα 'ρθει η ισορρόπηση (ύστερα, δηλ., από τη νίκη μας)
 ας διδάσκουν τους ανθρώπους νά 'ναι αρμονικοί, universels και tolérants.
 Τώρα, όλες αυτές οι αρετές είναι αδυναμίες κ' εγκατάλειψη ασπίδας στη
 μάχη.²⁹

Nevertheless, he did admire Wyneken, whom he praised in a later letter as «από τους μεγαλύτερους σκεπτόμενους τώρα στη Γερμανία, δηλ. στον Κόσμο. Οι σκέψεις του για τη θρησκεία, την ηθική, την εκπαίδευση είναι εξαιρετικές. Ό,τι λέει για την ουσία της θεότητας είναι τόσο σύμφωνο με την αντίληψή μου, που ζήτησα να τονε δω και περιμένω αυτές τις μέρες να τονε βγάλουν από τη φυλακή (όλη η ανώτερη πνευματική τάξη εξεγέρθηκε, γιατί οι επικρατούντες τώρα στο δικαστήριο αντιδραστικοί και μοναρχικοί τον εφυλάκσαν) θα πάω κοντά στη Βαϊμάρη όπου είναι το σχολιό του να μιλήσω μαζί του».³⁰

His interest in educational reform eventually led to a new scheme: «μαζεύω τώρα όλα τα σχολικά κομμουνιστικά βιβλία που γράφτηκαν και όλα τα κομμουνιστικά παιδικά και θ' αρχίσω να εχτελώ ένα παλιό μου σχέδιο: Να γράψω μια σειρά βιβλία για τα παιδιά της ερχόμενης κοινωνίας».³¹

In November 1922, a month after the Asia Minor Disaster, he was increasingly negative about Greece, writing to Galatea, «Αν πάλι εξαφανιστούν οι Έλληνες, γιατί είναι ανάξιοι, τότε βλογημένη η ώρα του εξαφανισμού τους! Θ' αδειάσουν τη λαμπρή αυτή γωνία της θάλασσας που μολέβουν και θά 'ρθουν άλλοι άνθρωποι να τιμήσουν τ' όνομα του ανθρώπου». Then he continued: «Ναι, είμαι από την ελληνική ράτσα και ο ξεπεσμός της είναι και δικός μου ξεπεσμός — γιατί τα στοιχεία που μου παρέχει και με τα οποία και μόνο μπορώ να δουλέψω εδώ στη γη, είναι ξεπεσμένα. Μα πάλι λέω, νιώθω πως η Κρητική μας ράτσα δεν είναι ελληνική. Φρικώδεις, βέβαια, είναι κ' οι Κρητικοί, μα γιατί παρασύρθηκαν απ' την Ελλάδική αθλιότητα. Βαθύτατα είναι γεροί, βάρβαροι, αγνοί, δημιουργοί. Μάχομαι να ξεφύγω. . . . Οι άνθρωποι στην Ελλάδα είναι ακόμα ολότελα απροετοίμαστοι ν' ακούσουνε μια ιδέα και να ταραχτούν. Είναι μικροί, εμποράκοι, δασκαλάκοι, αναντροι. Σαν εσένα

δεν ξέρω αν θα υπάρχουνε τρεις σε όλο τον Ελληνισμό — να σηκωθούν κι ας μὴν εἶναι ολότελα σύμφωνοι, και να τιμήσουνε μιαν ιδέα». ³² Later, in April 1923, he wrote in the same vein about the Greeks after extolling Lenin's willingness to compromise: «Όλα αυτά καμιά σχέση δεν έχουνε με τους ανθρωπάκους που ασχημονούν εκάστοτε στην Ελλάδα. Όλοι αυτοί προβαίνουνε σε συβιβασμούς όχι χάρη της Ιδέας, μα χάρη του εαυτούλη τους, για ν' αριθάρουν. Όλοι αυτοί, ως επιτήδειοι ρωμιοί, μεταχειρίζονται ως όργανο και όπλο τους ό,τι ιερό βρήκαν οι άνθρωποι για να πετύχουνε μια θέση». ³³ When "The Six" who presumably were responsible for the Asia Minor Disaster were executed at the end of November 1922, Kazantzakis commented: «Έπρεπε να σκοτωθούν απ' το λαό· μα πάλι καλά που βρέθηκε ο Πλαστήρας να πει μια γενναία λέξη. Καλύτερα να χαθούμε παίζοντας τραγωδία, παρά να ζούμε παίζοντας οπερέτα. Εδώ η Ευρώπη όλη εξανέστη για τη βαρβαρότητα! Και για τις 50.000 που ξεσπιτώθηκαν καθώς και για τους χιλιάδες Τούρκους που σκότωσαν οι Έλληνες έμεινε απαθέστατη. Εγώ χάρηκα γιατί νομίζω πως τώρα μόνο θα καταλάβει ο Ρωμιός ότι κάτι σημαντικό συμβαίνει. Να χαθεί η Σμύρνη, η Πόλη, η Θράκη δεν τόντε νοιάζει. Μα να σκοτωθούν έτσι, σα σκύλοι, οι βοσκοί τους, που σύχναζαν στα Ντορέ, αυτό θα τους κάμει κατάπληξη και δέος. Και πάντα το δέος είναι χρήσιμο σ' ένα τέτοιο λαο». ³⁴

He says that he is struggling to escape. One way, the way operating at that moment, was by completing *Buddha*. He hopes that when «η ωραιότητα, η καλή εικόνα, η πιστή παρομοίωση, το όραμα το τραγικό της ζωής διατυπωμένο σε λέξεις» no longer exercises its fatal attraction over him, ³⁵ he will begin to work with people instead of words. A propos:

Συλλογούμαι πολύ να πάω στη Ρουσία. Αχ! νά 'μαστε Ρούσοι! Να ένας λαός, που περισσότερο απ' το ψωμί έχει ανάγκη την ιδέα. Όλοι οι σπόροι του μελλούμενου βράζουν, χορεύουνε στα λιμασμένα ρημαγμένα του σπλάχνα. . . . οι πιο ταπεινές ρούσικες ψυχές, οι έμιγρές εδώ, που γιομίσανε με τις γυναίκες τους, με τη μουσική, με το χορό, με τη ζωγραφική, με τα cabarets και τα τραγούδια τους τη Γερμανία, τι βαθύτατες, όλο σινέπαρμα, ίλιγγο, ψυχές! Όλα για όλα!

Πώς να πάω στη Ρουσία, πώς θα ενεργήσω, πώς θα μιλήσω στους ανθρώπους, δεν ξέρω. Κάποτε, οράματα επικά και παράφρονα γειμίζουν το μυαλό μου. Μια σταθροφορία βράζει μέσα μου, να κινήσει η Ρουσία με το νέο Θεό να πατήσει την Ευρώπη. Ο νέος προλετάριος Θεός θα συντρίψει όλα τα φρικώδη, άτιμα πολιτικά, οικονομικά, ηθικά, πνεματικά

είδωλα, και θα κηρύξει μια νέαν ελευθερία στον κόσμο. Όλη η Ασία ταράζεται, η Ρουσία σταυρωμένη προσδοκεί και κατεργάζεται την Ανάσταση, η Ευρώπη όλο και βουλιάζει στην ατιμία και στο σκοτάδι.³⁶

He was not entirely naïve about Russia despite his enthusiasm: «Δεν έχω καμιάν illusion για τη σύγχρονη πραγματικότητα της Ρουσίας. Ξέρω πως οι ίδιοι οι αρχηγοί της δεν έχουνε σαφή ιδέα της εντολής τους, ξέρω πως ο λαός υποφέρει αφάνταστα, κ' εδώ γνώρισα το μεγαλύτερο της σήμερα φιλόσοφο, το Σεστώβ και ένα συγγραφέα τον Ρεμίζωφ που έφυγαν απ' τη Ρουσία γιατί ήταν αντίθετοι, μη μπορώντας ν' ανεχτούνε τις φοβερές λεπτομέρειες».³⁷ Nevertheless, he began to take lessons in the Russian language (in winter 1923 he was already reading *Anna Karenina* in the original!), decided that he'd better learn a trade, to be able to work there three hours a day,³⁸ and convinced himself that, no matter what, he had to live «μέσα στο θείο αυτό, φριχτό και εξαιρετικό χάος της Ρουσίας».³⁹ His aim: «να προσπαθήσουμε να βρούμε το ρυθμό της πορείας του [Θεού] και . . . να προσαρμόζουμε, όσο μπορούμε, μαζί του, το ρυθμό της μικρής μας, εφήμερης ζωής».⁴⁰

Yet it is also clear that his dream of going to Russia offered some sort of escape, he hoped, from loneliness and from a pervasive sorrow caused by his conviction that his wife Galatea had no faith in him. He even contemplated suicide on this account.⁴¹ Listen to how he moans in mid-December 1922, after three and a half months in Berlin: «Έχω αγωνίες μεγαλύτερες από την ατομική μου περιπέτεια, έχω ανάγκες και ξέρω πως ποτέ δεν θα μπορέσω να τις γαληνέψω. Τίποτα δεν μπορεί να μου δώσει και την πιο μικρή χαρά. Κάθομαι ολημέρα στο δωμάτιο εδώ και διαβάζω, γράφω και νιώθω τόση αηδία για τις μικρές μου τούτες ασχολίες που συχνά δεν μπορώ να βαστάξω το κλάμα. Πάω ταχτικά στη μουσική, παρακολουθώ διάλεξεις, χορούς, μουσεία — κι όλα τούτα είναι σαν τα μήλα του Ντάντε: γιομίζουν το στόμα μου με στάχτη».⁴²

In late December 1922 we get important news:

Γράφω τώρα την «Ασκητική», ένα βιβλίο mystique, όπου διαγράφω τη μέθοδο ν' ανεβεί η ψυχή από κύκλο σε κύκλο ωσότου φτάσει στην ανώτατη Επαφή. Είναι πέντε κύκλοι: Εγώ, ανθρωπότητα, Γης, Σύμπαντο, Θεός. Πώς ν' ανεβούμε όλα τούτα τα σκαλοπάτια κι όταν φτάσουμε στο ανώτατο να ζήσουμε όλους τους προηγούμενους κύκλους. Το γράφω επίτηδες χωρίς ποίηση, με στεγνή, επιταχτική φόρμα. Βλέπεις, . . . είναι ο τελευταίος καρπός της αναζήτησής μου. Ως τότε η αναζήτηση; Η

μήπως σκοπός μου είναι μονάχα η αναζήτηση, δηλ. η πορεία από σημείο σε σημείο; Μήπως τέτια είναι κ' η πορεία του Θεού; Η αναζήτηση (προς τ' άνω και με συνοχή) ίσως αυτός είναι ο σκοπός του Σύμπαντος. Σκοπός και μέσα ταυτίζονται.⁴³

Later: «μάχομαι, κοιτάζω μπροστά σαν τον Οδυσσέα, μα χωρίς εγώ να ξέρω αν ποτέ θ' αράξω στην Ιθάκη. Εχτός αν Ιθάκη είναι το ταξίδι».⁴⁴ In January 1923, to Papastefanou, he elaborated more on the book's contents and explained why its subtitle was «Salvatores Dei»: God «φωνάζει βοήθεια. Δε μας σώζει. Εμείς τότε σώζομε. Salvatores Dei! Τι θα πει τότε σώζομε; Σώζομε μέσα απ' την εφήμερη πλήληνη ύπαρξήμας την πνοή την αιώνια, μετουσιδόνουμε τη σάρκα, τον αέρα, το νερό και τα κάνομε πνέμα. Μέσα από την ύλη, στο εργαστήρι τούτο του κορμιούμας, κατασκεβάζομε πνέμα, ελεφτερόνομε το Θεό. Άλο σκοπό δεν έχει η ζωήμας».⁴⁵ He noted that he planned to have the book translated into Hebrew and Russian, then printed, «και διαδοθεί μυστικά στους κατηχομένους». His hope was «μια καινούργια σταυροφορία να κηρύξω ενάντια του σύχρονου πολιτισμού και με εκατομύρια πεινασμένους, ένθεους ρούσους να πλημυρίσω την Εβρώπη».⁴⁶

His opinion of his fellow Greeks had softened a bit by this time. At least he was able to declare: «θαρρώ πως οι αρετές της ράτσας μας αναδειχονται μόνο έξω από Κρατικά καθεστώτα. Ως Κρατικός ο Έλληνας είναι φρικαλέος ως Οδυσσέας, περιπλανόμενος, εργαζόμενος, εμπορευόμενος, σκεπτόμενος, χωρίς δικό του Κρατικό σύστημα, σαν τους Εβραίους, είναι μοναδικός στον κόσμο. Μπορεί, όπως οι Εβραίοι, να γίνει δραστηκότατο προζύμι για ν' ανεβεί η γης».⁴⁷

In mid-January 1923, he was witness to a new crisis, occupation of the Ruhr. He wrote to his wife:

Οι Γάλλοι μπήκανε στη Γερμανία, πήραν όλα της τα βιομηχανικά μεγάλα κέντρα κι ο αντίχτυπος — ηθικός και υλικός — είναι τεράστιος. Χτες νύχτα πήγα σε μια μεγάλη συγκέντρωση κομμουνιστών. Λόγια, φωνές, internationale και, ξάφνου, η αστυνομία. Όλοι, χιλιάδες, εν σώματι, περάσαμε τους δρόμους με μια τεράστια κόκκινη σημαία μπροστά, που κρατούσε μια εργάτισσα. Έγιναν μερικές σύλληψες, τίποτ' άλλο. Αύριο νέα συλλαλητήρια. Σκοπός: οι κομμουνιστές της Γαλλίας και Γερμανίας να ενωθούν με την ευκαιρία αυτή, αφού οι bourgeois Γαλλίας και Γερμανίας με το coup αυτό του Poincaré ενώθηκαν (τους εδώ βιομηχανους συμφέρε η επέμβαση της Γαλλίας). Έτσι ν' αρχίσει η ένωση η

διεθνής των κομμουνιστών και να διατυπωθεί ο νέος πόλεμος (που έρχεται) ή αρνητικά: γενική απεργία, ή θετικά: πόλεμος όχι μεταξύ εθνών μα μεταξύ τάξεων.

Όλα, τρόφιμα, τραμ κλπ. διπλασιάστηκαν οι τιμές τους. Όταν ήρθα το τραίνο από Lichterfelde στο Βερολίνο είχε 7 μάρκα. Σήμερα έχει 80 κι από αύριο 160. Το ίδιο οι επιστολές από αύριο διπλάσιο. Ελαττώνω όσο μπορώ τα έξοδά μου. . . .⁴⁸

Τώρα τι αναβρασμός υπάρχει σε όλη τη Γερμανία, δε φαντάζεσαι, εναντίον των Γάλλων. Η φτώχεια έφτασε σε επικίνδυνο σημείο. Η λίρα ανέβηκε 120.000 Μάρκα (από 5.000 όπου τη βρήκα) και μαζί της ανέβηκαν όλα τα πράματα. Κάρβουνο πια δεν υπάρχει και το δωμάτιό μου μόνο δυο μέρες τη βδομάδα μπορώ να το ζεστάνω. Και το κρύο είναι φοβερό, όξω χιόνια παντού. . . .⁴⁹

Για να νιώσεις: ένα βιβλίο . . . είχε προ ενός μηνός 3.000 Μάρκα. Σήμερα μου ζήτησαν 72.000!

Έπαψα πια ν' αγοράζω βιβλία. Περιορίζομαι στα πιο απαραίτητα. Ευτυχώς η βιβλιοθήκη εδώ είναι πλουσιότατη κ' έχω όλα.⁵⁰

Συλλαλητήρια τεράστια, μίσος εναντίον των ξένων. Απαγορεύτηκαν τα liqueurs, οι χοροί, οι σπατάλες στα ξενοδοχεία. Δεν επιτρέπεται, από χτές, να τοποθετούνται τρόφιμα με ορεχτικά στις προθήκες για να μη βλέπει ο λαός που πεινά κ' ερεθίζεται. Πολλοί καθηγητές και γιατροί δουλεύουν τη νύχτα ως γκαρσόνια στα καφενεία και στα ρεστωράν. Πολλοί πάστορες πιάσανε δουλειά στα μεταλλεία.

Η δυστυχία δεν περιγράφεται. Και πλάι σπατάλη κι αναιδεια των ξένων που έχουν καλή βαλούτα. Οι Ρωμιοί εδώ (από μακριά μου τους δείχνει ο Δανιηλίδης, κανένα δε γνώρισα) είναι άθλιοι, γλεντζέδες, προστυχότατοι Βαλκάνιοι. Συνάμα αναβρασμός στους κομμουνιστές. Συνέδρια, συναδέρφωση Γάλλων και Γερμανών κομμουνιστών.

Οι νασιοναλιστές τουναντίον (και είναι εδώ η πλειοψηφία) οργανώνουν συλλαλητήρια υπέρ του πολέμου.

Η Ρουσία αγρυπνεί. Μπορεί, αν εκμεταλλευτεί την ευκαιρία, να πλημμυρίσει την Ευρώπη την αστική και να σηκώσει τη μεγάλη επανάσταση των τάξεων. Μα ο Λένιν, αν κ' έγινε καλά, είναι ακόμα κουρασμένος κ' έχασε την ορμή του. Ίσως ο Τρότσκι που είναι θηριώδης και sans scrupules, τεράστιος οργανωτής των μαζών, παίζει ένα ρόλο Τσιγκισχάνου πνευματικού.

Πάντως τα πάντα εδώ είναι σε παραμονές εκρήξεως.⁵¹

He continued to go to demonstrations, and was especially admiring of radical women, whose virtues he commended to his wife: «Εδώ είδα προ λίγου καιρού μια γυναίκα να μιλάει σε κομμουνιστικό συλλαλητήριο. Πόσο ζήλεψα! Η φωνή της καθαρή, αποφασισμένη, οξύτατη μέσα στις χοντρές ακαθόριστες γνάμες των αντρών. Είπε χωρίς θεωρίες και Μαρξικές επίκλησες, πως “τα λόγια είναι περιττα”, πως “ήρθε πια ο καιρός της πράξης. Έχομε δίκιο; δεν έχομε; Αυτό το βλέπομε με την πράξη. Ο κόσμος τούτος πρέπει να καταστραφεί!” Μια άλλη γυναίκα, 70 χρονών, η Κλάρα Ζέτκιν, περνάει κρυφά τα σύνορα, εμφανίζεται σε κάθε κομμουνιστική διαδήλωση σε όλη τη Γερμανία και μιλάει με πάθος, ορμή, διαύγεια αφάνταστη. Επικεφαλής της γριάς αυτής, χιλιάδες αργάτες διασχίζουν τους μεγάλους δρόμους. Μια άλλη γυναίκα, άσκημη, κουτσή, διευθύνει ένα περίφημο σκολειό προλετάριο στα περίχωρα του Βερολίνου. Προχτές είχε συνέδριο όπου όλοι οι “Αποφασισμένοι αναμορφωτές” πήγαν και μίλησαν, όχι πια για τις νέες μέθοδες της παιδαγωγικής, μα για τους νέους σκοπούς που πρέπει να δώσομε στην παιδαγωγική. Απ’ όπου περνούσε η Tanni αυτή, όπως λέγεται η κουτσή διευθύντρα, σφυριές, ύβρεις, πέτρες, τα παιδιά των άλλων αστικών σκολειών. Όλοι τη μισούνε στο προάστειο αυτό, το Spandau. Μόνο οι μικροί μαθητές της, αγόρια και κορίτσια, δέκα έως 14 ετών, τη λατρεύουν. Μάχες συνάπτονται μεταξύ των παιδιών κ’ η κουτσή Τυρταία ανάβει το μίσος, την αγάπη, τον έρωτα για το μελλούμενο πόλεμο.

Σε συλλογούμαι πάντα θωρώντας τις γυναίκες τούτες. Στην Ελλάδα ν’ αρχίσεις;⁵²

In the winter of 1923, with the cold and lack of coal, Kazantzakis was spending the day in bed as he struggled to complete *Άσκητική* and then to go back to *Βούδας*.⁵³ He was clearly depressed: «Είμαι λυπημένος, ανήσυχος, κοιτάζω τη ζωή μου και τη ψυχή μου με δέος. Τίποτα δεν μπορεί να μ’ ευχαριστήσει, η μουσική, η ζωγραφική δε μου γεμίζουν πια την καρδιά, η καθημερινή εργασία είναι μαρτύριο. Να μπορούσα να μην έγγραφα! Κάθε πρωί που ζέυομαι στο χαρτί, ανατριχιάζω από αγωνία, — τι θα μπορέσω να ξελαγαρίσω, να σώσω από τη φθορά, πώς θα βρω τις λέξεις να μην χαθεί η ψυχή μου; Το καθημερινό αυτό μαρτύριο μ’ εξαντλεί. . . . είμαι πολύ στενοχωρημένος, δεν κάνω πια στη Γερμανία».⁵⁴

On April 10, 1923, he voiced one of his most memorable confessions: «Υπήρξα καθαρευουσιάνος, νασιοναλιστής, δημοτικιστής, επιστήμονας, ποιητής, σοσιαλιστής, θρησκομανής, άθεος, esthète — και τίποτα πια από αυτά δεν μπορεί να με ξεγελάσει».⁵⁵

In May 1923 the weather was obviously improving. «άνθισαν οι καστανιές», he wrote; «θάμα είναι το Lichterfelde». ⁵⁶ He was again dreaming of some concrete action:

... γυρίζω τώρα από τη μεγάλη συγκέντρωση των κομμουνιστών σε μια μεγάλη πλατεία του Βερολίνου. Ήταν μποροστά στο Παλάτι και χιλιάδες κόσμος είχανε μαζευτεί, η πλατεία γιομάτη κόκκινες σημαίες, τ' αγάλματα των παλιών Χοεντζόλερν καταστόλιστα από κόκκινες σημαίες, σφυριά και δρεπάνια. Οι μανάδες κρατούσαν απάνου στους ώμους τους τα μικρά παιδιά τους για να δούνε και να τυπώσουνε στο μυαλό τους το θέαμα τούτο. Ρήτορες πολλοί, φράσεις γνωστές, ο λαός άκουσε δυο-τρεις ώρες τις αιώνιες φρασεολογίες και διαλύθηκε.

Μαζί μου ήταν ένας διανοούμενος Γερμανός κομμουνιστής με τη στολή που συνήθως έχουν εδώ οι διανοούμενοι — φοιτητές, δασκάλιοι, λόγιοι κλπ. κομμουνίστες: σακάκι κλειστό *peau de diable*, ανοιχτό γιακά, συνήθως χρωματιστό, δίχως καπέλλο, κοντό πανταλόνι και κάλτσες ως τα γόνατα και χοντρά παπούτσια ή πέδιλα. Του ΄λεγα πόσο η φόρμα αυτή των συλλαλητηρίων μου φαίνεται παλιά και άψυχη. Πρέπει μια νέα φόρμα να βρεθεί στις συγκέντρωσες αυτές και τις οργάνωσες του κομμουνισμού. Τα συλλαλητήρια τούτα είναι σήμερα ό,τι άλλοτε ήσαν οι θρησκευτικές λιτανείες. Πώς οργάνωσε η Εκκλησία τις λιτανείες τούτες; Στους δρόμους εξετυλιγέτο κάποια ενιαία, δραματική δράση: ήταν οι χοροί, μιλούσε ο ένας, απαντούσε ο άλλος, ο επίσκοπος ήταν η ορατή ενότητα, σταματούσανε στα σταυροδρόμια, επεκαλούντο το Θεό, σώπαινε το πλήθος, ξεσπούσε ξαφνικά σε επίκλησες, σε απειλές, σε ελπίδες.

Όχι το ίδιο, μα μια αφορμή μπορούνε να μας δώσουν οι λιτανείες τούτες. Πρέπει να οργανωθεί σε μορφές σύγχρονες ο ενθουσιασμός, το μίσος, η δύναμη του προλεταριάτου, όταν ξεχύνεται στους δρόμους και διενεργεί συλλαλητήρια ή διαμαρτυρίες.

Κ' η φόρμα θά 'ναι διαφορετική σε κάθε έθνος. Τι έκαναν οι Γερμανοί του μεσαίωνα, όταν κινούσανε σε σταυροφορίες ή όταν αγωνίζονταν επί γενεές να ρίξουν τη φεουδαρχία; Έτσι θα οδηγηθούμε σε μια φόρμα σύγχρονη, καθαρά γερμανική, μιάς ομαδικής συγκέντρωσης.

Ήτανε σύμφωνος μαζί μου ο φίλος μου, μα έλεγε πως ή λείπουν οι μεγάλες ατομικότητες που θα συλλάβουν την υποσυνείδητη επιθυμία του πλήθους ή το υποσυνείδητο τούτο δεν είναι ακόμα πολύ ισχυρό ώστε να επιβληθεί σε ορισμένες ατομικότητες και διατυπωθεί σε στερεές μορφές.

Μαζί με το φίλο μου αυτό και μερικούς άλλους εργαζόμαστε τώρα ταχτικά να ιδρύσουμε ένα Σύνδεσμο διεθνή για φωτισμό του λαού με βιβλία, ομιλίες, προπαγάντες κλπ. Αυτοί επιμένουν κυρίως στη διαμόρφωση εκλεκτών διανοούμενων που να προματευτούν φιλοσοφικά, επιστημονικά, καλλιτεχνικά κλπ. θέματα από κομμουνιστική, μαρξική άποψη. Εγώ επιμένω στην ανάγκη ν' αφήσουμε για τώρα όλες τούτες τις νοητικές πολυτέλειες και να δούμε πώς θ' αποταθούμε 1) στο λαό γενικά 2) στους εργαζόμενους ειδικά 3) στα παιδιά.⁵⁷

But his health was not good. He was advised to go to a village, to eat more, and work less. So in June he arrived in a small village near Jena, rooming in a medieval tower—now a pension—where Goethe once stayed.

Πήρα ελάχιστα βιβλία μαζί μου και λέω να κάνω μεγάλους περίπατους. Περνώντας από το Naumburg είδα το σπίτι όπου γεννήθηκε ο Νίτσε κ' η τραγική μορφή του ανθρώπου αυτού που τόσο συγγενεύει με την ψυχική και τη σωματική μου διάπλαση με τάραξε πάλλι. Προχτές, στο Βερολίνο, ένας Γερμανός που γνώρισα, έτρεξε, την ώρα που περνούσα και πήγαινα μερικά βιβλία στη Βιβλιοθήκη, και μου είπε με συγκίνηση πως ξαφικά ως με είδε, θάρρηψε πως είδε το Νίτσε. Κι αλήθεια, μερικές εικόνες του μού μοιάζουνε απίστευτα. Μα ας ελπίσω πως είμαι πιο γερός, πως οι γονείς μου δε μου μεταβίβασαν — όπως ο πατέρας του Νίτσε — το σπέρμα της παραφροσύνης. . . .

Λέω ν' αναπαυτώ, λέω ν' αναπαυτώ και πολεμώ να συμβάσω τον εαυτό μου να το θελήσει. Έχω το προαίσθημα πώς δε θα μπορέσω. Εδώ πια στη Γερμανία ο αέρας είναι γιομάτος αγωνία κ' η εξοχή κ' η ησυχία της μοναξιάς είναι vieux jeu, που πια δεν μπορούνε να θεραπεύουν. Υποθέτω πως γρήγορα θα 'χουμε μεγάλες ταραχές· άρχισαν κι όλες στο Ruhr και στη Δρέσδη.⁵⁸

In August, which found him back in Berlin, a new crisis had developed: «Βρισκόμαστε σε παραμονές επανάστασης. Οι προθήκες στα μαγαζιά που πουλούν τρόφιμα αδειανές, οι Τράπεζες σταμάτησαν τις πληρωμές, μια λίρα κάνει 20 εκατομμύρια μάρκα, απεργίες άρχισαν, γενική απεργία σχεδιάζεται. Στη Νότιο Γερμανία, όπου ήμουν προχτές, ο νασιοναλισμός, ο Καϊζερισμός, θριαμβεύει· εδώ στο Βόρειο, οι σοσιαλιστές. Μα οι σοσιαλιστές είναι νερόβραστοι, δεν τολμούν κ' οι κομμουνιστές που τολμούν είναι λίγοι. Γι' αυτό κανείς

δεν μπορεί τίποτα να προβλέψει. Βρισκόμαι σε στενή επαφή με τους κομμουνιστές και μελετάται να αναλάβω τη διεύθυνση ενός γερμανικού περιοδικού κομμουνιστικού με εντελώς νέα πνευματική κατεύθυνση. Αυτές τις μέρες θα συνεννοηθώ με τον εδώ μπόλσεβίκο πρέσβη κ' ίσως νά 'ρθομε σε συνεννόηση· δύσκολο, όμως, γιατί εγώ τονίζω πολύ την ηθική και μεταφυσική πορεία του μπόλσεβικισμού, θεωρώντας την οικονομική απολευτέρωση του ανθρώπου ως μέσο. Ποιος ο σκοπός; Η νέα Kultur».⁵⁹

He urged Galatea to come quickly, in order to see what he predicted would be great historical moments for Germany: «Οι μήνες τούτοι είναι κρισιμότατοι. Η λίρα ανέβηκε πάνω από ενάμιση εκατομμύριο μάρκα, η ζωή για τους Γερμανούς είναι απίστευτα αβάσταχτη. Μεθαύριο, στις 29 Ιουλίου, ετοιμάζονται μεγάλες διαδήλωσης, οι κομμουνιστικές εφημερίδες καλούν το λαό σε αγώνα οδοφραγμάτων, οι φασίστες ετοιμάζονται να επιτεθούν, η ρωσική πρεσβεία εργάζεται μερόνυχτα και διευθύνει τα πάντα. Πιθανότατα θά 'χομε αιματηρά γεγονότα μεθαύριο. Λέω να πάω στο Μόναχο εκδρομή για λίγες μέρες. Εκεί είναι η καρδιά των φασίσι μοναρχικών· ίσως εκεί νά 'χομε τις μεγαλύτερες σύγκρουσες. Άρχισαν κιόλας οι κομμουνιστικές εφημερίδες να συζητούνε για στρατιωτικά σχέδια επίθεσης των προλετάρων εναντίον των αστών — ποιες γέφυρες ν' ανατιναχτούν, ποια εργοστάσια να μεταβληθούνε σε πολεμικά εργαστήρια, πόσοι αξιωματικοί είναι με το μέρος μας κλπ».⁶⁰

In the autumn of 1923 he wrote extensively to Papastefanou about his conception of God, concluding: «Πρόσεχε, απόφεβγε όταν θες να συλλάβεις το πρόσωπο του Θεούμας, ό,τι έμαθες για το Θεό των χριστιανών. Ο Θεόςμας δεν είναι πανάγαθος, δεν είναι παντοδύναμος, δεν είναι πανωραίος, δεν είναι πάνσοφος. Αν είταν τί αξία θάχε με συνεργασίαμας; Αν είταν πώς μπορούσε να πονεί, ν' αγωνίζετα, ν' ανεβαίνει; Απόφεβγε τις ρομαντικές θεολογίες, τις ανθρώπινες ελπίδες, τις βεβαιότητες που έχουν πάντα οι άναντροι — είτε αισιόδοξοι, είτε απαισιόδοξοι. Τίποτα δεν είναι βέβαιο στο Σύμπαντο, ριχνόμαστε στο αβέβαιο παίζομε κάθε στιγμή τη μοίρα μας, επηρεάζομε το Σύμπαντο να χαθεί η να σωθεί. Έχομε τεράστια ευθύνη».⁶¹

Finally, Galatea came. She stayed only a short while, from the end of November until the beginning of December. After she left, Kazantzakis confessed: «Η μόνη βαθιά τώρα, ανθρώπινη παρηγοριά μου είναι που ήρθες, για να με δεις. Αυτό μέσα μου όλο και ριζώνει, στερεώνεται, μου δίνει θερμότητα, χαρά. Ένας άνθρωπος με αγαπά, ήρθε, μου έδωκε τη ζεστή τούτη πιγιάμα που τώρα φορά, μου ετύλιξε ένα μάλλινο γελέκο να μην κρυώνω, μου μίλησε, ενδιαφέρθηκε πως υπάρχω. Αχ! Θεέ μου, πόσο όλη τούτη η έγνοια με

παρηγορεί, ξέρω πως δεν την αξίζω, όμως η ανθρώπινη αγάπη παραβλέπει και γιομίζει και τον πιο ανάξιο άνθρωπο με βασιλική ευτυχία. Αυτό το καλό που μου 'καμες ήταν η μεγαλύτερη μου, θαρρώ, στη ζωή, ευτυχία. Ο Θεός να Σ' έχει καλά, να Σε συντηρεί γερή, χωρίς νευρικότητες, χωρίς λιγοψυχίες, γενναία στον αγώνα τούτο της γης!»⁶²

His great desire now was to leave Berlin and go perhaps to India (he had just completed a draft of *Buddha* and wanted to see India before revising it), or to Russia to spread the gospel of his new god. «Εδώ η ζωή αβιώτη κάθε μέρα», he wrote to Galatea in mid-December.⁶³ He was thinking now of southern Italy. «Νεάπολη. Ήλιο, θάλασσα, δεν μπορώ πια. Όλα εδώ είναι ανυπόφορα. Η Κυβέρνηση νασιοναλιστική, η ζωή πανάκριβη, κρύο, όλα γκριζα, δεν έχω πια την πρώτη εκείνη σφοδρή επαφή με το Βερολίνο».⁶⁴ And he was despondent: «Απόψε που δούλενα ολημέρα στο μικρό Σου δωμάτιο, ακούμπησα κουρασμένος στη σόμπα και δεν ξέρω, μια βαθύτατη πικρία με κυριέψε. Λέω: προς τι όλη μου ετούτη η αγωνία, η αγέλαστη ζωή, η φόρμα που παίρνει όλο και εντονώτερη, η φόρμα η ασκητική της ψυχής μου;»⁶⁵ There was some relief at the end of the month because he went for a few days to Leipzig to collaborate with Karl Dieterich on a German translation of *Ασκητική*. Then he spent January 1 to 18, 1924 in Dornburg at the Goetheschloss, stopping on the way at Naumburg, where his heart pounded because he remembered the small house in Weinbergstrasse in which Nietzsche was born.

On January 21, 1924, he reached Naples. His first letter from there emphasizes the huge difference between that city and Berlin: «Chérie, αν ήσουν εδώ θα παραφρονούσες. Είχα τέλεια ξεχάσει τις πολιτείες τις νότιες και ξάφνου από την άσπρη, κρύα, ήσυχη Γερμανία πετάχτηκα στην πιο παρδαλή, φωνακλού, εξωφρενική πολιτεία της Ευρώπης. Το τι βλέπουν τα μάτια του ανθρώπου δε λέγεται».⁶⁶ In his notebook for that day he gave some details: «Φωνές στους δρόμους, ρομβίες, πορτοκαλόφλουδες, χρωματιστά κουρέλια σε όλα τα μπαλκόνια . . . μια ζωή όλο οσμή, κραυγή, βλαστήμιες, οι άνθρωποι φτύνουν, βάζουν το χέρι τους πολλήώρα στη μύτη, χερονομούν, μιλούν μοναχοί τους». But his conclusion was that the city was a siren: «Κι εμένα ήσυχα, σίγουρα, μια γλύκα με συνεπαίρνει, γυρίζω χαηλωμένος, ευτυχισμένος, άεργος στη θάλασσα. Πρέπει γρήγορα να φύγω».⁶⁷

But probably the most crucial difference between Naples and Berlin is indicated by a conversation that he recorded (or invented) on that first day: «Γιατί να σκεφτούμαστε;» μου 'λεγε ένας γλομός λαμπρότατος

νέος. “Όλα είναι μάταια μπροστά σε τόση ωραιότητα. Η σκέψη εδώ είναι μια δυσαρμονία. Σκέφτονται οι άνθρωποι του Βορρά για ν’ αμυνθούν, από αυτοσυντήρηση, για ν’ αντικαταστήσουν το άσκημο γύρα τους κόσμο με τον κόσμο του μυαλού τους. Η σκέψη εδώ είναι περιττή”». ⁶⁸ Clearly, thought was not superfluous in Berlin during Kazantzakis’s sojourn there for sixteen months in 1922–23. Despite the cold, the political unrest, the extreme inflation, the loneliness, Kazantzakis was extraordinarily stimulated intellectually, emotionally, and — I would say — spiritually. His major philosophical statement, *Ασκητική*, was a product of this environment and most likely would not have been written if he had spent those months in the sunshine of Italy or Greece.

Notes

- 1 Lev Shestov, Russian-Jewish existentialist philosopher (1886-1938); Aleksei Remizov, Russian modernist novelist (1877-1957); Käthe Kollwitz, German expressionistic painter (1867-1945).
- 2 Παντέλης Πρεβελάκης, *Τετρακόσια γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Αθήνα: Ελένη Ν. Καζαντζάκη, 1965), σελ. 78, υποσημείωση 1. «Η Ίτκα (που διανεύει μέσα στον *Toda-Raba* μαζί με τη Ραχήλ) . . . βρήκε φρικτό τέλος στη Ρωσία κατά τη σταλινική τρομοκρατία. Ο Καζαντζάκης την είχε ξανανταμώσει στα 1927 και 1928 στη Μόσχα. Η Ντίνα ήταν ζωγράφος . . . σκοτώθηκε από τους Γερμανούς στο γκέτο του Lodz στα 1943. Η Ρόζα . . . καθαρίστηκε μαζί με τον άντρα της από τους σταλινικούς, στη Μόσχα, στα 1936–37» (Παντέλης Πρεβελάκης, *Ο ποιητής και το ποίημα της Οδύσσειας* [Αθήνα: Βιβλιόπωλειο της Εστίας, 1958], σελ. 300, υποσημείωση 102).
- 3 Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια* (Αθήνα: Δίφρος, 1958), σελ. 81–82, 9 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 4 Επιστολές, σελ. 71, 1 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 5 Επιστολές, σελ. 76, αρχή Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 6 Επιστολές, σελ. 82, 17 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 7 Επιστολές, σελ. 80–81, 9 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 8 Δημοσθένης Δανιηλίδης (1889–1972), κοινωνιολόγος, a long-time faithful friend of Kazantzakis’s. Στο *Ταξιδεύοντας: Ο Μοριάς* (σελ. 327), ο Καζαντζάκης mentions a «βαθύ βιβλίο του Δανιηλίδη» on Greek civilization.
- 9 Επιστολές, σελ. 72, 1 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 10 Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου, πολιτικός και κοινωνιολόγος (1876–1936). Ξενοφών Φαρμαδίδης, Κύριος Λαογράφος (1875–1943). Ανδρέας Ανδρεάδης, καθηγητής της Δημοσίας Οικονομίας (1876–1935). Γεώργιος Παπανδρέου,

- πολιτικός (1888–1968)· Αόστολος Δοξιάδης, γιατρός (1874–1942)· Ηλίας Αναστασιάδης, υφυγητής (1879–1949)· Παναγιώτης Σκουριώτης, δικηγόρος (1881–1960)· Θάλης Κουτούπης, δημοσιογράφος (1870–1935)· Κωνσταντίνος Ράδος, συγγραφέας ναυτικών διηγημάτων (1862–1931).
- 11 Επιστολές, σελ. 71–73, 1 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922. Klabund, German playwright and novelist (1890–1928). Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok, lyric poet, a leader of Russian symbolism (1880–1921).
 - 12 Επιστολές, σελ. 152–153, 11 Φεβρουαρίου 1923.
 - 13 Επιστολές, σελ. 113–114, 27 Νοεμβρίου 1922.
 - 14 Εμμανουήλ Παπαστεφάνου, κληρικός, φίλος του Καζαντζάκη από τα νεανικά τους χρόνια στο Ιράκλιο (1883–1955).
 - 15 Κυριάκος Μητσστάκης, *Ο Καζαντζακισ μιλεί για Θεό* (Αθήνα: Μινώας, 1972), σελ. 54, 5 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
 - 16 Μητσστάκης, σελ. 55.
 - 17 Επιστολές, σελ. 104, Νοέμβριος 1922.
 - 18 Μητσστάκης, σελ. 55.
 - 19 Μητσστάκης, σελ. 55 Λευτέρης Αλεξίου, φιλόλογος, αδελφός της Γαλάτειας Καζαντζάκη (1890–1964)· Άγγελος Σικελιανός, ποιητής, φίλος του Καζαντζάκη (1884–1951).
 - 20 Μητσστάκης, σελ. 56.
 - 21 Επιστολές, σελ. 76.
 - 22 Επιστολές, σελ. 80, 9 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
 - 23 Επιστολές, σελ. 77–78.
 - 24 Επιστολές, σελ. 79.
 - 25 Επιστολές, σελ. 222.
 - 26 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
 - 27 Επιστολές, σελ. 101. *Peau de diable* = moleskin.
 - 28 Επιστολές, σελ. 172–174.
 - 29 Επιστολές, σελ. 182–183, 10 Απριλίου 1923.
 - 30 Επιστολές, σελ. 195–196, 7 Μαΐου 7, 1923.
 - 31 Επιστολές, σελ. 181, 10 Απριλίου 1923.
 - 32 Επιστολές, σελ. 104–106.
 - 33 Επιστολές, σελ. 188–189.
 - 34 Επιστολές, σελ. 114–115.
 - 35 Επιστολές, σελ. 104.
 - 36 Επιστολές, σελ. 106–107.
 - 37 Επιστολές, σελ. 116.
 - 38 Επιστολές, σελ. 120.

- 39 Επιστολές, σελ. 115.
 40 Επιστολές, σελ. 116.
 41 Επιστολές, σελ. 129–130.
 42 Επιστολές, σελ. 128.
 43 Επιστολές, σελ. 134.
 44 Επιστολές, σελ. 150, 20 Ιανουαρίου 1923.
 45 Μητσοτάκης, σελ. 97.
 46 Μητσοτάκης, σελ. 96, Ιανουαρίου 1923.
 47 Επιστολές, σελ. 140.
 48 Επιστολές, σελ. 144–145.
 49 Επιστολές, σελ. 147, 20 Ιανουαρίου 1923.
 50 Επιστολές, σελ. 155–156, 11 Φεβρουαρίου 1923.
 51 Επιστολές, σελ. 148, 20 Ιανουαρίου 1923.
 52 Επιστολές, σελ. 154–155, 11 Φεβρουαρίου 1923.
 53 Επιστολές, σελ. 149.
 54 Επιστολές, σελ. 164–165.
 55 Επιστολές, σελ. 184.
 56 Επιστολές, σελ. 197, 7 Μαΐου, 1923.
 57 Επιστολές, σελ. 192–194, 1 Μαΐου, 1923.
 58 Επιστολές, σελ. 210–211, 1 Ιουνίου 1923, Dornburg.
 59 Επιστολές, σελ. 216.
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 61 Μητσοτάκης, σελ. 85.
 62 Επιστολές, σελ. 228.
 63 Επιστολές, σελ. 225–226.
 64 Επιστολές, σελ. 230, 18 Δεκεμβρίου 1923.
 65 Επιστολές, σελ. 226–227.
 66 Επιστολές, σελ. 232.
 67 Ελένη Καζαντζάκη, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο ασυμβίβαστος* (Αθήνα: Ελένη Ν. Καζαντζάκη, 1977), σελ. 128.
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Ο Καζαντζάκης Επιστολογράφος

Θέλω σήμερα να σας μιλήσω για τα *Επιλεκτά Γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη* που εκδόθηκαν πέρυσι σε δική μου μετάφραση στ' αγγλικά. Ίσως θα ξέρετε ήδη ότι υπάρχουν στα ελληνικά τα *Τετρακόσια γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη*, τα γράμματα προς τη δεύτερη γυναίκα του στον *Ασυμβίβαστο*, προς την πρώτη γυναίκα του στις *Επιστολές προς τη Γαλάτεια*, προς τον Γιάννη Κακριδή και μερικούς άλλους παραλήπτες σε περιοδικά. Αλλά όλες οι πηγές αυτές περιλαμβάνουν γράμματα κυρίως προς ένα μονάχα παραλήπτη. Όταν, πριν από πόλλα χρόνια, η μακαρίτισσα Ελένη Καζαντζάκη μου ζήτησε να μεταφράσω τα *Τετρακόσια γράμματα στον Πρεβελάκη*, της είπα ότι προτιμώ να μαζέψω και να μεταφράσω γράμματα προς όλους τους παραλήπτες. Συμφώνησε και μου έδωσε συστατικές επιστολές για πολύν κόσμο. Έτσι, το 1995, πήγαμε με τη γυναίκα μου, τη Χρυσάνθη, σε διάφορα σπίτια στην Ελλάδα, μαζεύοντας υλικό, πάντα σε φωτοτυπίες. Σχεδόν όλοι οι παραλήπτες χάρηκαν επειδή κατάλαβαν πως μερικά απ' τα γράμματα που είχαν στοιβαχτεί τόσο προσεχτικά σε συρτάρια θα μεταφράζονταν και θα εκδίνονταν. Μα αρκετά χειρόγραφα δεν βρίσκονται στην Ελλάδα. Πήγα π. χ. στην Ούψαλα, Σουηδίας για τα γράμματα προς τον Börje Knös, στη Νέα Υόρκη για τα γράμματα προς τον Max Schuster, στο Λονδίνο για τα γράμματα προς τον Sydney Waterlow, κτλ.

Ήταν απαραίτητο να μαζέψω τα χειρόγραφα των γραμμάτων επειδή τα τυπωμένα γράμματα δεν είναι πάντα ατόφια. Στα *Τετρακόσια γράμματα*, λόγω χάριν, κάθε φορά που ο Καζαντζάκης έβριζε κάποιον, ο Παντελής Πρεβελάκης έβαζε μια τελεία για κάθε προσβλητική λέξη. Απευθύνθηκα πρώτα στον αδελφό του Παντελή, τον μακαρίτη τον Ελευθέριο, που είχε τότες όλα τα πρωτότυπα στο διαμέρισμά του στην Αθήνα, και βρήκα πολλές λέξεις που είχαν λογοκριθεί. Επίσης βρήκα πολλές στις κρυφές συλλογές του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης στο Ρέθυμνο, χάρη στη βιβλιοθηκάρισα εκεί Ελένη Κοβαίου. Να μερικά παραδείγματα: Παραπονιέται ο Καζαντζάκης για μιαν κριτική. Στο

κείμενο που το τύπωσε ο Πρεβελάκης διαβάζουμε: «Την κριτική αυτή την έγραψε ο [. . .] Καστανάκης. Ό,τι λέει για Θεοτόκη και Βάρναλη, σωστά. Μα παραλείπει [. . .] τη Γαλάτεια . . .» Στο χειρόγραφο διαβάζουμε το σωστό κείμενο: «Την κριτική αυτή την έγραψε ο αηδής αριβίστας Καστανάκης. Ό,τι λέει για Θεοτόκη και Βάρναλη, σωστά. Μα παραλείπει — το ζώο — τη Γαλάτεια . . .»¹ Τα παράπονα του Καζαντζάκη προς τον Γιάννη Γουδέλη, τον Κωνσταντίνο Δημαρά, τον Πέτρο Χάρη, τον Octave Merlier, τον Δημήτριο Δημητράκο και άλλους έχουν παρόμοια νοστιμάδα. Να και ένα άλλο παράδειγμα· αναφέρεται στον εκδότη Δημητράκο. Διαβάζουμε «Οι όροι του Δημητράκου είναι λαμπροί, μα αυτός είναι [.]· αρνήθηκα». Η πλήρης φράση που έγραψε ο Καζαντζάκης είναι «Οι όροι του Δημητράκου είναι λαμπροί, μα αυτός είναι παλιάνθρωπος· αρνήθηκα».² Να και ένα τρίτο παράδειγμα. Στα *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα*, σελ. 34, γράφει στον Πρεβελάκη σχετικά με την κυρία Έλλη Λαμπρίδη, που δε ήρθε να τον επισκεφθεί στην Αίγινα την περασμένη Κυριακή. Θέλει νά'ρθει ο Πρεβελάκης την ερχόμενη Κυριακή αλλά του λέει να εξακριβώσει ότι η Λαμπρίδη δεν θά'ρθει κι αυτή την ίδια μέρα. Τότε βρίσκουμε ένδεκα τελείες! Οι ένδεκα λέξεις που τις λογόκρινε ο Πρεβελάκης είναι: «Γιατί αν τύχει κ' οι δυο νάστε εδώ, αλοιμόνο και στους διόμας!». Λοιπόν, η αποκατάσταση λογοκριμένων λέξεων στη μετάφρασή μου προσφέρει νόστιμο ζουμί στα «Selected Letters».

Λογοκρισία υπάρχει και στο *Ασυμβίβαστο* της κυρίας Καζαντζάκη με τη διαφορά ότι η συντάκτισσα δεν μας ειδοποιεί σχετικά. Πρέπει ν' έχουμε στη διάθεσή μας το πρωτότυπο χειρόγραφο για να εξακριβώσουμε αν ένα γράμμα σ' αυτή τη συλλογή είναι ή δεν είναι ακέραιο. Γι' αυτό το πρώτο κριτήριο της επιλογής μου ήταν: κάθε γράμμα πλήρες· το δεύτερο ήταν: τουλάχιστο μία επιστολή προς κάθε παραλήπτη. Μάζεψα χιλιάδες γράμματα και διάλεξα ίσως το ένα πέμπτο. Μαζί με τα άφθονα σχόλια που χρειάζονται για ένα αναγνωστικό κοινό που δεν ξέρει πολλά για την ελληνική ιστορία ή για προσωπικότητες Ελλήνων, το σύνολο γεμίζει 851 σελίδες.

Ίσως θα αναρωτιέται κανείς, «Άξιζε ο κόπος;» Απαντώντας, θα συγκρίνω την περίπτωση του Καζαντζάκη με παρόμοιες περιπτώσεις στην αγγλική φιλολογία. Έχουμε θαυμάσιες συλλογές γραμμάτων της Virginia Woolf, του James Joyce και του D. H. Lawrence. Σε κάθε περίπτωση, η συλλογή είναι τόσο πλήρης ώστε μαθαίνουμε τι έγραφε ο συγγραφέας, τι σκεφτόταν και τι ήλπιζε σχεδόν κάθε μέρα της ζωής του. Όταν ένας φοιτητής ερχόταν στο γραφείο μου με πρόταση να γράψει π.χ. πάνω σ' ένα επεισόδιο στο μυθιστόρημα *Ulysses* του James Joyce, συνήθως του έλεγα, «Να πας πρώτα στο ευρετήριο

των Γραμμάτων του Joyce για να δεις τι σκεφτόταν ο ίδιος για το επεισόδιο αυτό». Πρέπει να θυμηθούμε ότι στα χρόνια και του Καζαντζάκη και των Άγγλων αυτών συγγραφέων, δεν υπήρχε e-mail ούτε τηλέφωνο σε κάθε σπίτι. Επικοινωνούσαν με γράμματα. Πάντως, σαν τα γράμματα των Woolf, Joyce και Lawrence, τα γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη αποτελούν ένα γνήσιο θησαυρό. Μαθαίνουμε τι έτρωγε, τι έβλεπε, τι κέρδιζε οικονομικά ή — συνήθως — τι δεν κέρδιζε, ποιες γυναίκες που του άρεσαν ή (όπως στην περίπτωση της Γαλάτειας) που λαχταρούσε ο ίδιος να ξεφορτωθεί, τις πολιτικές του αρχές, τη θρησκομανία του, και, . . . και . . . και . . . Μαθαίνουμε και για τη μοναξιά του και πως η επιστολογραφία ήταν για αυτόν ένα είδος σωτηρίας. Τολμώ να ισχυριστώ ότι ήταν ένας επιστολομανής. Έγραφε όλη τη μέρα· το βράδι, μανιωδώς, έγραφε κάποτε σχεδόν το ίδιο γράμμα, συνήθως από πεντε-έξι σελίδες, σε δύο ή τρεις διαφορετικούς παραλήπτες — και πάντα, ας μην ξεχνάμε, με πέννα και μελάνι, στον πυκνό του γραφικό χαρακτήρα, που γέμιζε τη σελίδα.

Η πρώτη επιστολή που βρήκα γράφτηκε στις 21 Σεπτεμβρίου 1902 από την Αθήνα, όπου είχε πάει για να σπουδάσει νομικά στο πανεπιστήμιο. Ήταν δεκαενέα χρονών. Η τελευταία που έβαλα στη συλλογή μου γράφτηκε από το Τόκιο την 1^η Αυγούστου 1957, τρεις μήνες πριν πεθάνει. Θα ήθελα να σας διαβάσω τις δύο επιστολές αυτές. Η πρώτη είναι μεγάλη — 4 σελίδες· επομένως θα σας διαβάσω μονάχα μερικά αποσπάσματα.

Αγαπητέ και Σεβαστέ μου πατέρα

. . . ουδέποτε τω όντι έκαμα καλύτερο ταξίδι· ούτε εξαλίστηκα, ούτε εκρύωσα· η μόνη αλλά μεγάλη μου λύπη ήτο ότι έφευγα μακράν Σας, μακράν από την πατρικήν και μητρικήν αγάπην. . . .

Είναι τω όντι, σεβαστέ μου πατέρα, είναι πολύ λυπητερό να φεύγη κανείς μακράν από τον πατέρα του, τη μητέρα του και τους αδελφούς του· αλλά ήτο ανάγκη να γίνη αφού θέλετε καμμιά μέρα να γίνω άνθρωπος και να μη εντρέπομαι να λέγομαι παιδί Σας. . . .

Ιδιαιτέρως τους πολλούς μου ασπασμούς και τα θερμότερά μου σέβη εις την αγαπητήν μου μητέρα: να μη κλαίη, περνώ εδώ καλά και εξ άλλου δεν θ' αργήσω και να την ξαναδώ, οι μήνες περνούν γρήγορα. . . .

Σας ασπάζομαι θερμότητα,

ο αγαπών Σας υιός

Νικόλαος³

Ύστερα από πενήντα πέντε χρόνια: το τελευταίο γράμμα, ένα σύντομο εικονογραφημένο δελτάριο στον Παντελή Πρεβελάκη:

Tokio-Nara, 1-8-57

Αγαπητέ αδελφέ,

Όλα ως τώρα πάνε καλά· χαίρουμαι διαπιστώνοντας πόσο η ψυχή του ανθρώπου είναι παντοδύναμη. Αύριο φεύγω για την Αλάσκα, κι ανυπομονώ να χαιρετήσω — και ν' αποχαιρετήσω — και την όψη τούτης της γης.

Κάθε στιγμή, από την άκρα ετούτη του κόσμου, Σας στέλνω χαιρετίσματα.

Κι η Ελένη Σας χαιρετάει με πολλή αγάπη. Ο Θεός μαζί Σας!

N. Καζαντζάκης⁴

Γυρίζοντας τώρα στα φοιτητικά του χρόνια στην Αθήνα, θα ήθελα να σας διαβάσω αποσπάσματα από ένα γράμμα στη μητέρα και τις δύο αδερφές του. Θα καταλάβετε πόσο και η γλώσσα και το περιεχόμενο διαφέρουν από το πολύ τυπικό γράμμα προς τον σεβαστόν πατέρα.

Είμαι πολύ, πολύ ευχαριστημένος από το νοικοκυριό μας. . . Σήμερα έχομε ντολμάδες, μελιτζάνες και κολοκύθια ντολμάδες. . . Έρχομαι το μεσημέρι και βλέπω κάτι χονδρές μελιτζάνες γεμάτες ρύζι άψητο, κοκαλιστό. . . Έπρεπε οι μελιτζάνες να είναι λιανές, να τζι βάλγης στον πάτο του τσικαλιού. . .

Τως κάνω δίαιτα. Κάθε μέρα χόρτα θέλω.

«Επί τέλους», μου λέν, «δεν παίρνεις και μια φορά κρέας; . . .»

«Κρέας», τως λέω, «κρέας; Ξέρετε τι ασθένειες έχει; . . . Κρέας; Θέλετε λοιπόν ν' αρρωστήσωμε;»

Εσείς πώς περνάτε αυτού; . . .

Σας φιλώ, αγαπητή μου μητέρα, Ανεστασία και Ελένη γλυκά-γλυκά.⁵

Τα γράμματα είναι τόσο πλούσια, τόσο ποικίλα! Αδύνατον να σας αποδώσω πλήρως ούτε την ακτίνα ούτε την ποιότητά τους. Λέω να σας διαβάσω στην αρχή μερικά σκόρπια αποσπάσματα και ύστερα να συγκεντρωθώ λιγάκι στις επιστολές του 1922–23 από το Βερολίνο και μετά με άλλα γράμματα που έχουν κάποιο πολιτικό περιεχόμενο και τελευταία με τις πολύ ενδιαφέρουσες επιστολές στο Γιάννη Κακριδή σχετικά με τη δική τους μετάφραση της Ιλιάδας.

Λοιπόν. . . :

Πρώτα . . . ήμουν «αισθηματικός», είχα την λεγομένη «αισθηματικήν μελαγχολίαν». Τώρα μισώ τας αισθηματικότητας, τας μπομπώδεις φράσεις, τας αηδείς εκμυστηρεύσεις της αγάπης. . .⁶

... μη ξεχνάς ότι υποστηρίζονται τρεις γλώσσες κυρίως: α) η καθαρὸν β) η δημοτικὴ γ) η ψυχαρικὴ.

Και η α' και η γ' είναι ἐξ ἴσου φρικώδεις. Τη β' λατρεύω και υποστηρίζω.⁷

Θέλω να σχηματίσω μια ατομική, δική μου αντίληψη της ζωής, μια θεωρία του κόσμου και του προορισμού τ' ανθρώπου και σύμφωνα μ' αυτή, συστηματικά και μ' ωρισμένο σκοπό και πρόγραμμα, να γράφω — ό,τι γράφω.

Ευτυχώς ακούω ἐδώ τον περίφημο ψυχολόγο Bergson και αισθάνομαι πως δεν χάνω τον καιρό μου.⁸

Οι επιστολές των 1922–23 από το Βερολίνο στη Γαλάτεια είναι ιδιαίτερα ενδιαφέρουσες, όχι μονάχα επειδή ο Καζαντζάκης προσπάθησε να μπλεχτεί σε κομμουνιστικά συλλαλητήρια, όχι επειδή αγάπησε μιαν επαναστάτρια κοπέλα ενώ έγραφε επανειλημένα στη γυναίκα του, τη Γαλάτεια, που έμεινε στην Αθήνα, πόσο τη λάτρευε. Όχι. Τα κύρια ενδιαφέροντα νομίζω, παράγονται από το γεγονός ότι ο Καζαντζάκης τον καιρό εκείνο υπέφερε από μοναξιά και νόμιζε πως δεν άξιζε τίποτα — ενώ συγχρόνως συνέθετε το οριστικό του πιστεύω, την *Ασκητική*. Θα διαβάσω μερικά παραδείγματα αυτής της ψυχολογικής του κατάστασης:

... μόνος μου νά'ρθω σ' επαφή με τους ανθρώπους, να παλέψω με την αδιαφορία, τη γελοιοποίηση, την καθημερινή μικρολογία, δεν μπορώ.⁹

... είδα προ λίγου καιρού μια γυναίκα να μιλάει σε κομμουνιστικό συλλαλητήριο. Πόσο ζήλεψα!¹⁰

... μια βαθύτατη πικρία με κυρίεψε. Λέω: προς τι όλη μου ετούτη η αγωνία, η αγέλαστη ζωή...¹¹

... κανένας, άμα πεθάνω, δε θα μαντέψει απ' τη ζωή μου κι απ' τα ελεεινά γραφτά μου, την αγιάτρευτη, ανώτατη ανάταση της ψυχής μου¹²

... Τίποτα δεν μπορεί να μου δώσει και την πιο μικρή χαρά. Κάθομαι ολημέρα στο δωμάτιο ἐδώ και διαβάζω, γράφω και νιώθω τόση αηδία για τις μικρές μου τούτες ασχολίες που συχνά δεν μπορώ να βαστάξω το κλάμα. Πάω ταχτικά στη μουσική, παρακολουθώ διάλεξεις, χορούς, μουσεία — κι όλα τούτα είναι σαν τα μήλα του Ντάντε: γιομίζουν το στόμα μου με στάχτη.¹³

. . . Να μπορούσα να μην έγραφα! Κάθε πρωί που ζεύομαι στο χαρτί, ανατριχιάζω από αγωνία, — τι θα μπορέσω να ξελαγαρίσω, να σώσω από τη φθορά, πώς θα βρω τις λέξεις να μην χαθεί η ψυχή μου; . . .¹⁴

Η θλίψη του ερχόταν εν μέρει — ίσως! — από τις δυσκολίες που είχε με τη γυναίκα του, τη Γαλάτεια, που αρνήθηκε νά'ρθει κι αυτή στο Βερολίνο. Της γράφει, «Έλα! Δεν ξέρεις τί χαρές.» Όμως προσθέτει, «Μα νά'ναι κ' οι φιλενάδες σου γιατί αλλιώς θα στενοχωρηθείς μαζί μου.» (Επιστολές, σελ. 32) Επίσης, σε άλλη επιστολή: «Και πάλι λέω: τι ανιαρή η συντροφιά η δική μου» και προβλέπει ότι η Γαλάτεια «θα κοιτάζει πάντα κατά την Αθήνα, προς τις γνωστές συνήθειες, θα νευριάζει, η ζωή μας θα γίνεται αβάσταχτη και τέλος θα φύγει και θ' αρχίσει πάλι η αγάπη, το ενδιαφέρον από μακριά. Να ένα μαρτύριο που το νιώθω κάθε μέρα.» (Επιστολές, σελ. 45).

Ήταν σ' αυτές τις σκοτεινές μέρες στο Βερολίνο που διατύπωνε την κοσμοθεωρία του στην *Ασκητική*. Βρίσκουμε σε μερικά γράμματα σαφείς περιλήψεις της φιλοσοφίας του, όπως . . .:

Γράφω τώρα την «Ασκητική», ένα βιβλίο *mystique*, όπου διαγράφω τη μέθοδο ν' ανεβεί η ψυχή από κύκλο σε κύκλο ωσότου φτάσει στην ανώτατη Επαφή. Είναι πέντε κύκλοι: Εγώ, ανθρωπότητα, Γης, Σύμπαντο, Θεός. Πώς ν' ανεβούμε όλα τούτα τα σκαλοπάτια κι όταν φτάσουμε στο ανώτατο να ζήσουμε όλους τους προηγούμενους κύκλους. Το γράφω επίτηδες χωρίς ποίηση, με στεγνή, επιταχτική φόρμα. Βλέπεις, . . . είναι ο τελευταίος καρπός της αναζήτησής μου. Ως τότε η αναζήτηση; Η μήπως σκοπός μου είναι μονάχα η αναζήτηση, δηλ. η πορεία από σημείο σε σημείο; (Επιστολές, σελ. 134)

Ξέρω . . . πως τίποτα ατομικό δε μ' ενδιαφέρει, πως δίνω όλη μου τη ζωή . . . πέρα από το άτομό μου . . . Πιστεύω ακλόνητα στη . . . δύναμη μιας Πνοής που διαπερνάει φυτά, ζα, ανθρώπους και τώρα μάχεται συνειδητά μέσα μου και θέλει να με ξεπεράσει, να λευτερωθεί από την ανάξια φύση μου, να γλυτώσει από μένα. Την πνοή αυτή μάχομαι να υπηρέτω . . .¹⁵

Αξίζει να αναρωτηθούμε αν ήταν η *Ασκητική* το προϊόν της ψυχολογικής κρίσης που βλέπουμε τόσο καθαρά στα γράμματα από το Βερολίνο. Αν δεν είχε γίνει η Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή λίγους μήνες πριν, αν δεν βρισκόταν ο Καζαντζάκης στο χάος της Δημοκρατίας της Βαϊμάρης, αν δεν του κοπάνανε διαρκώς η Γαλάτεια την ανεπάρκεια του, θα έγραφε άραγε το ότι ερχόμαστε και καταλήγουμε σε μια σκοτεινή άβυσσο; Ίσως — ίσως — για να δικαιολο-

γρηθεί η αγωνιώδης πίστη του ότι η δική του προσωπική ζωή δεν έχει έννοια, ίσως γι' αυτό επεξεργάστηκε μια κοσμοθεωρία που λέει ότι η ζωή γενικώς δεν έχει έννοια. Αν η φύση είναι απατηλή, τότε η δική του ιδιωτική ανεπάρκεια εξηγείται και διαλύεται.

Δεν μας ξαφνιάζει η γενική αντίδραση εναντίον της *Ασκητικής* όταν εκδόθηκε. Ο λίγος κόσμος που τη διάβασε τότε συμπέρανε πως ο Καζαντζάκης ήταν νιχιλιστής. Επιπλέον όταν προσέθεσε τη Σιγή στο τέλος της δεύτερης γραφής, ο υποτιθέμενός του μηδενισμός φάνηκε αναμφισβήτητος ακόμα στους οπαδούς του σαν τον Παντελή Πρεβελάκη και την Έλλη Λαμπρίδη. Εμείς, όμως, πρέπει να είμαστε προσεχτικοί. Θα καταλάβουμε σωστά τι σημαίνει η Σιγή μονάχα αν έχουμε στη διάθεσή μας δυο σπουδαιότατα γράμματα στα οποία ο Καζαντζάκης εξηγεί καθαρά τι ήθελε να πει. Το πρώτο το έστειλε στον παιδικό του φίλο Εμμανουήλ Παπαστεφάνου που είχε γίνει ιερέας και που είχε γράψει στον Καζαντζάκη ότι το τέλος της δεύτερης γραφής της *Ασκητικής* είναι «όλα ματαιότη, όλα σβύσιμο, όλα στάχτη». Ο Καζαντζάκης υπερασπίστηκε έτσι στο γράμμα του:

Σαν ανότατο βαθμό λέω: «Σιγή». Όχι γιατί δίνω το περιεχόμενο που λες στη Σιγή. Δεν είναι η ακρότατη απελπισία, δεν είναι η εκμηδένιση ή η αγιάτρευτη άγνοια. Σιγή θα πει: καθένας αφού . . . τελέψει τη θητεία του . . . φτάνει πια . . . πέρα από κάθε άθλο, . . . πέρα από σκοπό, από βεβαιότητα . . . Δε ρωτάει πια, δεν αγωνίζεται . . .¹⁶

Ο παραλήπτης του δευτέρου γράμματος που εξηγεί τη Σιγή ήταν ο Αιμίλιος Χουρμούζιος. Το κύριο θέμα αυτού του γράμματος είναι η *Οδύσσεια*, αλλά τα επιχειρήματα σχετίζονται πολύ φανερά με το τέλος της *Ασκητικής*. Λέει:

. . . Κάθε ψυχή μεγάλη πλαντάει κάποτε, γιατί νιώθει πως . . . τίποτα δεν τη χωράει, παρά μονάχα το Τίποτα. Και ρίχνει μιαν Κραυγή. Κι ύστερα πάλι συνέρχεται, κάνει κουράγιο . . . κ' εξακολουθεί τον ανήφορο.

Το ίδιο κάνει κι ο Οδυσσεύς· δεν είναι η αποκορύφωση του αγώνα του η μηδενιστική αυτή Κραυγή . . . Είναι μια δικλείδα που την ανοίγει μια στιγμή για να μην πλαντάξει, ανακουφίζεται, . . . κ' εξακολουθεί το δρόμο που διάλεξε . . .¹⁷

Ελπίζω ότι θα συμφωνήσετε τώρα πως τα γράμματα είναι απαραίτητα για μιαν πλήρη κατανόηση της σκέψης του Καζαντζάκη. Ας προσθέσω ότι δεν είμαι — ή τουλάχιστο ελπίζω ότι δεν είμαι — ολοκληρωτικά αφελής. Εκτιμώ τον κανόνα της φιλολογίας που δηλώνει πως τα σχόλια ενός συγγραφέα πάνω στα δικά του συγγράμματα μπορούν νά'ναι επικίνδυνα. Ο D. H. Lawrence λέει σωστά

ότι πρέπει να πιστέψουμε τι λέει το έργο, όχι τι λέει ο δράστης. Ωστόσο στην περίπτωση του Καζαντζάκη, αν είμαστε προσεχτικοί, μπορούμε πολλές φορές να ωφεληθούμε αν συγκρίνουμε συνετά τα κείμενα με τα συγγραφικά σχόλια.

Ας συνεχίσω τώρα με μερικά άλλα σκόρπια παραδείγματα από τις επιστολές. Θα σας παραθέσω πρώτα ένα πολύ νόστιμο γράμμα του 1924, όταν είχε φύγει ο Καζαντζάκης από τη Γερμανία και βρίσκεται στη Νάπολη, Ιταλίας. Γράφει με κέφι στη Γαλάτεια:

Chérie, αν ήσουν εδώ θα παραφρονούσες. . . . από την άσπρη, κρύα, ήσυχη Γερμανία πετάχτηκα στην πιο παρδαλή, φωνακλού εξωφρενική πολιτεία της Ευρώπης. . . . Παντού μια ακαθαρσία royale, . . . όλοι φτύνουνε, κατουρούν όπου βρουν, χώνουνε όχι τα δάχτυλα μα τα χέρια τους σε τεράστια, ελαστικότατα ρουθούνια. . . . Και όλη τούτη την αθλιότητα την περιζώνει μια θάλασσα δροσερή, όλο μυρωδιά (σαν καρπούζι). . . .¹⁸

Παραδέχομαι πως δεν υπάρχει πολύ χιούμορ στις επιστολές του Καζαντζάκη, ούτε και στα συγγράμματά του, αλλά πού και πού βρίσκονται σκόρπια κομματάκια, όπως σε αυτή την παράγραφο για τη Νάπολη, και επίσης όταν ο παραλήπτης είναι ο Panait Istrati, π.χ.:

Au revoilà, αδερφέ μου! Φρόντιζε το κορμί σου — η ψυχή μας δεν έχει άλλον γάιδαρο σε τούτη τη γη. Φρόντιξέ το, μην το κουράζεις πάρα πολύ, τάιξέ το καλά, μην του δίνεις κρασί (μήτε κονιάκ, μήτε ρακή, φυσικά), μην του δίνεις να καπνίζει πάρα πολύ (από πότε καπνίζουν τα γαϊδούρια;)¹⁹

Ακούτε τώρα κάποια άλλα γράμματα με πολιτικό περιεχόμενο:

Το Νοέμβριο 1922, ένα μήνα ύστερα από τη Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή, η στάση του Καζαντζάκη απέναντι στην Ελλάδα ήταν λίαν αρνητική. Έγραψε στη Γαλάτεια:

Αν πάλι εξαφανιστούν οι Έλληνες, γιατί είναι ανάξιοι, τότε βλογημένη η ώρα του εξαφανισμού τους! Θ' αδειάσουν τη λαμπρή αυτή γωνία της θάλασσας που μολέβουν και θά 'ρθουν άλλοι άνθρωποι να τιμήσουν τ' όνομα του ανθρώπου. . . . Ναι, είμαι από την ελληνική ράτσα και ο ξεπεσμός της είναι και δικός μου ξεπεσμός — γιατί τα στοιχεία που μου παρέχει και με τα οποία και μόνο μπορώ να δουλέψω εδώ στη γη, είναι ξεπεσμένα. Μα πάλι λέω, νιώθω πως η Κρητική μας ράτσα δεν είναι ελληνική. Φρικώδεις, βέβαια, είναι κ' οι Κρητικοί, μα γιατί παρασύρθηκαν

απ' την Ελλαδική αθλιότητα. Βαθύτατα είναι γεροί, βάρβαροι, αγνοί, δημιουργοί. (Επιστολές, σελ. 104–105)

Όταν στο τέλος του Νοεμβρίου εκτελέστηκαν οι Έξι που ήταν δήθεν οι ευθυνόμενοι για την Καταστροφή, ο Καζαντζάκης έγραψε:

Έπρεπε να σκοτωθούν απ' το λαό· μα πάλι καλά που βρέθηκε ο Πλαστήρας να πει μια γενναία λέξη. Καλύτερα να χαθούμε παίζοντας τραγωδία, παρά να ζούμε παίζοντας οπερέτα. Εδώ η Ευρώπη όλη εξανέστη για τη βαρβαρότητα! Και για τις 50.000 που ξεσπιτώθηκαν καθώς και για τους χιλιάδες Τούρκους που σκότωσαν οι Έλληνες έμεινε απαθέστατη. Εγώ χάρηκα γιατί νομίζω πως τώρα μόνο θα καταλάβει ο Ρωμιός ότι κάτι σημαντικό συμβαίνει. Να χαθεί η Σμύρνη, η Πόλη, η Θράκη δεν τότε νοιάζει. Μα να σκοτωθούν έτσι, σα σκύλοι, οι βοσκοί τους, που σύχναζαν στα Ντορέ, αυτό θα τους κάμει κατάπληξη και δέος. Και πάντα το δέος είναι χρήσιμο σ' ένα τέτιο λαό. (Επιστολές, σελ. 114–115)

Να το γενικό συμπέρασμά του:

Ως Κρατικός ο Έλληνας είναι φρικαλέος· ως Οδυσσέας, περιπλανώμενος, εργαζόμενος, εμπορευόμενος, σκεπτόμενος, χωρίς δικό του Κρατικό σύστημα, σαν τους Εβραίους, είναι μοναδικός στον κόσμο. (Επιστολές, σελ. 140)

Το 1926, ταξιδεύοντας στην Κέρκυρα, πάλι κατέκρινε την πατρίδα:

Η Ελλάδα δε μου 'καμε καμιά χαρά. Οι άνθρωποι μου φάνηκαν κοντοί, άσκημοι, πνιμένοι στη μικροπολιτική. . . . Άκουγα τους βαρκάρηδες γύρα μου να βλαστημούν, τις βαμμένες πόρνες να τριγυρίζουν στο μάλιο το νιοφτασμένο βαπόρι, ένωθα τα σαπημένα φρούτα ν' αποσυνθέτουνται στο αρμυρό νερό . . . Ένα καλό στίχο, μια πράξη γενναία, ένα απότομο έλα να μπορούσα να δημιουργήσω μέσα σε όλη τούτη τη μάταιη ακάθαρτη ροή της καθημερινής ανάγκης!²⁰

Αυτά τα χρόνια, ύστερα από τη Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή, ο Καζαντζάκης ενδιαφερόταν πολύ για τη Σοβιετική Ένωση κι ήθελε να ζήσει εκεί, αν και αναγνώρισε πως η μοίρα του ήταν διαφορετική. Το 1925 έγραψε στην Έλλη Λαμπρίδη:

Η ράτσα η ρούσικη μούκαμε πάλι καταπληχτική εντύπωση: άγρια, πρωτόγονη, brutale, οι άντρες όλο σκοτάδι, οι γυναίκες όλο λαγόνια. . . . Τι

διαφορά με τα λιγνά ανεμώλια χωρίς φως και σκοτάδι, τους Έλληνες. Αχ! νάμουν γενημένος ρούσος! Αχ! νάμουν από τις ράτσες που έρχονται και όχι από τις βαριοφορτομένες, decadents, vieilles cocottes, τις ελθολατινικές! Μα τώρα πια είναι πολύ αργά και άλλη ζωή δεν υπάρχει.²¹

Ύστερα από μερικά χρόνια στη Ρουσία, μολονότι που είχε γίνει απογοητευμένος, συνέχιζε να υποστηρίζει τον κομμουνισμό για ενδιαφέροντες λόγους που εξήγησε στον Πρεβελάκη το 1930:

Εγώ όλο και γίνουμαι πιο ανένδοτος, ακριβώς γιατί τόσες αθλιότητες γίνονται στη «Μάμα Ρουσία». Βέβαια η . . . ματεριαλιστική βάση του κομμουνισμού μου είναι απεχθής. Μα είναι απαραίτητη, γιατί . . . ο κομμουνισμός δεν είναι αρχή ενούς νέου πολιτισμού, μα το τέλος ενούς παλιού κι επομένως οξύνει στο ακρότατο τις προσπάθειές του — υλισμός, μηχανή, αμερικανισμός.²²

Αλλά και νωρίτερα ακόμα, στο Βερολίνο όταν φαινόταν να ήταν κομμουνιστής ενώ έγραφε την *Ασκητική*, κρατούσε την ανεξαρτησία του. Μαθαίνουμε αυτό σ'ένα γράμμα προς την Ελένη Σαμίου που περιγράφει το έργο του.

Τέλεψα μια μελέτη . . . για τον Metakommunismus. Έτσι τον λέω. Θα δημοσιευτεί αργότερα — γιατί είναι ένα βήμα décisif στη ζωή μου και πρέπει καλά να το ζυγιάσω. Είναι μια μεγάλη rupture με τον Κομμουν[ισμό] — όχι προς τα πίσου βέβαια, μα φοβερά προς τα εμπρός. Όλοι οι φίλοι μου Κομμουν[ιστές] θα οργιστούν, όσοι είναι σύμφωνοι πάλι θα παρεξηγήσουν.²³

Κι έτσι έγινε! Δυστυχώς οι δεξιοί στην Ελλάδα πίστεψαν ότι ο Καζαντζάκης έμεινε ένας οπαδός του κομμουνισμού. Αυτοί που ήξεραν την αλήθεια — δηλαδή ότι ήταν βασικά ένας ιδεαλιστής — ήταν οι Έλληνες κομμουνιστές όπως ο Κώστας Βάρναλης.

Για να ξαναβρεί ο Καζαντζάκης την αγάπη του για την Ελλάδα έπρεπε να γίνει η κατοχή. Βρισκόταν από την αρχή ως το τέλος στην Αίγινα, όπου έβλεπε το 1941 τα γερμανικά αεροπλάνα που πετούσαν προς την πατρίδα του, την Κρήτη. Γράφει τότες στη δεύτερη γυναίκα του:

. . . εδώ η περιοχή του σπιτιού μας τις τελευταίες πολεμικές μέρες είταν «επικίνδυνη ζώνη» . . . πολυβολισμοί λίγα μέτρα μακριά από το σπίτι, έβλεπα τ' αεροπλάνα να περνούν απάνω από το κεφάλι μου κι ένιωθα πόσο από μια κλωστή κρέμονται όλα. . . Αφήστε λοιπόν τα «μέλλον-

τα» κι ας προσπαθήσουμε να ζήσουμε χωρίς νευρικότητες τις τωρινές φοβερές στιγμές.²⁴

Στην αρχή του 1942 γράφει στον Πρεβελάκη:

Εγώ πήρα οριστικά την απόφαση ν' αφήσω για μερικά χρόνια τα γραψίματα και να βοηθήσω όσο μπορώ, στην κρίσιμη τούτη στιγμή, τη ράτσα μας. . . ήρθε ο καιρός να γυρίσουμε από την εξορία μας. «Καλή Πατρίδα!» μου αρέσει αυτή η κραυγή. (400 Γράμματα, σελ. 502–503)

Η ευκαρία ήρθε ύστερα από τη φυγή των Γερμανών. Θα έλεγα όμως ότι δούλευε πατριωτικά και σ' όλη τη διάρκεια της κατοχής. Ήταν για αυτόν μια εξαιρετικά παραγωγική περίοδος. Έγραψε τον *Ζορμπά*, τον *Βούδα* και μια σειρά τραγωδιών με θέματα από την αρχαία, μεσαιωνική και μοντέρνα Ελλάδα. Όμως ίσως η πιο ικανοποιητική απασχόλησή του επί Κατοχής, και η πιο πατριωτική, ήταν να μεταφράσει την *Ιλιάδα* στη δημοτική. Συνεργάστηκε με τον καθηγητή Γιάννη Κακριδή. Ο μεν Καζαντζάκης ήταν στην Αίγινα, μη μπορώντας να φύγει χωρίς την άδεια των Γερμανών· ο δε Κακριδής βρισκόταν στην Αθήνα. Έτσι προχώρησε η δουλειά τους κυρίως επιστολογραφικά. Συμφώνησαν ότι ο Καζαντζάκης θα συνθέτει, μόνος του, την πρώτη γραφή και τότε ο Κακριδής θα υποδεικνύει τα σημεία που διαφωνούσε — οι παρατηρήσεις του γέμισαν τελικά δύο χιλιάδες σελίδες. Οι δύο μεταφραστές αγωνίστηκαν σχετικά με το μέτρο, τα ονόματα των προσώπων, τα επίθετα, τους ιδιωματισμούς, αν τα ομηρικά εφόδια του πολέμου έπρεπε να παραμείνουν ή να εκμοντερνιστούν, και πολλά άλλα φιλολογικά ζητήματα. Η ποικιλία αυτή συζητήθηκε στα άφθονα γράμματά τους. Θα διαβάσω μερικά παραδείγματα:

. . . η μόρα μ' έχει συνεπάρει και δουλέβω 15 ώρες το μερονύχτι. . . Αν δεν αρωστήσω, θα τελιώσω την πρώτη γραφή σε λίγους μήνες. . . Ένα είδος μέθη . . . με κυρίεψε και δεν μπορώ να σταματώσω. (84 Γράμματα, σελ. 259)

Σας παρακαλώ εφτύς ως μπορέσετε, στείλετέμου με τον ταχυδρόμο σας τα βοηθητικά βιβλία για γλωσσική επικουρία: Χρονικό του Μωρέως, Πτωχοπρόδρομο, Μεσαιωνικά του Legrand, . . . το Διγενή Ακρίτα . . . (84 Γράμματα, σελ. 262)

Η λέξη «αντράλα» είναι καθαρότατα δημοτική, τη χρησιμοποιώ συχνότατα στην «Οδύσεια» και την έχουν: ο Βλαστός, το λεξικό της Πρωίας, το Ηπειρωτικό γλωσσάριο του Αραβαντινού . . . και θα πει: ζάλι,

σκοτοδινη... Σας γράφω βιαστικά γιατί αληθινά δεν έχω καιρό μήτε ν' ανασάνω· πρι να ξημερώσει που πιάνω δουλιά ως βαθιά τη νύχτα είμαι εφτυχής βυθισμένος, ποντοπορώντας, στον Όμηρο. (84 Γράμματα, σελ. 260–261)

Έλαβα το γράμα και χάρηκα πολύ με τ' αγαπητά γκρινιάρικα μούτρα της σοφίας. Σε όλα, ίσως, έχετε δίκιο κι όλα, όσο είναι μπορετό, θα διορθοθούν· μην ανησυχείτε καθόλου... (84 Γράμματα σελ. 261)

Ξέρετε το δημοτικό μας για το άλογο: γοργοκυκλοπόδης (που γυρίζει γοργά τα πόδια του). Αυτή 'ναι η βάση· αντί όμως γοργο-, που εδώ δε χρειάζονται, έβαλα αερο-... που ισοδυναμεί με ανάερο) κ' έβγαλα: αεροκυκλοπόδης, που γυρίζει, παίζει τα πόδια του στον αγέρα.

Και ο τρομερός α' στίχος μου φαίνεται αθεράπεφτος. Ύστερα από πολλή κόπο, για να βάλω και το «Πηληιάδεω», έφτασα στον ακόλουθο απαίσιο στίχο: «Θεά, του γιου τραγοῦδα του Πηλέα τη μάνητα Αχιλλέα». Απαίσιος...²⁵

... ο μέγας μπελάς, τα κύρια ονόματα... άρτιος ο τύπος όλων των ονομάτων αδύνατο να διατηρηθεί. Ο Ιδομενέας... πρέπει ν' αποκεφαλιστεί... και να γίνει Δομενίας. Αυτό εμένα καθόλου δε με πειράζει... το αντίθετο θα μούκανε κακήν εντύπωση μέσα σε τόσο δημοτικό κείμενο· σα νάβλεπα την καημένη την Εύα Σικελιανού να κυκλοφορεί στα χωριά μας...

Το «αρνήφιλος» όμως; Καλύτερο από το πολεμόχαρος δε βρήκα. Βλέπω δε Σου αρέσει καθόλου· Σε παρακαλώ βοήθα με...²⁶

Κρίμα που δεν μου επιτρέπει ο χρόνος να διαβάσω κι άλλα τέτοια γράμματα σχετικά με τη διαδικασία της μετάφρασης. Πρέπει όμως να πεταχτώ στο 1955, όταν εξεδόθη η μετάφραση. Ο Καζαντζάκης ζούσε τότε στην Αντίπολη της Γαλλίας.

Πολύ αγαπητέ Συναθλητή, χαρά μεγάλη να δούμε... την Ιλιάδα τυπομένη... Προχτές είδα όνειρο: γελούσα, λέει, και Σούλεγα: «Αχ, πότε να βγει η β' έκδοση να διορθώσουμε αυτό το καλόγνωμος!»... Μα το σπουδαιότερο: Πότε θα βάλουμε μπροστά και την Οδύσεια;...²⁷

Αγαπημένε, νικηφόρε Συναθλητή,

Θαρώ η μέρα τούτη στάθηκε από τις πιο ευτυχισμένες της ζωής μου·

ανέβηκε η Ελένη στο γραφείο μου, πηδώντας δυο δυο τα σκαλιά, κ' είχε πίσω κρυμένα τα χέρια της. — Κλείσε τα μάτια σου! μου φώναξε. Κ' εγώ ευτύς κατάλαβα: — Η Ιλιάδα!

'Εκλεισα τα μάτια, τη δέχτηκα στα χέρια μου, τη φίλησα. Άνοιξα τα μάτια· τι χαρά λοιπόν είναι ν' αγωνίζεσαι χρόνια και χρόνια κι αργά να δένει ο καρπός του αγώνα Σου και να τον κρατάς στο χέρι! . . . Τώρα, ας ανασκουμπούμε· η σειρά της Οδύσειας!²⁸

Βλέπετε πως αυτός ο αγωνιζόμενος άνθρωπος αισθάνθηκε, κάποτε, λίγη ευχαρίστηση. Τα επίλεκτα γράμματα φανερώνουν τα βάσανά του, που ήταν πολλά, μα φανερώνουν επίσης τις πιο ελαφρές στιγμές μιας πολύπλευρης προσωπικότητας. Γι' αυτό, λέω να τελειώσω με την πιο ελαφριά, παιχνιδιάρικη, ίσως και συναισθηματική πλευρά του Καζαντζάκη που φανερώνεται στα γράμματα. Ακουσαμε κιόλας πόσο χιουμοριστικός ήταν όταν έγραφε στον Istrati. Μια όμοια μαλακή πλευρά δείχνεται πολλές φορές όταν γράφει σε γυναίκες. Υπάρχουν μερικά έξοχα παραδείγματα, λόγου χάριν, προς την Έλλη Λαμπρίδη. Σ' ένα γράμμα της λέει, «Σε συλογούμαι με τόση φυσικότητα κι άνεση, σα ν' αναπνέω. . . . Άχ! Νάμαστε μαζί! . . .».²⁹ Τρυφερά λόγια αλλά, όπως πάντα, σαν πρόλογος σε εκτεταμένες περιγραφές των σκέψεων και εμπειριών του! Σε μια άλλη επιστολή προς την Λαμπρίδη, τελειώνει έτσι: «. . . να μπορούσα νάβρισκα ένα λόγο απλό να σου πω πόσο ακατάλυτα είμαι μαζί σου. . . . Η ζωή τούτη είναι ένα όνειρο αβάσταχτο κ' η καρδιά του ανθρώπου πηδάει, χτυπάει και μάχεται να ξυπνήσει, πεθαίνοντας. Είκοσι μέρες ακόμα μας χωρίζουν. Ο "Θεός" να δώσει να σε βρω καλή, χαρούμενη, εσένα και το παιδί σου. Σε φιλώ στους ώμους, σου φιλώ τα χέρια, σου φιλώ τα δυό σου μάτια.»³⁰

Πώς λοιπόν να εξηγήσουμε τη μανιώδη αυτή επιστολογραφία του Καζαντζάκη; Μήπως πίστεψε ότι όλοι οι παραλήπτες θα κρατήσουν τα γράμματα ώστε μια μέρα να εκδοθούν; Μπορεί· μα το αμφιβάλλω, μια και δεν υπάρχουν αποδείξεις. Πιστεύω ότι η επιστολογραφία ήταν η πιο βολική μέθοδος επικοινωνίας για εκείνον — μια μέθοδος που του επέτρεπε να εκφάσει όχι μονάχα τις ιδέες του αλλά και τα συναισθήματα που δεν μπόρεσε να φανερώσει χωρίς μια πέννα στο χέρι του. Από τη δική του εξομολόγηση καθώς και τη γνώμη άλλων, δεν τα πήγαινε καλά με τους ανθρώπους. Και πέρα από αυτό, ήταν για πολλά χρόνια της ζωής του αποξενωμένος από την πατρίδα. Ακόμα όταν ζούσε στην Ελλάδα αισθάνθηκε εξόριστος στον ίδιο του τον τόπο. Ισχυρίζομαι ότι ήταν ένας μανιώδης επιστολογράφος επειδή το να γράφει γράμματα ήταν για αυτόν μια πραγματική μανία, κάτι που ορίζεται στο λεξικό σαν μιαν έμμονη τάση,

μια ακατανίκητη κλίση, μια ιδεοληψία. Ο Θόδωρος Adorno λέει ότι «για κάποιον που δεν έχει πια μια πατρίδα, το γράψιμο γίνεται τόπος να ζήσει».³¹ Άρα συμπεραίνω πως η μανιώδης επιστολογραφία του Καζαντζάκη έγινε ένα καταφύγιο — ο πιο ασφαλής του τόπος.

Riparius, NY, August 2007

Revised: Hanover, NH, March 2012

Expanded: Hanover, NH, May 2014

Σημειώσεις

- 1 Παντελής Πρεβελάκης, *Τετρακόσια γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ελένης Ν. Καζαντζάκη, 1965), σελ. 176 (3 Φλεβάρη 1930), Peter Bien, ed., *The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 370. Όλα τα χειρόγραφα των τετρακόσιων γραμμάτων βρίσκονται στη βιβλιοθήκη του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, Ρεθύμνου με την έξοχη φροντίδα της Ελένης Κωβαίου.
- 2 Πρεβελάκης 1965, σελ. 660 (6 Δεκεμβρίου 1953), Bien 2012, p. 746.
- 3 Μια φωτοτυπία βρίσκεται στη *Νέα Εστία* 66, Χριστούγεννα 1959, σελ. 68. Το χειρόγραφο βρίσκεται στο Ιστορικό Μουσείο Κρήτης, Καζ 2 Α/Α1. Το κείμενο δημοσιεύτηκε στο βιβλίο *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης γεννήθηκε για τη δόξα της Ελλάς* Αλεξίου και του Γιώργου Στεφανιάκη (Αθήνα: Καστανιώτη, 1983), σελ. 335–338. Bien 2012, pp. 1–3.
- 4 *Τετρακόσια γράμματα*, σελ. 729–730. Bien 2012, p. 851.
- 5 Ελένη Ν. Καζαντζάκη, *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης ο ασυμβίβαστος* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ελένης Ν. Καζαντζάκη, 1977), σελ. 41. Πολλά γράμματα στον πατέρα και στη μητέρα βρίσκονται στο Ιστορικό Μουσείο Κρήτης, αλλά όχι εκείνο.
- 6 *Ανέκδοτες επιστολές Καζαντζάκη από τα νεανικά έως τα ώριμα χρόνια του (1902–1956)*, με πρόλογο και δύο σχόλια του Μηνά Δημάκη (Αθήνα: Έκδοση Μουσείου Καζαντζάκη, 1979), σελ. 47. Το χειρόγραφο βρίσκεται στο Μουσείο Νίκου Καζαντζάκη. 12–1–1904, προς τον Αντώνη Ανεμογιάννη.
- 7 Μάρθα Αποσκήτου-Αλεξίου, «Τριάντα τέσσερα άγνωστα γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη». *Αμάλθεια* (Άγιος Νικόλαος, Κρήτης), τομ. Θ', τεύχος 35 (Απριλίου-Ιουνίου 1978), φωτογραφία του χειρογράφου στη σελ. 133, κείμενο τυπομένο στη σελ. 134. Καλοκαίρι 1906 προς τον Τσιριντάνη.
- 8 Πέτρος Μαρκάκης, «Ανέκδοτα γράμματα του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη. Το περιοδικό “Πινακοθήκη” κι ο Δημ. Καλογερόπουλος. *Καινούρια Εποχή*, Φθινόπωρο 1959, σελ. 35. 4–1–08 προς τον Δημ. Καλογερόπουλο.
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104. Μετάφραση στα γαλλικά στο Colette Janiaud-Lust, *Nikos Kazantzaki: sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: Maspero, 1970), σελ. 557. Τα χειρόγραφα των γραμμάτων στη Γαλάτεια βρίσκονται στο Ιστορικό Μουσείο Κρήτης.
- 10 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 154. 11–2–1923.
- 11 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 226–227. Δεκέμβριος 1923.
- 12 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 79. 9 Σεπτεμβρίου 1922.
- 13 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 128.
- 14 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 163–165.
- 15 *Επιστολές προς την Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 222.
- 16 Κυριάκος Μητσοτάκης, *Ο Καζαντζάκης μιλεί για Θεό* (Αθήνα: Μινώας, 1972), σελ. 81–82. Φωτόγραφο του χειρογράφου στη σελ. 28. Βλ. «Οι αληθινές θεολογικές σχέσεις Ν. Καζαντζάκη και Εμμ. Παπαστεφάνου» του Γιωργίου Π. Σταματίου (*Νέα Εστία* τόμ. 98, τεύχος 1153, 15 Ιουλίου 1975, σελ. 960–966 και τεύχος 1154, 1 Αυγούστου, σελ. 1032–1039. Για τα ελαττώματα του βιβλίου του Μητσοτάκη, βλέπε σελ. 960· για το σωστό κείμενο του εν λόγω γράμματος, εν μέρει, βλέπε σελ. 1036. Μεταφράζεται το γράμμα σε *The Suffering God: Selected Letters to Galatea and to Papastephanou*, translated by Philip Ramp and Katerina Angelaki Rooke (New Rochelle, New York: Caratzas, 1979), σελ. 33–36.
- 17 «Δέκα επιστολές του Καζαντζάκη στον Χουρμούζιο». Θεώρηση του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη είκοσι χρόνια από το θάνατό του. *Τετράδια «Ευθύνης»* 3 (1977), σελ. 187, πρβ. σελ. 184. Το γράμμα γραφτηκε 23–10–1943. Το χειρόγραφο βρήσκειται στο Μουσείο Νίκου Καζαντζάκη.
- 18 *Επιστολές προς τη Γαλάτεια*, σελ. 232–233. Bien 2012, pp. 191–192.
- 19 Eleni N. Kazantzaki, *Le Disident: biographie de Nikos Kazantzaki* (Paris: Plon, 1968), σελ. 281. Ασυμβίβαστος, σελ. 332.
- 20 20–10–1925 προς την Έλλη Λαμπρίδη. Έχω μια φωτοτυπία του χειρογράφου χάρη στη Γιολάντα Χατζή, την ανιψιά της Έλλης Λαμπρίδη.
- 21 21–10–1926 προς την Ελένη Σαμίου. Ασυμβίβαστος, σελ. 191–192, εν μέρει. Έχω μια φωτοτυπία του πλήρους χειρογράφου.
- 22 13–12–1926 προς την Ελένη Σαμίου. Ασυμβίβαστος, σελ. 196, εν μέρει. Έχω μια φωτοτυπία του πλήρους χειρογράφου.
- 23 22–2–1930 προς τον Πρεβελάκη. *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα*, σελ. 179–180.
- 24 15–5–1941 προς την Ελένη Σαμίου. *Ασυμβίβαστος*, σελ. 469–470 εν μέρει. Έχω μια φωτοτυπία του πλήρους χειρογράφου.
- 25 «84 Γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Κακριδή». *Νέα Εστία* τόμ. 102, τεύχος 1211, Χριστούγεννα 1977, σελ. 264. 1–1–1943. Όλα τα χειρόγραφα βρίσκονται στο Μουσείο Νίκου Καζαντζάκη.
- 26 15–2–1943. 84 Γράμματα, σελ. 265–266.

- 27 12-9-1955. 84 Γράμματα, σελ. 293-294.
28 9-11-1955. 84 Γράμματα, σελ. 294-295.
29 22-10-1925 to Elli Lambridi.
30 9-12-1927. Selected Letters, p. 290.
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CAVAFY

Constantine Cavafy

CONSTANTINE CAVAFY (1863–1933) craved recognition on a worldwide scale.¹ That he should now enjoy it is ironic considering his assumption that fate always frustrates our hopes for fame. It is also improbable, since he never published in the normal manner, merely distributing his poems gratis to a select circle of Greek admirers.² Even during his lifetime, however, a small group of English-speaking readers began to find his work original and impressive. Here again we encounter irony, for this repute was occasioned by the very agent Cavafy so mistrusted — the strange fate that, sending E. M. Forster to Alexandria in World War I, brought about Cavafy’s first appearance in English translation when Forster included a version of “Απολείπειν ο Θεός Αντώνιον” (“The God Abandons Antony,” 1910) in his *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (1922) and supplemented this with a wry essay published the following year in *Pharos and Pharillon* about this singular “Greek gentleman in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe.”

Since then, Cavafy has enjoyed growing esteem among writers and critics. He has even reached the general reading public as the shadowy “old poet” of Lawrence Durrell’s *Justine*, where he epitomizes the dappled spirit of Alexandria with its weariness, worn sophistication, and priapic intrigue. What Durrell perhaps expects is that specialists and the broader public alike may realize that we are touched by Cavafy because we are all now somewhat “Alexandrian.”

Fate, far from frustrating Cavafy’s desire for worldwide fame, has been posthumously good to him; but in the process it has played another ironic trick: it has made him respectable. Although many of his poems are veiled enough to be suitable for schoolgirls, when correctly interpreted they are almost all openly or covertly scandalous, for they either deny, ridicule, or (worst of all) ignore the three bulwarks of respectable bourgeois society: Christianity, patriotism, and heterosexual love. His near-canonization has

gone furthest in Greece itself, in a kind of twisted fulfillment of the sentiments that Cavafy expressed under the significant title “Πολύ Σπανιώς” (“Very Seldom,” 1911). In this poem we see an exhausted and stooped old man who nevertheless still has a share in youth:

His poems are recited now by adolescent boys;
 his visions invade their vibrant eyes.
 Their healthy sensuous minds,
 their shapely well built bodies
 are moved by his manifestations of Beauty.

It is easy enough to understand how these lines of wish fulfillment with their benignly homosexual overtones can be sentimentalized by school-teachers into an inoffensive poem on the incorruptibility of art. And it is also easy enough to forget, when in 1963 on the centenary of Cavafy’s birth we hear a Greek schoolgirl characterize him as “the beloved poet of youth,” that fifty years previously his own sister forbade her daughter to read Uncle Costas’s disreputable verses. Nor is it any less ironic that another feature of canonization during the centenary observances should have been a speech in which Cavafy’s verse was flanked by excerpts from Thucydides and Saint Paul. Thucydides (representing patriotism: the glory of the classic tradition) makes a strange bedfellow for an author who so studiously ignored everything that Greek chauvinists idolize. Paul is equally incompatible, representing as he does the religion that extirpated or at least forced underground the pagan gods Cavafy so studiously cultivated. But the fact that young girls can now read Cavafy without scandalizing their parents indicates that Athens, London, Paris, and New York feel an affinity for this previously disreputable figure, accepting him as the spokesman of a Western tradition that, lacking vital new drives or a solid moral or religious understructure, has become effete, weary, cynical, eclectic, and, by consequence, tolerant.

Cavafy’s sophisticated modernity is all the more astonishing because it seems to issue from nowhere, or at best from some backwater. While Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, André Gide — all at the center of twentieth-century modernism and fortified to a greater or lesser extent by the writings of professional philosophers — were giving us their carefully elaborated artistic visions of *Homo Europaeus*, together with implied attitudes toward time, memory, the af-

terlife, morality, God, and absolute truth, here was Cavafy doing the same thing as though naïvely, by instinct. He is of course the very opposite of a naïve, instinctive poet; yet, because of a fateful crossing of psychological disposition, personal circumstances both economic and social, and the fact that he was a Greek living in Alexandria, he did not need philosophers or acquaintance with literary trends in order to evoke *Homo Europaeus*: all he needed was to write about himself, having first discovered how to remove every sentimental element from this personal indulgence.

The method he found led him to Alexandrian history. If this sounds paradoxical, it is but one such facet of this most paradoxical of men. Obsessively the subjective poet of self, he was at the same time largely detached and objective—an antilyrical lyricist. Although modern to the core, he remained oblivious to contemporary affairs, preferring to lose himself in remote periods of history. Proudly conscious of his identity as a Greek and of the part played by Greece in Western civilization, he nevertheless largely ignored the great figures: Homer, the dramatists, Pericles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. In his personal life he was a monkish, antisocial recluse who nevertheless craved, and received, the constant adulation of a circle of disciples. By day a fastidious aristocrat conscious of his social position, sensitive to any slights, and crushed if he failed to be invited to the dinner parties of Alexandria's respectable moneyed class, by night he lived a dissolute life in the city's slums, giving himself over with deliberate recklessness to the purchased fulfillment of what he himself termed "love that is sterile and disdained." Perhaps most paradoxical of all is that this aristocrat and bohemian, with his exclusively urban mentality, spent so many years as a petit bourgeois official in the Egyptian government's Ministry of Irrigation.

He was truly a man with a stance at a slight angle to the universe—a stance that becomes understandable when we know a little more about his life and background: about his psychological disposition and his social and economic circumstances, about Alexandria itself, and about the specific technical problems Cavafy had to work out before his artistry could become distinctive. For although his poems are neither syntactically difficult nor outwardly cryptic and although they are therefore "available" to the average reader who comes to them without a panoply of scholarship, part of Cavafy's modernity is that he does require this scholarship. Perhaps this is simply a result of his astonishing egocentricity: he is saying, in

effect, My poems are me, and if you wish to read them the way they should be read, you will need to know all about me, and that means knowing all about my life in Alexandria, my aristocratic ancestors, my city's glory and decline, and the other things that interest me, such as the defunct dynasties of Byzantium and Syria and the encroachment of Christian asceticism on the splendid paganism of the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East.

TO BEGIN, then, with Cavafy's life in Alexandria: After his fortieth year — that is, from the time he began to develop his mature poetic style — outwardly his existence was uneventful. The thirty succeeding years, those that produced the poems comprising his canon, were spent entirely in Alexandria, except for a trip to a hospital in Athens just before his death. A major characteristic of this Alexandrian period is a spiritual as well as physical identification between the poet and his birthplace. “Η Πόλις” (“The City,” 1894), although a very early poem and one that deals most basically not with Alexandria per se but with Cavafy's anguish over his homosexuality, is prophetic on a literal level, and it gives a good idea of just what Alexandria came to mean to him, in both his writing and his personal life. The poet vows that he will “go to another land . . . another sea.” In Alexandria his every effort is doomed:

Wherever I cast my glance, wherever I stare,
I see my life's black ruins here
where I passed so many years in loss and waste.

Another city will be found, he tells himself at first — a better one. But then he realizes the truth: “New lands you will not find; you will find no other seas”:

The city will follow you. You will patrol
the same streets, in the same districts grow old,
turn gray in these same houses
.....
for you there is no vessel, road for you there is none.
Here in this tiny corner, such harm you have done
your life, the loss spreads over the entire world.

Even during his lifetime, Cavafy's identification with his city was recognized; he was considered *the* poet of Alexandria and enjoyed a certain

notoriety as such. Forster and Durrell give us some idea of his peculiar renown among his fellow Alexandrians, and this picture is confirmed and enlarged by many Greeks who knew him and have recorded their impressions. All seem to agree on at least two points: his eccentricity and his extraordinary powers as a conversationalist. Timos Malanos, his earliest biographer, claims that Cavafy was always acting, that his appearance, gestures, and tone of voice were so strange that mimicking him became a favorite Alexandrian pastime. But this does not mean that he was an object of ridicule; on the contrary, he attracted a circle of loyal young disciples whom he met regularly in a café. His powers of repartee are proved by the fact that so many of these companions — a circle of Mediterranean Boswells — habitually recorded everything he said. Cavafy, with his almost pathological need to be admired, must have played his role with gusto, entrancing his auditors in the way that Forster so well describes:

He may be prevailed upon to begin a sentence — an immense complicated yet shapely sentence, full of parentheses that never get mixed and of reservations that really do resolve; a sentence that moves with logic to its foreseen end, yet to an end that is always more vivid and thrilling than one foresaw. . . . It deals with the tricky behaviour of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus in 1096, or with olives, their possibilities and price, or with the fortunes of friends, or George Eliot, or the dialects of the interior of Asia Minor. It is delivered with equal ease in Greek, English, or French. (*Pharos and Pharillon*, pp. 91–92)

An equally charming picture, part truth, part wish-fulfillment, is given in the final stanza of Cavafy's poem "Ἡρώδης Ἀττικὸς" ("Herodes Atticus," 1911). Here we perhaps encounter some habitual topics at the poet's café table, and we are offered a Cavafian definition of consummate bliss:

How many young lads in Alexandria now,
 in Antioch and Beirut
 (the future orators that Hellenism is readying)
 when they gather at the choice tables
 where the talk is sometimes of lovely philosophy
 and sometimes of their exquisite love affairs,
 suddenly, absorbed, fall silent?
 They leave their glasses untouched beside them

and reflect on Herodes' good fortune
 — what other philosopher was granted so much? —
 that in his wants and actions
 the Greeks (the Greeks!) should follow him,
 neither judging nor discussing,
 not even choosing any more, just following.

Much of the legend that has grown up around this eccentric poet centers on his flat at 10 Rue Lepsius. His niece Harikleia Valieri records that when his relatives, scandalized by the neighborhood, implored him to leave, he rose, went to the window, drew back the curtains, and declared, "Where else could I be better situated than here, amidst these three centers of existence: a brothel, a church which forgives, and a hospital where you die?"

Favored visitors were admitted to this sanctum, with its subdued light, the ornate Oriental furniture that Cavafy had brought from his family's baronial mansion, and the three diamonds embedded in the sitting-room wall. If the guest was young and handsome, an additional candle would be lighted, but the host always sat in shadow. Hypersensitive about his aging, he could not bear to let his wrinkles be seen or to have anyone insinuate that *he* was no longer young and handsome. Cavafy could not contemplate old age with equanimity. In "Η Ψυχές των Γερόντων" ("The Souls of Old Men," 1898), he views the senescent as enduring a wretched, burdensome life while at the same time "they tremble they might lose it — these

bewildered contradictory
 souls that sit comictragically
 in their ancient, their ruined hides.

If to philosophize is to learn to die, Cavafy was never a philosopher, and those who see stoic overtones in some of his poems overlook the fact that on his deathbed he wept. Cavafy was not a philosopher; he was a voluptuary, and for a voluptuary (especially one who disbelieves in an after-life) the irreparable disaster is old age, while the sole consolation, the sole drug to narcotize this "wound from a hideous knife" as Cavafy terms it, is reverie — reverie about foregone pleasure, foregone vigor. In most cases such reverie is dissipated and lost; in Cavafy's it was solidified into poetry.

It is to the past, therefore — first to Cavafy's youthful years before the

poems were written and then beyond that time to the glory and decline of his family — that we must turn for the “events” of his largely uneventful life. In the poet’s youth we have the homosexual assignations in the slums of Constantinople and Alexandria; these, with their exultation and frustration, are repeatedly described in the poetry, sometimes in a veiled manner, sometimes openly. Here is Cavafy by night. By day we have the dandified scion of a once-great house, struggling to maintain a dignified position that he knows has been lost forever. Conflict between the nocturnal and diurnal selves, inevitable at first, is recorded in “Ομνῶει” (“He Swears,” 1905), a poem whose autobiographical nature is confirmed by notes found among the poet’s papers after his death:

Every so often he swears to begin a better life.
But when the night comes with its own suggestions,
with its compromises and promises;
when night comes with its own fleshly
vigor that craves and stalks — then, lost,
he returns again to the same lethal pleasure.

But this situation, although superficially one of irresolvable conflict, contained its own resolution, and in so doing provided the method of Cavafy’s poetry. For Cavafy’s genius perceived that his sexual decadence was congruent with his and his family’s decline and that this personal misfortune was in turn congruent with the decline of the local Greek community as a whole; furthermore, he saw that his situation bore analogy to the ups and downs of Greek fortunes in Alexandria over a period of two millennia, to the decline of Hellenism as a civilizing force in numerous other cultural centers, and (implicitly) to the weary decadence of contemporary European civilization in general. Cavafy now had at his fingertips an expanding series of equivalent situations, any one of which could be utilized poetically to symbolize any, or all, of the others. By placing his personal dilemma in this huge perspective embracing family and nationality and by learning to view everything with an attitude of resignation, he was able to resolve his personal troubles without sentimentalizing them.

The best evidence of family decline is a descendant obsessed with family glory. Cavafy betrays this obsession in “Genealogy,” a monograph that he wrote sporadically between 1882 and 1909 and finally abandoned in 1911 (this date, as we shall see, may be significant). Here he dwells with

pathetic insistence on the glories of both his paternal and maternal ancestors. Among these, on his father's side were the governor of a city in Moldavia, a chief priest of the church at Antioch, a head physician of St. George's Hospital in London, and an entire branch of Italian nobility; on his mother's side were a prince of Samos, two wives of high-level Belgian diplomats, and a wealthy philanthropist whose "splendid funeral" Cavafy especially mentions.

Status, respectability, and cosmopolitanism seem the common ingredients of the family tradition, and these mark the poet's own childhood as well. According to the same document, his father's export business was the largest in Egypt from about 1851 to 1870, with branches in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Constantinople, Cairo, and elsewhere. The Cavafy mansion, in the town's most aristocratic neighborhood, maintained a French tutor, an English nanny, four or five Greek menservants, an Italian coachman, and an Egyptian groom. But this affluence did not last; the fortunes and misfortunes of Cavafy and Sons roughly paralleled those of the Greek community in general.

To understand what happened, we must know a few facts. Modern Egypt dates from the French occupation of 1798–1801, when Napoleon drove out the Turks and introduced French scientists, engineers, and historians in their wake. Under the rule of Mohammed Ali (effectively in command ca. 1810–1840) new seed and methods were introduced, making Egypt into a great producer of cotton. A revitalized Alexandria became the country's export center, and Ali, mistrusting the Egyptians, gave concessions to foreigners, encouraging in particular a Greek monopoly of foreign trade. The Greeks prospered to such an extent that by the 1850s, soon after the founding of Cavafy and Sons, they controlled the commercial life of Cairo, Khartoum, and Alexandria. In 1845 there were two thousand Greeks in Alexandria; in 1900, twenty thousand; in 1907, twenty-six thousand. The researches of Stratis Tsirkas have shown that the original Francophile Greek plutocracy, including Cavafy's father, declined in the 1870s and 1880s owing to increased British influence in Egypt. This group was replaced by a *nouveau riche* class of Anglophile Greek merchants, who in turn suffered from the financial crisis of 1907, the growing antagonism toward all Europeans, the founding of the nationalist movement in 1919, the agreement to end extraterritoriality in 1937, the revolution against King Farouk in 1952, and finally the expulsion of the Greek com-

munity by Gamal Abdel Nasser in the early 1960s. For us the important thing is to realize that Cavafy, as Tsirkas puts it, “emerges from the atmosphere of the Greek community of the Middle East at the moment it was traveling the road of its bankruptcy and liquidation.”

Without the demise of Cavafy and Sons we would not have had the poet as we know him, if only for the fact that after Cavafy’s father died, leaving only a meager estate, his widow was forced by circumstances to take her children to live in England. This sojourn, which lasted for seven of Cavafy’s most formative years, put the definitive stamp on the poet’s cosmopolitanism. It is essential to remember in any consideration of his artistic development that he knew and loved English literature (as well as French), habitually conversed in English with his brothers, spoke Greek with a British accent, and began his poetic career with translations and imitations of English and French verse. However, the other side of the coin is equally important. Although he could very well have continued in this imitative way, or even have written exclusively in the English or French languages (as did Yannis Papadiamantopoulos, who became famous as the “French” poet Jean Moréas), he did not. The lure of Greek greatness and decline, and above all the magic of the Greek tongue, proved too compelling.

Cavafy returned to Alexandria at the age of sixteen. Subsequently, he went to Constantinople for three years, a period about which we know very little but which he always deemed the freest and “most beautiful” of his life. At twenty-two the young poet came back to Alexandria, this time to stay. Cultured, sophisticated, proud to the point of arrogant snobbery, and saddled with what Durrell likes to call “tendencies,” he was forced by a malevolent fortune to go each morning to the office in order to “sit among insignificant functionaries,” as he put it. We see him behind the mask of a Sidonian actor in “Θέατρον της Σιδώνος (400 μ.Χ.)” (“Theater of Sidon [A.D. 400],” 1923), a poem that may serve as a convenient illustration of how Cavafy linked his personal situation with the general decline of Hellenism:

Son of an esteemed citizen,	above all a good-looking
juvenile actor,	pleasing in diverse ways,
now and then I compose	in the Greek language
excessively daring verses . . .	

We also learn the important fact that these verses, being about “exquisite self-gratification leading / to love that is sterile and disdained,” are of course circulated most secretly in order to keep them from “dun-clad promulgators of morals.”

The personal situation in this poem is presented through a ruse. The historical mask and the pose of scholarly accuracy in time and place enable Cavafy to distance and objectify what is a personal indulgence. Then, beyond this, the poet employs historicity to draw us into the expanding series of equivalent situations, thus weighting his poem with meaning not apparent in the bare prose sense. The extent of personal indulgence becomes clear when we remember that the poem’s “excessively daring verses” are of course Cavafy’s own disreputable work and that in circulating them “always on the sly” the handsome Sidonian is following Cavafy’s own practice. This practice was to issue his poems singly or grouped in folders that he circulated among select friends. No book of his work was ever published during his lifetime. The element of “Theater of Sidon (A.D. 400)” that draws us into the equivalent situation and thus links Cavafy’s personal troubles with the general decline of Hellenism is the all-important date included in the title. Cavafy expects us to remember A.D. 400 as the time when triumphant Christianity was forcing Greek paganism in Sidon, Alexandria, and the rest of the Hellenistic world to breathe its last breath. The poem in its larger implications, therefore, is one of many in which Cavafy laments the historical retreat of the pagan way of life (which he continually identifies with exquisite self-gratification) before the taboos and respectability of Christianity. By means of this equivalent situation the verses express his own predicament as a latter-day pagan still in a hostile environment of sexual restrictions unknown, he would have us believe, to pre-Christian Greeks.

As the years passed and Cavafy’s sensual desires came to be frustrated by creeping old age as well as Christian morality and bourgeois respectability, the poet found increasing solace in reveries of a bygone period of freedom and fulfillment — probably those three beautiful years in Constantinople. In the same way, his historical reveries were directed to Hellenism’s zenith as well as to its nadir. But in neither the personal nor the historical case was he willing to sentimentalize; he saw the frustration and failure along with the exultation. Just as his own vigor and youth had succumbed to decrepitude, so the various Hellenistic centers had undergone

the same process, and the method by which he could recapture in poetry the soars and swoops of his personal history was to evoke the history of his people — in particular the vicissitudes of that people in Alexandria.

THE BEST WAY to gain acquaintance with Cavafy, therefore, is to follow the entire history of Alexandria as he displays it in his poems. The city, in his view, was at its most dazzling during the early period of pagan Greek rule, roughly from 300 to 200 B.C. When the Romans intruded, the dimming began. They eventually acquired complete control; then came Christianity's turn to intrude. The Greek spirit was almost entirely snuffed out when Rome itself turned Christian. Finally, the Arab conquest in the seventh century brought total blackness. Such, in capsule, is Cavafy's view.

At this point it may be well to remember that Cleopatra was not an Egyptian but a Greek and that Alexandria, although a meeting ground of Greeks, Jews, Egyptians, Syrians, and others, was dominated by Greek culture and was originally ruled by Macedonian monarchs whose blood from first to last was as purely Greek (since they generally married their brothers or sisters) as that of the dynasty's founder, Ptolemy. This first Ptolemy determined to make his capital city the world center of culture — “*Ἡ Δόξα των Πτολεμαίων*” (“The Glory of the Ptolemies,” 1911):

the mentor city, the Hellenic world's acme
wisest in all the arts, in all philosophy.

The instrument for effecting these glorious cultural aims was the Mouseion, “the great intellectual achievement of the dynasty,” as Forster writes in his *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*. Not only did the Mouseion

mould the literature and science of its day, but it has left a permanent impress upon thought. . . . It was essentially a court institution, under palace control, and knew both the advantages and disadvantages of royal patronage. In some ways it resembled a modern university, but the scholars and scientists and literary men whom it supported were under no obligation to teach; they had only to pursue their studies to the greater glory of the Ptolemies. (p. 17)

These studies resulted in the calendar we still use today; the determination of the earth's diameter; the astronomical calculations that were codified

by Claudius Ptolemy (also an Alexandrian, but one who lived after the fall of the dynasty whose name he shared); the *Elements* of Euclid; the beginning of literary scholarship; and — most important in connection with Cavafy — a school of epigrammatic poetry that influenced him in attitude, subject matter, and technique. Callimachus, Meleager, Crinagoras, Rhianus, Aratus, and the others whose works have come down to us wrote, as Forster says, “when the heroic age of Greece was over, when liberty was lost and possibly honour too.” The literature they developed

was disillusioned, and we may be glad that it was not embittered also. It had strength of a kind, for it saw that out of the wreck of traditional hopes three good things remained — namely the decorative surface of the universe, the delights of study, and the delights of love, and that of these three the best was love. (p. 29)

Cavafy’s indebtedness to this school of epigrammists cannot be too often stressed. We need only add one additional genre cultivated in this lustrous period, 300–200 B.C. — the “mime,” little scenes from everyday urban life, dramatized in dialogue — and we have precedents for every aspect of Cavafy’s poetic manner. Forster’s list of characteristics is remarkably applicable: disillusionment that lacks bitterness, obsession with the wreck of traditional hopes, complete absence of the heroic spirit, love of study, and a hedonism that cultivates the delights of love. We must subtract only the interest in the decorative surface of the universe (Cavafy’s urban mentality was deliberately oblivious to nature) and put in its place one further delight and consolation, that of poetry itself — or, to be more exact, of *Greek* poetry.

Since the Mouseion was the instrument for making Alexandria the summit of pan-Hellenism, it was bound to suffer once the Hellenic world began to capitulate to the superior strength of Rome. By 200 B.C. the Ptolemies were already under Rome’s “protection,” a situation that eventually led not only to the dynasty’s well-known end, when Cleopatra applied her asp, but also (and of far greater consequence) to Julius Caesar’s accidental burning of the Mouseion together with its extraordinary library. Once established as Egypt’s protector, Rome found pretexts for further intervention owing to internal dissension among the Ptolemies themselves, so that by the time of Ptolemy VI (ca. 150 B.C.), the rulers of Egypt, as well as other Hellenistic monarchs, had become mere puppets. Indeed, when this Ptolemy was expelled from Alexandria by his brother, he was obliged

to go begging to Rome in order to ask the Senate to reinstate him. The Romans settled the dispute wisely — in their own interests — by dividing the kingdom and thus further weakening it. Cavafy treats the incident in two poems. In “*Ἡ Δυσαρέσκεια τοῦ Σελευκίδου*” (“The Displeasure of Selefkidis,” 1910) he follows his source, the historian Diodorus Siculus, and recounts the meeting between Ptolemy and Demetrios Selefkidis, himself a hostage in Rome at the time; in “*Πρέσβεις ἀπ’ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια*” (“Envoys from Alexandria,” 1915), departing from history, he conveys the decline of Greece most piquantly by inventing a futile embassy to the Delphic Oracle, which itself has been overshadowed by the rival “oracle” in Rome. He has ambassadors from Alexandria arrive at Delphi bearing extraordinary gifts from “the rival/Ptolemaic kings.” The Delphic priests, having accepted these treasures, are understandably uneasy:

... How

most astutely to arrange which of the pair
— of such a pair — should be displeased, will require
their fullest expertise.

But suddenly the ambassadors take their leave; they “have no further need / of any oracle whatever.” The priests are relieved but also “perplexed in the extreme,” ...

for grave news reached the envoys the day before; of this they’re
unaware.

The oracle was given in Rome; the partition took place there.

The end of the dynasty is known to every schoolchild, but chiefly from the Roman point of view. The official Augustan version, propagated by Vergil, is that Mark Antony unmanned himself by capitulating to Cleopatra’s infinite variety and languid Oriental debauchery and that Octavian’s naval triumph at Actium in 31 B.C. signified the triumph, as C. M. Bowra puts it, of “the upright spirit of Rome over the corrupting influences of the East.” Cavafy, in some of his most memorably ironic poems, treats the leading figures and events in an altogether different way.

Regarding Octavian’s triumph over Antony, in “*Ἐν δήμῳ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας*” (“In a Township in Asia Minor,” 1926), Cavafy sees that, at least from the vantage point of the average contemporaneous Greek, one Roman ruler was much the same as another: all were nuisances to be

placated with rhetoric and tolerated insofar as they recognized the cultural superiority of Greece.

The news about Actium, the outcome of the naval engagement there,
 was most assuredly unforeseen.
 But we have no need to compose a new document.
 Only the name must be changed. There in the
 concluding lines, instead of “Having delivered the Romans
 from pernicious Octavian, that travesty of Caesar,”
 now we’ll put, “Having delivered the Romans
 from pernicious Antony.” The entire text fits perfectly.

Hereupon follows the panegyric. The victor is praised as “unsurpassed in every martial enterprise” and as “admirable for monumental civil achievement,” but above all as the “venerator of Hellenic customs,” whose deeds are therefore worthy of being extensively narrated

in the Greek language, both in verse and prose;
in the Greek language, the conveyer of fame.

“And so on and so forth,” the poem continues. Yes, “everything fits beautifully.”

A second poem — one of several effective superimpositions of speech rhythms and prosaic tone upon the decorous form of couplets rhymed as often as not in homonyms — likewise views the event with irony, but with an irony that takes an entirely new turn. If we may judge by repeated elaborations of this theme in other poems, Cavafy here is not just inventing a stratagem on the part of Cleopatra’s representatives to keep the populace from knowing the truth about Actium; he is suggesting that the people themselves, through this lie, are vainly trying to preserve their own pathetically impossible hopes in the face of brutal reality. Once again the title — “Το 31 π.Χ. στην Αλεξάνδρεια” (“31 B.C. in Alexandria,” 1924)—includes an all-important date.

The peddler came from his tiny
 village near the outskirts, still grimy
 from the journey’s dust. “Incense!” he cries
 through the streets, and “Gum! Finest oil! Dyes

for the hair!" But with the great noisy herd
and the music and parades, how can he be heard?

The throngs push him, drag him, pound him with their fists;
and when he asks, confused, "What madness is this?"

he too is tossed the gigantic palace yarn —
that Antony, in Greece, has won.

This theme of vain hopes out of keeping with the hidden plans of destiny is paramount in "Αλεξανδρινοί Βασιλείς" ("Alexandrian Kings," 1910), a third poem dealing with the fall of the dynasty. It is characteristic of Cavafy's eccentricity that he should ignore Cleopatra and instead treat Caesarion, the queen's illegitimate son by Julius Caesar. The poet assumes that his readers will know this boy's tragic fortune: to be murdered in his teens by order of Octavian after the suicides of Cleopatra and Antony. Caesarion's death ended the Ptolemaic dynasty; yet in this poem, set just three years before Actium, Antony and Cleopatra advance preposterous claims for all three of the royal heirs (the two youngest were sired by Antony), investing them with the rule of dominions most of which had yet to be conquered. Cavafy emphasizes the pathetic ostentation of the ceremony of investment and departs from his source, Plutarch, in making it not the Romans but the Alexandrians themselves who "surely knew what it was worth . . ." Still, he has them enjoy the show, for this is an age in which glitter seems self-justifying. Like their cousins in the township in Asia Minor, the Alexandrians (including Hellenized Egyptians and Jews) are largely devoid of illusion; yet they still deliberately wish to perpetuate the final illusion of Greek hegemony, whether it be cultural or political:

Alexander they named king of
Armenia, Media, and the Parthians.
Ptolemy they named king of
Cilicia, Syria, and Phoenicia.
Caesarion stood more to the front,
dressed in pinkish silk,
a posy of hyacinths on his breast
his belt a double row of sapphires and amethysts,
his sandals laced with white ribbons
embroidered with rose-tinted pearls.

Caesarion receives the greatest designation of the three: “him they named King of Kings.” The Alexandrians realized of course that “all this was just talk and playacting,” but the atmosphere was just right — fine weather, the courtiers’ impressive grandeur, Caesarion’s “grace and beauty” — and people

. . . kept hurrying to the festival
and they grew enthusiastic, and cheered
in Greek, in Egyptian, and some in Hebrew,
enchanted by the lovely spectacle —
although they knew of course what it was worth,
what empty words were these kingships.

According to Timos Malanos, Cavafy remarked in connection with this poem that he dressed Caesarion in pinkish silk “because in those days a yard of such silk cost the equivalent of several thousand of today’s drachmas.” The statement is characteristic of Cavafy’s antiquarian mind; like the old writers of the Mouseion, he was a scholar as well as a poet. But, again like his prototypes, he did not allow his scholarship to keep him from stretching facts or departing from them entirely. The difference is that they, being on salary, departed from truth in order to flatter their royal employers and retain their jobs; he, although also on salary (until 1922), departed from truth in order to give freer rein to his imagination. His antiquarianism was never an end in itself but rather an aid toward the imaginative expression of personal and social problems that were perennial and thus modern. If he was a historian, a recorder of Alexandrian events and personages, this was because he found in them the imaginative sheathing for a substance that was personal and contemporary.

This paradoxical linkage between the antiquarian verifying every detail and the romancer making out of history what he liked can be seen in “Καίσαριών” (“Caesarion,” 1914), a companion poem to “Alexandrian Kings.” In addition, “Caesarion” indicates how Cavafy’s imagination was triggered by small, insignificant details around which a poem could be built. In this case it was Plutarch’s statement that as Octavian (called C. Julius Caesar Octavianus before he ascended the throne as Augustus) was deliberating what to do with his young Alexandrian rival, a subordinate said to him, “Too many Caesars is not good,” whereupon C. Julius Caesar Octavianus put the rival Caesar to death. This poem is also an example of Cavafy’s habitual method of weaving homosexual suggestions into historical con-

text and of making the finished work deal most basically with his own frustrations based on fear of persecution by “the rabble.” The poem begins by describing its origins:

In part to verify chronology,
in part to while away the hour,
last night I took up an anthology
of Ptolemaic inscriptions to explore.

.....

When I succeeded in verifying the chronology,
I would have dropped the book, had not a small
insignificant mention of King Caesarion
immediately attracted my attention.

The young king with his “ill-defined fascination” is now made exceedingly handsome and sensitive by the poet’s imagination, all the more freely because “in history but few / lines are found” about him. “My art,” says the poet, addressing the vision he has created, “bequeaths a dreamlike / winsome beauty to your face”:

So completely did I imagine you
that late last night as my lamp was
waning — I purposely let it wane —
I thought you came into my room.
You stood before me, it seemed, as you must have been
in conquered Alexandria,
pale and weary, an idealist in your grief,
still hoping they’d have mercy on you,
the rabble, who kept whispering their “Too many Caesars.”

In a further consideration of the dynasty’s fall Cavafy turns to Antony, using him as a vehicle for a poem that is really about Alexandria itself. “The God Abandons Antony” is the chief evidence advanced by those who wish to characterize Cavafy as a Stoic counseling brave, realistic acceptance of disastrous reality:

When suddenly at midnight hour
an unseen troupe is heard to pass

with exquisite music and with cries —
do not uselessly lament your fortune
giving way at last, your projects that have failed,

.....

Above all, do not be deceived; do not say it was
a dream, that your hearing had been mistaken;
do not stoop to futile hopes like these.

But although this poem does seem to insist that false hopes must be rejected in favor of stoic acceptance, it is actually a hedonistic paean that refuses to admit that pleasure, too, is illusory and vain. The emphasis is not on stoic acceptance of death, but rather on the serenity derived from accepting pleasure as a self-justifying good: “As if long ago prepared, as a man of courage, / as it becomes you who deserved such a city” (i.e., who deserved the hedonistic life), you must

listen as a final pleasure to the sounds,
the exquisite instruments of the mystical troupe,
and bid farewell to her, the Alexandria you are losing.

For Antony in this poem we can read Cavafy the voluptuary, trying to confront his own aging. But despite the loss of pleasure, life went on for him. It went on as well for Alexandria after the deposition of the Ptolemies; indeed, the city continued to be a great cultural center for many centuries, although the character of its achievement changed. Instead of the dainty and often obscene epigrams of Callimachus and his school, what began to appear was heavily esoteric philosophy and then, with the coming of Christianity, doctrinal disputes concerning the nature of Christ until finally, in a complete turnabout, ascetic monks uncompromisingly rejected not only pagan license but also art, philosophy, and learning in any form whatsoever.

Philosophy in those days gravitated toward theology, not toward semantics. Residents of Alexandria—whether Jews, pagan Greeks, or Christians—were interested in God, and being both Alexandrians and of a philosophical temperament that was “mystical rather than scientific,” as Forster states, “as soon as they hit on an explanation of the universe that was comforting, they did not stop to consider whether it might be true.” Philo, living at the time of Christ, represents the culmination of the Jew-

ish school at Alexandria. Writing in Greek and building his philosophical system upon the Greek concept of the *logos*, he is also a splendid indication of how irresistible Hellenistic culture was for Jews at that time. But obviously the clash of religious and cultural loyalties caused tensions, such as those experienced by Ianthes in Cavafy's poem "Τῶν Εβραίων (50 μ.Χ.)" ("Of the Jews [A.D. 50]," 1912). A painter and discus thrower, Hellenized Ianthes is nevertheless close to the synagogue. His "most precious days," he says, are when he abandons beautiful Hellenism and becomes the man he "would always like / to be: son of the Jews, of the holy Jews." "Exceedingly fervent his declaration," comments the poet with sarcasm, for in reality Ianthes

... became nothing of the sort.

Alexandria's hedonism and art retained him
as their own devoted child.

Like their Jewish colleagues, the Greek philosophers of Alexandria viewed God's nature in a mystical rather than a scientific way. Because these Neoplatonists followed Plato in considering the flesh ephemeral and sensual pleasure therefore vain, they were not likely to find a disciple in Cavafy; nevertheless Ammonios Sakkas, founder of the Neoplatonic school and reputed teacher of Longinus and Plotinus, appears in a delightfully sardonic poem entitled "Από την σχολήν του περιωνύμου φιλοσόφου" ("From the School of the Renowned Philosopher," 1921) that is really not about philosophy at all. The protagonist has been Sakkas's pupil for two years. Growing weary both of philosophy and of Sakkas, he enters politics, only to abandon this calling because his superior is an "idiot" surrounded by "solemn-looking official blockheads" whose Greek is "thrice barbarous." Next, his curiosity is attracted somewhat by the Church; he'll be baptized "and be taken as a Christian." But the thought that his parents, who are "ostentatious pagans," will assuredly cut off his allowance makes him quickly change his mind. Forced to do something, he becomes a client of Alexandria's "every secret den of debauchery." His good looks aid him in this regard; he can be sure that his beauty will endure for ten more years at least:

... After that —

perhaps he would go to Sakkas again.

And if the old man had died in the meantime,
 he would go to some other philosopher or Sophist —
 someone suitable can always be found.

Or, finally, he might even return to
 politics, laudably recalling
 his family traditions,
 patriotic duty, and other such blather.

The handsome young man of this poem is a type who haunts Cavafy's work. Sophisticated and bored, he tends to interpret his own deficient moral vigor as a lack of *savoir faire* in others. Embroiled in the rivalry between Christianity and paganism, he is hardly the type to embrace either faith except for convenience's sake or personal advantage. Many of his fellow Alexandrians were equally eclectic. Their local cult, custom-made by the first Ptolemy, combined the two Egyptian deities Osiris and Apis to form Serapis, who was then dressed in Greek robes and depicted with a Zeus-like face and beard. Already accustomed to a multiplicity of gods in hypostatic union, the Alexandrians found little difficulty at first to assimilate one more, Jesus Christ, especially since in his role as intermediary between humans and God-the-Father he spoke to the problem of the deity's inaccessibility, which had already been occupying both the Jewish and Neoplatonic philosophers of the city. At this early stage, therefore, just as it was natural for the poem's handsome young student to be attracted a little by the church, so too was it natural for him to be more curious than fervent, seeing Christianity as a complement to his existing practice rather than as a challenge. Apropos of this situation, Forster quotes a letter written by a visitor to Alexandria in A.D. 134 who observed that "those who worship Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ are devoted to Serapis!"

But although the theological and philosophical difficulties occasioned by the multiplicity of gods were at first solvable, the political problem was more refractory. It led to a thoroughgoing persecution of Alexandrian Christians by Diocletian and other Roman emperors, which in turn led to an equally thoroughgoing persecution of Alexandrian pagans once Christianity became the official religion under Constantine. Both phases of this persecution helped the adherents of Christianity to overcome their lack of fervor; indeed, by the fourth century the theological differences

had grown fully as refractory as the political ones had been before. When Christianity became not only official but compulsory by decree of Theodosius in 392, paganism was doomed. Shortly before this, the ascetics who had fled Alexandrian lechery to settle in the desert had banded together in order to return in triumph. These monks destroyed the great temple of Serapis, the Serapeum, together with the library housed there — an even greater collection than the one destroyed earlier by Julius Caesar. Forming the nucleus of what became the native Egyptian, or Coptic, church, they grew powerful in temporal as well as eternal matters and, hating everything Greek, made Egypt an especially vulnerable portion of the Byzantine Empire. In 641, as a result, Alexandria, eight centuries earlier than either Athens or Constantinople, fell to the Muhammadans.

From Cavafy's point of view this was a frightfully distressing development, but one he could identify with and, as with each of his other forms of anguish, could transmute into poetry. Was he not, just like the earlier Alexandrians, a pagan who allowed himself to be taken for a Christian and who, at the same time, tended to be tolerant and eclectic by nature rather than militantly narrow in his allegiances? It is characteristic of his fickleness that, although his work at times seems defiantly anti-ascetic, there are several poems in which he envies men of affairs who at the eleventh hour don the monk's habit; similarly that on his deathbed, after being scandalized by the appearance of a priest to administer the last rites, he consented. Like his poetic personae, Cavafy was incapable of being a narrowly heroic devotee of any cause, even the anti-Christian one. What was natural to him, and what therefore interested him poetically, was compromise, dilemma, self-delusion, indecision, bewilderment: the true, weak, and "human," reactions of the average person caught between antagonistic loyalties. An example is the dilemma of the son in "Ἱερεὺς τοῦ Σεραπείου" ("Priest of the Serapeum," 1926) who laments his father, that "good old man / who always loved me the same." This bereaved son is a convert pledged to honor Christian precepts. He affirms to his new Savior:

... all who deny thee
I abhor. But now I lament;
I mourn my father, O Christ,
even though he was — dreadful to admit —
a priest at the accursed Serapeum.

The pagan-Christian conflict is a perfect sheathing for Cavafy's obsessive concerns because it lends itself not only to the theme of irreconcilable personal dilemma but also to the related problems of art and homosexuality. The hostility displayed by Christianity's "dun-clad promulgators of morals" to Greek poetry (and especially to "excessively daring verses" about "love that is sterile and disdained") we have already seen implied in "Theater of Sidon (A.D. 400)." It is clear that Cavafy identifies pagan Greece with art and homosexuality. These two in their turn are connected to each other not simply because each is related to Greek paganism but also because according to Cavafy's personal aesthetic theory it is homosexuality that constitutes poetry's muse. In "Η Αρχή των" ("Their Beginning," 1915) the two male lovers rise from bed, dress "hurriedly, without a word," and depart "separately, furtively," as though they suspect that something about them betrays "what kind of bed they'd lain in, a little while before."

But how the artist's life has gained!

Tomorrow, the next day, or years afterward will be written
the powerful verses that here had their beginning.

The connection is explained in "Κι Ακούμπησα και πλάγιασα στες κλι-
νες των" ("And I Leaned and Lay on Their Beds," 1915), one of the erotic poems that Cavafy suppressed. Here he recounts how he avoided the heterosexual salon when visiting a brothel and proceeded to "the secret rooms / considered shameful even to name." But not shameful to him, he continues, because what kind of poet would he be if he took his pleasure "in the commonplace salon"?

Paganism, homosexuality, and art being linked in Cavafy's mind, the pagan-Christian conflict is open to a great variety of treatments. As always, Cavafy is a master at extracting diversity of nuance from similar predicaments. The two poems that follow illustrate this, the first being governed by irony, the second by pathos. The predicament of Myrtias, the protagonist of the first poem, is parallel to that of the young Jewish youth already encountered, although he lives at a later date; we may conjecture how likely he is to keep his spirit as ascetic as before when he is confronted by "Τα Επικίνδυνα" ("Things That Are Dangerous," 1911). Myrtias vows:

I shall not fear my passions like a coward.

My body I shall devote to sensual gratification

,
to the more daring erotic desires.

This he will do “without / the slightest fear,”

 . . . because when I will it
(and I shall have the power to will it, fortified
as I’ll be with theory and study)
at the crucial moments I shall rediscover
my spirit, as before, ascetic.

The second poem, “*Ἡ Ἀρρώστια τοῦ Κλειτοῦ*” (“Kleitos’s Illness,” 1926), again links the pagan-Christian conflict with homosexuality, but in a subordinated and altogether different way. Bowra says of this poem:

The pathos of the sick young man is left behind and replaced by a different pathos, more complex and more profound, of his old nurse, whose desire to save him makes her forsake her adopted religion and even so to no avail. The situation expands and develops and invites a greater variety of response than its opening suggests. (p. 53)

The opening announces Kleitos’ illness:

Kleitos, an engaging young man
about twenty-three years old,
with superior upbringing and a rare knowledge of Greek —
Kleitos is gravely ill. . . .

The cause is a fever that decimated Alexandria, but it is also something else: Kleitos is “chagrined because his partner, a young actor, / had ceased to love or want him.” His parents tremble for his life, as does an old servant woman, a pagan who accepted baptism when she “entered service there / in that home of conspicuous Christians.” She remembers an idol that she worshiped as a child:

Secretly she takes some flatbread, wine, and honey,
sets them before the idol, chants the supplication,
— odds and ends, whatever bits she can recall — not realizing
(the fool) how little the black demon cares
whether a Christian is cured or not.

From the preceding poems we see that Cavafy is able to evoke the psychological condition of Alexandrians at each stage of the incursion of Christianity into the city's ancient traditions: first, the easy skepticism of those who could be bishops of Christ and at the same time devotees of Serapis; second, the gentle anguish of people who saw that a decision needed to be made and who lived at a time when it still could be made either way; last, the bitterness of would-be pagans unlucky enough to be born in the period after 400, when the decision was made for them by the imperial court. Although Cavafy's usual tone is an irony that precludes bitterness, a poem like "Είγε Ετελεύτα" ("If Dead Indeed," 1920) unmasks his dismay at Alexandria's decline. The protagonist here is musing on the fate of Apollonius of Tyana, who can be taken as typifying the pagan Greek philosophers. No one seems to know what became of Apollonius, although there are numerous stories. Could he have been translated to the heavens? And yet there was "his miraculous / supernatural apparition / to a young student at Tyana":

Perhaps it is still too soon for his return,
 his second appearance in the world;
 or perhaps, transfigured, he roams among us
 unrecognized. But appear again he will,
 just as before, teaching us the right; and then surely
 he shall restore the worship of our gods,
 and our seemly Greek rites.

The poem ends with a mention of Emperor Justin; this is Cavafy's method of indicating that the action takes place in the period 518–527, when the battle to preserve Greek religion and culture had been decisively lost and when only a little more than a century was left before the final debacle: the Arab conquest. The musing protagonist is "one of the few pagans, / the very few, who had remained." But otherwise he is a cowardly, insignificant man who outwardly

played the Christian and went to church.
 It was the period when Justin the Elder
 reigned in extreme piety
 and Alexandria, a god-fearing city,
 abhorred all wretched idolaters.

This poem with its bitterly ironic conclusion brings to an end Cavafy's historical survey of Alexandria, a survey that has taken us from the glories of the initial Ptolemies in the third century B.C. to the beginnings of Roman intervention in the second century, the extinction of the dynasty with the death of Caesarion near the end of the first century, the domination by pagan Rome from 30 B.C. to the reign of Constantine the Great in the fourth century A.D., and finally to the dismal period when, with Christianity the compulsory religion, Alexandria as "the mentor city, the Hellenic world's acme" — this glorious Alexandria — was no more.

IT IS OBVIOUS that Cavafy possessed in the individual events of Alexandrian history a treasury of analogues to his own psychological, economic, and social condition. What needs to be emphasized once again is that each event must be viewed in relation to the city's history as a whole. When Cavafy records a low-water mark in Alexandria's fortunes, we are meant to recall the surging glory of the Ptolemies; conversely, just as his description of Caesarion's splendid investiture tacitly recalls the boy's impending and ignominious death, so in describing any phase of Alexandrian splendor Cavafy tacitly asks us to remember that this great center of empire, with its palaces, its Pharos, its fabulous libraries and wealth, was fated to become an Arab fishing village of four thousand inhabitants.

And not only Alexandria. As suggested earlier, Cavafy's treasury contains an expanding series of equivalent situations, his larger concern being the fate of Hellenism in general rather than the decline of any particular center of Greek culture. Thus the Alexandrian poems are but one cycle. Others treat the demise of the Seleucid dynasty, the hopeless efforts of the Achaean League to hold off the advancing Roman legions, and the miserable condition of the later Byzantine emperors. Identical themes run through all these poems: Hellenism as a great cultural force, the Greek language as the preferred speech of subject peoples, the often absurd efforts of non-Greeks to ape their cultural betters — in short, pride of Greekness (which must be distinguished from pride of country: in this respect Cavafy is the least patriotic of poets). Of course, accompanying all this esteem for Greek achievements is the ever-present knowledge, whether tacit or pronounced, of eventual frustration and decline.

The pendulum swing between prosperity and adversity expanded temporally as well as spatially, repeating itself, as we have seen, in Cavafy's

lifetime — not just in his family’s business or in the fortunes of the rest of Alexandria’s Greek community but also in the Greek world at large. Mainland Greece, although liberated by the Revolution of 1821 from four centuries of Turkish rule, long remained a puppet state controlled by the Great Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia), its so-called “protectors”; furthermore, it remained a state whose irredentist dreams were smashed toward the middle of Cavafy’s creative period by the disastrous war of 1921–1922 in Asia Minor, which deprived the Greek people of a territory they had occupied since Homeric times. In looking at the full spectrum of Greek affairs Cavafy naturally concluded that history runs in recurring cycles, always in the same pattern of advance and decline, from which there is no escape. Thus it is hardly surprising that his attitude toward this situation should have been colored not solely by irony, whether bitter or not, but also by resignation: everything is fated to turn out as it does, and we must learn to accept what we cannot control. This seems to be stoicism pure and simple; but despite the fact that many poems do counsel acceptance of fate, nowhere in Cavafy do we see the central stoic doctrine that humanity should be free from passion — from grief or joy. Quite the contrary. It is misleading, in short, to attribute Cavafy’s resignation to a conscious espousal of philosophical doctrine. We ought rather to ascribe it to psychological and cultural factors. Resignation was Cavafy’s way of coming to terms with his homosexuality; furthermore, it was the predictably Greek response of this Hellene to the “fated” conjunction in him of his sexual orientation, traditional Greek attitudes about the malevolent role of the gods in human affairs, and the recurring pattern of prosperity and liquidation governing Greek commercial and intellectual life in Alexandria and elsewhere. Little wonder, with the wheel of fortune revolving so inexorably, that Cavafy should have been an early singer of “Μονοτονία” (“Monotony,” 1898), that particular facet of resignation that pervades modernist literature:

One monotonous day follows another just
as monotonous. Moments exactly the same
happen again and again, they always must
find us and leave us, moments exactly the same.

Here we begin to see Cavafy’s artistic problem. Since the fatalism underlying this ennui was for him not a pan-European emotion but rather a

traditional Greek attitude bound up with his own Greekness, his first task after his student days was to keep himself from overabsorbing Western European approaches and thus deliquescing into sophisticated but non-individualized cosmopolitanism. Next, once Greece had won out for him over England and France, he needed to avoid hackneyed approaches to the Greek experience—in particular the stereotypical varieties of mythologizing. This meant going against almost everyone: Homer, the foreign romantics he had cultivated in his youth, and even the leading Greek poets of his own time, who, encouraged by both Western example and “nationalistic” fervor, found the old-time gods and heroes as obligatory a subject as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow found the American Indians.

It is nevertheless true that Cavafy left in his canon some early poems with subject matter drawn from the heroic age. Characteristically, his emphasis here as elsewhere is overwhelmingly on the futility of humanity’s hopes in the face of the whimsy or outright malevolence of the gods. In the few poems derived from Homer Cavafy chooses subjects such as the dilemma of Achilles’ immortal horses, weeping for the death of Patroklos although by rights they should be above involvement with pathetic human beings, the toys of fate. Whatever period he drew from, he pared away what was irrelevant or stereotyped and extracted what he needed to give outward shape to his own preoccupations. As Bowra states, “With careful skill he would probe a subject until he found in it some final, insoluble conflict, and then he would present this in an individual dramatic crisis.”

But these early poems, although expressing preoccupations central to all of Cavafy’s work, do not achieve this individual dramatic crisis; derivative and remote, they fail to escape the Pentelic bloodlessness of so much latter-day mythologizing. Cavafy eventually felt that the Olympians can be nothing more than decorative for us, so exclusively have we viewed them as symmetry on pediments in museums or encountered their nonkinetic élan in poems such as John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1820). Fortunately, he abandoned the gods and, by one of those paradoxes that seem to haunt him, he conquered remoteness by turning to subject matter considerably more distant for most of us than Homer. This subject matter, in turn, lent itself to new methods of presentation and resulted in the irony and the individual dramatic crises that enabled Cavafy to treat the mythological themes of fate and resignation in an original, effective

manner. Three poems on these themes illustrate varying approaches and degrees of success. First, there is the didacticism of “Τελειωμένα” (“Finalities,” 1910)—like an unadorned Beethoven statement to be submitted elsewhere to numerous variations, some perfunctory, others startling and brilliant:

With fear and suspicion,
 agitated minds and frightened eyes,
 we desperately plan how
 to shun the certain danger
 that so horribly threatens us.
 Yet we are mistaken; this danger is not on its way.
 The messages were false
 (or else we did not hear them, or failed to understand them well).
 Another disaster, one we never imagined,
 suddenly, torrentially, overwhelms us
 and, unprepared — no time now — we are swept away.

Second, in one of the Homeric poems, “Τρώες” (“Trojans,” 1900), Cavafy employs the worn method of didacticism mixed with evocation by means of simile; after stating a proposition, he illustrates it from the heroic age, reminding us of the parallel between that age and our own.

In our efforts we are victims of misfortune;
 in our efforts we’re like the Trojans.

This explicitness he eventually forsook; nevertheless, the poem shows the mature Cavafian touch in expanding the Trojans’ predicament until it becomes the universal condition of mankind: “We succeed a bit,” gain “high hopes,”

But something always comes out and stops us.
 Achilles, in front of us in the trench,
 comes out and frightens us with great shouting.

In the third and last poem, “Περιμένοντας τους Βαρβάρους” (“Waiting for the Barbarians,” 1898), the equation between history and our own time remains unstated; simile gives way to metaphor. The same theme of fate — the discrepancy between our hopes and brutal reality — is here treated not from a positive and tragic point of view (“something always comes out

and stops us”), but from a negative one that lends itself to irony and even comedy: our hopes will never be realized, there is no solution, no answer; we latter-day Alexandrians of the twentieth century, not being of a heroic age, cannot even redeem ourselves with splendid deaths as the Trojans did, but must simply go on living as before, weary and disillusioned, seeking solutions that either do not exist or, if they do exist, do not come. The sentiment of resignation — the response of older Greeks to the irresponsible caprice of the gods — is presented in a new way that makes it, instead of decorative and remote, evocative, near, and unrelentingly honest. Cavafy saw long before the creator of *Godot* that we must go on waiting; no solution will be provided or indeed is possible; the barbarians, even if they did come, would be but a new group of Alexandrians:

What are we waiting for, gathered in the marketplace?

The barbarians are to arrive today.

.....

Why should this uneasiness commence all at once
this confusion? (How grave the faces have become.)
Why are the streets and squares rapidly emptying
and everyone returning home so thoughtfully?

Because it is nighttime and the barbarians have not come.
Several men arrived from the frontier;
they say there are no barbarians anymore.

What will become of us now without barbarians?

Those people were some sort of a solution.

Like all of Cavafy’s most successful poems, “Waiting for the Barbarians” presents an individual dramatic crisis with immediacy, accomplishing this not only because the author and his didactic explanations have been refined out of existence but also because of such factors as the careful details of scene and costume that make the poem visually evocative, and, above all, because of the author’s psychological insight into his characters. We see in them what we may know too well about ourselves: the propensity of people to believe that a cataclysm can be therapeutic and consequently their readiness to throw themselves, as Bowra puts it, “into causes which are, on a wider view, entirely inimical to their interests.” But Cavafy’s

psychological insight into others derives, as we might suspect, from his insight into his own problems; in his personal life he knew full well the fatal attraction of an inimical “cause.” Thus the poem’s political situation is a dramatic projection of Cavafy’s personal situation, and the governing attitude of resignation is none other than the attitude that enabled Cavafy finally to make peace with his homosexuality.

The qualification “finally” is important, for Cavafy’s acceptance came only after a struggle. It is characteristic that the nature of the opposing forces in this personal struggle should be seen in a comment by Kimon Friar on the political significance of “Waiting for the Barbarians.” The poem, writes Friar, “is deeply moving to those who understand the secret temptation in the hearts of free men to cast off their responsibilities and yield themselves to directing power.” Cavafy’s personal struggle was the same: moral responsibility versus the temptation of abandonment to the directing power of fate. We are reminded that any division of the poet’s work into personal/impersonal or didactic/historical/erotic is false: each of the modes implicitly includes the others.

The progression toward fatalistic abandonment is evident both in the openly erotic poems and in the veiled didactic ones that seemingly have nothing to do with Cavafy’s personal problems. Among early examples of the second category is “Chè fece . . . il gran rifiuto” (1899),³ which extols moral decision, or at least regards it as a possibility. Next comes an intermediary stage in which Cavafy praises those who, trapped by circumstance, still dutifully and freely (and thus with dignity) choose to do what necessity requires. Finally, there is the complete (yet ironically viewed) fatalism of a poem like “Ας Φρόντιζαν” (“They Ought to Have Taken Care,” 1930), in which the protagonist blames the gods for his own lack of moral fiber. “I’ve been reduced practically to vagrancy,” he complains. The “fatal city” of Antioch has devoured his funds, but he is still “young and in perfect health,” with an “admirable mastery of Greek,” not to mention inside information on both military and civil affairs. Thus he considers himself “qualified / in the fullest” to serve his “beloved homeland Syria.” He intends to be useful in whatever position he is placed. But if he is thwarted by those in power, he’ll not be the one to blame:

I’ll apply first to Zavinas,
and if that moron fails to appreciate me

I'll go to his rival, Grypus.
And if that blockhead, if he too does not engage me
I go straight to Hyrcanus.

One of the three, at any rate, will want me.

And my conscience is clear
regarding the indifference of my choice.
All three harm Syria equally.

But, ruined man that I am, how can I be blamed?
Poor me, I'm just trying to make ends meet.
The almighty gods ought to have taken care
to create a fourth who was good.
To him, gladly, I would have gone.

The same gradual development toward fatalistic abandonment occurs in the openly sexual poems. In 1905 in “Ομνύει” (“He Swears”) Cavafy could still write, “Every so often he swears to begin a better life,” although even here the poet admits that such resolutions are in vain. Henceforth they cease entirely, giving way to an increasing defiance of the bourgeois demand for moral responsibility and an increasingly frank avowal of the poet's outlawed tendencies. If we look for the reason, we find over and over again the sentiment of resignation, a yielding to the directing power of fate. Homosexuals are destined to be as they are. In “Μέρες του 1896” (“Days of 1896,” 1925), for example, the protagonist's erotic bent, one “condemned and strictly forbidden,” is “innate for all that”; in “Ιαση Τάφος” (“Tomb of Iasis,” 1917) personal beauty constitutes a mixed blessing and curse that dooms one to dissipations that are fatal in more than one sense of the word:

... since everyone considered me so much
a Narcissus and a Hermes, abuses wore me out and killed me.

Having come to terms with his homosexuality through the attitude of resignation, Cavafy began to broadcast his outlawed tendencies more openly and defiantly — possibly abetted by various contributory factors such as the system of publication by broadsheet, the general relaxation of moral censure after World War I, and his retirement in 1922 from the Ministry of Irrigation. Perhaps we have here simply the exhibitionism of

an aging reprobate (most of the poems Cavafy admitted into his canon were written after his fiftieth year). In any case, at some point he began to turn his back on the bourgeois world of his ancestors and decided to give himself over, poetically now as well as physically, to the way of life so out of keeping with his dignified pedigree. The abandonment of “Genealogy” in 1911 may help us to date the beginning of this change; it is perhaps no coincidence that he eventually grouped all the early verses together under the heading “Before 1911” while assigning each of the later poems to a specific year, thereby establishing 1911 — when he was forty-eight years old — as the beginning of his maturity.

But from a literary point of view the most interesting and important reason for Cavafy’s increasing frankness was an aesthetic one: the poet’s conviction that debauchery formed the source of his art. We have already seen this conviction in “And I Leaned and Lay on Their Beds” and in “Their Beginning.” Another poem, “Νόησις” (“Understanding,” 1915), attempts a retrospective analysis of Cavafy’s failure to control his fleshly desires. During the years of his youth he did not understand why his “repentances were never constant.” But now he sees the meaning of those years:

In the debauchery of my early years
my poetry’s intent took form,
my art’s domain was planned.

The question is whether Cavafy’s debauchery was unconsciously cultivated for the sake of poetry, as this poem retrospectively argues, or whether, as in “Ἡδονή” (“To Sensual Pleasure,” 1913), his poetry was cultivated to preserve the memory of past debauchery: “My life’s joy and salve: memory of the hours / when I discovered and prolonged sensual pleasure / the way I wanted it.” Whatever the case, Cavafy’s life grew more and more a *recherche du temps perdu* as he aged. Memory became as exciting as the remembered occasion. Action and contemplation coalesced; to remember was to act, and to fix the remembered incident in poetry was to forestall the incident’s corruption:

Try to save them, poet
(those few that may be captured):
the visions of your erotic past.
Insert them half-hidden in your verses.

Try to grip them, poet,
when they rise excitedly into your mind
at night, or in noontime brightness.

THE FINAL ASPECT of Cavafy's artistic problem now becomes evident. First he needed to maintain his Greekness and avoid aping Western European modes. Next, he needed to guard against a hackneyed mythological approach to the Greek experience. Finally, he needed to discover how to indulge the memory of his own anguished homosexual assignations and yet avoid repulsive sentimentality. It is all somewhat the same problem, for he was able to treat his deviation without sentimentality by eschewing the worn-out language, imagery, and tone of nineteenth-century romanticism and by cultivating instead the dramatic, ironical evocation of Hellenistic history, which in turn enabled him to express so much more than his homosexuality. The secret to the actual mechanics of this nonsentimental indulgence seems to be revealed in the fourth line of "ὥταν Διεγείρονται" ("When They Rise Excitedly," 1913), the poem just quoted: "Insert them half-hidden in your verses" — in other words, semi-confession achieved first by objectifying the visions of his loving, placing them in dramatic contexts in which they are attributed to other personages real or imagined, contemporary or historical, and second by maintaining a balance between caution and reckless abandonment.

This second consideration is of great interest, for just as Cavafy moved from the necessity for moral decision to the resigned acceptance of his sexuality as fated, so the poetry moves from extreme caution to extreme openness and self-indulgence. Here we have a yardstick for judgment: does Cavafy achieve his goal of "half-hidden" confession, or does he err through excess?

In the early poems he tended to suppress any direct revelation of the nature of his personal anguish; he veiled his trouble by using neutral symbols such as "Τείχη" ("Walls," 1896):

Without pity, without shame, without consideration
they built all around me great high walls.

And now I sit here in desperation.
I think of nothing else: this fate galls

my mind, for I had so many things to do outside.
 Oh, when the walls were being built, how did I not take note?

But no sign or mark of builders by me was ever descried.
 Imperceptibly, they excluded me from the world without.

On the other hand, in many of the later poems in which he returns to the lyrical, nondramatic expression seen in “Walls,” his use of the first person, originally an inhibitor leading him to excessive caution, now has the reverse effect. Even though some of these poems are outwardly narrative in form or vaguely dramatic in conception, they are energized by self-indulgence, so that the incident recorded is laden with an emotion out of proportion to the event. “Νὰ Μείνῃ” (“To Remain,” 1918) is an example. The narrator and his lover are hidden behind the wooden partition of a deserted tavern at half past one in the morning. No one would have seen them, but in any case they had grown so aroused that they “were unfit for precautions”:

Our clothes came half-unbuttoned — they were few,
 since a gorgeous month of July was ablaze.

Delight of the flesh between
 half-unbuttoned clothing;
 flesh’s swift denuding, whose image
 has crossed six and twenty years
 to remain now in this poem.

Although some of these first-person erotic poems lack the perspective needed to save them from sentimentality, most show remarkable control; it would be misleading to dwell on Cavafy’s lapses into excessive emotion. Given the basically subjective nature of his poetic concerns, the remarkable thing is that he so frequently did achieve a delicate equilibrium between fear and recklessness, control and abandon, while also avoiding the extremes of bitter aloofness on the one hand and sentimental indulgence on the other. As Durrell has Balthazar say in *Justine*, the old poet’s “exquisite balance of irony and tenderness would have put him among the saints had he been a religious man.” That his control lapses as infrequently as it does is testimony to the fact that he was his own best critic. Not only did he consciously realize that his natural pitfall would be “to [overdo] the ef-

fect and [strain] the sentiment, both fatal accidents in art,” as he writes in a letter; he also had the integrity to suppress those poems that he considered unworthy. The extent of this suppression may indicate a pathological fear of disapproval but, whatever the motives, the astonishing fact remains that in 1910 at the age of forty-seven he allowed his private audience to see only twenty-one of the approximately 220 poems he had written up to then. Even after he had developed his mature style and was completing up to seventy poems a year, he sanctioned sometimes as few as four or five, putting away or destroying the rest.

All this attests to Cavafy’s extraordinary craftsmanship. It is true that he exercised freedom in versification and diction, cultivated speech rhythms, and favored economy, flatness, and anticlimax in defiance of the expansive rhetorical style then in vogue in Greece. But everything was deliberate, every “nonpoetic” or “antipoetic” element being introduced for a specific poetic effect. There is evidence not just internally in the poems themselves but also externally in Cavafy’s letters and self-commentaries that he counted syllables, was proud of his ingenuity in rhyming, took great care with punctuation because he considered it vital to a poem’s meaning, and used specific vowels to produce specific effects. Rewriting constantly, he always strove for the exact cadence, the *mot juste*.

Regarding the last, a whole literature of controversy has grown up. Why did Cavafy employ such odd diction? Why such an inconsistent hodgepodge of purist Greek and offhand colloquialism? Why, for instance, do we find the demotic (i.e., spoken, colloquial, “improper”) ἀδέρφια instead of ἀδελφία (brothers) in the first stanza of “Alexandrian Kings,” while in the second stanza the “proper” form of the accusative, βασιλέα (king), is used instead of the demotic βασιλιά? Or why does Cavafy sometimes prefer the modern grammar of preposition plus accusative in order to convey what may be translated as English “in something” (e.g., *μες στις φράσεις σου*) whereas elsewhere for the same meaning he prefers the ancient Greek dative case: ἐν λόγῳ ἑλληνικῶ?

Further examples are given by Rae Dalven in the notes to her volume of translations. She maintains that Cavafy’s “first consideration was not whether an expression or construction was purist or demotic, but whether it served his poetic purpose.” Cavafy himself once summed the matter up when he remarked: “Of course we should write in the demotic. But . . . the artisan of words [he is playing on the literal sense of the Greek term for

“man of letters”] has the duty to combine what is beautiful with what is alive.” His eclectic mentality prevented him from being a doctrinaire partisan of either the demotic or the purist cause; he saw the Greek language, from ancient to modern times, as a single diverse but unified entity full of riches for the poet, and he refused to accept the arbitrary exaltation of one period or style as an inflexible standard.

To this might be added some further considerations. It seems, in the first place, that Cavafy merely wrote as he spoke, in the motley argot of one who indulged in palimpsests by day and pederasts by night. Beyond this, additional purisms and archaisms (so hopelessly lost in translation) were introduced to give flavor and authenticity to the historical poems. The private joy of a poet-scholar following in the tradition of the Mousaeion, these archaisms often serve the added purpose of conveying meaning through allusion. For example, the dun-clad promulgators of morals in “Theater of Sidon (A.D. 400)” are obviously meant to be Christians. This is never stated directly, but the archaic expression *φαῖά φοροῦντες*, translated as “dun-clad,” was a regular epithet for Christians in the Byzantine chronicles Cavafy knew so well. Rather an obscure allusion, it is true, but in the poet’s defense it must be noted that he did not introduce such expressions indiscriminately. He rigorously excluded anachronisms from his poems, and he always valued intelligibility over donnish erudition. Edouard Roditi notes that when Cavafy wished to employ a word that might fail to be understood, he would “engage in apparently idle conversations with a number of friends or strangers. In the course of these talks, he would skillfully find occasion to use the doubtful word: if it was always properly understood, Cavafy then knew that he could use it in his poem.”

The precision evident here is perhaps the chief overall characteristic of the poems themselves. Cavafy deliberately strove for originality, for an unquestionably individualistic style. Turning his back on worn-out modes, he chose as models for what he needed the ancient Alexandrian epigrammatists and writers of mime, as noted earlier. In them he found frugality, terseness, realism, dramatic objectivity, and scholarly exactitude in the realm of technique, while in the realm of theme he found disillusion, weary paganism, and obsession with thwarted hopes and wilting senses. What is extraordinary is that in this turning to the past for both the method and content of his poems he avoided a sterile antiquarianism,

and that in cultivating the paradox implicit in the situations he treats he evaded the triviality of valuing paradox for its own sake. To call him either antiquated or trivial would be completely to misunderstand his work. On the contrary, he always strikes through to fundamentals of the human situation, doing so in a manner that is consistently and importantly modern.

Nikos Kazantzakis wrote of him that he should have been “a fifteenth-century Florentine, a cardinal, secret adviser to the Pope, negotiating the most diabolic, intricate and scandalous affairs.” The truth of this serves only to indicate Cavafy’s modernity all the more, for like so many twentieth-century poets he was a spiritual anachronism: out of place in his own age, and seeking—with the frustration and failure inevitable in such a search—for a tradition that like a great sea would both buoy him up and nourish him. Although there is scarcely a hint of the metaphysical or theological in his work, the very absence of such considerations is a factor in the Cavafian predicament. It may be surprising to know that Cavafy repeatedly lamented his inability to accept Christianity; he especially regretted that he could not believe in an afterlife. Out of this inability, of course, came his fear of death; and out of his overall rejection of the supernatural came his attempt to salvage some meaning for a humanity whose existence now seemed meaningless.

The meaning he found was, paradoxically, the meaningless revolutions of the wheel of fortune. Experience that is incomplete, conflicts that remain unresolved, plans and achievements that go awry, love that bears no fruit—these, whether in history or in one’s own intimate past, must now be considered meaningful in themselves. There is no longer a goal by which life is to be justified: life must be its own justification. Yes, we continue to aspire and plan, yet when we are abandoned by the gods, like Antony, we must realize that the sheer pleasure and intensity of living is the only good. Changing the metaphor, Cavafy tells us in the final stanza of “*Ἰθάκη*” (“Ithaca,” 1910) that the journey, not the destination, is what constitutes our reward. True, arrival in Ithaca is our “destined end”:

But do not hasten the journey in the least.
Better it continue many years
and you anchor at the isle an old man,
rich with all you gained along the way,
not expecting Ithaca to grant you riches.

Ithaca has granted you the lovely voyage.
 Without her you would never have departed on your way.
 But now she has nothing else to grant you.

And although you find her squalid, Ithaca did not cheat you.
 So wise have you become, so experienced,
 you already will have realized what they mean: these Ithacas.

Acceptance of the process itself in contradistinction to the goal (for we now have many Ithacas, not one) is what constituted Cavafy's own freedom and enabled him to be animated and yea-saying whereas another in his circumstances might have shriveled like Shakespeare's Jaques into despondency.

But for all its vitality, this outlook is still basically tragic. Although affirmative in spirit, it is at the same time rigorously pessimistic, for it denies as illusory all the comforts invented by humankind: eternity, order, decorum, absolute good, morality, justice. If to declare "Yes" to necessity is our only salvation, we are indeed pitiable creatures; yet we achieve a modicum of dignity by contemplating our predicament honestly and accepting it with fortitude.

That is precisely what Cavafy did, and this psychological as well as historical honesty — this refusal to ignore, veil, or romanticize — is a further aspect of his modernity. Unable to look upward to heaven for his answers, he looked backward into history and inward into his own psyche. What he found in both places was awful: cowardice, disillusion, sordidness, contradiction, paradox. This he exposed bravely in his poetry and in so doing stripped naked his own being — that superlatively paradoxical being of a priapic monk whose slight angle to the universe may be shared by more people than we would like to admit.

Notes

- 1 Originally published as a pamphlet: number 5 in the *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers*, edited by William York Tindall. First printing 1964, second printing 1965. Rights reverted to me by Columbia University Press. Reprinted in *Three Generations of Greek Writers* (Athens: Efstathiadis, 1983). Greek translation by Jenny Mastoraki, published in Athens by Kedros, 1983. Revised version, with my own translations of all the poetic

- quotations, in *European Writers: The Twentieth Century*, vol. 8, edited by George Stade (New York: Scribner's, 1989), pp. 205–228. Serbian translation, 2006.
- 2 For this reason, the dates given in this essay are dates of composition rather than publication. Although some of Cavafy's poems exist in several versions, only the composition dates of final versions are given here.
 - 3 This Greek poem's title is Dante's Italian from *Inferno* 3.60. The meaning is "who make . . . the great refusal." Cavafy deliberately omits Dante's "per viltà" (from cowardice).

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Cavafy's Three-Phase Development into Detachment

I

CRITICS LIKE TO categorize writers as major or minor. Although the designations often represent merely personal taste, at least one criterion for differentiating the two categories would seem to be somewhat objective. According to this criterion, minor writers are those who may have written first-rate works but whose careers, from start to finish, fail to display continuous growth and development. This would make Emily Brontë and Andrew Marvell minor, although marvelous, whereas Shakespeare, Yeats, and Joyce would be clearly major.

Neohellenists always think of Cavafy as major. Indeed, we are tempted to ask, "Who could possibly be major if Cavafy isn't?" Yet the justifications usually given for this opinion, if and when they transcend mere personal taste, are not totally compelling. The most straightforward is that Cavafy wrote many first-rate poems; therefore he is first-rate, a major poet. But this, according to the reasoning expressed earlier, is not sufficient. Another contention is that Cavafy influenced so many other poets and indeed the total course of Greek letters. That is important, but extrinsic. The best reason, to my mind, because it considers the oeuvre as a whole and not just the excellence of individual poems, is that Cavafy created an entire world with its own rules, a world into which each particular poem effortlessly fits.

This is the beginning. Nevertheless, we still need more investigation of the entire career from the perspective of development; it is not enough to say that everything changed around 1911, since this implies that no significant development took place in the two decades that followed. An encouraging start has been made by Edmund Keeley in his book *Cavafy's*

Alexandria—encouraging not only because Keeley demonstrated there a new and significant development toward the very end of the poet’s career, but also because this development is curiously like both Shakespeare’s and Yeats’s insofar as it moves toward nonchalance, detachment, a more aestheticized view of reality.

What I intend to do in this essay is to examine and extend Keeley’s findings, limiting myself mostly to the poems in the Alexandrian cycle.

In a key passage in *Cavafy’s Alexandria*, Keeley argues that certain late poems display an “element of ambivalence in the poet’s attitude toward the mythical Alexandria he created.”¹ But he continues by maintaining that the wider knowledge leading to this ambivalence does not cause the poet “to reject Alexandria.” Instead, as Keeley says in a subsequent essay, the poet’s perspective is raised “above the speaker’s particular bias” toward Alexandria or equivalent, so that it sees a “more universal . . . pattern behind even those moments of [aestheticized] history with which he has shown some degree of sympathetic identification.”²

What this means, I think, is that Cavafy was eventually able to aestheticize what he had already aestheticized. And what that means, in turn, is that he was eventually able to see in a detached manner, *as spectacle*, the beloved myth called Alexandria by means of which he had already detached himself from reality. We have, in sum, a process whereby the poet (a) detaches himself from reality by means of aesthetic attachment to a myth, (b) detaches himself from that aesthetic attachment but without forswearing the earlier aesthetic mode of coming to terms with reality. Keeley is correct in emphasizing that the new ambivalence toward mythical Alexandria never resulted in Alexandria’s rejection. Similarly, we must avoid the mistake of thinking that Cavafy demythologized the myth he had so lovingly fashioned.

So we are left with a puzzle or, more accurately, a paradox: Cavafy continued to embrace a “solution” to which he was no longer unambiguously attached. A cynic would accuse the poet of weakness and would invoke the old saw, “Beggars can’t be choosers.” A Marxist would affirm that Cavafy’s definitive perspective unmasks the inadequacy of his earlier aestheticism, revealing a state of confusion inescapable in bourgeois culture. For Edmund Keeley, however, the puzzle or paradox derives from strength, not weakness or confusion. I agree. Yet I worry lest my irremediable bias toward Cavafy make me critically obtuse or (worse) senti-

mental; thus I feel a need to puzzle over the puzzle, to analyze it and to look at lots of poems before concluding (as I confess I very much desire to conclude) that Cavafy at the end of his career was stronger than ever — a poet who surpassed his previous greatness, who just could not stop growing.

The key words in my analysis have already been introduced. They are “attachment” and “detachment.” Cavafy seems to mellow into a detachment that may paradoxically be termed the summit of attachment³ (a) because this detachment could never have been attained without the previous attachment and (b) because, once reached, this same detachment does not fly off into separation from the underlying attachment but, on the contrary, nonchalantly allows any and all attachment to continue. In this sense detachment does not only grow out of and crown attachment, its opposite, it includes that opposite. Cavafy, rather than ending in confusion, puts an end to confusion because his heightened perspective transforms paradox into something logical and consistent without reducing it to something simple. This, in my view as well as Keeley’s, is strength.

II

If we may adopt the foregoing as a hypothesis, one problem immediately arises: Did Cavafy go the route of unalloyed attachment before he mellowed into detachment, or was the later detachment — the aestheticizing of the aestheticized — somehow implicit in the original attachment from the start, a seed lying buried there, waiting to send forth shoots?

It is tempting to favor the route of unalloyed attachment. After all, that is neat, unparadoxical, simple. Let’s argue it, therefore, before considering the other route.

All Cavafians agree on the central role of Alexandria in the poet’s life and work; all demonstrate — Keeley most definitively — that Cavafy’s salvation lay in his creation of a mythical Alexandria to which he could attach himself because the mythical city, unlike the real one, could be viewed aesthetically as spectacle. We start with the problem expressed in early poems of total impasse such as «Κερίά» (“The Windows,” 1897; 1903), «Τείχη» (“Walls,” 1896; 1897?), «Μονοτονία» (“Monotony,” 1898; 1908).⁴ From here we move to the crucial advance seen in «ΗΠόλις» (“The City,” 1894, 1910; 1910):

“Wherever I cast my glance, wherever I stare,
I see my life’s black ruins here
where I passed so many years in loss and waste.”

New lands you will not find; you will find no other places.

This city will follow you

.....

... As for elsewhere, have no hopes.⁵

Next comes the partial accommodation revealed in an unpublished note dated April 28, 1907:

By now I’ve gotten used to Alexandria, and it’s very likely that even if I were rich I’d stay here. But in spite of this, how the place disturbs me. What trouble, what a burden small cities are — what lack of freedom.

I’d stay here (then again I’m not entirely certain that I’d stay) because it is like a native country for me, because it is related to my life’s memories ...⁶

Finally in this progression we may adduce the surprising last stanza of «Ἐν Ἑσπέρα» (“In the Evening,” 1916; 1917):

Then, feeling melancholy, I went out onto the balcony,
went out to change my thoughts by seeing
a bit of the beloved city at least,
a bit of movement in the street and shops.

By selecting the poems in this way we emerge with what appears to be unalloyed attachment, the antithesis of earlier feelings such as “they built all around me great high walls. / And now I sit here in desperation. / I think of nothing else: this fate galls / my mind, for I had so many things to do outside.” But unalloyed attachment to what? Not to the real “movement in the street and shops,” despite the line’s literal sense, but rather to the spectacle of the metaphorical city that Cavafy had created in his imagination over the decade 1907–1917.

The difference between attachment to something real and attachment to something metaphorical lies in mediation. Cavafy’s relation to “this city I love” is no longer immediate; instead, it is mediated by one or more factors such as imagination, memory, or language — of which memory

now seems the most central. We have all learned from Proust that memory releases us from the prison cells of space as well as from those of time, ushering us into an imaginative freedom that transforms the sordidness of past or present into something no longer disturbing, because mediated. Cavafy never said this more clearly than in a poem called «Κατὰ τες Συνταγές Αρχαίων Ελληνοσύρων Μάγων» (“Following the Recipe of Ancient Greco-Syrian Magicians,” ?; 1931):

Said an aesthete: “What distillation from magic herbs
can I find — what distillation, following the recipe
of ancient Greco-Syrian magicians — that will bring back to me
for one day (if its power does not last longer),
or even for a few hours,
my twenty-third year,
bring back to me my friend of twenty-two,
his beauty, his love?”

What distillation, following the recipe
of ancient Greco-Syrian magicians, can be found
to bring back — as part of this return to the past —
the little room we shared?”⁷

Here, unmistakably, we see the craving for mediation. The speaker wishes to attach himself not so much to the past per se as to the past revived and aestheticized through memory. This wish is fulfilled in Cavafy’s mature poems, all of which derive from his realization, expressed in “The City,” that he could never escape his repressive environment except through the memory of an imagined city no longer repressive.

This city includes, of course, his own life. Those little rooms that Cavafy shared in encounters often sordid, when integrated into the spectacle of an aestheticized Alexandria, all become no longer dark rooms where he lived out empty days attempting to find the windows, no longer walls that closed him off from the outside world, but, on the contrary, luminous corridors connecting him to a metaphoric city possessing the power to validate people and occurrences otherwise antipathetic. This may be seen, for example, in «Μέρες του 1909, '10, και '11» (“Days of 1909, '10, and '11,” [?; 1928]), where a single mention of “the illustrious Alexandria” of ancient times is sufficient to aestheticize a male prostitute who “quickly . . . / became debauched.”⁸

In short, we find Cavafy everywhere mediating his real experience. More specifically, we find him, as Keeley says, “longing for a lost paradise” and therefore searching “for material in the glory of the Ptolemies and the ancient Alexandrian days thereafter.”⁹ To overcome the alienation seen in “Walls,” “The Windows,” “Monotony,” and “The City,” Cavafy needed to become attached to a mythical city and to a mythical personal life that could be equated to that city—all this being accomplished chiefly through memory, that most potent of magic distillations.

III

Here we have the beginnings of an argument for the first solution to the problem raised earlier, the problem of whether Cavafy went the route of unalloyed attachment at first, before mellowing into detachment, or whether the “later” detachment was somehow present from the start. The first solution, as I maintained, possesses the attraction of simplicity. It is so refreshingly unparadoxical that one is tempted to conclude that Cavafy, repulsed by the real, invented a lost paradise in his imagination and attached himself to that vivifying myth with all his heart and soul.

But Cavafy’s career probably did not unfold in such a straightforward way. While it is the job of critics to penetrate beneath the wealth of data to a basic pattern that is often very simple, they must always be prepared to find their natural desire for neatness contradicted, or at least qualified, by the evidence. If we look at all of the poems concerning Alexandria, for example, we immediately must suspect the assertion that Cavafy invented a lost paradise. The truth is that relatively few poems deal with the glory of the Ptolemies while most treat the ancient Alexandrian days thereafter in ways that emphasize the city’s decline. Of course, this in itself does not destroy the argument for attachment; it merely confirms our sense that Cavafy was incapable of sentimentality. The crucial aspect of spectacle remains inviolate. What changes is merely the nature of the spectacle. Cavafy attached himself to a metaphor that embraced failure as well as success, and in this way was able to aestheticize his own failures without necessarily transforming them into successes. The emphasis on decline, although certainly adding a complicating factor to our previous analysis, does not in itself invalidate the argument for Cavafy’s unalloyed attachment to a metaphoric city.

Yet, if we look at the Alexandrian poems still more closely, and especially at those treating the ancient Alexandrian days thereafter, we see Cavafy dwelling repeatedly on figures who take themselves too seriously — who are, in other words, too attached. To state this in the most paradoxical manner possible, the very poems that establish the poet's attachment project, whether explicitly through theme or implicitly through narrative strategy, demonstrate the dangers of attachment and, by implication, the need for detachment. This happens not only at the end of the poet's career but also earlier in the mature period, and obsessively after about 1916 or 1917. Not that we find in full flower here the aestheticizing of the aestheticized that characterizes the poet's final mode (if our hypothesis is correct); we do, however, discover the seed lying buried that I mentioned earlier. This constitutes a new dissonance or impurity introduced precisely into those poems whose purpose was to remedy the original dissonance between the poet's spiritual aspirations and his actual life. In any case, if we look more carefully at the Alexandrian poems, we cannot escape the suspicion that the importunate theme of self-deception applied to the characters who collectively make up the mythical Alexandria of both success and decline — in other words, the way in which Cavafy repeatedly makes his characters incapable of seeing the disparity between their fantasy worlds and reality — must contain within it a power that will eventually touch the poet's own attachment to his aestheticizing enterprise. In this sense, his attachment is not unalloyed, but includes (to use now Cavafy's own metaphor) a kind of half-light that will be penetrated by the full light of later works.¹⁰

Readers may object that it is both limiting and arbitrary to look only at the Alexandrian poems in this survey of the evolving themes of attachment and self-deception. True. Many poems in other cycles are equally useful; indeed, some are so relevant that I shall include them. In general, however, to limit ourselves to the Alexandrian cycle will be seen, I hope, as a legitimate simplification. These poems are representative in that they span the full career and also the three areas specified by Cavafy as his concerns: "the philosophical, the historical, and the erotic (or sensual)."¹¹ Above and beyond this, since Alexandria epitomized for Cavafy the broader metaphor of the entire Hellenistic civilization resulting from the conquests of Alexander the Great, we may approach this cycle synecdochically, as a part standing for the whole.

If we chart the Alexandrian poems according to their order of publication (an arrangement preferable to utilizing their order of composition because it was through his carefully controlled sequence of publication that Cavafy deliberately created a mythical “work in progress”¹²) and if we then attempt to assign individual poems to categories determined by issues we have already raised, and by others we shall raise later, we emerge with some interesting results (see table, pp. 154–55).

Of the thirty-three poems in question, ten — or slightly under one-third — do not involve the theme of self-deception at all (column II). What is significant is that all but two of these ten were published between 1899 and 1918. Furthermore, of the ten, eight (seven before 1919, one afterward) clearly help to establish mythical Alexandria without irony or reservation; they are straightforward poems of aesthetic attachment (column I).¹³ We may conclude that the nonproblematical poems of attachment are not spread equally over this cycle but cluster in the period before 1918.

Turning now to the twenty-three poems that do involve the theme of self-deception (columns III–IV), we find them rather evenly distributed from 1911 onward, with eleven coming before 1919 and twelve afterward. On the other hand, this theme, which is interspersed with straightforward poems in the period before 1918, becomes strangely obsessive after this year, with each and every poem, except only the two noted above, dealing with self-deception in one form or another.

Although there is no precisely chronological division between the poems that involve self-deception and those that do not, something does seem to happen around 1918 or 1919, and we may specify this time as a demarcation indicating when the seeds of the poet’s ambivalence toward the mythical Alexandria he was creating began, if not to thrust visible sprouts above ground, then at least to germinate more actively than before, although still invisibly beneath the soil. This particular choice for the demarcation becomes even more convincing in light of a nonAlexandrian poem called «Μελαγχολία του Ιάσωνος Κλεάνδρου· ποιητοῦ ἐν Κομμαγηνῇ· 595 μ.Χ.» (“Melancholy of Jason Kleander, Poet in Kommagini, A.D. 695,” which was written most likely in August 1918 although not published until June 1921:

The aging of my face and body
is a wound from a horrendous knife.

Resignation I totally lack.

To you I resort, O Art of Poetry:

you know a bit about medicines

that attempt to numb pain via Imagination and the Word.

It's a wound from a horrendous knife.

Bring on your medicines, O Art of Poetry,

for just a little to keep the wound from being felt.

This poem is a perfect fulcrum between the unambivalent and the ambivalent Cavafy, shifting us away from unalloyed attachment. In addition, it epitomizes the entire career since it begins with an impasse imposed by reality, proceeds blatantly to invoke the aestheticization of that reality as some sort of solution, but then in the final line's brief but crucial qualification, "for just a little" (*για λίγο*), qualifies the proffered solution — indeed, suggests not only that the speaker is deceived but also that he knows he is deceived. Thus the poem moves us into a perspective above the sneaker's original bias without on the other hand vitiating that bias by rejecting the prior aestheticization. Instead, the poem establishes a new and different type of tension whose resolution will come later.

IV

But we are running ahead of ourselves. Returning now to the full Alexandrian cycle, that most potent of Cavafy's magic distillations, his poetic medicines utilizing Imagination and the Word, we must attempt to see precisely how and when this new resolution emerges. Our data as always are the thirty-three poems that constitute the cycle. So far, our most significant finding has been the virtual absence of poems of unalloyed attachment after 1919; the problem now resides in the twenty-three poems that, by virtue of their obsession with self-deception, may or may not reflect some increasing ambivalence in Cavafy regarding his solution of aestheticization. Keeley graphs this ambivalence against a change in the poet's voice, "rich with rhetoric and didactic authority at the beginning," as for example in «*Απολείπειν ο Θεός Αντώνιον*» ("The God Abandons Antony" 1910; 1911), but then becoming "more and more detached" so that in the latest poems it is "always masked," the poems' final comment being provided silently, as it were, by "events that follow on the speaker's

heels. . .”¹⁴ Without gainsaying any of this, I propose to graph the poet’s ambivalence against various other factors in his manner of treating the obsessive theme of self-deception. We start, of course, simply with the fact that the theme has become so obsessive. This leads to the conclusion I expressed earlier: given Cavafy’s repeated investigation of characters who take themselves and their attachments too seriously, it would seem hard to imagine these poems failing to reflect some doubts, on Cavafy’s part, about his own attachment to the very enterprise of aestheticization being carried forward by the poems in question. This is where we may start. To go further, we will need to ask whether the poet’s manner of treating his obsessive theme in these poems reveals any pattern of development.

There is, I believe, a remarkable change in these poems that occurs at the end of Cavafy’s career. The gauge I have employed is the degree to which Cavafy takes sides vis-à-vis his self-deceiving protagonists. Viewed in this way, the twenty-three poems do form an unmistakable pattern that may be seen on my chart. From 1911 to 1926, almost all of the poems take sides. More precisely, of the seventeen items in this group, eleven are unmistakably either *pro* or *con* in their stance (column III). Three more are perhaps slightly less clear yet still demonstrably *con* (column IV), increasing the generally partisan majority from eleven to fourteen of the total, or 82 percent (columns III and IV). Two (one of which, «Φυγάδες» (“Exiles,” 1914; unpublished) was suppressed by Cavafy) are what I would call “half-ambiguous” (column V) and only one, «Καισαριων» (“Kaisarion,” 1914; 1948) is fully ambiguous (column VI). That is the picture from 1911 to the end of March 1926. In June 1926 we have «Μέσα στα Καπηλεία» (“In the Tavernas,” ?; 1926), which forms a convenient transition to the final mode since it edges toward full ambiguity (column V). Then, remarkably, we have full ambiguity in all five (100 percent) of the remaining poems of the cycle, three of which were published in 1928 and two in 1929 (column VI).

The persuasiveness of this pattern rests, of course, on my readings of the individual poems. Realizing that some (I hope not all) of these readings may be open to rebuttal, I will speak briefly about each poem, explaining my reasons for categorizing it in the way I have. First, however — while still discussing the overall pattern — I wish to venture a general explanation for what we see in these twenty-three items, assuming that the pattern I have suggested is correct. We see, I think, a process by which the possi-

bility of ambiguity in relation to the poet himself is held at bay. I mean the possibility that he, too, is taking himself with excessive seriousness, that he, too, is self-deceived in his aestheticizing enterprise. On the one hand, we have poem after poem bringing these possibilities out into the open by virtue of the obsessive theme of self-deception. On the other hand, in over 80 percent of the poems written before the spring of 1926 we have the deliberate refusal to treat this subject matter ambiguously. If the obsessive material truly reflects, as I have suggested, an ambiguity within Cavafy regarding his attachment to mythical Alexandria, something that he takes very seriously indeed, then a new tension is created in these poems because of the disparity between their content and their treatment. What I would like to suggest as an explanation is this: Cavafy's attachment to his myth is being threatened by his ineluctable honesty; hence he cannot help but explore the theme of self-deception yet he strives at the same time, probably unwittingly, to neutralize the force of ambiguity in this theme by taking sides regarding his characters' predicaments instead of allowing the ambiguity to remain at full strength. When he assumes a position unmistakably *pro* (which is seldom: only in "The God Abandons Antony" and "In the Evening") it is as though he wished to reaffirm his own enterprise of elaborate self-deception whereby he supposedly solved his problems by moving from the real city to the metaphoric one. When he turns fully round in order to oppose his characters' self-deception and/or reveal its futility (seen in twelve of the fourteen items that are totally or almost totally unambiguous), it is as though he were simultaneously (a) projecting his own vulnerability and consequently his doubts about the aestheticizing enterprise, and (b) scotching the snake before it can do harm. In either case, *pro* or *con*, the taking of sides would seem to be an attempt to hold at bay the very ambiguity that his honesty is forcing him to confront.

For an artist of Cavafy's integrity, this reduplicated self-deception, with all the new tensions following in its wake, could not persist. What precipitated the change sometime in the years 1926–1928 I cannot say. Whatever the cause, from 1928 onward Cavafy allowed the poems of self-deception, despite their threatening implication for the validity of his own enterprise, to stand with their ambiguity unneutralized. That he did this nonchalantly, without destroying the myth he had created, argues for his evolution to a detachment that was the summit, not the negation, of his attachment — a paradox to which I shall return at the end of this essay.

In any case, if the change I have been describing truly occurred, then it is a turn in Cavafy's career fully as important as his determination two decades earlier to speak openly about sexual inversion.

V

Since this explanation rests on the pattern I have displayed, and since the validity of the pattern rests on my readings of individual poems, I must now summarize those readings, proceeding chronologically through the twenty-three poems according to their sequence of publication.

«Απολείπειν ο Θεός Αντώνιον» (“The God Abandons Antony,” April 1911) didactically prescribes aestheticization as a remedy for life's ills and therefore supports self-deception even though it advises Antony not to be deceived about his failing luck. This poem was written only one month after the revised version of Cavafy's other most uncompromising defense of aestheticization, «Ιθάκη» (“Ithaca,” 1894; 1910/1911).

«Τα Επικίνδυνα» (“Dangerous Thoughts,” 1911) seems to side against Myrtias's rationalizations and to show how hopelessly self-deceived this student is. Yet I hesitate to call the poem totally unambiguous because the poet hints, at the same time, that Myrtias's particular form of self-deception makes his weakness acceptable.

«Αλεξανδρινοί Βασιλείς» (“Alexandrian Kings,” July 1912), unlike “Dangerous Thoughts,” does not qualify its exposure of the self-deceiving farce it describes. The crowd's open-eyed acceptance of the farce reinforces, I believe, the poem's negative stance, rather than adding a touch of ambiguity, because there is little to indicate that Cavafy looks upon the crowd with favor. Even if we take the crowd as “wise” to the farce, Cavafy's condemnation of the rulers' self-deception remains, although the crowd's self-awareness would perhaps move this poem over into column IV.

«Ο Θεόδοτος» (“Theodotos,” June 1915): a straightforwardly didactic poem against Caesar and others who take themselves too seriously and are deceived as to their own vulnerability.

«Η Δυσάρεσκεια του Σελευκίδου» (“The Displeasure of Selefkidis” (January 1916) implies the futility of Selefkidis's empty pomp. History tells us, on the other hand, that Ptolemy, whom Cavafy paints as eschewing self-deception, actually prospered in his suit, being restored to his throne by the Roman Senate.

«Φυγάδες» (“Exiles,” unpublished) strikes me as half-ambiguous and thus a foretaste of the post-1927 mode. (If this judgment is correct and if the poem is therefore a kind of mutation, out of phase with Cavafy’s style ca. 1913–1916, can we perhaps understand why it was suppressed? Yet the next poem to be considered, “For Ammonis . . .,” although equally ambiguous, was not suppressed.) Cavafy’s stance in “Exiles” is generally hostile, exposing the protagonist’s confusion and self-deception. At first the speaker seems to be doing something that Cavafy would sanction: making his monotonous, constricted life in Alexandria bearable by standing outside of it and viewing it as a spectacle. But we soon discover that he and the other exiles denigrate this process, indulging in it only because “it’s not going to last forever.” In one of those silent comments by the masked voice that so delights Edmund Keeley, Cavafy has the last word, exposing the exiles’ self-deception. They think that they will “easily overthrow Basil,” whereupon their “turn will come”; but Cavafy expects us to know that Basil reigned for nineteen years and was succeeded by his son, having established a dynasty that endured for 189 years. On the other hand, the author’s stance in this poem is not totally con because, even though he exposes the protagonists’ political hopes and also the duplicity and fragility of their aestheticization, somehow he also still accepts that aestheticization as attractive, although not to the degree that we shall find in the final poems. This is why I deem “Exiles” half-ambiguous.

«Για τον Αμμώνη, που πέθανε 29 ετών, στα 610» (“For Ammonis, Who Died at 29, in A.D. 610,” 1917) suggests the futility of the attempt by Egyptians to perpetuate Greek modes of behavior and expression in the very year of Muhammad’s first vision (another silent comment) and only nine years before the Persians conquered the city. At the same time, Cavafy’s attitude is neither cynical nor hostile; on the contrary, he seems to look down with some pride and admiration on these figures who, after all, are acting out his myth. I class the poem as (at least) half-ambiguous; it is another foretaste of the final mode.

«Ἐν Ἑσπέρα» (“In the Evening,” (1917), like “The God Abandons Antony,” shows Cavafy taking an unambiguously pro stance toward his own enterprise of self-deception whereby the formerly repugnant city becomes “this city I love” (*αγαπημένη πολιτεία*).

«Καισαρίων» (“Kaisarion,” 1918) is fully ambiguous because it exposes the self-deception of aestheticization while simultaneously embracing

this self-deception lovingly and nonchalantly, without seeming to be disturbed by the contradiction.

«Πρέσβεις απ' την Αλεξάνδρεια» (“Envoys from Alexandria,” 1918) unmasks the Lagids’ self-deception of believing that power still resides in Greece.

«Αιμιλιανός Μοναῖ, Αλεξανδρεύς, 628–655 μ.Χ.» (“Aimilianos Monai, Alexandrian, A.D. 628–655,” 1918) displays a protagonist who, overwhelmed by reality (the conquest of Alexandria by the Muslims under Amr in 642), fails miserably to deal with his repugnant life by means of “deceptions.”

«Τῶν Εβραίων (50 μ.Χ.)» (“Of the Jews [A.D. 50],” 1919) at first glance seems straightforwardly didactic in the early mode, its lesson being Ianthis’s deception in believing that mythical Alexandria can be resisted. Perhaps we should classify Cavafy’s perspective here as *pro* regarding his own enterprise of deliberate self-deception; on the other hand, the poem’s greater power seems to be directed toward exposing a character who takes himself too seriously and who overestimates his ability to deal with the outside world. The argument for *con* is strengthened by the poem’s historical dimension. The date A.D. 50 comes roughly between A.D. 40, when Philo’s plea in Rome on the Alexandrian Jews’ behalf resulted in the restoration of their rights, and A.D. 66, the start of the Jewish-Roman wars that caused the Alexandrian Jewish community’s extinction.¹⁵ This second event (still unknown to Ianthis, naturally) renders his self-deception all the more pathetic, thus reinforcing the didactic cynicism of the poem’s final stanza. Yet a tinge of admiration for Ianthis’s Hellenic weaknesses remains, which is why I classify the poem, along with “Dangerous Thoughts” and “Those Who Fought for the Achaian League,” as slightly less straightforward than the unmistakably unambiguous poems, yet still clearly negative in perspective.

«Εἶγε Ετελεύτα» (“If Actually Dead,” 1920). Here, too, in light of historical circumstances (presented less cryptically this time), the speaker’s musings seem to be pathetic and Cavafy to be exposing their inadequacy. What is to come shortly is not the restoration of paganism but the acme of Byzantine Christianity in the reign of Justinian the Great, who succeeded Justin.

«Υπέρ της Αχαικῆς Συμπολιτείας Πολεμήσαντες» (“Those Who Fought for the Achaian League,” 1922) is almost exclusively negative vis-à-vis the

process of transforming reality through mediation, in this case the mediation of rhetoric added to memory. The Achaian who is exiled in Alexandria does not perceive the irony that Ptolemy Lathyros is as bad a leader as Dialos and Kritolaos were, the implication being that “brave men . . . who fought and died gloriously” will always be betrayed. Yet my unavoidable suspicion that Cavafy may at the same time be sincerely praising the “men . . . our nation breeds,” despite the rhetoric, leads me to hesitate to call this poem unmistakably unambiguous. Its date of composition, February 1922, when inadequate generals were once again leading brave men to disaster, is not irrelevant to this classification.

«Το 31 π.Χ. στην Αλεξάνδρεια» (“In Alexandria, 31 B.C.,” 1924). In this case, deception is not only pathetic, but obscene. The “great noisy herd / and the music and parades” encountered by the poem’s ignorant peddler are those of the triumphant return staged by Cleopatra in her futile attempt to hide from her subjects (and herself?) the fact that she and her fleet deserted Antony at Actium, thereby insuring his, and her, defeat.

«Η Αρρώστια του Κλείτου» (“Kleitos’s Illness,” February 1925) cruelly — yet at the same time somehow sympathetically — exposes the servant’s self-deception.

«Ἐν Δήμῳ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας» (“In a Township of Asia Minor,” March 1926) is the poet’s clearest attack on willful self-deception through rhetoric.

«Μέσα στα Καπηλειά» (“In the Tavernas,” June 1926) edges, as I claimed earlier, toward full ambiguity and therefore serves as a transition into the final mode. At the same time that the poet’s voice invites us to scorn the speaker as a self-deluding and self-destroying escapist, we are allowed to suspect that metaphorical Alexandria, i.e. the speaker’s memory of Tamides, does perhaps “save” one as does “durable beauty” — to suspect, in other words, that an aesthetic moment perhaps transcends its own ephemerality.

«Ἐν Σπάρτῃ» (“In Sparta,” April 1928). Queen-mother Kratisiklia nobly refuses to allow her son to deceive her, yet at the same time is herself deceived regarding her future vulnerability. Cavafy allows these opposite perceptions to coexist.

«Ηγεμῶν εκ Δυτικῆς Λιβύης» (“A Prince From Western Libya,” August 1928) offers as its protagonist an imposter whose attempt to play the Alexandrian is futile. At the same time, the poet’s attitude, totally unstated, is positive with regard to metaphorical Alexandria, using this pathetic

protagonist to add power to the myth because throughout the poem the supreme value of everything Greek is an unquestioned assumption. Cavafy ridicules his own willful self-deception but simultaneously reinforces it without introducing into the poem any damaging tension owing to the contradiction.

«Μέρες του 1909, '10, και '11» (“Days of 1909, '10, and '11,” December 1928) — to repeat what I said about it earlier — uses a single mention of metaphoric Alexandria to validate an otherwise contemptible figure from real Alexandria. The I of the poem, who of course sounds like Cavafy and indeed *is* Cavafy to some degree, nevertheless is also merely a persona created by another Cavafy who hovers silently above the poem. This other Cavafy makes the speaker seem somewhat contemptible because he is so obviously deceiving himself, while at the same time the silent Cavafy looks down approvingly on the speaker, in the interests of the Alexandrian myth they share. The ambiguity creates no tension; therefore, as in all of these late poems, Cavafy has no need to suppress it.

«Μύρης· Αλεξάνδρεια του 340 μ.Χ.» (“Myris: Alexandria, A.D. 340,” April 1929) affirms “memory as the redeeming resource of those committed to the Alexandrian ideology.”¹⁶ Concurrently, it projects the speaker’s near-panic at his realization of what a tragic “solution” memory is (how fragile an instrument it is for mediating distasteful reality). The poet’s negative attitude toward the speaker’s self-deception is reinforced by the date in the title, since A.D. 340 was a time when Christianity, not paganism, stood at the center of Alexandrian life. Nevertheless, the affirmation of memory and the exposure of its inadequacy somehow coexist without tension. Cavafy is able to stand outside of his aestheticizing enterprise and to view it with ambivalence, yet without rejecting Alexandria.

«Ἄγε ὦ Βασιλεῦ Λακεδαιμονίων» (“Come, O King of the Lacedaimonians,” October 1929) is perfectly analyzed by Keeley, who says that it

points to the capacity for dignity . . . of rulers who accept the limits of their power and leave both their prosperity and their future to the gods. . . . Kratisiklia . . . knows the facts of history. . . . But it is still within her power to walk in dignified silence before her people, and it is still within her capacity to recognize that her ultimate fate is in the hands of powers beyond hers. . . . The unstated theme . . . is that dignity and wisdom do not ensure the gods’ favor. . . . But it is exactly

her recognition of this Cavafian reality that earns Kratisiklia the designation “magnificent” [ἡ θαυμασία γυναικῶν].¹⁷

Kratisiklia is completely and effortlessly ambiguous. On the one hand, she refuses to deceive herself about reality; on the other, she willfully perpetuates, by her attitude and behavior, the myth of Spartan imperturbability. Cavafy admires her transcendence of one form of deception and simultaneously admires her devotion to another form — more precisely, admires the detachment that allows her to play with reality even though she knows that that playing leaves a person as vulnerable as before.

VI

Kratisiklia's transcendence of dissonance may reflect the detached perspective from which Cavafy, too, was able by this time to view himself and his surroundings. Throughout this essay, I have termed this change his aestheticization of the aestheticized — i.e. his detached ability to see as spectacle the beloved myth-spectacle called Alexandria (*αγαπημένη πολιτεία*) by means of which he had already detached himself. Pursuing this development still further, we may say that his attachment to reality was remedied by aesthetic detachment but that this detachment then tended to become a new attachment — an attachment to the detachment. The result was that the element of play stood in danger of being suppressed, so that what had started as a process of converting reality to spectacle by means of mediation might now become all too “real” in its own right, because taken too seriously. At this point what was needed to counteract this tendency was a new, wider, perspective whereby the process of seeing reality as spectacle could itself be seen as spectacle: a perspective whereby the process of aestheticization could itself be aestheticized. Thus we have the beginning of what theoretically, I suppose, would have to be an infinite sequence by which the imagination plays with experience (i.e., refuses to take experience too seriously), then plays with that playing, then plays with the playing with the original playing, and so on. In any case, Cavafy's original spectacle being mythical Alexandria (which may now be characterized as a playing with the reality of the ancient and modern city), he then evolved to a perspective from which he could play as well with this mythical Alexandria that he had created. Said in another way: he evolved

to a perspective from which he could succeed in taking not too seriously the myth that had enabled him, earlier, to take not too seriously his entrapment within the walls and behind the windows of the real city.

Keeley's contention, and mine, is that Cavafy attained this perspective only gradually. According to the data we have examined, he starts with the city as an ogre pursuing him. Wherever he casts his glance, wherever he stares, he sees his life's black ruins there where he passed so many years in loss and waste. That is the problem. The solution unfolds in a process that seems to divide into identifiable phases, the first of which, running from about 1910 to 1918, involves Cavafy in what initially appears to be unalloyed attachment to an Alexandria that is now viewed from a distance as spectacle. His ability to play with repugnant reality, no longer taking his own predicament so seriously, liberates him (at least for the moment) from the dissonance between his spiritual aspirations and his actual life. But we wondered from the start whether this first phase was really so clean. Common sense would lead us to suspect that a person who fervently attempts to aestheticize reality, i.e., not to take it or himself too seriously, runs the risk of taking too seriously the myth he is determined will save him from taking things too seriously, and consequently the risk of setting up a new tension or dissonance at the very moment when the first one is being alleviated. Our data strengthen this suspicion because we find interspersed even with the ten poems of unalloyed attachment, eight of which come before 1918, other poems that dwell on the self-deception of figures whose problem is that they take themselves much too seriously — i.e., are too attached. I advanced as a hypothesis the supposition that these poems, even though many deal with attachment to reality rather than with attachment to myth, might reflect some inchoate ambiguity in Cavafy himself regarding the mythic enterprise that, from one point of view, was his life's salvation, and might therefore be the seeds of something destined to grow more visible later.

When we enter the second phase, our suspicions are strengthened. I call this a different phase because during the decade it lasted (roughly from 1918 to 1928) the theme of self-deception becomes obsessive and the poems of unalloyed attachment drop away. This is the difference; however, there is also a similarity. Cavafy's development is gradual. The poems of the second phase share with those of the first phase the peculiarity that the great majority lean over backward to be totally unambiguous in

the way that they treat the subject matter of self-deception, subject matter that, as we have seen, would appear to arise out of Cavafy's incipient doubts about the nature of his mythologizing enterprise. I ventured the opinion that, by virtue of his pro or con position with regard to inherently ambiguous material, Cavafy was holding these doubts at bay in an effort to neutralize the material's inherent ambiguity and its concomitant power to expose his own vulnerability.

But this is merely a stage in a continuing evolution both natural and inevitable (at least when viewed from hindsight). A poet of Cavafy's intellectual honesty, a poet so strongly attached to the overcoming of dissonance, could not remain in this second phase in which the material's inner contradictions, although resisted, remained. Therefore, we move to a third phase, after 1928, in which ambiguity is treated ambiguously yet at the same time with assurance. There is no sign whatever of panic that this honesty might cause the whole enterprise to founder. On the contrary, Cavafy seems able now to sustain a firm allegiance to mythical Alexandria while simultaneously admitting his awareness that he must not take this allegiance too seriously. In place of the new and greater tension that we would expect to develop at this point, we find nonchalance: a playing with the previous playing, an aestheticization of what was previously aestheticized. Cavafy's detachment from his material is broad enough to include attachment, its opposite. This explains why there is no demythologizing at the end of the career — why, as Keeley stresses, the poet's ambivalence toward mythical Alexandria does not result in Alexandria's rejection.¹⁸ Nor do we have a retraction out of weakness. Cavafy's ability to face his doubts and to exploit them to the extent of creating a very different kind of poem toward the end of his life is, in my view, the last of his many strengths. There is, of course, nothing so startling in Cavafy's final period as Yeats's "Crazy Jane" poems or as Shakespeare's serene romances coming after the tragedies. Nevertheless, Cavafy resembles these giants in that he never stopped growing. As a whole, his career displays a shape and development that help us confirm what we knew all along: that he is a major poet.

VII

All these conclusions derive, of course, from an examination of only the thirty-three poems in the Alexandrian cycle. I have assumed that these are

representative; yet, ideally, the three-phase development into detachment ought to be tested against a similar analysis of the remaining poems — an analysis that will confirm, I hope, the findings derived from the synecdochic sample. As evidence that this hope is not just wishful thinking, I will mention here in closing that the characterization I have offered of the third phase, on the basis of only the last five poems in the Alexandrian cycle, is strengthened by many other poems published during the poet's final years (1929–1932). Most of these have been discussed at length by Keeley; there is no need for me to repeat what he says.¹⁹ I will dwell for a moment, however, on a poem that he could have included in his evidence for Cavafy's "universal perspective" but did not: "Following the Recipe of Ancient Greco-Syrian Magicians." Earlier, I quoted this poem in full in order to argue Cavafy's apparently unalloyed attachment to aestheticization during his first phase, remarking in endnote 7, however, that this same poem also provides evidence for the heightened perspective of the third phase. I deliberately ignored, then, the poem's time of publication (1931), treating the work simply as a dateless artifact. What I wish to suggest now is that we do this at our peril. Once we become convinced that a poet's sensibility changes as it evolves, we should always include in our consideration of any individual poem that poem's chronological placement in the entire evolution, as a possible aid to discovering its truest meaning. "Following the Recipe of Ancient Greco-Syrian Magicians," considered dateless, may easily seem to project Cavafy's passion for aestheticization — his craving for the magic distillation of memory to bring back to him his twenty-third year, his friend of twenty-two, their love, and even the little room they shared. If, however, we remember the poem's chronological niche in Cavafy's carefully controlled order of publication, we will pay much more attention to the qualifications that we so easily overlooked before. The craving for mediation is present, to be sure (Cavafy's subsequent position never eliminates his earlier one), but present as well is recognition of memory's fragility. The speaker will be satisfied with a distillation that maintains its effect for just one day, "or even for a few hours," since he is not at all sure whether its power lasts longer. Already we begin to see certain ironies and ambiguities in a poem that might otherwise have been read as essentially straightforward. Above and beyond this, we will also pay more attention (now that we have been alerted to the ironic element) to who the speaker is. Cavafy calls him "an aesthete," a designation whose

negative connotations cast certain doubts upon the aestheticizing enterprise that is the speaker's specialty and the poem's subject matter. But this speaker is obviously not the poet. Our receptivity to the poem's ironies alerts us to another voice standing outside, fully masked by what Keeley calls a "narrative strategy."²⁰ Suddenly we realize that this poem, which seems at first to be straightforwardly about the need for aestheticization, something to which Cavafy, we have always assumed, is irremediably attached, derives from an exterior voice that is not so attached, indeed that is sufficiently detached from the material to infect it with ironies. At the same time, these ironies are not corrosive: the need for aestheticization remains. As we might have predicted, knowing as we do the general characteristics of the ultimate mode, in this particular late poem, as in others, we find the aesthetic aestheticized, not rejected.

Hanover, New Hampshire;
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Notes

- 1 Edmund Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria: Study of a Myth in Progress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 149.
- 2 "Voice, Perspective, and Context in Cavafy," *Grand Street*, Spring 1983.
- 3 This paradox derives from Byzantine theology, where the terms are προσπάθεια ("attachment" in Ancient Greek) and απροσπάθεια ("detachment" in Ancient Greek). I first encountered the paradox in one of Nikos Kazantzakis's letters. See *Τετρακόσια γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Athens, 1965), p. 631.
- 4 Here and elsewhere the date(s) before the semicolon indicate(s) the time of composition and, where appropriate, revision, whereas the date after the semicolon indicates the time of publication. A question mark shows (obviously) that the date in question is more-or-less conjectural, or unknown. These dates are conveniently indicated in Diana Haas & Michalis Pieris, *Βιβλιογραφικός οδηγός στα 154 ποιήματα του Καβάφη* (Athens: Ερμής, 1984). I list these three poems in the sequence desired (much later) by Cavafy. See C. P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, tr. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. George Savidis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 392 of the bilingual hardbound edition.
- 5 All translations of Cavafy's poems are my own unless otherwise indicated.

- 6 Printed in Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria*, p. 19. The sentiments expressed in this note help explain why Cavafy placed "The City" at the head of his *Poems: 1905–1915*, the first collection that represented his mature voice.
- 7 Translated by Keeley and Sherrard. This is a poem to which we shall return later because, although I use it here to help argue the case for Cavafy's unalloyed attachment to an aestheticized city, it also provides splendid evidence for the poet's ambivalent attitudes and his ultimate detachment.
- 8 This poem's ambiguities will be discussed later.
- 9 *Cavafy's Alexandria*, p. 85.
- 10 See the note, most likely by Cavafy, printed in *Cavafy's Alexandria*, pp. 186–187.
- 11 *Cavafy's Alexandria*, p. 186.
- 12 This is well argued in *Cavafy's Alexandria*, pp. 148 and 186, n. 13.
- 13 "Glory of the Ptolemies," although classified here as straightforwardly positive, may perhaps be ironic. If so, the irony will be perceived only when the light of later poems whose rhetorical exaggeration makes them clearly ironic (e.g., "In the Year 200 B.C.") subtly penetrates the (possible) half-light of this poem.
- 14 The first two citations occur on p. 149 of *Cavafy's Alexandria*, the third on p. 142 of the same book, and the last in the essay "Voice, Perspective, and Context in Cavafy" printed in *Grand Street* II/3 (Spring, 1983).
- 15 I am indebted to Rachel Spielman, a Dartmouth undergraduate, for bringing the full historical context to my attention through her essay "The Hellenistic Jewish Community of Alexandria."
- 16 Keeley, *Cavafy's Alexandria*, p. 148.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.
- 19 *Ibid.*, Chapter Six *passim*. See especially the treatment of "In the Year 200 B.C.," pp. 123, 145–148.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Cavafy's Homosexuality and His Reputation Outside Greece

*His poems are recited now by adolescent boys;
his visions invade their vibrant eyes.
Their healthy sensuous minds,
their shapely well-built bodies
are moved by his manifestations of Beauty.¹*

“Πολύ Σπανίως” (“Very Seldom,” 1911; 1913)

“LET IT FINALLY BE SAID: Cavafy is neither ‘perverse’ nor ‘obscene’ nor ‘obsessed’ nor even ‘erotic.’ . . . Cavafy articulates a *specifically* homosexual strategy of liberation and historical consciousness. And if we distort this most central aspect of Cavafy’s *perception* of human society, we have decimated him beyond recognition.”²

With this manifesto, the editors of the *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* launched their special Cavafy issue in 1983. How different their pugnacious challenge sounds from E. M. Forster’s characterization, sixty years earlier, of a poet whose art reveals “a curious world” in which he has “mis-governed.”³ Forster’s homosexual suggestions are discernible in retrospect, no doubt; but they were effectively veiled for those who never dreamed in the 1920s — or the 1930s or 1940s or even the 1950s, for that matter — that Cavafy’s work articulates a specifically homosexual strategy of liberation (if indeed it does).

What I propose to do in this essay is to examine Cavafy’s homosexuality as a factor aiding the establishment of his reputation in the English-speaking world; to wonder whether Cavafy speaks differently to different audiences; to demonstrate some instances of sexual code-language in specific

translations; and finally to question the alleged specificity of Cavafy's strategy of liberation.

THE KEY FIGURE in the establishment of Cavafy's reputation outside Greece was the celebrated British novelist E. M. Forster. He must be given the credit for spreading Cavafy's fame to the English-speaking world, thus opening the door to wider appreciation throughout Europe and beyond. Every Cavafy aficionado knows Forster's pioneering essay that appeared in *Pharos and Pharillon* in 1923, with its vignette of "a Greek gentleman in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe."⁴ But Forster's more extensive efforts on Cavafy's behalf were less well known until recently because much of the evidence resided in unpublished letters among the Forster papers at King's College Cambridge and at the Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas. Many of these letters were published in 1983 and 1985.⁵ In addition, Jane Pinchin's book *Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell, and Cavafy*, published in 1977, gathers together the evidence and interprets it. Pinchin shows how and why Forster's three-year association with Cavafy in Alexandria — Forster was stationed there as a functionary for the British Red Cross from November 1915 to January 1919 — helped to liberate him from the paralysis that had forced him to abandon *A Passage to India* in 1913. What Forster discovered in Alexandria, thanks to Cavafy, was how to deal with loss. He examined Alexandrian history in a Cavafian manner, confronted its anticlimactical shiftlessness, and concluded, as he once wrote to Cavafy, that repose comes "not in fruition but in creation."⁶ In other words, Forster learned in Alexandria that process surpasses results. This is what made possible the completion of *A Passage to India*, in which the friendship of two men ends anticlimactically with separation. No wonder that Forster chose Cavafy's "The God Abandons Antony" as a kind of emblem for his own passage to maturity:

do not uselessly lament your fortune
giving way at last, your projects that have failed,
your life's designs all turned delusions.

He placed this poem at the center of his two books on Alexandria, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (1922) and *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923), both of which were assembled (from previous writings) precisely while he was completing his great novel.

Forster was always reticent about his homosexuality, as he was about Cavafy's. But it is clear that the liberation he experienced during his time in Alexandria was connected with the love that in those days dared not speak its name. For one thing, he found a lover there, a handsome young Egyptian tram-conductor named Mohammed el Adl, with whom he experienced his first consummated affair.⁷ More generally, he was able to confront the homosexual aspect of Greek culture, ancient and modern. This was a refreshing change from the sterilized Public School brand of Hellenism that "never goes bad, even in the tropics"⁸ — the brand that he had carried with him as a result of an education that had subjected him to "schoolroom tyrants": "Pericles and Aspasia and Themistocles and all those bores." Guided by Cavafy, Forster reacted against "the simple idealising sort [of Hellenism] in which the ancient world is invoked as a standard to set off the deficiencies of modern civilization."¹⁰ He delighted in Cavafy's rejection of the tyranny of classicism, a rejection that enabled Cavafy to rewrite Greek history so that "Athens and Sparta . . . [became] two quarrelsome little slave states, ephemeral beside the Hellenistic kingdoms that followed them, just as these are ephemeral beside the secular empire of Constantinople."¹¹ But Constantinople, too, was ultimately lost. What Cavafian anti-classicism enabled Forster to appreciate was (I repeat) process as opposed to results, creation as opposed to fruition. "If the strain died out — never mind: it had done its work, and it would have left, far away upon some Asian upland, a coin of silver, stamped with the exquisite head of a Hellenizing King."¹²

With the sterilized Public School brand of Hellenism behind him thanks to Cavafy, Forster was able to be more forthright about Greek homosexuality. In *A Room with a View* (1908), one of his early novels, the narrator comments disparagingly regarding a young man: "He was mediaeval. Like a Gothic statue. . . . A Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition."¹³ What is really meant here is that a Greek statue implies not so much fruition as a creative love between man and man. A clearer indication comes in a still earlier text, the short story "Albergo Empedocle," published in an obscure periodical in December 1903 and omitted from Forster's various volumes of collected stories. In it, a young man named Harold goes out to Sicily — to Magna Graecia — armed only with his sterilized Public School conception of Hellenism. Falling asleep between two fallen columns of the Temple of Zeus at Acragas, he dreams

that he actually was a Greek in some previous life. When questioned about that life by his fiancée, he tells her: “I was better, I saw better, heard better, thought better.” She then asks in a low voice, “Did you also love better?” and he replies, “I loved very differently . . . Yes, I loved better too . . .” So great is his obsession with this previous life that he is confined to an asylum as a lunatic. Abandoned by his fiancée, he is comforted only by a male friend, the one person who “understands and loves him.” As a whole, the story contrasts sterilized Public School Greece with something entirely different, Harold’s fiancée enthuses about “the poetry, oh, the poetry!” of his past existence, whereas he retorts “I don’t see any poetry.” She of course assumes he had lived in the fifth century B.C., “the period in which she was given to understand that the Greek race was at its prime” and Acragas “was a great city full of gorgeous palaces and snow-white marble temples, full of poets and music . . . , full of noble men and noble thoughts, bounded by the sapphire sea, covered by the azure sky,” a city in which people “walked through the marble streets, . . . led solemn sacrifices,” etc., etc., etc.¹⁴ But none of this sentimentality in which the ancient world is invoked to set off the deficiencies of modern life has anything to do with Harold’s vision — a vision that makes him not effusive but mute.

Forster of course retained his reticence until the end, suppressing the openly homosexual novel *Maurice*, written between 1913 and 1914, across the manuscript of which he scribbled, “Publishable but is it worth it?”¹⁵ Yet his confrontation with physical sex in Alexandria, and his more general extrication from the nineteenth-century Victorian ethos of perfectionism and fruition that had created Public School Greece, liberated him to proceed with *A Passage to India*, which deals with loss, anticlimax, and nonfruition not only in politics and heterosexual romance but also in a relationship between two men, an Englishman and a native, who honor the creativity of their relationship (which is not presented as homosexual owing to Forster’s reticence) despite that relationship’s dissolution.

The kernel of the anticlassical Hellenism that Forster acquired thanks to Cavafy was an unsterilized conception of passion. In sterilized Public School Greece, passion had been suppressed or sublimated; the ideal was Keats’s “cold pastoral” (my emphasis), not the heated flesh-and-blood pursuit of shepherdess by shepherd, much less of ephebe by sodomite. Guided by Cavafy, Forster came to value passion as creative and liberating. We must remember his own liberated passion in Alexandria with

Mohammed et Adl. Forster had been taught that homosexual love was depraved; now, instead of accepting this view, he argued — in an important letter addressed to Cavafy — that depravity, far from being connected with passion, is passion's "absolute antithesis," reminding Cavafy that ice, not fire, is at the center of Dante's hell. "No action, no thought is per se depraved," he concluded.¹⁶ This is the same letter in which he connected repose not with fruition but with creation. Cavafy's Greece — passionate, "dirty, dishonest, unaristocratic, roving," to cite another letter,¹⁷ enabled the formerly repressed Englishman to integrate his own sexual drives into a larger worldview that is modern rather than Victorian.

No wonder, then, that Forster, when he returned to England after the war, embarked on an energetic campaign to place individual poems by Cavafy in British journals, his goal being to convince a publisher to bring out a full volume of Cavafy's work in translation.

This was not easy. Cavafy himself, although wishing to be translated, apparently did not favor a book. "Perhaps he felt, along with his literary ancestor Callimachus," Forster reminisced ten years later, "that a large book is a large evil."¹⁸ Furthermore, the obvious translator, Forster's and Cavafy's mutual friend George Valassopoulo, proved to be not a good choice. Cavafy favored him, assuring Forster that Valassopoulo's renderings were faithful to the originals.¹⁹ Forster, too, favored him at first, even if he sometimes revised Valassopoulo's versions with the help of T. E. Lawrence and Arnold Toynbee.²⁰ But Valassopoulo had two drawbacks. He balked at translating what he termed the "lurid" love poems²¹ and he was only minimally productive. "I quite agree with you that Valassopoulo is your ideal translator if he would but translate!" expostulated Forster to Cavafy five years after the former's return to England. "The British public won't know you as I wish, if he only sends a poem a year."²² This was after Forster, in 1923, had brought out his piece about Cavafy's slight angle to the universe. "It is important to keep your name before the public, now that interest has been aroused," he wrote to Cavafy in that year.²³ Indeed, the TLS reviewer of *Pharos and Pharillon* had not only noted Cavafy in his own right but had suggested that Forster "first gained the courage of his own vision" in Cavafy's Alexandria.²⁴ "My dear Cavafy," Forster wrote,

things are rather exciting. The book has had a great success for a book of its type, 900 copies have been sold in 6 weeks, we are rush-

ing out a second edition; a review of over a column in the *Times Literary Supplement*, long reviews in the *Nation*, the *New Statesman*, *The Daily Telegraph* and so on. And the things that have attracted most attention in it are your poems. The reviewers have in some cases quoted them in full, and I have private letters — e.g. from Siegfried Sassoon — for more of them and for more about you. And now I come to the exciting point. I was at Chatto and Windus' the other day — they are one of our leading publishers — and they began asking me about you, and what's more if your poems couldn't be translated. . . .²⁵ (Forster 1923c)

Forster had no luck with the hoped-for book, although he approached Heinemann's and also Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press as well as Chatto and Windus.²⁶ The problem was Valassopoulo's lack of productivity.²⁷ Nevertheless, by 1925 about fifty further translations had arrived,²⁸ and Forster busily "corresponded with the editors of the *Athenaeum*, the *Oxford Outlook*, *Chapbook*, the *Criterion* — anyone who would publish Cavafy in English . . ." in the process introducing Cavafy's work to T. S. Eliot, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, Virginia Woolf, T. E. Lawrence, William Plomer, and others.²⁹

Persevering with the idea of a book, Forster, along with some others of "Cavafy's English friends," was finally able to convince John Mavrogordato, professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at Oxford, to translate the entire canon after it had been posthumously published in Greek in Alexandria in 1935. Mavrogordato completed his translation in 1937;³⁰ it remained unpublished until 1951, however, by which time Cavafy had become the subject of an influential appreciation by C. M. Bowra (1949).³¹ Forster's review of the Mavrogordato volume appeared in *The Listener* and was immediately reprinted in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951). In it, Forster does not actively reveal his displeasure with the new translations (privately, he disparaged "Wooden cordato's" work as "reliable rather than inspired"³²; instead, he comments diplomatically that Valassopoulo is his favorite because he had "the advantage of working with the poet and he has brought much of the magic across." Rather than analyze translations, Forster concentrates on Cavafy's "magic," noting that the poems are "sensuous" (he does not say "erotic") as well as "learned, . . . ironic, civilised, sensitive, witty," and that what Cavafy's "amoral mind"

most envies is “the power to snatch sensation, even if the sensation derives from the disreputable amours of youth and even if remorse ensues.”³³

Forster's point is that Cavafy teaches us how to overcome loss: “If the strain died out — never mind.”³⁴ There is not a word about homosexuality; yet Forster dangles it in playful semi-disguise before those in the know, citing for example in its entirety a particular favorite of his, <Ἐνας Θεός των> (“One of their Gods,” 1899; 1917), which concerns a “perfectly beautiful adolescent boy” with perfumed dark hair who indulges in “questionable pleasure” (ὕποπτην ἀπόλαυσι). Although his reticence continued, Forster succeeded at least in exposing the public to the entire canon, including the unmistakably homosexual poems. Cavafy would never have entered the British literary consciousness had it not been for his patron's energetic advocacy over three decades. But the benefit was mutual. “I did a little to spread his fame,” wrote Forster in 1958, continuing: “It was about the best thing I did.”³⁵ Similarly, in a letter written in the same year to George Savidis he declared: “How very proud I am, George, that I ever got to know him; it is certainly one of my ‘triumphs’ . . .”³⁶

We have seen that the key figure in the establishment of Cavafy's reputation in the English-speaking world was E. M. Forster, and that homosexuality certainly played a part in Forster's involvement. Forster's success, culminating in the Mavrogordato translation of 1951, was extended a decade later when W. H. Auden, another homosexual, used his influence to convince Harcourt, Brace & World to publish Rae Dalven's translation.³⁷ But what a difference those ten years made! In his introduction to Mavrogordato's volume, Rex Warner concentrated on Cavafy's historical vision. When he came to the personal poems, he quoted “Ἡ Ἀρχή των” (“Their Beginning,” 1915; 1921) which is imprecise about the lovers' genders, speaking merely of της ἐκνομῆς των ηδονῆς, “of their illegal pleasure.” Warner even implied that the setting was a heterosexual brothel by invoking T. S. Eliot's “one-night cheap hotels” as an analogue. Auden, by contrast, quoting the same poem in Dalven's translation (which renders ἐκνομη ηδονή as “deviate, sensual delight”), blazons out: “Cavafy was a homosexual, and his erotic poems make no attempt to conceal the fact.”³⁸ The poet is now seen as “a witness to the truth” — one who

is exceptionally honest. He neither bowdlerizes nor glamorizes nor giggles. The erotic world he depicts is one of casual pickups and

short-lived affairs. Love, there, is rarely more than physical passion, and when tenderer emotions do exist, they are almost always one-sided. At the same time, he refuses to pretend that his memories of moments of sensual pleasure are unhappy or spoiled by feelings of guilt.³⁹

This signaled Cavafy's homosexual admirers that they could henceforth adulate the Alexandrian without circumlocution. Thus the gay photographer Duane Michals in his *Homage to Cavafy*, a book that interleaves ten of the poet's sensuous verses with photos of male nudes and other males reminiscent of Cavafy's world, begins with the following tribute:

Constantine Cavafy was a man of great feeling and even greater courage. His poetry was his life. And because he was a man who loved other men, he demonstrated his courage by making public these private passions. He lived then, as we still do today, among those brute people who would literally destroy him both physically and spiritually for the unforgivable sin of loving the wrong person. Despite this vulnerability, he wrote about the truth of himself with painful honesty, and the strength of his art protected him and freed others. I salute his courage and thank him for the gift of his life.⁴⁰

What we must remember now is that Cavafy's admirers outside of Greece, whether homosexual or heterosexual, have typically come to conclusions such as E. M. Forster's, Rex Warner's, W. H. Auden's, or Duane Michals's on the basis of translations, not on Cavafy's original Greek. If, for Cavafy's *Ἡ ἐκπλήρωση τῆς ἐκνομῆς τῶν ἡδονῆς / ἐγένετο*, one reader encounters "The fulfillment of their deviate, sensual delight / is done" (Dalven), another "The consummation of their lawless pleasure / was done" (Mavrogordato), another "Their illicit pleasure has been fulfilled" (Keeley and Sherrard), another "The consummations of unlawful pleasure done" (Friar), another "The process of fulfilling their illicit pleasuring / is now complete" (Kolaitis), and another "The fulfillment of their deviant pleasure / is complete" (Sachperoglou), are these readers encountering the same poem? Every single word in the Greek line is problematical.⁴¹ No translation can reproduce all the nuances of the original.

Instead of lamenting the deficiencies of translation, or attempting to demonstrate the superiority of one rendering over another, should we not

accept each translation (to some degree, at least) as a new and different response to the aesthetic norms of a particular audience? As soon as we do this, we will be reminded that literary criticism is no longer satisfied with an orientation merely to poems themselves and to their creators. Critical theory must also consider the audience being addressed.⁴² Thus Cavafy in English translation, speaking to an anglophone audience, should be distinguished from Cavafy in French, German, or Greek insofar as the audience is no longer considered merely “a passive consumer of finished artistic works” but instead “an active participant in the production of aesthetic norms” — whereupon art becomes no longer “the private expression of the artist” but rather “a matter of social negotiation dependent on certain cultural conventions that emerge under specific historical conditions.”⁴³ What we have seen in addition, in reviewing the efforts of E. M. Forster and W. H. Auden to establish Cavafy’s place in Anglo-American letters, is that a poet’s foreign audiences, whether American, French, or German, may need to be subdivided into homosexual and heterosexual, each of which exercises some power over the production of the aesthetic norms that govern a particular translation.

Are there specifically homosexual or heterosexual ways to translate Cavafy in response to these different audiences? Blatant renderings such as George Khairallah’s would seem to argue the affirmative. In his collection we encounter things like “I wallow in the taverns and gay bars / of Beirut. I couldn’t take it / any longer in Alexandria. Tamides left me: / took off with the son of the Eparch to screw him / out of a villa on the Nile . . .”⁴⁴ or “He can’t be more than twenty-two. / And yet I’m convinced that just about that many / years ago I’d horned into that same body. / I’m neither dotty nor all that horny. / . . . I remember his every movement — and under his pants / can see once again the naked thighs, and things.”⁴⁵ But let us consider as well some more subtle renderings. For Cavafy’s *ὑψηλός και τέλεια ωραίος ἐφηβος* (from: “One of Their Gods”), is Valassopoulos’ “a tall young man of beauty,” in a version revised by Forster and T. E. Lawrence,⁴⁶ more suggestive to a homosexual audience than Dalven’s “a tall and perfectly handsome youth”? Probably it is, because “a youth” in Dalven is too formal to be evocative and “handsome” is too nonsexual (compare my own “adolescent boy,” which is closer to the Greek *ἐφηβος* than is either “young man” or “youth”; “teenager” would be even better). Kimon Friar, at all events, has striven (by his own confession) to include

sexual code-language in his versions, without going to the extremes of Khairallah. An example is his treatment of Cavafy's νέον πιο περικαλλή in "Days of 1909, '10, and '11." Keeley and Sherrard speak of "a boy / more exquisite," Mavrogordato of "a youth whose loveliness . . .," Dalven of "a more superb-looking youth," and Kolaïtis of "a youth more beautiful." Friar complains that Keeley and Sherrard's "exquisite" is inappropriate for someone who works in a blacksmith's shop, while Dalven's "superb-looking" is "too prosy" and Mavrogordato's "loveliness" too weak. Friar's own choice is "a youth more ravishing,"⁴⁷ partly, as he says, "in keeping with the heightening of tone in these lines, and partly because it is a word often used by persons of Cavafian temperament [that is, homosexuals] to describe handsome young men."⁴⁸ Another example comes from «Ἐν τῇ Ὁδῷ» ("In the Street," 1913; 1916) in which a young man wanders down the street after a homosexual assignation, ἀκόμη σαν υπνωτισμένος ἀπ' τὴν ἀνομιήν ἡδονή, / ἀπὸ τὴν πολὺ ἀνομιήν ἡδονήν που ἀπέκτησε. Keeley and Sherrard translate this: "as though still hypnotized by the illicit pleasure, / the very illicit pleasure he's just experienced." Dalven writes, "as if hypnotized still by the deviate sensual delight, / by the so deviate sensual delight he has enjoyed." Kolaïtis is freer with "as if still dazed from some illicit pleasuring, / the strong illicit pleasuring that he had made his own." Friar, noticing Cavafy's choice of the verb αποκτώ— one "acquires" or "obtains" sensuous delight, that is, buys it, instead of merely experiencing it, enjoying it, or making it one's own —, adds further nuances by rendering these lines: "As if still mesmerized by the lawless lust, / the gross and lawless lust he has procured."⁴⁹ Friar justifies "procure" as opposed to "acquire," "purchase," or "obtain" because he thinks that Cavafy "might have been delighted with the overtones of sexual illegality in English, as in 'procurer'"⁵⁰ There is no question but that Friar has directed this poem to "persons of Cavafian temperament." But there *is* a question regarding the aesthetic success of his version, especially since, in English, to procure lawless lust (or deviate sensual delight or illicit pleasure!) tends to mean to act as a pimp for someone else's purchased gratification, not to buy one's own.

My final example of a conscious attempt to achieve a voice that will speak in special ways to a homosexual audience concerns «Σοφιστῆς Ἀπερχόμενος ἐκ Συρίας» ("Sophist Leaving Syria," 1926), which gushes praise for a certain Mevis, Antioch's most expensive male prostitute. "No one . . . gets paid / what he gets paid," write Keeley and Sherrard for

Cavafy's *κανένα δεν πληρώνουν / τόσο ακριβά ως αυτόν*. Dalven has "To none of the other youth / . . . do they pay as high a price," Kolaïtis "not one is ever paid / as much as he commands," Khairallah "None of the boys . . . makes as much as he." But Friar cannot resist a sexual pun, so he translates, "Not one of all the other / young men . . . / comes so expensively"⁵¹ (emphasis added), referring, as he says, "both to purchase and practice!"⁵²

Is there a specifically homosexual way to translate Cavafy? Perhaps. Should he be translated in this way? That is a harder question to answer. It is true that Cavafy himself was aware of specialized audiences and the code-language of in-groups.⁵³ But this parochialism is not his essence. On the contrary, even though we might agree that "if Cavafy were not gay, he would not be Cavafy," we should not assume that Cavafy wrote primarily for an audience of initiates even in the poems of sensuous desire, any more than we should assume that these poems are narrowly autobiographical. It is owing to "critical perverseness," warns Margaret Alexiou, that we misinterpret the erotic poems "as a kind of diary of the poet's sexual anomaly." Neither the first-person poems nor "those with a specific date, such as 'Days of . . .,' [can] be related directly to Cavafy's life." "The world of Cavafy's poems is not 'real' in the literal sense," she continues. It is instead an imaginary world "created out of a unique perception of history, Hellenism, and eros."⁵⁴

Cavafy's own agenda would seem to be not so much to proclaim homosexual love either to initiates or noninitiates as "to save concrete moments of experience from history" by writing about them. The power he wields is the power of language, which persuades audiences that "seeming is reality and reality only seeming." His perception of Eros "cannot be separated from his perception of Poetry."⁵⁵ «*Εκόμισα εις την Τέχνην*» ("I've Brought to Art," 1921; 1921), for example, exults in Art's power to "draw the countenance of Beauty, / . . . to supplement life by blending impressions, blending days." Similarly, in «*Θάλασσα του Πρωιού*» ("Morning Sea," 1915), the poet gazes at nature's beauty—sea, sky, shoreline—but immediately subjectivizes the experience:

. . . and let me deceive myself into thinking that I saw them —
 (I really did see them one moment, when I first came)
 — that I am not seeing, even here, my fancies,
 my memories, my visions of voluptuousness.⁵⁶

It may be objected that even here the first-person narrative voice cannot be assumed to be Cavafy's. When we turn, however, to the poet's "Ars Poetica," an essay written in 1903 in English, we may be certain that in this instance the "I" is indeed Cavafy: "If even for one day, or one hour I felt like the man within 'Walls,' or like the man of 'Windows' the poem is based on a truth." He suggests here that "by the imagination (and by the help of incidents experienced . . .)" we can "create an experience." In this way, poetry overcomes what Cavafy terms the "philosophy of the absolute worthlessness of effort . . ."⁵⁷

Should Cavafy be translated in a specifically homosexual way? I think not. What preoccupied him was the modern perception of the reality of loss and, at the same time, the failure of traditional attempts to confront that reality, whether through a Christian faith in heavenly recompense or a Victorian faith in earthly progress. Homosexual love, being infertile, is a perfect emblem for loss. Focusing on such love in order to show that experience is neither false nor worthless just because it lacks fruition, and that process is more important than results, Cavafy elaborated a strategy that liberated him from his sexual impasse and also from the philosophy of the absolute worthlessness of effort. This strategy speaks to the needs of everyone. To translate Cavafy's poems specifically for a homosexual audience is to compromise their universal appeal.

Notes

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- 1 Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Alexander Kitroeff, et al. Statement. *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 10 (Spring-Summer, 1983): 5–6.
- 3 E. M. Forster. "The Poetry of C. P. Cavafy," in *Pharos and Pharillon* (Rich-

- mond, Surrey: The Hogarth Press, 1923), pp. 75–77. (Originally published in *The Egyptian Mail*, April 23, 1919.)
- 4 Forster 1923, p. 75.
 - 5 Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank, eds. *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*, vol. 1, 1879–1920, vol. 2, 1921–1970 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983, 1985).
 - 6 Forster, letter dated July 1, 1917. Published in Lago and Furbank 1983, 259–260, and in George Savvidis, “Cavafy and Forster,” *Times Literary Supplement*, November 14, 1975, p. 1356. Also cited in Jane Lagoudis Pinchin, *Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell, and Cavafy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 110–111.
 - 7 P. N. Furbank. *E. M. Forster: A Life*, Vol. 2 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), pp. 35–41, 49–51; Donald Watt, “Mohammed el Adl and A Passage to India,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 10: 311–326.
 - 8 Forster. *A Passage to India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1924), p. 257; Pinchin 1977, p. 143.
 - 9 Forster 1923, p. 78; Forster. *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1951), p. 250; Forster, “In the Rue Lepsius,” *The Listener*, July 5, 1951, pp. 28–29.
 - 10 G. D. Klingopoulos, “E. M. Forster’s Sense of History: and Cavafy. *Essays in Criticism* 8 (1958): 160–161.
 - 11 Forster 1923, pp. 77–78.
 - 12 Forster 1951, 250.
 - 13 Forster, *A Room with a View* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), pp. 100–101; Pinchin 1977, p. 90.
 - 14 Forster, *Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), pp. 23–24, 36, 21, 24, 25.
 - 15 George H. Thomson, “Introduction” in Forster 1971, p. xi.
 - 16 Forster 1917: letter to Cavafy from Alexandria, July 1, 1917. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 111; 111; published in Savvidis 1975 and in Lago and Furbank 1983, pp. 259–260.
 - 17 Forster 1917a: letter to R. C. Trevelyan from Alexandria, August 6, 1917. Published in H. H. Anniah Gowda, *A Garland for E. M. Forster* (Mysore, India: The Literary Half-Yearly, 1969), pp. 131–132 [letters from Forster to R. C. Trevelyan]; Lago and Furbank 1983, p. 266.
 - 18 Forster, “Dans la rue Lepsius,” *La Semaine égyptienne* [Cairo], numéro spécial consacré au poète Alexandrin C. P. Cavafy. April 1929, p. 18; Pinchin 1977, p. 103.
 - 19 Unpublished letter to Forster, Oct. 1, 1919. Forster archive at King’s College, Cambridge; cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 211.

- 20 Pinchin 1977, pp. 108, 147–148.
- 21 George Valassopoulo, unpublished letter to Forster, February 2, 1924. Forster archive at King's College, Cambridge. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 213. Cf. Furbank 1978, p. 115. Cf. Robert Liddell, *Cavafy: a Critical Biography* (London: Duckworth, 1974), p. 185. Yet Forster's letter of May 17, 1924 to Valassopoulo indicates that the latter did want the erotic poems published, as did Forster: "You ask about the erotic poems. But you've never sent me any! At least nothing that I recognised as erotic. I quite agree with you that they ought to be published, and I don't think that the British Public is as silly as it used to be on this point. It stands Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence, and I don't imagine Cavafy will be hotter stuff than they are" (Forster 1924b). But Forster presumably is referring to the public's acceptance only of heterosexual eroticism. He asks for a translation of «Μία Νύχτα» ("One Night"), a poem in which the gender of the narrator's partner is not specified, and would likely be assumed to be female.
- 22 Forster 1924a: letter to Cavafy from Weybridge, April 14, 1924. Forster archive at King's College, Cambridge. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 108; published in Lago and Furbank 1985, p. 54. Cf. Forster 1924b, letter to Valassopoulo from Weybridge, May 17, 1924; published in Lago and Furbank 1985, pp. 57–58.
- 23 Forster 1923a: unpublished letter to Cavafy from Weybridge, Aug. 1, 1923. Forster archive at King's College, Cambridge. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 108.
- 24 *Times Literary Supplement*, May 31, 1923, p. 369. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 124.
- 25 Forster 1923b: letter to Cavafy from Weybridge, July 5, 1923. Forster archive at King's College, Cambridge. Cited in Pinchin 1977, p. 124 (misdated July 6); published in Lago and Furbank 1985, p. 40.
- 26 Pinchin 1977, p. 108.
- 27 Forster 1924b
- 28 Furbank 1978, p. 138.
- 29 Pinchin 1977, pp. 107–108; Lago and Furbank 1985, pp. 54–55, 57–58, 60–61; Mary Lago, *Calendar of the Letters of E. M. Forster* (London: Mansell, 1985), p. 80 #E14.
- 30 *The Poems of C. P. Cavafy*, translated by John Mavrogordato. Introduction by Rex Warner (London: The Hogarth Press, 1951), p. 11.
- 31 C. M. Bowra, "Constantine Cavafy and the Greek Past, *The Creative Experiment* (London: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 29–60.
- 32 Forster, letter to George Savidis from Cambridge, July 25, 1958. Published in Savidis 1975 (misdated January 25) and in Lago and Furbank 1985, pp. 271–272.

- 33 Forster 1951, p. 246, 247. Compare Memas Kolaïtis's *Cavafy as I Knew Him* (Santa Barbara, CA: Kolaïtis Dictionaries, 1980), pp. 54, 80. Kolaïtis complains that Cavafy's ηδονική, in his famous division of his oeuvre into three areas, should not be translated "the erotic (or sensual)," as it is by Edmund Keeley in *Cavafy's Alexandria: Study of Myth in Progress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 186, but rather as "the hedonic (or sensuous)," where sensuous means "less an indulgence of appetite than an aesthetic gratification or delight."
- 34 Forster 1951, p. 250.
- 35 Forster, "C. P. Cavafy: 1863–1933," *Umbrella* 1 (Coventry 1958): 5–7.
- 36 Forster 1958.
- 37 *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*. Expanded Edition. Translated by Rae Dalven. Introduction by W. H. Auden (New York: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976). First published in 1961 by Harcourt, Brace & World. On Auden's influence, see Rae Dalven, "An Unsought-for-Calling (My Life as a Translator from the Modern Greek)," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 8 (1990), pp. 312–313.
- 38 Cavafy 1951, p. 8; Cavafy 1976, p. ix.
- 39 Cavafy 1976, p. ix.
- 40 Duane Michals, *Homage to Cavafy* (Danbury, NH: Addison House, 1978).
- 41 Εκπλήρωσις, literally "a filling up," carries with it both the negative connotation of the Septuagint's προς εκπλήρωσιν αμαρτιών (2 Maccabees 6.14), which is rendered in the Revised Standard Version as reaching "the full measure of their sins," and on the other hand the positive or at least neutral connotation of satisfying any sort of desire. Έκνομος, literally "outlawed," is forced into various new directions by "deviate," "lawless," and "illicit." Ηδονή can mean voluptuousness, to be sure, but also delight or joy without carnal or sensual (as opposed to sensuous) overtones. A further problem is the difference between έκνομη ηδονή, here, and the άνομη ηδονή of «Έν τή 'Οδω» ("In the Street," 1913; 1916), not to mention the παράνομη επιθυμία of «Η Προθήκη του Καπνοπωλείου» ("The Window of the Tobacco Shop," 1907; 1917). For a short examination, see Margaret Alexiou, "C. P. Cavafy's 'Dangerous' Drugs: Poetry, Eros and the Dissemination of Images," *The Text and its Margins*, edited by M. Alexiou and V. Lambropoulos (New York: Pella, 1985), pp. 172–173. Similarly, subtle differences exist, of course, among the English words "illegal," "illicit," "unlawful," "outlawed," and "illegitimate."
- 42 M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 7; Gregory Jusdanis,

- The *Poetics of Cavafy: Textuality, Eroticism, History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. xiii.
- 43 Jusdanis 1987, pp. xx, 53.
- 44 From «Μέσα στα Καπηλειά» (“In the Taverns,” 1926) in *Poems of Constantine Cavafy*, translated by George Khairallah (Beirut, 1979), p. 43. The corresponding Greek is Μέσα στα καπηλειά και τα χαμαιτυπεία / της Βηρυτού κυλιέμαι. Δεν ήθελα να μένω / στην Αλεξάνδρεια εγώ. Μ’ άφισεν ο Ταμιδης. / κ’ επήγε με του Επάρχου τον υιο για ν’ αποκτήσει / μια έπαυλι στον Νείλο . . .
- 45 From «Το Διπλανό Τραπέζι» (“The Next Table,” 1918; 1919), Khairallah p. 31. The corresponding Greek is Θάνατι μόλις είκοσι δυό ετών. / Κι όμως εγώ είμαι βέβαιος που, σχεδόν τα ίσα / χρόνια προτύτερα, το ίδιο σώμα αυτό το απήλαυσα. / Δεν είναι διόλου έξαψις ερωισμού. / . . . / γνωρίζω κάθε κίνησι που κάμνει — κι απ’ τα ρούχα κάτω / γυμνά τ’ αγαπημένα μέλη ξαναβλέπω.
- 46 Pinchin 1977, p. 147.
- 47 Kimon Friar, *Modern Greek Poetry* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 157.
- 48 Kimon Friar, “Cavafis and His Translators into English,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 5 (Spring, 1978), p. 36.
- 49 Friar 1973, p. 146.
- 50 Friar 1978, p. 26.
- 51 Friar 1973, p. 154.
- 52 Friar 1978, p. 27.
- 53 The best indication is «Τέμεθος, Αντιοχεύς· 400 μ.Χ.» (“Temethos, Antiochian, A.D. 400,” 1925), in which Temethos has written verses in praise of his lover but, fearing the overt revelation of homosexuality at a time when Christian puritanism is overcoming pagan license, invents a suitable mask for the lover. Yet “we the initiated,” continues Cavafy’s narrator in Keeley-Sherrard’s literal rendering of Cavafy’s εμεις οι μυημένοι, “know about whom the lines were written.” “The poetic field is expanded to include a few disciples who understand the ‘real’ theme of Temethos’s recently completed poem” (Gregory Jusdanis, *The Poetics of Cavafy: Textuality, Eroticism, History* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987], p. 43).
- 54 “Eroticism and Poetry,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 10 (Spring-Summer 1983), pp. 58, 64.
- 55 Alexiou and Lambropoulos 1985, pp. 12, 166, 191.
- 56 Translated by Valassopoulo in Forster 1923, p. 76.
- 57 Cavafy, “Ars Poetica,” *Ανέκδοτα πεζά κείμενα*, edited by Michalis Peridis (Athens: Fexis, 1963), pp. 56, 38, 40, 42; cf. Alexiou and Lambropoulos 1985, pp. 190–191.

Twenty-Four Cavafy Poems

TRANSLATED BY PETER BIEN

(employing rhyme when Cavafy employs rhyme)

Τείχη [Walls]

Without pity, without shame, without consideration
they built all around me great high walls.
And now I sit here in desperation.
I think of nothing else: this fate galls
my mind, for I had so many things to do outside.
Oh, when the walls were being built, how did I not take note?
But no sign or mark of builders was ever by me descried.
Imperceptibly, they excluded me from the world without.

Chè fece . . . il gran rifiuto

To certain people a day arrives
when they must voice the giant Nay
or giant Yea. Whoever has prepared within the Yea
reveals himself at once, and affirming it derives
increased esteem and self-assurance.
The denier does not repent. If asked anew
he would reaffirm the Nay; yet that true
Nay is all his life a hindrance.

Περιμένοντας τους Βαρβάρους [Awaiting the Barbarians]

What are we waiting for, gathered in the marketplace?

The barbarians are to arrive today.

Why is there such inactivity in the senate?

Why do the senators sit there and make no laws?

Because the barbarians will arrive today.

What laws can senators make any longer?

When the barbarians arrive, they will make the laws.

Why did our emperor arise so early in the morning
and seat himself at the city's greatest gate,
upon his throne, in state, wearing his crown?

Because the barbarians will arrive today.

The emperor is waiting to receive
their leader. He even prepared
a scroll to give him. On it he inscribed
for him many names and titles.

Why did our two consuls and the praetors come out today
in their scarlet embroidered togas?

Why have they donned bracelets with so many amethysts,
and rings with brilliantly polished emeralds?

Why, today, do they grasp costly walking sticks
superbly inlaid with silver and gold?

Because the barbarians will arrive today;
such things dazzle barbarians.

The worthy orators, why do they not come out as usual
to make their speeches and have their say?

Because the barbarians will arrive today;
barbarians find eloquence and orations boring.

Why should this uneasiness commence all at once,
this confusion? (How grave the faces have become.)

Why are the streets and squares rapidly emptying
and everyone returning home so thoughtfully?

Because it is nighttime and the barbarians have not come.
Several men arrived from the frontier;
they say there are no barbarians anymore.

What will become of us now without barbarians?
Those people were some sort of a solution.

Τρώες [Trojans]

In our efforts we are victims of misfortune;
in our efforts we are like the Trojans.
We succeed a bit, regain
our strength a bit, and begin
to gain courage and high hopes.

But something always comes out and stops us.
Achilles, in front of us in the trench,
comes out and frightens us with great shouting.

In our efforts we are like the Trojans.
We think we shall alter fate's ill will
by daring and resolve,
so we position ourselves outside to do battle.

But when the great crisis comes,
our resolve and daring perish.
Our spirit grows perturbed, paralyzed,
and we race around the walls
seeking to save ourselves by flight.

Yet our defeat is certain. High up
on the ramparts, the lamentations have already begun.
They are bewailing the memory and feeling of our days.
For us Priam and Hecuba are bitterly wailing.

Η Πόλις [The City]

You said, "I shall go to another land, I shall go to another place.
 Some other city will be found better than this one.
 My every effort is doomed a condemnation
 And my heart — like a corpse — is in a tomb.
 Will my mind stay in this decline for long?
 Wherever I cast my glance, wherever I stare,
 I see my life's black ruins here
 where I passed so many years in loss and waste."

New lands you will not find; you will find no other places.
 The city will follow you. You will patrol
 the same streets, in the same districts grow old,
 turn gray in these same houses.
 You will always arrive in this city. As for elsewhere, have no hopes:
 for you there is no vessel, road for you there is none.
 Here in this tiny corner, such harm you have done
 your life, the loss spreads over the earth's many faces.

Τελειωμένα [Finalities]

With fear and suspicion,
 agitated minds and frightened eyes,
 we desperately plan how
 to shun the certain danger
 that so horribly threatens us.
 Yet we are mistaken; this danger is not on its way.
 The messages were false
 (or else we did not hear them, or failed to understand them well).
 Another disaster, one we never imagined,
 suddenly, precipitously, overwhelms us
 and, unprepared — no time now — we are swept away.

Απολείπειν ο Θεός Αντώνιον [The God Abandons Antony]

When suddenly at midnight hour
an unseen troupe is heard to pass
with exquisite music and with cries —
do not uselessly lament your fortune
giving way at last, your projects that have failed,
your life's designs all turned delusions.
As if long ago prepared, as a man of courage,
bid farewell to her, to Alexandria that is leaving.
Above all, do not be deceived; do not say it was a
dream, that your hearing had been mistaken;
do not stoop to futile hopes like these.
As if long ago prepared, as a man of courage,
as it becomes you who deserved such a city,
draw firmly to the window
and with emotion, but not the
supplication and reproaches of a coward,
listen as a final pleasure to the sounds,
the exquisite instruments of the mystic troupe,
and bid farewell to her, the Alexandria you are losing.

Ιθάκη [Ithaca]

When you set your course for Ithaca,
 pray the route be long: filled with
 adventure, filled with learning.
 Do not fear the Cyclops,
 Laistrygonians, or angry Poseidon.
 Such you will never find along your way
 if your thoughts stay high, if choice emotions
 graze your body and your spirit.
 You will never meet the Cyclops,
 Laistrygonians, or angry Poseidon
 unless you carry them inside your mind,
 unless your mind stands them up before you.

Pray the route be long
 — that on many a summer morning
 (with what delight, what joy!) you enter
 harbors you have never glimpsed before
 — that you call at Phoenician bazaars
 to obtain the splendid items
 of amber and ebony, coral, mother-of-pearl,
 and luscious perfumes of every kind,
 as lavishly as you can: luscious perfumes.
 — that you go to many Egyptian towns
 to learn and learn from the instructed.

Always keep Ithaca in mind;
 arrival there is your destined end.
 But do not hasten the journey in the least.
 Better it continue many years
 and you anchor at the isle an old man,
 rich with all you have gained along the way,
 not expecting Ithaca to grant you riches.

Ithaca has granted you the lovely voyage;
 without her you would have never departed on your way.
 But now she has nothing else to grant you.

And although you find her squalid, Ithaca did not cheat you.
So wise have you become, so very experienced,
you already will have realized what they mean: these Ithacas.

Τὰ Επικίνδυνα [Dangerous Things]

Said Myrtias (a Syrian student
in Alexandria during the reign
Of Emperors Constans and Constantius,
partly pagan, partly Christianized):
“Fortified with theory and study,
I shall not fear my passions like a coward.
My body I shall devote to sensual gratification,
to dreamed-of enjoyments,
to the more daring erotic desires,
to the lewd impulses of my blood, without
the slightest fear, because when I will it
(and I shall have the power to will it,
fortified as I’ll be with theory and study)
at the crucial moments I shall rediscover
my spirit, as before, ascetic.”

Αλεξανδρινοί Βασιλείς [Alexandrian Kings]

The Alexandrians assembled
 to see Cleopatra's sons
 Caesarion and his younger brothers,
 Alexander and Ptolemy, who for the first
 time were being brought out to the Sports Ground,
 there to be proclaimed kings
 amid the soldiers' brilliant array.

Alexander they named king of
 Armenia, Media, and the Parthians.
 Ptolemy they named king of
 Cilicia, Syria, and Phoenicia.
 Caesarion stood more to the front,
 dressed in pinkish silk,
 a posy of hyacinths on his breast,
 his belt a double row of sapphires and amethysts,
 his sandals laced with white ribbons
 embroidered with rose-tinted pearls.
 Him they named greater than the little ones;
 him they named King of Kings.

The Alexandrians realized, of course,
 that all this was just talk and play-acting.

But the day was warm and poetic,
 the sky a pale blue,
 the Alexandrian Sports Ground
 a triumph of artistic achievement,
 the courtiers' grandeur extraordinary,
 Caesarion all grace and beauty
 (son of Cleopatra, blood of the Lagidae)
 hence the Alexandrians kept hurrying to the festival
 and they grew enthusiastic, and cheered
 in Greek, in Egyptian, and some in Hebrew,
 enchanted by the lovely ceremony—
 although they surely knew what it was worth,
 what empty words were these kingships.

Ομνύει [He Swears]

Every so often he swears to begin a better life.
But when night comes with its own suggestions,
with its compromises and promises;
when night comes with its own fleshly
vigor that craves and stalks — then, lost,
he returns again to the same lethal pleasure.

Όταν Διεγείρονται [As They Rise Excitedly]

Try to save them, poet
(those few that may be captured):
the visions of your erotic past.
Insert them half-hidden in your verses.
Try to grip them, poet,
as they rise excitedly into your mind
at night, or in noontime brightness.

Ηδονή [Sensual Pleasure]

My life's joy and salve: memory of the hours
when I discovered and prolonged sensual pleasure
the way I wanted it.
My life's personal joy and salve: when I avoided
every indulgence of routine sex.

Ἰασή Τάφος [Tomb of Iasis]

I, Iasis, lie here, the teenager renowned
 for beauty in this large city.
 Learned sages admired me, as did the unprofound,
 the common people; and I delighted equally
 in both. But since everyone considered me so much
 a Narcissus and a Hermes, abuses wore me out and killed me.
 Wayfarer, if an Alexandrian you will not condemn. You will
 know the rush
 of our life, what zeal it has, what consummate sensuality.

Νόησις [Understanding]

The years of my youth, my sensuous life —
 how clearly I see their meaning now.
 What pointless, futile repentances . . .
 But then I had no understanding of the meaning.
 In the debauchery of my early years
 my poetry's intent took form,
 my art's domain was planned.
 That is why the repentances were never constant.
 My decisions to restrain myself, to change —
 two weeks at the most they endured.

Πρέσβεις απ' την Αλεξάνδρεια [Envoys from Alexandria]

For ages at Delphi no gifts were seen so beautiful
as those the two brothers, the rival
Ptolemaic kings, had sent. But since the priests have taken them, now
they feel anxious about the oracle. How
most astutely to arrange which of the pair —
of such a pair — should be displeased, will require
their fullest expertise. So they meet nocturnally,
in secret, to debate the family affairs of the Lagidae.

But look, the envoys have come back. They take their leave,
are returning to Alexandria they say, and have no further need
of any oracle whatever. The priests hear them with pleasure
(they'll retain, you understand, the splendid treasure)
but are perplexed in the extreme,
not understanding what this sudden indifference can mean.
For grave news reached the envoys the day before; of this they're
unaware.
The oracle was given in Rome; the partition took place there.

Nα Μείνει [To Remain]

One in the morning it must have been,
or half past one.

In a corner of the wine shop,
behind the wooden partition.
Aside from the two of us, the entire store completely empty,
an oil lamp barely lighting it,
the sleep-deprived porter napping at the door.

No one would have seen us. But so aroused
had we already become,
we were unfit for precautions.

Our clothes came half-unbuttoned — they were few,
since a divine month of July was ablaze.

Delight of the flesh between
half-unbuttoned clothing;
flesh's swift denuding, whose image
has crossed six and twenty years
to remain now in this poem.

Τὸν Ἰβραίων (50 μ.Χ.) [Of the Jews (A.D. 50)]

Ianthes, son of Antony — painter and poet,
runner and discuss-thrower; as lovely as Endymion;
from a family friendly to the synagogue.

“My most precious days are those
when I leave the aesthetic pursuit,
abandon hard beautiful Hellenism
with its ruling commitment
to corrupt, consummately wrought white limbs,
and become the person I would always like to be:
son of the Jews, of the holy Jews.”

Exceedingly fervent his declaration:
“. . . of the Jews, of the holy Jews.”

However, he became nothing of the sort.
Alexandrian hedonism and art retained him
as their own devoted child.

Από την Σχολήν του Περιωνύμου φιλοσόφου
[From the School of the Renowned Philosopher]

He remained Ammonios Sakkas's pupil two years,
 but he grew weary both of philosophy and of Sakkas.

Afterwards he went into politics.

This, however, he abandoned. The governor was an idiot,
 his entourage solemn-looking official blockheads,
 their Greek thrice-barbarous, the wretches.

The church attracted his curiosity
 a little; he'd be baptized
 and be taken as a Christian. But he rapidly
 changed his mind. He would assuredly squabble
 with his parents, ostentatious pagans,
 and they — horrible thought — would promptly cut off
 his exceedingly generous allowance.

Nevertheless, he had to do something. He became the client
 of Alexandria's corrupt houses,
 every secret den of debauchery.

Fate proved kind to him in this regard,
 giving him an extremely good-looking face.
 He delighted in the divine benefaction.

His beauty would last at least
 ten more years. After that,
 perhaps he would go to Sakkas again.
 And if the old man had died in the meantime,
 he would go to some other philosopher or Sophist —
 someone suitable can always be found.

Or, finally, he might even return
 to politics, laudably recalling
 his family traditions,
 patriotic duty, and other such blather.

Θέατρον της Σιδώνος (400 μ.Χ.) [Theater of Sidon (A.D. 400)]

Son of an esteemed citizen, juvenile actor now and then I compose excessively daring verses always on the sly (obviously) from the eyes of those verses concerning exquisite to love that is sterile	above all a good-looking pleasing in diverse ways: in the Greek language that I distribute —to keep them, O ye gods! dun-clad promulgators of morals— self-gratification leading and disdained.
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Το 31 π.Χ. στην Αλεξάνδρεια [31 B.C. in Alexandria]

The peddler came from his tiny
village near the outskirts, still grimy
from the journey's dust. "Incense!" he cries
through the streets, and "Gum! Finest oil! Dyes
for the hair!" But with the great noisy herd
and the music and parades, how can he be heard?
The throngs push him, drag him, pound him with their fists;
and when he asks, confused, "What madness is this?"
he too is tossed the gigantic palace yarn—
that Antony, in Greece, has won.

Ἐν Δήμῳ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας [In a Township of Asia Minor]

The news about Actium, the outcome of the naval battle there,
was most assuredly unforeseen.

But we have no need to compose another document.

Only the name must be changed. There in the
concluding lines, instead of “Having delivered the Romans
from pernicious Octavian, that travesty of Caesar,”
now we’ll put, “Having delivered the Romans
from pernicious Antony.” The entire text fits perfectly.

“To the most illustrious vanquisher,
unsurpassed in every martial enterprise,
admirable for monumental civil achievement,
on whose behalf the township fervently prayed
‘May Antony be victorious’
[here, as we said, the change: ‘May Caesar be victorious’]
considering this victory to be Zeus’s finest gift
to the mighty protector of the Greeks,
the commiserative venerator of Hellenic customs,
cherished in every Hellenic land,
eminently designated for tangible commendation,
and for the extensive narration of his deeds
in the Greek language, both in verse and prose;
in the Greek language, the conveyer of fame . . .”
And so on and so forth. Everything fits beautifully.

Η Αρρώστια του Κλείτου [Kleitos's Illness]

Kleitos, an engaging young man
about twenty-three years old,
with superior upbringing and a rare knowledge of Greek—
Kleitos is gravely ill. The fever found him
that this year has decimated Alexandria.

The fever found him already in moral exhaustion,
chagrined because his partner, a young actor,
had ceased to love or want him.

He is gravely ill and his parents are trembling.

An agèd servant-woman who raised him,
she too is trembling for Kleitos's life.
In her frightful anxiety,
into her mind comes an idol that she
worshiped when a child, before she entered service there
in that home of conspicuous Christians and became a Christian herself.
Secretly she takes some flatbread, wine, and honey,
sets them before the idol, chants the supplication
— odds and ends, whatever bits she can recall — not realizing
(the fool) how little the black demon cares
whether a Christian is cured or not.

Ας Φρόντιζαν [They Ought to Have Taken Care]

I've been reduced practically to vagrancy and pauperdom.
 This fatal city, Antioch,
 has devoured all my funds:
 this fatal city with its extravagant life.

But I'm young and in perfect health,
 with an admirable mastery of Greek —
 I know Plato and Aristotle inside out;
 whichever orators, whichever poets, whatever else you mention.
 Of military matters I have some notion,
 and I'm on friendly terms with generals of the mercenary forces.
 I'm quite on the inside in administrative affairs as well.
 Last year I spent six months in Alexandria.
 I have some acquaintance (this is useful) with things there:
 Kakergetes's designs, his chicaneries, and so on and so forth.

Therefore I think myself qualified
 in the fullest to serve this country,
 my beloved homeland Syria.

In whatsoever job they put me, I shall strive
 to be of use to the nation. That is my intention.
 On the other hand, if they thwart me with their schemes
 (we know them, those smart alecks — need more be said?)
 if they thwart me, how can I be blamed?

I'll apply first to Zavinas,
 and if that moron fails to appreciate me
 I go to his rival, Grypos.
 And if that blockhead, if he too does not engage me,
 I go straight to Hyrkanos.

One of the three, at any rate, will want me.

And my conscience is clear
 regarding the indifference of my choice.
 All three harm Syria equally.

But, ruined man that I am, how can I be blamed?
Poor me, I'm just trying to make ends meet.
The almighty gods ought to have taken care
to create a fourth who was good.
To him, gladly, I would have gone.

MYRIVILIS

Life in the Tomb

I AM LECTURING on Stratis Myrivilis's wonderful novel *Life in the Tomb* tonight primarily because Speros Vryonis loves this work so very much. In a sense, this lecture is a response to that love. But I, too, love this novel; indeed when I first experienced the Greek original I vowed that I must be the one to translate it — just as I had done with Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. I regretted that second vow exceedingly after I embarked on the translation, first of all because the task was so extraordinarily difficult and second because after I had finished I needed to labor six entire years to find a publisher.

The job was difficult for many reasons. First of all, Myrivilis, like Kazantzakis, wrote at a time when Greek authors were still attempting to demonstrate that demotic could be a viable idiom for prose fiction (the demoticist crusade had already been won for poetry and drama). These authors favored lushness rather than sparseness. They employed a palette crowded with all possible colors — in other words, a huge vocabulary drawn from diverse regions — in order to impress upon readers demotic's descriptive power, and also to preserve words by incorporating them in literary texts lest they disappear owing to standardization and/or the dominance of Athenian demotic. Here, for example, is Myrivilis's high-spirited description of a flowing river:

Αλαλάζει με τις νερένιες του μούρες για την ασυγκράτητη λευτεριά του. Χουγιάζει προκλητικά και διαλαλεί μ' ένα μακρόσυρτο σοβαρό τραγούδι τη χαρά της κίνησης. . . . Όλα ένα γύρω αυτιάζονται σιωπηλά, ν' ακούσουν τη μακρινή βουή τού ευτυχισμένου ποταμιού. Αυτό γιουργιάρει λεύτερα μες στους κάμπους, κρεμάζει άσπρες, σερπετές γλώσσες από τους γκρεμούς κι αφήνει μπόι . . . Δρασκελά πέτρες που μουσκεύουν αιώνες, φουσκώνει σα σφουγγάρια τα πράσινα μουσκλια τους τα βελουδωτά. Αφρίζει γύρω στους γκρεμισμένους δεντρίσιους κορμούς, πηδάει

πάνωθι τους σα δυνατό ξεκαπίστρωτο πουλάρι, που χαιρείται την αγρι-
άδα του και χλιμιντράει με φουσκωμένα ρουθούνια προς τον ουρανό την
απόλυτη λευτεριά του. (σελ. 180)

It exults with aqueous snouts over the unrestrained freedom it enjoys. Squealing provocatively and whooping, it hawks the pleasures of movement, proclaims these delights in a serious, languidly protracted song. . . . All things in the vicinity prick up their ears and maintain their silence so that they may hear the happy river rumble in the distance as it charges freely across the plains, dangling serpentine tongues of elongating whiteness down the cliff-faces . . . It strides over stones that have been soaked for centuries and bloats their velvety green moss as though saturating a sponge, froths its way round fallen tree-trunks or overleaps them like a powerful unbridled foal that rejoices in its wildness and with dilated nostrils whinnies its absolute freedom to the heavens.

This is what is called, in the trade, “fine writing,” which nowadays really means overwriting, the opposite of the aesthetic fashion of a subsequent generation, perhaps best expressed by the poet Odysseas Elytis when he wrote, “Great art is found wherever man succeeds in recognizing himself and in expressing himself with fullness in the fewest possible words.”

The demoticist lushness of a Myrivilis or a Kazantzakis is great fun for a translator but also exceedingly difficult. In Myrivilis’s case the difficulty is compounded because the novel also employs Turkish, Bulgarian, Macedonian, nautical terms that are Genoese in origin and cannot be found in Greek dictionaries, Greek military terms such as the sergeant’s command *αναρτήσατε* (which the dictionary defines as “hang up,” as in “hang up one’s coat” but which in a military context apparently means “Sling arms,” whatever that means), and — worst of all — the international military jargon of World War I, a lot of which is French transmogrified into Greek. On top of all this is a passage in which Russian soldiers attempt to communicate with the Greeks via mangled ancient Greek, and another passage in which a French soldier recounts an adventure with a girl in his mispronounced Greek, concluding that he plans to marry her after the war “αν ο Τεός τέλει να είναι γκέρος.”

—Γερός! διορθώνουν όλοι μαζί γελώντας. Και του ξηγάνε τη διαφορά.

—Καταλαβαίνει [continues the Frenchman, instead of καταλαβαίνω]. Καταλαβαίνει. Σαν είναι γκέρος όκι είναι γκέρος. Σαν είναι γκερός όκι είναι γκέρος. Σ'ε σα. Αυτό ντουλειά όκι τέλει γκέρος, τέλει γκερός. Νες πα; (σελ. 337)

This I translated weakly as:

... [he plans to marry her] “eef ze goud Dieu want me eez — how you say? — ”pale and hardy.”¹

“Hale!” they corrected him, all shouting at once and guffawing. And they explained the difference.

“Me understood, me understood. Eef *on* eez pale *non* eez hale. Eef *on* eez hale *non* eez pale. *C'est ça*. Zees beezeness *non* want pale, want hale, *n'est-ce pas?*”

All in all, I somehow managed, with considerable help from informants. Luckily, my father-in-law had served as a quartermaster in World War I and remembered the lingo; I found speakers from Florina for whom Myrivilis's Macedonian idiom was child's play; Professor Vryonis helped with the Turkish; French and English military terminology of the time was easily accessible through World War I memoirs; and so forth.

So the translation reached completion. Then, as I said, came the struggle to convince someone to publish it. Here, if you'll allow me, I shall lament the general plight of authors who write in the so-called minor languages. There are fine novels in Indonesian, Turkish, Greek, Egyptian Arabic (as we discovered thanks to the 1988 Nobel Prize to Naguib Mahfouz), Finnish, Dutch, et cetera, et cetera, but who knows about them, who reads them in the so-called major languages, and especially in English, where translations are rarer than in German and French? In this case, publisher after publisher in both the United States and Great Britain judged the novel to be magnificent but unsaleable, for nobody had heard of Stratis Myrivilis and nobody, they judged, would be interested in the Salonica front of World War I, a part of the war that — again — nobody had heard of. Compare this situation with that of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a mediocre work in the opinion of most critics, lacking effective characterization, lacking psychological depth, but which has sold over thirty million copies in fifty languages.

The different fate of the two works derives not from aesthetic factors

but from political ones. And it is not simply that Remarque's book was written in a so-called major language and that it concerned the Western front in Flanders, action that everyone had heard of, but also that the book was issued in 1928 on the tenth anniversary of the armistice and was immediately attacked by rightwingers in Germany as defeatist, which of course made it a *succès de scandale*. Hitler burned the book publicly in 1933, Remarque was stripped of German citizenship in 1938, and so on.

Myrivilis was treated very differently, perhaps because his book is not defeatist even though it portrays warfare's horror and futility. On the contrary, the novel was an instantaneous success when published in book form in Athens in 1930 (it had been composed in part in the trenches in 1918, then expanded and brought out as a newspaper serialization in 1924). Athens "embraced me and welcomed me with all the honors accorded to a conqueror," Myrivilis has testified. True, the book was banned during the Metaxas dictatorship and the German occupation (1936–1944), but who outside of Greece would know about that or care? In Greece, *Life in the Tomb* has remained the most widely read account of the Great War and indeed, so far as I can tell, the most widely read novel, having sold over 80,000 copies, a formidable number for such a small population. It has also broken the translation barrier. An abridged version appeared in French in 1933 and the complete text has been translated into Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Italian, Czech, Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Turkish. Now the English translation is being assigned here and there in courses on World War I literature. With luck, Myrivilis's work may someday take its rightful place in the first rank of novels about the Great War.

I am assuming that most of you have not read *Life in the Tomb*—not yet, that is. Therefore, I probably should say what the novel is about. I'll try to describe its general qualities, to recount the plot very briefly, although it really does not have a plot (something I'll return to later), and to place it in its very interesting historical context.

The first thing to say about the book's general qualities is that they truly are numerous. The diversity of emotion and evocation is extreme: from the most lyrical passages describing the serene, meaningful life of peaceful Lesbos to the most brutal accounts of mutilation, agony, and meaninglessness in the trenches at the front—that is, "in the tomb." The book begins by conveying the protagonist's sense of unreality at being swept out of a secure, ordered, tranquil life on the island and deposited in an

incomprehensible horror completely beyond his control. Then the book conveys an equally vivid sense of how he and all these soldiers adjust to their new situation. They hardly know why they are fighting; they have next to no training. Yet the everyday indignities of the tomb (mice eating their food, a dead friend's severed, cigarette-stained fingers discovered in the dirt, the general's fatuity) combine with tiny, unexpected touches of grace (a lone flower blossoming inexplicitly among the sandbags, the aman-song of a Bulgarian floating to their ears from the enemy trench) to constitute for them a true life in the tomb: a new form of meaningfulness. The novel's miracle is its ability to convey such a diversity of emotion and evocation without either splitting in two or yoking the extremes together by violence.

It would be interesting to analyze precisely how this unity out of diversity is accomplished. I won't attempt that here, for such explorations are more appropriate for a scholarly paper delivered before an audience of professional academics. But I'll throw out just a single suggestion, if I may. Perhaps what allows Myrivilis to combine the mechanization of modern warfare with the humanism of island tranquility are figures of speech that make the latter infiltrate the former. Weapons are given nonmechanistic qualities. A certain type of shell is called a "puppy" owing to the barking sound it makes as it passes overhead (p. 141). The enemy cannons, when not firing, are "napping" (*λαγοκοιμούνται*, p. 176) as though they, too, were human. A machine gun fires away "loquaciously" (*φλύαρα*, p. 176). Everything—animate or inanimate—is given a personality in this way. A different sort of example is the despised general's "bay window." When this exalted personage laughs (always at his own jokes, of course), his paunch guffaws "animatedly in its own right"; indeed, it is "so brimming with satisfaction" that it continues "to chuckle independently for a few moments," even after its owner has ceased (p. 8). This imagistic infiltration of human qualities into objects that are disdained or feared serves, if my analysis is correct, to unify the book's double witness—of modern warfare's mechanized carnage, on the one hand, and of peace's natural creativity, on the other.

All the other general qualities fall under this double umbrella. The range is impressive: lyrical evocations of life's small joys; sarcastic exposure of hypocrisy or pomposity; evocation of the dignity of suffering; caricature; philosophic meditation; exquisite vignettes of character; descriptive

power. Regarding the last, I cited earlier the set piece on a flowing river when speaking about the exuberance of the author's idiom — the overwriting that may be explained by his desire to make demotic a viable vehicle for prose fiction. But many of the descriptions are excessive not in this way at all, but merely in their freshness. Consider the following on seasickness,

That . . . malady of the oceans that takes a man . . . with all his grand and courageous resolutions, and turns him into something as disgustingly soft and boneless as an octopus when the fisherman pounds it against some rocks to tenderize it. You are encased in loathing as in gooey spittle. The soul surrenders, the brain moans. Your joints grow slimy with sweat, your knees buckle, and your abdomen turns into a basketful of putrescent guts shifting first to one side then to the other. Afterwards comes the vomit . . . which flows out of all the orifices — mouth, nostrils, eyes — and befouls everything. (p. 22)

The novel is, as Peter Levi writes in the Introduction to the paperback edition, “a staggering piece of work” especially when one considers Myrivilis's total inexperience when he wrote it, his isolation from the mainstream of literary life in Athens (not to mention Western Europe), and the paucity of novelistic examples in Greek for him to emulate. In some respects — not all — his situation reminds one of Emily Brontë's: in both cases a totally unexpected achievement issued from a backwater, an achievement that can be explained only by invoking the term “genius.”

I said that I would recount the plot very briefly. This is easy, because really there is no plot, certainly not in the sense of an intricate web of personalities, motivations, and incidents that leads to a culmination. The hero of *Life in the Tomb* is a young intellectual from Lesbos, Anthony Kostoulas, who volunteers to serve in Greece's Archipelago Division, allied with the French, English, Serbians, and Italians (plus a brigade of Russians, some Chinese, Senegalese, and Indians) against the Bulgarians, Germans, Austrians, and Turks in what came to be known as the Salonica Campaign. So he leaves his idyllic existence in Lesbos, and the sweetheart he has been courting there, to descend into the trenches on the Serbian front near Monastir. Once there, he finds that war is chiefly boredom, punctuated by an occasional bombardment that slices people in half. There are patrols, of course, and little forays, and at one point he is

wounded and is cared for during his convalescence by a saintly family of Slavic Macedonians, “lovely openhearted creatures of a beneficent God” (p. 172). All this, starting with the troopship carrying him from Lesvos to Salonica, is described by Kostoulas in a series of letters to the girlfriend back home, letters that are never posted because of course they would be confiscated by the censors. He returns to the front, describes his fellow soldiers, the execution of deserters, and once again the boredom of inaction. But finally the great offensive is declared; they go over the top and Kostoulas is mistakenly incinerated by the flame-thrower of a French ally as both leap into a Bulgarian trench. The letters, however, are saved, all neatly stowed in his knapsack. Discovered later, they are offered to us by a fellow soldier in the Archipelago Division named Stratis Myrivilis. Such is the plot, or nonplot.

All of this is quite close to actual history. There really was an Archipelago Division and the final offensive described in the novel is the famous one against Skra di Legen on May 30, 1918. This opened the way to an even larger offensive in September in which the allies broke the enemy line entirely and advanced to Belgrade, a victory that “contributed in large measure to the decision of the German High Command to sue for peace” shortly thereafter (Clogg 1979, p. 111). But it is even more interesting to ask what was likely to have happened if the Allies had not come to Salonica. First, the Germans might have occupied the whole of the Balkan peninsula, including Greece, especially while the pro-German King Constantine was still in power. Second, the large numbers of Central Powers troops massed against the Entente on the Salonica front would have been freed to fight on the Western front, perhaps making a difference in the outcome there. Third, the Serbs would presumably have lost heart and perhaps have ceased to exist as a nation (Price 1918, pp. 4–5). It is needless to say that these events starting back in 1915 are still working themselves out today.

The historical context is, if anything, even more interesting when we narrow our focus to Greece itself. *Life in the Tomb* opens with Kostoulas’s account of the revolution that ousted King Constantine:

Commotion everywhere: waves of intoxicating uproar formed from a thousand disparate voices. The city’s church bells had gone insane. . . . Their clangs entered our bloodstreams, coalescing there as warm vapor. . . . Rivers of people kept pouring out of the lanes, which de-

scended to the harbor. Various lost and confused animals darted between their legs. . . . I do not know how it happened, but suddenly in the midst of the outlandish and spooky gathering . . . the thunder-clap broke. . . .

“Down with the king! We want war!”

The speaker on the platform had not shouted this. With his fervid voice and premeditated, operatic gestures, he had acted only as a midwife, delivering it expertly from the throats of the populace. . . .

“Down with the king!”

After we shouted it in this way for the first time, fists clenched at our thighs, teeth locked over each syllable as though biting each in turn, we all stood still for a moment. . . . Something was disintegrating; something had vanished in our hearts, leaving a sudden and disagreeable vacuum. . . .

I would hazard that a long line of venerable fathers . . . had come to a momentary halt. . . . These ancestors . . . had been living in our blood for centuries; they were our Byzantine heritage. . . . Amazed, they . . . banged their crutches down upon the paving-stones, and shouted:

“What? And the Great Idea, have you forgotten that? And our Emperor Constantine Palaiologos, turned to marble in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia . . . ? And our great hymn to the Virgin, the Protecting General [ο ύμνος της «Υπερμάχου Στρατηγού»? And the double-headed eagle stamped on your βασιλόπιτα? And the saying ‘One Constantine gave, another Constantine shall take’? And the prophecies of Agathangelos? Anathema! Anathema! Anathema!”

But we, intoxicated with our own unbounded audacity, . . . we shouted again, and then again, repeatedly, with obstinate, rabid fury: “Down! No more kings! Away with the whole filthy lot of them!” . . . Our Greek blood is redder than any royal purple. . . . The royalist bias . . . was fluttering now in a daze all around us, a bewildered bat which had lost its bearings . . . — a poor blind creature as ugly as it was wretched. And our victorious wrath pursued this bat for hours, lunging at it pitilessly, like a child with a broomstick. (pp. 11–14)

If you know your Greek history, you are aware of what happened. King Constantine, married to Kaiser Wilhelm II’s sister and trained at the

Prussian Military Academy, resolved to keep Greece from siding with the Entente, mostly because he believed that Germany would win. Eleftherios Venizelos, his prime minister, favored the Entente. When Bulgaria mobilized against Serbia in 1915, Venizelos felt that Greece was obliged to go to Serbia's assistance, while Constantine insisted on neutrality and opposed Venizelos's invitation to the British and French to send troops to Salonica. Venizelos won parliament's support, whereupon the king demanded his resignation, an act that the Venizelists considered unconstitutional. This situation developed into the so-called National Schism and the possibility of civil war when Venizelos set up a provisional government in Salonica in October 1916. But the king's extreme antagonism toward the Entente brought pressure from England and France for his abdication. In June 1917 he went into exile and was succeeded by his second son, Alexander, whereupon Venizelos returned to Athens, became once again prime minister of a united Greece, and committed nine divisions to the Salonica front.

The events of the novel take place against this sensational background, far more important for the average Greek than was the larger scene involving Britain and France against Germany. As you no doubt realize from the long quotation about revolution that I read a moment ago, the political situation poses by implication the ever-present question in Greek novels and Greek life: What is Greekness, *ελληνικότητα*? Is Greekness the Byzantine heritage of Church and anointed majesty? Is Greekness the republican, democratic heritage of Periclean Athens? Whatever the answer, is Greek nationalism, *εθνικισμός*, an unmitigated good? Kostoulas goes back and forth on this issue. At first, as we have seen, he is swept up by nationalistic and democratic fervor: "Our Greek blood is redder than any royal purple." But once exposed to the hypocrisy and complication of warfare's reality, he loses his faith in the war and in the colors he serves. As he says at one point, "I engaged in insurrection against our lawful government in order to honor the Greek promise to stand by the Serbs as allies. Now I am helping the Serbs to enslave the Greeks of Monastir. I came here in order to stand side by side with the French and to be killed with them for the sake of democratic ideals. When I arrived I found them thrashing their black troops and heard them greet us in the trenches with the cry '*chiens grecs*.' . . . The truly horrible thing," he continues, "is to wage war without believing in it, and in addition to lack an unbelief sufficiently strong to push you to the other extreme of denying war completely, come what may.

... I cry in anguish out of the depths of my stony dugout; I weep, I beg: 'Lord, Lord, help Thou mine unbelief!'" (p. 138) He realizes that, just as we now laugh at the Byzantines for stabbing each other because one half wanted the Son *homoousian* with the Father and the other half wanted him *homoiousian*, so future generations may laugh at us for killing each other because of nationalistic quarrels, and still other generations may laugh at those who one day will kill each other in pursuit of anti-nationalistic ideals. No matter what banner is flown, he concludes, warfare will be "just as disgraceful as always" (p. 137).

Yet Kostoulas continues to be haunted, despite himself, by Greek nationalism. Without faith himself, he nevertheless admires those, like his captain, whose faith is absolute. "First let's throw the king out of Athens," says the captain to Kostoulas, "along with all his German-loving friends — the dogs! Then let's throw the Bulgarians out of our Macedonia. After that we'll have plenty of leisure to ponder your ideas" (p. 137). Kostoulas reasons that "this man, even if he tramples over whole mountains of human corpses, will be as entirely innocent in God's eyes as a newborn babe. The same holds for all innocent criminals of every ideology, because faith can work such miracles."

"Lord, Lord, help Thou mine unbelief." When all is said and done, Kostoulas cannot function without a faith of some kind. The only one available to him (it is still too early for Bolshevism) is . . . ελληνικότητα. I said at the start that Myrivilis's novel is not defeatist, unlike Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Kostoulas, despite all his doubts, is a believer when he enters the final offensive, the one in which he is accidentally killed by his own ally. We could perhaps criticize Myrivilis for this, accusing him of cowardice in failing to pursue his pacifist agenda to the end. But I think that Kostoulas's turnabout is, on the contrary, aesthetically correct because it is true to the Greek character. In any case, on the eve of the offensive, Kostoulas confesses to his beloved:

I am terrified. I keep this terror hidden, however, in the depths of my heart. On the other hand, I know full well that my actions . . . will not be inferior to the actions of my comrades. . . . Once more I shall become the infantry sergeant with his share of responsibility and his national traditions to uphold. . . . It's something we Greeks call *filotimo* — "self-respect" — a force whose enormous strength has never

been sufficiently appreciated. Like the philosopher's stone, *filotimo* transubstantiates baser metals into gold. (p. 325)

You can see from the way I have discussed this novel that its plot is of very little importance. Myrivili's work is more a meditation than a story in the usual sense; its events are strung together like a *κομπολόι*, and most of the time it really doesn't matter which of these worry beads we finger first, for they can come in almost any order. What is most important is the string. This consists of attitudes rather than events; it consists of that constant infusion, referred to earlier, of humanistic elements into mechanistic ones; it consists of a protracted attempt to understand the hero's Greekness. *Life in the Tomb* can easily be criticized for its episodic, loose structure, just as it can be criticized for the sometimes exaggerated exuberance of its prose. It is not a novel in the mode of Hemingway, to be sure; nor is it a novel in the mode, say, of Jane Austen. So we need to worry a bit about this relative lack of plot, which perhaps has kept *Life in the Tomb* from being esteemed as much as it deserves to be in the West. What I am going to suggest is quite ironic in light of my earlier assertion that authors like Myrivili and Kazantzakis were attempting to demonstrate demotic's viability for prose fiction — that is, for a written idiom. The irony is that the lushness they favored, and their palette crowded with all possible colors, and their imagistic richness, and their tendency toward episodic rather than tightly knit plots are all — at least in the Greek context — characteristic of oral literature and poetry rather than of written literature and the novel, or, to use a kind of Greek shorthand, characteristic of *φωνή* as opposed to *γραφή*.

There has been a lot of interest in this difference lately among Greek critics. A particularly good study is the article by Dimitris Tziouvas called "Residual Orality and Belated Textuality in Greek Literature and Culture," published in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* in 1989. Tziouvas claims that Greece remains even today, and assuredly was throughout the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, a protoliterate society, that is, one in which oral attitudes and practices continue to compete with literate ones. *Γραφή* of course increased markedly in Greece throughout the nineteenth century, but paradoxically the result was the ever-stronger sanctioning of *φωνή*. This happened in three successive phases.

The first involved the ancestor-worship inculcated in modern Greeks

before, during, and after the Revolution by their own intellectuals and by Western philhellenes. Since the purpose was to stimulate liberation from the tyranny of the Ottomans, the figures most often invoked were Pericles, the later orators, and the dramatists, all connected with orality, as opposed to Plato, who, quite aside from his advocacy of authoritarian government, distrusted poets and himself exemplifies the increased weight of *γραφὴ* over *φωνή* that helped to end the great era of ancient Greek theater.

The second phase, stimulated by Fallmerayer's assertion in 1830 that modern Greeks are really Slavs rather than true descendants of the ancients, extended ancestor-worship to Byzantine and post-Byzantine Greeks, strengthening orality in new ways because the elements of continuity offered to counteract Fallmerayer's assumption of discontinuity were church ritual and folk song, each of which could be a civilizing force among a barely literate people.

The third phase occurred from roughly 1890 to 1920 with the flowering of demoticism, which viewed the Greek language as the indisputable evidence of Hellenic continuity. Was not that language in its various forms the vehicle of Pericles, Demosthenes, the New Testament, the church liturgy, the folk songs of the Byzantine and Turkish periods, the exemplary prose of Makriyannis? Was not Homer, in his day, a demotic bard just like the epic singers still circulating in Greek villages? In short, the uninterrupted orality of the uninterrupted Greek language was presented as the ultimate guarantee of the uninterrupted continuity of Greek culture, a culture necessarily favoring *φωνή* over *γραφὴ*.

What we see in this development is the emerging ideology of Greekness as a unified collectivity rooted in history, of course, but at the same time peculiarly ahistorical, transcendent, mythical. And all this, at least according to the more-or-less dominant interpretation, is precisely antithetical to the novelistic genre as that genre developed in the West. Pre-novelistic texts consider universals to be the real; the novel finds the real in particulars (Watt 1957, p. 12). The novel is atomistic, reflecting "that vast transformation of Western civilization since the Renaissance . . . which presents us, essentially, with a developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places" (Watt 1957, p. 31).

But Myrivilis's novel is not like this; nor are the novels of Kazantzakis. This may explain why they so often seem unsatisfying to Western readers.

Western critics acknowledge that Greece has produced world-class poets but they allow no Greek novelist to stand beside a Jane Austen, a Dickens, a Balzac, a Tolstoy, or a Dostoevski. Viewed from the Western perspective that expects the realistic, nineteenth-century conventions of plotting, causality, characterization, specificity of time and place, and elimination of linguistic ornateness, the Greek novel is defective.

I am suggesting that the cause is the bias toward orality in Greek culture. As Tziovas has written,

The art of literary composition in Greece has its roots in the oral mode of narration. . . . [T]he principal oral narrative genre is the epic. . . . If we consider climactic linearity to be the prime characteristic of plot, we can then argue that the epic does not have a plot. Examining the Greek novel from this point of view, we find that one of its features is the lack of plot. This is evident in many 20th century novels, for example . . . *I zoi en tafo* . . . which use[s] a mainly episodic structure rather than a tight and intricately organized plot. . . . [T]he episodic structure persists as a remnant of orality. (1989, pp. 327–328)

Regarding language, the so-called overwriting in Greek prose may be ascribed not so much to demoticism per se as to the primacy in Greece of oral expression, which, again to quote Tziovas, “is not compositive but, rather, accumulative, filled with epithets and redundancies[,] . . . voluble laxity, and not the tightly constructed intensity of textuality” (1989, p. 328).

Let me conclude with a further irony. It is this: The very factors, grouped under the rubric “orality” or φωνή, that from one perspective make *Life in the Tomb* less attractive to Western readers, from another perspective make the novel more attractive. This other perspective is what academics call “modernism,” a great movement in all the arts that began in the West, but not in Greece, soon after the turn of the twentieth century and flourished until mid-century. If I attempted to explain modernism adequately we would all be here for another hour. So let me say merely that among modernism’s characteristics are (1) a preference for fragmented methods of narration that tend to diffuse well-made plots, (2) an emphasis on the process of seeing as opposed to things seen, which in turn produces an emphasis on style (the way of telling) as opposed to what is told. The irony

is that both of these characteristics are found in *Life in the Tomb*, a work that surely is not consciously modernist but, as it seems, is accidentally so. Naïvely, without belonging to any school or even knowing what was happening in avant-garde circles in the West, Myrivilis in this novel responds to a crisis in meaning started by the Great War and then expanded by the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 (remember that the novel did not reach its definitive form until 1930) — responds in the modernist way, by being so obsessed with stylistic perfection that style itself becomes, in a sense, the novel's most important subject: the vibrant life that, despite everything, may persist anywhere, even in the tomb.

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April 17, 1992.

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The Accidental Modernism of Myrivilis's *Life In The Tomb*

MARGARET ALEXIOU argues that *Η δασκάλα με τα χρυσά μάτια* (1933; *The Schoolmistress with the Golden Eyes*) and *Η Παναγιά η γοργόνα* (1949; *The Mermaid Madonna*) do not work very well according to traditional standards of judgment, not because they are defective but because they should be criticized according to modernist standards, not realist ones.¹ But what about the first novel in Myrivilis's so-called "war trilogy"? This of course is *Η ζωή εν τάφω* (*Life in the Tomb*), drafted in the trenches of the Macedonian front in 1918, reworked in 1923 for a serial publication that no one read, and finally published in book form in 1930 in Athens, where it became an instantaneous success.

Like its two sequels, this novel does not conform to realist modes of characterization or plotting. Does this mean that it is a modernist work? I doubt that anyone would answer in the affirmative even though everyone realizes that this book does not work well if judged according to traditional nineteenth-century criteria. Mario Vitti's conclusion is typical of the attempts to resolve the quandary. "It is true that Myrivilis employs expressionistic naturalism," he asserts; "however . . . , the immediacy of his expression frees him from the decadent elements of the tradition that he follows."²

To my mind, this formulation is not entirely satisfactory. On the other hand, I cannot claim that *Η ζωή εν τάφω*—although a product, essentially, of the 1920s—is consciously modernist. What I do think, however, is that it became accidentally modernist because of its delayed publication.

Before we go further, we should try to define modernism. In its Western European manifestations in writers like Eliot, Joyce, Proust, Woolf, and Mann it involved at least five characteristics:

- 1 A challenge to the previous doctrine of imitation (mimesis) whereby the artist's role was said to be to hold a mirror up to nature. Modernism gradually shifted its emphasis away from nature — the object seen — to the process of seeing, the sensibility that registers nature. This meant an increasing interest in style: the way of telling.
- 2 Subjectivism. If the emphasis is on the see-er, then relativity of value becomes more apparent since each see-er sees differently.
- 3 Belief in value, in truth: now less focused on reality itself, more on great subjective norms discoverable through and behind reality rather than in it. In other words, modernism tends to be symbolistic, metaphorical.
- 4 The writer is considered now a private rather than a social animal, identifying no longer with established social orders, but with the value of his or her own sensibility (as manifested in style).
- 5 The break-up of well-made form. Modernist form tends to be fragmented, in keeping with the loss of faith in a rational, logical, ordered reality.

As for the cause of these changes in Western Europe, certainly industrialization played a part, and then, first and foremost, the most horrendous consequence of industrialization: World War I. Civilization had reached such an impasse that continuing manifestations of vitality needed to take new forms.

In Greece, the situation was somewhat different. Modernism began about two decades after its inauguration in the West, perhaps because Greece was not industrialized during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and because its great debacle was not World War I but rather the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922. Basically, however, Greece experienced a similar impasse followed by a similar surge of vitality expressed in nontraditional ways. In literary history, the impasse is usually called Karyotakism, after the pessimistic poet who took his own life in 1928, while the renewed vitality is associated with the generation of 1930. An external factor in the timing may have been the premiership of Eleftherios Venizelos from 1928 to 1932, a period when dialogue was not only possible but lively, especially between the philosophical idealists and the philosophical materialists, the

former soon to thrust up Seferis and Elytis as their poetic spokesmen, the latter Ritsos.

WHATEVER THE REASONS, we find in the 1930s a literary generation determined to overcome defeatism. To give a sense of what was happening just in prose, I shall quote the influential editor and critic Andreas Karandonis. Writing in 1936, he characterized the new novelists as

making contemporary the living elements of tradition; burying once and for all the conventional novel of manners and morals . . . ; deepening the meaning of society; confronting man without many prejudices, with a quite free and optimistic desire . . . , often with avant-garde imagination, and above all with that multifarious sap, the sense of life, that suffuses the most important prose works.³

The most talented of the new breed of prose writers described above was Stratis Myrivilis (1890–1969), even though he was older than the others by more than a decade. What brought Myrivilis into this picture was the delayed publication in 1930 of *Η ζωή εν τάφω*. As I argued earlier, we cannot call this novel consciously modernist. It was conceived in a different era, naïvely, without any desire on the author's part to launch a new literary mode, to overcome an impasse, or to renew Greek letters. The novel's form seems, if anything, backward-looking rather than forward-looking, since we associate epistolary narration with the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, not with avant-garde prose in the twentieth. Yet it does contain certain technical elements that, irrespective of what the author intended, caught the imagination of other Greek writers and critics who in the early 1930s were consciously attempting to become modern. As Myrivilis himself has testified, Athens “embraced me and welcomed me with all the honors accorded to a conquerer.”⁴ This is because *Η ζωή εν τάφω* somehow encouraged its readers to believe that a new approach was possible.

Before attempting to analyze the precise reasons for the novel's impact, I must emphasize once again that we are not dealing here with a fully fledged modernist work that suddenly burst upon the Athenian literary scene. Remembering the five characteristics of Western modernism listed earlier, we will note that several do not apply at all. Myrivilis, although criticizing jingoism in *Η ζωή εν τάφω*, still adheres to established social

norms, including chauvinistic ones. Moreover, his technique is neither symbolist nor metaphorical, seeking great subjective truths beyond reality; instead, he continues the naturalist tradition of older prose writers and in particular of Karkavitsas, in many ways his mentor. Nevertheless, the novel exhibits certain elements that, in the circumstances of 1930, reverberated in sympathy with the inchoate modernism of more consciously avant-garde writers.

Consider the novel's narrative technique, for example. The form is old-fashioned, a series of letters written by the hero in the trenches to his girlfriend in Mytilene. Yet in this case the return to previous epistolary practice paradoxically produces an avant-garde effect because the resulting narrative is loose and episodic, the very opposite of "well-made fictions" that reflect the optimistic assumption that reality is logical and indeed providential. Without intending to, Myrivilis employed a subjectivist narrative technique appropriate for a world in which meaning had been fragmented. As William Barrett has written, if we still believed that reality was a coherent system "we could demand of the artist that his form imitate this idea of reality, and give us . . . a picture of the world with no loose ends. But to make such a demand nowadays is worse than an impertinence."⁵ Myrivilis's novel was a revelation to Athenian intellectuals because it showed that literary form could adjust to a pessimistic concept of reality while, at the same time, literary sensibility could transcend pessimism and assert a new kind of value. His novel transcended the impasse in a way acceptable for that time because it refused to ignore or sentimentalize the breakup of value that everyone felt on account of World War I and especially the Asia Minor Disaster. Nowhere is the brutality, violence, hypocrisy, and futility both of war and of the political life that causes wars more honestly and straightforwardly displayed than in this novel, which records the bankruptcy of an era. Yet the novel is neither pessimistic nor despairing.

Consider its content. Despite all the horror, *H ζωή ἐν τάφῳ* is suffused with "that multifarious sap, the sense of life," emphasized by Karandonis as characterizing the modernists of the 1930s. If we ask precisely how this sense of life is conveyed, we can of course invoke the hero's famous encounter with a poppy in the trenches or his delicious evocations of Mytilene's enduring beauty. But elements such as these are not very good indications of modernism; what matters is technique as opposed to mere assertion. Interestingly, we do find in *H ζωή ἐν τάφῳ* the same technical conveyer of

the sense of life that appears so strikingly in the work of acknowledged giants of modernist prose such as Joyce, Proust, Lawrence, and Woolf—namely, style. Myrivilis's obsession with stylistic perfection is so pervasive that style itself becomes, in a sense, the novel's most important subject, drawing attention to itself to a degree characteristic of modernism and not just of what Mario Vitti terms "expressionistic naturalism." We must recognize the degree to which Myrivilis is positive not only in the nostalgic, lyrical sections of the novel: the marvelously evoked memories of the narrator's idyllic existence in Mytilene before the war. True, these sections are filled with a sense of life. But so, paradoxically, are the "naturalistic" descriptions of the tomb of wartime horror. They, too, are used by Myrivilis as materials out of which to create something stylistically perfect, thereby asserting a new subjective value that may even be termed modernistic.

This may be demonstrated by comparing one of Myrivilis's descriptions to a similar description by Karkavitsas, whom I cited earlier as Myrivilis's mentor in many ways. Myrivilis carries on Karkavitsas's "fine writing" (to our sensibilities, overwriting). In both of the quotations I have selected there is linguistic hyperbole. But Karkavitsas's description still looks primarily outward to the object being described, holding the mirror up to nature in the mimetic tradition, while Myrivilis's calls attention to the subjective sensibility that is engaging the objective world. Style here is no longer primarily a means to evoke a given subject; it itself has become the subject. Both passages describe a river. Here is Karkavitsas's, from Chapter 4 of *Ο ζητιάνος*, written and published in 1896:

Ο Πηνειός κατέβαινε από τα Τέμπε, ανάμεσα στις καταπράσινες και ισκιωμένες όχθες του, θολός και φουσκωμένος. Του Απριλομάρτη το ηλιοπύρι ετίναζε αρκετά επιβουλα τα φιλήματά του στα βαρυστοιβαγμένα χιόνια των βουνών και καταρράχτες αυτοσχέδιοι εκρεμνίζονταν από τα Χάσια και τον Πίνδο, από την Γκούρα και τον Όλυμπο, κ' εχύνονταν πολώνυμα παρακλάδια στην πολυδαίδαλη κοίτη του.

The Peneios, muddy and swelled, descended from the Vale of Tempe between green, shady banks. Quite treacherously, the warm sun of April and March shook out its kisses upon the deeply piled snow of the mountains, and impromptu waterfalls fell down from Hasia and Pindus, from Goura and Olympus. Multinamed offshoots poured into the river's multilabyrinthine bed.

And here is Myrivilis's, from Chapter 26 of *Η ζωή έν τάφω*, this time a river whose sounds are detected by those in the wartime trench:

Μακριά, η όλοσκότεινη λαγκαδιά με το μεγάλο Δραγόρα που δε φαίνεται. Μά σαν αφουγκραστείς πολύ, σαν ακουμπήσεις το μάγουλο στό προπέτασμα, τον ακούς να φωνάζει ροβολώντας θριαμβευτικά.

Αλαλάζει. με τις νερένιες του μούρες για την ασυγκράτητη λευτεριά του. Χουγιάζει προκλητικά και διαλαλεί μ> ένα μακρόσυρτο σοβαρό τραγούδι τη χαρά της κίνησης. Πάντα μ' έπιανε μελαγχολία να βλέπω σε στέρνες το νερό φυλακισμένο. Ο Θεός τόκαμε στοιχείο λύτερο για να μη σταματά νά τρέχει. Πέρα στο βάθος σηκώνεται η σκοτεινή πυραμίδα του Περιστεριού, αινιγματική και βουβή. Όλα ένα γύρω αυτιάζονται σιωπηλά, ν' ακούσουν τη μακρινή βουή του ευτυχισμένου ποταμιού. Αυτό γιουργιάρει λύτερα μες στους κάμπους, κρεμάζει άσπρες, σερπετές γλώσσες από τους γκρεμούς κι αφήνει μπόι, γελώντας από τα ψηλώματα. Δρασκελά πέτρες που μουσκεύουν αιώνες, φουσκώνει σα σφουγγάρια τά πράσινα μούσκλια τους τά βελουδωτά. Αφρίζει γύρω στους γκρεμισμένους δεντρίσιους κορμούς, πηδάει πάνωθέ τους σα δυνατό ξεκαπίστρωτο πουλάρι, που χαίρεται την αγριάδα του και χλιμιντράει μέ φουσκωμένα ρουθούνια προς τον ουρανό την απόλυτη λευτεριά του. (σελ. 180)

Far in the distance is the Dragor, invisible in its tenebrous gully. Though the river cannot be seen, if you listen very intently while resting your cheek upon the parapet, you can hear its triumphant huzzas as it cascades downstream and exults with aqueous snouts over the unrestrained freedom it enjoys. Squealing provocatively and whooping, it hawks the pleasures of movement, proclaims these delights in a serious, languidly protracted song. I always feel melancholy when I observe water imprisoned in tanks. God created it a free element and it should never stop running. Looming in the background, enigmatic and mute, is the Dove's murky pyramid. All things in the vicinity are pricking up their ears and maintaining their silence so that they may hear the Dragor rumble in the distance as the happy river charges freely across the plains, dangles serpentine tongues of elongating whiteness down the cliff-faces while guffawing at the tops, strides over stones which have been soaked for centuries and bloats their velvety green moss as though saturating a sponge, froths its way round fallen tree-trunks or overleaps them like a powerful unbridled

foal that rejoices in its wildness and with dilated nostrils whinnies its absolute freedom to the heavens. (Chapter 26)

In the second example, style is not just *élan*; it is (to some degree, at least) “ideology” — the assertion that subjective creativity is still possible in the modern world of industrial warfare. Most important is the fact that this ideology of stylistic perfection pervades the entire work, not just the nostalgic evocations of peacetime bliss in Mytilene. We must avoid the trap of dividing the novel into naturalistic descriptions of battle vs. poetic evocations of peacetime idylls. On the contrary, what is particularly striking about this work is Myrivilis’s ability to be simultaneously pessimistic and optimistic throughout via the combination of fragmented narrative technique and the pervasive devotion to style.

It was this — this simultaneous ability to acknowledge and transcend the contemporary impasse — that became so meaningful to Athenian intellectuals in 1930. Because of its delayed publication, the novel’s happy fate was to enter Greek literary life at the moment when Karyotakism was running its course but modernism had not yet clearly asserted itself. Demonstrating that a new attitude was possible, it helped crystallize the modernist sensibility that was to flower soon afterward, although in different ways, in the generation of 1930. Thus we can say that *Η ζωή έν τάρω*, although premodernist in conception because Myrivilis’s narrative technique and devotion to style proceeded from stimuli unrelated to modernism, nevertheless played an accidental role in the emergence of modernism in Greece.

Notes

- 1 Margaret Alexiou, “Women in Two Novels of Stratis Myrivilis: Myth, Fantasy and Violence.” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 5 (1989), pp. 117–118.
- 2 Mario Vitti, *Ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* (Αθήνα: Οδυσσέας, 1978), p. 332.
- 3 *Τα Νέα Γράμματα* 2 (1936), p. 162 ff. Cited in Mario Vitti, *Η γενιά του τριάντα: ιδεολογία και μορφή* (Αθήνα: Ερμής, 1977), p. 243.
- 4 *Το λογοτεχνικό τέταρτο* (Αθήνα: Κολλάρος, 1961), p. 189. Cited in Mario Vitti, *Η ιδεολογική λειτουργία της ελληνικής ηθογραφίας* (Αθήνα: Κέδρος, 1978), p. 106.
- 5 William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), p. 51.

OTHER GREEK SUBJECTS

Homer as Temporal and Spatial Geometrician

I

ONE OF THE REASONS for the Greeks' longevity was their mental capacity to arrange past, present, and future in an orderly pattern in defiance of time's fickleness — in other words, their capacity to geometricize time. In reviewing certain manifestations of what ought to be called Greek rationality, we should naturally begin with the earliest one, and the one that, because it was prior and also so universally honored, surely shaped the others. I am referring, of course, to the Homeric epics. Note that I cite both epics, not just the *Iliad* but the *Odyssey* as well. It is easy enough to demonstrate the geometrical mentality of each of these in isolation, but this would not be fair to the total phenomenon we call Homer because the Greeks developed and honored two epics, not one, and two that, taken together, show the Hellenic need for imposing patterns on experience. It is important, furthermore, to include the *Odyssey* in order to understand the relation between these epics and Greek colonization: the way in which poetry, as a centripetal counter-current, helped to maintain cohesiveness despite the centrifugal forces of trade and settlement. So I am going to refer to both epics. And I am going to treat Homer as the Greeks always treated him — namely, as their prime educator: prime in both senses of the world, “first,” and “most important.” For it was Homer, more than any other factor, that articulated for the Greeks a cultural cohesiveness and identity, and then helped them to preserve that identity.

I know that I am making big claims for poetry, or at least claims that will sound big to most Americans because poetry is so marginal in our technological society. The reading public for poetry in America has been reliably estimated at 5000 souls, and most of these are a coterie, very often

poets themselves, hardly a broad spectrum of our population. Things were different in Greece, and still are to some extent. Wondering how to make someone grasp this fact imaginatively, I conclude that perhaps numbers will help. Plato describes a poetic reciter holding 20,000 people enthralled with his rendition of Homer (*Ion*, 535d). Putting that into modern American life, the closest we get is 20,000 avid fans listening to Luciano Pavarotti singing Neapolitan barcaroles at Madison Square Garden. Could we imagine Richard Burton or John Gielgud reciting the story of Achilles chasing Hector around the walls, or of Odysseus tricking the Cyclops, to a full house in the Garden? Or, even more apropos, since poetic recitals were normally part of athletic contests at Delphi, Olympia, Corinth, Delos, Ephesus, and so forth (see Thucydides III.104), could we imagine 20,000 spectators at a Dartmouth football game entranced by the *Iliad* during half-time?

Somehow, we need to conceive of the extent to which poetry was a factor in these people's private and public lives. I will attempt to convey this by an anecdote from that dismal moment in Athenian history when the Spartans, under Lysander, after their victory at Aegospotami, entered Athens and forced the losers to agree to demolish the long walls. The Athenians delayed the execution of these provisions, and Lysander, claiming that the treaty of capitulation had been broken, brought the case to his allied council. One member proposed that the entire population of Athens should be sold into slavery, another that the city should be burned and converted to sheep-pasture. But when the council gathered for dinner they were entertained in the normal fashion by a poetic recitation, specifically the opening chorus of Euripides's play *Electra*. "At this," writes Plutarch, "the whole company was moved to pity and felt that it would be an outrage to destroy so glorious a city which had produced such great men" (Lysander, 15). This shows poetry moving from entertainment to policy, and from private to public life. These hardened soldiers and politicians of the Spartan confederacy were obviously capable of recognizing poetry as a Panhellenic treasure. In destroying Athens, the mother of the tragedians and perhaps even of the Homeric epics in their final form, the Spartans would have been destroying a portion of their own identity as Greeks. Although political cohesiveness had come apart in the Peloponnesian War, cultural cohesiveness had not; as a result, we still have the Parthenon, instead of a sheep-pasture.

Another anecdote shows the degree to which poetry had entered the lives of ordinary people. Our moment now — again dismal for the Athenians — is when the Syracusans had defeated the Athenian Expedition in 413 and had herded the surviving Athenian troops into the quarries, where they died of sickness or were sold as slaves. But a few, says Plutarch,

were rescued because of their knowledge of Euripides, for it seems that the Sicilians were more devoted to his poetry than any other Greeks living outside the mother country. Even the smallest fragments of his verses were learned from every stranger who set foot on the island, and they took delight in exchanging these quotations with one another. At any rate there is a tradition that many of the Athenian soldiers who returned home safely visited Euripides to thank him for their deliverance, which they owed to his poetry. Some . . . had been given their freedom in return for teaching their masters all they could remember of his works, while others . . . had been given food and water for reciting some of his lyrics (Nicias, 29).

This anecdote shows us not only the avidity with which the Sicilian Greeks wished to know poetry, but also the extent to which the common Athenians had memorized it. Let's return now to the poet whom I called the prime educator of the Greeks. The work of Euripides that saved Athens — the play *Electra* — is of course an elaboration of Homeric material. Indeed, we can consider Homer, as Simone Weil does, a necessary forerunner of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and the rest of Athenian tragedy. But Homer was also known directly, and his poetry served as a guide to conduct. This happened in frivolous and even sinister ways, as one might expect with a text that has been canonized, like our Bible. Homer easily degenerated into a kind of fundamentalist authority quoted out of context to justify almost anything. In other words, he was abused and it was this abuse that made Plato say disparagingly that too many Greeks believed that “a man ought to regulate the whole of his life by following this poet” (Republic, 606E). Homer could, for example, “educate” his devotees to murder, as he apparently did in the case of Octavian, the future Emperor Augustus, who, having defeated Antony and Cleopatra, wondered whether to kill the last surviving Ptolemy, the young Caesarion, and decided to do so after one of his advisers reminded him that Homer says in the *Iliad* (2.203–5), “Let there be one ruler, one king,” i.e., one Cae-

sar. Whatever one may think of this kind of “educational” effect, it does serve to show how extraordinarily well Homer was known by the Greeks themselves and by others, too, in post-classical times. But let’s not allow the frivolous and sinister applications of the Homeric epics to incline us, like Plato, against them. Let’s not allow sinister applications to obscure the beneficial role that they have played as educators in Greek culture. As I stressed earlier, they gave the Greeks coherence. Probably the easiest way to understand Homer’s power for cultural coherence is to think of emulation, a theme prevalent in the *Iliad* itself, so many of whose heroes want to live up to the example set by their fathers, and to create an example themselves that will be followed by their sons. But fathers and sons can also be expanded to mean cultural forebears and cultural descendants. Thus we find Alexander the Great, when he departed from Macedonia to conquer an empire in Asia, carrying the *Iliad* with him, not just because he learned military tactics from Homer (which he did), but because Achilles gave him standards of valor, intransigence, single-mindedness, and heroic aspiration. The ethos of emulation originally reflected in Homer, and taught to successive generations by the *Iliad*, suffused Greek culture. Thus it is almost a reflex for Thucydides to describe Pericles as “the most powerful both in action and debate (I. 139) because this is the combination of attributes required by Homer for his heroes, and therefore required by Thucydides for his. Furthermore, Thucydides’s juxtaposition of the Melian Dialogue (V. 84–116) with the Sicilian expedition (VI) shows him analyzing the latter in the Homeric way as folly following arrogance and preceding retribution. Nor are the examples solely military or political. One of the most revealing involves Socrates, a man as outwardly unlike Achilles as we could imagine. Yet Socrates quotes the *Iliad* and self-consciously models his behavior on Achilles’s behavior when, in court, he refuses to renounce his absolute devotion to the philosophic life even though this intransigence and single-mindedness will bring the death-sentence upon him (Plato, *Apology*, 28c–d¹).

Looked at another way, connection with Homer did not only encourage the Greeks to rise to a standard of excellence via emulation; it also gave them grandeur, which means that it put them in touch with something so fine that it transcended mere human excellence. We learn, for example,² that the sculptor Phidias, when asked what model he used for his statue

of Zeus at Olympia, he cited not a human model but the description in *Iliad* I. 527–30:

Thus spoke the son of Kronos and
nodded his dark brow and the
ambrosial locks flowed down from
the lord's immortal head, and he
made great Olympus quake.

This brings Homeric grandeur closer to us than we might have thought, since Phidias's great statue, which we know from written descriptions and from its depiction on coins, was a model for one of our own national treasures, Daniel Chester French's statue of Abraham Lincoln in Washington.

II

I repeat that Homer gave the Greeks coherence, identity, values—all of which helped their civilization to survive. But this we know after the fact. Going back to the beginning, can we possibly explain why the Homeric poems were preserved and honored so specially, as opposed to other poems? One of the most interesting of possible explanations depends on the two poems' complementarity consistent with what was happening in colonization, the great era for which was the eighth century B.C., precisely the time when the two Homeric poems seem to have reached their final form, the *Iliad* between 750 and 725 and the *Odyssey* slightly later, nearer 700. In this same century the poems were also widely disseminated and, lastly, they were presumably written down, the eighth century being the time when the Greeks regained literacy. I say that this is the time when the poems reached their final form. They must have coalesced out of a preexisting group of shorter, separate stories, all oral, dealing (a) with exploits during the Trojan War itself and (b) with the homecomings of various heroes after the war. The possible connection with colonization becomes more attractive when we realize that we not only have a coincidence of time, the eighth century, but also one of place. The two poems that were developed and preserved contain stories set precisely in the two areas of colonization, which we can call East Greece and West Greece. The *Iliad* reflects some conflict, or series of conflicts, east of Greece at the northern

end of the Anatolian coast. The *Odyssey*, although the place names are mythical (except for Ithaca) seems to involve Sicily and the boot of Italy.

What about the colonization of these areas? The East Aegean, or Ionia, had been settled by Hellenes around 1000 B.C. (we are not talking now about Bronze Age Mycenaeans). Thucydides (I.2) gives the reason as overpopulation in Attica. But eastward colonization continued in the eighth century. What happened then in East Greece was that older colonies began to set up their own colonies, especially in the Black Sea area. An example is the town of Cyzicus, established in 756 by the older colony of Miletus. In addition, people continued to go out from Greece itself. Byzantium was founded in 667 — the late seventh century — by colonists from Megara near Athens on a splendid site recommended by the Delphian oracle. The eighth century saw the start of a movement westward as well, the first colony being Pithecusae on the island of Ischia near the entrance to the Bay of Naples. The date is between 770 and 760. Thucydides (VI.3; cf. I.12) tells us that colonists from Euboea founded Naxos in Sicily in 734. Syracuse was settled the following year, 733. Soon afterward, towns were established on both coasts of the Straits of Messina, again on the advice of the oracle at Delphi. So we have two coincidences linking Homer and colonization: the temporal one of the eighth century and the spatial one of activity in both east and west, the precise settings of Homer's two epics.

No one suggests that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which deal with events traditionally dated to the early twelfth or even late thirteenth centuries, were composed in the eighth century. What is suggested is that they reached their final form in the period 750–700 and were especially treasured because, in their complementarity, they reflected the imaginative needs of a people who had a double frontier: a wild west, so to speak, and a wild east. These two poems were chosen above all others, and given their definitive form (according to the colonization theory) because they corresponded to the opposite yet complementary yearnings of the Greek spirit — the yearning, on the one hand, to persevere and succeed in expeditions to gain new territory, and the opposite yearning to arrive back home despite all the monsters and temptations along the way, to see again the smoke rising from one's chimney, and to be reunited with wife and family. In the *Odyssey* there is a wonderful moment in Book VIII where the hero listens to the recital of an epic about himself. He is moved to tears. Simi-

larly, the eighth- and seventh-century Greek colonists, whether in Cyzicus in the east or Syracuse in the west, listening to the *Odyssey*, when they heard Odysseus say things like “How many bitter seas men cross for hunger (XVII.478), must have been moved and fascinated because they were hearing about themselves, connecting themselves not only with the privations of the Homeric heroes but also with those heroes’ grandeur: the whole heightening of experience that we sense so miraculously in the Homeric poems.

So, precisely at the time when the great centrifugal force of trade — or, as Odysseus says, of hunger — was threatening the Greeks’ cohesiveness by pulling them outward in two directions, the Greek genius invented counterbalancing centripetal forces of various kinds. One was the oracle at Delphi, which began to function as a Panhellenic site rather than a local one in the eighth century. Another was the Olympic Games, founded in 776. And still another was the complementary epics we assign to Homer. Surely this double ability, to move outward to new experience and, conversely, to keep the center from flying apart, must account to some degree for the Greeks’ longevity. In this case, precisely at the time when they were scattering over great distances, at a time when the colonists could have lost their Greekness and been absorbed into other cultures, precisely at this time of centrifugal danger, the Greeks were banded together by a shared educator offering them a shared group of heroes to emulate. It was the two Homeric poems that, from the later eighth century onwards, gave the entire Greek world a common cultural tradition so strong that it could transcend, for example, the political differences between Sparta and Athens.

There is another factor in all this that I have cited only in passing: the renewal of literacy. Not only were these poems most likely in their present form and widely disseminated by the end of the eighth century, they were also most likely written down by that time.³ Indeed, it may have been the fact that they could be written down that accelerated their definitive formation. This is conjectural. What is not conjectural is that the Greeks had learned to write again by the mid-eighth century at the latest, and probably earlier. Moreover, they had learned now to write with an alphabet as opposed to the syllabic script used by the Mycenaeans. The alphabet they employed was borrowed from one already known by the Phoenicians. Sometime between 850 and 800, “we must imagine a hitherto illiterate Greek craftsman memorizing (. . .) the names of the Phoenician letters

(. . . and) learning to associate each name with a sign drawn by his Phoenician instructor.⁴ What a great moment! And not just for the Greeks but for us, too, because it was the Greek colonists in Italy who later taught the alphabet to the Etruscans, who taught it to the Romans, whose version we employ.

But the acquisition of the alphabet, great in itself, was even greater because of the uses to which the alphabet was put. The marvelous fact is that writing was not confined to a priestly class or to professional scribes but was taught to every Greek citizen. This means, in turn, that writing was not used merely for commercial lists, records of officials, and law codes, as it had been in earlier civilizations. In fact these uses came later, not at the start. What was written down at first was poetry. Of course, early writing was put to other uses as well, indeed to some that can hardly be called elevated. But even these tell us something very important about the Greeks of this time. A favorite was for homosexual advertisements on the inside bottom of drinking cups, usually on ones found near the gymnasium. You'd drink the contents and then discover a message like "Chromius is beautiful" (*Chromios kalos*) or "Phylakidas has a fantastic backside" (*Phylakidas katapygas*). Cups also bore name-tags such as "I am the cup of Aristokleidas; whoever steals me may he become blind." Or they bore the name of the potter. Another early use was for dedications. I like those at Delphi. You wrote your name on your gift to Apollo, hoping for the god's favor. We also have bits of pottery called "abecedarian" on which eighth- and seventh-century Greeks practiced their newly acquired alphabet. Lastly, we have inscriptions that proudly declare, "I wrote this all by myself" (*Autos egrapsen*).

I repeat that even these humble uses tell us something very important about the Greeks. What they tell us is that writing had infiltrated the private lives of ordinary people. So far as I know, this is the first time that this ever happened in Western culture, and the consequences were immense because it was this widespread, casual literacy not restricted to special castes of priests or scribes, nor limited to official uses, that accounts for the extraordinarily literate and literary culture that within the next three hundred years produced an Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, and Thucydides.

But we are supposed to be discussing Homeric poetry. The connection between literacy and poetry confirms what we already know — that po-

etry for the Greeks was part of the ordinary citizen's private life, and not restricted to an intellectual caste of professors and literati as in America today. Remember that recitations took place at athletic contests before huge crowds. Remember those poor Athenian soldiers held captive in the quarries at Syracuse, trading a few lines of Euripides for some food. So it's appropriate that the earliest extant Greek inscription, datable to about 740 B.C., is a line of poetry. Not Homer, alas, but at least a verse in Homer's meter, the dactylic hexameter, inscribed on a drinking cup produced in the Dipylon workshop at Athens, precisely where and when the Homeric poems were probably coalescing into their final form. Another cup, made sometime before 720, when it was buried with its owner, confirms the wide dissemination of the Homeric material. The cup was manufactured in Rhodes and exported to the colony of Pithecusae near Naples, founded, as we know, between 770 and 760. It was there that the cup was inscribed with two hexameters presumably in connection with some fraternity bash: "I am the fair drinking cup of Nestor, and whoever drinks from this cup will be immediately seized by the desires of fair-crowned Aphrodite." It wasn't enough, at this western frontier of the Greek world, simply to get drunk and then take a courtesan off to bed. You had to think of yourself as re-enacting the carousals of Homeric heroes. Neither the Dipylon cup nor the Nestor cup proves that Homer was written down by 740 or 720, but they do prove that he could have been, since the alphabet was definitely employed for poetry. And the Nestor cup out there in Pithecusae is a poignant although hardly elevated reminder of the cohesive, centripetal role played by the Homeric stories at the time of colonization.

III

What I want to explore in the remainder of this article is the further possibility that these two poems caught on because, on some deep level, they expressed the very mentality of the Greek people, a mentality that I have been calling obsessively rational because it imposed balanced patterns of sameness and difference, doing this both temporally and spatially. This is what each of the poems does, considered in isolation; furthermore, it is what both poems do when they are considered together. In complementary ways, they geometricize experience. And this, I believe, is on the deepest level the grandeur that Greeks felt themselves sharing when they

encountered Homer. It wasn't just their identification with the heightening of experience conveyed through the story of Odysseus or Achilles, and it certainly was not the obscene identification with the carousing of a Nestor. Most deeply, I think, it was the momentary sharing of a universal order. At bottom, the poet caught on because of his ability to geometrize time, overcoming unpredictability, and to geometricize space, overcoming formlessness — his ability in other words to assure the Greeks that the universe is rational. As Pollitt says in his discussion of the first principles of Greek art,⁵ it was this psychological need to discover “a permanent pattern (. . .) by which apparently chaotic experience could be measured and explained” that determined the balanced, measured, generic quality of Greek art. The “quest for order and clarity was [. . . for the Greeks] the search for a kind of spiritual ideal” — the ideal that we now call classical — and Homer's power ultimately lies in this spiritual area that defines the meaning of our lives in relation to the circumambient universe, showing that apparently chaotic experience is comprehensible.

I've suggested repeatedly that the Homeric patterning through sameness and antithesis can best be seen if we consider the two poems as a complementary pair. Let's examine the patterns of antithesis first. We have already noted that the *Iliad* reflects colonization eastward, the *Odyssey* colonization westward. Let's continue. The *Iliad* is philosophically morbid, concentrating on the brevity of life; the *Odyssey* is radiant with a love of life and is about survival, not death. The *Iliad* gives us an intransigent, inflexible hero who reflects the aristocratic ethos; the *Odyssey* gives an adaptable, pliable hero who reflects the give-and-take of democratic society. The *Iliad* is about heroic individualism defying and endangering the group; the *Odyssey* is about the restoration of the family and the state. The *Iliad* concerns land-power; the *Odyssey* is an epic of the sea. The *Iliad*'s basic movement is outward, away from home, centrifugal; the *Odyssey*'s is inward, toward home, centripetal. But the two epics also display patterns of sameness. Both, in their overall structure, show the restoration of civilized values after a period of chaos. Both, furthermore, do this in terms of family pieties, Odysseus reestablishing his relationship with father, wife, and son, Achilles honoring a father's request — Priam's — for the return of his son's body. Both impose temporal syntax upon experience, showing that insolence or arrogance is followed first by folly and then by retribution. This is one of the similar ways in which the two epics geometrize time.

The other, linked to the first, is our old friend emulation: the insistence that any moment of accomplishment derives from something previous and implies something subsequent. This is what Simone Weil means when she says in her pamphlet on the *Iliad* that the Greeks were “geometricians in their apprenticeship to virtue.”⁶ Lastly, both epics geometricize space by means of their own structure. In each case, the narrative flow is controlled by an extraordinary system of symmetries. Odysseus on his way home does not encounter a random series of monsters and temptations that any colonizer might meet “out west”; his adventures are chosen and arranged by a mind obsessed with spatial patterns, and their deepest message is therefore that all experience, even the most uncivilized, is part of a universal order. Calypso tempts Odysseus to be more than human, Circe to be less; Scylla challenges him with craggy, adamantine terror, Charybdis with a watery vortex; the Phaeacians need to be rejected because they are over-civilized, the Cyclops because they are under-civilized . . . , and so forth.

The spatial patterning of the *Iliad* is even more pervasive. The poem opens with a suppliant father, Chryses, being rejected, and it closes with another suppliant father, Priam, being accepted. And this thematic reversal is enhanced technically by a symmetrical inversion whereby the sequence of events in Book I is repeated in Book XXIV, but backwards.⁷ This is only one example of the *Iliad*'s thematic and technical structuring according to the geometrical patterning we call “ring composition.” When diagrammed, the poem resembles a Dipylon vase.

These, then, are some of the balanced patterns of sameness that we encounter when we consider the two epics together. I want to go back now and end with a pattern of difference, the difference between our two heroes, the one so intransigent and inflexible, the other so adaptable. Odysseus seems immediately admirable while Achilles presents a problem because he does not seem at all admirable; nor does he even seem rational throughout most of the poem. Why then should the *Iliad* have been the great textbook for the Greeks, even more so than the *Odyssey*? It is because of a factor I cited before: grandeur. Odysseus aspires to be quintessentially human, which means balanced and rational—all of which is fine. But Achilles aspires to be like a god, which is grand. True, he is guilty of excess, and thus suffers folly and retribution, just like the reprehensible suitors in the *Odyssey*. But theirs is an excess that places them beneath the human norm while his is one that places him above it.

Again, this is hard to understand because he seems merely peevish, adolescent, or unnecessarily brutal as, in defiance of the needs of the group, he acts according to a vision of supreme individual autonomy, first by refusing to fight — the famous sulking in the tent — and then, when he does fight, by doing so without the slightest “human” consideration. For the Greeks, though, this irrational excess, the attempt to perceive, and to live by, a law for oneself, was noble because it was seen as an attempt to escape relativity, unpredictability, formlessness — seen, most paradoxically, as rational: i.e. as the total subjection of one’s actions to an idea. Achilles strove to do this absolutely, uninfluenced by circumstance, which means that he strove to behave like a god. We don’t like Achilles because we have been indoctrinated by Christianity to see excessive self-esteem as sinful. But for the Greeks, “there seems to have been something almost divine in passionate self-esteem.” This is because a figure like Achilles taught the Greeks that, to some degree, they could “magnificently defy the limits imposed on our will by the fear of public opinion, of community action, even of death, [could] refuse to accept humiliation and [. . . could impose their] will no matter what the consequences to others and [themselves].”⁸ Remember that we are speaking now of an extremely deep level of virtue worthy of emulation, something very different from Achilles’s petulance in his tent or his brutality avenging Patroclus. We are speaking of the level of virtue — the integrity — perceived for example by Socrates when he cited the *Iliad* in connection with his own refusal to allow an absolute devotion to the philosophic life to become merely a relative devotion.

Achilles educated the Greeks in this way. But there is more. We must remember that he is not an immortal god; he is mortal. This fact enabled him to teach the Greeks, and us, that we must come to know ourselves: to know our limitations. Achilles is the first example of introspective self-consciousness in Western culture, the model for later examples. What he comes to know about himself is precisely that, in life, he cannot behave like a god — i.e., cannot follow an idea absolutely, unaffected by circumstance. He can neither control circumstance nor escape it. Indeed, it is his mistaken belief that he can do this that leads him to the folly of sending out Patroclus and brings upon him the retribution of Patroclus’s death. So Achilles, unable to achieve the absolute standard in life, wills it in death, establishing another heroic pattern that was to be expanded in new, non-militaristic ways not only by Socrates but also by Jesus of Nazareth.

Simone Weil is not irresponsible when she makes the startling statement that the Gospels “are the last marvelous expression of the Greek genius, as the *Iliad* is the first.”⁹

What the Greeks learned from all this is that aspiration beyond the human norm is noble. For them, this was one pole of the balanced pattern that is seen in the story of Solon and Croesus. Such aspiration brings bitter and predictable consequences according to the temporal geometry of a moral universe, yet these consequences, far from arguing against the original aspiration, make that aspiration all the more worthy of esteem and emulation because they show us a man willing to pay the price for what the Greeks considered the goal of every life: the ability to control that life through an idea.

In conclusion, I hope that I have shown some ways in which Homer is both the beginning and in some sense also the culmination of Greek rationality. Many marvels were to come later—the Parthenon, sculpture, drama, the patterning seen in Thucydides—but these do not surpass Homer, they merely extend his mentality to other media. It is his mentality, his compulsive rationalism, that is most important. Much ink has been spilled on the question of Homer’s historicity: Did the Trojan War really take place? Did Helen ever reach Troy? Were there real people corresponding to Nestor, Odysseus, Agamemnon, and the rest? Is Troy the actual site? We shall never settle these questions, nor do they matter. What matters, I repeat, is Homer’s mentality: *that* is what is historical, since it reflects how the Greek people had learned to think by the mid-eighth century B.C.

Homer, the supreme temporal and spatial geometrician, was the Greeks’ prime educator, articulating their national identity and then helping to preserve that identity against the forces of cultural disintegration. Surely he is a major explanation for the miracle of Greek survival over so many centuries, a survival that has bequeathed so much to us.

Notes

- 1 Cited by Bernard M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 58, 175.
- 2 J. J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 99.

- 3 Cedric Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 78.
- 4 J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), p. 295.
- 5 Pollitt, p. 4.
- 6 Simone Weil, *The ILLAD or The Poem of Force* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet 91, 1956), p. 15.
- 7 From the chart in Whitman, p. 260.
In Book I, the sequence is:
 1. Plague, funerals, laments
 2. Quarrel; seizure of Briseis
 3. Thetis and Achilles: appeal to Zeus
 4. Journey to Chrysa bringing gifts
 5. Thetis and Zeus: adoption of Achilles's cause
 6. Quarrel on Olympus
- In Book XXIV, these go 6, 5, 3, 4, 2, 1:
 1. Quarrel on Olympus (6)
 2. Thetis and Zeus: modification of hero's cause (5)
 3. Thetis and Achilles: message from Zeus (3)
 4. Journey of Priam bringing gifts (4)
 5. Reconciliation and restitution of Hector's body, balancing the seizure of Briseis (2)
 6. Funeral of Hector; laments (1)
- 8 Bernard Knox, p. 57.
- 9 Weil, p. 34.

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Reading Notes for Homer's *Iliad*

These notes are meant to supplement the excellent treatment of the poem in Simone Weil's pamphlet, "The *Iliad* or The Poem of Force" (Pendle Hill Publications).

Page references below are to the translation by Robert Fitzgerald, Anchor Books. Book and line references will enable to reader to use the Lattimore translation if preferred.

BOOK ONE. Openings are of course extremely important. What Homer does here is what any good novelist would do: he starts excitingly, with a dramatic incident. This means that he enters the story in the middle; the past history (how the Trojan War began and what its progress has been so far) will be given in bits and pieces later. For now, we witness an argument that sets up the major fact in the subsequent plot—namely, Achilles' withdrawal from the fight. We also get to know many of the main characters (though only on the Greek side, so far). You should ask yourselves what you think of Agamemnon. What is his personality like, is he an effective general, etc.? Remember that he corresponds to Dwight Eisenhower in World War II, being the overall commander of a host of allies. Ask similar questions about Achilles: what principles drive him, what is his personality like, is he childish, do you admire him? These are the two main characters, but Nestor and Odysseus are also worth our attention, as are the gods at the end. For example, do you see any parallelism between the personalities of various immortal gods and the personalities of the mortals on earth?

This book, as befits an opening, also introduces major themes. The theme of honor comes in strongly on p. 23 (I.352–54). Note that honor is based on mortality; since we are going to die, we want to feel that our lives are sufficiently worthwhile so that we will be remembered. Honor, for the Greeks, means a *reputation* that a man will be proud to leave to his sons

in particular and to the community in general. But the most pervasive theme of Book One is chaos versus order. What we see in the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon, quite aside from the revelation of two very vivid personalities, is the breakdown of the orderly bonds that hold a community together: respect for elders, respect for priests, the love of man for woman, respect for another's property. Though we don't know this yet (since it belongs to the past history), the entire Trojan War began because of a breakdown in the laws of hospitality (because Paris stole Menelaos' wife Helen when Paris was a guest in Menelaos' palace — see page 60 [III.354]). In sum, Book One shows us the heroic world disintegrating. Things will get worse in heaven as well as on earth until order is restored at the very end of the poem.

BOOK TWO. Ever so skillfully, Homer begins now to weave in the antecedent action while still continuing the present excitement. In the midst of Agamemnon's defeatist speech, we learn that the Greeks have already been besieging Troy for nine years (p. 39; II.134). In Odysseus' speech we hear about the flotilla's original departure from Aulis (p. 45; II.303) and about the prophecy that the city will fall in the tenth year (p. 46; II.329). (Aulis is where Agamemnon had to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia in order to secure favorable winds.) The great muster of the army serves as an excuse for Homer to catalogue the ships that originally sailed (pp. 51–60; II.487–759). Don't overlook Philoktetes (pp.56–59; II.716ff.), the great archer, not a character in the *Iliad* proper but very much one in the subsequent action, and the subject of Sophocles' fascinating play.

Book Two also introduces us to the prime warrior on the other side, Hektor, and to the Trojan allies.

BOOKS THREE TO SEVEN. These are a flashback to the antecedent action. All in all, they lead to the condition of stalemate that now pertains, with the Achaeans having gained advantage at one point, only to give way before the Trojans. The section ends appropriately with a truce enabling both sides to burn their dead (pp. 174–75; VII.375ff.). More importantly, these books play a thematic role in that they establish certain norms against which we shall later be able to measure Achilles. They do this by bringing models of both cowardice and heroism on stage. Pandarus (from whom we get our word “pander”) is the type of the slinky anti-hero, as he

wounds Menelaos (pp. 91–92; IV.112ff.) with an arrow shot from behind others' shields, instead of facing him like a man. Another anti-hero is Paris (also an archer — see Diomedes' scorn on p. 263; XI.384–87). In Book Six (pp. 151–52; VI.325–31) he is rebuked by Hektor for uxoriousness. (Paris is also known as Alexandros; don't let this confuse you.) In this same vein, these books emphasize the anti-heroic trait of *hubris*, which means arrogant behavior against the gods (already seen, of course, in Agamemnon). Interestingly, here this trait is seen in the otherwise impeccable hero Diomedes, in Book Five, when he dares to vie with Apollo and is vigorously rebuked (p. 123; V.440–42). The moral is clear: bravery is fine, but for a human to aspire to absolute bravery is an insult to the gods. On the other hand, Diomedes is used by Homer chiefly to introduce positive attributes. The curious encounter with Glaukos in Book Six, for example, is a pretext for allowing Glaukos to stress the theme of emulation in his long, improbable speech (pp. 145–48; VI.144–211). This strikes home for Diomedes in particular, who was earlier accused (p. 100; IV.368–73) of not living up to his father's reputation for bravery. Another side to this same motif of family connection comes next: since Diomedes' grandfather had entertained Glaukos' grandfather, Diomedes and Glaukos cannot fight each other — the laws of family connection, and of hospitality, are too strong. Remember the theme of family when we come to Book Twenty-Four.

The great exemplum of heroism in these books is Hektor. The scene between him and his wife Andromakhe in Book Six (p. 155; VI.39off.), probably the most famous in the *Iliad*, is celebrated for its human tenderness, but at the same time it serves to coalesce the various strands that, twined together, make a man heroic. These are: (a) honor, i.e. the need for esteem granted by others; (b) the family nexus by which son emulates father and hopes that his son, in turn, will emulate him; (c) a communal dimension: Hektor is the protector not only of his family but of his city, and by extension of civilization (the root meaning of the word “civilized” is “living in a city”). Summed up, heroism involves devotion to a code that take precedence over everything else. Note, for example, Hektor's knowledge that both he and Troy are doomed. This is irrelevant for a true hero. If we think of Hektor now as the mean between Diomedes in his moment of hubris, on the one side, and Pandaros/Paris on the other side, we see that the virtue of heroism, for the Greeks, like all other virtues, involved a mid-point between excess and defect: in this case the excess

of rashness and the defect of cowardice. But even Hektor is not perfect (i.e. he is very much a human, not a god). In Book Seven, Homer has him make a noble speech about burial codes and respect for the body of a slain enemy (p. 164; VII.67–91). Homer does this in order to set up Hektor’s disrespect for Patroklos’ corpse in Book Seventeen (p. 411; XVII.125–27), where our otherwise perfect hero wants “to behead it / and give the trunk to Trojan dogs.” What Homer needs to do, of course, after having offered Hektor as a model, is to show enough of his negative side to make us feel that he deserves to be slaughtered by Achilles. But we are getting ahead of ourselves! What is important at this point is Homer’s refusal to present cardboard heroes or villains. His poem presents the assumptions of its culture, but also *questions those assumptions*. We shall see this especially in Book Nine.

BOOK EIGHT. We’re back now in the tenth year, the time of the current action. Book Eight serves as a transition to the all-important Book Nine. In Book Seven, Nestor had suggested the strategy of building a stockade consisting of moat and wall (p. 172; VII.339–43). Now, in Book Eight, we hear Hektor’s plan of getting beyond these defenses and setting fire to the Achaeans’ ships (p. 187; VIII.174–79). This situation dominates the action until the end of Book Sixteen, when Patroklos is killed by Hektor (p. 402; XVI.816ff.). Zeus of course knows everything in advance, and gives a forecast on p. 196 (VIII.469–83). Be sure to note, in this book, Agamemnon’s interpretation of his own stupidity in Book One: he blames Zeus for blinding him “in disastrous folly” (p. 189; VIII.236–37) — Fitzgerald’s translation of the Greek word meaning a delusion that temporarily destroys one’s judgment, engendering bad consequences. Also noteworthy is the marvelous simile of the poppy (p. 191; VIII.305–07).

BOOK NINE. This episode, the so-called “Embassy,” repays close examination. Agamemnon is now willing to placate Achilles. He even admits his own responsibility for his *atê*, translated now as “blind errors” (p. 207; IX.115–16). But let us not be deluded by his excessive offer of reparation. The offer involves no humiliation whatsoever; on the contrary, the gifts only confirm Agamemnon’s power. His true feelings come out in the speech’s coda (p. 208; IX.160–61), a section prudently omitted by wily Odysseus when he repeats the speech by heart: “Let him [Achilles] be

subdued!" Let him "bow to me." On p. 210 (IX.186ff.) we see the ambassadors in Achilles' tent. The necessary rituals of hospitality provide a short interval, after which (p. 210; IX.225ff.) Odysseus appeals first to Achilles' self-interest (surely a weak argument), then penetrates more deeply by appealing to Achilles' respect for his father, then lists the gifts proposed by Agamemnon (omitting the coda), and finally calls upon Achilles to pity the rest of the army. Achilles answers insolently but with total insight into Agamemnon's hypocrisy (p. 213; IX.312–13). In a word, he refuses to be bought (p. 215; IX 385–86). Most important and surprising, he goes on to question the entire heroic ideal *in its external form*, declaring that "no riches can compare with being alive" (p. 216; IX.401), in contradistinction to the principle — announced on p. 23 (I.352) — that a short life is redeemed by honor (riches would be an external mark of honor for a Homeric hero). At this point, Achilles is the antithesis of the epic hero. We'll have to conclude either that he doesn't mean what he is saying, or that Homer is — in this startling way — criticizing the outward, mechanistic abuse of a cherished principle. In any case, Achilles at this point is defeatist, if not treasonous. Furious, he announces that he will take his men and sail off for home on the next day (pp. 214–15; IX.356–61), leaving the others to their fate.

Phoinix, his aged tutor, must now rise to the occasion lest the negotiations break off at this point and the embassy end as a fiasco. He begins by establishing his credentials, which means that he appeals to the family nexus, reminding Achilles that they have had a kind of son-father relationship. Next, he turns to the (by now familiar) subject of *atê*, translated this time as "passionate folly" (p. 219; IX.505). In a neat little allegory, he speaks of the need for requests for forgiveness (Greek *litaí*, here translated rather weakly as "prayers" and allegorized as "daughters of Zeus"). Such requests are difficult and apparently weak, yet in the long run they can be curative, and the alternative is to have one's arrogance rooted out by extreme suffering — a prediction of what is going to happen to Achilles. The moral is repeated on the top of p. 220 (IX. 523–26) in a typically Greek way: anger comes to us all and is an acceptable human trait, *provided that it is not implacable*. In other words, a range of emotion is human, but the hubris that extends any emotion to an absolute degree is an affront to the gods. Phoinix, long-winded like so many older people, now reinforces all this with an interminable story about Meleagros, an obvious parallel to

Achilles. He ends (p. 222; IX.600–03) with a direct appeal to Achilles to relent, holding out “honor” as his prize.

Achilles’ answer is curt. He can live without this kind of honor (the external variety); he will be honored inwardly by his conviction that his grudge against Agamemnon is just. On the other hand, something has happened: it appears that Phoinix has penetrated, because Achilles now retreats from his earlier decision to sail off on the morrow. Instead, he leaves the matter open, announcing that he will decide in the morning (p. 223; IX.618).

Aias (= Ajax) speaks next, bluntly, sarcastically—and perfectly in character. He appeals to the principles of friendship, hospitality, and community. Achilles hears him. Though his pride keeps him from repenting outwardly, he in effect does relent . . . up to a point. He will not sail off, after all, but neither will he fight—not until Hektor crosses the moat and wall and begins to burn the ships, i.e. not until Agamemnon has learned a good lesson!

Odysseus, crafty as always, does not report this last position when he returns to headquarters (p. 225; IX.682ff.). The book ends with uncomplicated Diomedes, who possesses all the virtues of a hero who doesn’t think too much, rallying the general staff before defeatist, complicated Agamemnon can sap their vitality. Homer wants to prepare us for the vigorous battles that follow. In summary, we can say that Book Nine shows the heroic code as problematic. Individual integrity is sometimes at odds with communal needs (a theme repeated in Sophocles’ play *Philoctetes*); “honor from Zeus” may be different from external honor according to an established code. Though Achilles may still seem truculent and childish, he is at the same time totally honest whereas others (Odysseus in particular) engage in “policy” in order to achieve victory. The remainder of the epic works out these problems, or, rather, shows that they cannot be worked out except tragically. Achilles, for all his virtues, must be blamed for trying to live according to an *individual* code of total integrity in a world that has communal demands. He wishes to be absolute in a human world that is necessarily contingent. (Only the gods can be absolute.) The result is tragedy.

BOOK TEN, the so-called “Doloneia,” can be skipped even though it’s a rather exciting account of Diomedes’ and Odysseus’ escapade behind

enemy lines. If the book (which may be a later addition) has a serious purpose, it is to introduce an action that buoys the Greeks' spirits after the previous day's battle and the failure of the embassy.

BOOKS ELEVEN TO FIFTEEN. These are a unit that leads us to the situation predicted by implication at the end of the Embassy, where the Trojans have crossed the Achaeans' moat and wall (p. 361; XV.356–60), and are attempting to set fire to the ships (p. 373; XV.741–76). Book Eleven starts the process by showing the systematic elimination of the Greeks' best warriors (except Aias): Agamemnon (p. 259; XI.248ff.), Diomedes (p. 263; XI.385–400), Odysseus (p. 264; XI.434ff.). At the same time, each of these warriors is allowed his moment — called in Greek his *aristeia* — in which he can shine as an individual. In this sense the battle scenes are a little like a piece of jazz in which each player gets a solo. The book also carefully foreshadows Patroklos' eventual role, suggested by Nestor on p. 276 (XI.795–96) after his longwinded speech. Note Homer's care to present Eurypylos (p. 277; XI.840ff.). This helps prepare for the tragedy of Patroklos' death in Book Sixteen. It is in this book, too (p. 275; XI.783), that we encounter one of the most famous lines in Homer, the formulation of the heroic code, translated here as “to do none but great feats, to be distinguished above the rest” (compare Lattimore's: “to be always best in battle and pre-eminent beyond all others”).

Book Twelve directs our attention for a moment to the Trojans and focuses on a minor character that we must not overlook, Poulydamas, whose epithet at line 109 (p. 284) is “blameless” (Fitzgerald's translation, “cool,” isn't very accurate). Hektor listens to Poulydamas' advice (this time), but Asios doesn't, and is killed (p. 311; XIII.389). If we know the poem as a whole (and Greek listeners knew it backwards and forwards), this will alert us to Hektor's refusal shortly afterward (pp. 287–88; XII.230ff.) to listen when Poulydamas advises him not to carry the fighting to the ships. To make matters worse, Hektor in his reply (p. 288; XII.237–38) scoffs at the omen of the birds, displaying the same kind of arrogance that Agamemnon displayed in Book One. Homer expects us to connect these two examples. What he is doing is deftly preparing Hektor's death by complicating the perfect Hektor we saw in Book VI. He does not want a “bad guy” to kill a “good guy.” By the time the two major heroes fight (in Book Twenty-Two), both will be seen by us as mixtures of both good and bad,

i.e. as human. In addition, Hektor's behavior toward Poulydamas helps Homer establish the traditional Greek point that our "fate" is not handed down arbitrarily by the gods. We make our own fate, at least in part. Character becomes fate; what happens to us is deserved.

The Trojans are now at the Argives' defensive wall, in front of the ships. But Homer, instead of just describing the battle, focuses on one figure in particular, Sarpedon, giving him his *aristeia* (p. 293; XII.397ff.), and also making him a spokesman for the heroic ideal, i.e. for the perfect hero: one proficient in both speaking and acting. Sarpedon's oration on the nature of heroism (pp. 290–91; XII.310–28) is one of the clearest in the poem. He stresses noblesse oblige, and then the familiar link between mortality and honor. Readers may object that Homer is getting repetitious. But the poet has a definite reason for projecting Sarpedon as the perfect hero: he wants to build him up in our minds in preparation for his battle with Patroklos in Book Sixteen. If Patroklos kills such a worthy enemy, then Patroklos will be raised in our estimation — preparing us, in turn, for the killing of Patroklos by Hektor, also in Book Sixteen. We go up and up in a hierarchy of nobility until the apex is reached in the battle between Hektor and Achilles.

Three other aspects of Book Twelve are worth noting. The first is the Trojans' tactics. Sarpedon is at one end of the line. Because he is so formidable, the Achaeans have to send reinforcements (Aias et al.) to this end, thereby weakening the center of the line, which allows Hektor, in the center, to smash down the gate. (Subsequent Greeks learned military tactics from Homer, as they learned almost everything else. Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander used these same tactics, for example, at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. Alexander, by the way, carried the *Iliad* with him throughout the whole of his campaign in Asia.) The second aspect worth noting in this book is the epic heightening. Sarpedon, Aias, and Hektor are transformed into giants like Paul Bunyan, able to lift immense boulders with ease. At the same time (this is the third notable aspect) Homer grounds his poem in humble reality, especially in the vivid simile (p. 294; XII.433–35) of the "honest cottage spinner / balancing weight in one pan of the scales / and wool yarn on the other, trying to earn a pittance for her children." In like manner, Homer balances fantasy and reality, heroic nobility and brutal carnage.

Book Thirteen opens with Poseidon watching the battle from the

highest ridge on the island of Samothrace (previously called Samos). His marvelous journey to Troy (p. 300; XIII.23–31) is surely the model for Superman's mode of travel in our own day. Note how Homer yokes this delicious fantasy of a golden chariot skimming between parting white-caps to the most down-to-earth description of horses being unharnessed, fed, and hobbled—one more example of his ability to link fantasy with realism.

The book is notable for its continuation of the Poulydamas-Hektor motif. We see Hektor's cocksureness on p. 304 (XIII.154). Later, we see him once again ignoring Poulydamas' advice. The "blameless counselor," after dressing Hektor down (p. 321; XIII.726ff.), tells him not to attack at once but rather to regroup, call a council, and then decide what to do. Hektor agrees (p. 322; XIII.748); in the event, however, he does not call the council but instead orders the attack (p. 325; XIII.824–37). On pp. 324–25 (XIII.821ff.), we see him disregarding an omen again, and displaying insulting arrogance toward Aias. Surely Homer is laying it on thick! The clincher comes in Book Eighteen (pp. 443–44; XVIII.243–314), where Hektor again disregards Poulydamas' advice, this time that he withdraw inside the Trojan walls. The motif is brought to its conclusion in Book Twenty-Two (p. 518; XXII.100ff.) when Hektor, about to be killed, realizes not only that his failure to listen to Poulydamas is the cause, but also that this failure to listen derives from his own "foolish pride."

In Book Fourteen, Homer introduces the device of comic relief to delay the action. First we have the Achaean council, with Agamemnon again defeatist (p. 332; XIV.74–81), Odysseus scandalized at this, patriotic, yet sensible and mature, Diomedes predictably impetuous (p. 333; XIV.128). The scene ends with Poseidon rallying the troops with his fantastical shout equal to the yell of "nine or ten thousand / men" (p. 334; XIV.148). Immediately, with lovely humor, Homer shifts from this preparation for battle to a different kind of preparation for a different kind of battle. The "toilet of Hera," so carefully described on p. 335 (XIV.166ff.), is in effect the goddess's "arming" in preparation for her own battle—in bed! Of course, all this serves at the same time as a little plot to beguile Zeus into a heavy post-coital sleep so that the Greeks can gain some ground. This they do by the end of the book.

Book Fifteen brings this long battle-section to an end by shifting the luck back in the Trojans' favor and ending with the Greeks desperately

trying to keep their ships from being burned — the point where Achilles, in accord with his final promise in the Embassy scene (Book Nine), “will think of carnage or of war.” The next large movement of the epic (Books Sixteen to Twenty-Two) is predicted in detail by Zeus on p. 351 (XV.64–71) after he has awakened and vented some anti-feminist invective against Hera. Achilles will send Patroklos out to fight; Patroklos will be killed by Hektor; Achilles will then slay Hektor in a rage. All this is designed so that Achilles may have honor (p. 352; XV.77).

Though the book’s primary purpose is to advance the action in the way described, it offers many other areas of interest. In Homer, the tiniest details are often the most rewarding. Note, for example, what happens on the bottom of p. 361 (XV.372–76). Nestor prays to Zeus to defend the Achaeans against the Trojans. Zeus “replies” with a great clap of thunder. But the same clap is interpreted by the Trojans as favorable to *them* (XV.379–80). In Homer’s day, as in our own, God is on everybody’s side! Another area worth noting is family loyalty and solidarity, something that seems to be in Homer’s mind since he dwells on it so often. On p. 356 (XV.204) we are told, in effect, that younger brothers should listen to older ones. On p. 360, bottom (XV.349–51), Hektor reminds us that the worst insult to an enemy is the deprivation of decent cremation by kinfolk. Soon afterward (p. 365; XV.497) he tells his troops that if they die they should take heart in feeling that they helped win “a peaceful hearth for wife and children later.” Then Nestor suggests the same motivation for Greek valor, as he implores the soldiers “for their children’s sake” to hold their ground (p. 370; XV.660; Lattimore translates “for the sake of his parents,” which is correct — but the idea is the same: the sanctity of the family). All in all, Homer’s poem is such a profound one about war because it refuses to give us heroes versus villains. Instead, we see that both sides fight for the same values, both commit atrocities, both claim support from the same god. In the deepest sense, the antagonists are brothers — which is why warfare is so senseless. This deep brotherhood of Greek and Trojan, and the tragic futility of battle, are stressed by Homer in Book Twenty-Four.

Finally, in Book Fifteen, we should note the profusion of similes. Hektor is like a stallion (p. 358; XV.263ff.); the Achaeans are like hunters who, stalking a goat or stag, suddenly encounter a lion (p. 358; XV.271ff.); the Achaean rampart is swept away like a child’s sandcastle (p. 361; XV.362–64); Antilokhos slinks like a beast that has killed a dog (p. 368; XV.585–

89); Aias defending the ships against fire is like an expert rider galloping erect on the backs of two horses harnessed together (p. 371; XV.679–86); Hektor is (a) like a furious wave overwhelming a ship (p. 369; XV.624), (b) like a pitiless lion coming down on cattle that stampede despite the herdsman (p. 369; XV.630ff).

BOOK SIXTEEN. Watch for more similes, and note how they are invariably taken from ordinary life: a girl clinging to her mother (p. 377; XVI.7–10); well articulated masonry (p. 384; XVI.212–14); hornets teased by small boys (p. 385; XVI.259–67; more accurately: wasps); autumn rains bringing erosion (p. 389; XVI.384–93); a fisherman hooking a fish (p. 389; XVI.404–08); flies droning around milk pails in a farmyard (p. 396; XVI.641); an oyster diver leaving his boat (p. 400; XVI.745–50). It is also worth noting that when Achilles prays, he addresses the Zeus of Dodona (p. 384; XVI.234).

Thematically, the book seems to concentrate on hubris, a motif already familiar to us. To this, however, are now added the related themes of retribution, reciprocity, and (by way of forecast) the reestablishment of balance. The spotlight falls successively on Achilles, Patroklos, and finally Hektor. Achilles, at the start, loses his good sense after hearing Patroklos' proposal that he—Patroklos—go into battle disguised as Achilles (suggested originally, we should remember, by Nestor in Book Eleven). Achilles now claims (p. 379; XVI.50) that he knows of “no word / from Zeus reported by my gentle mother” — whereas in the Embassy (p. 216, IX.410–16) he was totally clear about the two possible destinies for him reported by Thetis. Furthermore, he forgets his distinction between external and internal honor, made in the Embassy, and forecasts that Patroklos' exploits will “win great honor for me . . . / then they'll send me back / my lovely girl, with bright new gifts as well” (p. 380; XVI.84–86). His monomania regarding Agamemnon's insult has made him inflexible; thus he agrees to Patroklos' request and brings on, through his own misjudgment, the retribution that in this case will take the form of Patroklos' death. Next, Homer concentrates on Patroklos. Achilles, regaining his good sense to some degree, counsels him to be moderate: he should turn back as soon as he restores the safety of the ships (p. 380; XVI.87–94), and should not advance to the Trojan walls. Patroklos achieves his assigned objective on p. 386 (XVI.275–96), driving the Trojans from the ships and

extinguishing the fire. But then, contrary to advice, he does not stop. We already know that he is going to kill Sarpedon, Zeus's son, and thereby be raised in stature. His fatal mistake comes on p. 398 (XVI.684–89) when, contrary to Achilles' instructions, he decides to pursue the retreating Trojans to their walls, only to bring on himself the retribution of Zeus. A kind of ghoulish reciprocity now begins to operate as Patroklos, having been raised through his defeat of a god's son, is now destroyed not so much by a mortal, Hektor, as by the gods themselves. His death (pp. 401–02; XVI.784–857) is strangely ritualistic, almost like a formal sacrifice. First, he is stunned by Phoibos Apollo (compare the blow that stuns a sacrificial animal before the actual killing); then he is stripped of his armor, then wounded by Euphorbos, then — already helpless — dispatched by Hektor. Next, a new kind of reciprocity is introduced (or at least anticipated) as Hektor, now enjoying Homer's spotlight, vaunts illegitimately over the body (which the god, not he, had truly overcome) and forgets his own pious sentiments earlier (p. 164; VII.76–86) about restoring dead bodies for dignified cremation. The reciprocity consists of the fact that Hektor, now occupying Patroklos' place, will be dealt with by Achilles just as he — Hektor — has just dealt with Patroklos. We shall see this in Book Twenty-Two, when Hektor the helpless victim begs Achilles for a decent funeral (p. 526; XXII.338–43). That the poet had such reciprocity in mind is doubly proved by the fact that the formulaic lines describing Patroklos' death here in Book Sixteen (p. 403; XVI.855–57) are repeated verbatim, but now in reference to Hektor's death, in Book Twenty-Two (p. 527, XXII.361–63). The question of the reestablishment of balance is forecasted, though very faintly, by the strange conversation between Zeus and Hera about whether Zeus should save Sarpedon from Patroklos' spear (pp. 390–91; XVI.433ff.). Hera's answer on p. 391 (XVI.439–49) suggests that even the gods are not exempt from the retribution and reciprocity all too evident in human life. Once the balance is disturbed, a chain reaction is inaugurated. In other words, if Zeus acts arbitrarily, in defiance of established balance, there will be disagreeable consequences. This suggests, if only barely, that the human beings in this poem must at some point break the chain reaction that is clearly becoming more and more disastrous. How can they do this? How can they reestablish balance, overcoming the ever-escalating violence that we have been witnessing? The answer comes in Book Twenty-Four. It is strangely Christian, long before Christianity

was ever dreamed of, since it consists of Achilles' breaking of the cycle of revenge. But, before that happens, Achilles must become obsessively vengeful and bloody. Homer appears to be saying that we learn only by bitter experience, not by precept.

BOOK SEVENTEEN seems designed to downgrade Hektor, preparing us for Achilles' monomaniacal thirst for revenge. Homer's points are not new. The first is that although Hektor gets Patroklos' (i.e. Achilles') armor he does not deserve this trophy. The second is Hektor's gross mistreatment of the corpse (p. 411; XVII.125–27). Zeus points the moral at the bottom of p. 413 (XVII.200–206) when he comments that Hektor stripped Patroklos "without respect." Note that Achilles will eventually break the cycle of violence and retribution precisely by showing respect to Hektor's dead body and turning it over to Priam for a proper funeral.

A lovely touch is the description of Achilles' immortal horses weeping for Patroklos (pp. 420–21; XVII.426–47). Homer uses this incident to comment, via Zeus, on the human condition, lamenting that such glorious horses should have become embroiled in the pitiful affairs of men.

As the book ends, it is clear that Achilles is the Greeks' only hope. But how can he fight? He has no armor.

BOOK EIGHTEEN contains the famous set piece about the construction of a new set of armor for Achilles, but it is also important for extending the characterizations of both Achilles and Hektor. Achilles is now the victim of retribution; most importantly, he knows this — knows that his own anger is to blame (he does not invoke *atê*). His own passionate hatred for Agamemnon is now abated, but only because it has been replaced by a greater passion: to avenge Patroklos' death (p. 439; XVIII. 111–16). So, although Achilles displays a good deal of wisdom about his own condition, he still is unable to be guided by this wisdom: he is more advanced in precept than in action. On the other hand, the degree of his advancement is considerable, especially if we compare him with Hektor, who lacks the kind of self-awareness that Achilles has now obtained. On the contrary, Hektor is governed by self-delusion. He thinks, for example, that Zeus is protecting him (p. 445; XVIII.293–94), but he is wrong: he conveniently forgets that Zeus promised him "power of massacre [only] as far as the deepsea ships of the Akhaians" (p. 257, XI.207–09). Homer immediately

reinforces these defects by contrasting Hektor with Poulydamas, who has just advised his general to pull back behind the walls (as we saw earlier) and has been overruled by a cocksure, arrogant leader.

Meanwhile, Achilles plans his grisly revenge, including a plan to murder twelve young Trojans and throw them on Patroklos' funeral pyre. Clearly the vicious circle of violence has not been halted. But we know full well, long before the end, what will be required: restoration of family pieties, adherence to established custom, younger men's respect for their elders — in sum, the reestablishment of balance and order.

As an earnest of this, we now have the celebrated section on Achilles' new armor, and in particular on the extraordinary shield fashioned for him by Hephaistos. What this shield does is to portray *order*. War is not absent, of course; it characterizes the second city (pp. 451–52; XVIII.509ff.). But this city in strife is balanced against the first city, where peace pertains and where a murder, instead of being avenged with another murder, is settled rationally by venerable judges (p. 451; XVIII.503–08). The shield therefore portrays life's evil, but shows evil in an overall context of goodness so overwhelming that the evil is neutralized instead of being dominant and excessive, as in the disordered, unbalanced world of the Trojan War. Not only does Hephaistos include the first city in order to counterbalance the strife of the second; he also includes the pacific pursuits of civilized life: ploughing, reaping, vintaging; village festivals, dancing, music, acrobatics. In a way, the shield depicts the kind of world that civilized people yearn to inhabit.

Of course, on another level, Homer has used the shield simply as a delaying device, to stretch the story out awhile, instead of allowing Achilles to go immediately to slaughter Hektor.

BOOKS NINETEEN TO TWENTY-ONE also serve to delay the climax of the military action, but each in a different way.

Book Nineteen gives us another public assembly. In the geometry of the *Iliad*, this is necessary to balance the initial public assembly (Book One) in which the dissention between Agamemnon and Achilles began. Now, just before Achilles joins the battle, a public reconciliation is required. Thus Agamemnon swears he never slept with Briseis (p. 465; XIX.261–62), and Achilles, in his turn, tactfully assigns Agamemnon's behavior to *atê* (p. 465; XIX.270–73). But the book is most interesting

in its subtle characterization of the two principals. Agamemnon is obviously nervous; this explains his worry about interruptions as he begins his speech (p. 460; XIX.81). He proceeds to deny responsibility, blaming Zeus for putting *atê* in his mind in the earlier assembly, and conveniently forgetting his own earlier admission of responsibility (p. 207; IX.119ff.). But then (p. 461; XIX. 137–38), he in effect does admit his responsibility — rather, does and does not, showing perfect technique for a politician! When he finally comes down to repeating the offer of all the gifts promised by Odysseus in the Embassy yesterday (note that everything since Book Nine has occupied only one day!), he betrays his continued nervousness by refusing to address Achilles with proper titles of respect (p. 461; XIX.139ff.), subtly asserting his superiority at the very moment that he is ostensibly humbling himself. As for Achilles, he is effortlessly suave. Since, unlike Agamemnon, he is totally assured of his own worth, he finds no difficulty in addressing Agamemnon with the customary honorifics (p. 462; XIX.146), after which he accepts the gifts, and even asserts that they are due, but at the same time shows that he doesn't *require* them, being above such external indications of self-worth. We are beginning to see Achilles the perfect gentleman as opposed to Achilles the peevish adolescent. On the other hand, Homer deepens the characterization in this same book by contrasting Achilles with Odysseus. The latter is the type of the practical man, the former the type of the uncompromising idealist (to a fault). Odysseus wants the troops to have a good breakfast before battle (p. 462; XIX.155ff.); Achilles demurs: Why stop to eat when there's work to be done? We can jolly well eat at supertime "when our shame has been avenged" (p. 463; XIX.208). Homer shows his own view by having Zeus and Athena conspire to feed the intransigent Achilles with nectar and ambrosia so that "an empty belly may not weaken him" (p. 468; XIX.348).

Book Twenty continues the delay. The purpose, now, is to show Achilles' magnificence and, at the same time, to place this human war — and its most magnificent fighter — in a larger perspective that prepares us for Achilles' battle against *nature* in Book Twenty-One, and for the war there between the gods themselves. Thus the most important passage in Book Twenty is the wonderful one occupying most of page 475 (XX.47–74), because it heightens the Trojan War into a great natural disaster involving rivers, mountains, thunder, and earthquake. The entire natural world begins to fall apart, so horrendous is the disruption of order and balance

caused by the passions of human beings. On the other hand, having indulged himself in a way that produces some of the best poetry in the epic, Homer then turns all this on its head when he has Poseidon exclaim “Let men make war!” (p. 478; XX.137). The natural world really does not want to be disordered; it is only men who pursue this folly. When we do finally see the gods at war in Book Twenty-One, we shall observe that warfare for them is a farce, an utterly ridiculous game. Man’s fault is to pursue this same activity in a deadly serious manner.

Book Twenty-One shows Achilles, at first, as a cool, cold-blooded killer. He is totally in control, not governed by emotion; his wrath cannot be attributed to *atê* or anything else outside; he knows precisely what he is doing. The encounter with poor Lykaon shows Achilles’ total monomania: his inability to think of anything except Patroklos’ death (p. 496; XXI.100). On the other hand, he calls Lykaon “friend” just before he kills him and then goes on (p. 496; XXI. 106ff.) to make clear his knowledge that it is the fellowship of death that unites Patroklos, Lykaon, and himself. Strangely, therefore, he kills in such cold blood because his own life is nothing to him. This leads to such excess, such extraordinary imbalance, that he must be chastened. He perhaps can momentarily get away with the massive disrespect shown Lykaon’s body, which he tosses into the river to be eaten by fish (p. 497; XXI.120–22), but when he gloats over the murder of Asteropaios (p. 499; XXI.180–99), directly insulting the river itself, he has gone too far. In an extraordinary description (p. 501; XXI.233ff.), Homer makes the flooding river come alive in order to do battle with Achilles and overcome the otherwise invincible hero. The result (p. 502; XXI.273–83) is that Achilles senses his vulnerability sufficiently to listen to instruction regarding limits. Kill Hektor, he is told, pin the Trojans inside their walls, but then go back to the ships and be satisfied (p. 502; XXI.296–97). Note how similar this is to the advice given earlier by Achilles himself to Patroklos, who did not obey. But chastened Achilles will be appeased by Hektor’s death.

The section ends with the taming of the river by Hephaistos’ fire. The moral comes on p. 505 (XXI.379–80), voiced by Hera as she tells Hephaistos to desist: “It will not do / to vex an immortal river so, for men.” In other words, let men pursue their stupidly destructive ways; do not involve the gods (cf. the weeping horses of Achilles, earlier [p. 421; XVII.426ff.]).

The next section, the Theomachy (battle of the gods), reiterates this,

while at the same time serving the purposes of delay, this time in the mode of comic relief. The whole thing is a farce. When Ares' knees give way (p. 506; XXI.406–07) and he “hits the dust,” all 700 feet of it, his armor clanging upon him, the whole point is that he will get up again. Homer continues the humor as he makes Poseidon suggest to Apollo that he — Apollo — take the lead into battle since he is the younger (p. 507; XXI.439), or as he makes Hera box Artemis's ears, whereupon Artemis returns to Papa to be comforted (p. 509; XXI.491, 506–08). The moral is again clear: it is crazy for gods to become involved for mortals' sake — “let men themselves contend with one another” (p. 506; XXI.467).

When all is said and done, Homer has it both ways. On the one hand, he heightens the human battle by involving both nature and the gods in it, thus establishing the importance of human affairs; on the other, he denigrates humans at war by implying, through the gods' attitude, that humans, given their mortality, ought to find something better to do than kill each other.

BOOK TWENTY-TWO. Finally, we reach the moment when Achilles and Hektor must face each other. Homer is full of surprises. Here, contrary to what we have seen earlier, he goes out of his way to put Hektor in a good light once more, doing this both directly and indirectly. Directly, we see the Trojan general in the family context again, both before his death (pp. 516–18; XXII.33–130) and after it (pp. 530–31; XII.437–515). Perhaps more importantly, we see him aware at last of his own deficiencies, and in particular of his foolishness in not having listened to Poulydamas (p. 518; XXII.100). He has no delusions about the outcome (p. 519; XXII.124), yet goes out bravely. On the other hand, he runs away in panic from Achilles (pp. 519–20; XXII.136ff.); yet this momentary cowardice only serves to make us admire him all the more when, finally, he knows that he must face Achilles bravely (p. 525; XXII.296–305). Indirectly, Homer puts Hektor in a good light by putting Achilles in a very bad one. Once more, contrary to the chastening of the previous book, Achilles appears totally vicious. Now it is Hektor (forgetting the past!) who swears not to insult Achilles' corpse. But when he begs for a decent funeral for himself, Achilles answers him with unnecessary savagery (p. 526; XXII.345–54). Of course, Hektor is now the reciprocal victim of his own savagery toward Patroklos' body. Though he is not being treated with mercy, perhaps he is being treated with a kind of cruelly exaggerated justice.

BOOK TWENTY-THREE. Book Twenty-Three divides into two parts: Patroklos' cremation, and the funeral games.

Patroklos' cremation shows Achilles' continuing intransigence: he executes his plans to the last detail, including the sacrifice of the twelve Trojan lads. He seems intent on caring for Patroklos' body in inverse proportion to the lack of care given Hektor's. Dramatically, Homer seems eager here to make the denouement in Book Twenty-Four all the more remarkable, considering Achilles' vow never to restore Hektor to Priam (p. 541; XXIII.182–83).

The funeral games, beginning on the bottom of p. 543 (XXIII.259ff.), are the earliest known description of athletics. But the games are not a fascinatingly vivid digression in this poem about Achilles and the Trojan War, an interlude unrelated to the *Iliad's* major themes; on the contrary, Homer inserts them in such detail because he wants to make thematic statements through them. The games signal a return to civilized order in contrast to the chaotic violence we have been witnessing. This is because, in them, we encounter the same dissent that opened the *Iliad*, yet a dissent that is now settled by reason, good manners, and courtesy before any real harm can come to anyone. Sports, in other words, become a metaphor for civilization functioning as it is meant to function. To change the metaphor: in the games, human beings act like gods in that they are able to contend with one another without hurting anyone. It should be noted that all this, coming as it does in Book Twenty-Three, eases Homer's task in Book Twenty-Four, where we find Achilles acting with courtesy to Priam, his enemy in war. The lessons of athletics are extended to politics.

In Book Twenty-Three, Achilles is no longer the sulking, arrogant (yet magnificent) infant; he is the quintessential gentleman superintending the proceedings with diplomatic genius. Most of the "lessons" for us come in the first event, the chariot race. Antilokhos crowds Menelaos in the narrow spot, making Menelaos hold back to avoid a collision (p. 548; XXIII.419–28). As if to echo this bad sportsmanship on the course, even the fans begin to bicker as they watch the remainder of the race (p. 550; XXIII.473–84). Diomedes wins, but Antilokhos comes in second, "by guile, not speed outrunning Menelaos" (p. 551; XXIII.515). Achilles, realizing what Antilokhos has done, offers the second prize to Eumelos, whereupon Antilokhos berates Achilles and threatens to fight anyone who will deprive him of his prize (p. 552; XXIII.553–54). At this point,

Achilles, instead of responding to anger with anger, is conciliatory. He offers a rational solution. Menelaos is still hot-headed, but Antilokhos, inspired by Achilles' example (after all, leaders should be examples of civilized behavior, precisely what Agamemnon was not, earlier) — Antilokhos counters Menelaos' anger with courtesy (p. 553; XXIII.587–91), whereupon Menelaos, too, in his turn, is won over to rational conduct (p. 554; XXIII.597–611). In sum, we have here a little scene in which Homer, using athletics as a metaphor, shows how a situation in which war is the potential outcome need not end in war. The heroic world is once again ordered, civilized, rational.

The remainder of the games reinforces this conclusion, adding moments of lovely humor, especially when mighty Aias slips and gets a face full of cow manure (p. 559; XXIII.774–75). At the very end, in the javelin throw, Achilles brings us full circle from where we started in Book One, since he makes peace with Agamemnon by offering him first prize even though the contest never takes place — his way of shielding Agamemnon from the humiliation of coming in second . . . or worse. We are ready for the much more significant diplomacy of Book Twenty-Four.

BOOK TWENTY-FOUR. The family occupies center stage in Homer's treatment of the restoration of order. Of course, all is engineered by the gods. Achilles obeys instantly when told by Thetis that Zeus himself wishes Hektor's body restored (pp. 571–72; XXIV.133–40). This may be disappointing to modern readers, who like action to proceed from psychological motivation. But in Greek literature a command from the gods is often just a device to indicate a psychological disposition to do what is commanded. If nothing else, Achilles' readiness to obey puts balance and order back into the world, confirming what we have just seen in the funeral games. Men are meant to obey immortals in an ordered universe; similarly, young men are meant to obey older men, and certainly to be courteous toward them, a point that Homer illustrates in his treatment of Hermes, disguised as a boy who tells old Priam that he reminds him of his father whom he holds dear (p. 579; XXIV.371). In any case, it is family pieties that turn the tables when we move from the magic of divine commands to the realism of Achilles' actual interview with Priam. Prompted by Hermes, Priam invokes Achilles' father (pp. 583–84; XXIV.486–92), and this works. Achilles' splendid speech to Priam on

p. 585 (XXIV.517–51) is filled with compassion and courtesy, as he meditates on the human condition that *unites* these two enemies through the common sorrow they have experienced. Achilles is still volatile, as we see on p. 586 (XXIV.560–70); yet he is able now to control his emotions. And his final action is to suggest that they sit down together to supper (p. 587; XXIV.601), as he remembers that “even Niobê in her extremity / took thought for bread” — in short, as he retreats from the absolutism of his earlier refusal to eat before going out to kill. We may conclude that Achilles is now truly chastened, even though it is of course too late and he must pay the tragic price of his magnificent excesses.

The poem ends poignantly with laments by Hektor’s wife and mother — again the emphasis is on the family. But the last words belong to Helen, who testifies to Priam’s mildness, as though he, the Greeks’ enemy, were her own father. By extending the family nexus across the battle lines in this way, she who caused the war condemns its senseless futility.

Odysseus Across the Centuries

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ESSAY is to examine the diverse post-Homeric literature treating Odysseus. I do not pretend to cover everything. What I do hope to cover are some representative works that show the literary tradition's various possibilities. My goal is to demonstrate the inexhaustible potentiality of Homer's original conception. To begin, I'll concentrate on the *Iliad* rather than the *Odyssey* because the *Iliad* is where we first meet our hero. We'll encounter elements of the *Odyssey* later.

In Book I of the *Iliad*, Odysseus is introduced as a responsible man worthy of being assigned an important diplomatic mission. He is serviceable, trustworthy, efficient—precisely the qualities needed in a diplomatic envoy. And the particular mission assigned him is to return a daughter to her father; he is identified from the very start with the restoration of family integrity. Book I thus presents Odysseus as a man of action. Immediately afterward, in Book II, he is praised as “the equal of Zeus in counsel.” He is not only a man of action; he is also a great talker. Quite an all-round fellow! But what does this paragon look like? Is he tall, dark, and handsome? We are told in Book III: the answer is No. Indeed, he's a bit of a runt: shorter by a head than Agamemnon, who is shorter by a head than Ajax. He is stocky, country-bred, provincial. He even appears somewhat dull. When he talks he stares at the ground, doesn't wave his arms around—but what a voice! His words come drifting down like winter snow! Book X shows him successful again as a man of action. He steals into the Thracians' camp in order to get the enemy's splendid horses. In this escapade he is the epitome of resourcefulness, dragging corpses out of the way so the steeds won't shy. And afterwards he exhibits his sheer bodily exuberance with a swim to wash off the blood, then a bath and a big, hearty breakfast! We begin to think once again, “What an extraordinary fellow!” But Book XI pulls us back. When he is left alone on the field of battle after the other leaders have been wounded, Odysseus is not impulsively

brave; he needs to convince himself to be brave, having realized the possibility that he could be a coward. Again, we see not a cardboard hero but an imperfect, very human one. Book XIX reinforces this human element. Achilles' friend Patroclus has been killed; Achilles decides to fight — immediately! But the men must eat first, objects Odysseus. His is the voice of common sense, of compromise, whereas Achilles is the absolutist: even if the others eat, he will not. Absolutists, we learn from the *Iliad*, achieve their fulfillment only in death. Compromisers, we learn from the *Odyssey*, survive. I'm reminded here of Alexander the Great, who, they say, slept with the *Iliad* under his pillow. The night before his battle with the Persian king Darius, Alexander told his men to get a good night's sleep, whereas the Persians kept watch all night. Guess who won. Finally, in Book XXIII of the *Iliad*, we see Odysseus once more as a man of action, this time as an athlete. In the foot race, someone else is out in front. As Odysseus catches up, he prays to Athena to help him, whereupon the front-runner slips on a heap of manure. Odysseus seems indeed to lead a charmed life with the goddess watching over him. Why? Perhaps because he deserves her care.

Odysseus as characterized in the *Iliad* is taken up in diverse ways by future writers, but one important event is missing in the *Iliad*. It involves slow-witted, inarticulate Ajax, the antithesis of Odysseus. Both Ajax and Odysseus claim Achilles' armor after he is killed. A hearing is arranged, with Trojan prisoners called in as witnesses. They testify that they had been more harmed by Odysseus than by Ajax, so the armor is awarded to Odysseus, whereupon Ajax goes mad with resentment, humiliates himself, and commits suicide. This story, told in the *Little Iliad*, which survives only in fragments, furnishes the material used by Pindar, the first of the future writers whose work survives. Pindar was born in the late sixth century B.C., around 538, and died sometime after 446. He treats Odysseus very negatively, saying in his 7th Nemean Ode that Homer's genius makes more of Odysseus' deeds than they deserve. Indeed, if the truth about Odysseus had been known, then "never would great Ajax, / angered over the weapons, have driven the burnished / sword through his own heart . . ." Clearly, the armor was awarded to the wrong man: the liar, the utterer of "beguiling words." Ajax on the other hand is described here as "a quiet man, no talker, steadfast of heart." What we see in this first extant example of the attack on Odysseus's character is the valuation of acting over speaking. This early negativism is often explained politically.

Speaking had become more important owing to the advance of democracy in Athens, and the old aristocrats, whose code was heroic action, resented upstarts with clever tongues. This may or may not explain Pindar's antipathy toward Odysseus, but it does seem to be a likely factor in the negative treatment of Odysseus in the play *Philoctetes* by Sophocles, who lived from 496 to 406 B.C., spanning the fifth century. This is particularly interesting because there are two extant plays by Sophocles in which Odysseus appears. The first, *Ajax*, an early work, presents Odysseus positively. A political interpretation may again be useful. Athenian democracy was in its heyday under Pericles between, say, 460 and 455, when the play may have been written. Odysseus as portrayed here by Sophocles "embodies the flexibility, reliance on persuasion and debate, and reasonableness necessary" if a democracy is to work. Conversely, the aristocratic ethos, with its valuation of action over speech, is felt to be obsolete. In any case, Sophocles' Odysseus in this play is tolerant and reasonable, contrasting with the inflexible personalities of the other main characters — namely, Ajax himself, Menelaos, and Agamemnon. Ajax is an absolutist and, as such, can find fulfillment only in death, whereas Odysseus, the quintessential survivor, is not only moral but also practical. The question is whether the dead Ajax should be accorded burial. Menelaos and Agamemnon insist that burial be denied; they ignore Ajax's previous services, and they lack Odysseus's compassion. Odysseus, exulting in clever talk, sees both sides. We have heard Pindar on "beguiling words," but here the chorus concludes that Odysseus is "wise." It has been argued that the tolerance and reasonableness seen in Odysseus in this play "are the foundations upon which the city-state must stand." Political interpretations of this sort may be risky, but that does not stop people from attempting them. Let's consider what is said about Sophocles' other play in which Odysseus appears — *Philoctetes*, produced in 409 when Sophocles was 87 years old. Athens at the end of the fifth century was in terrible straits owing to the Peloponnesian War, with collapse imminent. Perhaps the aristocratic ethos — the integrity praised by Pindar, seen in *Ajax*, and now in the character *Philoctetes* — was needed after all. Eloquence seems to have degenerated into deception and blatant lying, fulfilling Pindar's fears concerning beguiling words. The situation is not unlike that in *Ajax*. *Philoctetes*, the slighted aristocratic hero, demands justice. He had sailed with Agamemnon to fight the Trojan War, but had been dumped on a deserted island because

of a mysterious stinking wound in his foot. But he possessed a magic bow that enabled him to kill birds and small game, and thus to survive. Now the leaders have come to get him, or at least the bow, which an oracle has told them they need to win the war. The situation resembles that in *Ajax* because Philoctetes, too, is now an absolutist. What is new in this play is Sophocles' addition of Neoptolemus, Achilles' inexperienced son. He and Odysseus have been dispatched by the army to bring Philoctetes to Troy by hook or by crook. The political view I cited earlier — Athenian democracy about to collapse, eloquence suspect, stolid aristocratic virtues needed — makes Odysseus the villain of this play. Young Neoptolemus at the start seems to echo his father's aristocratic integrity; he is "unreservedly hostile to the use of deception; he would prefer to fail by direct means [rather] than to succeed by what he regards as shameful means." Odysseus, on the other hand, is the total pragmatist: whatever works is okay, including deception and lying. The end justifies the means. "You want to be virtuous," he says to Neoptolemos. "Fine! You can be virtuous later. Right now we have a job to do." The boy — pulled one way by Odysseus, the other by Philoctetes, who demands to be taken home — wavers at one point and, joining Odysseus in deception, manages to get the magic bow into his hands. But he then restores it to Philoctetes, choosing ultimately to align himself with justice rather than with Odysseus' so-called "wisdom." Finally, he agrees to take Philoctetes home, although this will be regarded as insubordination by the army. Odysseus clearly seems to be the villain. Yet things are never so uncomplicated in Sophoclean drama. Odysseus, after all, is motivated once again by survival: not just his own, but the army's. Furthermore, he is acting on orders and considers that to be a sufficient mandate. Perhaps we are meant to see Neoptolemus as naïve owing to immaturity; perhaps we are meant to see Odysseus' tactic of deception as an acceptable part of military procedure. And then there is the strange ending to the play, where everything is turned suddenly upside down by a *deus ex machina* that commands Philoctetes to go to Troy after all, which he now agrees to do. Is the final moral, then, that individual need, even if just, must be subordinated to communal need? Nevertheless, I think it is safe to say that anyone seeing Sophocles' play will find Odysseus a skunk: unprincipled, cowardly, pragmatic to a fault. The fun and challenge of this marvelous play is that we really cannot be sure.

A problematic situation of this sort can be exhausting for an audience.

Thus we may be excused, I suppose, for sometimes desiring literature that is non-problematic, clearly favoring one side over the other. I'm relieved to say that we find this in Book 13 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which dates probably from near the close of the first century B.C. The subject, once again, is the awarding of Achilles' armor. Ovid has the two claimants, Ajax and Odysseus, present their cases to the army. Ajax's speech comes first. He regales his auditors with an abundance of negative "facts" — all the dirt he knows about his opponent. Finally he says, "What need of words? Let us be seen in action!" Now it is Odysseus' turn, or Ulysses' as he is called in this Latin text. He stares at the ground at first before looking up to establish eye contact with the generals. He then laments Achilles' death and "with his hand he made as if to wipe tears from his eyes." This completed, he launches into the attack, calling Ajax "slow of wit" and hoping that the use of his own ready wit for the Greeks' advantage will not be undervalued. As for deeds, he maintains, he has enough to his credit, but his major service has been via thought. Also, he countered defeatism when everyone, including Ajax, was ready to leave. Indeed, since he brought Ajax back from flight, he says, "whatever brave deed my rival here can claim to have accomplished belongs to me." Ulysses is ready now for the peroration to his speech, in which he extols his own superior intelligence. Glaring at poor Ajax, he argues, "You are a good fighter; but it is I who help Agamemnon select the time of fighting. Your value is in your body only; mine, in mind. And, as much as he who directs the ship surpasses him who only rows it, . . . so much greater am I than you." The generals are convinced; their decision, says Ovid, "proved the power of eloquence." Ajax in a fit kills himself, but Ulysses — ever serviceable — sets sail to retrieve Philoctetes and thereby make possible the final capture of Troy. We may feel sorry for the doltish Ajax; nevertheless, Ovid clearly sides with intelligence. And so does James Joyce in his extraordinary novel, *Ulysses*. Neither of these works is problematic.

But problematic works can be more challenging for us. We must not mind the freedom with which some authors redesign the Homeric material. A myth does not suffer from contradiction; it is always the sum of its diverse interpretations. In any case, sometimes the most powerful neo-Homeric poems or novels deliberately stretch, shrink, or modify the material so that it fits a current post-Homeric situation. We have seen that process already in Sophocles. It continues today, for example in Derek

Walcott's *Omeros*, which transports everything to the Caribbean. Indeed, this sort of updating may be one of the chief reasons that the Homeric texts are still so vibrantly alive. Let me give a supreme example, W. H. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles," written in 1952. The material comes from the *Iliad*, of course, but it also relates to the contest between Odysseus and Ajax for Achilles' shield. Auden makes his art serve a purpose fully appropriate to the war-torn twentieth century. Echoing Homer, he has Achilles' mother, Thetis, look over lame Hephaestos' shoulder to survey the blacksmith's handiwork. But whereas in Homer the shield celebrates the achievements of Greek civilization, in Auden's poem, written in the midst of the Cold War, the Korean War, and the threat of atomic extinction, the depictions are very different. I'll cite part of the poem:

She looked over his shoulder
 For vines and olive trees.
 Marble well-governed cities
 And ships upon untamed seas.
 But there on the shining metal
 His hands had put instead
 An artificial wilderness
 And a sky like lead.

.....

She looked over his shoulder
 For athletes at their games.
 Men and women in a dance
 Moving their sweet limbs
 Quick, quick, to music.
 But there on the shining shield
 His hands had set no dancing-floor
 But a weed-choked field.

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone.
 Loitered about that vacancy; a bird
 Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
 That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third
 Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
 Of any world where promises were kept.
 Or one could weep because another wept.

The thin-lipped armorer,
Hephaestos, hobbled away,
Thetis of the shining breasts
Cried out in dismay
At what the god had wrought
To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
Who would not live long.

Another fine example of a free appropriation of Homeric material to suit a contemporary need is George Seferis' "Upon a Foreign Line of Verse," written in 1931. This brings us back to Odysseus himself and to the *Odyssey* proper. It also provides a perfect example of what people in comparative literature call intertextuality — the penetration of one text by another. In this case, to reach Seferis' subject in 1931 we start with Homer and then go to Ovid in the winter of A.D. 12–13 and afterward to the French poet Joachim Du Bellay in 1558. The Homeric text describes Odysseus as held captive by Calypso, despondently "straining for no more than a glimpse / of hearth-smoke drifting up from his own land." Ovid, like Odysseus, wanted desperately to get home. In A.D. 8 he had been exiled from Rome to the Black Sea port now called Constantza, in today's Romania, a hateful, freezing place according to the "Letters from the Black Sea" that he wrote there four years later. He thinks of Philoctetes, whose similar situation we already know, and then of Ulysses, who "prays that he may see the smoke from his native hearth." Ovid's point is that perhaps it is "womanish" to long for home and not be sufficiently brave to endure the rigors of exile, yet even manly Ulysses does long for home. As for Ovid, poor fellow, he never did get back: he died in the Scythian cold in the year 18. The exiled Joachim Du Bellay was luckier. For the last three years of his life he lived again in his beloved Loire valley in France, dying there in 1560. Upon his return home he published *Les Regrets*, a sequence of over a hundred sonnets, some of which invoke Ulysses. Sonnet 31 begins:

Happy the man who, like Ulysses, went on a fine journey, . . . and
then came back, filled with experience and good sense to live
among his kin the remainder of his days!
Oh, when shall I see smoke again from the hearth of my tiny
village . . .

In Sonnet 40 he compares himself to Ulysses:

Athena was his guide; I drift haphazardly.
 He was hardened to stress; I'm soft by nature.
 In the end he anchored his ship at home port;
 I have no guarantee I'll return to France.
 He took splendid vengeance on his enemies;
 I'm too weak to take vengeance on mine.

When we go to Seferis' "Upon a Foreign Line of Verse," we of course now recognize the foreign line in question. It is Du Bellay's opening of Sonnet 31, quoted now in Greek translation. Seferis, like Odysseus, Philoctetes, Ovid, and Du Bellay, felt himself an exile, since his native city, Smyrna (now Ismir), had been forever denied him owing to its capture by the Turks in 1922. In the poem, he shares the anguish of loss experienced by these predecessors, invoking of course Odysseus' longing to see the smoke ascending from his warm hearth. His only friends are the dead. Yet Seferis shares Odysseus' strength and love. Indeed, remembering Odysseus allows the poet to be calm. In the midst of his turmoil it is only Odysseus who, in the poem's final image, can present to him "the waveless blue sea in the heart of winter." What all this means, I think, is that Seferis, although cut off from his roots in Asia Minor, found new roots in the sum total of Hellenism: its ability to *survive*, so quintessentially represented by Odysseus, and its ability to be constantly creative. As the poem says, he can gain strength by conversing with the dead — that is, with all the great cultural figures who, speaking the Greek language for at least three thousand years, have created Greek culture. Here are some parts of this poem:

UPON A FOREIGN LINE OF VERSE

Fortunate he who's made the voyage of Odysseus.
 Fortunate if on setting out he's felt the rigging of a love . . .

I ask God to help me say . . . what that love is;
 sometimes when I sit surrounded by exile I hear its distant
 murmur . . .

And again and again the shade of Odysseus appears before me, his
 eyes red . . .
 from his ripe longing to see once more the smoke ascending from
 his warm hearth . . .

A large man, whispering . . . words
in our language spoken as it was three thousand years ago . . .

It's as if he wants to expel from among us the superhuman one-eyed
Cyclops, the Sirens who make you forget with their song, Scylla
and Charybdis:
so many complex monsters that prevent us from remembering that
he, too, was a man struggling in the world . . .

He is the mighty Odysseus: he who proposed the wooden horse
with which the Achaeans captured Troy.
I imagine he's coming to tell me how I, too, may build a wooden
horse to capture my own Troy . . .

He tells me . . .
of the bitterness of seeing your companions . . . pulled down into
the elements and scattered;
and of how strangely you gain strength conversing with the dead
when the living who remain are no longer enough.

He speaks . . .
presenting me the waveless blue sea in the heart of winter.

Intertextuality is strong here: the poem could not exist if it had not been preceded by Homer, Ovid, and Du Bellay. But Seferis treats the anguish of exile in a new fashion, finding that a return to the smoke of one's original hearth is perhaps not the ultimate desire any longer, because other solutions may be discovered. Regarding these other solutions, probably the most definitive expression we have of the conviction that getting home may not be so important after all is Constantine Cavafy's famous poem "Ithaca." For Cavafy, the journey itself, not the destination, is paramount. Is he justified in this interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey*? Perhaps, insofar as the epic is centrifugal as well as centripetal. True, Odysseus sighs for home; nevertheless, he very often enjoys the variety of the journey that is directing him away from home. Perhaps Cavafy overemphasizes the centrifugal aspect. But no matter, because his poem is really not about Homer; it merely uses the Homeric material as an extended metaphor. The real subject, I believe, is God—the fact that God does not exist. All we have is life. No goal exists beyond experience; there is no heaven, no eternity, no ultimate destination. We of course still act as though some

ultimate destination exists, and that's all right. "Always keep Ithaca in mind. / Arrival there is your destined end,"

but do not hasten the journey in the least.
 Better it continue many years
 and you anchor at the island an old man,
 rich with all you gained along the way,
 not expecting Ithaca to grant you riches.

Ithaca granted you the lovely voyage.
 Without her you would never have departed on your course.
 But she has nothing else to grant you any more.

And if you find her squalid, Ithaca did not cheat you.
 So wise have you become, so experienced,
 you already will have realized what they mean: these Ithacas.

I hope I have shown convincingly how the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* lend themselves to diverse treatments that, rather than being merely pedantic or antiquarian in their attachment to acknowledged masterpieces, use the Homeric material effectively to tell us about our own lives in the here and now. But we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. I repeat that I cannot possibly cover everything; yet some highlights do remain. Let's see if we can say something, however rushed, about Dante, Tennyson, Kazantzakis, and Joyce. Dante, writing around 1300, places Ulysses in hell in the circle of evil counselors, reserved for gifted men who abused their genius through stratagems and glibness of tongue. The chief stratagem for which Ulysses is condemned is of course his invention of the Trojan horse. We need to remember that Dante, as an Italian, favored the Trojans in the Trojan War, considering himself their descendant. In addition, when Ulysses' shade recounts how he died, Dante makes him confess that he also gave bad advice to his crew — advice that resulted in everyone's destruction. Yet this advice, clearly wrong in 1300 for Dante, was praised by later writers who admired the Dantean Ulysses' spirit of adventure. After all, Dante's Ulysses rejects son, wife, home, and hearth-smoke in order to smash boundaries. In order to seek knowledge and experience, he passes beyond the Pillars of Hercules — that is, through the Strait of Gibraltar — into the Atlantic Ocean, an act considered the ultimate folly in the Middle Ages, when the world was thought flat. Listen to some of Ulysses' account as imagined by Dante in the *Inferno*:

When I left Circe . . .

not fondness for my son, nor reverence
for my aged father, nor Penelope's claim

to the joys of love, could drive out of my mind
the lust to experience the far-flung world
.....

I put out on the high and open sea . . .

Hercules' Pillars rose upon our sight. . . .

"Shipmates," I said, . . .

"Greeks! You were not born to live like brutes,
but to press on toward manhood and recognition!

"With this brief exhortation I made my crew
so eager for the voyage I could hardly
have held them back from it when I was through."

So they sail out into the Atlantic, head southwest across the equator, and
continue for five months without finding land, when suddenly

we sighted, dark in space, a peak so tall
I doubted any man had seen the like.
Our cheers were hardly sounded, when a squall

broke hard upon our bow from the new land:
three times it sucked the ship and the sea about
as it pleased Another to order and command.

At the fourth, the poop rose and the bow went down
till the sea closed over us and the light was gone.

How strange that this suicidal mission foisted on his men by the evil
counselor should have encouraged nineteenth- and twentieth-century ro-
mantics to consider Odysseus and his journey increasing centrifugal. Even
in Cavafy's "Ithaca" the voyager is counseled to go home (eventually). But
in Tennyson and Kazantzakis, Odysseus, once home, is so bored that he
decides to leave again, even if he will end in shipwreck. Listen to excerpts
from our hero's thoughts as imagined by Tennyson in 1842:

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees. . . .

Much have I seen and known; . . .

Yet . . .

How dull it is to pause, to make an end . . .

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:

. . . My mariners . . .

Free hearts, . . . you and I are old; . . . but . . .

Some work of noble note may yet be done. . . .

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:

. . . though

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

James Joyce, in his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, thinking no doubt of Tennyson, uses bloated language like “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield” to indicate his hero’s immaturity. Two American critics, commenting on Tennyson’s poem, ask whether Ulysses here resembles “the American businessman who simply cannot think of retiring?” Yet many people find this poem inspirational. Perhaps it is a cultural Viagra meant to be prescribed for all of us who are over seventy. Is it Homeric? Yes . . . sort of . . . although it makes the original poem 100% centrifugal, which of course it is not. But at least Tennyson’s *Ulysses* is short!

Nikos Kazantzakis’s *Odyssey*, written between 1925 and 1938, consists of 33,333 lines, which makes it longer than both of Homer’s epics put together. It is also the ultimate expression of literary romanticism, by which we mean a mentality whose chief axiom is that human potential is infinite. It follows that laws, traditions, and strict forms are straitjackets restricting this potential. All genuine people must revolt, throwing off constraints. But the infinite is hard to achieve; the romantic potential is always usurped by life’s indifference or meaningless vicissitude, with the result that the romantic personality becomes increasingly self-absorbed. In romanticism we thus start with revolt and end with radical subjectivism. This is precisely what happens in Kazantzakis’ drastic revision of the Homeric *Odyssey*. We start with revolt. His Odysseus kills the suitors, as in Homer, but then decides almost immediately to leave Ithaca again. Gathering together

a crew of ne'er-do-wells, he arranges to steal away just before dawn. Like Telemachus in Homer's version, he travels first to Sparta. But that is where all similarity with Homer ends. At Sparta, Odysseus finds Helen bored so silly that she is delighted to be abducted once again. Sailing next to Crete, he observes the bull rituals and then supports a rebellion against the decadent king. Continuing further south, he reaches Egypt, another decadent kingdom. Its workers are in revolt. He joins three revolutionaries who clearly represent Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin; all three are defeated and imprisoned by Pharaoh, but when Odysseus interprets one of Pharaoh's dreams he is set free. He continues to the source of the Nile where, like Moses, he climbs a mountain and communes with God. Then Odysseus and his companions build an ideal city, a utopia. But no sooner is the city dedicated than a huge earthquake — life's meaningless vicissitude at work — destroys it. In the remainder of the epic, Odysseus, now alone, becomes a meditating ascetic, reëxperiencing much of what happened but now on the higher plane of subjective imagination as opposed to the phantasmagoria of objective reality. Finally, astride an ice floe at the south pole, he dies. With the extinction of his subjectivity, we return to the abyss of nothingness, the substratum of all experience. Such is Kazantzakis's centrifugal sequel to Homer's *Odyssey*. It is actually extremely interesting. If only it weren't so long!

If nothing else, it serves as a perfect foil for Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is centripetal. Joyce exemplifies the classic mentality as opposed to the romantic. The chief axiom of the classic mentality is that human potential is limited. It follows that laws, traditions, and strict forms, far from being straitjackets restricting potential, are prior building blocks upon which limited human beings, by adding to the achievements of others, may create new achievements. One neither revolts nor rejects the human community but works with it. Furthermore, whereas the romantic temper favors irrationality, the classical temper favors rationality. Joyce's centripetal Ulysses, a strange little man named Leopold Bloom who seems very non-exceptional, does not revolt against human limitation but accepts it, learns to live with it, and is reasonably happy, even serene, despite the various usurpations that life always offers. Another way of saying this is to affirm that he is courageous. But his courage is not what one might expect, and certainly not what Tennyson might advocate for his Ulysses. Instead, it is participation in reason's attempt to thwart all that is irrational. Let me

add that for Joyce the worst form of irrationality is violence and the worst form of violence is nationalistic bellicosity. Indeed, Mr. Leopold Bloom is a pacifist; he slays Joyce's suitors (fully aware that his Penelope entertained one of them in bed that afternoon) not with Homer's bow and arrow, but with abnegation and equanimity, realizing—rationalist that he is—that the sexual drive is natural, and that his wife's adultery is certainly "not so calamitous as a cataclysmic annihilation of the planet in consequence of a collision with a dark sun." It is important to stress that Joyce wanted his modern Ulysses to be an everyman, not a specialized hero even though serviceable, trustworthy, and supportive of family values. He wanted someone who exhibited all sides of human behavior. We have an interesting commentary by Joyce himself concerning all-round characters in literature. "Your complete man in literature is, I suppose, Ulysses?" asked a friend. "Yes," replied Joyce. "But you mentioned Hamlet. Hamlet is a son only. Ulysses is son to Laertes, but he is father to Telemachus, husband to Penelope, lover of Calypso, companion in arms of the Greek warriors around Troy and King of Ithaca. He was subjected to many trials, but with wisdom and courage came through them all. . . . And then . . . he was the first gentleman in Europe. When he advanced, naked, to meet the young princess he hid from her maidenly eyes the parts that mattered. . . . He was an inventor too. The tank is his creation. Wooden horse or iron box—it doesn't matter. They are both shells containing armed warriors. . . . I see him from all sides, . . . he is a complete man. . . ." Joyce's *Ulysses* is contemporary literature's truest sequel to Homer's *Odyssey* because the central subject of both is *survival*. Joyce, like Homer, brings his centripetal hero safely home, places him securely in Penelope's bed at the end, and suggests that the allegiance of husband and wife will continue despite whatever forces of irrationality intervene.

In this survey of Odysseus across the centuries, we have come a long way from Pindar's complaints, from the denigration of mind, from the depiction of Ulysses as an evil counselor or a gushy executive afraid to retire. With Joyce we see mind once again exalted, provided it meld with compassion and understanding. We see resourcefulness, patience, a bit of absurdity, some obvious faults: in other words, a real human being—not a very special one, and certainly not a cardboard hero—who nevertheless overcomes. Homer should be pleased.

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Study Guide for Thucydides's *The Peloponnesian War*

Introduction

THIS BOOK IS HUGE and will therefore be daunting to some, but it is crucial for understanding Greece (not to mention modern politics). To encourage people to read it, here is a study guide that specifies certain parts that ought to be read. The remainder may be omitted. It is much better to read the work in this way — getting the highlights from start to finish, and omitting the details — than to do one or two sections in their entirety and then stop. This is because Thucydides's history is a unified work, with themes that are presented early and then work themselves out later. I have tried to choose passages that demonstrate these themes. In general, I follow the splendid analyses by Professor John H. Finley, Jr. in his *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1942) and W. Robert Connor in his *Thucydides* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

The uncanny relevance of Thucydides to our own situation today, with America and Russia each controlling weaker states and vying for domination over third-world areas rich in needed commodities, with each state furthermore representing a different political ideology, will I hope be all too evident.

Since the struggle between the two ancient superpowers, Athens and Sparta, was in large part a struggle between democracy and aristocratic oligarchy, it is appropriate to begin with a well-known passage from Herodotus (Book III, sections 80–82), and then with some excerpts from a cynical commentary on Athenian democracy written by an anonymous “Old Oligarch” around 424 B.C., the latter having the added usefulness of indicating to what degree both Athenian democracy and Athenian

prosperity rested on naval power — one of the major themes in Thucydides's account. For an even more cynical assessment of democracy, see Alcibiades's speech to the Spartans after he has defected to them (Thucydides VI 89). For Thucydides's own view, see VIII.

From: Herodotus's Persian Wars, Book III

§80 . . . the conspirators met together. . . Otanes recommended that the management of public affairs should be entrusted to the whole nation. "To me," he said, "it seems advisable that we should no longer have a single man to rule over us — the rule of one is neither good nor pleasant. . . . How indeed is it possible that monarchy should be a well-adjusted thing, when it allows a man to do as he likes without being answerable? . . . Give a person this power, and straightway his manifold good things puff him up with pride, while envy is so natural to humankind that it cannot but arise in him. Pride and envy together include all wickedness; both lead on to deeds of savage violence. True it is that kings, possessing as they do all that heart can desire, ought to be void of envy, but the contrary is seen in their conduct toward the citizen. They are jealous of the most virtuous among their subjects, and wish their death; while they take delight in the meanest and basest, being ever ready to listen to the tales of slanderers. . . . But the worst of all is that [the king] sets aside the laws of the land, puts men to death without trial, and rapes women. The rule of the many, on the other hand, has, in the first place, the fairest of names, equality before the law; furthermore, it is free from all those outrages which a king is wont to commit. There, places are given by lot, the magistrate is answerable for what he does, and measures rest with the common people. I vote, therefore, that we do away with monarchy and raise the people to power."

§81. Such were the sentiments of Otanes. Megabyzus spoke next, and advised the setting up of an oligarchy. "In all that Otanes has said to persuade you to put down monarchy," he observed, "I fully concur; but his recommendation that we should call the people to power seems to me not the best advice. For there is nothing so void of understanding, nothing so full of wantonness, as the unwieldy rabble. It were folly . . . for men, while seeking to escape the wantonness of a tyrant, to give themselves up to the wantonness of a rude unbridled mob. The tyrant, in all his doings, at least

knows what he is about, but a mob is altogether devoid of knowledge; for how should there be any knowledge in a rabble, untaught, and with no natural sense of what is right and fit? It rushes wildly into state affairs with all the fury of a stream swollen in the winter, and confuses everything. Let the enemies of the Persians be ruled by democracies; but let us choose out from the citizens a certain number of the worthiest, and put the government into their hands. For thus both we ourselves shall be among the governors, and power being entrusted to the best men, it is likely that the best counsels will prevail in the state.”

§82. This was the advice that Megabyzus gave. After him Darius came forward and spoke as follows: “All that Megabyzus said against democracy was well said, I think; but about oligarchy he did not speak advisedly. For take these three forms of government — democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy — and let them each be at their best, I maintain that monarchy far surpasses the other two. What government can possibly be better than that of the very best man in the whole state? The counsels of such a man are like himself, and so he governs the mass of the people to their heart’s content, while at the same time his measures against evil-doers are kept more secret than in other states. Contrariwise, in oligarchies, where men vie with each other in the service of the commonwealth, fierce enmities are apt to arise between man and man, each wishing to be leader, and to carry his own measures; whence violent quarrels come, which lead to open strife, often ending in bloodshed. Then monarchy is sure to follow; and this too shows how far that rule surpasses all others. Again, in a democracy, it is impossible but that there will be malpractices; these malpractices, however, do not lead to enmities, but to close friendships, which are formed among those engaged in them, who must hold well together to carry on their villainies. And so things go on until a man stands forth as champion of the common people, and puts down the evil-doers. Straightway the author of so great a service is admired by all, and from being admired soon comes to be appointed king; so that here too it is plain that monarchy is the best government. Lastly, to sum up all in a word, whence, I ask, was it that we got the freedom that we enjoy? Did democracy give it us, or oligarchy, or a monarch? As a single man recovered our freedom for us, my sentence is that we keep to the rule of one.”

*Excerpts from “The Constitution of the Athenians”
by “The Old Oligarch”*

Now, as for the constitution of the Athenians . . . I praise it not, insofar as the very choice involves the welfare of the baser folk as opposed to that of the better class. . . . But, given the fact that this is the type agreed upon, I propose to show that they set about preservation in the right way. . . . It is only just that the poorer classes and the common people of Athens should be better off than the men of birth and wealth, seeing that it is the common people who man the fleet, and have brought the city her power. The steersman, the boatswain, the lieutenant, the look-out-man at the prow, the shipwright—these are the people who supply the city with power. . . . This being the case, it seems only just that the offices of state should be thrown open to everyone both in the ballot and the show of hands, and that the right of speech should belong to any one who likes, without restriction. . . .

The fact that everywhere greater consideration is shown to the base, to poor people and to common folk, than to persons of good quality . . . is the keystone of the preservation of democracy. . . . The objection may be raised that it was a mistake to allow the universal right of speech and a seat in council. These should have been reserved for the cleverest, the flower of the community. But here, again, it will be found that they are acting with wise deliberation in granting to even the baser sort the right of speech, for supposing only the better people might speak, or sit in council, blessings would fall to the lot of those like themselves, but to the commons the reverse of blessings. . . . What it comes to, therefore, is that a state founded upon such institutions will not be the best state; but, given a democracy, these are the right means to secure its preservation. The people do not demand that the city should be well governed. . . . They desire to be free and to be master. . . . What you believe to be bad legislation is the very source of the people’s strength and freedom. . . .

As to wealth, the Athenians are exceptionally placed with regard to Hellenic and foreign communities alike, in their ability to hold it. For, given that some state or other is rich in timber for shipbuilding, where is it to find a market for the product except by persuading the ruler of the sea? Or, suppose the wealth of some state or other to consist of iron, or maybe of bronze, or of linen yarn, where will it find a market except by permission of the supreme maritime power . . . ?

I repeat that my position concerning the constitution of the Athenians is this: the type of constitution is not to my taste, but given that a democratic form of government has been agreed upon, they do seem to me to go the right way to preserve the democracy.

Some Relevant Dates

- 490 First Persian invasion; battle of Marathon
- 480 Second Persian invasion; the Greeks lose on land at Thermopylae but win by sea at Salamis; Persians sack Athens, destroying public buildings
- 479 Greek victories at Plataea and Mycale. The period of reconstruction and consolidation following victory over the Persians is the great “classic” period in Athenian history. Themistocles refortifies Athens and Piraeus; plans for the Long Walls between Athens and Piraeus so that the Athenians would always have access to their fleet (built between 461 and 456).
- 477 Founding of the Athenian League (Delian League)
- 449 Pericles orders plans drawn up for the Parthenon (completed in 438)
- 445 Thirty Years’ Peace Treaty between Athens and Sparta
- 432 The conference at Sparta decides on war
- 431 Sparta invades Attica for the first time
- 431 Pericles’s Funeral Oration, delivered at the end of the first year of war, at a ceremony when the bones of the fallen were given public burial
- 430 Plague in Athens
- 429 Pericles dies
- 428 Mytilene revolts from Athens
- 425 The first great climax: Demosthenes’s victory at Pylos
- 422 The so-called “Peace” of Nicias
- 415 Melos invaded by Athens; the expedition leaves for Sicily; Alcibiades recalled
- 414 Alcibiades now in Sparta
- 413 The débâcle at Syracuse
- 411 The oligarchic party takes over Athens, briefly, followed by the rule of the Five Thousand

- 410 Alcibiades, now fighting for Athens again, wins at Cyzicus
 405 Athens defeated definitively at Aegospotami by Lysander,
 who surprises the Athenian fleet and destroys all but nine of
 the 180 ships
 404 April: Lysander and his fleet sail into Piraeus; the Spartans
 and their allies, to the music of flutes, begin to demolish the
 Long Walls built by Themistocles

A good sense of Thucydides's themes, and of the major events and personalities involved, may be obtained from the following passages; the rest may be omitted. Note that numbers refer to sections, not to pages.

BOOK ONE

§1. Why Thucydides wrote.

§§2–19. The “Archaeology,” filling in the remote past (Minoan Greece, Mycenaean Greece, the Trojan War) and establishing the major themes of (a) the central significance of naval power for empire and material progress, and (b) the significance of stable government.

§§20–22. The importance of empirical evidence. Section 22 gives Thucydides's theory of history, a cyclical one. “Taken in isolation, the passage indicates . . . a belief in an ability to recognize recurring patterns, even to predict and thereby in some degree to control events” (Connor, p. 243). The question is whether “the utility of historical knowledge is progressively undermined and . . . belief in rational prediction and control erodes as the work continues” (Connor, p. 246). Connor's answer is that the utility of historical knowledge is not denied as the work progresses, but redefined. “History does not teach us how to control human events . . . , but it reminds us how easily men move from the illusion of control over events to being controlled by them” (p. 247).

§23. What an unprecedented calamity the Peloponnesian War was.

§§31–45. The dispute over Corcyra reveals Athens and Sparta struggling to control the trade routes with Western Greece and Sicily.

§§66–88. The debate at Sparta contrasts Athenian dynamism — the result of naval power, democracy and a belief in intelligence (cf. Pericles' Funeral Oration, later) — with Spartan “quietism,” connected in turn with oligarchy, land power and a preference for moral over intellectual virtue. By implication, we see the tragic dilemma with which Thucydides will be

preoccupied throughout: how can you have both dynamism and stable government? (The answer seems to be that you cannot.) In any case, we see here that the war began because of Sparta's fear of Athens's growing commercial power. In section 86, interestingly, we see that it is emotionalism, not reason, that finally wins over the Spartans.

§§89–93. The Pentecontaetia, another digression, continues the Archaeology, treating the fifty years since the victory at Salamis. This survey of the recent past is used again by Thucydides to show the significance of naval power. Section 93 shows us the hurried building of the Themistoclean walls, which preserved so much sculpture.

§§139–146. The Spartan ultimatum becomes the occasion for Pericles's first great speech in this history. He states his faith in the efficacy of naval as opposed to land power, and he issues his (prophetic) warnings: Athens must not try to increase its empire during the war, and, if Athens loses, the cause will be its own mistakes, not the superiority of the enemy. (In the rest of the history, Thucydides goes on to show how Athens lost because of poor leadership, one of the worst mistakes being the decision to turn a defensive war into an offensive one that would expand the empire.)

BOOK TWO

§§13–17. Outbreak of war.

§§34–46. Pericles's Funeral Oration: an analysis and justification of democracy, empire, and material progress. Note section 40, where the ideal of a benevolent imperialism is asserted: "We make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them."

§§47–55. The plague. A lover of antitheses, Thucydides juxtaposes this horror story to the high idealism of Pericles's Funeral Oration, immediately preceding. Though the plague did not destroy Athens, it gives a foretaste of the panic and instability that indeed will destroy it later.

§§55–65. Pericles, under duress because of the plague, defends his policies and attempts to rally the citizens. Section 65 explains why Athens ultimately lost.

BOOK THREE

§§1–15. The revolt against Athens by Mytilene shows how important it was for Athens to keep control of her satellite states. Note as a sideline (section 8) how natural it was for the Mytilenian ambassadors to be told

to go to Olympia to consult with the Spartans and other Peloponnesians, since everyone was gathered there for the games.

§§36–50. The Mytilenian debate exemplifies the degeneration of Athenian government, which is increasingly given over to considerations of naked power, devoid of idealism. Cleon, the major figure here, is the antithesis of Pericles. He despises the policy of moderation toward the allies in the empire; he wishes to limit freedom of speech, thereby compromising Athenian democracy; he scorns intelligence and education. Even his opponent in debate, Diodotus, is motivated now more by cynicism than by Periclean idealism.

§§82–84. These are among the most famous passages in Thucydides's history; they speak to all times and places, not just to the situation in fifth-century Greece. Here we find Thucydides's strongest expression of his conviction that war leads to violence of attitude as well as arms, and that such violence brings about political chaos, which in turn causes military defeat. "The constancy of human nature, the premise upon which . . . the Archaeology is based, remains, but its implications are deeply pessimistic. . . . No longer is there any suggestion that knowing the recurrence of events will enable us to draw useful inferences about the future (I 22). . . . Gone is the optimism of the early part of the Histories, which binds the reader to Pericles . . ." (Connor, p. 104). The devastating passage about the degeneration of language is illustrated later in the Melian Dialogue, at V 111, where the Athenians describe honor as dishonor.

BOOK FOUR

§§3–6, 12, 19–23, 38–41. The battle at Pylos is crucial for several reasons: (1) It presages the later reversal whereby first Syracuse (VII 71) and then Sparta will win at sea. The Athenians, "at the outset Greece's major naval power, ultimately lose their fleet; the Spartans, traditionally a land power, acquire an empire and develop the navy to control it. Pylos is our first glimpse of the larger pattern" (Connor, p. 111). (2) It illustrates further Athenian mistakes — specifically, the refusal by Cleon to accept Sparta's overtures for peace. (Cf. V 14, where Thucydides says that the Athenians later regretted this refusal. V 16 gives Cleon's real motive.) Athenian leadership is now self-serving, and the defensive war advocated by Pericles is being transformed more and more into an offensive one of imperialistic expansion, seen of course primarily in the Sicilian expedition (note Alci-

biades's own statement, VI 90). The battle of Pylos takes place at the Bay of Navarino. This same Bay was the site of the battle that won Greece her independence in the nineteenth century.

§§117–119. The armistice between Athens and Sparta.

BOOK FIVE

§14–24. Peace treaty and alliance after ten years of war.

§26. Thucydides's second "introduction," as well as his comment on the so-called "peace" of Nicias.

§43. Alcibiades' enters the story.

§§65–74. The account of the battle of Mantinea is Thucydides's most vivid and detailed picture of how hoplites (heavily armed infantry) fought.

§§84–116. The famous Melian Dialogue shows Athens now completely ignoring the ideals set forth by Pericles in the Funeral Oration, e.g. "We make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them" (II 40). In their "negotiations" with the Melians, the Athenian generals are governed solely by considerations of power and expediency, and are thus following the line expressed by Cleon, earlier, in the Mytilenian debate (Book III). Athens is being transformed from within into a tyrannically imperialistic power instead of a benevolently imperialistic one. It is probably no accident that Thucydides follows the Melian Dialogue immediately with the long, tragic account of the Sicilian expedition: the cause of Athens's ultimate undoing. He sees Sicily as inverting the situation at Melos, since in the Sicilian disaster it is the Athenians who are now dependent on hope, chance, and speculation about the gods (VII 61, 77) as they are overwhelmed by an island power. Athenian arrogance at Melos has led in a Homeric way to folly and retribution. (There is some speculation that Thucydides fabricated the Melian Dialogue after the Sicilian disaster.)

BOOK SIX

§§1–5. Sicilian Antiquities. A convenient guide book to Sicily.

§§8–32. The launching of the Sicilian expedition introduces the two figures who will now dominate the scene: Nicias and Alcibiades. "It will be recalled that Pericles was said to have had four characteristics: he could see and expound what was necessary, he was patriotic and above money [II 60]. Athens' misfortune and the essential cause of her ruin was that

none of his successors combined all these traits. Nicias, who was honest but inactive, had the last two; Alcibiades, who was able but utterly self-interested, had the first two" (Finley, p. 203). Section 27 describes the crucial episode of the desecration of the Hermae, alleged to be the work of oligarchic clubs opposed to Athens' extreme democrats. This allegation, implicating Alcibiades, led to the biggest tactical mistake of all, his recall, which in turn led to his defection to Sparta. Thucydides's predictions at III 83 are being fulfilled: "Society had become divided into two ideologically hostile camps, and each viewed the other with suspicion."

§§53, 60–61. Alcibiades's recall and escape. Note especially the prevalence of suspicions in Athens (section 60) and compare with Pericles's description of the ideal situation in a democracy: "And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other" (II 37). Ironically, Athens' efforts "to avoid a tyranny have resulted in a loss of some of the most essential features of the free civic order Athens prized so highly. In seeking to protect itself from a tyranny Athens begins to become a tyrant and a tyrant whose effects are felt not so much by its subjects as by its own citizens" (Connor, p. 180). Compare the speech of Euphemus, the Athenian representative, especially at VI 85: "When a man or a city exercises absolute power the logical course is the course of self-interest . . . ; one must choose one's friends and enemies according to the circumstances on each particular occasion." "The confidence and restraint envisioned in the Funeral Oration are replaced by the suspicion and repression described in the sixth book. . . . There are few sudden breaks in mood or attitude, but rather a progressive hardening, as imperial dominance and the argument from advantage are freed from restraints and extended into new areas" (Connor, p. 184).

§§88–93. Alcibiades is now directing the Spartans' strategy against the Athenians! Thucydides utilizes Alcibiades's speech to the Spartans to show, once again, the moral decay of Athens. At III 82 Thucydides had said of revolutionary situations, "To fit in with change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings." Now (in VI 92) we see Alcibiades totally distorting the concept of patriotism.

BOOK SEVEN

§§7–8, 10–18. Nicias's letter reveals the pathetic situation of the Athenian land and naval forces at Syracuse.

§§36–41. First naval defeat of Athens in the Great Harbor.

§§42–56. Repeatedly, Nicias’s indecisiveness brings ruin. Here we see him hesitating because of the famous eclipse of the moon (section 50), and we also see the rationalist Thucydides’s scorn of such superstition.

§§59–71. The definitive Syracusan naval victory, vividly described. Plutarch, commenting on this passage, wrote: “The most effective historian is the one who makes his narrative like a painting by giving a visual quality to the sufferings and characters” (*Moralia* 347A).

§§72–87. Final and total destruction of the Athenian expedition—probably the most celebrated section in Thucydides, after the Funeral Oration. The treatment of the doomed Nicias is particularly sensitive and balanced. As Connor writes, Nicias “acted as best he could by his own values and by those of his society. And his mistakes were, after all, not vicious ones, but ones that he shared with his fellows—pride in courage, confidence in piety and integrity, and a reliance on the calculations of ships and money that had seemed so plausible and reassuring. . . . His death marks the destruction not only of the army, and symbolically of the city, but also of the constraints that convention and traditional morality sought to place upon appetite and self-aggrandisement” (p. 206). Thucydides’s last sentence (section 87) contains a word meaning “total annihilation” that was used previously by Herodotus in a famous comment on the fall of Troy: “When some divine power contrives that all should perish with total annihilation, [the gods] make clear to men that for great wrongdoings great also are the punishments from the gods” (II.120.5). It is tempting to see this as Thucydides’s own tacit comment on the Athenians despite Thucydides’s professed skepticism about theological explanations of events.

BOOK EIGHT, which Thucydides never finished, “describes the first steps in the dismemberment of the Athenian empire, telling how one by one Athens’ principal possessions in the Aegean, first Chios, then Miletus, then Thasos, then Euboea, were wrested from her by the combined efforts of those unnatural partners, the Spartans, the Persians, and Alcibiades. Thucydides . . . lays chief emphasis, as before, on the old problem of unity within Athens, praising highly both the conservative rule of the ten *probouloi* or guardians set up in the autumn of 413 and the so-called government of the Five Thousand which was in force from the autumn of

411 to the summer of 410 (VIII 97). . . . On the other hand, he vehemently criticizes the brief rule of the extreme oligarchs in 411 as both repressive in itself and destructive of the empire (VIII 64–66, 91). . . . The moderate constitution of the Five Thousand . . . must have seemed to him a second best, the nearest approach then possible to the vigorous yet united, humane yet expansive, city of Pericles. For it is that city which is constantly before his eyes, the city which he knew in his youth as yoking the creativity of freedom to effective leadership. Certainly her long and brilliant struggle proved how vastly stronger she originally was than her oligarchic rivals. . . . But Athens, he thought, failed through the excess of democracy itself. . . . The end of the war saw the city captured, the long walls dismantled, the fleet taken over, and oligarchies set up in all parts of the empire that had not been handed back to Persia.” (Finley, pp. 247–249).

Note: Thucydides’s history breaks off in 411. From this year until the end of the war in 404, the principal source is Xenophon’s *Hellenica*, a history of Greece from 411 to 362 B.C. Thucydides, born around 460, lived through the events he describes. Xenophon was born about when Pericles died, and was about twenty-five years old when the Greeks were defeated at Aegospotami in 405. The end of the Peloponnesian War is also recounted by a much later writer, Plutarch (c. A.D. 45–c. A.D. 120), in his biographies of Alcibiades and of Lysander, conveniently available in *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch* [Theseus, Solon, Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, Lysander], edited by Ian Scott-Kilvert and published by Penguin Books.

Looking at America through Fifty Centuries of Greek Longevity

I AM NOT GOING TO EXALT the ancient Greeks all out of proportion, transforming them into demigods; nor am I going to pretend that the Greek people stopped existing at the end of the Hellenistic period. Classicists sometimes do both. It is so easy, so tempting, to worship the ancient Greeks: their accomplishments were indeed staggering. But I am going to try for a fairer and broader view. If anything, I want us to sense how ordinary or even awful the Greeks were. That's why it's good to read Thucydides and not just Homer and the Greek dramatists. The violence, selfishness, vindictiveness, egotism and political instability are in both, but in Thucydides they occur in a harsher form, not softened and sweetened by the magic of art as they are in the literary works.

Why should we learn how awful the Greeks were? It is because then and only then shall we realize that they were just like us — no better as human beings, no different. Their actual accomplishments are staggering. But even more staggering is the fact that such all-too-human, entirely non-angelic people should have accomplished what they did in spite of themselves. And this should give us hope. We can now turn the formula around and realize not only that they were no different from us but that we are no different from them, certainly not in potential. If we cease deifying them, we give ourselves a chance. If they did so much, we can too. Perhaps we already have.

What I hope will happen now is that we shall learn about ourselves, shall think as much about American civilization as about Greek civilization, seeing in Greek failures and successes our own potential for disaster and, equally, for accomplishment — in short, that we shall not be just antiquarians marveling at something forever separated from ourselves, or forever separated even from present-day Greece.

Let me expand on these hopes in two different ways. First: No one who reads Thucydides can avoid the eerie feeling of similarity between our own situation at this point in time and that of the Greeks in the fifth century B.C. Secretary of State George Marshall recognized this in 1947 when he said, “I doubt seriously whether a man can think with full wisdom . . . regarding certain of the basic international issues today who has not . . . reviewed . . . the period of the Peloponnesian War and the Fall of Athens” (W. R. Connor, *Thucydides*, p. 3). Athens and Sparta, two different kinds of societies, competitors in the commercial sphere, each with lesser states under control — Athens and Sparta combined forces in 480 to resist the Persian barbarians. America and Russia, two different kinds of societies, each with lesser states under control, combined forces to resist the twentieth-century German barbarians. Athens, after its definitive victory against the Persians in 479, enjoyed a few decades of immense self-confidence, power, prosperity, and artistic fruition, clearly becoming king of the roost, a leading imperialistic power controlling satellite states through the Delian League. The United States, after its victory against the Germans, began to enjoy a similar extraordinary self-confidence, power, and prosperity, clearly becoming leader of the free world, with NATO our equivalent of the Athenians’ Delian League. But this lovely situation did not last in Greece. The Athenian satellites became uneasy and rebellious; Sparta, previously allied with Athens in a common cause against the Persians, grew increasingly antagonistic; cold war turned hot, first in various colonies far away from either of the principal belligerents, then on Attic soil itself. By fighting to preserve the way of life proudly articulated by Pericles in his Funeral Oration, Athens actually lost of its own accord — if we are to believe Thucydides — many of the qualities that supposedly would be lost only if the Spartans had conquered. Poor decisions were made, poor leaders chosen, and by the end of the century the Spartans had conquered Athens, or — if once again we are to believe Thucydides — the Athenians had undone themselves. They did not go under all at once; fourth-century Athens was still remarkable. But democracy was seriously weakened, Athenian hegemony gave way, and within fifty years or so the Macedonians, taking advantage of Sparta’s inability to remain predominant, ushered in a monarchical system and changed other aspects of life so completely that we need to speak of a new age, the Hellenistic one, beginning with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and bringing to an end the classical period.

We obviously don't know what our own equivalent to this scenario will be because it hasn't happened yet. So far, we are just at the beginning, at the point when the two superpowers formerly allied against the common German barbarian are now opposed to each other, allowing their cold war to become hot only in various "colonies" (including Greece itself from 1944 to 1949). Whether we will make the mistakes that the Athenians made—their arrogance against weaker allies; their compulsion to keep expanding the empire—and will undo ourselves, no one knows. Which third group—the Chinese? the Arabs?—will acquire hegemony after the United States and Russia exhaust themselves, no one knows.

But one thing, I believe, can be said with certainty on the basis of both Greek history in particular and human history in general: No single people or nation stays on top for very long. That, I hope, is the first lesson that we shall learn about ourselves as a result of learning about Greece. This certainly is the only rational prediction; as we study Greece (the nation that introduced rationality into western culture) we should become more willing to be rational ourselves. To arrive at the opposite conclusion would be to make ourselves guilty of what the Greeks called hubris, an insult against the gods, who alone are unchanging and immortal. We see this manifested in the celebrated story of Solon and Croesus that I shall include later on. For now, let's recall the equally celebrated adage on Apollo's temple at Delphi: "Know thyself." Primarily, this means "Know that thou art mortal." Since this applies to nations as well as individuals, let's grant the probability that America, either sooner or later, definitively or provisionally, will lose its present status as a dominant power.

Let me now try to expand in a second way upon my original hopes, which were (1) that we would not allow our acknowledgement of ancient Greek accomplishments to make us ignore ancient Greek failures, and (2) that we would not pretend that Greek civilization ceased to exist after the Hellenistic age. American civilization has lasted for almost four centuries. If you want to think of us as deriving from Anglo-Saxon civilization, then we have lasted as a culture for almost fifteen centuries. Not bad! But throughout our four centuries in the New World, we have never been overwhelmed by an invader to the extent of being killed off, suppressed, or uprooted to such a degree that our civilization seemed to die. The Greeks have existed for forty centuries against our four, and if you want to think of them as deriving from Minoan civilization—which is certainly just as fair (or unfair) as connecting us with the Anglo-Saxons—then they

have existed for at least fifty centuries as against our fifteen. But—and this is what is so important—throughout those fifty centuries they have been repeatedly wiped out, obliterated, uprooted, decimated, dislocated by earthquakes, tidal waves, fire, foreign invasion, civil war to such a degree that their civilization has seemed to die over and over again. The Minoan “old palaces” were destroyed around 1700 B.C.; new palaces replaced them. The new palaces were destroyed less than three hundred years later, around 1450 B.C., and two hundred and fifty years after this destruction the Mycenaean ones on the mainland suffered a similar fate with loss of an entire way of life, loss even of literacy, ushering in a prolonged dark age. Things went much better from the ninth century until the fourth, and the great momentum established in those five hundred years sustained Greek culture for still another six hundred or so, despite the disaster of the Peloponnesian War, despite the totally different conditions after Alexander’s conquests, despite Rome’s acquisition of political hegemony—until the one enemy I have neglected to mention, Christianity, finished Hellenism off (or seemed to) in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries of our era. Yet, instead of succumbing fully to Christianity, Greek culture and individual Greek personalities, not to mention the Greek language, infiltrated the new mode of existence sufficiently to make various revivals of pagan learning possible in the ninth century and afterwards in Byzantium, stimulating our own western renaissance when Greek scholars like George Gemistos, John Bessarion, and Emmanuel Chrysolaras went to Italy shortly before the fall of Constantinople, until that way of life, too, succumbed on Tuesday morning, May 29, 1453, when the 23-year-old Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II conquered the queen of cities, continuer of Greek culture from Athens, Alexandria, and Rome, whereupon the Greeks under Turkish rule entered still another dark age.

The point I am making—the all-too-obvious point—is that throughout all this neither the Greeks themselves as an identifiable nation nor the Greek language (perhaps the single most important ingredient of Greek tenacity), nor even pagan Greek culture ever really disappeared. This is obvious now. But we should not take this continual survival for granted. All these things could easily have disappeared, indeed did disappear in some instances, a fact that should make us appreciate all the more their survival in most instances. Many Greeks in Ottoman-occupied areas “turned Turk” in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, changing their

religion and language; many Greeks in the United States today are “turning American,” losing religion, language and culture — or, perhaps just as regrettably, clinging to empty forms of the old culture. This happened in ancient times as well, for example to Greek colonists in Italy during the Roman era. Listen to a relevant poem by Cavafy, based on an account written circa A.D. 200. The title is “Poseidonians.”

The Poseidonians forgot the Greek language
after so many centuries of mingling
with Tyrrhenians, Latins, and other foreigners.
The only thing surviving from their ancestors was a Greek festival,
with beautiful rites with lyres and flutes, contests and garlands.
And it was their habit toward the festival's end to tell each other
about their ancient customs and once again to speak Greek
names that hardly any of them still recognized.
And so their festival always had a melancholy ending
because they remembered that they too were Greeks,
they too once upon a time were citizens of Magna Graecia.
But how they'd fallen now, how they'd changed,
living and speaking like barbarians,
cut off so disastrously from the Greek way of life.

The remarkable thing is that in most cases this did not happen. The language and the overwhelming sense of Greekness have been retained, despite everything, from ancient days until the present.

I obviously cannot give a full account of Greek culture continuing in many centers inside and outside of Greece proper. But I do wish to give a few details about post-Hellenistic Athens. One of the reasons that this city survived culturally for so many centuries after all power had passed to Rome was that it remained a center of education. Pericles's boast in the Funeral Oration that “our city is an education to Greece” (II. 41) was an understatement, for Athens, even after her inevitable decay as an imperial power, became an education to everyone. Americans, at least until recently, have tended to come east for a quality education. The ancients went to Athens, where “Harvard,” “Yale,” “Dartmouth,” “Columbia,” “Brown,” and “Princeton” were all in the same city, fiercely competing for students, the difference being that a prospective student did not apply to one in advance but simply arrived in Athens and was recruited on the spot by

an avid alumni representative. Listen to the account of a freshman named Eunapius, Proaeresius College '66 (that is A.D. 366). This young man came to Athens with a whole shipload of others and bypassed the system.

I crossed over from Asia to Athens in my sixteenth year [he wrote many years later]. We arrived at the Piraeus late at night. Before any of the usual proceedings could take place — many were lying in wait for the ship at dockside, mad enthusiasts each for his own particular school — the captain and his passengers went straight to Athens, on foot.

The captain was an old friend of Proaeresius's. Knocking at his door, he ushered in this whole crowd of students, so many that, at a time when battles were being fought to win only one or two pupils, the newcomers seemed enough in themselves to man all the schools [in Athens]. Some of these youths were distinguished for physical strength; some had more bulky purses . . . [The upperclassmen] made the usual demonstrations with jokes and laughter at their expense.

Students like Eunapius had been pouring in for centuries and Athens had survived in large part because of her schools. Cicero was educated there, as was the future emperor Julian the Apostate, and the future saints Gregory Nazianzen and Basil, fathers of the church — pagan Athens training its own enemies just as Oxford and Cambridge trained future enemies of the British empire. But in 381, less than two decades after Eunapius's arrival, the Roman emperor Theodosius ordered his subjects, including those in the depopulated province called Hellas, to change their gods under pain of death, and Justinian the Great finally closed the schools themselves in 529. Athens, having lost its power but having survived for seven additional centuries as an educational center, now lost everything. So did Alexandria, the other great center of education and scholarship, only to emerge again, incredibly, as a major site of Greek commerce, wealth, and culture in the late nineteenth century, after an interval of about 1500 years.

But let's stay with Athens. The city went under, the Parthenon and Acropolis being used, successively, as a Byzantine cathedral, a crusader's castle where only French was spoken, a Frankish cathedral known as St. Mary's of Athens, a Catalan castle, a Florentine castle, a Turkish castle and mosque (doubling as powder magazine in 1687 when "a fortunate shot," as Morosini described it to the Venetian senate, blew up the great

Periclean temple), a Venetian castle, a Turkish castle again, until 1833 when the Ottoman garrison evacuated the once-noble city, which now had all of three hundred houses, one street of any consequence and — to quote an English traveler in 1832 — “no books, no lamps, no windows, no carriages, no newspapers, no post office . . .” Yet Athens, too, like Alexandria, emerged after fourteen hundred or fifteen hundred years to become the center once again of a vibrantly creative culture.

That the achievement of classical Greece is extraordinary no one can deny. But equally extraordinary, I submit, is the tenacity of the Greek people over fifty centuries, a tenacity without which there never would have been a Periclean age, since classical Greece, we must always remember, was not a beginning but a renewal after at least three major catastrophes. Typically, most temples that one visits today are the third, fourth, or fifth on the same site; Schliemann and his successors found the ruins of nine cities at Troy, one on top of the other. This is not just an interesting archaeological datum. It means that successive generations of people there, as elsewhere, built, lost everything, built again . . . and then yet again. The secret of Greece, says Nikos Kazantzakis, is that like the mythological Phoenix it burns, turns to ashes, and then rises again out of its own ashes, renewed. And one of the most fascinating aspects of this tenacity and renewal is that, contrary to all the sentimentality about the particular area of the world actually called Greece (the “unique” sunlight, the “classical” sparseness of the landscape, and all the other clichés), Greece is not really a place at all but a culture that has seemed able to renew itself almost anywhere. When the Mycenaean palace system was obliterated, Greek culture revived — slowly — in Aegina, Corinth, Miletus, Syracuse, and of course Athens. From there it went to Alexandria, from there to Constantinople, then back to Crete; from there to Venice and the Ionian islands, Vienna, Paris, Odessa; and today, although the center of Greek culture is Athens once again, an ambitious and systematic system of education for Greeks is being carried out in Melbourne, Australia, and the fourth largest Greek city in the world is Astoria, Long Island, New York, which in some senses is a thriving Greek colony just as, say, Sicilian Syracuse used to be, with considerable amounts of money flowing back to the home country, which sends out teachers, priests, and sailors, as in ancient times. It is customary to shudder when we read in Plutarch that Themistocles, just before the battle of Salamis, threatened to move the entire population of Athens to

Siris in southern Italy and to found there “as free a city . . . as the one they [had] sacrificed.” If this had happened, we say, there would never have been a Parthenon or a Periclean age. Perhaps so. But it is also possible that these enterprising and inventive people would have produced comparable wonders elsewhere, because the key elements are the liveliness and perseverance I have been discussing, rather than any particular location.

“Know thyself,” Greek culture admonishes us. We can add what James Joyce says in his very Greek novel, *Ulysses* — namely, that we come to know ourselves by “walking through others.” What I have tried to suggest is that we Americans can come to know ourselves better by walking through Thucydides. We should gain from Greek history some perspective on the power, wealth, self-confidence, and political hegemony that we Americans currently enjoy. Greek precept and history tell us that it would be the wildest folly to believe that this good fortune is likely to continue forever. Consequently, the next questions become: Will we, like the Greeks, be able to survive and revive? Do we have a way of life in which we believe so strongly that we will keep it alive, identifiably as American, throughout all the downswings of history? More specifically, do we possess the determination, resources, and intelligence that will make us sought-after educators beyond our time of hegemony in the way that the Greeks became educators to the world after the collapse of Athens and again after the collapse of Constantinople?

When I first arrived to teach at Dartmouth, my neighbor was a young professor of psychology who had proved scientifically by means of extensive worldwide interviews, and the most sophisticated methods of statistical sampling, that Americans are the happiest people on earth. Perhaps he was right. But, like most Americans, and unlike most Greeks, he lived and thought only in the present, as if the past and future did not exist. There was no mention in his study of the famous story in Herodotus about the Athenian sage, Solon, and Croesus, the King of Lydia.

I’ll quote the version given us by Plutarch.

When Solon visited Sardis, King Croesus — after taking care to display his huge wealth in the most ostentatious fashion — asked Solon whether he had ever known anyone more fortunate than he. Solon said that he had, and mentioned the name of Tellus, . . . an honest man [who] had left behind him children who upheld his good name, . . . had passed his life without ever being in serious want, and . . . had

ended it by dying gloriously in battle for his country. By this time Croesus had already come to regard Solon as an eccentric . . . individual . . . [but] in spite of this he asked him a second time whether, after Tellus, he knew of any man more fortunate than himself. Solon . . . named Cleobis and Biton, two men who had no equals in brotherly affection and in their devotion to their mother. Once, he told Croesus, when the carriage in which she was riding was delayed by the oxen, they harnessed themselves to the yoke and pulled her to the Temple of Hera. All the citizens congratulated her . . . and then the two men, after they had sacrificed and drunk wine, lay down and never rose again, but were found to have died a painless and untroubled death, with all their honours fresh upon them.

Croesus was now furious. “Why didn’t you include me?” he shouted. And Solon pointed the moral: “King of the Lydians, . . . human life is subject to innumerable shifts of fortune. [We Greeks have a cautious habit of mind that] forbids us to take pride in the good things of the present or to admire a man’s prosperity while there is still time for it to change. The future bears down upon each one of us with all the hazards of the unknown, and we can only count a man happy when the gods have granted him good fortune to the end.”

This story was definitely not a part of my former colleague’s work. But others, I hope, will expand their perspectives beyond the present and learn to be like Solon — i.e., to look beyond current prosperity and therefore to know ourselves as mortal. Once we do this, we will also, I hope, begin to wonder whether we will display a Greek tenacity and liveliness in adversity, whether we will build and rebuild our cities, retain a distinctive culture even if relocated on another continent, and — more importantly — whether we have, or will have at some point, a culture that is worth being preserved, revived, and taught to others.

The Greeks — as bad as they were, as ordinary and reprehensible in so many ways — not only hung on, but produced something remarkable at each new stage: Mycenaean, classical, Hellenistic, Byzantine, and modern. How will we compare, fifty centuries from now, if we still exist at all as an identifiable people? Obviously, we don’t know. But it might be useful if we too tried to gain some insight concerning what gave the Greeks their triple power of accomplishment, survival, and renewal.

Inventing Greece

ABSTRACT

One way to look at nationalism is via metaphysics. This view tells us that nationalism, at the deepest level, acts as a bulwark against death, fate, and contingency. In short, nationalism replaces religion, taking over attributes previously assigned only to God and claiming qualities for the state that clearly are not true. Indeed, nationalism is invented: it is a fiction.

The invention of Greece can be seen interestingly via the invention of Ireland, since the two nations are so similar. Nor does Greece differ fundamentally from other European nations. In all cases, the phenomenon of nationalism, which is atomistic, developed in the void left by the breakdown of the unified, organicist Christian worldview.

The Neohellenic eighteenth-century Enlightenment invented a native past for Greece as well as a glorious future. The chief figure, Adamantios Korais, contributed a particularistic conception of what is real, a diachronic view of history, and a belief in progress. But the distortions thus created were so gross that they could not continue without revision during the nineteenth century. What happened then was sparked by Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer's contention that all Ancient Greek traces had become extinct and by Constantine Paparrhigopoulos's rebuttal that the Byzantines had re-Hellenized Attica in the tenth century. This, plus a new interest in folklore stimulated by German romanticism, tended to return Greek nationalism to a steady state and to an organic, synthetic view of history. But nationalism was reinvented yet again in the twentieth century, this time under the influence of European modernism, which views the "real" as residing neither in particulars nor in universals but in imagination. Ultimate value was thus aestheticized; Greece became a metaphor, a *subjective* value of infinite importance, expressed for example in George Seferis's "The King of Asine."

What we need to realize in the twenty-first century, in addition to the invented nature of nationalism, is that the world has had quite enough of this invention. Let us redevelop an all-embracing system of values that goes beyond the nation-state.

I WAS ONCE PRIVILEGED to sit next to the late Polish poet Czesław Miłosz at lunch some years ago and to talk with him at length. He had recently returned from Poland, which then was still under communist control. When we began discussing the two great economic systems competing in the Cold War, I voiced my perplexity regarding the forces in our own system that make industrial CEOs feel that salaries of many millions of dollars are their due. I felt that communism, for all its faults, maintained a better relation between the compensation of those directing factories and those working in them. He agreed but then went on to surprise me by saying that, at the deepest level, there is no difference at all between capitalism and communism. His point was that both systems supposedly provide a way to cheat death. Capitalism does this by encouraging the acquisition of sufficient *individual* security to overcome all kinds of contingencies in one's own life and the future life of one's family, thus guaranteeing a sort of "immortality"; communism does the same by encouraging the acquisition of sufficient *communal* security to provide exactly the same benefits. In both cases, the complexity of life and its continued unpredictability encourage the acquisition of much more security than is needed, because we always fear the loss of what we have. Thus an income of ten million dollars needs to become one of twenty or fifty million, and a communist state needs to be surrounded on all sides by other states under its control to lessen the possibility of invasion by the capitalist enemy.

Miłosz was interpreting both politics and economics via what I suppose we may call metaphysics. In this essay, I want to do the same with nationalism (should we perhaps say "nationism"?), for I believe that nationalism, too, at the deepest level, acts as a bulwark against death, fate, and contingency, providing a way to cheat those ever-present forces. In short, nationalism has replaced religion in this regard. None of this, of course, is a new discovery; on the contrary, it is almost a commonplace in the discussion of nationalism. I quote, for example, from the eloquent summary by Gregory Jusdanis:

Why is the appeal of nationalism so seemingly universal? The answer may lie ultimately in the metaphysics of nationalism, which has transformed it into the global theology of the modern age. Nationalist discourse, with its tales of progress, self-fulfillment, and manifest destiny, allows modern individuals to deny their mortality in the face of change. . . . [N]ationalism allows [people] to forget contingency . . .¹

The best proof of the equation “nationalism = religion” is provided, I suppose, by how people behave. The history of religion gives ample evidence of people’s willingness to die for their faith. What else in the modern world provides similar evidence, besides nationalism? Miłosz equated economic systems with religion, yet I very much doubt that people are willing to die for “capitalism” as an abstract concept, much less for Coca-Cola or General Motors, or even for “communism” as distinct from The Soviet Union, say, or Vietnam, Cuba, or China. But people fight and die all the time, alas, for their nation — for Bosnia, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, Syria — and seem seldom to question the appropriateness of such martyrdom, which means that the nation has usurped the role of religion in providing the ultimate justification for existence. “Dying for one’s country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur that dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International cannot rival, for these are all bodies one can join or leave at easy will.”²

Clearly, the nation has taken over attributes previously assigned only to God. As Stathis Gourgouris in his book *Dream Nation* reminds us, “No nation can imagine its death.”³ Although nations do have a beginning, they seemingly have no end and thus are thought to be at least relatively immortal. They are also thought to be purely pure and perfectly perfect. When various presidents say, as they invariably do, that the United States is the greatest nation on earth or the greatest democracy in the world, no one blushes, any more than people do when the minister in his pulpit declares that the God who permits horrendous evil in the world is nevertheless absolutely good. It should not require much rational perception to understand that God (shorthand for the nature of being) is much more complicated: good/bad, immortal/mortal, eternal/temporal, benign/ma-

lignant, concerned/indifferent, and so forth — indeed, ultimately incomprehensible. And the United States, or any other nation, is great in some ways but wanting in others. To be more specific, with only about 5 percent of the world's population, Americans account for 22% of global emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide⁴; our newspapers are intellectually inferior to some of those in Greece; our schools do not teach languages nearly as well as schools do in The Netherlands; and we are one of only six countries in the world that allow teenage criminals to be executed, the others being Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia! On the other hand, we are a marvelously productive and creative people. What I am leading to, of course, is the now common perception that nationality is a fiction rather than a truth — a very selective and distorting fiction that includes certain things and excludes or forgets others, more or less the same way that theology distorts the nature of being.

Nationalism is invented. Benedict Anderson, perhaps the most cited author of the 1990s, defines the nation as “an *imagined* political community”⁵ and cites Ernest Gellner's dictum that nationalism “is not the *awakening* of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.”⁶ Gourgouris goes further, calling nationalistic discourse “signs of idolatry” or the “national fantasy” and the institution of the nation a process “akin to what Freud called dream-work.”⁷

The pervasiveness of this view is evidenced in a very fine book entitled *Inventing Ireland* (1995) whose author, Declan Kiberd, insists that the first step in the creation (or re-creation) of the Irish nation was to instill in the Irish people “a *self-belief* which might in time lead to social and cultural prosperity.”⁸ In Ireland, as in so many other cultures, this was accomplished largely through literature. In America, for example, it was James Fenimore Cooper who, in a series of novels and tracts published between 1823 and 1841, helped to invent the American idolatry, dream-work, or fantasy of well-ordered individual farms and grazing sheep linked in a rural idyll,⁹ hiding the genocide that had made this possible (also see Anderson, p. 202). This romantic invention was inaugurated by Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and extended by Emerson's 1837 Phi Beta Kappa oration “The American Scholar,” by Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, which appeared in increasingly large editions between 1855 and 1892, and by Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884;

see Anderson, p. 203). In Finland, *The Kalevala*, an epic published in 1849, caused the cultural awakening that led to the independent Finnish nation. One could investigate comparable influences in other nations. But I would like to return for a few moments to Ireland as a way of leading to the invention of Greece, because Ireland and Greece are so similar in so many ways, a fact that will help make entirely clear that what happened in Greece was not at all unique.

In what ways are Ireland and Greece similar? In the twentieth century, Ireland and Greece, the one at the extreme western verge of Europe, the other at the extreme eastern verge, produced the most extraordinary literary renaissances in occidental culture. Both nations still had a peasant tradition at the beginning of the century. As John Millington Synge wrote in 1907 about Ireland in his famous preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, “for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.”¹⁰ Both Ireland and Greece had (and have) a diaspora; both were occupied for centuries by a foreign power, in both cases the occupied and the occupier being geographical neighbors who shared affinities of climate, temperament, and culture; both were dominated by a single Christian church; intellectuals in both felt very much on the fringe of things and considered Paris or London the center; both needed to deal with a “language question”; both reached back to a glorious past in order to feel distinguished yet at the same time suffered constrictions owing to ancestor worship; both exalted the “folk” as repositories of virtue and wisdom; both were mightily influenced by the American Revolution and by the phenomenon of a national bard seen in Walt Whitman; both experienced grave internal discord that undermined the national purpose; both sometimes crucified their own best leaders (Parnell, Venizelos), both experienced civil wars “in which brother fought brother and men who had recently been comrades against a foreign enemy now killed and executed former friends.”¹¹

Let us look at some of the findings in Kiberd’s *Inventing Ireland*. I will cite them without comment in the hope that my readers will see in some at least, if not in all, the applicability to Greece as well.¹²

[C]ultural revival preceded and in many ways enabled the political revolution that followed.

The Irish resolved . . . to instill in their people a self-belief which might in time lead to social and cultural prosperity.

In theory, two kinds of freedom were available to the Irish: the return to a past, pre-colonial Gaelic identity . . . or the reconstruction of a national identity, beginning from first principles all over again. . . . Inevitably, neither model was sufficient unto itself: even its stoutest defenders were compelled . . . to “borrow” some elements of the alternative version.

In other words, the Irish wished to be modern and counter-modern in one and the same gesture.

[P]eople are lulled by their leaders to “become drunk on remembrance,” to recover the past as fetish rather than to live in the flow of actual history.

James Connolly’s sad prediction came true: the worship of the past really was a way of reconciling people to the mediocrity of the present.

The question . . . was: how to build a future on the past without returning to it?

[T]he choice was one between nationality or cosmopolitanism. . . . Were the Irish a hybrid people . . . ? Or were they a pure, unitary race, dedicated to defending a romantic notion of integrity?

. . . a nation has a *plurality* of identities, constantly remaking themselves in perpetual renewals. . . . [N]ationalist politicians, instead, . . . said: there is an essential Ireland to be served, and a definitive all-Ireland mind to be described.

The way was open for a literary movement to fill the political vacuum. Its writers would take Standish O’Grady’s versions of the Cuchulain legend, and interpret the hero not as an exemplar for the Anglo-Irish overlords but as a model for those who were about to displace them.

The Irish writer has always been confronted with a choice. This is the dilemma of whether to write for the native audience . . . or to produce texts for consumption in Britain and North America.

The mistake of the [Irish] revivalists would be repeated in Africa and India in later decades: too often an “African” or an “Indian” culture would simply be one which could be easily translated into forms comprehensible to European imperial minds. . . . Since “Ireland” in such a construction was largely an English invention, those who took upon themselves the burden of having an idea of Ireland were often the most Anglicized of the natives.

Standard Irish sought to erase dialectal differences. . . . Generations of children came to see it not as a gift but as a threat. . . . The whole burden of language revival was placed on hard-pressed schoolteachers, in the innocent belief that the substitution of Irish for English in the youthful mind would be enough to deanglicize Ireland.

[James Joyce] knew that his national culture, in which a centuries-old oral tradition was challenged by the onset of print, must take due account of both processes.

The . . . poems [of Whitman and Yeats] are founded on a necessary contradiction: they celebrate a nation’s soul, while at the same time insisting that it has yet to be made.

[A]t root the English and Irish are rather similar peoples, who have nonetheless decided to perform versions of Englishness and Irishness to one another. . . . Each group projects onto the other many attributes which it has denied in itself.

The aim of recent Irish historians [is] to replace the old morality-tale of Holy Ireland versus Perfidious Albion with a less sentimental and simplified account.

Preening themselves on some occasions for being “like no other people on earth,” arraigning themselves on others, [the Irish] often failed to regard Irish experience as representative of human experience . . .

One could, I believe, take each of the above assertions and, changing the references from Ireland to Greece, and from England to Turkey or the

Ottoman Empire, apply them more or less to the Greek situation. Not that the two situations are identical — of course they are not. Nevertheless, my point is that “inventing Greece” was and is largely a phenomenon characteristic of the nationalistic inventions of other nations.

Another way of saying this, I suppose, is that “Greek exceptionalism” is a position that really should be mistrusted. It is often asserted, for example, that Greece differs fundamentally from the West because it never had a Renaissance or Reformation. Yet certain fundamental changes occurring for example in England as a result of the Western Renaissance and Reformation are clearly found in Greece as well. I intend to examine them, as before, using a metaphysical rather than an economic approach because I continue to believe that, at the deepest level, the phenomenon of Western nationalism has a religious character that fills the void left by the breakdown of the Christian world-view. But let us use certain literary changes as an entrée to this subject. What happened in England in the seventeenth century was the development of a new genre, the so-called realistic novel. But it is wrong to say that older texts were not realistic. We must instead speak of two different concepts of what is real. For older texts, the real resides in universals; for the novel, it resides in particulars. The novel is atomistic. It reflects, in the formulation of Ian Watt in his classic study *The Rise of the Novel*, “that vast transformation of Western civilization since the Renaissance which has replaced the unified world picture of the Middle Ages with another very different one — one which presents us, essentially, with a developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places.”¹³ Watt goes on to describe the specific effects of this atomistic world-view on plot and characterization. “‘Defoe and Richardson are the first great writers in [English] literature who did not take their plots from mythology, . . . legend or previous literature’ since they, unlike older writers, rejected the ‘premise . . . that, since Nature is essentially complete and unchanging, its records . . . constitute a definite repertoire of human experience.’ Plots are now ‘acted out by particular people in particular circumstances, rather than . . . by general human types. Time in novels resists anachronism. Furthermore, in the new genre ‘a causal connection operating through time replaces the reliance of earlier narratives on disguises and coincidences.’ Place, instead of being vague or general, as in Shakespeare’s plays, takes on the specificity of a guidebook.”¹⁴

All this is a sea change, a fundamental alteration in metaphysical understanding manifested in English literature probably a century or more after the cultural change actually began to take place. “Of course, the older conception — the unified world view of the Middle Ages — did not capitulate entirely to the atomistic view, but continued in various forms . . . — for example, the organicist model of evolution promulgated in the eighteenth century by . . . Herder, in which individual entities are seen ‘as components of processes which aggregate into wholes greater than . . . the sum of their parts.’”¹⁵

What we see in Greece is that its invented nationalism/nationism is initially based upon the atomistic model described above, and could never have occurred without that prior development, but that later phases of this same invention conform to the organicist model. Note that both phases respond, although in different ways, to the breakdown of Christian metaphysics, and also that both phases conform to what was also happening in Western Europe. Thus they lead us once again to mistrust any claims for Greek exceptionalism. What happened in Greece as elsewhere (Ireland, for example) was the invention of a myth of nationality that provided, at the deepest level, what religion had previously provided — namely, a metaphysical rationale for life and death: a meaning for what would otherwise be our futile, meaningless existence. No matter if the myth took various forms, for any myth is always the sum of its many variations.

With all this as prelude, let me now concentrate specifically, and in more detail, on “inventing Greece.”

We have heard that Greece did not have a Renaissance or a Reformation. But its intellectuals outside of Greece did have an Enlightenment, and this was the force that transferred to Greece many of the changes that had occurred earlier in the West, changes ironically stimulated by the rediscovery of Ancient Greek humanism. It is true that Gourgouris in *Dream Nation*, which examines the role of the Enlightenment in inventing Greece, warns that it is “rather misguided to perceive the Neohellenic Enlightenment merely as the vehicle for the Westernization or the modernization of Greece. . . . It hardly consists,” he argues, “in a simple Western imposition of ideas.” Nevertheless, he agrees with earlier scholars, in particular K. Th. Dimaras, that it “does involve the transposition of the *currency* of [European] ideas prevalent during the late eighteenth century.”¹⁶ It creates, he continues, “a new tradition, it institutes a new image

of what Neohellenic culture is . . .”¹⁷ What the Enlightenment created, he claims, was a new identity involving “a social homogeneity, a linguistic tradition, and a geographical continuity: in other words, a *native past*”¹⁸ all juxtaposed to Ottoman “barbarism.” The great figure, of course, was Adamantios Korais, who amalgamated European Philhellenism’s adulation of pagan Greece with enthusiasm for the French Revolution and an utter revulsion against what he considered the superstitions of the Orthodox Church. Born in Smyrna in 1748, he became friendly with a Dutch clergyman who despised the Turk and emphasized how much Europeans venerated the ancient Greeks. Korais went to Holland in 1772 and stayed for six years. Returning to Smyrna, he found Greek life disgusting. In 1782 he left for France, eventually moving to Paris, which he considered a new Athens, and witnessing there the French Revolution at first hand (see Kedourie, pp. 38–40). Gourgouris describes Korais’s contribution as “a visionary . . . conception of a culture that does not yet exist and thus literally has to be made.”¹⁹ “Nationalism . . . rests on the assumption that a nation must have a past. [But it] also rests on another assumption, no less fundamental, namely, that a nation must have a future . . . a variant of the idea of progress which has been the dominant strand in modern European culture.”²⁰ Korais invented both a past and a future for Greece as a way of providing a new identity. He fulfilled these needs most famously in his “Report on the Present State of Civilization in Greece,” delivered as a lecture in Paris in 1803, in which we see “eloquently expressed the customary appeal to a glorious past, earnest of a still more glorious future, and warrant for the subversion of present and existing institutions.”²¹ I offer here a few quotes from the lecture in order to convey a sense of his project:

What then was to be seen in that unhappy Greece, birthplace of the sciences and the arts? What in fact may be seen among almost all enslaved peoples: a superstitious and ignorant clergy, leading as they liked an even more ignorant people . . .²²

[W]ho is better able than you [Greek merchants] to appreciate our ancestors’ values, virtues, and learning? Gaining honor from the Greek name, it is in turn your duty to bring it honor, by calling forth once against in the midst of degraded Greece, its ancient exaltation and splendor.²³

Elie Kedourie's comments are instructive. "Koraïs," she says, "saw the modern Greeks through the golden haze of Western Hellenism in the eighteenth century. His writings are a reflection, an echo, of European sentiments and prejudices. . . . European scholars and writers of the eighteenth century looked upon Periclean Athens as a peak of human achievement and all that followed thereafter in Greek history as lamentable decline and decadence; and Koraïs followed suit, as is shown by his violent diatribes against the Orthodox Church of his day and its Byzantine matrix."²⁴

A significant part of Koraïs's project, of course, was his invention of *katharévoussa*, for which unfortunately he acquired a bad name—he is satirized mercilessly, for example, in Solomos's *Diálogos*. But Koraïs was following the conviction of his time that language is the essence of nationality. As his great opponent, Ioannis Psicharis, said a century later, "Language and fatherland are the same."²⁵ I once spent a considerable time studying Koraïs's career, especially the linguistic element, and reached the conclusion that this man was truly admirable in his attempt to reach a compromise between the demotic of his day and the extreme Atticism recommended by Panayotis Soutsos and others. It is to his credit, "and a measure of his extraordinary energy, that compromise tended to be viewed by him not as a concession, but instead as the appropriate and proper linguistic solution for his people. He argued generally from strength, not weakness."²⁶ But his basic premises—namely, (a) that "the Hellenic language" automatically "refines the habits of the young, making them more elegant and wise," not to mention "peaceful, freedom-loving, and virtuous," and (b) that if Greeks rediscovered the classics they, too, like Western Europeans, would undergo a Renaissance—are questionable. What he did contribute was the atomistic world-view of which I spoke earlier: a particularistic rather than universal conception of what is real, a diachronic rather than synchronic view of history, a belief in progress rather than in a steady state. "In short," as Philip Sherrard concludes with his customary acerbity, "what Koraïs envisaged was the 'emancipation' of Greece in terms of the secular liberalism and humanist enlightenment of the contemporary West."²⁷ It is important to add that this conception, as well as later ones, had two axes, a vertical and a horizontal. The vertical is the one I have been describing, reaching back to a past that is ideal-

ized and mythicized (after all, there is nothing about slavery in Korai's evocation of Ancient Greece, or indeed about homosexuality, or internal discord, or the brevity of Periclean democracy), and reaching forward to a utopian future. This vertical axis was meant to convey to the barbarized Greeks of the Ottoman Empire a "sense of continuity in time and unity in space."²⁸ The horizontal axis is the one extending from contemporary Greece out to contemporary Europe. The Ancient Greece evoked by Korai's was essentially the invention of Western philhellenes. Even *katharévousa*, although ostensibly meant to refine those who spoke and wrote "the Hellenic language," making them more elegant, wise, freedom-loving, and virtuous (although not necessarily peaceful) by eliminating from their vocabulary the barbarity of Turkish words that kept them chained to their degeneracy—even *katharévousa* was produced not just for the Ottomanized Greeks, but also for Western philhellenes, as Korai's reveals when he confesses that his notes, "written in our common tongue, were ready for the printers when some friends of mine—philhellenes expert in our ancient but not our modern language—eventually persuaded me to Hellenize [my notes] so that they might be understood . . . by the scholars of Europe, who are ignorant of Modern Greek."²⁹

Such, more or less, was the first form of invented Greek nationality—the initial version, if you will, of the myth that, displacing the Christian world-view, provided at the deepest level a metaphysical rationale for life and death, a meaning for what would otherwise be a futile, meaningless existence. No matter that it was a double distortion: a distortion of Ancient Greek reality, and a distortion as well of Modern Greek reality. It provided (and to some degree still provides) a sense of connection to something apparently admirable, something that matters, and something even "eternal," for, as I stated earlier, no nation can imagine its own death. As for its beginning, Ancient Greek culture lay far enough back in hazy antiquity to seem never to have not been there. In sum, Greek nationality, imagined in this way as the inheritor of ancient glory, took on religious force as a way to cheat contingency and fate by giving existence a kind of supernal meaning.

Regarding the distortion of Modern Greece, one may object that, no matter what happened in Western Europe regarding the gradual eclipse of religion there, Christianity continued strong in Greece. Yes, the Orthodox *Church* did continue strong in Greece, just as the Roman Catholic

Church continued strong in Ireland. But I am not so sure that Christianity did. Invented nationalism is expert not only at distorting but also at forgetting—indeed, forgetting is probably its prime mechanism for distorting. In effect, nationalism *requires* amnesia. And one of the major areas of amnesia in Greece concerns the role of the Orthodox Church in the period leading up to the revolution—specifically the role of Patriarch Gregory V. Quite appropriately remembering Saint Paul’s assertion in Romans 10:12, “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him,” or again in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” the Church opposed the radical republicanism of Rigas Velesinlis in 1798 in its tract *Paternal Instruction*, “probably written by Gregory V himself, which . . . warned against the pernicious consequences of revolutionary plans for the souls of the faithful.”³⁰ It opposed the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821. The great innovation brought by Christianity was, after all, its rejection of the concept of a “chosen people,” a view recognized by the Orthodox Church when a major synod in 1872 stated, “[I]n the Christian Church, which is a spiritual communion, predestined by its Leader and Founder to contain all nations in one brotherhood in Christ, φυλετισμός [which here means nationalism³¹] is alien and quite unthinkable.” Ironically, the multiculturalism and multiethnicity of the Islamic Ottoman Empire was closer to Christianity’s original vision at least in this respect than was the new atomization of nationalistic self-definition preached by the Neohellenic Enlightenment—thus Gregory’s opposition to the Greek nationalistic rebellion, not to mention his Encyclical issued in 1819 against precisely the sort of learning that had been stimulated in the West by the rediscovery of Ancient Greece.³² As Kitromilides has written, “The Church objected precisely to the ethnic parochialism of secular nationalism, which threatened, and eventually did destroy, the ecumenicity of transcendental values which held Balkan society together within the fold of Orthodoxy during the centuries of captivity.”³³ When the patriarch was executed in 1821 as primarily responsible for the Greek insurrection, he became a national martyr by an extraordinary quirk of history; anyone who visits the Patriarchate in Istanbul today is shown with reverence the gate from which he was hanged. But none of this means that Christianity (as opposed to the Church) continued strong

in nationalistic Greece. Indeed, once the independent Greek state was established, the first of the “explicitly ideological initiatives whereby [it] attempted . . . to cement its national identity [was] the creation [in 1833] of an autocephalous national church.”³⁴ “When the Church of Greece was declared independent from the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch . . . and was brought firmly under state control, it became all the more associated with the nation. Instead of adopting Korais’s dim view of the clergy, the state incorporated the Church and its martyrs into the pantheon of Greek heroes and made them integral parts of the national myth. Thus the Church became an accomplice of the state in its mission to spread the cohesive nationalist creed . . .”³⁵ What happened was a transvaluation whereby secular values came to control spiritual ones instead of the other way round. I find it very difficult to accept that true Christianity, with its claims of transcendental, supreme value, can exist as a subordinate instrument of the state. Interestingly, Patriarch Bartholemew was quoted in *To Bήμα* a few years ago as declaring “. . . ο Πατριάρχος είναι ανώτερος και από τον βασιλιά”³⁶ (the reference being to Bartholemew’s rival, Archbishop Christodoulos, the supposed “king”).

The original distortion of Korais and the European philhellenes whereby a new Greece in the image of Periclean Athens was invented — a fiction excluding the Church, not to mention the Byzantine heritage, folk songs, and the *Tourkokratía* — was so gross that it could not continue without revision. What happened next is too well known to require extensive discussion here, especially since I want to reach the aesthetization that took place in the twentieth century. Briefly: In 1835 Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer, in a lecture before the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, contended “that all Ancient Greek traces . . . had become extinct by virtue of the Slavic invasions of mainland Greece, and especially the Attic peninsula, during the fifth century A.D.”³⁷ Henceforth, Fallmerayer, considered a diabolical Slavophile, became — and still is — public enemy number one in Greece. The almost hysterical resistance that greeted his contention is the best evidence, I believe, for the degree to which Korais’s initial philhellenic phase of invented Greece had become the nation’s deepest *raison d’être*: Fallmerayer was robbing the Greeks of all that enabled them to forget contingency and deny their mortality in the face of change. Interestingly, poor misunderstood Fallmerayer was not motivated by hatred of the Greeks but rather, as Gourgouris explains, by “the concern of Western

European powers over the apparent dissolution of the Ottoman State and the expansionist visions of tsarist Russia. . . . Fallmerayer's contention that Greece was in effect a de-Hellenized culture was meant to thwart the ideology of those European politicians who, as a result of their philhellenism, actively promoted the dismantling of Ottoman control over the Balkans. He argued vehemently that only a strong Ottoman state could prevent Russian expansion into Western Europe."³⁸

In any case, Fallmerayer's contention set in motion a basic shift in the myth or dream of Greek nationality, a shift brought about by the disciplines of history, archaeology, and folklore. The famous historian Konstantinos Paparrhigopoulos began his career with a treatise rebutting Fallmerayer's view that "the Byzantine colonization of Athens in the tenth century [was] a re-Hellenization of an already Slavified population," and seeing it instead as "the intractable dominance of Hellenic culture" and implicitly as a guarantee of racial integrity.³⁹ His six-volume *History of the Hellenic Nation*, which appeared from 1860 to 1872, countered the Enlightenment view that genuine Hellenic civilization had died at the beginning of the Christian era and had passed to Rome. Instead, he presented "a synthetic view, stressing the continuity from ancient times and the significance of Byzantium and the Turkish period for Modern Greece. This revised attitude [in turn] helped . . . to intensify the search for proof that Greece's imaginative powers had not lain dormant. . . . As more and more evidence of poetic activity came to light, [Korais's and the philhellenes'] . . . view of a dark age was . . . qualified. . . . In addition, the folklorists made Greece susceptible to the romantic German adulation of the *Volk*."⁴⁰ "Folklore's object of study is the . . . coherence of customary culture, conceived as a kind of naturally preserved, but contemporary, expression of myth. . . . Folk songs . . . may reflect the spirit of, say, the Greek people in themselves, but they are actually studied for (and as) *inscriptions* of the development of this spirit through the ages. . . . Thus, unlike archaeology, folklore [derives its importance] . . . not merely from the discovery of the past as relic but from the evidence of the past as present."⁴¹ This clearly begins to take us out of the diachronic, atomistic worldview characterizing the nationalistic dream's first stage, out of a particularistic conception of what is real, out of an emphasis on progress. It begins to return us to the steady state, the organic, synchronic view of history, and the universal view of what is real, all characteristic of the Christian worldview that nationalism had originally displaced.

This, in turn, leads to the final phase of imagined Greece: the aestheticization of nationalism that took place in the twentieth century.

I argued at the start of this paper, when citing Miłosz's comments about communism and capitalism, that nationalism may best be understood in metaphysical terms. But it is important to remember that metaphysical change is often occasioned by political development. Thus Greece was first imagined during the eighteenth century ferment occasioned by the French Revolution and Greece's own pre-revolutionary chagrin. It was then re-imagined after the failure in the nineteenth century of the Enlightenment's project of a new Periclean democracy. Finally, it was re-imagined yet again after the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922, the Axis occupation of 1941–1944, and civil war that followed. Perhaps one can say that political vicissitude serves to open up afresh, each time, the chasm of contingency, futility, and meaninglessness that must be filled by an ever-renewed, ever-redefined nationalism, the modern world's primary religion. This is certainly what happened in Greece in the twentieth century — not once but twice.

It is equally important to remember that the various versions of the myth of imagined Greek nationalism have all been connected with movements in Western Europe. I referred earlier to two axes, the vertical and horizontal, the vertical reaching back to an imagined Greek past and ahead to an imagined Greek future, the horizontal extending from contemporary Greece to contemporary Western Europe. Stage 1 of the myth was influenced along this horizontal axis by the European Enlightenment and by philhellenism, as we have seen. Stage 2 was influenced by German romanticism, especially the adulation of the *Volk*. Stage 3 was influenced by European modernism, itself the product of the cataclysm of the First World War.

Modernism presents one more way to look at the real. Before the Renaissance and Reformation, the real resided in universals; afterward, it resided in particulars. The universals in which the real resided in the Middle Ages were considered true; so were the particulars in which the real resided in the post-Renaissance period. In modernism, neither the particulars nor the universals are considered true in the same way. The particulars have value only as symbols of something else, something universal. But this something universal, instead of truly existing, is *imagined*. In a word, ultimate value is aestheticized. The concrete world of particulars is now

valued because it provides an entrée to “something coherent, continuous, and logical beneath or beyond: something subjective that is connected . . . most broadly with an entire culture. Cultural norms discerned indirectly through symbolism replace the older world-views’ apparently objective life — whether particular or universal — that is thought to exist apart from the act of perception.”⁴²

The aestheticization of invented Greek nationalism is the main subject of Gregory Jusdanis’s important book *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature*. He says there, for instance, that the development in question came after the Asia Minor disaster as a “cure for failed irredentist aspirations and [for the] wrecked hopes for a modern, democratic, and liberal state. The indispensable tool in [this] aestheticization,” he continues, “. . . was the notion of Greekness (*Ellinikótita*),”⁴³ which is aesthetic “because its promised unification of differences occurs in [an] imaginary space,”⁴⁴ permitting Greeks “to be both Hellenic and Romeic, to christen their children Pericles as well as Maria,”⁴⁵ and so forth. Gourgouris carries this line of reasoning up to the next political crisis when he says that “after the Second World War, and even more so after the Civil War, Greece . . . becomes . . . a metaphor.”⁴⁶

Obviously, each phase of invented Greek nationalism was expressed not only by polemicists like Korais or historians like Paparrhigopoulos but also by poets and novelists. To treat them at all adequately would require probably three more essays, but let me just note here that a good example for phase 1, in which Enlightenment was the goal, might be Pavlos Kalligas’s novel *Thanos Vlekas*, published in 1855. It exhibits the atomistic specificity of characterization, time, and place demanded by the post-Renaissance world view, and pleads for a responsible judiciary, so needed if the nationalist dream of the Enlightenment and the philhellenic envisioning of Greece was to be realized.⁴⁷ A good example for phase 2 might be Kostis Palamas’s *The King’s Flute*, which the critic Papanoutsos has called “the epic par excellence of Greek continuity,”⁴⁸ fulfilling the project of Paparrhigopoulos. For phase 3, I would nominate Angelos Sikelianos’s poem “Pan” and George Seferis’s “The King of Asine,” both of which combine specifics of the present and the past to evoke an organic, synthetic, *metaphoric* value of infinite importance — in other words a “saving” value still wholly nationalistic, hence capable of cheating the ever present forces of death, fate, and contingency.

A fourth phase—a postmodernist reinvention of Greek nationalism—is presumably in process at the moment.

In concluding these thoughts on inventing Greece, I feel impelled to note my belief that the world has now had quite enough of nationalism. This force, in its two hundred years of existence among Greeks and other Europeans, has accomplished much, to be sure, but I fear that its creative potential is exhausted and that it has become primarily an instigator of stagnation and evil. We need to develop a dream/myth/fantasy/idolatry beyond *amerikanikótita*, *irlandikótita*, *germanikótita*, *ellinikótita*. Nationalism is not an inevitable human phenomenon. It did not exist before the modern era and there is no reason why it should continue to exist in the postmodern era. Indeed, given the vast changes that have occurred recently—the European Union, space travel, instantaneous communication by fax and e-mail, globalization of the world's economies—there are ever-increasing indications that we may be headed toward a postnationalistic time in which the earth as a whole and mankind as a whole become primary, replacing or displacing nationalism just as nationalism replaced or displaced Christianity as our primary source of meaning. But let us not forget Christianity entirely; let us remember Saint Paul's "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in"—. . . in? . . .—well, perhaps not in Jesus Christ, but in *anthropótita*.

Notes

- 1 Jusdanis, p. 165.
- 2 Anderson, p. 144.
- 3 Gourgouris, p. 15.
- 4 McElroy, p. 35.
- 5 Anderson, p. 6, emphasis added.
- 6 Gellner, p. 169, emphasis added.
- 7 Gourgouris, pp. 31, 37, 261.
- 8 Kiberd, p. 141, emphasis added.
- 9 Baveystock, p. 104.
- 10 Synge, p. liii.
- 11 Kiberd, p. 194.
- 12 Kiberd, pp. 4, 141, 286, 330, 294, 247, 292, 7, 298, 25, 136, 335–337, 265, 355, 128, 54, 642, 641.

- 13 Watt, p. 31.
- 14 Bien 1994, p. 388, citing Watt, pp. 14, 15, 22.
- 15 Bien 1994, p. 376, citing White, p. 15, cited in Tziovas 1986, p. 61.
- 16 Gourgouris, p. 75.
- 17 Gourgouris, p. 81.
- 18 Gourgouris, p. 73.
- 19 Gourgouris, p. 118.
- 20 Kedourie, p. 47.
- 21 Kedourie, p. 42.
- 22 Korais 1970, p. 156.
- 23 Korais 1970, p. 171.
- 24 Kedourie, p. 47.
- 25 Psicharis, p. 34.
- 26 Bien 1972, p. 42.
- 27 Sherrard, p. 180; basic premise (a), above, is cited in Sherrard, p. 183.
- 28 Tsaousis, p. 19.
- 29 Bien 1972, p. 51, citing Korais 1883, p. 41.
- 30 Kitromilides, pp. 179–180.
- 31 Kitromilides, p. 181.
- 32 Henderson, p. 199; Gourgouris, p. 79.
- 33 Kitromilides, p. 159.
- 34 Kitromilides, p. 165.
- 35 Veremis, p. 136.
- 36 Theodorakis, p. 79.
- 37 Gourgouris, p. 141.
- 38 Gourgouris, p. 142.
- 39 Gourgouris, pp. 144–145.
- 40 Bien 1972, p. 94.
- 41 Gourgouris, p. 148.
- 42 Bien 1997, pp. 263–264, adapted.
- 43 Jusdanis, p. 79.
- 44 Jusdanis, p. 94.
- 45 Jusdanis, p. 114.
- 46 Gourgouris, p. 221.
- 47 See Kitromilides, p. 163.
- 48 Papanoutsos, p. 94.

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The “Language Question” in Greece

IN HIS POEM “Reflections on a Foreign Line of Verse,” George Seferis has his narrator describe Homer’s Odysseus as speaking “words in our language spoken as it was three thousand years ago.” He does not think of “our language” — Modern Greek — as a development from Ancient Greek. His point, of course, is that the Greek language, despite its very long recorded history and its very obvious changes in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, is nevertheless *unified*. This may sound strange to a foreigner who knows Ancient Greek and, going to Greece, finds that he or she cannot understand a word owing to the great difference in pronunciation (although reading might not be quite so discouraging). But a foreigner is not a Greek, not someone who grows up surrounded by antiquities, is exposed to medieval Greek in the church liturgy and to Hellenistic Greek in the old and new Testaments, maybe studies some Homer and Plato in school, and of course believes that the fifth century B.C. was the absolute height of human civilization.

Nevertheless, this sense of linguistic unity took time to be established in Greece. Indeed, the competition between one sort of Greek and another was occasionally pervasive, even bitter, leading to what was called the *γλωσσικό ζήτημα*, which can be translated as “the language question” but better still as “the language problem.” This may be glossed most simply as “What shall be the language of the Greek state?” The answer seems simple. The language of a state should be the language that its people speak. But things are not always so simple. When the British colonies revolted to form the United States, for example, many felt that we should not be speaking the language of our former overlords, and even Ancient Greek was considered as an alternative. In Greece in the 1830s when the new state was formed, some felt that the spoken language — the “demotic” — had been “barbarized” because it had assimilated Turkish, Italian, and other foreign words, had very little in the way of a written literary tradi-

tion, and was fragmented into sometimes incomprehensible regional variations. On the other hand, there was the memory of the Attic Greek of the Golden Age, the *koine* Greek of early Christianity, and the Byzantine Greek employed in official documents by the Greek Orthodox Church. Which of these was proper for a new state that some considered (believe it or not!) a revival of Periclean Athens?

Before proceeding, it's important to note that this sort of language question was not a new phenomenon in Greek culture. It goes back at least to Hellenistic times. Alexander's conquests and Greek commercial energy spread Greek throughout Syria, Persia, Egypt, and elsewhere. Understandably, classical Attic underwent changes in vocabulary, syntax, and inflexion. The resulting *koine* or "common" Greek remained a lingua franca for six hundred years, until the fourth century A.D. Besides borrowing words, it lost the difference between long and short vowels, normalized irregular declensions, abandoned the dual, weakened the dative, gave new meanings to old words (for example, *παιδεύω* came to mean "to chastise" alongside its older meaning, "to educate children"), replaced certain Attic words with their diminutive (e.g., *οὐς* with *ὠπίον*), and so forth.

Today we hear everyone speaking English, our own lingua franca, sometimes well, sometimes badly, sometimes with very distinctive and even somewhat incomprehensible pronunciations, as in Scotland or Australia. Greek must have been the same in Hellenistic times. Cavafy has fun with this situation in several poems. The first of these excerpts, from "From the School of the Renowned Philosopher," is set in about A.D. 220, the second, from "They Should Have Taken Care," in about 125 B.C.

He remained Ammonios Sakkas's pupil two years,
but he grew weary both of philosophy and of Sakkas.
Afterward he went into politics.

This, however, he abandoned. The governor was an idiot,
his entourage solemn-looking official blockheads,
their Greek thrice-barbarous, the wretches. . . .

I've been reduced practically to vagrancy and pauperdom.
This fatal city, Antioch,
has devoured all my funds:
this fatal city with its extravagant life.
But I'm young and in perfect health,

with an admirable mastery of Greek —
I know Plato and Aristotle inside out;
whichever orators, whichever poets, whatever else you
mention). . . .
Therefore I think myself qualified
in the fullest to serve this country,
my beloved homeland Syria.

For many, the situation was not at all funny. Many deplored what was happening to "pure" Greek. Thus during the early Roman period a diglossia developed. This term, which must be distinguished from "bilingualism," means a situation in which social functions are distributed between two different varieties of the same language, a prestigious one and a supposedly "low" variety. By A.D. 200, certain educated Greeks and educated Greek-speakers living in Rome spoke Attic Greek among themselves and employed it for their lectures, but were forced to use the koine when addressing their servants (and probably also their wives). To the cook they said *πανάριον* ("bread-basket," from Latin *panarium*), to each other *άρτοφόριον*. And they condemned *ψύλλος* (flea) as barbarous because for the ancients this insect was feminine: *ψύλλα*.

But things were even more complicated since other educated folk — indeed, Plutarch, Galen, and Marcus Aurelius — resisted this degree of "purism." They preferred an "educated" *koine* that retained Attic characteristics but was not a dead language. What we have, therefore, is not a diglossia but a triglossia. The groups fought each other, the Atticists attacking Plutarch while Galen satirized Atticistic pedantry. In any case, Atticism could not survive the eventual eclipse of pagan culture by Christianity, an eclipse that became total in 529 with Justinian's decree closing the heathen philosophic academies.

The Church favored educated *koine*, often with Attic elements. In the New Testament, Luke clings to the dative (sometimes using it erroneously) and likes to substitute Greek words for Mark's foreign ones (e.g. *ἐκατόνταρχος* instead of *κεντυρίων*, from Latin *centurio*). Although in general the New Testament was composed in the contemporary spoken idiom, from the second century onward Christian apologists embraced the learned type of *koine* since they were attempting to make their religion comprehensible to those schooled in Greek philosophy and also wished to

counteract the charge that Christians were illiterate. It is important to realize that these learned churchmen became the channel through which diglossia was perpetuated. We have noted that Atticists spoke one language among themselves and another to their servants and wives. Similarly, so the story goes, John Chrysostom once had to halt one of his sermons and continue in the vernacular because a simple woman in the congregation called out that he was incomprehensible.

By the early Byzantine period Atticism proper had run its course and the educated *koine* had become the official instrument of religion. During the thousand years of the Eastern Empire this idiom became an artificially preserved written language used for documents of church and state. It no longer resembled the spoken tongue even of the educated classes. The popular speech of the masses — preserved, as we shall see in a moment, in Ptohoprodromos — was scorned. To complicate things still further, a new impetus to employ Attic gathered force after classical studies were resumed in the ninth century and flourished from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries under the Comnenoi and Palaiologoi. Anna Comneni wrote an epic called the *Alexiás* (early twelfth century) in a language very much like Ancient Greek — for example: βοησάντων δὲ πάντων τὸ «ὁ Θεὸς μεθ' ἡμῶν» — at a time when, as we see in the Ptohoprodromic poems (also twelfth century), people were speaking almost exactly the way they do today:

Ἀνάθεμαν τα γράμματα, Χριστέ, και οπού τα θέλει !
 ανάθεμαν και τον καιρόν και εκείνην την ημέραν
 καθ' ἣν με παρεδώκασιν εις το διδασκαλείον,
 προς το να μάθω γράμματα, τάχα να ζω απ' εκείνα !

Thus, by the fall of Constantinople in 1453, we have triglossia once again. Although Attic declined, it continued to find adherents among the Greek aristocracy. For example, we have Alexander Mavrogordatos's impeccably Atticistic letters to his sons at the end of the seventeenth century, urging them to shun the vulgar language of the marketplace. The Church continued to employ its now-fossilized *koine*; the common people, often illiterate, continued to speak the colorful demotic that comes down to us in the memoirs of General Makriyannis; the intellectuals, often more attached to the imagined glories of the Periclean age than to Christianity, dreamed of a “purified” demotic that would prove modern Greeks the in-

heritors of ancient excellence every time they opened their mouths. Thus in the 1830s, when the new state was formed, we still have triglossia — in short, a "language question."

In the first half century of the new state's existence, as in the period directly preceding the Greek Revolution, the controversy centered primarily on what form or degree of purification should be effected. In the period roughly from 1880 to 1975, the controversy centered on whether any form of purification is justified. Since 1975 purism has been dead and the demotic idiom triumphant. It took a long time, since the demotic of today was already being spoken, more or less, in the twelfth century, as we have seen, and probably earlier.

THE SITUATION in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, then, involved a demotic language almost exclusively oral and a written language in forms including Atticistic, *koine*, and various "educated" compromises, none of which had achieved fixity or had become the accepted written language. Into this situation came a remarkable man, Adamantios Korais, who amalgamated European Philhellenism's adulation of pagan Greece with enthusiasm for the French Revolution and an utter revulsion against what he considered the superstitions of the Orthodox Church. Born in Smyrna in 1748, he became friendly with a Dutch clergyman who despised the Turks and emphasized how much Europeans venerated the ancient Greeks. Korais went to Holland in 1772 and stayed for six years. Returning to Smyrna, he found Greek life disgusting. In 1782 he left for France, eventually moving to Paris, which he considered a new Athens, and witnessing there the French Revolution at first hand. In effect, Korais invented Greek nationalism, contriving both an imagined past and an imagined future for Greece as a way of providing a new identity. He fulfilled these needs most famously in his "Report on the Present State of Civilization in Greece," delivered as a lecture in Paris in 1803, in which he appeals to a glorious past that is an earnest of a still more glorious future. Here are a few quotes from the lecture, just to convey a sense of his project:

What then was to be seen in that unhappy Greece, birthplace of the sciences and the arts? What in fact may be seen among almost all enslaved peoples: a superstitious and ignorant clergy, leading . . . an even more ignorant people . . .

[W]ho is better able than you [Greek merchants] to appreciate our ancestors' values, virtues, and learning? Gaining honor from the Greek name, it is in turn your duty to bring it honor, by calling forth once again, in the midst of degraded Greece, its ancient exaltation and splendor.

A significant part of Korai's project, of course, was his invention of *katharévousa*, for which unfortunately he acquired a bad name. But he was simply following the conviction of his time that language is the essence of nationality. I once spent a considerable time studying Korai's career, especially the linguistic element, and reached the conclusion that this man was truly admirable in his attempt to reach a compromise between the demotic of the day and the extreme Atticism recommended by others. It is to his credit, and a measure of his extraordinary energy, that compromise tended to be viewed by him not as a concession, but instead as the appropriate and proper linguistic solution for his people. He argued generally from strength, not weakness. Surely questionable, however, is his basic premise — namely, that “the Hellenic language” (by which he means Ancient Greek) automatically “refines the habits of the young, making them more elegant and wise,” not to mention “peaceful, freedom-loving, and virtuous.”

My own conclusion is that compromise, at this point in history, was the unavoidable path. If Korai's *katharévousa* developed into a curse for the Greeks, it was not so much his fault as that of his supposed followers, in whose hands his principles of correction underwent such a stretching that they elicited excessive purification backward in the direction of Ancient Greek, at odds with his original teaching. Sometimes he sounds exactly like the later demoticists who so vigorously opposed his purified language. For example, he once wrote in a letter that a person's character cannot manifest itself as it truly is unless that person “writes in his natural language — that is, in the language which he suckled with his mother's milk and which he speaks every day or at least more regularly than other, acquired languages.” He was even capable of declaring, again in a letter, that “the contemporary spoken idiom is neither barbaric nor Hellenic, but the new language of a new nation, the daughter and heir of an old tongue that is abundantly rich — Ancient Greek.” He searched the Ptohoprodromian poems of the twelfth century for words that contemporary demotic might

revivify and he dreamed of writing a demotic dictionary, actually compiling part of one. However, we see here his insistence that any word spoken by Greeks of the new nation-state must derive somehow from ancient or Medieval Greek despite its present form. Thus he accepts demotic φωνάζω because of Ancient Greek φωνέω and he accepts demotic αλωπού—but not αλεπού—because of Ancient Greek ἀλώπηξ (he lost out on this one since Modern Greek today uses αλεπού).

After all his reasonableness concerning demotic and his invocation of mother's milk, Korais in his other guise may seem hypocritical. The basic problem, perhaps, was the axiom that language and nationality are the same. Yes, one should speak the language imbibed with mother's milk; yet, at the same time, since modern Greece was meant to be a revival of Periclean Athens, the true character of a Greek could be known only if—somehow—he spoke fifth-century Attic. Korais's problem was that his progressivism arose paradoxically from allegiance to the past; his hopes for a new Greece were hopes for a resurrected old Greece. Making him cling to these hopes all the more were the attitudes of European philhellenes. He was a classical philologist honored as such throughout Europe. Despite his protestations about the dignity of the spoken tongue, he wrote for French, German, and English philhellenes as well as for Greeks and—most important—shared with these philhellenes a romantic (and sometimes preposterous) view of the Hellenic past and of the moral, cultural, and intellectual effect that a revival of that past would exert upon the Ottomanized modern Greeks. A devoted reader of Gibbon, he saw civilization in terms of a "classicism" that had been born in the Greece of Pericles, preserved through the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but then eclipsed in the dark Christian Middle Ages, whether Latin or Byzantine, until re-born in Italy with the Renaissance. What the ignorant Greeks needed was reeducation through study of the classics. But since national character was identified in his mind with language, what the classics taught was not enough; their language also needed to be understood. And if this was too much to expect, then they had to be understood in a purified demotic that reminded one of the ancient idiom as much as possible.

In sum, we see in him a contradictory dynamo devoted simultaneously to both the new and the old Greece. Since he realized that modern Greeks could never be made to write and speak like Plato, he endeavored to enable the old to shine through the new to the greatest degree possible. In-

terestingly, he justified this endeavor in part by his belief that Plato himself had also been a linguistic compromiser. “What other road is open to the nation’s literary men,” he wrote, “but the middle one, leading away from vulgarity, for it is probable that neither the Platos nor Isocrates wrote like the galley-slaves of Athens; far also from Hellenism or Hellenic macaronism, for it is likewise probably that the Platos and Isocrates wrote in such a way that the galley-slaves could understand them.”

Let’s see more precisely, now, some forms of his cherished purification. We have already encountered *αλωπού*, which presumably would let Ancient Greek *άλωπηξ* shine through better than would the barbaric *αλεπού*. *Αλωπώ* would be even better, but, oh well, we can’t win them all! We also saw his acquiescence regarding Modern Greek *φωναίζω* because of Ancient Greek *φωνέω*. But in other cases where the “barbaric” *-άζω* ending exists in demotic and a very close one exists in Ancient Greek, why not change? Thus he campaigned for *φράσσω* (to enclose with a fence; this goes all the way back to Homer) rather than *φράζω*, and for *συνάγω* (to gather together; also Homeric) rather than *συνάζω*. Interestingly, today’s Modern Greek uses both of these “corrected” forms of his and both of the supposedly “unpure” demotic forms interchangeably. Another example is his substitution of *ὀψάριον* for *ψάρι* (fish). In his investigation of Ptohoprodromos he found the word *ὄψον*, which originally meant “something eaten with bread to give it flavor” but which, as far back as Menander’s time (fourth century B.C.), was used specifically for fish, presumably because fish was the Athenians’ chief supplier of flavor. The word even occurs in Plato. *Ὀψάριον*, the diminutive of *ὄψον*, is obviously the source of *ψάρι*. If it was too much to expect modern Greeks to order an *ιχθύς* for dinner, they assuredly could ask for an *ὀψάριον* instead of just a *ψάρι* in order to allow the ancient heritage to shine through a bit more. Similarly, although obviously they would no longer say *ὀφθαλμός* for “eye,” they could surely lengthen demotic *μάτι* to convert it to its actual source, *ὀμματίον*, the diminutive of Ancient Greek *ὄμμα*. *Ὀμματίον* survives in Modern Greek only in the tender expression *φως των ομματιών μου* (light of my eyes); *ὀφθαλμός* survives as a medical term, in certain fixed expressions quoted from *katharévousa*, and in quite a few compound forms, some rather colorful, for example *οφθαλμοπορνεία* (sexual satisfaction derived from viewing pornography). Ancient Greek *ιχθύς* likewise survives in compound forms owing to the influence of *katharévousa*. So, you do

not buy fish from a seller of ψάρια but go instead to the ιχθυοπώλης, and if you are a zoologist specializing in the study of fish you are not a ψαρολόγος but an ιχθυολόγος, a word that may have returned to Greek via English "ichthyologist" or, more likely, French "ichtyologiste."

All of this seems sufficiently reasonable, as I suggested before. But the sad truth is that his language could not be understood without special study in school. Good evidence comes from the archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which consulted Korais in 1808 regarding a projected translation of the New Testament. The society's chief consultant in the matter, however, reported that Korais's language

is . . . so exalted, so much approaching to the hellenistical idiom, . . . and so difficult to readers who have not learned the Ancient Greek, that it cannot be supposed to be generally understood by all Greeks. I do not mean to detract anything from Mr. Corai's great and eminent knowledge of the Ancient and Modern Greek, and I must declare his noble efforts very praiseworthy, to bring the modern dialect . . . as near the ancient language as it is practicable . . . However, I must confess that his modern language is fit for learned treatises and investigations rather than for the common understanding of the Greek Nation in general . . .

Another critic concluded, cruelly, that although Korais accepted demotic as the lawful language of the nation, "he had not the courage to do it openly and wholeheartedly. . . . Instead of the great reformer that he might have been, he remains a mere erudite, babbling of liberal institutions."

Politically, however, he was immensely successful. His purified language, supported by the rising merchant-bourgeois class to which he had appealed in his Paris lecture, by westernized Greek intellectuals, and even by the youth who had been educated in the classics thanks to the books he distributed, was strong enough to be recognized in King Otho's educational laws of 1834 and 1836 as, in effect, the official language of the Greek state, a sanctioning later enhanced by a constitutional clause that stood firm until the 1970s. In effect, there were really two languages in Greece, one that everyone spoke and another that those who stayed on beyond elementary school learned—or half-learned—in high school. All parliamentary debates, all university lectures (at least in the University of Athens; the University of Thessaloniki revolted), all right-wing or

centrist newspapers, all proceedings in the law courts were conducted in *katharévousa*. I happened to be in Greece on the day of the colonels' coup d'état on April 21, 1967. On that day and previous days I could understand the news on the radio; on April 22 I could no longer understand the news, because the right-wing colonels had insisted it be in *katharévousa*, since demotic, the language of the people, was of course the language of Greek communists! Naturally the colonels' speeches on the radio were also in *katharévousa* but because these officers were not very well educated their "pure" Greek was full of grammatical howlers.

By the 1960s, however, demotic had already defeated *katharévousa* in the areas of poetry, the novel, and theater. This is an exciting story. Ironically, the impetus for the movement to favor demotic, called "demotism," arose because of linguistic right-wing objections to Korais's purified language as not sufficiently "Hellenic" — that is, sufficiently ancient. The arguments of these extremists is what provoked various rebuttals, the most important of which was a book called *Τὸ ταξίδι μου* (My Journey), published in 1888. Its author, Yannis Psiharis, lived from 1854 to 1929. Born in Odessa, he studied in Paris and was appointed to the *École des Hautes Études* there, specializing in linguistics. His book, actually written in demotic, which is in itself crucially important, had the double task of demolishing the old and constructing the new, doing both in an entertaining fashion. The "journey" of the book's title brings him from Paris to Athens, Constantinople (= Istanbul), and Chios, where he repeats the language he heard spoken in these places. He warns that *katharévousa* will destroy both Modern Greek and Ancient Greek and disparages its distinction between "noble" and "vulgar" as a debilitating self-deception in modern Greek culture. Nobility, he insists, cannot be conferred by outward forms; it is a thing of the soul. Indeed, excessive attention to outward forms is precisely what has been blinding the as to their lack of inner nobility. The first step toward gaining true nobility is to accept yourself for what you truly are and to stop pretending that you are something else, such as the inheritors of Periclean culture.

His method is entertaining. For example, traveling by ship from Constantinople to Chios, he converses with a schoolteacher and happens to say νόμισα (I thought). The teacher corrects him: he should say ἐνόμισα. Why? Because Ancient Greek is nobler. It's a grand thing to be instructed in nobility by this teacher, Psiharis concludes. Now I can even steal with

impunity. If I speak Ancient Greek to them they will become immediately aware of my innocence. If a policeman calls me a thief, I will reply οὐκ ἐνόμισα (I didn't think so), never δε νόμισα, and all will be fine.

Psiharis continues his demolition of *katharévoussa* by pointing out its many and often ludicrous inconsistencies. The craving for nobility has been so strong that the purists add epsilon, as they did in ἐνόμισα, even where it does not belong, writing ἐσὺ, for example, although the ancients said merely σὺ. Next, *katharévoussa* produces mélanges. Psiharis heard a boy say to his mother, Μάννα, θα πάω καβάλλα, whereupon the mother angrily corrected him: Θὰ ὑπάγω νὰ ιππεύσω. This links the modern θα with the ancient ιππεύσω and ὑπάγω. "I understood then," Psiharis concludes, "that the only foreign language in Greece is *katharévoussa*."

Arguing further, Psiharis reminds the purists that even after they have changed Μάρτης to Μάρτιον or Κωσταντῖνο to Κωνσταντῖνος, these words are still Latin. Conversely, when they wish to eliminate πόρτα (door) as a supposed barbarism taken from Italian, they forget that it has been in the Greek language since the reign of Justinian in the sixth century. Worst of all, purification is nonsense unless the modern pronunciation is also abandoned in favor of the ancient. Psiharis is expansive on the Gallicisms. In Constantinople he picks up a Greek newspaper expecting that now, at last, he will be able to read his beloved Greek instead of the French he is forced to read in Paris. But then he has a strange sensation; he is really reading a series of French idioms translated into Greek. In a dream, he sees all of Europe laughing at the Greeks, saying: "Is this your Greek, you descendants of Pericles? . . . Do you think you speak Greek? No indeed! You have been Gallicized. Speak your own language so that the world may listen to you." Appropriately, then, Psiharis appeals to his fellow Greeks: "We have made a new language . . . Our first duty is to recognize this and admit it. A nation exalts itself when it shows that it does not fear the truth."

I repeat that Psiharis set himself the double task of demolishing the old and constructing the new. The latter he helped accomplish by producing two volumes of essays concerning Modern Greek grammar, plus theoretical treatises in which he emphasized that languages change and furthermore that they change not in an arbitrary way but according to patterns that may be discovered. The basic problem he was trying to solve was precisely that of the "language question" from the start — namely, what the language of the Greek state should be, how a new, modern *koine* could be

developed. His answer was twofold. First, it would be developed by poets, not by grammarians. Second, teachers should go out to the villages and listen to how people speak, instead of reading Plato. As for himself, he signed, “Ah, if only I could! . . . I would race all over Greece, . . . a piece of paper in my hand, and collect, collect.”

The movement called δημοτικισμός (demoticism) established itself almost immediately after Psiharis’s *My Journey* appeared. It was considered a great, noble struggle, and enlisted some remarkable figures in Greek intellectual life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Periodicals were essential, especially the crusadingly demoticist *Ο Νουμάς*, which began publication in 1903. Even *Νέα Ζωή*, first published in 1906 by a professor of mathematics at the university, saw fit to write at least its literary section in the “language of peasants.” Also essential were societies such as the Educational Association, which dates from 1910 and which published a journal in demotic. Even earlier, in 1904, came the Society for the National Language, one of whose founders was the crucially important Manolis Triantafyllidis, who wrote a pioneering grammar of Modern Greek. Various treatises also helped, especially one in 1902 by the famous German philologist Karl Krumbacher, founder of Byzantine studies in the West, which argued that the demotic tradition, hidden behind the official Atticism of the state, had continued to nourish the nation in Byzantine times.

What was needed, quite obviously, were dictionaries, grammars, and actual texts employing demotic in ways that proved its versatility. Greece still does not have a great dictionary like our own *Oxford English Dictionary*, but one is partially completed. But we now have a splendid more-or-less unabridged dictionary by George Babinotis published in 1998 and another equally comprehensive one produced also in 1998 by the Triantafyllidis Institute of the University of Thessaloniki. Let me add that when I was translating Kazantzakis’s novels in the 1960s the dictionaries were still woefully inadequate since they recorded *katharévousa* terms but seemed to assume that since everyone spoke demotic there was no need to include demotic words. Regarding grammars, the earliest, written by Nikolaos Sophianos in the first half of the sixteenth century, was not published until 1870. A seventeenth-century grammar was finally published in 1907. Menos Filintas’s grammar, actually written in demotic, came out in 1907 as well, but the heroic figure in this area, as already indi-

cated, was Manolis Triantafyllidis, whose *Neohellenic Grammar* appeared in 1941.

Actual texts employing demotic came in the areas of journalism, scholarship, translation, and all genres of imaginative literature: poetry, prose, and drama. It is here that we see the extraordinary creative energy that demoticism released. The important thing to remember is that the question was not simply one of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Those who supported demotic were doing so in an effort to develop a true culture for modern Greece — to discover a real contemporary Greece behind the romanticized conception of a resurrected ancient Greece.

Newspapers connected language with politics, those on the far right employing Atticized *katharévoussa*, those in the middle a more friendly form of *katharévoussa*, the socialist *Μάχη* a sort of standard demotic, and the communist *Ρίζοσπάστης* a radical demotic. Kazantzakis, who published lots of journalism in order to make money, was always fighting with editors to keep them from "fixing" his demotic language. A pioneering scholarly study, dedicated to Psiharis, came out in 1901 under the revealing title *Ιστορία της ρωμιοσύνης* (History of the Greek People), not *Ιστορία του ελληνισμού*. The fact that it was actually written in demotic caused much resentment in the scholarly community. Much energy was applied to translation. Let me remember just one figure, Alexander Pallis, an unpromising disciple of Psiharis's, believing that the written language must conform in all respects to the spoken. He was a businessman, a director of the Rally Company, who in his spare time translated Thucydides, Euripides, Sophocles, Homer's *Iliad* (1892), and the Gospels (1901). In Homer, so relentless was his allegiance to the spoken language that he even modernized the proper names, converting *Ελένη* (Helen) to *Λενιώ*. We should appreciate the remarkableness of such a major undertaking appearing only four years after Psiharis's book. In Greek schools, the Homeric epics and indeed all the classical texts were just mummies existing in order to be parsed for their grammar. It was still that way when my wife was in school in the late 1930s. Pallis changed all this, liberating the epic for the ordinary reader and demonstrating for the first time the great poetic potentiality of demotic. Of course he was accused of desecrating an ancient treasure, but the real storm was yet to come.

It broke because of his translation of the Gospels. The reaction was so great that rioting occurred in the streets. Added to the hue and cry about

demoticism's coining of new words, its advocacy of everything vulgar, its desecration of ancient classics, was now the charge of undermining religion, strangely directed against a man who read the Gospel to his children each Sunday and drew his justification from Saint Paul's admonition in I Corinthians 14:9: "if you . . . utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?" For demoticists, however, Pallis became a great hero. When Kazantzakis, for example, was revising his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1933, he told his wife that he wished his rendering "to be on the same level as Pallis's *Iliad*." And his own translation of the *Iliad* is dedicated to Pallis's memory.

Above and beyond all this was the hope that Greece could create an imaginative literature of its own in demotic. And this it did. To give the full story would require an entire series of additional studies, but perhaps I can at least mention some important names. The first is the poet Kostis Palamas, who began using demotic for his verse as early as 1880 and by 1900 was convinced that demotic should enjoy universal use, not just in poetry but everywhere — indeed, should become the language of the state. He revived interest in previous demotic poets such as Solomos, supported the movement to translate the Bible, and convinced at least some people that one could be both a demoticist and a nationalist. Thanks mostly to his prestige, demotic became the vehicle for poetry rather quickly.

The same was not true for the novel. Although poetry had precedents in the demotic folksongs, prose fiction's precedents were in *katharévousa* novels and, at best, in some that used *kathaévousa* for narration and demotic for dialogue. But Psiharis's novel *My Journey*, written of course in demotic, was an impetus. Andreas Karkavitsas embraced demotic to such a degree that he even went back after 1888 and translated some of his earlier stories, written in *katharévousa*, into demotic. Kazantzakis's first novel, *Snake and Lily* (1906), employs a mixed language, but his second, *Broken Souls*, written in 1908, is in pure demotic.

In drama, *katharévousa* was the rule until 1900 but also somewhat beyond. In 1903 a production of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* in demotic produced commotions similar to those provoked by Pallis's Gospels two years earlier. Once again, however, Psiharis was the impetus for a change that produced remarkable theatrical growth in the decade 1900–1910, assuring victory for demotic. Palamas produced a play in demotic in 1902, Kazantzakis, in 1907, a play inspired — it is important to note — by Ibsen rather than

by ancient Greek drama. There were also many demotic translations of foreign plays by Shakespeare, Goethe, Molière, and others.

Thus demotic essentially replaced *katharévoussa* in the area of imaginative literature quite early in the twentieth century. This was still not true, however, in other areas, despite Palamas's wishes that demotic should become the language of the state. This was hotly debated in the Revisionary Assembly charged with revising the constitution in 1911. An essential place for demotic to gain ground was in the schools, but this was not happening. Although the whole point of *katharévoussa* was somehow to connect modern Greece with the ancient heritage, actually it was doing the opposite. An ideal classroom exercise, according to Korais, was for children to translate a passage from an ancient text into *katharévoussa* and then back again into Ancient Greek. Older children were forced to slog through ancient texts in the original while younger children, beginning in third grade, were given horrendous translations in *katharévoussa*. In sum, the ancients were made inaccessible and hateful to Greek schoolchildren. To remedy this, educators who were also demoticists strove to produce accessible translations in demotic and to convince the Ministry of Education to sanction their materials for actual use in schools, which in turn required enabling legislation by parliament, since *katharévoussa* was by law the official language of Greece. More broadly, they strove to foster a truly literary sensibility and to counteract the widespread feeling that the capacity to speak and write *katharévoussa* was equivalent to improved social status. Happily, there were some successes. Demoticists were eventually appointed to the Ministry of Education, legislation was passed by parliament in 1917, and demotic was sanctioned as the exclusive language in the first four grades and as a partner with *katharévoussa* in the fifth and sixth grades. Beforehand, there was even a school — *one* school — that taught in demotic for three years until it was forced to close in 1911. Its headmaster, Alekos Delmouzos, instructed his pupils (all girls) to write *νύχτα* instead of *νύξ*, *μέσα στο σπίτι* instead of *ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ*, *ένα ζευγάρι κάλτσες* instead of *ἓν ζεῦγος ὑποποδιῶν*, and so forth. But, not only was his school closed; he was brought to trial in 1914 for promulgating Darwinism, freemasonry, anarchism, and for being "an enemy of religion, morality, and the fatherland." Happily, he was acquitted, and the sad affair became a *cause célèbre* in the demotic struggle, greatly helping to create the liberalization effected in 1917, when — believe it or not! — Delmouzos himself and

the demotic grammarian Triantafyllidis were appointed to oversee the change.

The final change did not take place until the mid-1970s. Its cause was the illiterate *katharévoussa* of the colonels' regime from 1967 to 1974. When they fell owing to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and when the conservative politician Constantine Karamanlis became prime minister, he was able to abolish *katharévoussa* altogether through a constitutional change and even to replace the polytonic stress system, with its multiple accents and breathings, a nightmare for children to learn, with the monotonic system, which employs just an acute accent over stressed syllables and generally nothing over one-syllable words.

I hope that I have conveyed something about the development of diglossia, about the complicated case of Adamantios Koraïs, about the inevitability of Psiharis's call for reform, the urgency with which many good souls approached the language question, and the extraordinary amount of creative energy that demoticism released, as evidenced in poetry, prose, drama, periodicals, textbooks, dictionaries, grammars, translations, and schoolbooks.

Hanover, N.H.

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Introduction to *Modern Greek Writers*

WE ARE ALL INTRIGUED, perhaps mystified, by the way various nations suddenly blossom forth artistically. Poets, painters, and musicians whom we call great are so often just the most distinguished figures of a general artistic ferment usually centered in a single city or region and very clearly having a growth, peak, and decline. Athens in the Golden Age, Florence at the time of Dante, the London of Shakespeare, the Vienna of Mozart and Beethoven, the Paris of the Impressionists, Emerson's Boston, and the Dublin of Yeats and Joyce are diverse examples, all of which have been studied and admired throughout the West.

Although an equally extraordinary cultural flowering occurred in Modern Greece, centered in Athens, unfortunately it has not been examined to the same degree, especially outside of Greece itself. Indeed, until very recently the Greek literary renaissance has remained almost unknown even to those who consider themselves experts in European letters. The reason for this is the status of Modern Greek as an "unimportant" language, an impediment that has been counteracted only minimally by (a) the increase in translations, (b) the swelling numbers of students who are learning the language in order to read Cavafy, Seferis, Kazantzakis, Palamas, and others in the original, and (c) the small band of classically trained Hellenists who are extending their interests to Byzantium and the period of Turkish rule, realizing that not only the Greek language but also Greek literature has had an uninterrupted history stretching from Minoan times to the present.

A sense of Modern Greece's cultural importance, a concern over the relative absence of coordinated scholarly attention to its achievements, and a hope that these might be made accessible to a much wider public led a group of American scholars to found the Modern Greek Studies Association. They were encouraged in this by the brilliant contributions of previous scholars, both Greek and European, and by continuing work in

centers such as Geneva, Rome, London, Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham, Chicago, Princeton, Cincinnati, and Montreal—not to mention Athens and Thessaloniki. They wished in particular to coordinate existing efforts, to stimulate further activity especially in North America, and to see that more scholarly and critical material became available in English, the twentieth century's *koine*. In sum, the founders sought to provide for Modern Greek language, literature, and history the services given other disciplines by existing associations of a similar nature.

The actual beginning of the MGS A (as it is known in abbreviated form) contained a large element of the spontaneous. The idea emerged initially from an informal meeting of American scholars who came together in the fall of 1967 to plan a symposium on Modern Greek literature under the sponsorship of the Comparative Literature Department at the University of Maryland.¹ The symposium that was held the following spring—undoubtedly the first such gathering in the Western hemisphere and probably the first anywhere in the world—proved to be a warm and stimulating occasion (although somewhat casually organized, since the various papers were not united by a central theme).² The planners of this symposium were so delighted to see how many others shared their enthusiasm for Modern Greek literature, and so determined that the momentum achieved should not die at the symposium's end, that a small group of them joined several of the leading participants in forming a provisional executive committee that charged itself with the task of shaping the Association.³

The next step was to draft a constitution stating details of membership, administration, finances and, above all, purposes. The last were articulated in this document as follows: (1) The general purpose shall be the fostering and advancement of Modern Greek Studies, particularly in the United States. (2) Toward this end, the association deems as its specific purposes: (a) to organize scholarly symposia in the various fields of Modern Greek studies; (b) to finance, edit, and publish a professional journal; (c) to compile an annual bibliography of publications relating to Modern Greek literature, culture, history, etc.; (d) to assist in establishing chairs, programs, and departments of Modern Greek in American universities; (e) to encourage the teaching of Modern Greek language, literature, and culture at all levels; (f) to serve as a center for the dissemination of literature and information regarding courses, books, and professional opportunities in the field of Byzantine and Modern Greek studies, including literature,

language, history, political science, and all other aspects of Greek civilization; (g) to support other groups and individuals sharing an interest in the realization of the above goals; (h) to encourage the formation within the Association of sections covering the various academic disciplines, such sections to be coordinated by secretaries elected by their membership; (i) to engage in any and all other activities as may be deemed necessary or expedient for the better realization of any of the foregoing purposes.

Some of these specific purposes are more visionary than others. To endow professorial chairs, for example, requires vast sums of money. Unsuccessful campaigns in the past have led the Association to feel that it should concentrate at first on realizable goals. Its initial action, therefore, was to establish an annual bibliography. This was made possible by affiliation with the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), in turn an affiliate of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and by the good fortune of securing the services of Mrs. Evro Layton, a trained librarian formerly in charge of the Modern Greek collection at Harvard.⁴ The bibliography will continue to appear in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* (PMLA) each June, and it should prove an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Modern Greek Studies. As an additional service in this general area, the Association is sponsoring a cooperative project to encourage and facilitate libraries in the purchase of books and journals printed in the Modern Greek language (demotic or *katharévousa*). Under the terms of the project, Mrs. Layton selects items, orders them, and supplies cataloguing data, all according to the individual needs of subscribing institutions.⁵

A second realizable goal to which the Association turned its immediate attention was the organizing of meetings where scholars could present papers and discuss aspects of Modern Greek culture. A seminar was established in connection with the annual December convention of the Modern Language Association. The first of these yearly seminars, held in New York in 1968, concentrated on the novelists Theotokas, Myrivilis, and Kazantzakis; the second, held in Denver, on the poet Cavafy; the third, again in New York, on the Greek folksong and its contribution to nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. The 1971 seminar, held in Chicago, focused on the poetry of Sikelianos.

From the start, however, it was clear that a meeting of an hour and a half each year, even when supplemented by a business meeting, would be

hardly enough to satisfy the Association's interest in bringing together, for the sharing of mutual concerns, scholars devoted to all aspects of the field. Especially since another cherished goal, the inauguration of a journal, seemed a relatively long-term project, the executive committee voted to direct the Association's limited initial resources toward a series of biennial symposia lasting three or four days and hopefully offering an opportunity to invite distinguished foreign scholars to meet with their colleagues in this country. The proceedings of the first such symposium, convened at Princeton for three days in the fall of 1969 (October 30 to November 1) and attended by approximately 200 persons, form the basis of this book, to be discussed in detail below. The second symposium, sponsored by the MGSa in cooperation with the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard and the Fogg Museum, took place in Cambridge on May 7, 8, and 9, 1971, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Greek War of Independence. Because of this historical context, and because the Princeton symposium had focused on literature, the meetings at Harvard were devoted chiefly to historical themes, supplemented by papers on the literature most relevant to the occasion and by other cultural manifestations, such as a demonstration of Greek shadow theater (*Karaghiozis*).⁶ It is hoped that the proceedings of the Harvard symposium will eventually be published in a volume similar to the present one.

In turning now to the Princeton symposium, we should first of all remember that it depended substantially on the administrative assistance provided by the University through its Council of the Humanities and its University Conference office, and also on several generous gifts. The American Council of Learned Societies, eager to see its new affiliate receive a proper launching, awarded a grant of \$5,675. The remainder of symposium expenses (some \$2,500) were met by grants from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Eberhardt Faber Fund, and Mr. Andreas Carnavas. Under this rather munificent budget, the Association was able to invite participants from Athens, Rome, Geneva, and Oxford,⁷ in addition to scholars from a wide range of American universities.

Unlike the meetings at Maryland in 1968, the Princeton symposium was unified by a central theme: "Modern Greek Literature and Its European Background." But the planners also included several sessions on the Greek language and modes of teaching it, since these areas of exploration

were considered crucially important for the effective and expanded instruction of Modern Greek Studies in this country.⁸ In addition, the symposium offered two presentations not directly related to the central theme but regarded as generally relevant. In the first of these Professor C. A. Trypanis surveyed the Greek literary language from classical times to 1800, stressing the recurring efforts in the Roman, Byzantine, and Turkish periods to bring written Greek back to an Attic purity, and then turning to the demotic florescence in Crete under Venetian rule and the subsequent influence this exerted on the schools of Ioannina, Chios, Smyrna, and the Ionian islands. Though only grazing the role of other European cultures in this development, the survey offered a helpful general background to the two papers on bilingualism delivered later.

The second presentation not directly related to the symposium's central theme was a reading of, and commentary on, eleven "new" poems by Cavafy. These texts were delivered in Greek by Zissimos Lorenzatos and in English by Edmund Keeley, who read versions he had translated in collaboration with George Savidis. In his commentary, Professor Keeley spoke about the history and relevance of the seventy-five *ανέκδοτα* (unpublished) poems that appeared in Athens in 1968, placing these "new" poems in the context of the Cavafy canon as it was then known and describing the particular interest of each new poem selected for reading. His remarks at the symposium became the basis for the essay included in this book.

The remaining papers—twelve in all, of which nine are reproduced here⁹—examined the central theme of the symposium from diverse perspectives. The material they covered ranges in date from the 1820s to the 1960s; includes the three major genres: poetry, prose, and drama; and involves authors resident in mainland Greece, the islands, and the diaspora. Various critical methodologies are in evidence, and Greek literature is scrutinized not only by Hellenes but by barbarians, who presumably see things from a different point of view. A danger invited by such diversity is the possible absence of a coherent center despite the shared topic of Modern Greek Literature and Its European Background. A danger invited by the topic itself is the temptation to enumerate drearily how Greek writer X was influenced by European writer Y—surely one of the most discouragingly sterile of critical exercises. Readers must judge for themselves whether these dangers have been avoided; in my opinion, they have.

Regarding the first: scholars would need to work extremely hard to make a collection of diverse essays on Modern Greek literature lack a coherent center. The deeper one goes into this field of study, the more one becomes aware that everything in it relates unavoidably and naturally to everything else, whether or not we strive for coherence. The language itself—that continuous, “mortally immortal” vehicle—is one reason. The self-conscious obsession of all Greeks with their Greekness, even when they are slavishly imitating foreign modes, is another. Further causes of this unavoidable coherence need not be elaborated here; they should be evident in the essays that follow. Suffice it to say that in large part the unity felt during the Princeton symposium was *αχειροποίητος*: “not made by hands.”

Regarding the second danger, the dreary enumeration of influences, I believe that the symposium avoided this problem as well—again, not necessarily owing to skill or forethought, but rather owing to the nature of the field itself. William Butler Yeats once asserted that great literature arises from a marriage of folk culture and images with individual cultivated urban intelligence. He was speaking primarily of the Irish renaissance, but his formula could be applied equally well to the Chaucerian and Elizabethan florescences in England, the seventeenth-century renaissance in Crete, and other significant instances of concerted artistic excellence. If we think of the great figures involved—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Kornaros, Joyce, Yeats himself—we will note that the “cultivated urban intelligence” residing in each was trained in, and inspired by, foreign modes. Chaucer looked to France, Shakespeare and Kornaros to Italy, Yeats to England and Japan, Joyce to Norway and the Parisian avant-garde. Yet each in his own way managed to fuse indigenous folk elements into his sophisticated, borrowed plots, meters, or genres, producing something fresh and remarkable. What I am suggesting, obviously, is that when we examine the European background to Modern Greek literature, even if we do this by unimaginatively cataloguing Y’s influence upon X, we are investigating of necessity the most basic and fascinating problem of all: what caused Greece to blossom.

The essays here suggest again and again that Yeats’s formula may be applied to the Modern Greek literary renaissance, and they confirm the degree to which the individual intelligences involved were cultivated outside of Greece itself, or by foreign influences that had been imported. Solomos, the founder of Modern Greek poetry, was Italianate in culture; when

he finally discovered his role as a poet writing in Greek, he drew inspiration from Dante in the ways described so eloquently by Mr. Lorenzatos. Calvos, as Mr. Bouvier tells us, might never have written poetry in Greek if it were not for the currents of European philhellenism he encountered in Geneva. Matesis, like the other Ionian intellectuals of his time, grew up on Italian, French, English, and German literature, yet wedded these influences to the idiomatic and picturesque language of his own time and place, drawing both his characterization and the “problem” of his play from indigenous sources. The Palamas we see in Mr. Maskaleris’s essay was so busy reading Goethe, Hugo, Leconte de Lisle, Prudhomme, *les symbolistes*, Mistral, Verhaeren, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Nietzsche, D’Annunzio, Pascoli, Unamuno, Hardy, and William James that it is a wonder he found time to write anything of his own. Yet he not only wrote voluminously; he assimilated all the foreign influences, married them to indigenous reality and dream, and produced an oeuvre that was both individual and national. His urban intelligence was cultivated largely outside his own land and time (though physically he never left Greece), but his hero was the gypsy — the “mortally immortal” ever-wandering Greek.

If we consider Kazantzakis, we see essentially the same dichotomies, though we are not so sure of the happy conclusion. Brought up under the great shadow of Palamas’s eclecticism (everything in Modern Greek literature relates to everything else!), Kazantzakis, possibly because he was physically removed from his nation for extended periods, had much more difficulty in disciplining this eclecticism so that it might speak to the specific condition of his people. He clung to the demotic language championed by Solomos, Matesis, and Palamas, but this was not enough: his truly significant work came only when he was willing to honor other aspects of the folk culture and to allow himself to see the world through at least one eye that was native and unsophisticated. Finally, coming to Seferis, we are presented in Peter Levi’s study with “a poet who became possible only because of the central tradition of European poetry in the late nineteenth century,” yet one whose cultivated urban intelligence took the influences “available” to him — those of Rimbaud, Eliot, and Laforgue, for example — and squeezed them into the cap of a mortally immortal Greek sailor, his most characteristic protagonist.

But all formulas about literature, including the one by Yeats that I have been applying, are extremely dangerous if we do not qualify them, or

perhaps even abandon them after they have rendered service. These essays would indeed be formulaic in the worst sense if they showed Greek writers doing nothing more than turning outward toward Western European models in order to gain sophistication, or if they implied that there have been no changes or developments during the century and a half we are considering. Fortunately, the essays collected here do not fall into either of these traps. Mr. Maskaleris, after cataloguing Palamas's European sources, quite rightly reminds us that ancient and Byzantine writings were also vitally active in the cultivated intelligence that this author wedded to folk culture. As we all know, Greek writers turned not only outward to Europe, but backward to their own past. What the essays here help us realize, however, is that the division is misleading. Calvos's Hellenism was inspired by his contacts with Western Europe. The cult of the ancients injected into Greek education and linguistic consciousness by Solomos's bogymen Korais was a Europeanized one, the result of Korais's admiration for the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment. In short, although the Greeks looked backward as well as outward, they tended at first to see their history through Western European eyes, slighting the Byzantine years in favor of an idealized, distorted conception of the Golden Age. But even when (here, Mr. Dimaras's essay is very suggestive) the inevitable reaction took place and Paparrigopoulos's monumental history established Byzantium as the crucial link joining Ancient Greece and Modern Greece, establishing as well the dogma that the history of the Greek people is single, unified, and continuous, this was once more a looking backward through the lenses of European consciousness, in this instance through the Romanticism that was then everywhere in the ascendant.

What we see, therefore, are cultivated urban intelligences whose sophistication involves a contemporaneity (outward looking) and a historicity (backward looking) that are mixed very closely together. The situation becomes even more complicated when we realize — as Mr. Dimaras wisely says we must — that this hybrid was then wedded to “indigenous” elements by no means entirely distinguishable from it, for the vogue of folk language and culture, something we might have considered impeccably native, was itself shaped by Western European Romanticism.

Yeats's formula seems to have degenerated into a target that yearns to be riddled with qualifications; yet we all know instinctively, without need of fancy proof, that Modern Greek literature arose from two mergers: the

foreign with the indigenous, the cultivated with the popular. It is at this point that we must cease viewing the hundred and fifty years between Solomos and Seferis as though they were static. I asserted earlier that the essays in the present volume do not fall into this trap; on the contrary, if we view them synoptically, they suggest very interesting lines of development. They suggest, first of all, that Greek writers, though perhaps initially prodded to look outward, backward, and even inward because of their *ξενομανία*, gradually learned to see all these aspects of reality through their own, not borrowed, eyes—to see them through their ears as well, one might venture, since the way the poet or novelist hears the contemporaneity and historicity around him, the way he makes us hear it, in short the language he employs, is such a crucial factor in Greek individuality.

The most startling example is Cavafy. Completely conversant with poetic fashion in Europe, he nevertheless approached the Greek past and present in a wholly individualistic way, exploiting Paparrigopoulos's dogma of a continuous, mortally immortal Greece in a manner inconceivable in a Western writer. As Edmund Keeley suggests, Cavafy's successful struggle to achieve a forthright and unpretentious (if sometimes highly dramatic) language, as he explored the meaning of Hellenism in both himself and his tradition, served more than anything to establish him as the most original Greek poet of his century, whether one listens to his voice in the collected poems or in the newly published poems introduced here. The originality is first of all a matter of what Peter Levi calls "tone of voice": the unique signature that expresses and guarantees a writer's individuality. Using as his example Seferis—a poet, we remember, "who became possible only because of the central tradition of European poetry in the late nineteenth century"—Levi stresses how inseparable this tone is from language, how by Seferis's time the Greek tongue had come to carry its own moral and aesthetic values, enabling the poet to exploit it as a context, with nonchalance and assurance.

If we view our essays synoptically, however, we are reminded that the nonchalant genuineness one senses in Seferis was an achievement won only after long struggle. In the realm of their own language as well as in everything else, cultivated Greeks had to purge themselves gradually of European eyes and ears; only when they had done so were they content to allow this indigenous element to exist unmolested. The essays show the Europeanized vision of classicists and demoticists alike. The latter,

because they were polemicists, could not be nonchalant. They had to prove something, had to mold the language instead of allowing themselves to be molded by it. Kazantzakis is a particularly interesting—and tragic—example, embroiled as he was in the crusade begun so innocently by Solomos, manipulating the language (although with the best of intentions), and compromising his own artistry because he saw himself as a crusader in the European tradition and because he subscribed indiscriminately to a romantic view of the “folk.” But perhaps the Kazantzakian embroilment is a precondition of the Cavafian or Seferian assurance. Perhaps someone needs to choke on certain ingredients before someone else can swallow them.

Viewed synoptically, the essays suggest this development. They also show how Greece, like Western Europe, began with a literature almost exclusively poetic and then introduced the novel at a later stage. There are six essays on poets, only one on prose, an imbalance that bears tacit witness to certain assumptions still very much alive. Once again, Kazantzakis becomes an interesting example, this time of a man with a greater natural talent for prose than for verse, yet tragically denying this talent because prose was considered an inferior medium. Prose is now becoming firmly established in Greece; Mr. Vitti’s essay shows some of its growing pains, and how, over a span of several generations, it has attempted to treat the fashionable European concern of alienation in an individual way, providing us, incidentally, with another instance where Yeats’s insight may be applied profitably to Greek letters. The increasing acceptance of prose has naturally affected poetry and will continue to do so. How each genre modifies the other, and how, separately and concertedly, they continue to assimilate foreign influences, wedding these to things indigenous, will undoubtedly occupy future scholars.

I HAVE TRIED to show certain elements of overt and covert unity in these diverse essays on the European background of Modern Greek literature, and I have also tried to show why this general topic brings us willy-nilly to the most fundamental problem of all: what made Greece suddenly blossom forth artistically. Each reader will ask this question personally and will keep looking for those special qualities that somehow constitute the Greekness of the literary renaissance we are considering. Is it primarily the language that gives this literature its signature, or the

awareness of survival, interruption, and continuity, or the sense of loss infused with hope, or the plasticity, the immersion in the palpable immediacy of Greece's landscape, or the ability to look outward, backward, and inward at the same time, or all of these, and more? It would be wrong to expect definitive answers to such questions. Yet a collection of essays should at least pose the problems and grope toward some solution. The Modern Greek Studies Association trusts that this book will be a beginning in this process, and, if nothing else, that it will help to awaken English-speaking readers and educators to the creative wealth of Modern Greece, a wealth that has been so unjustifiably neglected until now in our schools and in our humanistic studies at all levels.

Woodbrooke,
Birmingham, England
February, 1971

Notes

- 1 Among those attending this meeting, called by Professor K. Mitsakis (then Acting Chairman of the Comparative Literature Department at Maryland), were Andonis Decavalles, Kostas Kazazis, Edmund Keeley, John Nicolopoulos, and Byron Tsangadas.
- 2 On the first day Basil Laourdas, visiting from Thessaloniki, surveyed the novels of Pandelis Prevelakis; A. O. Aldridge spoke on "Kazantzakis and the Modern Spirit"; and Kimon Friar, an other visitor from Greece, roused the audience with his account of Kazantzakis's *Odyssey*. The second day offered studies of Cavafy's mythology and his position in the diaspora by John Anton and Basil Christides, respectively, and a survey of Kosmas Politis's novels by Andonis Decavalies. On the final evening, Edmund Keeley spoke on the "mythical method" in the poetry of Seferis. The pro gram ended movingly with a talk on "Modern Greek Literature: A Quest for Identity," by Benjamin Jackson of the State Department, who was already visibly affected by the disease that was soon to kill him.
- 3 The provisional executive committee consisted of John Anton, Peter Bien, Andonis Decavalies, Thomas Doulis, Mary Gianos, Edmund Keeley (chairman), K. Mitsakis, John Nicolopoulos (secretary), Byron Tsangadas, and Peter Topping.
- 4 The first fruits of Mrs. Layton's industry appeared in the annual bibliographical supplement of the *Publications of the Modern Language Asso-*

- ciation* (PMLA), June 1969, pp. 1064–73, under the following headings: i. General and Miscellaneous; ii. Folklore; iii. Medieval Literature in the Vernacular; iv. Literature 1453–1669; v. Literature 1670–1830; vi. Literature 1831–1880; vii. Literature 1881–1922; viii. Modern Literature after 1922. Each section has subheadings such as General, Poetry, Prose Fiction, Drama and Theater. Books and periodicals are listed alphabetically according to author under these headings.
- 5 The following fields are covered: Archeology, Byzantine and Modern Greek history, literature, folklore, art, language, economics, education, the history and dogma of the Greek Orthodox Church, bibliography, and biography.
 - 6 The historical papers included the following: D. Geanakoplos, “The Role of the Greeks of the Diaspora in the Development of the New National Consciousness”; J. Nicolopoulos, “The Greeks of Russia and the Origins of Greek Nationalism”; N. Valaoritis, “Rhigas Pheraios and the Pre-Revolutionary Intellectual Ferment”; G. D. Frangos, “Philike Hetairia and the Greek Revolution”; E. Vlachos, “Social Organization and Social Conflicts at the Time of the Greek War of Independence”; D. Skiotis, “The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha’s Last Gamble”; K. Kazazis, “Some Aspects of Linguistic Hellenocentrism, or Why the Turks Behave Like Turks”; Barbara Jelavich, “The Greek Revolution and the Balkan Nations”; J. Petropoulos, “Forms of Collaboration with the Enemy during the Greek War of Independence”; S. Vryonis, “The Greeks under Turkish Rule”; A. Bryer, “The Greeks of the Pontos and the Greek War of Independence”; L. Stavrianos, “Greece in World Historical Perspective”; and H. Psomiades, “The Character of the Modern Greek State.” In addition, the symposium offered the following: C. Proussis, “The Memoirs of Makryiannis”; A. Lord, “The Heroic Tradition of Greek Epic and Ballad—Continuity and Change”; and Ann Farmakides, “On Combining the Teaching of Classical and Modern Greek.”
 - 7 Two of the speakers invited from Greece, Dr. C. Th. Dimaras and Professor George Savidis, were unable to obtain permission to leave Greece in order to participate in the symposium. Dr. Dimaras’s paper, included here in the original French version, was read in English translation by Edmund Keeley. Reference to Professor Savidis’s work on the new poems of Cavafy was included in the commentary on those poems (see pp. 124ff. below), and the English versions read at the symposium were those he had prepared in collaboration with Edmund Keeley for the Dial Press volume entitled *Passions and Ancient Days*, New York, 1971.

- 8 One such session was practical, the other theoretical. During the first, Mrs. Chrysanthi Bien demonstrated a beginning class in Modern Greek, using Princeton students as guinea pigs. She was assisted in this by Professors John Rassias and Peter Bien, who used the occasion to demonstrate their new textbook incorporating the oral/aural/visual techniques developed by Professor Rassias in his work as a director of language instruction for the Peace Corps. The theoretical session involved a panel discussion on university programs in Modern Greek. Professor A. Owen Aldridge argued that Modern Greek literature could be most conveniently housed in Comparative Literature departments, and he described some courses in this area already offered at the University of Illinois. Dr. Ann Farmakides urged parallel instruction of Ancient and Modern Greek, citing her own experience in the Department of Classics at McGill. Professor Thanasis Maskaleris stressed cultural involvement and indicated how he combines Modern Greek culture and literature in his courses in the extension division at Berkeley. Mr. Philip Emmanuel called for systematic collaboration between literary men and educators here and in Greece, with the aim of developing viable curricula. Dr. Basil Vlavianos exposed the *bête noire* of *katharévousa*, emphasizing the complications that Greek bilingualism produces in the classroom. Professor Mary Gianos, editor of the Twayne series on Modern Greek authors, drew attention to the need for teaching materials, especially translations and criticism, if Modern Greek literature is to be offered in our schools as effectively as are other contemporary literatures. Professor John Anton brought the above points together by suggesting that if Modern Greek Studies are to secure an appropriate place in the curricula of our universities, we must foster and coordinate efforts to produce (1) effective manuals of instruction for the Modern Greek language, (2) imaginative courses relating Modern Greek literature to other literatures, and (3) a wealth of readily available textbooks, literary texts, and critical commentaries. To put these hopes for the future in perspective, Professor Kostas Kazazis presented the situation as it now exists in America: a plethora of short-lived non-credit courses, an emotional rather than scholarly attitude toward the language, the absence of teacher training, and uncertainty among instructors regarding the possibilities of offering the language as a major or even of continuing instruction beyond the elementary level. Kazazis argued that we should expand existing programs before attempting to inaugurate new ones.
- 9 The three not included, owing to space limitations, focused on writers or themes already represented in the selection offered here: Michael Anton-

akes on “Reactions (Greek, French, and English) to Kazantzakis’s View of the Christ Figure”; M. Byron Raizis on “Kazantzakis’s play *Odysseus* and Gerhart Hauptmann’s *The Bow of Odysseus*; and Andreas K. Poulakides on “The Romantic Movement in Greek Literature.”

The First Phase of MGS A's Publication of a Scholarly Journal

OUR GENERAL TOPIC is “The Past, Present, and Future of *The Journal of Modern Greek Studies*.” It is appropriate that I speak of the past, since I was involved from day one. We need to remember that *JMGS* did not originally exist as an independent entity but rather as part of *BMGS* (*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*). This collaboration ran from 1975 through 1982. *JMGS* began its independent existence with its volume 1, number 1 in May 1983. I served first as associate editor of *BMGS* from 1977 until 1983 under its editor, Professor Donald M. Nicol, the distinguished Byzantinist of King's College, London. I then served as associate editor of *JMGS* from 1983 through 1985 under its initial editor, William McNeill, and afterward under Ernestine Friedl from 1986 through 1990, when I became editor until 1999, adding up to a total involvement of twenty-four very interesting years.

How did all this start? A group gathered together at the University of Maryland in the fall of 1967 to discuss the possibility of holding a symposium in 1968. That symposium never took place; however, the same group decided in 1968 to constitute itself a small executive committee charged with inventing the Modern Greek Studies Association. The members (in alphabetical order) were John Anton, Peter Bien, Andonis Decavalles, Thomas Doulis, Mary Gianos, Edmund Keeley (chairman), Karolos Mitsakis, John Nicolopoulos, Byron Tsangadas, and Peter Topping. The committee's immediate task was to compose a constitution specifying the purposes of the association, one of which was to finance, edit, and publish a professional journal. That was the beginning. But a journal — namely, *BMGS* — did not actually appear until seven years later. What happened in between?

At this time the discipline of Modern Greek Studies did not exist in

the United States. Our purpose was to invent it. But it is hard to publish a professional journal when there is no organized body of scholars to provide articles, to subscribe, to advertise in the journal, and so forth. Thus we decided that our best hope was to combine with *Byzantine Studies*, which did exist as an organized discipline in the United States and equally or more so in Great Britain, not to mention elsewhere. Edmund Keeley likes to remember that the way forward was discovered during a conversation over an ample number of beers at the Staff House bar of the University of Birmingham, England, between himself and Antony Bryer, a professor of Byzantine history at Birmingham whose special interest in the Pontos extended his range into Modern Greek history and culture. Bryer (his friends and even his wife always addressed him by his last name) volunteered to be business manager but not editor. Since a Byzantinist and presumably a British one was needed as editor in chief, we appealed to Donald Nicol, the Koraës Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature in King's College, University of London. He agreed to serve. I was eventually brought on as associate editor to represent both the American half of this enterprise and the Modern Greek side. Thanks to Nicol's stature and Bryer's contacts, we somehow managed to get Basil Blackwell of Oxford to be the initial publisher. Thus *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* — *BMGS*, lovingly called "Bumgas" by Bryer — was launched, originally as an annual journal. The first issue, 1975, contained the following articles: "A Chronological Note on the First Persian Campaign of Heraclius" by N. Oikonomides, "Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries" by J. F. Haldon, "Byzantine 'Nationalism' and the Nicaean Empire" by M. Angold, "Peasant Names in Fourteenth-Century Macedonia" by Angeliki Laiou, "'The Leprous Queen' — a Ballad from Lesbos" by D. W. Holton, "The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk-Song" by Margaret Alexiou, "The Translation of the Scriptures and the Ecumenical Patriarchate: The Translation Efforts of Hilarion of Tirnovo" by N. M. Vaporiis, "Andreas Kalvos and the Eighteenth-Century Ethos" by Philip Sherrard, and "A Karamanlidika Inscription from Mount Athos (1818)" by R. R. M. Clogg. About three and a half modern subjects out of a total of nine articles — not bad for a beginning, although none of the modern material pertained to the twentieth century.

The agreement with Blackwell needed to be strengthened immediately.

As early as the spring of 1975, Bryer and I were back in Oxford, negotiating for another two years. Smooth sailing occurred until 1979, when I was in Birmingham again on November 1 to plan some sort of strategy with Bryer. We telephoned Nicol in London as well as Richard Clogg, and planned to meet once more with a Blackwell's director in Oxford, this time also with Lily Macrakis, then president of MGSA, who traveled from America to augment this combined effort to save the journal. Off to Oxford with Bryer on November 19. Met Lily Macrakis there. Then to Blackwell's for a two and a half hour meeting with David Martin and David Taylor about *BMGS*. We got them to bring the price down a bit. They urged us to publish twice a year instead of annually, 112 pages maximum each time, and also to include review articles. We found all this encouraging. But Lily, at the same time, was trying to get Cambridge University Press, which seemed interested, to steal us away from Blackwell. On the next day, November 20th, I feasted with Bryer at Staff House, again over beers, in order to plan the next meeting, which took place in London three days later. The two of us lunched at King's with Nicol, Clogg, and Macrakis. Nicol wasted two hours with drinks and small talk. We finally got down to business at 2:30 and left at 5:00. But it was discouraging—no agenda, Nicol not enthusiastic about changes, insisting on publishing *BMGS* #6 at Blackwell in the old way. But we agreed to move to two issues per year after number 6 (which did not happen that quickly), and also decided to strengthen the social science contingent of the editorial board by adding Margaret Alexiou and John Iatrides. On November 24 Lily reported that Cambridge University Press seemed truly interested; yet there was still no agreement about pounds, shillings, and pence. On December 11, still in 1979, Nicol appeared ready with number 6, since all submissions had been vetted and copyedited. MGSA had approved all relevant arrangements for this issue at its Executive Committee meeting of October 6, 1979, but had also voted to keep alternative arrangements under discussion.

This brings us to 1980. *BMGS* number 6 appeared under the Blackwell imprint. However, in the spring of that year we continued to try to get Cambridge University Press to take over *BMGS*. Edmund Keeley, Lily Macrakis, and I lunched with Sue Porter and Mark Sexton in New York, and Mike went to London to iron out remaining differences with Donald Nicol. However, at the very last minute Cambridge University Press got cold feet—for financial reasons, so we were told—and backed out. Let

me add that from the start most of us on both sides of the Atlantic felt that we needed a reputable publisher for this venture, which of course could have been issued by the University of Birmingham (as *BMGS* later was, beginning with its volume 9 [1984/85]). Please remember that the journal was part of a much larger project — namely, the establishment of a viable discipline for Modern Greek Studies. We reasoned that a reputable publisher would signify our respectability, whereas some sort of private publication would signify our marginality, besides bankrupting us.

Nineteen-eight-one was a crucial — and very difficult — year leading to the important change that was to take place. Cambridge University Press being no longer in the picture, we decided to negotiate, in America now, with the totally respectable Johns Hopkins University Press. Bryer, Keeley, Diskin Clay, and I went to Baltimore. But Hopkins wanted us to assume full financial liability instead of them doing so. Very risky; nevertheless we agreed. Let me add that our long relationship with Hopkins has been difficult but always cordial, despite huge initial troubles in getting them to print accurate Greek. Returning now to 1981, Donald Nicol was extremely angry concerning our suspected defection. Under his guidance, number 7 of *BMGS* (1981) was in press, an important issue that included Renata Lavagnini's "The Unpublished Drafts of Five Poems on Julian the Apostate by C. P. Cavafy" as well as Glen Bowersock's article on Cavafy's complete set of Julian poems, all this transpiring after innumerable international cables and extensively frayed nerves. Fine! But number 8 was suspended indefinitely for lack of money, although it did appear a year late (1983), still edited by Nicol and published by Blackwell.

MGSA, by this time much stronger, felt ready to break with the Byzantines in order to go it alone. So we invented *The Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. On March 25, 1983, Greek independence day, I drove to Colebrook, Connecticut to meet our first editor, Professor William Hardy McNeill, and his wife, who served the journal unofficially but vigorously in an editorial and secretarial capacity during her husband's two years of editorship. John Iatrides, a key player in the selection of this editor, came as well. I spoke earlier about respectability for our efforts. In choosing Bill McNeill we obtained the greatest possible respectability. His biographical notice on the Internet cites him as "among the world's most respected historians." His *Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, published in 1963, explored the effect of ancient civilizations on one another

and how our own Western civilization influenced others over the past five hundred years. The book's emphasis on cultural transmission and fusion has affected subsequent historical research. In 1978 he published a study called *The Metamorphosis of Greece since 1945*, and in 1989 a biography of Arnold Toynbee, the first Koraës Professor in the University of London.

I need to say something more about Donald Nicol and *BMGS*, having left him very angry in 1981 with his journal's 8th issue suspended. *BMGS* did continue, but under a new editor. I'm glad to add that when Nicol came to Harvard in 1983 to lecture on the afternoon of April 21 (another historical date for Greeks), he and I walked around Harvard Yard for two hours after supper and had coffee together. Our reunion was cordial. We both regretted the split that had occurred between modernists and Byzantinists, but felt that we could remain friends. One reason was something I had not known before: that having declared himself a conscientious objector, he had then served in the Quaker Ambulance Unit from 1942 to 1946, landing in Greece in October 1944 just after the Germans withdrew, in time to witness the *Δεκεμβριανά*, during which he was captured by the *αντάρτες*, who then released him unharmed. Returning to Britain in 1946, he studied classics at Cambridge University, wrote a dissertation supervised by Sir Steven Runciman, taught in Dublin, Indiana University, Edinburgh, and finally at King's College London, where he was appointed to the chair first occupied by Arnold Toynbee. He retired from King's in 1988, served the next three years as director of the Gennadius Library in Athens, and died in 2003, widely remembered for a distinguished career motivated by his experiences in wartime Greece. As for *BMGS*, it began a new lease on life with its volume 9, dated 1984/85, edited by John Haldon, a Byzantinist at the University of Birmingham, with Bryer staying on as business editor, and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Byzantine Studies & Modern Greek listed as publisher. The issue began with an "Editorial Comment" explaining certain changes from previous issues and including not a single word about the previous collaboration with MGS A. However, articles on Modern Greek subjects were included, volume 9 containing studies on folklore by Margaret Alexiou, on the Modern Greek novel by Roderick Beaton, on General Makriyannis by David Holton, on Kazantzakis and others by Gregory Jusdanis, on Solomos by Peter Mackridge — indeed, there was more modern material than Byzantine. *BMGS* continues. Thus MGS A's initial venture into journal publication, quite

aside from leading to our own *JMGS*, produced a British journal that includes Modern Greek material to some degree.

JMGS's volume 1, number 1 appeared in May 1983. It was a special issue devoted to *MGSA*'s 1980 symposium on "Woman and Men in Greece: a Society in Transition." Lily Macrakis and Peter Allen served as guest editors. The editorial board consisted of Diskin Clay, Richard Clogg, Ernestine Friedl, John Iatrides, Kostas Kazazis, Edmund Keeley, John Petropoulos, George Savidis, and Speros Vryonis, Jr.. Writers in this first issue were Bill Wyatt, Eva Topping, Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus, Paschalis Kitromilides, Elizabeth Constantinides, Margaret Alexiou, Renée Hirschon, Kostas Kazazis, Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke, Loring Danforth, Michael Herzfeld, Ruth Mandel, Jill Dubisch, Muriel Dimen, and Juliet du Boulay. It was a strong beginning, especially for a discipline that had not existed fifteen years earlier. And it is now (2016) up to volume 34, happily still published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Problems in Translating from Modern Greek

THERE ARE two schools of translators: those who aim for something totally idiomatic in the target language, so that the reader does not even know that he or she is reading a translation, versus those who deliberately retain idioms, sentence structure, vocabulary, etc. from the original language to accord some flavor to the English translation, so that the reader constantly realizes that the original was in Russian, Greek, French, or whatever.

I belong to the first group. My major aim is to create something that works well in English. I also believe, as we shall see later, that rhymed poetry should be translated in rhyme. Many translators disagree.

What sort of problems come up if one wishes to create something totally idiomatic in the target language?

- 1 Sentence length and structure. I've translated four long novels by Nikos Kazantzakis, who tends to use main clauses rather than subordinate clauses or phrases. Here is an example in literal translation: "Manolios threw more kindling on the fire, he was afraid of remaining alone in the darkness. He watched the fire leaping and hissing, he fixed his ear, heard nighttime voices through the open door." This certainly could be translated using subordinate clauses. For example: "Because he was afraid of remaining alone in the darkness, Manolios threw more kindling on the fire. Pricking up his ear as he watched the fire leaping and hissing, he heard nighttime voices through the open door." Notice here as well that the Greek idiom "fix one's ear" has been Englished to "prick up one's ear." So, we've already seen two problems that may occur.

- 2 **Lineation.** In translating poetry, should we slavishly reproduce the line-lengths of the original? One of the Greek poets I translated was Yannis Ritsos, who forbade me to change his lineation. But usually one has more flexibility, especially of course if the poet is dead. Here is an extreme example, a poem by Stylianos Harkianakis entitled “Οι Δύο” (“The Two”):

Σκιές παράλληλες που ανασηκώθηκαν για να φωτίσουν και να σβήσουν η μια την άλλη, όσο μπορέσουν και προλάβουν ν' αγαπηθούν!	Shadows side by side, rising up to brighten and efface each other, so long as they remain in love!
--	--

One could play with the form in various ways:

Shadows
 side by side, rising up
 to brighten and efface
 each other.
 so long as they remain
 in love!

Shadows
 side by side,
 rising up
 to brighten
 and
 efface
 each other
 so long
 as
 they
 remain
 in
 love!

- 3 **Rhyme.** Here is an extreme example, since I had to add something not in the original in order to produce a rhyme. Many translators will not do this. (I'll show some rhymed and unrhymed versions of another poem, later.). This poem is also by Harkianakis.

Μια λεμονιά στον κήπο μου η άκρη του κόσμου.	A lemon tree in my garden edge of the world.
Μια λεμονιά στον κήπο μου το τέλος μιάς ζωής ανθίζει κι ανασταίνεται όλο το φως μου, μυρίζει και λυτρώνεται ο λυγμός της αυγής.	A lemon tree in my garden end of a life blossoms and revives all my light is fragrant and redeems daybreak's sob.

A lemon tree in my garden
far-distant prison.
A lemon tree in my garden
lifetime flown
restores with its flowers
all my vision
redeems with its fragrance
daybreak's moan.

- 4 Another problem is whether to keep a Greek word in a case where the same word has passed into English. My view is that this generally should not be done.

Three examples:

Μην είναι τάχα χίμαιρα;

(Friar)

Is this perhaps chimerical?

(Keeley-Sherrard)

Can this be an illusion?

ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟ

Σκελετός ορφάνιας
ξερό σγουγγάρι στη θάλασσα
αγωνία αγίου
εμπειρία ληστού.

—Στυλιανός Χαρκιανάκης

(Karalis)

A skeleton of orphanhood
a sponge dry in the sea
with the saint's agony
a thief's experience.

(Bien)

Orphan's privation
lifeless sponge in the ocean
saint's vexation
bandit's savoir-faire.

Ανάεροι καταρράχτες
 της μπουμπουκιασμένης ροδοδάφνης
 στα γκρεμνά —Σικελιανός

aerial waterfalls
 of the full-budding oleander
 on the precipice

(translated by Keeley and Sherrard)

aerial cataracts
 of the flowering oleander
 on the escarpments (long, steep slope)
 (Keeley and Sherrard, revised)

αέριος (= aerial, of air, gaseous) vs. ανάερος (= immaterial, like air,
 ethereal)

καταρράχτης (= waterfall; torrent)

Here we see not only the problem of retaining in English a word derived from Greek but also the attempt to reproduce in English some of the original poem's technique: in this case its vowel-music. Always a temptation, but dangerous!

We also see here the possibility that even good, careful translators will make mistakes. One can hardly blame Keeley and Sherrard for confusing αέριος and ανάερος. In my translation of Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, throughout the novel, I spoke of Zebedee's "foster children" where I should have said "apprentices." And in my edition of *The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis*, I was happily saved from a booboo by a friend. Kazantzakis traveled by ship from Crete to Athens to begin his university career, and wrote to his father, "The journey was fine; I didn't get dizzy." Or at least that's what I thought. My friend corrected me. The word "dizzy" when applied to a sea voyage means "seasick." I looked in every Greek dictionary (and we now have very good ones); not a single one of them, under "dizzy" listed "seasick" as a possible meaning. I asked my wife. She said, "Of course, everyone knows that!" So, since everyone knows it, apparently there's no need to record that meaning in a dictionary.

- 5 Continuing with vocabulary, translators really need to be fully awake at every moment, which is difficult. They also should always be willing to ask people for help. For example:

κριτικός / κρητικός

φυλακή / φιλική

Ο Ο Ο Ο that Shakespearian Rag

Όρτσα ! (orzare)

Όρτσα, διάλε την πίστη του κι όπου το βγάλει η βράση,
για που θα σάσει μια δουλειά για που θα σοχαλάσει!

Luff the helm, embrace your faith come what come may,
who cares if a project thrive or if it decay!

These, then, are some of the problems affecting translation. We can say, more generally, that every translator is ground between two millstones.

One wants him to be precise, accurate, responsible, and of course always wide awake.

The other wants him to take liberties, to be imaginative, willing to take chances, but also, of course, to be always wide awake.

So, he squirms. If he decides to be literal, he is all too often stiff in the target language, not to mention unidiomatic sometimes by choice. If he decides to take liberties, he may be forced into inaccuracies. But sometimes the result is better.

Consider two celebrated translators of Homer. Richmond Lattimore is always precise and accurate. His Book IX, line 364 is exactly Homer's Book IX, line 364 in the Greek. Robert Fitzgerald is imaginative and daring. His line for the same passage is 394, which means that he is already 30 lines ahead of the Greek original.

(Lattimore)

“Cyclops, you ask me for my famous name. I will tell you
then, but you must give me a guest gift as you have promised.
Nobody is my name. My father and mother call me
Nobody, as do all the others who are my companions.”

So I spoke, and he answered me in pitiless spirit:

“Then I will eat Nobody after his friends, and the others
I will eat first, and that shall be my guest present to you.”

He spoke and slumped away and fell on his back, and lay there
with his thick neck crooked over on one side, and sleep who
subdues all

came on and captured him, and the wine gurgled up from his gullet with gobs of human meat. This was his drunken vomiting.

(Fitzgerald)

Kyklops,
you ask my honorable name? Remember
the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.
My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends,
everyone calls me Nohbdy.”

And he said:
“Nohbdy’s my meat, then, after I eat his friends.
Others come first. There’s a noble gift, now.”
Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,
his great head lolling to one side: and sleep
took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccupping,
he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

Let’s see now what happens with two translations of a passage from “Days of 1896” by the Modern Greek poet Constantine Cavafy:

Rae Dalven is a literalist, striving to reproduce the passage word by word even though the sense is impaired. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard are freer, willing to take chances with the Greek in order to produce something more viable in English:

Μα η κοινωνία που ήταν
σεμνότυφη πολύ
συσχετίζε κουτά.

Dalven:

But the community that was
so puritanical
made stupid comparisons.

Keeley-Sherrard

But society,
totally narrow-minded,
had all its values wrong.

Note the last line in each case. Dalven translates literally, mistaking the meaning of συσχετίζε, which means “correlated” more than “compared,” and obscuring the real meaning, which is given more or less correctly by Keeley-Sherrard. Although she translates κοινωνία correctly as “community,” the real meaning here is “society” or perhaps “high society.” The middle line is OK in both translations, although the Greek means only “prudish.”

What I want to show next is an entire poem, rhymed in the original, sometimes rhymed and sometimes not rhymed in diverse translations. This is Cavafy’s famous “31 B.C. in Alexandria” about the decisive battle of Actium that ended the Roman civil war, caused the suicides of both Antony and Cleopatra, and began the sole rule of Octavian as Emperor Augustus.

ΤΟ 31 Π. Χ. ΣΤΗΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑ

Απ’ την μικρή του, στα περίχωρα πλησίον, κώμη,
και σκονισμένος από το ταξίδι ακόμη

έφθασεν ο πραγματευτής. Και «Λίβανον» και «Κόμμι!»
«Άριστον Έλαιον!» «Άρωμα για την κόμη!»

στους δρόμους διαλαλεί. Αλλ’ η μεγάλη οχλοβοή,
κ’ η μουσικές, κ’ η παρελάσεις πού αφήνουν ν’ ακουσθεί.

Το πλήθος τον σκουντά, τον σέρνει, τον βροντά.
Κι όταν πια τέλεια σαστισμένος, τι είναι η τρέλλα αυτή; ρωτά,

ένας του ρίχνει κι αυτουνού την γιγαντιαία ψευτιά
του παλατιού — που στην Ελλάδα ο Αντώνιος νικά.

Dalven as usual is literal, and unrhymed:

From his tiny village, close to the suburbs,
and still covered with dust from the journey

The trader arrives. And “Frankincense!” and “Gum!”
“The Finest Olive Oil” “Scent for the Hair!”

He cries on the streets. But the great clamor of the mob,
the medley of music and the parades, would they let him be heard?

The crowd jostles him, pulls him along, knocks against him
 And then when he is perfectly befuddled, “What is this madness?”
 he asks.

One of them hurls at him also the gigantic lie
 of the palace — that in Greece Antony is victorious.

In line 1, her “suburbs” is accurate but gives the wrong impression since for us the suburbs are where the well-to-do middle class lives, whereas in the poem they refer to the slums on the edge of town. In line 3, her “trader” is also a dictionary definition, but what is meant is a peddler. Also “frankincense” is unfortunate because associated in our minds with the precious gift brought by the Magi to the infant Jesus, whereas in the poem the peddler is selling cheap incense. In line 5, “He cries *on* the streets” is unEnglish; the Greek says “he hawks *in* the streets.” In line 6 “the medley of music” is gauche for Cavafy’s plural noun, “musics,” which means various bands playing in separate parades. Dalven’s period at the end of line 8, where a comma is required, destroys the syntax, which should be a complex sentence continuing in lines 9 and 10, as in the Greek original. Finally in the last line she indicates that Antony has already won whereas the Greek says that he “is winning” — i.e., is still in the process of winning. Not a good translation, alas. Let’s see if Keeley-Sherrard’s, still unrhymed, is better.

From his village near the outskirts of town,
 still dust-covered from the journey in,
 the peddler arrives. And “Incense!” “Gum!”
 “The best olive oil!” “Perfume for your hair!”
 he hawks through the streets. But with all the hubbub,
 the music, the parades, who can hear him?
 The crowd shoves him, drags him along, knocks him around.
 And when he asks, now totally confused, “What the hell’s going on
 here?”
 someone tosses him too the huge palace lie:
 that Antony is winning in Greece.

They’ve got outskirts instead of suburbs; peddler; incense; hawking through the streets; hubbub, which is maybe better than Dalven’s literal “clamor of the mob,” “music” in the singular, which allows for various bands; “shoves,” “drags” “knocks” in line 7, which reproduces Cavafy’s

thumping “τον σκουντά, τον σέρνει, τον βροντά”; and Antony not yet fully victorious. But “What the hell’s going on here?” is surely too close to Brooklyn slang for Cleopatra’s Alexandria.

A more recent unrhymed translation might be the best of the lot even though it keeps frankincense, allows Antony to be completely victorious, and has too many “ands.” It does include one rhyme — roar/for — perhaps by accident.

TRANSLATED BY MEMAS KOLAITIS (1989)

From his small village, just beyond the city’s edge,
and covered over with the dust of his long walk,

the peddler came; and “Frankincense!”, “Sweet gum!”,
Fine fragrant oil!”, and “Perfume for your hair!”

he cries a-hawking down the streets. But through the roar,
the bands, and the parades, he cannot now be heard.

Pushed here, pulled there, and battered by the crowds,
and totally confused, he asks: “What all this madness for?”

and someone tosses at him too the foul great lie
the palace spreads — that Antony has won in Greece.

There are three attempts of rhymed translation that I know of. The earliest uses four sets of perfect masculine rhymes (composed of one syllable) and one set of a perfect feminine rhyme (two syllables). Like Cavafy, it does not employ any half-rhymes (like hitting/hurting, shell/shall).

TRANSLATED BY JOHN MAVROGORDATO (1951)

Coming from his little village, that lies just
Near the suburbs, still covered with the journey’s dust,

The trader arrives. “Frankincense,” and “Gum,” his ware,
And “Best Olive Oil,” and “Perfume for the Hair”

He cried along the streets. But in the noisy herd,
The music, the processions, how can he be heard?

The moving crowd around him jostles, hustles, thunders.
At last bewildered, What’s this madness here? he wonders.

And someone tosses him too the gigantic piece
Of palace fiction — Antony's victory in Greece.

Note the homophonous rhyme “herd/heard” in stanza 3, matching Cavafy's Κόμμα / κόμη in his second stanza.

Next, here's an attempt by the late Professor of Russian at Dartmouth, Walter Arndt, a brilliant translator into English, his sixth language (!), from Russian, German, and now from Greek:

From his suburban village come,
Still dusty from the way he'd fared,

The pedlar arrived. And “incense!” “gum!”
“The finest oil!” and “scent for the hair!”

He hawks in the streets. But could he be as loud
As the bands and processions, the roar of the crowd?

He is dragged by the mob and jostled and bruised.
When he asks what the frenzy means, all confused,

He is tossed the prodigious Palace canard:
Antonius in Greece is winning the war.

Finally, my own:

The peddler arrived from his tiny
village near the purlieu, still grimy

from the journey's dust. “Incense!” he cries
through the streets, and “Gum!” “Finest oil!” “Dyes

for the hair!” But with the great noisy herd
and the music and parades, how can he be heard?

The throngs push him, drag him, pound him with their fists
and when at last, perfectly confused, he asks, “What madness
is this?”

he too is tossed the gigantic palace yarn —
that Antony, in Greece, has won.

I still make Antony victorious instead of only on the way to victory. But I like “yarn/won,” my off-rhyme, better than Professor Arndt’s “canard/war.” What all this proves is simply that one does one’s best in translation but never really wins.

Address at the Celebration for Margaret Alexiou

*University of Birmingham Staff House
December 13, 1985*

YOU ARE WONDERING, I'm sure, why I should be making this speech. I've been wondering, too. It is true that I am a link between what Margaret Alexiou is leaving and where she is heading, since I have been associated with both Birmingham and Harvard. That is some sort of qualification, I suppose.

But I would rather stand here today as a recent president of the Modern Greek Studies Association, because what I would like us to be thinking about is not so much university A or B as a scholarly discipline. It is also useful that I happen to own some forest land in northern New York State. We favor trees that are straight and tall, with just a canopy, and no low branches; the others we cull. But here and there we do leave sprawling trees so branchy that they will never do for lumber. We call them seed trees.

That's the way I see Birmingham in relation to our discipline: as a seed tree. In America, Australia, Sweden, and ironically Greece itself, Birmingham-trained scholars hold key positions in Modern Greek programs. The very journal of the Modern Greek Studies Association was conceived downstairs in this building, in the bar over numerous beers.

For all this — this dissemination — we have to thank George Thomson first of all, for pioneering the then outlandish idea of Greek as an indivisible subject from Homer to the present; Bryn Rees, Ron Willetts, Anthony Byer, Desmond Costa, and Professor Douglas for continuing the administrative support; but above all Meg Alexiou, and Christos Alexiou, for doing the actual work: developing curricula, building up the

library, patiently teaching Demotic to beginners year after year, supervising dissertations, publishing *Mandatoforos*: in sum, creating an effective academic program from scratch, out of nothing.

But Christos is leaving, Meg is leaving. Perhaps we should lament. Perhaps we should worry about the future of Modern Greek at Brum. Yet, as I said earlier, I would rather think less about any particular center than about the discipline as a whole, especially since many signs show that Modern Greek at Brum, although destined to take new directions, is likely to retain its international prominence, perhaps because of these new directions, especially the pioneering link between Modern Greek and Ottoman Studies.

So let's talk about the discipline. In 1968, when the Modern Greek Studies Association was founded and you were getting started here, there was nothing outside of Greece, at least not in the English-speaking countries: no traditions, no established courses of study, no textbooks, no critical editions, no training of future personnel. Now, seventeen years later, Modern Greek is taught on all six continents, Demotic has just passed French as the most frequent language offered for A-level examinations in Melbourne; enrollments in the United States have been increasing steadily by 6 percent a year; journals are regularly published in England, the UK, Germany, Denmark, Canada.

Yet Birmingham remains the largest seed tree in the English-speaking world, although London, Oxford, Cambridge, Melbourne, and Sydney are playing their parts, too. But, for a growing discipline like ours, there is room for another seed tree, especially on the other side of the Atlantic, and there is no better location than Harvard, where Modern Greek roots are already deep — they go back to the 1820s owing to Americans involved in the Greek War of Independence. On the other hand, the program at Harvard is still very incomplete; it does not need to be established from scratch, thank goodness, but it very much needs to be developed along lines yet to be determined — and this is what Meg is going to do.

So, far from lamenting, I think that we should all be delighted that the discipline has acquired this opportunity. As for Meg herself, she is at the perfect point in her career. Her first book, on the ritual lament, has become a classic of the George Thomson approach; her second book, *The Text and Its Margins*, published this year, shows that she is now ready to go beyond that earlier approach, not renouncing it but rather modifying

it in light of the field's evolution. I say that she is at the perfect point in her career because, quite aside from the Harvard appointment, she has become increasingly interested in methodology and increasingly certain that the previous emphasis on continuity within the Greek tradition should now be supplemented by other emphases allowing Modern Greek culture to be seen in European and Oriental contexts, for example, and certainly no longer as a unique phenomenon in opposition to Balkan or Turkish culture. Let me quote from her "exaugural," given here yesterday. She argues that a full genealogy of Modern Greek Studies in the West

must take account of both Classicism and Orientalism; it should also include an investigation of when, where, and why academic posts in Modern Greek were set up, an analysis of the fields that have received major attention outside Greece (folklore, modern poetry, linguistics), and a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of Greek literature's failure to achieve standard canonisation within European literature. All these factors need to be considered within the context of European movements such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism.

So not only are we going to get a second seed tree at Harvard; we are also going to get one of a different species — and that is doubly beneficial for a forest.

It is wrong to think of Meg's departure as your loss and our gain. A strong program at Harvard will be everybody's gain. Therefore I don't want to end by welcoming Meg to Harvard, but instead by welcoming her to the natural evolution of her own career owing to a challenge that is much bigger than personal, because it is so closely connected with the evolution of the discipline itself — a challenge that is very well timed in both the personal and the wider, academic senses.

Let us raise our glasses to her, and also to Christos, who in his own way, in a different location, will be helping the discipline to move forward.

The Greek God Zeus and John Rassias

IN 1976, PAUL MORBY, the television producer of Birmingham University, England, invited John Rassias and me to make a series of instructional videos to accompany our textbook *Demotic Greek 1*. From December 8 to 22 we stayed in the temperance hotel in which we had been placed (not by choice), occupying two single rooms whose doors were opened without knocking early Sunday morning by matrons in order to verify that we had not kept some young ladies with us overnight (we had not). During the day we amassed an appropriate cast of native Greek speakers to act out the scenarios, as well as a group of non-Greek speakers, all English, to play the role of students being taught. It was very real. After the action of each scenario, John drilled the English students in the grammar covered, employing of course the well-known Rassias techniques of finger-snapping, eyes focused on the person not chosen to recite, orchestral gestures to produce choral repetitions, etc. All this was fine, and lots of fun.

But there was one problem that increased as we reached more advanced lessons: John's Greek was inadequate. He possessed a good accent and sounded close to a native speaker, but only close. The kitchen Greek he had learned at home as a child in Manchester, New Hampshire, could not rise to the demands of conditional constructions, the future perfect tense, and other such niceties. We were very perplexed. What to do? Could we appoint someone else — obviously a native speaker — to handle the drilling? But no one available was trained in grammar, and in any case no one could serve as an acceptable substitute for the celebrated John Rassias in this role, even someone with perfect pronunciation and extensive grammatical knowledge.

Then, when we all felt stumped and the videotaping had come to a halt, John invented a splendid solution. Whenever confronted by a grammatical form that was beyond him, he would gaze heavenward and call upon the Greek god Zeus, resident on high on Mount Olympus, to answer.

So we stationed a good native speaker off-stage and the technical people arranged for his voice to echo and reverberate as though descending through clouds from Olympus itself. John's frequent invocations were of course appropriately dramatic, and our "god" answered with gusto, adding some convincingly divine ad-libbing. All in all, this brilliant addition became the most admired part of the scenarios we produced. Its invention under pressure indicates to perfection John's irrepressible creativity.

Soil and Ashes

S. S. HARKIANAKIS

Translated by Peter Bien

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Anti-Prologue

On all your journeys
 from soil to fire
 may your dreams be green,
 your sorrows a wish
 that embers blossom in your hands,
 curses be received as blessings.

Nighttime Ballad

Only at nighttime should you weep,
 only in the dewy hours, very late
 when the many who wept in daytime
 are asleep — only then should you weep.

Nighttime knows how to hide,
 how to retain its silence;
 discretion is vital here, at least for those
 who expect that you will please them.

Do not forget: a brave man's tears
 should be helped by heaven only
 — and by silence,
 heaven's deputy in great moments.

For Those Who Hate the Light

For the great artist
 there are no major
 and minor works.
 When a painter looks
 at a work he's done
 he sees the work.
 When God wants you alive
 he wants his work;
 when he wants you dead
 he wants his work.

Strictly Confidential

I'll gather up the kisses still vibrating
on cigarette butts discarded in the street
and bring them to you barefoot
to remind you of human pain.

Where to hide the empty flasks of alcohol and drugs
to shield them from your sight I would not know.
If they did not need to be filled again
for chronic human pain,
your Promised Land would be transformed
into a monstrous garbage bin.

That's the way things are down here;
no need to write you anything else.
If I sent you even one more page of mankind's alienation
I fear I'd mute the thrice-holy Angelic Hymn.
But it is you who manage these affairs.
I await your new commandments.

Easy Payment Plan

You allow me tastes of joy
but the aftertaste is always bitter
— surely the unnamed price
for the joy to be mine.

Yet there is just one thing I dislike
about this tacit deal of ours.
I seek no easy payment plan from you
nor wish to settle by installments.

Why not allow me
to tender the full sum in advance?
Are you any less kindhearted than human beings?
I might even pay you double
if I expected joy to follow.

Modern Greek Prayer

Take a little jasmine from our sun
 and distribute holy bread
 once again in the refectory
 of Great Lavra on Mount Athos.
 Send the archangel afresh
 To stir up the water with basil
 and sprinkle our brows to make
 young lads gush out of stone —
 the generation that will be of service.

On faded frescoes I have read
 the bitter verdict.
 But we created our churches' history
 did we not, and you
 founded both Testaments.
 Expunge our NOW; retain only your
 EVERLASTING.

Watercolor

No use gazing out the window any longer:
 autumn is a thoroughgoing slaughter.
 It's not just cold that penetrates the glass now
 but impetuous sorrow, too,
 settling on the furniture like dust.
 You are pained by the contradiction
 of viewing branches stark naked
 while you dare not step outside without a heavy coat
 — also by grief dripping like rain from roof-edges.

Scenery

But who set up this ghastly
scenery all around me?
These unspeaking witnesses
turn furniture, books, paintings
— and my breathing— into a nightmare.
They pretend to be unconcerned spectators
I can never manage to evict
although I realize and I feel
that they suck the light out of my eyes,
proof they will outlive me and,
worst of all, will never testify
that they stole that light from me.
They learned their silence from my tears;
they erected their forbearance
out of filings from my transience.
Still, knowing that they possess
nothing of their own,
nothing from inside themselves
since they looted everything from inside me,
I do not envy them. I refuse, however,
to forgive their posturing.
So change the scenery for me
or bury it with me when I die.

Delayed Return

Is it the start, the finish?
Houses unrecognizable,
avenging winds expel
infant whimpers
and for welcome
no light remains.

Restoration

I loathe any talk that treats
 history, nature, or the future
 with always the same prejudices
 always the same standards
 always the same categories of thought
 that smudge the newborn's unstained mind
 like greasy cards from a bourgeois pack
 held for countless ages in the straggly fingers
 of a humanity that has forgotten dream
 and diabolically deflowered miracle.

So I'll employ this metaphor of the newborn
 (life's very first image) to speak to you
 about the ineffable theme of death.
 I'll speak from my heart's nostalgia,
 not my mind's darkness and fear.
 They are blind, those who name death a disaster;
 ungrateful those who call it an end.
 Have you seen a mother shift her newborn
 from one breast to the other
 when it nods after drinking the first breast's milk?
 Sleep makes the move less distressing
 and at daybreak one is suckling a new sunrise.
 So seal tight your ache with this image.
 Perhaps in such a way you'll make death's acquaintance
 and keep tasting in advance unperturbed
 the milk of the second breast.

Chemical Analysis

What is blood?

“Condensed emotion.”

“Red-hot anguish.”

“Unarticulated chagrin.”

“Nostalgia snuffed out internally.”

Also wine, fire,

and the whole world's light.

An Archangel's Conducted Tour

On this planet of ours, you will find
nothing more noteworthy than gravestones.
Although we possess a huge variety
from your Lord's various constellations,
we cherish our own and display them, since
gravestones are this earth's finest credentials.
In the land of light were you never informed
that this earth of ours is the firstborn daughter of
affliction, or that it was humanity's weeping that
hewed stone's resistance to turn cemeteries into
our foremost monuments? Owing to human silence,
gravestones constitute our holiest church.
That is where you will find your Lord's
largest congregation, O Archangel Michael,
and his devoutest worship. Gravestones
compose our definitive penitence.
We do not turn our back on Adonai as
our forefather Adam did in Eden. We all lie
opposite the Lord, face up and outstretched
so that evermore he may view just our breast
with its wounds from human squabbling but also
from his love. Yet, O fearsome Archangel Michael,
above all do not forget to present our common
petition to the Lord. All of us are here

beneath our tombs, awaiting His clemency.
 The Resurrection presupposes our Fall, does it not?
 Face up, supine, we shall continue to yearn for
 — and expect — Divinity's intercession.

Expropriation of Building Sites

Have you ever seen a city
 twitch like a headless hen
 as night, that apocalyptic
 curse, descends upon it?

Come to my hill at dusk.
 There, without x-rays, you
 shall view the skull and,
 behind the lovely face, the
 dried-out sockets of eyes that strove
 to suck in every last bit of starlight.

Lock your knees tight
 lest your giddiness undo them
 as I stand you opposite the illumined town
 and, instead of "Good night," say
 "Think of those who this evening
 turned these lights on again.
 A hundred years from now
 not a single one of them will be alive!"

Passus Mortalis

Always the newborn
 enters the world
 unfit, exhausted, mute.
 While crossing
 the spectral bridge
 from nonentity to life

the horror he saw
robbed him of speech
paralyzed his knees.

But he won't take long
to forget again the abc's
spelled out with such persistence.
He will prattle a bit in the light,
embrace phantoms and shades,
only to be categorically muted
in death's inexcusable hush.

The Fourth Dimension

On people's exhausted brows
the solace of mutuality is branded
when the day's toil is done
and they return home
to the standard domestic consolations,
collecting the final rays of sunset
to exorcise nighttime's threat.

Yet behind them inconsolably follow
guardian angels of the multifariously shackled,
their wings soaked in tears,
cheeks smarting from recent slaps.

Who will solicit pardon from archangels
whiter than snow and sunlight?
Who will console wounded seraphim?
They know it will come again —
the profanation blemishing daytime's face.

Mea Maxima Culpa

Expecting
a moment more radiant than this one,
I lost the chance to brighten my
 every moment.

Pursuing
nearsighted aims on one front only,
I bypassed unsuspecting a globular overview of
 Divine Providence.

Hoping
even so that salvation is not my personal affair,
I bury my face in my hands and seek expiation via this
 spontaneous confession.

Detail of Grief

Lacking good luck, poor child,
you sold lottery tickets during school hours
and I, on the day of Pentecost,
received two tickets from your hands.

Smiling, you wished me all the best
while returning my change
and I, who had begun to weep
from shame at your hard luck,
supplicated the Holy Spirit on your behalf,
not being able, however,
to purchase all your tickets.

Do Not Weep so Soon

Do not weep so soon; it's early
for your eye-wells to run dry.
Prior pain is a kind you

already can subdue.
Bury it with a minimum of tears.

But events to come will violate your soul
with a force more cruel perhaps
than what you have known so far.
They are merciless, these events to come.
Until such severity shows a specific face
how can you resist it without tears?
Do not weep so soon; it's early
for your eye-wells to run dry.

What Am I?

In nature's sphere I am nothing,
just a clot of light,
a pillar of frozen love
congealed by heavenly determination
into a template for the Cross.

I am morning's ultimate explanation,
noontime's red-hot grief
nighttime's severest plunder;
I am the sponsor of real things,
I am the gods' assassin.

After Ephialtes

The world's self-esteem is gone
like bread in the German Occupation.
People slaughter pigeons now
for half an ounce of meat
and grass has been obliterated
by reinforced concrete.

The barbarians are beyond Thermopylae;
but even worse than that: now

they guard Thermopylae
and have learned alas to speak Greek!

Maxims

Woe unto you, when all men shall
speak well of you. —Luke, 6.26

Woe unto those not contested
because this means they equaled everyone else.

Woe unto those not pursued
because this means they never fought even with shadows.

Woe unto those not put to death
because this means they failed to pay life's dues in full.

To My Teacher L. K.

You taught me to bicycle and swim
so that I could contend with land and sea.
You taught me numbers for quantity,
adjectives and images for impalpable quality.
But you never told me that the sea
is salty and unending or that tears are similar.
You never told me that the land
remains the same inside me no matter how far I travel,
or that beyond adjectives are nouns,
and more profound than numbers is my soul's thirst.

Fragilitas Humana

Objects, when you sense them aged—
no need to spurn or bury them.
Try to rejuvenate your soul
through the objects' prolongation.

If during Lent's forty days of foretaste
you are insufficiently conscientious,
your atonement will not achieve Communion;
if from the aftertaste you are not instructed
how to restore immediacy's throb,
you will have doomed your earthly passage
"to a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

Joint Liability

It was a night when I had forgotten
to sleep any longer.
Not that I wasn't tired;
my fatigue surpassed
any I had ever known.

I was pervaded, however, by the conviction
that sleep offered no further benefit.
Grief caused so much of the fatigue,
I needed a restorative as strong as thought.

Cabarets stay open till dawn;
factories oppress the night shift;
streets continue their business with
drunks, policemen, ambulances;
violence invades somewhere just like death;
and Mount Athos is a peninsula
of all-night weeping . . .

All-Hallowed Pain

To be familiar with rot
is human wisdom's
initial step.

The next is:
lovingly to serve the rot —

a revealing lesson from
Ministering Spirits.

The third and highest lesson
exists above the angels.
It is the Athos friar's lot:
to die while singing matins
amid so much that has rotted.

Metamorphoses

His mind he turned into eyes,
to see what he only thought.

His eyes he turned into arms,
to hug what he managed to see.

Lastly he turned completely into heart,
to feel in his breast
the whole world's pulse.

Paupers' Song

My major problem with you
is what name to call you by,
yet this will guide our dialogue
from now until its completion.

I'll call you "brother"
with all the solemnity of my native tongue
and will keep begging until I die for
the comforting warmth of that designation.

Once upon a time, issuing from
the primal dark of a boundless matrix,
we advanced together without complaint
to experience sperm-exempt conception!

Duet

Shadows
side by
side,
rising
to brighten
and
efface
each other
so long as
they first
fall in
love!

Practice

I am learning now to walk again
like a cripple with one leg gone.
If I sense the other gone as well
I will dare to fly into empty space
in search of angelic wings.

A Lemon Tree

A lemon tree in my garden
far-distant prison.
A lemon tree in my garden
lifetime flown
restores with its flowers
all my vision
redeems with its fragrance
daybreak's moan.

Keep Left

In this inflation of distress
 lamentation is ill-matched;
 the eucalyptuses will hoot you down
 with their silence and profusion.

No use grumbling you're an orphan
 in this desolation so remote;
 speak not of tears and sorrow
 at the antipodes of the earth.

People here have ever-open accounts
 with the cyclone and the shark;
 a man's sole recourse here
 if he hopes to keep the human norm in mind
 is to learn good sense
 from the kangaroo's spare pouch.

Australia 1975

God made this land for everyone.
 Succoring mother of pain and refugee hordes,
 she took in what other lands cast out
 and restored it to the sun: a newly minted coin,
 fashioned in the size of ocean and desert.

This land resembles the sea:
 vast, seductive, unruly, chaste,
 with her bread rich and salty
 her hugs two-faced at every kiss.

The Twentieth Century

Elbow-to-elbow, we flew
twenty hours in the same jet
with a common unconfessed longing
to touch ground again.

We ate the same meals
served at the same time,
received the same professional smiles
from the obliging attendants,
realized that every moment
might be equally fatal for us both.
Yet we dared not exchange a single word,
each pressing his solitude like an ailing baby
stingily to his breast.

I wish to tell you, sir,
that these lines are being written for you
who are no more a gentleman than I am
(since I dared not speak to you).
Yet even if you never hear
this protestation of my civility,
surely some third party will read it
and will sense — even more strongly, perhaps —
our brotherhood, which we passed over in silence.

Pollution

It's not just the slowly dying sea
or oxygen gasping out its last.
We have assassinated light throughout the globe.
Thus our final night, hurrying near,
is done not "without human hands"
but with all our treasonous persistence.

Statues' Sin

It's high time you gave up
 all this consorting with statues!
 The cream-white Aphrodite of dreams
 is a traitor to blood and cares not a fig
 for the truth of throbbing temples.
 Not once has the cream-white Aphrodite
 suspected any links between eternity
 and the dejection of a sleepless night.
 Yet, after all, this is the original sin
 of statues, is it not? So leave them
 in the frost of conceit and desolation.
 Forgive them their stony intransigence.

The Other

Inexpressible the other,
 neither great nor small.
 An unnamed yearning
 is my nearest god,
 no matter how familiar or remote.

The less alike the other
 the more extraordinary is
 this Lord of mine and God.
 Merely to finger him redeems me ecstatic
 into the fullness of the world.

My Fellow Villagers

Your horizons:
 peaceful meadows.
 Your ambition:
 that God's order remain untouched.
 Your creation:

the philanthropic embrace of stone and wood.

Credentials:

your calloused hands.

Ultimate triumph:

homes sealed tight by the grand finale!

The Darkness of the Stars

Soon water, soil, and vegetation
will be the most valuable markers we shall establish
to help us return to our earliest fireside.

Soon our wandering among the stars
will constitute the saddest exile
we have experienced on this earthly crust,
a reminiscence equal to the comforting snugness
we felt as children by the hearth.

Soon we shall ask no more about
language and religion,
contenting ourselves with form alone:
five fingers, rosebud lips, and, above all,
eyes brightened if only for a moment
by indwelling reason.

Pour Vos Amours 'Sieurs Dames

The old lady selling violets on the streetcorner
neither advertised nor entreated.
In her life she had never known the joy of excess,
only the struggle with daily need.

Pour vos amours! It was as though she had said:
“For your corns and hemorrhoids” —
because whoever has known just daily need
teaches always the most exacting language of privation.

Tearful Variations

Do not embrace wholeheartedly the sea
 here in the southern hemisphere
 where love affairs are so primitive.
 To confirm abruptly here
 in a moment of especial vigilance
 that seaweed is nothing but embalmed shark
 is not at all surprising.
 Very often here (almost always)
 behind a blissful smile lurks
 a wound of uprooting or abandonment
 expecting rupture and confession.
 That's why love here can never be content
 with society's sanctioned forms.
 You'll "drink blood" and "eat flesh" here
 if you aspire to transform
 your neighbor into your brother.

Requiem for Poetry

If bits of light survive from daily vicissitudes,
 they'll be sobs in a climate of wonder,
 sighs turned into poems.

We attempt with such incantations
 to postpone beauty's death
 by elevating fireworks and sparrows
 in an unfair conspiracy against natural law.

Yet how much light and emotion
 can words keep alive?
 They too die without a sound,
 leaving poems afloat in a tyranny of silence,
 bits of flotsam from an undetected shipwreck
 that nonetheless do not cease to testify
 that the journey was undertaken in good faith.

Death is My Brother

Death is not a black angel;
death is my brother.
At every moment our journeys,
parallel and equated,
mark out an ideal relation that is given
and wells up inside me
because death is not a black angel;
death is my faithful
my twin brother.

Theodicy

Light held imprisoned in lilies
is remorse transfixed and persistent
— is grief unexplained
like gunfire in the night.

The dying man's uncompleted phrase,
the spinster buried in her bridal gown,
the smile with no effect
— these conspire fatally
against universal harmony.

Yet by the rivers of Babylon
the people's lamentation
gave way to silence long ago.
Mourning is the psalm of times gone past
and the faithful's lot is always the same:
O sing unto the Lord a new song!

Incompatible Beauty

Your fingers
 could not follow the disaster's scope;
 they hovered like spellbound birds
 in the sunset that came so prematurely,
 painting grief in all directions.

Your fingers
 forgot themselves coquettishly
 in the shape and conviction of an adolescent gesture,
 inscribing definitively the horizon
 between beauty and death.

Your fingers
 groped the infinite in the humble forms of the relative,
 transforming into triune benediction
 all that affliction and the stoic resignation
 following every chimerical embrace.

Still Life

Felled tree-trunk deriding death:
 unburied corpse stabbing air.

Leafless branch: not an orphaned arm
 but orphanhood and death in the perfect crime.

Fallen leaves composting soil:
 not, as one might claim, blameless pillage
 but fingernails extracted ruthlessly
 from a captive who's been gagged.

Litany of the Neglected

For young men who dream with gaping eyes,
wild with fever and ignorance of any danger,
the muses willingly assent to every acquiescence,
even to every exaggeration.

For young girls with night still in their hair,
the acrid fragrance of myrtle or mastic on their lips,
admiration and sexual appetite will never lack.

Yet for women grown old and sickly,
for the bitterly silent or inanely gabbing,
who will speak?

For patient charwomen
with swollen feet and thick stockings
that year after year disfigure every shoe,
who will speak?

For embittered nurses who come and go
with inane stares
caused by deep insight into pain
and by imposed silence,
who will speak?

For all these and so many others
who remain unmentioned by poets
in their inhumane partiality
(inhumane, yet so humane)
I always reserve a place in the liturgy
immediately before the “especially
for Our Lady most holy, most pure . . .”

Traffic

Every morning there begin among us
 twenty-four hours of miraculous trust
 despite all our reservations and suspicions,
 all our inconsistencies and denials.

Every morning, without a word exchanged
 with anyone, we reaffirm an oath
 prepared for every possibility
 with vehicles public, private, or for hire.

Every morning when we leave our homes
 we brave an extensive confrontation
 (anonymous from start to finish)
 in such a way that traffic
 becomes for us a powerful emotion.

Notes to the Poems

Greek title: Χώρα και στάχτη

Cf. Genesis 18.27, where the rendering is “dust and ashes.”

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STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

line 14: the Angelic Hymn

Cf. Isaiah 6.3

MODERN GREEK PRAYER

line 4: Great Lavra

This is the first monastery to be established on Mount Athos;
 it was founded in A.D. 963.

line 6: to stir the waters

Cf. John 5.4

line 8: Out of the stones will gush young lads

Cf. Matthew 3.9

DETAIL OF GRIEF

line 3: Pentecost; line 9: the Holy Spirit

Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter, celebrates the Holy Spirit's
 (Comforter's) descent upon the Apostles.

AFTER EPHIALTES

title: Ephialtes

Ephialtes was the traitor who collaborated with the Persians at the battle of Thermopylae and enabled them to defeat the Greeks.

line 2: the German Occupation

This refers to the period (1941–1944) when Greece was occupied by the Axis powers during World War II. Especially at the start, there was an extreme shortage of food in the cities.

FRAGILITAS HUMANA

line 5: Lent's forty days

Cf. Matthew 4.2

line 11: a dry and thirsty land where no water is

Cf. Psalm 63.1 (62.2; 62.3)*

ALL-HALLOWED PAIN

line 7: Ministering Spirits

Cf. Hebrews 1.14

POLLUTION

line 5: without human hands

In the Greek Orthodox tradition, it is sometimes said of especially venerated or miraculous icons that they are “made without hands.” Actually, sometimes the monks paint with their feet.

THE OTHER

line 8: this Lord of mine and God

Cf. John 20.28

TEARFUL VARIATIONS

line 14: “drink blood” and “eat flesh”

Cf. John 6.56

THEODICY

title: Theodicy

In theology, this term is applied to the attempt to reconcile the existence of evil with the goodness and sovereignty of God, and thereby to justify divine providence.

line 10: by the rivers of Babylon

Cf. Psalm 137.1 (136.1)*

line 15: O sing unto the Lord a new song

Cf. Psalm 96.1 (95.1)*

LITANY OF THE NEGLECTED

lines 25–26: immediately before the “especially for our Lady most holy, most pure . . .”

The quotation is from the Greek Orthodox liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. What comes immediately before is the consecration of the host by the priest, who then chants: “. . . We offer this spiritual sacrificial worship for those who repose in faith, our Forefathers, Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics, and for every righteous soul made perfect in the Faith; especially, for our most holy, pure, blessed, glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary.”

A Note on the Author

Stylianos Harkianakis has published numerous collections of verse, of which *Dust and Ashes* is the first. In 1980 he received the Academy of Athens Prize for Poetry.

Since 1975 he has served as Archbishop and Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia. Active in the ecumenical movement since 1954, he was appointed chairman of the Orthodox delegation for the Official Theological Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church that began in 1980. Earlier in his career he served as abbot of the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessaloniki, where he and other scholars established the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies. In addition, he has taught systematic theology at the universities of Thessaloniki and Regensburg.

Archbishop Stylianos was born in Rethymnon, Crete, in 1935. Ordained to the priesthood after graduating from the Theological School of Halki in Istanbul, he pursued advanced studies in theology and philosophy in Germany, receiving his Doctorate of Divinity from the University of Athens. Among his many publications, aside from poetry, are essays on “The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology” (1965), and “The Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism” (1975).

OTHER LITERATURE

Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

THIS BOOK IS a masterpiece. Why? (1) Because of its perfect congruence between subject matter and technique — an ingredient of excellence, but not enough. In any case, the fashionable techniques of montage, fragmentation, and time shift are applied to subjective states of consciousness, where they truly belong. Instead of withering characterization away, these techniques enable us to know characters as we have never known them before. (2) Because of particularity wedded to universality. The book is convincing on the particular level; the events could have happened only to these particular people living in this particular time and place. Yet these particular characters and incidents are universal insofar as they evoke what is constant in human nature. Thus we have characters who are partially symbolical without being just abstract ideas, who transcend time and place while belonging completely to a specific time and place. Such is the magic of literary masterpieces: immediacy yoked to transcendence.

One could expound at great length about the book's particularity: how it grows out of a South in which a landowning or middle class, its wealth based on slavery, was suddenly hurled into new conditions by the Civil War and its aftermath, and — at least if we are to believe Faulkner — failed to be transformed. But I prefer to dwell on this book's other truth, the universal, in an attempt to demonstrate how it reaches what is constant in nature and in human nature. I propose that the book achieves its universality because it is (in part) a religious book, more specifically a Christian one. To begin, it is important to stress that the book is Christian not in a repulsively schematic manner, suggesting for example that the thirty-three year old Benjy somehow equals Christ, with his castration equaling Christ's crucifixion, and the like. The Christian parallel is very different: a generalized attempt by Faulkner to understand life and to respond to it in a religious manner. Insofar as the book is universal, delving into what is constant, it asks a basic question that religion also asks — not

“Does God exist?” but rather “How can human beings find lasting (one might say ‘eternal’) happiness in the world as given?” Religion in this sense is a recipe for dealing with life and succeeding. It has nothing to do with a specific church or even with any church or with what one believes. It is rather a life-style, a type of response that we can recognize because we have seen it functioning in certain rare people who, as far as we can tell, have achieved eternal happiness. By the way, when I say “eternal” I mean happiness in this life, not in some afterlife — happiness characterized by an impregnability that cuts through waves of vicissitude; also one whose stability rises above mere *moments* of happiness.

And let us remember as well that religion is a recipe for achieving happiness in the world *as given*. What this means, when we speak religiously, is “fallen,” which implies that the world was once unfallen. Common sense tells us that these two descriptions coexist. The world is cruel, dirty, destructive on the one hand, yet beautiful, idyllic, heavenly on the other; similarly, human nature is sometimes Satanic but at the same time made in the image of God. In sum, common sense as well as religious experience (and maybe even science) tell us that the world as given is problematical. We probably should therefore revise our earlier statement about the basic question that religion asks and declare it to be “How can we human beings find lasting (one might say ‘eternal’) happiness in a world that is morally, even physiologically, ambiguous?”

I suspect that few people achieve such happiness although many may achieve momentary happiness. In an attempt to discover why eternal happiness is rare, it might be useful to investigate why people fail to advance from their momentary happiness to something better. This has been famously explained by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. He teaches that everyone tries to attain happiness and that people do so in two ways that lead to momentary happiness but fail to go further. These he terms the aesthetic and the ethical. A third way, termed the religious, does go further. Both the ethical and religious ways are relevant to Faulkner’s marvelous novel.

The first way, the aesthetic, although not operative in the novel, is important to understand as a basis for understanding the other two. It has nothing to do with art or artists, at least not necessarily. For Kierkegaard, the aesthetic individual is someone who seeks to enjoy moments of such strong feeling that he or she is lifted at least momentarily out of the threat-

ening world of ambiguity into some other realm akin to eternal bliss. The great threat to such happiness is of course time, which will dull feeling and diminish the object of one's heightened feeling through aging and death. To counter time's power, the aesthetic person breaks time's flux into discrete units — moments — each of which has the capacity to make the person in question eternally happy only because it has been separated from past moments and future moments — hence separated from time's inevitable flux, not to mention its ambiguity. What the aesthetic individual does is to transform life's motion picture into a series of snapshots. If the strong, delicious feeling comes from love, then the "solution" will be a series of girlfriends or boyfriends, each one a snapshot that is abandoned so that another may succeed it, all of course in a vain effort to avoid the destructive power of time's continuous flux.

Such is the relation of an aesthetic individual to time. What about the beloved person who causes that individual's heightened feeling? Or, if happiness comes from, say, a love of beauty, of music, of good food, etc., what about the nature of these other sources that create a feeling so strong that ambiguity seems to be eliminated at least for a moment? The answer is easy. Whatever causes this happiness must be "unfallen": idealized until it seems to escape time's corrosion. But time's flux, we know, will erase this false perfection, forcing the aesthetic individual to shift to a new moment exhibiting a new supposedly perfectly unfallen source of happiness, then to another and then to yet another. Clearly, the aesthetic "solution" is vulnerable, leading predictably to failure.

What about Kierkegaard's other two modes, the ethical and the religious, both of which are exhibited in Faulkner's novel? Just as the aesthetic in Kierkegaard's philosophy has nothing necessarily to do with artists, so too the ethical has nothing necessarily to do with goodness, the religious nothing to do with churches or creeds. The ethical individual seeks happiness in an ambiguous world by following a code. His or her commitment involves a very different relation to time. Instead of attempting to escape the flux of time by converting time's flux into a series of independent moments, the ethical individual lives within that flux, linking the past to the present and also both past and present to the future. This is because the ethical individual's happiness comes not from discontinuous moments of heightened feeling but from the satisfaction that he or she has remained continuously committed from past to present and will do so as well in the

future despite all the vicissitudes that life presents. Whether the commitment be to a spouse, or to a code of law, or to one's nation or heritage or political party or even to one's gang of revolutionaries or thieves, ethical individuals are willing to sacrifice themselves because their ultimate happiness comes from this sense of unfailing allegiance to something chosen from within the world of ambiguity, supposedly enabling escape from that ambiguity. Anyone who has read Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* should be aware that the world of his Compsons is one in which the ethical mode predominates, in which this mode, as it truly can, enables people to enjoy supposedly "eternal" happiness . . . for a time. What we encounter in this novel is the breakdown of this ethical mode, indeed its perversion in the boy Quentin, Mr. Compson, Mrs. Compson, and Jason.

Kierkegaard maintains that the ethical response, like the aesthetic, is bound to fail. Aesthetic individuals are doomed because time, despite all one's efforts to fragment it into discrete moments of perfection, is ineluctably continuous. Ethical individuals are doomed because, although they seek to escape ambiguity by virtue of their unbending allegiance to moral judgments, finally realize that these very judgments are ineluctably themselves ambiguous owing to the moral complexity of the real world, which offers contrary judgments that are equally moral. Such people come to realize this sooner or later, whether consciously or subconsciously, after which their life is subverted by guilt and despair, as is the boy Quentin's in Faulkner's novel. The impasse reached in the ethical mode, if unperceived by the person involved, is objective — simply there; if perceived, is subjective. In this novel, Mrs. Compson and Jason are ethical beings in objective despair whereas Mr. Compson and especially the boy Quentin are ethical beings in subjective despair.

For Kierkegaard, ethical individuals with subjective despair can escape failure because their despair may be an important impetus driving them to leap into the religious mode and thus into the possibility of lasting happiness. The boy Quentin of course does not take this leap; he commits suicide. But Faulkner does take it by means of qualitative changes in style, subject matter, and attitude that bring the novel from Jason to Dilsey.

I repeat that for Kierkegaard the religious mode has nothing to do with church membership or with allegiance to a particular creed. Rather, it is a particular life-style that enables an individual to deal with the inevitable ambiguity of human existence. The aesthetic person's chief means for

confronting ambiguity is heightened feeling; the ethical person's is commitment. The religious person's is love or (more accurately) caring, which presupposes forgiving. Of course both aesthetic and ethical persons also practice love, but in different ways from the religious person and from each other. The aesthetic person's love is a disguised self-love that focuses on a supposedly unambiguous love-object that he or she has idealized; the ethical person's is directed toward a supposedly unambiguous code that he or she has chosen. Religious love, contrariwise, neither idealizes the love-object nor chooses it; nor does it even vow a commitment to it. It is more casual, more spontaneous — simply a caring for another person or for all of nature *as given*, ambiguity included. A stronger way to say this is to declare that religious love is the positive acceptance of a love-object that *does not deserve to be accepted*. We see this, of course, in Christianity's doctrine that God so loved the world — an undeserving object — that he sent his only son to redeem the world. But we also see this in the love of a mother or father for a child. After all, we do not choose our children, and they certainly are not deserving, or at least our love does not depend on whether or not the child deserves it. On the contrary, this love is a *forgiving* acceptance of a love-object that cannot be unambiguously acceptable, owing to the world's ineluctable ambiguity.

In Kierkegaard's analysis, it is this love that paradoxically brings us closest to eternal happiness. To understand why, we need to think again about time. For the religious individual, time is neither an enemy, as it is for the aesthetic individual, nor the indispensable medium of existence, as it is for the ethical person. The religious individual dances both in and out of time, is casual in relation to it — as shown by Dilsey's clock. The existence of religious individuals is defined by a relationship to the Absolute, which means that it is to something simultaneously in time and out of time. Such individuals can be happy in the real world of ambiguity because they *do not need the world*. Religious love is "casual," lacking any absolute need for the beloved person, object, or ideal. Paradoxically, such happiness may be called "eternal" because it is not directed toward something that will fail the lover, as in the aesthetic and ethical modes. Yet faith in the Absolute does not lead religious individuals to renounce the real world. Since religious people are essentially detached from everything finite, they can affirm the world for what it is — ambiguous — without fearing or idealizing it. They can accept finitude "casually." Lastly, because such happiness is not

something that religious people develop for themselves or receive as some sort of reward, but is alternatively something simply *discovered*—typically in despair, owing to failure in the other modes—the religious individual exhibits a humility foreign to the aesthetic and ethical modes. The proper expression of such humility is gratitude for the gift of life, the gift of happiness, the gift of being accepted even though one is unacceptable.

All this, I know, will strike everyone as distressingly abstract, as just a lot of idle theorizing—in a word, as theology. What William Faulkner has done, however, is to present a convincingly Kierkegaardian embodiment of the religious individual in his character Dilsey. Perhaps the idle theorizing will help us understand why she is what she is. I won't say "why she acts the way she acts," for she is defined not by specific actions but by her life-style. Why she is so different from the novel's other characters becomes all too clear in the book's final section. It is because she alone has a relation to the Absolute. The book as a whole, not just its character Dilsey, transcends its particularity, evoking what is constant in nature and human nature. Faulkner does this first by presenting to us the fallen world, the world as given. Appropriately, he gives us two views of nature: (1) nature as idyllic, redemptive—the pasture, the pristine forest, (2) nature as dirty, ugly—the girl Quentin's obsession with menstruation, called "periodical filth," the Father's definition of purity as contrary to nature. Faulkner is saying that evil is rooted in the nature of things and that we must learn to live with this given. But since he is an artist, not a theoretician, and certainly not a theologian, he offers us embodiments of ambiguity and then shows how various characters deal with such embodiments.

The chief embodiment is of course Benjy, the challenge that life in its ambiguity calls to all of us: "Accept me, even though I am unacceptable; care for me, even though I am not deserving of your care." Thus the way various characters, chiefly Mrs. Compson and Jason on the one hand, Dilsey on the other hand, react to Benjy is a figuration of the way they react to life itself. He is the thing-in-itself, pure unaccommodated man. The responses to him fall into the second and third of the Kierkegaardian modes. In Jason and the Mother we see the final degeneracy of the ethical mode, which Faulkner presents as the product of an ethical response masquerading as Calvinism. As Faulkner shows in these characters, the Calvinist wants to judge and be judged, not to forgive and be forgiven. Jason cannot see the truth of universal guilt and therefore cannot pity,

because to pity would be to admit self-doubt, hence to hope for and need pity himself. The Mother is obsessed with the Calvinist categories of the elect and the damned: "I know that people cannot flout God's laws with impunity," she says. She refuses to accept money from her daughter Caddie because these are the wages of sin; she spurns her daughter rather than forgiving her. She cannot realize that she, too, is a participant in the ambiguity of life. "Thank God I don't know about such wickedness," she says. "I don't even want to know about it." She exemplifies the perversion of religion, a point that Faulkner makes when he ironically has her say things like "Nobody knows how I dread Christmas" or "I've tried so hard to raise [the children] Christians."

This Calvinist legalism reaches its reduction ad absurdum, of course, in Jason who, because he thinks in terms of judgment, law, order, and commitment, is strangely an "ethical individual." He carries Old Testament morality to its extreme: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a castration for a sexual attack. He would even like to geld the girls Caddie and Quentin. He wants everything to be precisely on time — such is his legalistic response to life's ambiguity. He is the quintessentially rational man — rationality, after all, being the faculty that judges, establishes categories, thrives on order. Faulkner says, bitterly, that Jason is the only sane Compson, his point being that if this be sanity then nature itself is not rational, not even sane. Nature transcends legalism. Accordingly, it is no wonder that Jason and nature are at odds. Not only does he make Benjy "unnatural" by gelding him; he hates pigeons, would like to poison the very swallows of the sky because they defecate on his hat. The meadows — nature in its purity — give him asthma; in the forest, his hand comes down on a clump of poison oak. He is unkind to children, whose mischievousness makes them direct expressions of nature. Nor does Jason have any sense of thankfulness for the gift of life. As Kierkegaard's ethical individual, he assumes that his selfhood is self-made by his own choices and judgments. In his daydreams, far from sensing his weakness and dependence, he thinks of dragging Omnipotence down from its throne if necessary, to help him find Caddy so that justice may be done. Finally — and here Faulkner is commenting once more sardonically on Calvinism's distance from true religion — just as Mrs. Compson dreads Christmas, so Jason resents Easter because it will interfere with his dinner.

The true religious life-style seen in Dilsey is not a set of beliefs but pre-

cisely the style presented in Kierkegaard's descriptive analysis of the religious individual. She is not sentimentalized; she has her moments of spite and irritability, is capable of partiality (making her distaste for Jason all too clear); she certainly is not a do-gooder; indeed she is casual about her caring. Yet she is a saint, as seen for example in her relation to time, which is neither her enemy nor the medium of her existence. Her relation to it is easy-going because the relation that defines her being is out of time: it is to the Absolute. Her relation to other people is one of caring based on forgiveness. It, too, is casual because she does not need the people for whom she cares. Her selfhood is conferred neither by others, nor by her own choices and commitments. It is conferred by her relation to the Absolute. The only time she is visibly moved is when she is in church. She accepts Caddy and the girl Quentin, those embodiments of ambiguity, because, like the Afro-American youth whom the boy Quentin sees while he's on the train, the one to whom Faulkner attributes the timeless patience and serenity characteristic of sainthood, she, too, has "a fond and unflagging tolerance for whitefolks' vagaries like that of a grandparent for unpredictable and troublesome children." When Jason wants to thrash the girl Quentin, Dilsey tells him, "Hit me den ef nothing else but hittin somebody wont do you. Hit me." Note repeatedly the connection of Dilsey's selfhood with children insofar as she accepts what is unacceptable. Accordingly, it is appropriate that her sanctity be demonstrated above all in her mothering of that most unacceptable of all children: Benjy. She feeds him, strokes his head, soothes him when he bellows, all with infinite patience. She accepts because of her gratitude for being accepted and her faith in an accepting and forgiving God. When another character objects about bringing Benjy to church, saying that people will talk, Dilsey replies, "Tell um de good Lawd don't keer whether he smart or not." Benjy, the epitome of what is given, is "de Lawd's child," which simply means loved: accepted although unacceptable. Since God loves Benjy, Dilsey does the best she can with him.

In the book's climactic scene, the church service on Easter Sunday, Faulkner establishes the nature of Dilsey's God. We no longer have the Calvinistic doctrines of an eye for an eye, of judgment, of categories, and (one might say) of "sanity," rationality; no longer the supposedly religious legislator—part of Kierkegaard's ethical rather than religious mode. Rather, we do have this God momentarily but then surpass him.

The first sermon, in which the preacher characteristically “sounds like a white man,” is level, cold, and logical. At best, it only prepares for what is to come. The second sermon is Negroid. It is “dumb,” like Benjy, “beyond the need for words.” the “comfort and the unburdening” of a forgiving, loving God evoking God not as a lawgiver but as a lamb, and primarily as a little child. The essence of the religious life is contained in the child and its mother who loves and suffers, like Dilsey. The sermon ends on Easter as it must, with the Resurrection, stressing the third of the religious virtues. We have already seen faith and love; the third is hope, the assurance that love and forgiveness will endure.

Faulkner, it seems to me, has constructed his book on this religious framework thereby universalizing its contents by delving into what is constant in nature and in human nature. We do an injustice to his vision by talking simply of Benjy as a Christ symbol. This is the least of it. Instead, we pass in this book from the ethical dead end of Calvinism to the loving, forgiving God — “to that peace in which to sin and be forgiven, which is the life of man,” as Faulkner says in *Light in August*. *The Sound and the Fury* shows us how to be “eternally happy” in a world that is fallen. It does this by leading us from the legalism of Jason, which attempts to crucify the spirit of love (note that Jason's section occurs on Good Friday) to the Resurrection of Dilsey, whose section occurs, as it must, on Easter Sunday.

Thomas Mann's Ghost in *Der Zauberberg*¹

... the artist's mediating task, his hermetic and
magical role as broker between ... spirit and sense.²

I

MY INTEREST in fictional ghosts was first roused by L. P. Hartley's *Eustace and Hilda*, a conventional novel of manners and morals into which a specter comes and then promptly disappears. The *Times Literary Supplement* called this "a false touch" (November 6, 1953), but I am not so sure. After all, Hartley learned his trade from Henry James, who allowed a ghost to enter his otherwise realistic novel *The Portrait of a Lady* (Chapter 55). Both Hartley and James depict their apparitions as real, not as hallucinations; they treat a ghost as they would any other unusual, though perfectly understandable, occurrence. This is consistent with James's theory about such occurrences, for he says that prodigies in literature "keep all their character . . . by looming through . . . somebody's *normal* relation to something" (Preface, p. 256). He also insists that ghosts should not be overdone — i.e., that they must never seriously threaten a novel's verisimilitude. Fantastical intrusions are legitimate ways to express the spiritual facts with which an author is concerned; indeed, the search for such expressions, says James, is "of the very essence of poetry. But," he adds, "in such a process discretion is everything, and when the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself" (*Hawthorne*, p. 119). We see that his theory allows — even encourages — the use of fantastical elements in realistic literature provided that they disappear. Discretion is everything.

I cite all this because the situation encountered in Hartley and James is precisely what we meet again in *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*). A ghost appears once in Thomas Mann's magical, hermetic novel; the characters have what might be called a normal relation to it; then the ghost obligingly dissolves, never to return. I am speaking, of course, of Chapter 7's séance scene, appropriately entitled "Fragwürdigstes," which John Woods translates as "Highly Questionable." This includes the one and only supernatural touch in a novel that otherwise adheres strictly to the rules of realism, despite the term "magic" in the title. Even in extraordinary moments such as "Walpurgis Night" and "Snow," realism is never overruled. In the former, Mann convinces us that Hans Castorp's declaration of love to Clawdia Chauchat, as "fantastic" as his remarkable French may be, was nevertheless latent somehow in the hero's subconscious. In the latter, we accept Hans's remarkable dream as a hallucination entirely possible given the dreamer's fatigue and psychic turmoil.

But the séance chapter is different. The X-ray in Hans Castorp's lap is truly there, as is the ghost of Joachim Ziemßen that suddenly materializes and is viewed not only by Hans Castorp but by everyone else. Neither is a hallucination. Mann treats these extraordinary occurrences as if they actually happened.

In sum, we are dealing with a frankly supernatural intrusion into an otherwise realistic book. Our problem is how to react. Ideally we should treat this as a purely aesthetic question, as Henry James did in *Hawthorne*. In Mann's case, however, the waters are muddied by evidence that the author may perhaps have actually believed in spirits. "Okkulte Erlebnisse" ("Occult Experiences"), which Mann wrote in 1923 just as he was completing *Der Zauberberg*, describes some séances that he attended in December 1922 and January 1923. He tells us that he went with an open mind. He acted as the control, holding the medium's hands, just as Hans Castorp does in the novel. A spirit materialized. Mann testifies:

Nachdem ich gesehen, halte ich es für meine Pflicht, Zeugnis dafür abzulegen, daß bei den Experimenten, denen ich beiwohnte, jede Möglichkeit mechanischen Betruges, taschenspielerischer Illusionierung nach menschlichem Ermessen ausgeschlossen war. (*Bemühungen*, p. 229)

Having seen what I saw, I consider it my duty to bear witness that in the experiments during which I was present, any mechanical de-

ception or sleight-of-hand tricks were humanly impossible. (*Three Essays*, p. 255)

Mann's acknowledgment of the existence of occult occurrences complicates the problem in *The Magic Mountain* because, all too often when the séance episode is evaluated, aesthetic elements are ignored and the discussion reverts instead to the author: whether he really did believe in spiritualism, whether he was hoaxed, whether he is hoaxing us, etc.

My own hope is that we may forget this autobiographical element entirely. If anything, our own reaction to ghosts is much more relevant than the author's belief or disbelief in them. It is likely that nine out of ten readers of *The Magic Mountain* consider spiritualism a hoax, and therefore treat the ghostly intrusion in "Fragwürdigstes" as fantastical. Working from this we ought to be able to move to more legitimate questions than whether Thomas Mann was irregular in his personal beliefs. What we ought to do, having escaped the autobiographical trap, and also having decided that a ghost cannot be judged according to the rules of life, is to judge the supernatural intrusion according to the rules of art.³

II

If we take a radical view of the nature of art, the problem disappears. In this view, art and life occupy different worlds. A novel, even if seemingly realistic, is a fiction governed by its own laws. As E. M. Forster quaintly asks, "Why place an angel on a different basis from a stockbroker? Once in the realm of the fictitious, what difference is there between an apparition and a mortgage?" (*Aspects*, p. 75) A good spokesman for this radical view is the arrogant Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen speaks of a "formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its parts or parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part" (p. 241). This he calls "rhythm." To him, the question to be asked about the supernatural intrusion in Mann's séance would not be "Could it happen?" but rather "Is it rhythmic in this particular novel?" If someone remonstrated "Is it true?" the reply proffered by cocksure Stephen would be that truth in art is merely "the most satisfying relations of the intelligible" (p. 243). Ergo, a "rhythmic" ghost is a true one. Of course, not everyone is so aesthetically radical as young Stephen. E. M. Forster, after admitting that all novels are

fictions, says what many of us will also feel: "I see the soundness of this argument, but my heart refuses to assent. The general tone of novels is so literal that when the fantastic is introduced it produces a special effect . . . : it demands an additional adjustment." Whereas most novelists say, "Here is something that might occur in your lives," the fantasist says, "Here is something that could not occur. I must ask you first to accept my book as a whole, and secondly to accept certain things in my book" (*Aspects*, p. 75). In other words, Forster asks us to accept certain things in the novel that we would not accept outside of it. He is very much like Henry James, agreeing that we can assimilate ghosts provided that they are not overdone. They are legitimate ways to express the spiritual facts with which an author is mainly concerned. Although he wavers by paying homage to factors outside the novel, Forster remains basically formalistic because he justifies fantasy in terms of its relation to the entire work of art.

A third possibility, in addition to the radical and moderate formalism just discussed, is the ideological position represented by a critic like Georg Lukács. This I shall call conservative. Allegiance is still rendered to the rules of art as opposed to the rules of life, yet the rapprochement between art and life is fuller in this conservative view than in Forster's moderately formalistic view. The real difference, however, is that the ideological critic, in justifying a work of art, asks not how an author constructs his novel but what he believes. Forster and Henry James are interested in whether a novel presents events that might occur in our lives, in which case it is "realistic." A critic like Lukács says that the kinds of occurrences presented are no guarantee of realism. Indeed, a so-called "realist" novel may be less "realistic" than a novel that introduces fantasy. This is because realism is an attitude deriving from belief; it is not a technique. A realist, in this conservative view, is an author who believes that humans have a significant relation to their environment, that they are molded by society and history. The novelists whom we normally call the great realists — Tolstoy, Balzac, Stendhal (and we could add Thomas Mann to this list) — show characters in a meaningful relation to their particular environment, not in isolation as though affected primarily by some ahistorical "human condition" valid in all times and places for all human beings. In such a view, if a ghost is introduced with the purpose of demonstrating certain objective forces at work in the society of a given historical era, the ghost is justified, and may even be called "realistic" — ideologically.⁴

Here, then, we have three possible ways to approach Mann's apparition in "Fragwürdigstes." As we learn more about this ghost, I predict that we will find it remarkably obliging in that it will possess the ability to make everyone happy: radical, moderate, and conservative alike. In any case, instead of being led astray by autobiographical considerations involving Thomas Mann's belief or disbelief in spiritualism, let us examine the séance episode according to the rules of art. In other words, let us demonstrate (a) how the episode is part of the novel's "rhythm," and (b) how Mann uses this fantastical intrusion "realistically" to say something about objective forces operating in the society of the era he has chosen to depict: Germany just before the first World War.

Fortunately, we possess an aesthetic pronouncement by Mann himself that should give us confidence as we begin the formalistic part of our investigation. In *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, published in 1918, Mann wrote:

Der intellektuelle Gedanke im Kunstwerk wird nicht verstanden, wenn man ihn als Zweck seiner selbst versteht; . . . er ist zweckhaft in Hinsicht auf die Komposition, er will und bejaht sich selbst nur in Hinsicht auf diese . . . (*Gesammelte Werke* 12:229)

To take an intellectual idea proffered in a work of art as an end in itself is to misunderstand it; . . . it is contrived with an eye to the compositional scheme; it claims validity solely within this scheme . . .⁵

This speaks specifically of ideas, but it would be equally valid for events such as the one we are considering.

I believe that Mann contrived the séance episode with an eye to the novel's compositional scheme, and furthermore that we cannot begin to understand the episode's significance until we know its place within that scheme.

III

Our first task as readers of "Fragwürdigstes," therefore, is to learn something about Stephen Dedalus's "rhythm" in this novel: the relation of part to part and of parts to the whole. Immediately obvious is at least one element that links the séance with an earlier episode: the idea of a

“durchauswissenden Allseele” (“omniscient universal soul”) (3:909; 644),⁶ which is offered in “Fragwürdigstes” as a possible explanation for spiritualism and which appeared earlier in Hans Castorp’s dream in “Snow” as “[d]ie große Seele, von der du nur ein Teilchen” (“the great soul, of which we are just a little piece”) (3:684; 485). All we can conclude at this point is that the dubious nature of “Fragwürdigstes” has been prepared to some degree. If any pattern exists, it would seem to be repetition with variation, similar to Mann’s technique in “Tonio Kröger” (e.g., the two dances) and in “Der Tod in Venedig” (“Death in Venice,” e.g., the two Socratic dialogues).

Having gone this far, and knowing Mann’s penchant for symmetries, we can proceed by making a guess. We know that *Der Zauberberg* was published in two volumes, the first of which (Chapters 1–5) ends with “Walpurgisnacht.” Form is significant for Mann; thus “Walpurgisnacht” completes the novel’s first great movement, dividing the book into two meaningful halves. It is often said that the first half shows Hans Castorp’s increasing fascination with death while the second half (Chapters 6–7) shows him progressing to his disenchantment with all that the Berghof represents, and returning to life. But this, although perhaps partially true, is certainly not a fully satisfactory way to talk about the two volumes. We must realize that Volume Two is—in part, at least—a repetition with variation of Volume One, the structure of both volumes being controlled by a system of correspondences. This becomes apparent if we look for symmetries between the fifth and seventh chapters, these being the final chapters of the first and second volumes, respectively. If we consider the two contiguous sections called “Mynheer Peeperkorn (Continued)” and “Mynheer Peeperkorn (Conclusion)” as a single episode, we find that both chapters have nine parts, as follows:

<i>Fünftes Kapitel</i>	<i>Siebentes Kapitel</i>
[1] Ewigkeitssuppe und plötzliche	Strandspaziergang Klarheit
[2] “Mein Gott, ich sehe!”	Mynheer Peeperkorn
[3] Freiheit	Vingt et un
[4] Launen des Merkur	Mynheer Peeperkorn (des weiteren)
	Mynheer Peeperkorn (Schluß)
[5] Enzyklopädie	Der große Stumpfsinn

[6] Humaniora	Fülle des Wohllauts
[7] Forschungen	Fragwürdigstes
[8] Totentanz	Die große Gereiztheit
[9] Walpurgisnacht	Der Donnerschlag

The respective parts turn out to be linked by obvious symmetries in at least five out of the nine pairs. “Vingt et un,” which describes a bacchanalian rout in defiance of the Berghof’s regulations, matches “Freiheit” (“Freedom”), which reveals Hans’s concept of freedom to be a defiance of responsibility. “Fülle des Wohllauts” (“Fullness of Harmony”), since its subject is music, constitutes a repetition with variation of “Humaniora,” whose subject is the fine arts (sculpture and painting). “Die große Gereiztheit” (“The Great Petulance”), being the scene in which Settembrini and Naphta have their duel, corresponds to “Totentanz” (The Dance of Death, called “*Danse Macabre*” in the Woods translation). “Walpurgisnacht” relates to that other Walpurgis Night, World War I, which is the subject of “Der Donnerschlag” (“The Thunderbolt”). This system of blatant symmetry suggests that the séance scene should correspond to “Forschungen” (“Research”). Indeed, what *is* the séance if not research — no longer into physiology in a hope to fathom the material basis of life (Hans Castorp’s endeavor in Volume One) but rather an attempt to fathom life’s immaterial basis, the omniscient universal soul? When we remember that this second form of research is stimulated by Krokowski the psychologist as opposed to Hofrat Behrens the physiologist, who prodded Hans in the first volume, we are tempted to view the séance as an occult parapsychological match for the physiological and psychological research that culminated in “Walpurgisnacht” in the second volume. All this should suggest that Mann created the séance (not to mention the other parts of Chapter Seven) keeping a deliberate eye on the novel’s compositional scheme.

Before proceeding to a more meticulous demonstration of correspondences, I would like to dwell for a moment on the two doctors, emphasizing that the first volume is Behrens’s and the second Krokowski’s. The shift is not difficult to see. Krokowski is described in the first volume as occupying an “untergeordnetes Verhältnis” (“subordinate position”) (3:68; 44) in relation to Behrens, or as a “Persönlichkeit, die nur assistierenderweise anwesend ist” (“personage who is there merely to assist”) (3:249; 174). In the second volume things have changed. Krokowski’s lectures are now

described as the “Hauptattraktion des Hauses, Stolz des Prospektes” (“the sanatorium’s main attraction, the pride of its brochure”) (3:908; 644). Hans, who first considered Krokowski repulsive, now eagerly seeks him out for psychoanalytical consultations. More generally, the authority exercised by Behrens in Volume One is weakened or even openly ignored in the second half of the novel, as by Mynheer Peeperkorn. We have shifted, in other words, from the materiality of physiology to the immateriality of psychology, which explains — to cite just one example — the shift from sculpture to music in the sixth pair: from the most material of the arts to the most immaterial.

To understand the two volumes in this way leads to further insights. Both Behrens and Krokowski are physicians, and the main concern of medical science, as Hans knows, is “mit dem Menschen” (“with the human being”) (3:362; 256), i.e., with the nature of human life and of all life. This study, after all, is what helps to keep Hans Castorp so long at the Berghof. Quite aside from what he learns from Settembrini and Naphta, who are his prime mentors in the first and second volumes, respectively, Hans is led first into life’s material secrets by Behrens, then into its immaterial or spiritual ones by Krokowski. What he discovers about life — intellectually at first, emotionally later — is announced in an anticipatory fashion in “Forschungen”: “Es war nicht materiell, und es war nicht Geist. Es war etwas zwischen beidem” (“It was not matter, it was not spirit. It was something between the two”) (3:385; 271). He must overcome precisely the bifurcation that determines the novel’s compositional scheme (we must remember Thomas Mann’s announcement of the artist’s mediating task, cited as the epigraph to this essay).

IV

Numerous correspondences between motifs and themes in the psychological research under Krokowski in “Highly Questionable” and the physiological research under Behrens in Volume One can be meticulously demonstrated. I shall treat the motifs first, then the themes in the next section. This immediately causes a problem because it requires us to draw not only from “Forschungen,” the episode cited earlier as the physiological counterpart to the highly questionable research in the *séance* scene, but also from the episode in which Hans initiates his physiological in-

vestigations, namely “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” (“My God, I See It!”). But the imperfect symmetry should not bother us. It helps to remember, for example, that *Der Zauberberg* reflects Hans’s changed awareness of time. Because time seems to accelerate for him, the second volume comprises a period longer than that covered in the first volume by a factor of thirteen or fourteen, yet in an almost equal number of pages. Given this fact, we should not be surprised to see motifs from several episodes of the first volume compressed into a single episode in the second volume in the interests of the compositional scheme. Last, we should remember the system practiced by Settembrini: instruction “abwechselnd in Form von Geschichten und in abstrakter Form” (“sometimes in the form of stories and sometimes more abstractly”) (3:283; 199). Since the same system is used by Mann himself, it is appropriate that the séance, even though it is psychological anecdote rather than abstraction, should relate not only to “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” in the first volume but also to “Forschungen,” that volume’s episode of physiological abstraction.

Our revised scheme of correspondences now looks like this:

<i>Chapter Five</i>	<i>Chapter Seven</i>
[1]	
[2] “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” [anecdote]	
[3] Freiheit	Vingt et un
[4]	
[5]	
[6] Humaniora	Fülle des Wohllauts
[7] Forschungen [abstraction]	Fragwürdigstes
[8] Totentanz	Die große Gereiztheit
[9] Walpurgisnacht	Der Donnerschlag

If we examine “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” itself, we find some broad hints that this section is meant to be associated in the compositional scheme with the fantastical events to come in “Fragwürdigstes.” As Behrens places Joachim behind the fluoroscope, Hans remembers an ancestor who routinely saw the skeletons of persons about to die; the narrator describes this ancestor as Hans Castorp’s “seherische Tante” (“clairvoyant great-aunt”) (3:306; 215). After Hans takes his own turn behind the machine and, viewing the skeleton of his hand, understands for the first time in his life that

he will die, the Hofrat comments, “Spukhaft, was?” (“Spooky, isn’t it?”) (3:307; 216). We immediately feel, at least in hindsight, that the author desires to link “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” with the spooky results of clairvoyance that occur in the séance. This feeling is reinforced in the séance itself when we find Hans Castorp attempting to steel his spirits by harking back to his resolve in the X-ray laboratory (3:932; 661) where he had asked Joachim’s permission to commit “gewisse optische Indiskretionen” (“certain optical indiscretions”) (3:931; 661). These physiological indiscretions have now been transformed, of course, into psychical ones.

Accompanying the broad hints given above are at least twelve correspondences drawn from “Research” and its anecdotal counterpart, “Mein Gott, ich sehe!”

1. The séance chapter opens with abstraction: an account of Krokowski’s psychological researches, which dwelt, we learn, on a “Rätsel . . . wie das des Verhältnisses der Materie zum Psychischen, ja dasjenige des Lebens selbst” (riddles about the relationship between matter and the psyche, indeed, the very riddle of life itself) (3:908; 644). The account of Hans’s reading in “Research” opens with the same question: “Was war das Leben?” (“What was life?”) (3:383; 271). Here, however, the question is approached physiologically, via the relation of organic to inorganic matter.

The séance quickly moves to anecdote. Accordingly, the next group of correspondences comes from “Mein Gott, ich sehe!”

2. Hans Castorp’s attitude toward the highly questionable activities of the spiritualists is a mixture of curiosity and “körperliche Beängstigung,” a queasy feeling akin to seasickness (3:913; 648). When he is able to look at Joachim in the fluoroscope, he has a similarly dual feeling: stirrings of “geheime Zweifeln” (“secret doubting”) mixed with a “Lust der Indiskretion” (“deep desire to enjoy the indiscretion”) (3:306; 215).

3. The “mit rotem Papier verdunkelte Tischlämpchen” (“table lamp covered with red paper”) (3:929; 660, cf. 650) that half-illuminates the questionable activities of the séance corresponds of course to the “rotes Licht” (“red light”) (3:302; 212) that casts its glow over the magicking in the X-ray room—but also to the “rötlichen Schein des beschirmten Lämpchens” (“reddish light from his shaded lamp”) (3:382; 270) that illumines Hans Castorp’s huge physiology textbooks in “Research.”

4. The ceiling light is extinguished in the séance (“das Deckenlicht ge-

löscht”) (3:917; 650), as it is during the X-raying (“Das Deckenlicht erlosch”) (3:303; 213).

5. As the group gathers for the illicit *séance*, all know that they have come to embark on a “furchtsamneugieriges Erproben unbekannter Teile ihres Selbst” (“a test of unknown components of their inner selves”) (3:918; 651). This psychological probing corresponds, in the physiological sphere, to the illicit and indecent prying into the inside of Clawdia’s body in the X-ray scene. (It is noteworthy that in both cases Hans is the one who senses the equivocal, indiscreet nature of the proceedings.)

6. Given this last parallel, we understand why the compositional scheme should demand that Hans suddenly find the X-ray of Clawdia in his lap in the midst of the *séance*. The link between physiology and its psychological repetition-with-variation is obvious.

7. The *séances* are held by Dr. Krokowski “in seinem analytischen Souterrain” (“in his analytical basement”) (3:927; 658). Behrens’s X-ray room in “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” is overtly linked with this cabinet:

bemerkte Hans Castorp, daß im Durchleuchtungsraum Halbdunkel, das heißt künstliches Halblight herrschte, — gerade wie andererseits in Dr. Krokowski’s analytischem Kabinett. (3:295–296)

Hans Castorp saw that semidarkness, a kind of artificial twilight, reigned in the X-ray room — just as it did in Dr. Krokowski’s analytical chamber. (p. 208)

8. The imprint of Holger’s otherworldly hand in an earthen bowl full of flour (3:929–930; 660) corresponds of course to the impression of Hans Castorp’s thisworldly hand on the fluoroscopic screen in the first volume (3:306; 215–216).

9. Krokowski’s ominous yet reassuring welcome to Hans Castorp when the latter appears for the *séance* is parallel to Behrens’s welcome when Hans enters the X-ray laboratory:

[Behrens]

“Hallo!” . . . “ . . . Bitte, Wehelaute zu unterdrücken! . . .” (3:301)

“Hello” . . . “ . . . Please, keep all screams of pain to a minimum.” . . . (p. 212)

[Krokowski]

... er Hans Castorp willkommen hieß, der schweigsam war und dessen Miene schwankte. "Mut, mein Freund! ... Hier gibt es nicht Duckmäusertum noch Frömmerei, sondern einzig die männliche Heiterkeit vorurteilsloser Forschung!" (3:932)

... he welcomed Hans Castorp, who said nothing and looked unsure of himself. "Courage, my friend ... No cant, no sticky-sweet piety here, just the manly cheerfulness of unbiased research!" (p. 661)

It is at this point that Hans Castorp, as we saw earlier, steels his spirits by harking back to his resolve in the X-ray laboratory.

10. This is followed by a description of the apparatus for the séance: the table, red-shaded lamp, and certain "berüchtigte Gegenstände" ("infamous items"): two bells, a dish with flour, etc. (3:933; 662). In the physiological counterpart, the apparatus is catalogued in the same manner: "glassware, switch boxes . . . , rows of photographic plates . . ." (3:300; 211). Prophetically, Hans Castorp wonders whether the X-ray cabinet is more like a "photographic studio, a darkroom, or an inventor's workshop and sorcerer's laboratory" (p. 211; "technische Hexenoffizin" [3:301]) — in other words, the material counterpart of the immaterial witches' kitchen in the second volume.

11. When Krokowski turns off the ceiling light, Hans recalls the X-ray room's darkness, in which "man sich die Tagaugen gewaschen hatte, bevor man 'sah'" ("they had first had to let darkness wash over their daylight eyes before they could 'see'") (3:936; 664). He of course is recalling his own wisdom at the time: "Erst müssen wir uns mal die Augen mit Finsternis waschen, um so was zu sehen . . ." ("We first have to let darkness wash over our eyes to see anything") (3:303; 213).

These eleven correspondences should establish beyond any doubt the relation between "Fragwürdigstes," on the one hand, and, on the other, (a) the abstractions in "Forschungen" and (b) the anecdotal material in "Mein Gott, ich sehe!" So far, however, motifs from the two episodes in Chapter Five have been kept distinct, with the exception of the anecdotal/abstract connection between the red light of the X-ray room and the red-shaded lamp illuminating Hans Castorp's researches. As we reach the séance's climax, however, we shall find that these previously distinct motifs are fused in a twelfth correspondence. The climax is of course the

appearance of Joachim's ghost dressed in the uniform of a World War I soldier. Early in the novel, Hans Castorp experienced a prophetic vision of Joachim's death; now his vision is not only of Joachim but also, simultaneously, of himself—and presumably of his own death as, strangely, he takes Joachim's place in the future war. We reach this conclusion because Joachim is dressed in the uniform that Castorp himself will be wearing at the end of the book when we see him splashing through the mud on the battlefield of Flanders, and because Joachim appears with the beard that Hans grew while sitting at the “bad” Russian table (3:993; 705).

The identification of Joachim's ghost with Castorp's death becomes even surer when we realize that the apparition corresponds to the climaxes of both of the episodes in Chapter Five with which the séance is deliberately paralleled. Each involves a vision.

In “Forschungen,” Hans meditates on the question “What is life?” Then:

Dem jungen Hans Castorp, . . . zeigte sich . . . das Bild des Lebens. Es schwebte ihm vor, irgendwo im Raume, entrückt und doch sin-
nenah, der Leib, der Körper, . . . ausduftend, dampfend, klebrig . . .
(3:385)

This was the image of life revealed to young Hans Castorp as he lay there . . . The image hovered out there in space, remote and yet as near as his senses—it was a body: dull, whitish flesh, steaming, red-
olent sticky . . . (p. 272)

The remaining description, couched as it is in the physiological terminology appropriate to the first volume, reveals that the image of life is none other than Clawdia. Mann confirms this when he makes Hans repeat some of the description almost verbatim during his love-speech in French to Clawdia at the end of “Walpurgisnacht.”

If all we have been saying about the compositional scheme is true, we should expect Clawdia to be present as well in the image seen by Hans Castorp as a result of his psychological researches. And indeed she *is* present, not overtly, it is true, but present nonetheless. To indicate her presence, Mann employs one of his usual tricks, the expansion or variation of a leitmotif. In the séance, the ghost of Joachim sat “[a]ngelehnt . . . und hielt ein Bein über das andere geschlagen” (“leaning back, one

leg crossed over the other”) (3:946; 671). Such a position is exceedingly improper for Joachim, so we wonder why he appears in this posture. The answer can be found in “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” When Frau Chauchat comes for her X-ray and enters the waiting room, we read that she “schlug, zurückgelehnt, leicht ein Bein über das andere” (“leaned back, crossed one leg lightly over the other”) (3:296; 208). By taking one of her lax mannerisms and giving it to Joachim, Mann links the two characters. But the real point in the compositional scheme is that Hans Castorp’s vision of Joachim in Volume Two is, in part, a psychological equivalent for his physiological vision of Clawdia in Volume One. We know that the latter vision was deceptive; far from being the image of life imagined by Castorp in his naïveté, it was an image of disease, Kultur, Geist, and — ultimately — death. His vision of Joachim’s ghost in Volume Two is similar, since the prodigy conveys not only Hans’s individual death but the death of civilization through a war fought in the interests of a perverted German conception of Kultur and Geist.

This correspondence, drawing from both the abstract and the anecdotal episodes of Chapter Five, is strengthened by still another parallel with the anecdotal “Mein Gott, ich sehe!” Here, too, as in “Forschungen,” the climax is a vision, in this case the fluoroscopic image of Hans’s hand. The implication is explicitly stated:

Und Hans Castorp sah, was . . . eigentlich dem Menschen zu sehen nicht bestimmt ist . . . : er sah in sein eigenes Grab . . . und zum erstenmal in seinem Leben verstand er, daß er sterben werde. (3:306)

And Hans Castorp saw what . . . no man was ever intended to see . . . : he saw his own grave . . . and for the first time in his life he understood that he would die. (pp. 215–216)

Once again, if we understand the séance in terms of the novel’s compositional scheme, we are able to strengthen and expand certain interpretations — in this case the interpretation of Joachim’s ghost as a vision of Hans Castorp’s impending death.

Taken all together, the repeated motifs show the séance to be a parapsychological repetition of what occurred previously in the physiological realm, especially in the X-ray laboratory and during Hans Castorp’s researches.

V

Having seen how the compositional scheme determines the repetition of these twelve motifs, we may proceed to broader themes. We already know how the motif of death, introduced in the first volume, is carried forward into the second. Now we can examine some thematic implications attached to this motif. The first volume, dealing as it does with physiology, involves by extension science and technology — products of the humanistic enlightenment that is incarnated (and gently lampooned) in the major pedagogue of that volume, Settembrini. Science ought to be in the service of life, and sometimes it is. Mann's point, however, is that certain aspects of science have also sometimes been perverted. Instead of serving life, these lead to a devotion to death, and indeed to death for its own sake, not to death in the interests of life. This theme reaches its climax at the very end of the book when Hans flings himself into the mud to avoid a huge explosive shell, “[d]as Produkt einer verwilderten Wissenschaft” (“the product of science gone berserk”) (3:993; 705), a shell that we surmise must kill him. But the theme is evident enough in the first volume too, at least in hindsight, for science in the form of the X-ray apparatus is what gives Hans Castorp his first awareness of death and stimulates his fascination with it. Also, science occupies his mind as he reads the weighty textbooks that encourage him to conclude that organic life is a disease, “ein heimlich-fühlsames Sichregen in der keuschen Kälte des Alls, eine wollüstig-verstohlene Unsauberkeit von Nährsaugung und Ausscheidung” (“a secret, sensate stirring in the chaste chill of space. It was furtive, lascivious, sordid — nourishment sucked in and excreted”) (3:385; 272). His readings culminate, as we know, in the vision of Clawdia, and this vision — the fascination with the human body as diseased — leads directly to his wild declaration of love in “Walpurgisnacht.” As he kneels before Clawdia, he raves in French: “Le corps, l’amour, la mort, ces trois ne font qu’un” (3:476; 336 (“the body, love, death, are simply one and the same”). Science, instead of functioning in the service of life, has not only stimulated Hans Castorp's devotion to death for its own sake but has driven him to desire union with all that is deathly and corrupt, incarnated in Clawdia. It seems that the scientific humanism preached by Settembrini and practiced by Behrens has turned against itself, forsaking its life-enhancing goals.

The second volume carries us from Settembrini to Naphta and from

Behrens to Krokowski. Instead of Settembrini's interest in politics we witness Naphta's in religion; instead of Behrens's ministrations to the body we witness Krokowski's to the psyche. As always, there is repetition but with variation, the immaterial having replaced the material. But the point is the same; *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. What we discover, just as we did before, is perversion. Religion and psychology ought to be in the service of life, yet Thomas Mann shows them devoted to death — and not to death in the interests of life, but to death in its own interests. Even love, the quintessence of humanity's immaterial aspiration, is perverted along with the rest. This is hardly surprising now that Krokowski has come to dominate the novel's second half with his lectures on "Liebe als krankheitbildende Macht" ("love as a force conducive to illness") (3:510; 361). It is no accident that Elly Brand's writhings suggest those of a woman in childbirth; yet she gives birth not to life but to death.

Just as a perverted scientific humanism united to produce Hans Castorp's mad desire to couple with Clawdia in "Walpurgisnacht," so a perverted spiritual-psychological aspiration unites to produce this group of worshipers at the shrine of death — an "immaterial" counterpart to the madness of "Walpurgisnacht."

In sum, the séance must be understood thematically in terms of the novel's compositional scheme: specifically, as the psychological equivalent to the perversion of human capability depicted in Volume One. The perversion is starker now (and appropriately so, since a spiritual failing is more serious than a merely physical one) because the image thrust up for Hans's contemplation has none of the deceptive glamour or seductive fascination of the first image of death, Clawdia. In Volume One, Hans Castorp confused this image with an image of life. He does not do this the second time round — which explains why he reacts so differently, interrupting the proceedings at the crucial moment and, his voice choked with sobs, whispering "Verzeih!" ("Forgive me!") (3:947; 672), whereupon he turns on the white light and leaves the room, ignoring Krokowski's protestations.

By this action, Hans Castorp rejects the worship of death for its own sake. He is finally acting in accord with Settembrini's admonition to him a long time before (after Settembrini, too, had turned on the light [3:270; 189], a gesture vividly remembered by Hans in Volume Two [3:569; 404]). Settembrini spoke then of death:

als Bestandteil und Zubehör, als heilige Bedingung des Lebens. . . . Der Tod ist ehrwürdig als Wiege des Lebens, als Mutterschoß der Erneuerung. Vom Leben getrennt gesehen, wird er zum Gespenst, zur Fratze — und zu etwas noch Schlimmerem. Denn der Tod als selbständige geistige Macht ist eine höchst liederliche Macht, . . . mit der zu sympathisieren ebenso unzweifelhaft die greulichste Verirrung des Menschengenies bedeutet. (3:280)

as a constituent part of life. . . . Death is to be honored as the cradle of life, the womb of renewal. Once separated from life, it becomes grotesque, a wraith — or even worse. For as an independent spiritual power, death is a very depraved force, whose wicked attractions are very strong and without doubt can cause the most abominable confusion of the human mind. (p. 197)

So Hans refuses to be drawn to this specter, in contradistinction to the first time, when he confused the image of death with the image of life.

But he now moves beyond Settembrini. The pedagogue's deficiency was his belief that death could be conquered by reason. Hans has benefited from a good deal of education since hearing Settembrini's admonition. In particular, he understood in "Snow" that "[d]ie Liebe steht dem Tode entgegen, nur sie, nicht die Vernunft, ist stärker als er" ("Love stands opposed to death — it alone, and not reason, is stronger than death") (3:686; 487). This realization arises, of course, from his vision of the goddess of love, a young mother nursing her child (3:681; 483). Love is seen here as that which gives birth to life, makes life possible. The mother in "Snow" is of course a very different kind of goddess involved in a very different kind of birth from what Hans encounters in the séance. Similarly, the mother is a very different kind of goddess from the one who inspired Hans Castorp's declaration that "[l]e corps, l'amour, la mort, ces trois ne font qu'un" (3:476; 336). In addition, since hearing Settembrini's admonition, Hans Castorp has experienced Mynheer Peeperkorn. The new "pedagogue," the replacement in the novel for both Settembrini and Naphta, has taught Hans that love is feeling, sensitivity, sympathy; that the unpardonable sin is the failure to feel (3:837; 594)—furthermore, that the ultimate expression of love is renunciation, abdication (3:867; 615–616).

Hans Castorp's reaction at the end of the séance is an acting out of all that he has learned. The key is his sob-choked whisper "Verzeih!" ("For-

give me!”). His action derives now from his love for Joachim, love this time being not a force making for disease but precisely what Mynheer Peepkorn taught: feeling, sensitivity, sympathy; respect for life and respect also for death, yet not for death in and for itself but rather for death as part of life—for the memory of a Joachim who refused to succumb to the worship of death for its own sake, a Joachim whose very “wurzdurchwachsendes Soldatengrab” (“soldier’s grave, thick with matted roots”) (3:747; 530) symbolizes a death that will become the cradle of life, the womb of renewal. Last, Hans acts not only with the feeling, sensitivity and sympathy required of the lover, but with renunciation. For the first time during his stay at the Berghof, he overcomes his desire for forbidden knowledge. Defying Krokowski, he will pry no more, ask no questions of Joachim—and, since the apparition is also Hans Castorp himself, he will delve no longer into the unfamiliar regions of his own soul, will cut short the unclean traffic with his nature. In sum, by means of a true love that replaces the false love of Volume One, Hans conquers death—at least for the moment.⁷ He turns on the light, and the consulting chair is empty.

VI

My hope is that the foregoing analysis of symmetrical themes and motifs has shown the degree to which the novel’s compositional scheme governs “Fragwürdigstes.” I believe that we cannot understand the *séance’s* role in *Der Zauberberg* unless, attentive to the novel’s “rhythm,” we realize that the episode presents a psychological perversion corresponding to the physiological perversion depicted in Volume One. It is only after this realization that we can fully appreciate Hans’s response.

We must understand the episode according to the rules of art rather than the rules of life; this will release us from any worry about the reality of ghosts or about Thomas Mann’s possible belief in spiritualism. Once within the rules of art, we may espouse either a radical, moderate, or conservative position. With Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus, we may conclude that the ghost is “true” because of the part it plays in the novel’s “rhythm” (Stephen’s definition of truth being, as we know, “the most satisfying relations of the intelligible”). Or, if we are less pugnaciously aesthetic than Stephen, we may espouse E. M. Forster’s moderate position, concluding that we will accept Mann’s specter *in* the book even though we cannot accept it *out* of

the book. Whereas young Stephen dismisses the real world because of his conviction that the artistic world is the only one that matters, Forster values the real world yet, because he values art even more, agrees to suspend his disbelief. Oh dear, we can almost hear him sighing, it would be so very nice if rhythm and verisimilitude did not clash, but they do sometimes, don't you know, and in these cases, yes, rhythm must be allowed to win. Last, we may reject both of these formalistic positions — the radical and the moderate — that justify fantastical intrusions if those intrusions are required by a novel's compositional scheme, and espouse instead the conservative rationale that justifies Mann's ghost ideologically, by claiming that the non-realistic element actually serves the interests of realism since it says something about the objective forces operating in human society just before World War I.

"Fragwürdigstes" shows this society's perversion of spiritual aspiration. The reason is German culture's worship of Geist in a way that transforms this worship into a cult of death because death is esteemed for its own sake. What has been forgotten is that life is not matter alone or spirit alone, but something between the two. As Settembrini says: once the mind (also *Geist*) "[i]soliert . . . dualistisch den Tod, so wird derselbe . . . , zur eigenen, dem Leben entgegengesetzten Macht, zum widersacherischen Prinzip, zur großen Verführung" ("isolates death in a dualistic fashion, then . . . death becomes . . . a force of its own opposed to life, an antagonistic principle, the great seduction") (3:570; 404). A ghost produced by a collective mind that has succumbed to these seductive forces: such a ghost is "historical," the product of real factors operating in a given society in a given era. Thomas Mann, by allowing this fantastical intrusion, does not reject realism as an attitude, although he may be stretching it as a technique. On the contrary, he uses the séance to show his characters' relation to objective forces produced by European history. In sum, the ghost is not only formalistically true within the novel's compositional scheme; it is also ideologically real.

Notes

- 1 This essay was stimulated by one of my students, Steven Golladay, whose paper "Physiological versus Psychological Causation of Disease in *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann" first alerted me to the correspondences

that I discuss. I am also grateful to Burton Pike, Leo Papademetre, Walter Arndt, and my late colleagues Werner Hoffmeister and Steven Scher for reading a preliminary version and offering many helpful corrections. There is of course an extensive critical literature on this novel, including some essays that concentrate on the séance chapter. Charles E. Passage devotes his final three pages to it in "Hans Castorp's Musical Incantation" (*Germanic Review* 38/3 [May 1963]:238–256), noting that Hans's agonized reaction to the appearance of Joachim's ghost is one of the few unironic moments in the novel, but saying nothing about the correspondences that I investigate in this article. W. Gordon Cunliffe's "Cousin Joachim's Steel Helmet: *Der Zauberberg* and the War" (*Monatshefte* 68/4 [Winter 1976]:409–417) concentrates on Joachim's appearance as a forecast of the coming war. So does John S. King's "'Most Dubious': Myth, the Occult, and Politics in the *Zauberberg*" (*Monatshefte* 88/2 [Summer 1996]:217–236), elaborating on Mann's concern about the irrational elements in German political culture. Alan D. Latta's "The Mystery of Life: A Theme in *Der Zauberberg*" (*Monatshefte* 66/1 [Spring 1974]:1–32) prints a long list of critics who ignore the chapter completely or complain that it does not belong in a "realistic" (!) novel. His own view is that Joachim Ziemßen's appearance alerts us to the defects of Settembrini's humanism and reconfirms Mann's skepticism. He, too, says nothing about correspondences with earlier material. The fullest treatment comes in Rochard Koc's "Magical Enactments: Reflections on 'Highly Questionable' Matters in *Der Zauberberg*" (*Germanic Review* 68/3 [June 1993]:108–117), which examines the material in relation to art but, again, says nothing about the novel's elaborate set of correspondences.

- 2 Thomas Mann, "Presenting Schopenhauer," in *The Living Thoughts of Schopenhauer* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1939), p. 4.
- 3 My late colleague Werner Hoffmeister, in a letter to me, commented helpfully as follows: "Fundamentally, Thomas Mann adheres to his realistic-mimetic principles. Even though an outrageous, unbelievable event takes place, the narrator makes it believable by virtue of his painstakingly realistic procedure, the specificity of the setting, the minute descriptions of people, objects, movements, and the apparitions themselves. In the process, he *makes us believe* that these strange events did happen and must be accepted as 'real' within the fictional framework. It is surely not a question of whether Thomas Mann believed in spiritualism, but a question of how Thomas Mann employs his narrator to present the incidents as authentic."
- 4 Lukács elaborates this last position, speaking of the *Joseph* novels: "Thomas Mann's exploration of the mythical depths of middle-Eastern folklore . . . did not weaken the supremacy of the real over the imagined, but on the

contrary strengthened it [p. 111]. . . . This then is the background to Mann's playful phantasy [p. 113]. . . . The phantasy brings out the essential by *détour*. . . . The playful is always a vehicle of truth and reality in the end" (p. 114). Compare: "Thomas Mann is a realist whose respect, indeed reverence, for reality is of rare distinction. His detail . . . may not stay on the surface of everyday life; his form is quite unnaturalistic. Yet the content of his work never finally leaves the real world. What we are offered in Thomas Mann's work is bourgeois Germany . . ." (p. 13). Regarding the contrast between realistic writings and those that present an ahistorical "human condition," Lukács's 1964 preface for the West German edition of *The Historical Novel* is relevant (cited in Lichtheim, 103): "With [Swift] not only is there no conscious expression of the socio-historical hic-et-nunc; it is set aside formally. There is an entire human epoch with whose most general conflicts Man as such . . . is confronted. That is what is nowadays known as '*condition humaine*', but this overlooks the fact that Swift after all does not deal with man as such, but with his fate in a historically determined society. Swift's unique genius discloses itself in the fact that his view of society prophetically encompasses an entire epoch. In our time only Kafka furnishes something like an analogy, in that with him an entire age of inhumanity is set in motion as the counterpart of the Austrian (Bohemian-German-Jewish) individual during the closing stage of Francis Joseph's reign. Thereby his universe which — formally, but only formally — can be interpreted as *condition humaine*, acquires a profound and shattering truthfulness, in contrast to those who, without this kind of historical background, without such a foundation and a perspective, concentrate upon the bare, abstract — and therefore abstractly misconceived — Being of human existence, and who infallibly arrive at complete emptiness, at Nothing." For a general survey of Lukács's critical system, see the first essay in Lucien Goldmann's *Pour une sociologie du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

- 5 I use the translation given by Weigand (p. 110) next to his citation of the original. The rendering by W. Morris in the published translation of *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (p. 165) is somewhat different: "One does not understand the intellectual content in a work of art when one takes this content as an end in itself; . . . it is useful for the composition; only in relationship to the composition does it have purpose and confirmation . . ."
- 6 Page references from the German text of *Der Zauberberg* are from *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 3. References to the English translation are from the Vintage International edition. German and English page numbers are separated by a semicolon.
- 7 We must take care to remember Mann's ironic mode and therefore to real-

ize that Hans's virtues may not remain this time any more than his encouraging vision did in "Snow." As Theodore Ziolkowski states, "the ideologies [cancel] each other out, . . . the idea of love and a reconciliation of life and death [turn] out to be . . . of questionable value for the future of Hans Castorp" (p. 97). Consequently, perhaps the only ones who truly learn from Mann's huge novel are its readers, not any of the characters therein.

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The Critical Philosophy of D. H. Lawrence

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ANYONE READING through D. H. Lawrence's many critical pieces will feel, I think, that a single aesthetic position is basic to them all. It is not so very easy, however, to say exactly what this position is, for Lawrence never expressed it completely and systematically in one place. But although not a devotee of systematizations, he did give his various shreds of criticism sufficient consistency to enable us to reassemble them into an ordered whole, as in the present attempt. The result, I trust, will be a reasonably accurate reproduction of the critical equipment he had ready when he tried to evaluate any particular work.

I have endeavored to order this reassembly as Lawrence himself might have done. His mind proceeded from abstract or ideal to particular or actual and was fascinated by the conflict between these opposites. He also liked to define accurately the true negative of any conception. Therefore, it is fitting to begin with his ideas of what art, morality, and the artist should be, ideally, to continue with what they should not be, ideally, and to conclude the first section with what art and the artist are, actually.

This ordering will then be repeated with reference to the function and methods of the critic. Lawrence's abstract ideas on criticism will be followed by the manner in which he applies them in particular cases, concerning subject matter first and then technique.

I have confined myself chiefly to the critical pieces reprinted by Anthony Beal in *Selected Literary Criticism* by D. H. Lawrence (London: Heinemann, 1955). Page references to this volume are indicated by a "B." Other citations in the text are keyed with "LL," "S," "ER," "H," or "M. "

These refer, respectively, to *The Later D. H. Lawrence*, ed. William York Tindall (New York: Knopf, 1952); *Studies in Classic American Literature* by D. H. Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953); *The English Review*, where the original versions of the *Studies* were published; A. Huxley, ed., *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Viking, 1932); H. T. Moore, ed., *Sex, Literature and Censorship, Essays by D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Twayne, 1953).

What Art Should Be, Ideally

“Art communicates a state of being,” says Lawrence (ER, xxvii, 321). What does he mean by “being” and what by “a state”?

“Being” presupposes inner and outer wholeness. Inner wholeness is the full person, considered in isolation. A person is not “a soul, or a body, or a mind, . . . or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any of the rest of these bits. . . . The whole is greater than the part” (B 104). Outer wholeness is the full person existing in organic relation to the rest of the universe. “The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment” (B 108). The man in the novel — the novel being a miniature universe — must have a “relatedness to all the other things in the novel” (LL 194).

A “state” means “being” at the living moment. Relatedness of the circumambient universe is not a stable equilibrium, but a balance that can easily change. “Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance” (B 110). “And this is the beauty of the novel; everything is true in its own relationship, and no further” (LL 196).

MORALITY

Ideally, then, art communicates a moment of inner and outer relatedness, or a series of such moments. This changing balance of relatedness between a man and the universe, or between a character and the rest of the novel, or within a man or a character, is morality. Also, the changing balance of relatedness can be equated with Lawrence’s doctrine of “Love” as opposed to that of “Law. “ Ideally, “the essential function of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not decorative, not a pastime and recreation” (S 183). The novel teaches. It presents “the only thing that is anything, the wholeness

of a man" (B 108). Lawrence says: "I very much like . . . bits of me to be set trembling with life and the wisdom of life. But I do ask that the whole of me shall tremble in its wholeness, some time or other. . . . As far as it can happen from a communication, it can only happen when a whole novel communicates itself to me" (B 105). "In the novel you can see, plainly, when the man goes dead, the woman goes inert. You can develop an instinct for life" (B 107). "The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships. The novel can help us to live, as nothing else can" (B 113).

THE ARTIST

What about the artist, ideally? He must, of course, create states of true and vivid relationships. Since these involve inner and outer wholeness—that is, much more than just the intellectual side of man—he must create directly from his passional inspiration. He can have a purpose or philosophy, "if only the 'purpose' be large enough, and not at odds with the passional inspiration" (LL 190). The artist himself must be "whole" inwardly and outwardly: his inspiration is the energy that enables him to translate this state into an analogue, the work of art. The problem remains what exactly Lawrence means by a purpose—an intellectual program "large enough" not to contradict the inspiration. Lawrence does not in so many words prescribe one meaning exclusively, but he does indicate the one that would ideally fulfill his own requirement: the purpose or philosophy of "honoring" the true and vivid relationships that the artist's whole self is able to present (B 111).

What Art Should Not Be, Ideally

Art is not the communication or chronicle of mere existence. "A thing isn't life just because somebody does it. . . . The ordinary bank clerk buying himself a new straw hat isn't 'life' at all: it is just existence. . . . If the bank clerk feels really piquant about his hat, if he establishes a lively relation with it, . . . then that is life" (B 111). The action of hat-buying must involve the whole man, feelings and thought, and the balance of the man's organic relatedness to the universe must shift, if ever so slightly.

Art is not the presentation of an absolute, or of a fixed balance within a man or between a man and the universe. Still less is art the presentation of

a man who has no relatedness to the universe. Art communicates a relative state of relatedness. Nothing is true absolutely. Ideally, the novelist does not put “his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection” (B 110), to the intellectual absolute, or “Law” to which he wants life to conform. This is doing dishonor to true, vivid, and ever-changing relationships. Such artists and such art, for Lawrence, are immoral.

Art, ideally, is not merely aesthetic, nor decorative, nor recreative. Such art, for Lawrence, is amoral.

Art, ideally, is neither transcendental, intellectual, nor volitional. These are the stages of degeneration once inner and outer wholeness are lost. When outer wholeness (organic relatedness of the whole inner man to the universe or, as Lawrence loves to call it: “blood-sympathy”) is lost, the best men can do is “to enlarge themselves for a while in transcendentalism, . . . noble supermen lifted above the basic functions” (B 410). Interest in supernatural men is symptomatic of a feeling of repulsion toward natural men. When transcendentalism fails, then repulsiveness is felt all the more. The next retreat is to the intellect in isolation. We get the “high-browed, earnest novel” (B 114) with “self-consciousness picked into such fine bits” (B 115). Finally, there is “revulsion against the intellect, too, so we have the stark reduction to a . . . minimum of the human consciousness. . . . It is a *willed* minimum, sustained . . . by resistance . . . against any flow of consciousness except that of the barest, most brutal egotistic self-interest” (B 412). The hero finds even himself repulsive, “and he goes on, just . . . to hit the world. . . . Hit the world not to destroy it, but to experience in himself how repulsive it is” (B 413). This is the stage of “the smart and smudgily cynical novel, which says it doesn’t matter what you do, because one thing is as good as another” (B 111).

But no novel worth considering is ideally bad, just as none is ideally good.

What Art Is, Actually

What art is, actually, is a combination of what it is and what it is not, ideally.

At its best, art is a “revelation of the two principles of Love and Law in a state of conflict and yet reconciled” (B 186). Love is relative and intuitive; Law tends to be absolute and intellectual. But this reconciliation rarely, if

ever, occurs. Instead, “an artist usually intellectualizes on top, and his dark under-consciousness goes on contradicting him beneath” (S 35). “The artist usually sets out . . . to point a moral. . . . The tale, however, points the other way” (S 13). This is the “inevitable falseness, duplicity of art” (S 92). “An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day. And that is all that matters” (S 12).

The Proper Function of a Critic

The proper function of a critic, therefore, “is to save the tale from the artist who created it” (S 13). The critic must see through the artist’s subterfuge and rescue the art-truth, which is hidden or disguised (S 8–9). But to provide truth is only one of the functions of art, and a secondary one at that. First, art “provides an emotional experience” (S 12). “The touchstone is emotion, not reason. We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion” (B 118). Before he can arrive at any art-truth, the critic must be able to respond emotionally to the whole novel communicating itself to him. To do this, to feel a work correctly, says Lawrence, the critic must “be a man of force and complexity” (B 118). Then, if he also has “the courage to admit what he feels” (B 119), he can begin to formulate the “mine of practical truth” (S 12) that the work contains.

Of course, art communicates a state of being. Critics necessarily “degrade a work of art into a thing of meanings and reasoned exposition” (ER, xxvii, 322). “Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticizing. “ But this degrading into reasoned exposition must not go so far as to try to be a science. Criticism “is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. . . . All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon” (B 118).

Methods of the Critic

Lawrence, as a critic, certainly does not attempt to classify, although he does attempt to analyze. If we visualize a novel as, say, a rectangular ingot, we can observe, however, that he does not chop it into little analytical

slices vertically but rather into large ones horizontally, producing a top slice that is nearest our sight and subsequent slices that are increasingly obscured from it by the weight and opacity of those that lie above. Each horizontal slice comprises the whole of the ingot lengthwise, if not depthwise. This technique follows, of course, from Lawrence's conceptions of art and of the critic's role.

A work of art, conveying a state of being—inner and outer wholeness—must be felt in its wholeness. Lawrence is always true to this and very often even extends the scope of wholeness to include the entire output of an author, or, as in the case of the *Studies in Classic American Literature*, the entire significant output of a nation.

In the critical writings, his attention to wholeness is shown in various ways so used that the inevitable “degrading” of a work—that is, the loss of the feeling of its wholeness—is kept to the minimum.

The most important and pervading of these ways is Lawrence's attempt to express a book in terms of myth and symbol. He often does this as a refuge from a book's defects. Speaking of James Fenimore Cooper, for instance, he says: “Let me put aside my impatience at the unreality of this vision, and accept it as a wish-fulfilment vision, a kind of yearning myth” (s 60). Note his equation of the myth with the author's psychological state. Owing to Lawrence's conception of the very nature of myth or symbol, each must come into a book from that part of the author that is “a sort of dream-self, so that events that he relates as actual fact have indeed a far deeper reference to his own soul, his own inner life” (s 146). “No man can invent symbols” (B 158).

What exactly symbols and myth are, and the relation between the two, Lawrence makes clear. “Symbols,” he says, “are organic units of consciousness with a life of their own, and you can never explain them away, because their value is dynamic, emotional, . . . and not simply mental” (B 157). “Myth . . . is descriptive narrative using images. . . . Myth is an attempt to narrate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, going too deep in the blood and soul, for mental explanation or description. . . . And the images of myth are symbols. They don't ‘mean something.’ They stand for units of human *feeling*. . . . And the power of the symbol is to arouse the deep emotional self, and the dynamic self, beyond comprehension. Many ages of accumulated experience still throb within a symbol. And we throb in response” (B 158).

“Art-speech is . . . a language of pure symbols” (ER, xxvii, 321) that, taken together, communicate a state of being. The characters of fiction are also, in the deepest sense, symbols: they act out a myth. Because Lawrence believes all “quick” (alive) men and women to be necessarily and vitally related to the universe, it is his habit to treat characters first in terms of this relatedness and only afterward as beings who have no reference outside of themselves. In other words, Lawrence sees characters as embodiments of cosmic principles — so much so that he can describe these principles in terms of human personality. This he does in the “Study of Thomas Hardy,” where he develops his ideas on “maleness” and “femaleness”: “The goal of the male impulse is the announcement of motion, . . . endless diversity, endless change. The goal of the female impulse is the announcement of infinite oneness, of infinite stability” (B 68).

It is easy enough to see why Lawrence, having reduced universal principles to maleness and femaleness, concepts derived from human beings (and other animals), tends to think of human beings, when he encounters them in novels, as embodiments of universal principles, as symbols, as actors in the universal drama that, in art-language, is myth. It is also easy to see that thinking of characters in this way enables him to group them according to the principles they embody and to point out that in the successive novels of an author such as Hardy we find the same characters over and over again, masked only by new names.

Lawrence first tries to feel the characters’ places in the wholeness of the book — that is, to describe their outer-relatedness. Then he treats the relationships inside them, conceiving each person as a miniature universe whose wholeness is made up of a combination of the male and female principles, even though the person biologically can be only one gender. It is at this point that Lawrence inevitably must leave the first critical stage, the feeling of wholeness. Here the slicing must begin, if it has not already begun in the process of finding myth-meaning. A character considered as an embodiment of myth may be integral. A character considered as a human being rarely is, because he or she is created from the author’s conscious mind, whereas the myth or symbol comes from the author’s dream-mind. Lawrence always interprets art in reference to the psychology of the artist in this way, but with the following important reservation: “If a character in a novel wants two wives . . .: well, that is true of that man, at that time, in that circumstance. . . . To infer . . . that the novelist himself is

advocating furious polygamy is just imbecility” (LL 196). This reservation grants a character an artistic existence independent of his or her author. Nevertheless, Lawrence knows that characters do not come into being out of thin air, that they do reflect their authors’ minds, and that the latter often reflect in turn social, moral, or intellectual movements. That part of a character created from the author’s conscious mind is rarely integral because the author is rarely integral, and this state of dividedness within the author is a result, at least in England, of the great social movement that began with the Renaissance and that set the mind at odds with itself, especially regarding sex. “This, no doubt, is all in the course of the growth of the ‘spiritual-mental’ consciousness, at the expense of the instinctive-intuitive consciousness” (B 53).

Lawrence examines the inner nature of characters in terms of this statement. He finds, of course, that they are divided, not integral, people. Then he reads this back into the psychology of the author. Having established the latter in this way, and having reinforced it with whatever biographical information is relevant, he then — circuitously — reads the author’s lack of integration back into the characters’ lack. The important critical axiom for him is this: that the characters do not often *seem* divided because of the authors’ “duplicity” in hiding or calumniating their instinctive-intuitive consciousness. Hence, the critic’s role is to slice, to separate levels of meaning, to rescue what is hidden in spite of the author’s conscious mind. Why? So that the work may be seen in its wholeness. Why this? Because only in its wholeness is it able to communicate a state of being, which communication is necessary if the imagination of the reader is to be released.

“What we care about,” says Lawrence, “is the release of the imagination. A real release of the imagination renews our strength and our vitality, makes us feel stronger and happier” (B 156).

Critical Criteria Relevant to Subject Matter

The above statement about release of the imagination describes the purpose and result of art. Release of the imagination can also be used as a criterion for determining what is successful art and what is not. We come at last to Lawrence as a practical critic. What, specifically, must be present in a work of art in order for our imagination to be released? The answer

for Lawrence in the largest sense is myth and symbol, for they communicate wholeness, being. This underlies all of Lawrence's thinking, and is his basic critical position. But in actual practice he often says the same thing in different words. He also applies various subsidiary criteria of judgment, both to subject matter and to technique. In every case his theory and practice is to "make his standards of criticism clear." Lawrence argues that so long as the critic does this, tells us what his standards are, he can change them as he likes (B 119).

Let's list some of the standards used by Lawrence in his critical writings. The most frequent and important, as we have indicated, are variations of the release-of-imagination theme.

ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE (B 166)

This again is just as much a purpose as a standard of judgment. Art enhances life by communicating life. But what is life? "By life," says Lawrence, "we mean something that gleams, that has the fourth-dimensional quality" (B 111). What does Lawrence mean by "the fourth-dimensional quality"? Perhaps: "myth-meaning," which he says he prefers to just plain narrative (S 68). Perhaps: "mystic vision" (S 125), or "sheer apprehension of the world" (S 158). Certainly one element at least in this fourth dimension is the certain something in a book that is bigger than the characters or events in it. Lawrence speaks of this often. "In every great novel, who is the hero all the time? Not any of the characters, but some unnamed and nameless flame behind them all" (LL 193).

Compare the following: "That which is physic — non-human — in humanity is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element" (B 17). The characters in Lawrence's own work "fall into the form of some other rhythmic form, as when one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown" (B 18).

The fourth-dimensional quality is certainly a cousin of Lawrence's theory of outer-relatedness. If we turn to inner-relatedness, which also concerns "life" or "being," we see that Lawrence uses a variety of standards that are largely similar, although each is expressed with distinctive terminology.

In the essay on Galsworthy he sets up the standard of the "vivid human being" (B 119). To be sure, such a man has a "sense of being at one with the great universe-continuum of space-time-life" (B 121). But Lawrence's focus

is on the inner-relatedness of the man, rather than his outer-relatedness. The critique is in terms of characterization, and not in terms of something that is bigger than the characters. Lawrence's complaint is that the Forsytes are not vivid human beings. Speaking of them, he says: "Once the individual loses his naïve at-oneness with the living universe he falls into a state of fear and tries to insure himself with wealth. . . . Money, material salvation is the only salvation" (B 121). When the human being "becomes too much aware of objective reality, and of his own isolation in the face of a universe of objective reality, the core of his identity splits, his nucleus collapses, his innocence or his naïveté perishes, and he becomes only . . . a divided thing hinged together" (B 120): a man whose components are no longer related in a proper balance. The type of imbalance represented by the Forsytes Lawrence calls "social." The weight is, of course, on the side of the spiritual-mental consciousness at the expense of the instinctive-intuitive consciousness. In another essay, Lawrence describes how this psychological condition produced the "social man" typical of our industrial society: We became "ideal beings . . . rather than flesh-and-blood kin," and for the "feeling of physical, flesh-and-blood kinship" substituted "our ideal, social and political oneness" (B 58). This movement against the instincts and the intuition "became moral, said that the instincts . . . were evil, and promised a *reward* for their suppression. . . . Be good, and you'll have money. . . . The good got hold of the goods, and our modern 'civilisation' of money, machines, and wage-slaves was inaugurated" (B 61).

All this is well and good, but not the crux. Dislike of the type of people an author writes about is not the best basis for judging that author as a creative artist. Now Lawrence, who certainly can be accused of judging in precisely this way, did however reluctantly agree, speaking of *Point Counter Point*, that "art has to reveal the palpitating moment or the state of man as it is" (B 146). Lawrence detested the state of man shown in this novel. He felt the same way about the attitude of disgust and disinterest presented in the stories of Hemingway, but nevertheless could say of their author: He "is really good, because he's perfectly straight" (B 428).

The crux in Galsworthy, for Lawrence, is that he is not perfectly straight. Here, Lawrence employs two of his most important critical standards, those of "duplicity" and "negative species." "Galsworthy set out to show "that the Forsytes were not full human individuals, but social beings fallen to a lower level of life. . . . *The Man of Property* . . . sets out to reveal

the social being in all his strength and inferiority. “ But “Galsworthy had not quite enough of the superb courage of his satire. He faltered, and gave in to the Forsytes” (B 122). His duplicity was that he thought he was showing up the social man, but was not; that his instinctive self was nauseated by the social man, but that his spiritual-mental self conquered, and did so by giving the illusion that it agreed with the instinctive self. The method of achieving this illusion was to present the negative of the social-man species.

We see here how Jesuitically involved Lawrence’s critical thought can become, yet there is a splendid logicity pervading it. The axiom is that the author, and therefore his work, has a twofold self, the instinctive and the mental. The latter supplies a purpose or philosophy. Ideally this should be reconciled with the instinctive self—that is, the purpose should be to honor the instinctive self. No doubt Lawrence thought that he himself had achieved this reconciliation; however, in most cases the purpose is at odds with the instinctive self. It may be openly at odds, or secretly. Galsworthy’s case represents the secret opposition, pretending to honor the instinctive self but actually making the corruption worse. Tolstoy may be taken as representing the open opposition. And there are plenty more: “It is such a bore that nearly all great novelists have a didactic purpose, otherwise a philosophy, directly opposite to their passional inspiration. In their passional inspiration, they are all phallic worshippers. From Balzac to Hardy it is so. Nay, from Apuleius to E. M. Forster. Yet all of them, when it comes to their philosophy, or what they think-they-are, they are all crucified Jesuses. What a bore! And what a burden for the novel to carry!” (LL 190).

In both cases—secret and open opposition—we have duplicity because the author is not true to the direction that the “artist” in him, his passionate self, wishes to take. The struggle, however, is not one-sided. Often enough, according to Lawrence, the “artist” wins out. “Even a didactic purpose so wicked as Tolstoi’s or Flaubert’s cannot put to death the novel” (LL 189).

All this theorizing gives Lawrence a pat way to measure the value of various authors. At the bottom of his scale is someone like Benjamin Franklin, in whom the “artist” or instinctive self is entirely missing and the spiritual-mental self is therefore entirely in control. Next comes a large category: those authors in whom the artist-nature cannot be subdued by

an antagonistic mental purpose. In a work of such an author, the mental purpose is put forth. "But if it be really a work of art, it must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres." This essential criticism is, of course, the message of the author's passionate self. "The degree to which the system of morality, or the metaphysic, of any work of art is submitted to criticism within the work of art makes the lasting value and satisfaction of that work" (B 185). This pronouncement appears in the essay on Hardy, but it determines Lawrence's method elsewhere also, especially in the *Studies in Classic American Literature*. These start with Franklin, then proceed according to how well the artist-self survives and conquers the antagonism of the mental self—very poorly in Crèvecoeur, a little better in Cooper, and then a crescendo of success in Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. Dana seems the only one out of place. According to this scheme, he should fit nearer to Cooper. Whitman, the culmination, is more than just a purer example of the Hawthorne-Melville success. He is a new category. "Sensuously, passionately, they . . . attack the old morality. But they know nothing better mentally. Therefore they give tight mental allegiance to a morality which all their passion goes to destroy. Hence the duplicity which is the fatal flaw in them. . . . Whitman was the first to break the mental allegiance" (S 184). Whitman had his own fatal flaw, as we shall see, but he does represent for Lawrence at least the beginning of a truly American literature, a literature in which the spirit of the American soil, and not that of the European, dominates. (Lawrence considered the moral conception of Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, and Emerson—namely, that the spirit is superior to the flesh—to be essentially a European idea.)

If Galsworthy had been an American, Lawrence would probably have placed him in the Crèvecoeur area, for the nicety of distinction that applies to Galsworthy also applies to the American Farmer. They both thought they had broken their allegiance to the anti-passional morality, but in truth had not. And they both fooled themselves and perhaps also the reader by producing a negative of the anti-passional species, and not at all a new species, the thing really needed.

The idea of the negative of species is so central to Lawrence's thought and method that we must return to it again and again.

Crèvecoeur opposed nature to civilization, the intuitive to the spiritual-mental. But nature to him was only civilization inverted or made negative. He intellectualized nature, forcing it to conform to his mental

scheme of sweetness and pureness. “You can idealize or intellectualize,” says Lawrence. “Or, on the contrary, you can let the dark soul in you see for yourself” (S 35). Crèvecoeur “hates the dark pre-mental life, really. He hates the true sensual mystery. But he wants to ‘know.’ . . . He’s a liar” (S 41). His duplicity consists in setting up an idealized wish fulfillment, and in not having the courage to face the truth of the pre-mental state, a truth that is of an entirely different species from the sweetness and pureness of civilization.

Galsworthy’s civilization-species was the social man, whose god was money. Out of this several varieties of species-made-negative can develop: (1) Men who give money away or who altruistically wish to insure people by raising those people’s standards of living. These altruists are still devotees of the money-god. (2) Men who rebel “against this god, as do many of Galsworthy’s characters.” But “they are only anti-materialists instead of positive materialists. And the anti-materialist is a social being just the same as the materialist, neither more nor less” (B 121). A social man, as we have seen, has lost his innocence, the bright little spark of his at-oneness. The trouble with Galsworthy’s rebels, according to Lawrence, is that they have not regained this at-oneness; each is thus merely a social man manqué who wants to have “certain feelings: feelings of love, of passionate sex, of kindness” (B 125). It is precisely this wanting that confines them within the species they wish to leave. This “working off on yourself of feelings you haven’t really got” Lawrence calls sentimentalism. Galsworthy, “setting out to satirise the Forsytes, glorifies the *anti*, who is one worse” (B 127). If he had satirized this also, instead of sentimentalizing it, he would, claims Lawrence, have been a great writer instead of merely a popular one.

Several other applications of the negative-of-species standard are noteworthy. In an interesting essay entitled “The Good Man” Lawrence generalizes. The “good man” is one who “for the passion of life . . . substitutes the reasonable social virtues” (B 256). If, however, “I turn myself into a swindler, and am a brute to every beggar, I shall only be a ‘not good man’ instead of a ‘good man.’ It’s just the same species, really. Immorality is no new ground. . . . Whoever invents morality invents, tacitly, immorality” (B 257). Thus all the characters in Poe’s tales are self-consuming, whether they love or hate, for hate “is only inverted love.” Here, by “love” Lawrence of course means the moral social virtue, consisting of the desire for “intense vibrations and heightened consciousness” (S 91). The species that

should be opposed to love is not hate, which is negativized love, but “the integrity of the individual self. The real opposite of love is individuality” (LL 203). “We live to stand alone, and listen to the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, who is inside us” (S 91). This brings us back to inner wholeness but with a new implication, very important in Lawrence’s system: that Love, a relationship to another person, to God, or to the universe, does not mean a dissipation of individuality. Love is opposed to Law, the limiting factor. In the vivid human being (that is, the ideal human being) the two factors are reconciled, balanced. In the social man, Law outweighs Love. The man is too limited. In transcendentalists and mystics, love outweighs Law. The man is not limited enough. In this last category Lawrence places Poe and Whitman, as we shall see. I differentiate between love and Love in order to clarify Lawrence’s often confusing terminology. “Love” is the artistic justice of relativity, as opposed to Law, the absolute moral position, whereas “love” is the mentalized social virtue, perhaps better termed charity. It is also the desire to merge beyond the limits of the flesh, and is therefore “spiritual.”

Law, Love, and the anti-species are at the bottom of *Studies in Classic American Literature* with regard both to individual authors and the book’s overall sweep. Law is equated with the spiritual-mental self or moralist, Love with the instinctive-intuitive self or artist. The Americans, says Lawrence, have not listened to the Spirit of their Place, which is instinctive-intuitive. They have revolted against the spiritual-mental civilization of Europe, against kings and bondage, but only by becoming negative Europeans, the anti-species instead of the new species. The American “is in the main a recreant European still” (S 50).

Here, as in Galsworthy, Tolstoy, and Hardy, the spiritual-mental consciousness is a factor of limitation. It tries to make everything conform to the Law or absolute that it holds. In Hardy, for example, “the spirit of Love must always succumb before the blind, stupid, but overwhelming power of the law” (B 189), the law in this case being the author’s theory of fatality.

Elsewhere, the spiritual-mental consciousness can be a factor tending toward an absence of limitation: the love-hate of Poe or the “feeling for” of Whitman. In this way Lawrence is able to apply his basic standard of the “vivid human being” to the case of extremely divergent authors. Galsworthy gives us people who are less than human beings, Whitman and

Poe those who try to be more than human beings (in a bad sense). One extreme is as wrong as the other. The “bad sense” for Lawrence is very bad indeed. A person can enlarge himself, in a good sense, by achieving a relatedness to the universe. This assumes, however, that the person is still a person, flesh and all, and that the relationship, being of the nature of a balance, will have its ups and downs. Poe desired spiritual love—complete merging with the beloved—yet desired it continuously. Whitman wished to “feel for” slaves, prostitutes, syphilitics. “Which is merging. A sinking of Walt Whitman’s soul in the souls of these others” (S 187). “This merging, en masse, One Identity, Myself monomania was a carry-over from the old Love idea” (S 186). Whitman’s mistake was to confound sympathy “with Jesus’ LOVE, and with Paul’s CHARITY” (S 186). He did not recognize that “the central law of all organic life is that each organism is intrinsically isolate and single in itself” (S 75).

It is interesting that in at least one case Lawrence uses both prongs of the spiritual-mental fork—the one of too much limitation, the other of not enough—in treating the same author. With the first he censures; with the second he praises. Dostoyevsky’s novels, he says, “are great parables, . . . but false art. “Dostoyevsky used people “as theological or religious units. . . . They are bad art, false truth” (B 231)—that is, limited by a morality, idea, or absolute. But then, begrudgingly: “We may agree with Dostoyevsky or not, but we have to admit that his criticism of Jesus is the final criticism. . . . Man can but be true to his own nature. No inspiration whatsoever will ever get him permanently beyond his limits” (B 234). Lawrence does not say as much, but he would probably agree that the work of Dostoyevsky contains at least to some degree the essential criticism of the morality to which it adheres.

As we have seen, Lawrence considers this necessary if a work is to have lasting value. This implies, really, that the morality, the spiritual-mental element, must be present. In his effort to rescue the instinctive-intuitive element, Lawrence often gives the impression that any intrusion by the spiritual-mental is regrettable. But he does not mean this at all. The great principles of Love and Law “are, in a way, contradictions each of the other. But they are complementary. . . . Nothing is or can be created save by combined effort of the two principles” (B 225). In Greek and medieval times Law and Love worked together to give perfect expression to the Law: Law in relation to Love. Job, Aeschylus, Dante, Botticelli. In more

modern times the two have worked together to give perfect expression to Love, showing it in relation to the Law. Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Shelley, Wordsworth, Goethe, Tolstoy (B 226). There has been an imbalance, a shifting of balance in the relationship of one great principle to the other. Even if we take Lawrence's theoretical goal to be the finding of a "true balance" (B 227) — a perfect reconciliation — still, we see that this can come about only through conflict: an alternation of ascendancy, a kind of everlasting rhythm.

One of Lawrence's noticeable inconsistencies is just this: whether art must be judged by the standard of reconciliation or by the standard of alternation and struggle. He gives no final answer. On the side of reconciliation we have: "We start from one side or the other, from the female side or the male, hut what we want is always the perfect union of the two" (B 227). (Here, "Man and Woman are, roughly, the embodiment of Love and the Law" respectively.) On the side of alternation or struggle we have considerably more: Poets "reveal the inward desire of mankind. . . . They show the desire for chaos and the fear of chaos. The desire for chaos is the breath of their poetry. The fear of chaos is in their parade of forms and technique" (B 92). (Here, chaos is roughly equivalent to Love, and order to Law.)

"Life is so made that opposites sway about a trembling centre of balance. . . . And of all the art forms, the novel most of all demands the trembling and oscillating of the balance" (B 110).

"The rhythm of American art-activity is dual. (1) A disintegrating and sloughing of the old consciousness. (2) The forming of a new consciousness underneath" (S 73). "Poe has only one, only the disintegrative vibration. This makes him almost more a scientist than an artist." "In true art there is always the double rhythm of creating and destroying" (S 74).

In one instance we get a possible answer to the problem.

A combination of the male impulse and the female impulse "produces a sum of motion and stability at once, satisfying" (B 68). The clue to the ambiguity is that the motion and stability are not concurrent. The opposing principles of Law and Love struggle, then reach a momentary reconciliation, then struggle again. This is the pattern of Lawrence's own novels. It is a parting and a coming together, repeated over and over again. Struggle gives way to the temporary stability of union, which gives way to renewed struggle. The only "stable stability" consistent with the main weight of

Lawrence's thought would be the entire process—struggle, union, renewed struggle—viewed from the height of omniscience. It is the “sum.” Lawrence seems almost to be saying this when he declares, “the aim of man remains to recognise and seek out the Holy Spirit, the Reconciler, the Originator, He who drives the twin principles of Law and Love across the ages” (B 226).

Critical Criteria Relevant to Technique

Fortunately, not all of Lawrence's critical standards are so metaphysical as the ones with which we have been dealing. These latter have been concerned almost exclusively with the content of literature. The simpler criteria tend to treat style, form, or tone. Lawrence is often concerned with the attitude of the author, and how this comes through in the tone of the book. Joyce is “too terribly would-be and done-on-purpose, utterly without spontaneity or real life” (B 149). The trouble with *Faux Monnayeurs* is that it was done “to shock and surprise, *pour épater*. . . , not real” (B 147). Carl Van Vechten stands condemned for “hoping to pick up something to write about and make a sensation—and, of course, money” (B 423). This indicates Lawrence's attitude toward realism: the realist “tries to read his own sense of tragedy into people much smaller than himself. . . . The result is a discrepancy” (B 273–74). Joaquin Miller, Zane Grey, and Bret Harte are guilty of making use of a “pose”—the Wild West (B 421). Lawrence requires his authors to be spontaneous, sincere, and even a little naïve. He praises Hemingway, as we have seen, for being “perfectly straight,” and Dos Passos because his “confusion is genuine, not affected; it is life, not a pose” (B 425). Sentimentalists, for Lawrence, are not “straight”: they deal with feelings they haven't really got. In this category come Byron, Masefield (B 76), and dialect poets such as Abercrombie (B 82).

In the essay “Pornography and Obscenity” sentimentality is said to be “a sure sign of pornography” (M 81), because in falsely extolling purity, virtuous maidens, and the like, the sentimentalists desire to spite and degrade the sexual feeling. Thus Lawrence praises Deledda's *The Mother* in these terms: “The interest of the book lies, not in plot or characterization, but in the presentation of sheer instinctive life. The love of the priest for the woman is sheer instinctive passion, pure and un-defiled by sentiment” (B 294). Speaking of Verga, however, he says: “The sentimentality seems

to me to belong to the Sicilian characters in the book, it is true to type" (B 272). Even sentimentality is acceptable, then, so long as it is "straight." This is an indication, I think, of Lawrence at his very best as a critic, because he is flexible, not constrained by his critical philosophy.

A similar nonmetaphysical simplicity is shown in this judgment of Baron Corvo's *Hadrian the Seventh*: "And, great test, it does not 'date' as do Huysman's books, or Wilde's. . . . Only a first-rate book escapes its date" (B 149).

Nor does Lawrence overlook style or form, even though his chief interest is content. Deladda is praised because "she can put us into the mood and rhythm of Sardinia, like a true artist" (B 295). Verga is criticized for lack of narrative continuity, but, characteristically, his stylistic experiments are, for Lawrence, justified for being sincere. "He is doing, as a great artist, what men like James Joyce do only out of contrariness and desire for sensation" (B 291). That is, Verga's style is necessary to his matter. Lawrence also praises the "bottom-dog style" of Edward Dahlberg for this reason, though he dislikes Dahlberg's subject matter. Likewise, the seeming chaos of Dos Passos's style in *Manhattan Transfer* is praised because it expresses the rhythm of New York life (B 425). Melville receives commendation for his abilities to describe "violent, chaotic physical motion," to which Lawrence adds that Melville was "as perfect at creating stillness" (S 165). Lawrence certainly did not disdain technical virtuosity in style, his comments on Joyce notwithstanding.

With regard to form, we must not conclude that, because Lawrence had little good to say about the type used by his immediate predecessors, he was not concerned with good form at all. We can balance the following two comments: (1) "Tell Arnold Bennett that all rules of construction hold good only for novels which are copies of other novels" (B 20); (2) "I have read *The House of Ellis* carefully: such good stuff in it: but without unity or harmony. . . . You have a real gift—there is real quality in these scenes. But without form, like the world before creation" (H 583).

Lawrence's complaint was that Flaubert and his followers had made form into a "wholesale creed" of "self-effacement" (B 288). "Nothing outside the definite line of the book" (B 260). In the essay on Mann, Lawrence writes: "Thomas Mann seems to me the last sick sufferer from the complaint of Flaubert" (B 265). Germany is "undergoing that craving for form in fiction, that passionate desire for the mastery of the medium of

narrative, that will of the writer to be greater than and undisputed lord over the stuff he writes" (B 260). What we need, Lawrence says elsewhere, is "more looseness. We need an apparent formlessness, definite form is mechanical" (B 289). And we have already seen, of course, his famous statement concerning his own novel *The Rainbow*: "Don't look for the development . . . to follow the lines of certain characters: the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic form" (B 18).

This leads us to characterization and shortly thereafter to the problem of preaching in the novel. As a critic, Lawrence is if anything too concerned with characterization. His demands on a character should be evident by now: "The man in the novel must be 'quick'" (LL 194), alive, related. *The World of William Clissold* by H. G. Wells is not a successful novel because it contains "no created characters at all: it is words, words, words, about Socialism and Karl Marx" (B 134). Lawrence's attitude is interesting because of the amount of preaching in his own novels. As a critic, his standard in this case is found in a comment made on Cooper's *Deerslayer*: "He is a moralizer, but he always tries to moralize from actual experience, not from theory" (S 72). Melville in *Moby Dick* does not do this and is therefore "clumsy and sententiously in bad taste. . . . He preaches and holds forth because he is not sure of himself" (S 157). It is clear that Lawrence does not object to preaching. He is merely concerned that it be "straight." We remember his statement that "the essential function of art is moral," and note that his hope for the future of the novel is in terms of its ability and courage "to tackle new propositions without using abstractions" (B 118). "It was the greatest pity . . . when philosophy and fiction got split. They used to be one, right from the days of myth. Then they went and parted, like a nagging married couple, with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant. So the novel went sloppy, and philosophy went abstract-dry. The two should come together again — in the novel" (B 117).

THIS STATEMENT is a convenient stopping point, for it suggests an inquiry into how much Lawrence's prescriptions for the novel are to be found in his own work. This and several other problems should be treated in any really complete study of Lawrence as a critic. For instance, is his aesthetic theory derived basically from his own work and therefore an apologetic for it? Or would it be more correct to say that his work is an

application of a philosophy developed chiefly from other sources? Among these sources, what is the role of Lawrence's own psychological constitution, what the role of the historical debate between artist-as-teacher and artist-as-craftsman?

Further questions: Is Lawrence's critical method an effective one for judging his own work? Is Lawrence just as much the slave of a "spiritual-mental" program as some of the people he condemns for this? How may we explain the fact that Lawrence's judgment often contradicts what is at least present-day critical opinion? For instance, Lawrence condemns Joyce, Proust, and Forster while praising Dos Passos, Corvo, and Rupert Brooke. Does this reflect on his aesthetic theory? Last, can any aesthetic theory claim, as Lawrence's does, to be a good critical tool for all works of art?

POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY,
RELIGION

How to Be Happy

A QUESTION THAT some people—including religious ones—ask is not “Does God exist?” but rather “How can I find eternal happiness in the world as given?” Although they assume that religion is a relevant factor, they do not mean eternal happiness in some afterlife but rather a form of happiness in this world that exhibits long-term stability, continuity, endurance, and impregnability. Traditional religious language speaks of this world as fallen, implying that there was once an unfallen world. We are the victims of original sin (to continue with traditional language), yet at the same time we are fashioned in the image of God. Human nature is both satanic and divine, and the rest of nature is the same: cruel, unpredictable, destructive on the one hand, yet beautiful, heavenly, idyllic on the other. In sum, life as given is ambiguous. Let me therefore sharpen the previous question—namely “How can I find eternal happiness in the world as given”—to “How can I find eternal happiness in a world that is morally ambiguous?”

How many of us succeed in this? Very few, I’m afraid. How many of us enjoy this impregnable, stable, religious sort of happiness? Since the failures are all around us and the successes sometimes hard to find, it might be useful to investigate the reasons for failure, since these might help us to discover some reasons for success.

The best analysis, in my opinion, is the famous one by Søren Kierkegaard, first taught me by Professor Douglas Steere, a leading Quaker philosopher. Kierkegaard says that all of us strive to attain happiness and that we do this in three ways: aesthetic, ethical, and religious. These categories are very real in my own life as a Quaker. I suspect that they are alive in the lives of many of us as well. Every time I go to Quaker Meeting I need to keep asking myself whether I am doing something truly religious, or merely aesthetic or ethical. My experience not only at Meeting but also in other aspects of life is, alas, all too often not truly religious but only masquerading

as such. After all, it may be much easier to approach life aesthetically or ethically than religiously. That is why I suspect I am not alone in doing so. Let us try to see what these categories actually mean.

The aesthetic, as used here, has nothing to do with artists, at least not necessarily. The aesthetic person is someone who seeks to have moments of such strong feeling that he or she is lifted out of the threatening world of ambiguity into some other realm akin to eternal happiness. For the aesthetic person, time is the great enemy because it dulls feeling. If one's heightened feeling is occasioned by love, time ages the beloved and ultimately removes him or her. So what do aesthetic people do? They break time into discrete units — moments — each of which has the capacity to confer happiness only because it has been separated from the complications, unpredictability, etc. of past and future — from the true flux of time. Aesthetic people try to be happy by converting this flux, this “motion picture,” which of course is threatening, into a series of discrete snapshots.

How does this work out in practice? If the aesthetic pleasure comes through love, the love will be fleeting, involving a series of spouses or lovers, each one a snapshot, so to speak, which can be abandoned and replaced by another and then another in an (ultimately vain) effort to escape the continuity of time. Furthermore, the spouse or lover who provides this discrete, momentary heightening of feeling must be idealized, sentimentalized, as perfect and hence not subject to time's corrosion. Remember that this momentary aesthetic happiness can be achieved just as well by listening to a beautiful piece of music, admiring a sunset, climbing a mountain, going cross-country skiing, etc., and by entering the delicious silence of a Quaker Meeting.

I'm sure that we all know people whose major mode of obtaining so-called “eternal” happiness is this aesthetic mode. We may even recognize this mode in ourselves. The question is: Does it work? The answer is: Yes, up to a point. But not ultimately, for reasons that should be obvious. It falsifies the true nature of time, which is not discrete and discontinuous. It relies on an idealized conveyer of happiness. It requires constant, sometimes even frantic, repetition.

So let's turn our attention to the ethical mode. Just as the aesthetic is not primarily concerned with artists in Kierkegaard's analysis, so the ethical is not primarily concerned with goodness. For Kierkegaard, the ethical person is one who seeks something akin to eternal happiness in an

ambiguous world by virtue of commitment: following a code of behavior. Happiness comes not from discontinuous moments of heightened feeling but from the satisfaction of remaining true to an attachment despite life's vicissitudes. The attachment, of course, can be various: to a marriage, to a code of law, to one's political or ethnic heritage, to a particular church, etc. It involves a very different relationship to time. Instead of converting the flow of time into a series of independent, supposedly perfect moments, the ethical person lives *in* the flow of time, indeed gaining satisfaction from the continuity and steadiness of his or her devotion over years or decades. Personally, I have experienced my commitment to Quakerism for over sixty years and expect it to continue.

Ethical individuals experience something akin to eternal happiness in the world as given because of their continuing, enduring allegiance to a church, enterprise, scientific practice, revolutionary endeavor, or some equivalent that they deem worthwhile.

Again, we need to ask: Does it work? And again the answer is: Yes, up to a point. Yet the ethical response, according to Kierkegaard, just like the aesthetic response, is ultimately bound to fail. Aesthetic individuals fail in Kierkegaard's analysis because, despite their strenuous and repeated efforts to chop time into discrete moments of perfection, the inescapable continuousness and flow of time will invade the sanctuaries they have entered to save them from nature's ambiguity. Ethical individuals fail because they, too, create a sanctuary to protect them from an ambiguous world that is ultimately inescapable. By judging A to be superior to B, and by adhering to a relevant commitment, they presuppose that a separation between their choice and everything else can be made with impunity. It cannot, argues Kierkegaard, because ethical judgments themselves are ambiguous, given the moral ambiguity of the real world. So although a life of ethical commitment may work up to a point, it is liable to stop working sooner or later, as the ethical individual begins to acknowledge that the very fact of judging A to be superior to B adds to the real world's ambiguity and therefore subverts the precise mode of behavior that was meant to extricate this individual from ambiguity. In extreme cases, this new awareness leads to despair. And it is precisely this despair that may become the impetus driving someone to take a leap into the religious mode.

So we come to the form of behavior that, for Kierkegaard, is truly religious and not a masquerade. It has nothing to do with allegiance to a

particular credo, dogma, or church; instead, it involves adopting a particular lifestyle as a way of dealing successfully with ambiguous reality.

The aesthetic person supposedly escapes ambiguity by means of momentary feeling, the ethical person by means of prolonged attachment. In both cases, such a lifestyle is probably best realized through love. The religious person, according to Kierkegaard, confronts life's vicissitudes through caring and forgiving—in a word, also through love. But this love is very different from the love practiced in the aesthetic or ethical mode. In the former, love depends on a love-object that is idealized; in the latter, love's object is chosen because supposedly deserving. Religious love, contrariwise, neither idealizes nor chooses. It simply cares for other people, and indeed for all of nature, as given—that is, cares for them, loves them, in their full ambiguity. Religious love is acceptance of love-objects that do not deserve to be accepted; thus the great precondition of religious love is forgiveness.

All this should be familiar to Christians, for Christianity states that God so loved the world—an undeserving love-object—that he sent his only son to it, a son whose major characteristic was his capacity for forgiveness. In everyday life, religious love is probably most easily seen in the love of a parent toward a child, because (a) we do not choose our children and (b) we do not love them because they are deserving. Rather, we display forgiving acceptance of a problematic love-object.

Religious love is what enables us to be eternally happy, according to Kierkegaard. To begin to understand why, we need to return to the relationship with time. In the religious lifestyle, time is neither the enemy of happiness, as in the aesthetic mode, nor the medium of happiness, as in the ethical mode. Religious people dance in and out of time. Their existence is defined neither by single discontinuous moments nor by continuing participation in the flow of time. Instead, it is defined by a relationship to the Absolute—that is, by a relationship of someone in time to something altogether out of time. Religious people's real love—their real caring—is not for others but for the Absolute. This is what enables them to be eternally happy in the real world of temporality and ambiguity—*because they do not need it*. Unlike people in the aesthetic and ethical modes, religious people do not base their happiness on someone or something that is bound to fail them.

However, this form of detachment from the real world does not necessarily lead religious people to renounce that world. On the contrary, since they have already escaped ambiguity, they are paradoxically free to participate in it.

Last, because happiness in the religious mode is not something that a person develops for himself or herself but is, instead, something discovered (perhaps in moments of despair), religious people exhibit humility. This humility is expressed through gratitude for the gift of life and the gift of happiness — the fact that we are accepted although we are unacceptable.

How, then, can we find eternal happiness in the ambiguous world as given? How can we deal with life's vicissitudes and succeed? Kierkegaard tells us that we need a lifestyle determined by a relation with the Absolute, outside of time, rather than a lifestyle determined by successive relationships with idealized objects removed from the continuity of time, or from a lifestyle governed by a commitment grounded in time's continuity. To be sure, these other modes work, up to a point — that is why they are so popular. But they are also guaranteed to fail owing to inner contradictions. Kierkegaard insists that only the religious mode of happiness may be called eternal, since it alone exhibits long-term stability, continuity, endurance, and impregnability against the inescapable vicissitudes of the grossly imperfect world in which we live.

What I Believe

TO START, I must say that the title should be “What I believe *now*” (2003). Beliefs can change from decade to decade, maybe even from year to year. So I’m not sure that what I am about to specify now would have been the same ten years ago or will be the same twenty years hence if I’m still around to have an opinion.

What I believe now is . . . the importance of *rationality*. That may sound strange for someone who, like myself, is aware of modern philosophical thinking—or, more accurately, *postmodern* philosophical thinking—with its emphasis on the vagueness and imprecision of everything, on the omnipresence of mutability, the multiple meanings of language, the total absence of any Aristotelian “unmoved mover,” any “final point of stability in the swirl of existence.”¹

But I have been influenced recently by Stoicism, especially by the thought of Epictetus, who lived from about A.D. 50 to 130 first in Rome, then in northern Greece. Like other Stoics, he stressed that our own nature is part of the nature of the circumambient universe. That is certainly something I believe, and also is a belief that is fashionable nowadays, especially among environmentalists. But Epictetus and the earlier Stoics believed that nature is governed by reason; they took “all phenomena and living beings to be the observable effects of a cosmic order.”² Again, this seems contrary to postmodern thinking; yet as I observe and contemplate the regularity of sunrise and sunset, the circling of planets around stars, the predictable cycle of living creatures’ birth, growth, maturation, and senescence, the intricate interdependence of animate and inanimate creation, I really do sense rationality at work around me and inside me. Of course unpredictability, chance, and inexplicability are also present, but right now I like to see them as defects of a system, not as that system’s essence.³

The Stoics go one step further, asserting that the observable cosmic

order is “constituted and implemented by a principle they call Zeus” — in other words, God.⁴ That is more difficult for me, since I certainly do not believe that the universe was planned in advance by some supreme being. But if God is just shorthand for “the nature of things” — the predictable regularity characterizing cosmic order — then I have no problem. Indeed, I can subscribe to the Quaker assurance that something of God resides in each person: something of the rational universe in me, since I am part of the orderly cosmic whole.

But belief is frivolous if it does not manifest itself in action. Epictetus is especially attractive because he emphasizes moral behavior. His ultimate guru, Socrates, declared that an unexamined life is not worth living, which means that we are called to understand the ultimate structure and meaning of reality and, in addition, to collaborate with that structure, behaving morally. Moral behavior requires, first of all, that we differentiate between that which is subject to our control and that which is beyond our control. Furthermore, moral behavior requires that we act in conformity with a reasonable table of values. We are taught, for example, that the seven deadly sins may be divided into those that are carnal and those that are spiritual, with the spiritual being more serious than the carnal. If one overcomes gluttony, avarice, or lust (all carnal) and in so doing succumbs to anger, envy, or pride, one is *not* collaborating with a rationally structured universe but, rather, is sabotaging a table of values that arranges sins rationally according to their severity. Epictetus says this memorably: Why are we angry, he asks, when something is stolen from us? “Because we set such store on the things they steal from us. If you stop setting store on your clothes, you won’t be angry with the thief. . . . Whenever you see someone wealthy, observe what you have instead of that. . . . [I]f you have the absence of the need to have wealth, realize that you have something greater and much more valuable.”⁵

Clearly, Stoicism teaches us how to attain tranquility. Let me conclude with what Epictetus says concerning the relation between Socrates and ourselves: “Socrates fulfilled himself by attending to nothing except reason in everything he encountered. And you, although you are not yet a Socrates, should live as someone who at least wants to be a Socrates.”⁶ That is perfect advice for someone like myself who believes that the prerequisite of tranquility is a rational universe that challenges us to understand its ultimate structure and to collaborate, as best we can, with that

structure. So I end as I began: What I believe *now*, despite all the contrary evidence, is the importance of rationality.

Hanover, N.H.

October 2003

Notes

- 1 F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 181. Cited in Darren J. N. Middleton, “Kazantzakis among the Postmoderns: Some Reflections,” *BMJS* 20/1, pp. 71–88.
- 2 A. A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 20–21.
- 3 This view is currently espoused by the philosopher Sean Carroll in his book *The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself*. He calls his philosophy “poetic naturalism.” As the TLS review explains, “In this thoroughly naturalistic view of existence, the universe follows invariant laws that science has discovered — or will discover in the future. . . . Carroll reassuringly finds that nature at its deepest level is cohesive, largely predictable, and in principle fully explicable” (TLS, July 1, 2016, p. 32).
- 4 Long, p. 21.
- 5 Long, p. 252, p. 137.
- 6 Long, p. 272, citing Epictetus’s *Encheiridion* 51.

Quakerism, Darwin, and Process-Relational Theology

Nothing is permanent except change.

— Heraclitus

We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don't know . . . That is true of the relationship between God and scientific knowledge . . .

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The great questions — “Who are we?” “Where did we come from?” and “Why are we here?” — can be answered only, if ever, in the light of scientifically based evolutionary thought.

— Edward O. Wilson

God is the supreme expression of tirelessness and struggle — the indestructible, incurable seeker.

— Nikos Kazantzakis

The Problem

A TRULY NEW THOUGHT is often deemed heretical. That certainly happened when, on November 24, 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, probably the most significant book in the last century and a half. In the following year, Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford, asked the popularizer of evolution Thomas Henry Huxley at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science whether his ape ancestry pertained to his grandfather's or his grandmother's side! (Huxley replied that he preferred an ape ancestor

over a bishop who prostituted his talents.) Even decades later, the press was filled with cartoons of monkeys bearing Darwin's features, and his findings were vilified by the conservative clergy. But he was hardly the first innovative scientist to be considered heretical. Poor Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) was burned at the stake in Rome for his *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds* (1584), which claimed, "There are . . . innumerable suns, and an infinite number of earths revolve around those suns, just as the seven we can observe revolve around this sun which is close to us"¹ — the seven being Copernicus's Mercury, Venus, Earth, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, still embedded in the so-called "planetary spheres" of the Ptolemaic astronomical system. The other great scientist considered heretical was of course Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), who escaped burning because he recanted on his knees after his famous trial in 1633 before a panel of cardinals, who condemned him by a vote of seven to three owing to his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems — Ptolemaic and Copernican* (1632). Even so, he was sentenced to house arrest for the remainder of his life, his "crime" being that he defended not only the Copernican heliocentric system but, by extension, a new cosmology opposed to the accepted Aristotelian-Ptolemaic-biblical system that placed earth at the center and honored Aristotle's "hundred proofs that the universe is finite, bounded, and spherical."² With his improved telescope, Galileo had discovered that the Milky Way is indeed a seemingly infinite multitude of stars instead of a cloud, as previously believed. He had noted irregular mountains and craters on the moon, previously assumed to be a perfect celestial sphere. Worst of all, he found that Jupiter had four moons circling it — "a Copernican system in miniature"³ — whereas the old cosmology had everything circling the earth. All this was published in his *Starry Messenger* (1610). Naturally, the cardinals judging him saw heresy in his findings, which contradicted not only Aristotle and Ptolemy but also biblical verses such as "the world is established; it shall never be moved" (Psalms 93:1 and 96:10), "Thou didst set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be shaken" (Psalm 104:5), "the world stands firm, never to be moved" (1 Chronicles 16:30), and "The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises" (Ecclesiastes 1:5). His *Dialogue* was placed on the Church's Index of Prohibited Books and not removed until the nineteenth century. True, in 1984 Pope John Paul II appointed a commission, which "acknowledged that 'church officials had

erred in condemning Galileo.” In reviewing the commission’s findings in 1992, however, he argued “that there are ‘two realms of knowledge’ and that by failing to distinguish them, theologians had been led ‘to transpose into the realm of the doctrine of the faith a question that in fact pertained to scientific investigation.’”⁴

In worrying about Quakerism and the alleged heresy of Darwin, I believe that recourse to “two realms of knowledge” is precisely *not* the correct procedure. The problem must be faced, not avoided. Indeed, I feel that no religion is worthy of my respect and allegiance if it fails to be in concord with scientific knowledge. I realize that religion and science are often considered separate areas. Even such an authority as Freeman Dyson declares, “Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are here. The two windows give different views, but they look out at the same universe. Both . . . are worthy of respect.”⁵ Dyson still sees science and religion as separate. I do not.

Let’s consider Christianity as an example. Christian theology developed chiefly in the first four centuries of our era, amalgamating Greek thought with Hebrew thought. As traditionally conceived, Christianity’s God is entirely congruent with the cosmological science of that time — namely, the Ptolemaic astronomical system that placed at the center an unmoving Earth circled by seven planetary spheres plus an eighth sphere of the fixed stars, all set in motion by what Aristotle termed the “unmoved mover.” Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria published this system in Greek circa A.D. 150 as *The Great Treatise*; it comes down to us as *Almagest*, the Latin form of the Arabic translation of his title. The treatise has various main sections, for example: “That the heavens move spherically”; “That the Earth, taken as a whole, is sensibly spherical”; “That the earth is in the middle of the heavens”; “That the Earth does not in any way move locally.”⁶ This was based somewhat on observation and actually “worked” to some degree; yet essentially it was a projection of Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle reasoned understandably enough that any moving body must be set in motion by a second body. Yet that second body must itself be set in motion by a third body, the third by a fourth, and so on until, inevitably, this regression reaches his famous $\tau\iota\ \delta\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\ \kappa\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu\ \kappa\iota\nu\epsilon$ — “something that moves without being moved.”⁷ Beyond this key point, to which I shall return because he also identifies it with God, lie other Ptolemaic principles

that were previously dogmatically asserted by Aristotle—namely, “The shape of the heaven must be spherical,” “the earth must be at the center and immobile,” “the earth does not move.”⁸ Thinking now of the Ptolemaic system’s connection with Christianity, it is interesting that some of Aristotle’s descriptions of the unmoved mover sound theological rather than physical—for example, “the primary body of all is eternal, suffers neither growth nor diminution, but is ageless, unalterable and impassive.”⁹ Aristotle even declares that the unmoved mover “causes motion as being *an object of love*, whereas all other things cause motion because they are themselves in motion” (my italics).¹⁰ This physical power is beginning to sound more and more like God. We should be able now to appreciate how easily—indeed inevitably—Christian theology, influenced by Aristotle’s unquestionable prestige plus the Ptolemaic worldview that supposedly described the nature of being while at the same time projecting Aristotelian philosophy, gave us the understanding of God that then came to be pressed into orthodoxy initially by Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430), whose early neo-Platonism helped him maintain a clear division between the natural (transitory) and spiritual (eternal) worlds, then subsequently and principally by Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), about whom it has been said that he “studied Aristotle like no other man had before or since and he used Aristotle to justify his entire thinking.”¹¹

In sum: the traditionally conceived Christian God is the unmoved mover of Aristotelian philosophy and Ptolemaic astronomy, hence unchangeable, eternal, absolute, perfect. Very nice—except that the science governing this theology is entirely wrong! Earth is not at the center. The stars are not fixed. They began probably 13.7 billion years ago after a Big Bang and are part of a cosmos that has been expanding at an accelerating rate for the past five billion years (so we have learned from the Hubble telescope¹²), and that assuredly will end some billions of years hence when our sun and the zillions of other suns either explode or simply run out of heat.¹³ According to Robert Frost’s celebrated poem, the world will terminate in either fire or ice. (More on this termination below.) As Darwin teaches us regarding living creatures, geologists regarding inanimate nature, physicists regarding space-time, astronomers regarding galaxies, black holes, and retreating stars, nothing in our circumambient universe is unchangeable, eternal, absolute, perfect. So why should we accord respect and allegiance to a deity that differs so remarkably from scientific truth

as does the traditionally conceived Christian deity? Darwin himself had clear answers: “We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows. Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws.” “Whilst on board the *Beagle* I was quite orthodox. . . . But I had gradually come . . . to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world, with the Tower of Babel, the rainbow as a sign, etc., etc., and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos, or the beliefs of any barbarian.” “By further reflecting that the clearest evidence would be requisite to make any sane man believe in the miracles by which Christianity is supported, . . . I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation.”¹⁴

Quaker Responses So Far

Avoiding such atheistic conclusions, how can we Quakers today find religious answers that are consistent with Darwinism and other findings of modern science? Owing to Friends’ lack of creedal formulas and our openness to continuing revelation, we should be in the forefront of those who maintain their faith while at the same time heeding science’s confirmation that nothing is permanent except change. Indeed, “Quakerism in dispensing with creeds holds out a hand to the scientist,” as the distinguished Quaker astrophysicist Arthur Stanley Eddington (1882–1944) states in his 1929 Swarthmore Lecture. “The scientific objection,” he continues, “is not merely to particular creeds which assert in outworn phraseology beliefs which are either no longer held or no longer convey inspiration to life. The spirit of seeking, which animates [science], refuses to regard any kind of creed as its goal.” “In its early days [the Society of Friends] owed much to a people who called themselves Seekers. . . . It is a name which must appeal strongly to the scientific temperament. . . . [T]he spirit of seeking is still the prevailing one in [science’s] faith, which for that reason is not embodied in any creed or formula.”¹⁵ So let us continue to apply our own Quaker tradition of seeking in order to match our religious faith to the nature of the universe that we inhabit.

Happily, various post-Darwinian Quaker responses have already attempted to examine our faith in concert with science, although none has gone far enough in my opinion except the quasi-Quaker one I will mention last — namely, Ian Barbour’s *Religion and Science* (1997). Eddington begins with a summary of cosmological evolution culminating in the human brain; he then immediately links science with Quakerism owing to their shared valuation of experience: “If science claims in any way to be a guide to life it is because it deals with experience, or part of experience. And if religion is not an attitude towards experience, . . . it is not the kind of religion which our Society stands for.” Next, he refuses to distinguish the mystical experience of religion from the concrete experience of science: “It would be wrong to condemn alleged knowledge of the unseen world because it is unable to follow the lines of deduction laid down by science as appropriate to the seen world.” On the contrary, he sees both realms as essentially symbolic and then employs this similarity to justify the belief of many Quakers in a personal God: “We have to build the spiritual world out of symbols taken from our own personality, as we build the scientific world out of the symbols of the mathematician.”¹⁶ All this is fine, very fine; yet it ignores the stark incompatibility of modern evolutionary science with many believers’, and some Quakers’, outmoded “Ptolemaic” conception of God.

An earlier Swarthmore Lecture, delivered by Gerald Kenway Hibbert in 1924 to mark the tercentenary of George Fox’s birth, begins by pledging “to bring [Fox’s] message up to date” and then immediately states: “One important point to remember is that Darwin has lived in the interval between George Fox and ourselves. . . . Though we may differ as to what Darwin actually taught, and though our ideas of the evolutionary process may vary, the main thing is that we all look at the universe as developing and unfolding.”¹⁷ Fine, so far; yet then, strangely, there is nothing more about science and religion, nothing about bringing our Quaker faith cosmologically up to date.

Another attempt to link faith with science was made by Pendle Hill’s Howard Brinton (1884–1973) in his brilliant 1931 Swarthmore Lecture, *Creative Worship*, in which he claims that he has “endeavoured to propound a theory of worship in terms of a theory of evolution.” Darwin is not mentioned here; nevertheless, the entire conception is based on “[n]ew theories of the nature of time and space, matter and motion.”

What Brinton does with these clearly evolutionary theories, however, is to equate them with “the organic,” which he compares to older views, both scientific and religious, that he terms “mechanistic.” His point is that “Quakerism is founded on the concept of organism while Puritanism is founded on the concept of mechanism.”¹⁸ Thus he is really interested in the psychology of worship rather than in a theology that reflects our modern conception of the universe. On the other hand, the title of his much later *Evolution and the Inward Light: Where Science and Religion Meet* (1970) seems most promising. Yet Brinton, who was trained as a scientist, ignores the intensely heretical nature of Darwin’s views and instead presents George Fox as an “evolutionist” solely in the realm of spiritual development. “Assuming,” Brinton writes, “that evolution proceeds by the survival of the fittest . . . then on this theory [here he proceeds contrary to Darwinian teaching] the fittest is not the best fighter but one who best complies with the gospel of reconciliation or love.” “George Fox had no conception of evolution in the Darwinian sense, but he knew and said a great deal about evolution within the human species. . . . We believe in some interpretation of ‘the survival of the fittest,’ but who are the fittest? If this early Christian philosophy is true, then the most Christ-like are the fittest, and ‘Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth’ is a biological as well as a spiritual statement.” It is hard to see here any true meeting of science and religion, despite the pamphlet’s title. In fact Brinton ends by questioning Darwin’s most essential postulate: “It is generally asserted in scientific classrooms that the evolution of life on this planet has proceeded by a series of accidents in which the fittest survived. But it is very difficult to imagine that the world around us has resulted from an almost infinitely long game of dice.”¹⁹ Echoing Albert Einstein’s famous “God does not play dice with the universe,” a statement made to Nils Bohr in 1928 as the two physicists argued about indeterminacy, Brinton aligns himself with those who oppose indeterminacy and thus with those who basically oppose the findings of modern science. We might say of him, at least in this pamphlet, what the stimulating theologian Don Cupitt says of some other religious progressives: that they “still cling to a remnant of Platonism”²⁰ — meaning a remnant of belief in permanent, changeless Platonic forms, precisely what is denied by modern Darwinian science.

A short essay by Winifred M. White called *Concern for Vision* (1993) is an attempt to discover a liberal Quaker faith consistent with the theory of

evolution. She cites the view of Charles Raven (1885–1964) that God suffers when humans misuse their freedom; she calls Christ an evolver rather than a redeemer; she agrees with Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) that humans are always on the road to becoming and that “God is involved in that process,” concluding that “process-relational theology may be important for many who may never hear its name mentioned.”²¹ It’s a shame that this pamphlet is so hard to find, because it is clearly headed in the right direction.

A more recent Pendle Hill pamphlet than Howard Brinton’s is Calvin Schwabe’s *Quakerism and Science*. This says nothing at all about Darwinian evolution. Concentrating like Brinton’s Swarthmore Lecture on the type of mind seen in Quakers as well as scientists, it rejects dogmatism, favors those who depart from static bodies “of permanent ‘truth’ whether defined by hierarchical authorities or ancient books,” remembers Quaker chemist John Dalton (1766–1844), an early proponent of atomic theory, and quotes Arthur Eddington about acceptable religion being “an attitude toward experience” and not “just a creed postulating an ineffable being.” Yet it does not concentrate in any way on the correlation between “acceptable religion” and Darwin’s or other scientists’ descriptions of the universe in which we live.²²

A Pendle Hill pamphlet that comes closer to doing this is Ralph Hetherington’s *Universalism and Spirituality*. Importantly, it evokes Bishop Irenaeus (ca. 115–ca. 202), who “spoke of the world being made unfinished,” a doctrine that opens religion up to the continuous creation preached by Darwin.²³ I will treat Irenaeus below in relation to process-relational theology.

I must also mention Michael Ruse’s book *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion* (2001). His parents were convinced Friends and he was raised in Warwickshire Monthly Meeting, England. In his preface, he says that if his book helps readers on their spiritual route, they should thank “those very ordinary and very wonderful people,” the Quakers. He has written extensively on the conflict between evolutionist and creationist thinking, and has recently co-edited a 979-page collection of essays on evolution.²⁴ *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?* explains Darwinism at length, defines creationism, treats the views of Augustine and Aquinas on the human soul, shows areas in which Darwinism and creationism coincide, and concludes that a Darwinian can easily be a Christian but is not obligated to be one. Ruse’s op-

timism is based chiefly on moral issues, never however on cosmological ones, which he does not treat. Once again, we encounter a discussion that overlooks my insistence that religious views must be compatible with up-to-date scientific knowledge about our circumambient universe.

The one response that goes further than any of these others is surely Ian Graeme Barbour's magisterial *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (1997). Barbour (1923–2013), the son of an Episcopalian mother and Presbyterian father, is not a Quaker. Nevertheless, I call this a quasi-Quaker response because he was educated at The Downs School in Colwall, Herefordshire, England, founded by Quakers in 1900, and then at Swarthmore College in America. Moreover, he served afterward as a conscientious objector in World War II and participated as a leader in the international work camp movement, largely a Quaker initiative established in 1920 by the Swiss Quaker Pierre Cérésolle (1879–1945). Trained initially in physics, Barbour later enrolled in Yale Divinity School. His professorial appointment at Carleton College was in both physics and theology, and his 1965 book *Issues in Science and Religion* is often credited with creating the academic field of science and religion. In a 1999 radio interview he asked: "The popular image is of science and religion in conflict or in warfare — atheistic scientists on the one hand and creationists or biblical literalists on the other. But what about the people in between who believe in God and evolution or who see evolution as God's way of creating?"²⁵ In the same interview, he answered: "Many theologians . . . consider science and religion to be separate domains, but a significant number hold that traditional ideas of God and of human nature can be reformulated in the light of science (especially evolutionary biology) without giving up the central affirmations of their religious tradition." His specific answer for religion in an evolutionary world is process-relational theology — namely, a view that sees everything, even God, as evolving. In my opinion, this is what Quakers must seriously examine.

An Adequate Quaker Response for the Future

Let's start with three provocative quotations:

- 1 "Everything has changed but our thinking." (Albert Einstein, Nobel Laureate in Physics, 1921)
- 2 "Whatever one may call the 'Creator,' his only authentic

revelation is the Universe. Science is the study of the work of the Creator, a kind of divine service, a search for truth, searched with uncompromising honesty.” (Albert Szent-Györgyi, Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1937)²⁶

Last, approaching things from a different angle:

- 3 For our knowledge is imperfect . . . When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully . . .” (Saint Paul)

Yes, everything has changed owing to Darwin and other provocative scientists deemed heretics; yes, the circumambient universe is our best entry to Godhead; yes, our knowledge is imperfect, but no, we shall never understand fully. Saint Paul is infected head to toe by the expectation of *complete knowledge* — precisely what an adequate Quaker response for the future must overcome. Traditionalists, who always seem to act as though they understand fully, quote Revelation 1:4, which describes God as “him who is and who was and who is to come.” Hebrews 13:8 expresses the same dogma uncompromisingly when it states that Christ “is the same yesterday and today and for ever.” Contrariwise, a modern biblical scholar argues that aside from these two verses “there is virtually no warrant in the New Testament for any claim that God is immutable, and there is equally little in the Hebrew Bible. . . . True, the Lord God of Israel is the creator and ruler of time, and the Psalms delight in repeating that he lives forever. To that extent he is like Aristotle’s unmoved mover. Yet, contradictory as this must seem, he also enters time and is changed by experience. . . . God is constant; he is not immutable.”²⁷

Nevertheless, it seems so comforting — so *spiritual* — to believe in the unchangeable, eternal, absolute, perfect God of traditional theology. But another modern religious scholar helps us by claiming that there is “hardly a conception of God from Hegel onward that is not dynamic, changing, and in some manner intrinsically related to the world of change. . . . God thus shares in the metaphysical categories of process: temporality, potentiality, . . . relatedness, development, and dependence or passivity.”²⁸ Some of this may be found all the way back in the second century A.D. thanks

to the Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, whose doctrine that the world was made unfinished was mentioned earlier. Irenaeus Christianity emphasizes growth; it justifies the existence of evil owing to “an infinite good which God is bringing out of the temporal process.”²⁹ “The dominant Augustinian tradition speaks of a completed creation which is then distorted in the fall; a minor Christian tradition, exemplified by Irenaeus . . . , speaks of the world being made unfinished. Our responsibility is to complete it. The redeemed life, therefore, shares in divine creativity. Early Friends participate, although unwittingly, in the Irenaeus tradition in emphasizing growth from a seed and growing up into the image of God.”³⁰ Building on Irenaeus’s developmental emphasis, a branch of modern Christian theology known as process-relational theism tends to emphasize God’s changeability. The chief exponent of this branch, Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000), attended Haverford College from 1915 to 1917, where his favorite teacher was Rufus Jones, who impressed Hartshorne because he advocated a nondogmatic approach to religion. Hartshorne regretted the teachings of Plato and Aristotle regarding spiritual permanence and immutability, teachings that had led classical Christian theology, as we have seen, to view divine reality as eternal, not temporal, spiritual, not material, causative, not affected by causes. In his early book, *The Divine Relativity* (1948), he argues that God is open to influence, therefore changeable, not immutable. *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (1964) attempts a compromise, stating that God may be conceived as perfect and immutable in some respects but not in others. Hartshorne’s term for this difference is “dipolar,” which means that Deity combines into harmony disharmonious pairs such as one/many, being/becoming, permanence/change. Although this may strike one as irrational, modern thought replies that it is scientific. Albert Einstein realized in 1905, for example, that light needs to be understood not only as waves but also as quantum particles, later known as photons. We, too, more than one hundred years later, need to accept ambiguity also in theology. Listen to Einstein himself: “But what is light really? Is it a wave or a shower of photons? There seems no likelihood for forming a consistent description of the phenomena of light by a choice of only one of the two languages. It seems as though we must use sometimes the one theory and sometimes the other, while at times we may use either. We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena

of light, but together they do.”³¹ Similarly, in our theology, “supreme excellence . . . must somehow be able to integrate all the *complexity* there is in the world itself as one spiritual whole.”³² Said in another way: “The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth is usually another profound truth.”³³ This is why the process theologian Hartshorne is able to declare so categorically that he rejects “as idolatry the identification of God with ‘the absolute,’ ‘infinite,’ ‘immutable,’ or ‘necessary.’ God is on both sides of such abstract contraries, and only so can he be more than a mere abstraction. He is finite *and* infinite, eternal *and* temporal, necessary *and* contingent.”³⁴

We have reached the very heart of process-relational theology. The key terms are those of the rubric itself—namely, (1) *process*: God Himself and our revelation of Him/Her are ongoing, as opposed to being encapsulated once and for all in credal or biblical formulations, (2) *relational*: God is subject to emotion because He/She is causally related to the world, is affected by it, as opposed to being impassive and absolute. But a third term—namely, *panentheism*—is also central. This replaces “theism,” on the one hand, and “pantheism,” on the other, theism positing an impassive, immutable God without accidents, entirely separate from His/Her creation, pantheism a God wholly equivalent to His/Her creation, with no separation between them, whereas panentheism is the midpoint between the two, for it holds “that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items.”³⁵ Said more simply, panentheism is the belief that God is joined to—related to—the physical universe but at the same time transcends material creation.

Friends who find this difficult should consult Ian Barbour’s final chapter, “God and Nature,” which gives some of the historical background. The chapter begins with models of God’s role in nature, among which are those of classical theology (God as omnipotent, omniscient, unchanging, sovereign) and those of process theology (God as creative participant in the cosmic community). In classical theology (which many Quakers resist but perhaps some still follow), there is “a strictly asymmetrical, one-way relation: God affects the world, but the world does not affect a God who is eternal, unchanging, and impassible.” Barbour explains that “the exclusion of all temporality from God’s nature seems to have been indebted mainly to Greek thought. Plato had pictured a realm of eternal forms and

timeless truth, imperfectly reflected in the world; the perfect was the unchanging. Aristotle had spoken of God as the Unmoved Mover, the immutable Absolute. Aquinas argued that God is *impassible*, unaffected by the world. God loves only in the sense of doing good things for us, but without passion or emotion.”³⁶ During the long period that the classical mode prevailed, Barbour continues, “a static and hierarchical view of reality was assumed. . . . [T]he biblical idea of continuing creation was virtually ignored. Each lower form served the higher in the hierarchy: God/man/woman/animal/plant. This fixed order was unified by God’s sovereign power and omniscient plan. These assumptions were, of course, challenged by evolution.” In process-relational theology, by contrast, “reality is envisaged as a society in which one member is preeminent but not totally controlling. The world is a community of interacting beings . . .” “This is an incomplete cosmos still coming into being. Evolution is a creative process whose outcome is not predictable. . . . Here there is no dualism of soul and body and no sharp separation between the human and the nonhuman.” “Process thought is distinctive in holding indeterminacy among its basic postulates.” “Here divine purpose is understood to have unchanging goals but not a detailed eternal plan: God responds to the unpredictable.” “The process God does have power, but it is the *evocative power* of love and inspiration, not controlling, unilateral power.” In sum, process-relational philosophy includes “*a theology of nature* that does not disparage or neglect the natural order.” “Process thought is consonant with an ecological and evolutionary understanding of nature as a dynamic and open system . . .”³⁷

If Charles Darwin could return to earth and hear all this, he would be immensely pleased! Indeed if Quakers could lead the way in following process thought and thereby in combining religious faith with modern science much more fully than before, a resurrected Darwin might even overcome his anti-Christian bias sufficiently to join the Religious Society of Friends!

Concluding Thoughts

Listen now to some wisdom from my favorite living philosopher of religion, the deliciously heretical Don Cupitt (1934–), a former Anglican clergyman (believe it or not) who supports process-relational theology

even though he cannot give credence to the transcendent, unevolving half of Hartshorne's dipolar deity. Again and again Cupitt stresses that we must make our religion respond to the scientific truth of *process*: "True religion is the practice of making eternal happiness out of the flux of ordinariness . . ." "The more I understand that I am but part of the universal flux of everything, the more I am united with it. . . ." "We need to learn to love transience, because it's all there is, and we are part of it. Heraclitus has turned out to have been right: everything flows."³⁸

Yes, everything flows; nothing is permanent except change. Yet it is tempting to resist this Darwinian truth. Some of us, even some Quakers, are still prisoners of an uncompromising dualism postulating an incorruptible "spiritual" world exempt from the permanence of change. Recognizing the transience and corruption of flesh, some of us, even some Quakers, find relief in the solace of an everlasting incorruptible deity, an attitude that leads such Quakers to ask that people in difficulty be held in an everlasting incorruptible Light, even though other Friends, perhaps most, interpret the Light as the effluence of Jesus's or God's relational, dynamic love. Yet some of us still feel comfortable with Plato's eternal Forms as the supposedly true reality and with Aristotle's unmoved mover setting everything in motion except itself—"world without end."

And that is fine—fine if *combined* with relation and process. Probably the most important thing offered to religious folks by Hartshorne's dipolar theology is the virtue of accepting contradiction, even regarding Plato. I learned this in my freshman year at Harvard in a wonderful year-long course on Plato and Aristotle taught by Raphael Demos (1892–1968), Alford Professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Civil Policy. This remarkable man emigrated from Constantinople to the United States at age 21, worked as a janitor at Harvard and ended with a Harvard Ph.D. He was closely associated with Alfred North Whitehead at Harvard, lecturing (as did Hartshorne) in Whitehead's course on general metaphysical problems; one scholar even claims that Demos considered Plato a disciple of Whitehead! I was enraptured by him, for I felt that I was not only learning (in the first semester) *about* Plato, but *from* him. I recorded in my diary on December 1, 1948, "Mr. Demos was provocative as usual: the end is not living, but thinking. Living is a means to the end of thought. Therefore, the biological necessities of life are inferior to and less important than the continuance of thought. We are led to believe

that a life of contemplation is the highest pinnacle that man can reach.” Obviously, I was coming under the spell of those immaculate Platonic Forms! But in the second semester, devoted to Aristotle, we learned that everything Plato said was wrong. Professor Demos was equally convincing. The invaluable lesson from this year of study was that contradiction is not only OK, but essential. Remember Einstein on the phenomena of light, quoted above. Robert Rubin, speaking at a New York University commencement, recounted, “In my sophomore year, I took Philosophy I from a wonderful, elderly professor named Raphael Demos. His whole point was to show that every assertion ultimately rested on a basic principle that could not be proven. It could only be assumed or believed. That conclusion . . . fundamentally shaped the way I’ve made decisions ever since.”³⁹ Demos himself, in the introduction to his major book on Plato, affirms, “Almost in every case, alternative conclusions are possible; and where Plato seems to be defending both sides of the question, I have often repeated his apparently inconsistent answers without trying to make them fit into a logical pattern. After all, there is no such thing as *the* meaning of Plato; his thought can be formulated in a variety of meanings, all of them often equally good. . . . [H]is mentality is intuitive rather than rational, suggestive rather than definitive.”⁴⁰ Yes, truly a disciple of Whitehead and also of Hartshorne!

Of course there are also people whose rejection of process and relation is definitive. They may be incapable of accepting the contradiction in Darwinism itself, which on the one hand reveals and explains the miracle of physical creativity while on the other hand it emphasizes the “evils” of an evolutionary process in which those who survive are stronger, faster, more resilient, and indeed often more violent than those who do not survive.

Others presume to overcome the contradiction by postulating that evolution is shaped by design. Maybe evolution propels life eventually to consciousness. Maybe it has a direction, a purpose. If so, it had an intelligent designer who gave it that direction and purpose.⁴¹ These people do not treat religion and science as separate forms of knowledge. Their problem is that their science is fantasy rather than truth. Of course they do not adhere to the whole of Ptolemaic astronomy; nevertheless, they favor its geocentricity insofar as they posit an evolution leading to *us*, whereas the truth is that we are *nothing* in cosmic terms. Cosmic evolution is “leading” (if we may even use that term) not to us, so far as we know, but rather to

the universe's eventual destruction, the return of all matter to the energy that preceded the Big Bang. Those who wish to learn more about this are advised to read the spine-chilling book called *The Life and Death of Planet Earth*.⁴² But there is no need to worry: the sun will not reach its giant stage and vaporize the earth for about another seven billion years, so one needn't lose much sleep on this account. Nevertheless, just in case someone is curious: the sun, as it depletes its hydrogen fuel, will become about two and a half times brighter than at present. Its diameter will completely fill the daytime sky and it will heat the earth to over 2065 degrees Celsius (3750 degrees Fahrenheit). Later, when its core temperature reaches 100 billion degrees, its helium center will explode. The heavens are already filled with other suns, originally like ours, that have gone through this process.

So where does this bring us? It brings us back to my assertion near the start that no religion is worthy of my respect and allegiance if it fails to achieve concord with scientific knowledge (including Darwinian complicity) — except that I'll now add: if it fails to achieve concord with *accurate* scientific knowledge, so far as we can be sure, since we, unlike Saint Paul, shall never understand fully. We do, however, now know in part. Listen again to Don Cupitt: "True religion is the practice of making eternal happiness out of the flux of ordinariness. . . . The more I understand that I am but part of the universal flux of everything, the more I am united with it. . . . We need to learn to love transience, because it's all there is, and we are part of it." We are part of an immense transient cosmos that has produced us by a miracle, perhaps by a mistake, a mistake or miracle never likely to be replicated. But here we are, within this precious meanwhile. The "creator" — God, if you please — is the entire business, the entire miraculous development, governed not by intelligent design but by the laws of physics that somehow allow the fittest among us sufficient stability to get up each morning — at least for now — and welcome life-giving sunshine. Surely that is sufficiently miraculous to convey what Don Cupitt calls "eternal happiness"! The power that this entire miraculous development should hold for all of us was well appreciated by the novelist George Eliot right after she read Darwin's *Origin of Species*. "To me," she wrote in a letter, "the Development Theory, and all other explanations of processes by which things come to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under the processes."⁴³

But what about Judeo-Christian morality? Where has that gone? What

about the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments? What about the mirage of a Personal God who is supposed to intervene to make things better when prayed to but who, alas, seems not to intervene very much to prevent the world's natural and manmade disasters? What about love? The Buddhists know how to answer. I quote: a mind "endowed with Wisdom . . . into the truths of life and the cosmos, . . . the more radiant it will be through the development of loving-kindness and compassion. Just think how such a . . . mind can be callous to the sufferings of its brethren and sisters. . . . Are you able to view others, animals as well as human beings, with more loving-kindness or goodwill, more compassion, more feeling of friendship and relationship as sentient beings sharing the same fate of old age, illness, and death?"⁴⁴ These are noble ethical sentiments for Christians as well as Buddhists. How much more should we be able to view others — animals, plants, and human beings — with increased loving-kindness when we understand, thanks to accurate science, that all things and all beings share the same fate of the entire cosmos's birth, growth, maturity, decline, and death? So if we worry about the Sermon on the Mount, the reply is that a religion in concord with accurate scientific knowledge is capable of being fully as ethical as the falsely anthropomorphic, geocentric, Aristotelian-Ptolemaic-Platonic religion that we have inherited. Renouncing uncompromising dualism, yet accepting dipolar contradiction, let us finally cease treating science and religion as separate forms of knowledge. Let us give thanks to, perhaps even worship, the miraculous creation that has placed us here, *temporarily*, as an infinitesimal part of a *temporary* cosmos — world *with* end.

The bright side to all this is well expressed at the conclusion of the marvelous play about atomic physics, *Copenhagen*:

MARGRETHE BOHR: And sooner or later there will come a time when all our children are laid to dust, and all our children's children.

NIELS BOHR: When no more decisions, great or small, are ever made again. When there's no more uncertainty, because there's no more knowledge.

MARGRETHE BOHR: And when all our eyes are closed, when even the ghosts have gone, what will be left of our beloved world? Our ruined and dishonoured and beloved world?

WERNER HEISENBERG: But in the meanwhile, in this most precious meanwhile, there it is. Preserved, just possibly, . . . by that final core of uncertainty at the heart of things.⁴⁵

Since nothing is permanent except change, let us, in answering the great questions: “Who are we?” “Where did we come from?” “Why are we here?” — let us find God in what we know, namely in scientifically based evolutionary thought. Let us acknowledge God as the supreme expression of tireless seeking. Let us join a Christian community that has successfully redeemed former “heretics” such as Copernicus, Bruno, Kepler, and Galileo, incorporating their scientific discoveries into its own worldview, by finally — belatedly — acknowledging in fullness the wisdom of perhaps the most significant “heretic” of all, Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882), despite his demotion of human beings from the center of God’s universe to merely an extremely recent development in terrestrial life. In the precious meanwhile in which we have been placed by a series of extraordinary (miraculous?) accidents, let us give thanks to the ever-evolving Spirit that has placed us self-consciously here, able to understand our own insignificance in a world *with* end.

Notes

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Epigraphs: The Heraclitus epigraph is perhaps a slightly exaggerated way of translating the more literal “All is flux; nothing is stationary” as reported by Aristotle in his *On the Heavens (De Caelo)*, III.1.18 (298b). Confirmation of Heraclitus’s view may be found at the very end of Plato’s *Cratylus* (439c), although Socrates disagrees, saying “For knowledge to exist, reality cannot be all motion and flux. . . . That’s Heraclitus’s view of the world, and I’m convinced it must be wrong.” Cratylus, seeing Socrates’s point, nevertheless is “still convinced that Heraclitus is right and that reality is a flux.” “You are still young, Cratylus,” Socrates replies. “After much thought you may change your mind.” But Socrates, of course, had not read Darwin!

The Bonhoeffer epigraph is from his letter of May 29, 1944 to Eberhard Bethge, published in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

(New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 311. Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging on April 9, 1945, owing to his complicity in the July 20, 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler.

The Edward O. Wilson epigraph is from his “Foreword” to *Evolution: The First Four Billion Years*, edited by Michael Ruse and Joseph Travis (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p. viii.

The Nikos Kazantzakis epigraph is from his letter to his wife Galatea dated December 28, 1922, printed in his *Επιστολές προς Γαλάτεια* (Athens: Difros, 1984), p. 134.

- 1 Milton K. Munitz, *Theories of the Universe from Babylonian Myth to Modern Science* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957), p. 183, citing Dorothea Waley Singer, *Giordano Bruno, His Life and Thought with Annotated Translation of His Work, On the Infinite Universe and Worlds* (New York: Schuman, 1950), p. 304.
- 2 Simplicio (note the name) in Galileo’s *Dialogue*. Munitz, p. 191, citing Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems — Ptolemaic and Copernican*, translated by Stillman Drake, foreword by Albert Einstein (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953), p. 320.
- 3 Albert Einstein, “Foreword” to Galileo Galilei, p. xv. To speak of mountains and craters on the moon was considered heretical because the heavenly bodies were meant to be perfectly circular, without bumps! The reason was that a loving unmoved mover (i.e., God) would naturally make all the heavenly bodies move in perfect circles because such movement simulates the motionless eternity of the unmoved mover itself, since circular rotation brings the body back to where it started; in a sense, therefore, no motion has occurred. All this is explained by Aristotle in, for example, his *On the Heavens* II, iii, 286a 10–20: “The activity of God is immortality, i.e., eternal life. Therefore the movement of that which is divine must be eternal. But such is the heaven, viz. a divine body, and for that reason to it is given the circular body whose nature it is to move always in a circle” (cf. I.iii and I.iv; II.xi, 291b 11–20). Thus when Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) discovered that Earth and the other planets traveled not in circular orbits but in elliptical ones (published in 1609 in his book *Astronomia Nova*), this was very disturbing to orthodox Christians. His explanation was that the heavenly bodies truly *strove* to move in circles but were prevented from doing so by their imperfections.
- 4 Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 15, citing Cardinal Paul Poupard, ed.,

- Galileo Galilei: Toward a Resolution of 350 Years of Debate, 1633–1983* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987) and Pope John Paul II, “Lessons of the Galileo Case,” *Origins* 22 (November 12, 1992): 372.
- 5 Cited in Tom Huston, “A Brief History of Evolutionary Spirituality,” *What Is Enlightenment Magazine*, issue 35, January–March 2007. Dyson (b. 1923) is a solid-state physicist famous for his work on quantum field theory. Moreover, in 2000 he received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.
 - 6 Munitz, pp. 106–111. The *Almagest* was first translated into Latin from Arabic by Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187). Ptolemy’s original Greek text was not printed until 1515, in Venice.
 - 7 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.vii.2, 1072a 25; cf. Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.v, 256a 15, 257a 25, 257b 20.
 - 8 Aristotle, *On the Heavens* II.iv, 286b 10; II.xiv, 296b 20, 296b 25.
 - 9 Aristotle, *On the Heavens* I.iii, 270b 1.
 - 10 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.vii.4, 1072b 1.
 - 11 Regarding Aquinas, see <http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture28b.html>. Regarding Augustine, it is important to note that he combines a Platonic/neo-Platonic belief in a divine eternal realm with an account of human history that recognizes change and development. He even hopes that Christians will pay attention to new scientific discoveries although, dualist that he is, he insists that they must not confuse “worldly learning” with learning “written for the good of their souls” — i.e., Scripture. On this, see his *De Genesi ad litteram* (“The Literal Interpretation of Genesis”), Book One, Chapters 19 and 20. Moreover, he seems to suggest that creation did not actually take place all at once, as described in Genesis, but did so only as a potentiality — a seed — that could be subsequently actualized over the course of history. This is not exactly Darwinism, but it does make classical Christian theology seem more open to evolutionary theory. See Ernan McMullin on “Augustine’s ‘Seed-Principles’” in his edited volume *Evolution and Creation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), pp. 11–16, a book that in general is very relevant to problems raised in this essay.
 - 12 For findings of the Hubble telescope, see Timothy Ferris, “Hubble Vision,” *National Geographic* 212(5), November 2007, p. 147.
 - 13 For dating of earthly creation (about 4.55 billion years ago), see Pascal Richet, *A Natural History of Time*, translated by John Venerella (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) and the review by Richard A. Fortey in *The Times Literary Supplement*, January 11, 2008, pp. 3–5. Fortey writes (p.

4): “In the process of the discovery of temporal history, time itself changed. An eternal world was prevalent in classical times, one governed by cyclical renewal. . . . This indefinite time was then replaced by a direct historical narrative, one that began at the Creation.y. . . . Time was now graspable, since there were only three measures of it: the brief span of human life; the time since the beginning of the world (and its anticipated end); and the infinite — the promise of immortality through salvation. This arrangement was curiously comforting, and one can understand why people might have been reluctant to let it go.” Fortey goes on to describe the role of geology, organic evolution, and especially radioactivity in enabling a more accurate knowledge of cosmological time.

- 14 *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809–1882*, edited by Nora Barlow (New York: Norton Library, 1969), pp. 87, 85, 86.
- 15 Arthur Stanley Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*. Swarthmore Lecture, 1929 (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 89, 87.
- 16 Eddington, pp. 39, 75, 82. It should be of interest to Friends that Eddington was among the staunchest defenders of Einstein’s work and a supporter of the theory of an expanding universe. In addition, he believed that Einsteinian relativity could lead to enhanced religious experience.
- 17 Gerald Kenway, *The Inner Light and Modern Thought* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), pp. 8–9.
- 18 Howard H. Brinton, *Creative Worship* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), pp. 73, 92, 90
- 19 Brinton, Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 173, pp. 33, 4, 28.
- 20 Don Cupitt, *Emptiness & Brightness* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2001), p. 115. Cupitt is partial to the Religious Society of Friends because it is “one of the best examples extant of the immediate sort of religion in which the vast symbolic apparatus of mediation has simply dropped away” (p. 12).
- 21 Winifred M. White, *Concern for Vision* (York: Quacks Books, 1993), pp. 21, 27, 29. Rev. Charles Earle Raven was a prominent Christian pacifist whose special interest was religion and science, as may be seen primarily in his Gifford lectures of 1951–52, published as *Natural Religion and Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953). Professor Whitehead, a British mathematician and philosopher, taught from 1924 to 1937 at Harvard, where he developed the metaphysical system known as process philosophy. See especially his book *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), based on his 1927–28 Gifford lectures, also his earlier metaphysical ideas in *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: Lowell

- Institute Lectures, 1925). Winifred White's essay was identified by Mary Ellen Chijioke thanks to a computer search linking "Society of Friends" and "process-relational theology."
- 22 Calvin W. Schwabe, *Quakerism and Science*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 343 (1999), p. 14.
 - 23 Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 309 (1993); p. 16. It is fair to note that the universalist perspective is vigorously opposed by John Punshon in his *Letter to a Universalist* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 285 [1989]).
 - 24 *Evolution: The First Four Billion Years*, edited by Michael Ruse and Joseph Travis, foreword by Edward O. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).
 - 25 <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/june99/barbour.html>. Ian Barbour must not be confused with his equally distinguished brother, Hugh Barbour, the Quaker historian who taught at Earlham College.
 - 26 The quotations from Einstein and Szent-Györgyi are both cited in Robert G. Neuhauser, *The Cosmic Deity: Where Scientists and Theologians Fear to Tread* (Lancaster, PA: Mill Creek Publishers, 2005), p. 25 and p. 1. For Saint Paul's famous statement, see 1 Corinthians 13.9, 11–12 RSV.
 - 27 Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 12.
 - 28 Langdon Gilkey, "God" in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, edited by Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 82. Cited in Darren J. N. Middleton, "Nikos Kazantzakis and Process Theology: Thinking Theologically in a Relational World," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1994):57–74, p. 61.
 - 29 John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd edition (London & New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 237.
 - 30 Melvin Keiser, *Inward Light and the New Creation*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 295 (1991), p. 15. Keiser continues: "Penington makes the original unfinishedness explicit in his first Quaker book: "When the Creation of God is finished, when the Child is formed in the light, and the life breathed into him, then God brings him forth into his holy Land" (Isaac Penington, *The Way of Life and Death* (1658), in *The Works of the Long-Mournful and Sorely-Distressed Isaac Penington* (London: Benjamin Clark, 1681), p. 10.
 - 31 Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938), pp. 262–263.
 - 32 Daniel A. Dombrowski, "Kazantzakis' Dipolar Theism," *Sophia* 24 (2), 1985:4–17, p. 8.
 - 33 Ken Wilbur, "Spectrum of Consciousness," p. 34. <http://www.upscale.utoronto.ca/Generalinterest/Harrison/Complementarity/CompCopen.html>

- 34 Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1967), pp. 127–128.
- 35 Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 89. For more on Hartshorne, Whitehead, pantheism, etc., see Peter Bien, “Quakerism and Process-Relational Theology: The Motion of the Cosmic Dance” in Peter Bien and Chuck Fager, editors, *In Stillness There Is Fulness: A Peacemaker’s Harvest: Essays and Reflections in Honor of Daniel A. Seeger’s Four Decades of Quaker Service* (Bellefonte, PA: Kimo Press, 2000), pp. 56–71.
- 36 Barbour, pp. 305, 306–307.
- 37 Barbour, pp. 308, 322, 324–325, 326, 329, 331.
- 38 Cupitt, pp. 30, 44, 120.
- 39 <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/rr3147.htm>.
- 40 Raphael Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato* (New York: Scribner’s, 1939), pp. viii, x.
- 41 Probably the best counterargument against those who believe in a “designer” is the claim by many scientists that if a divine designer had been involved the design would have been very much better than it actually is. For a recent treatment of the opposition to Darwin see the chapter “American Antievolutionism: Retrospect and Prospect” by Eugenie C. Scott in Ruse and Joseph Travis, *Evolution: The First Four Billion Years*, pp. 370–399. For a recent treatment of all the material covered in this essay, and especially of the growth of “Scientific Religion,” the “Death of God,” etc., see Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God* (New York: Knopf, 2009), especially Part II, “The Modern God (1500 CE to the Present),” pp. 161–317.
- 42 Peter D. Ward and Donald Brownlee, *The Life and Death of Planet Earth: How the New Science of Astrobiology Charts the Ultimate Fate of our World* (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2002), pp. 160–161 et passim. More on the end of the cosmos may be found in John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker, editors, *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000) and in John Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). The precise nature of universal collapse is of course speculative. Freeman Dyson nevertheless ventures that the end of the world “is either a universal collapse ending in a big crunch or a universal expansion growing steadily colder and emptier until all energy decays into low-grade radiation. The universe ends as a lifeless autoclave or as a lifeless deep freeze. Either way, the prospects for life are ultimately dismal” (review of Polkinghorne’s *The God of Hope and*

the End of the World in *The New York Review of Books* 49/5, March 28, 2002, p. 4). The distinguished scientist James Hansen explains things as follows in his *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2009), pp. 229–230: “Our sun is a very ordinary medium-size star. It is about 4.6 billion years old, still ‘burning’ hydrogen, producing helium by nuclear fusion in the sun’s core, releasing energy in the process. It is slowly getting brighter. As the hydrogen fuel is exhausted, leaving inert helium in the core, the sun will expand enormously to its Red Giant phase as it burns hydrogen in its outer shell. The expanding sun will toast and eventually swallow Earth about 5 billion years from now. . . . In one billion years the sun will be about 10 percent brighter than it is today . . . surely enough to . . . evaporate the oceans, and exterminate all life on the planet.”

- 43 Letter to Mme Bodichon, December 5, 1859, cited in Basil Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 238. Mentioned in a letter by M. J. Parkinson to the editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*, December 18 and 25, 2009, p. 6.
- 44 Venerable Phra Rajadhammanidesa, *Great Reply to Global Questions* (Bangkok: Buddhism Promotion Centre of Thailand, n.d.), pp. 20, 50.
- 45 Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), p. 94.

Quakerism and Process-Relational Theology

The Motion of the Cosmic Dance

Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development.

— Alfred North Whitehead

DAN SEEGER was refused CO status because he could not affirm belief in a Supreme Being—an action that led, as we all know, to the momentous *Seeger* case in the Supreme Court. But lack of this belief did not induce Dan to renounce religion. Logically, people who fail to believe in a Supreme Being ought to declare themselves atheists, and many do.¹ But Dan did not; in his own way he was, and is, a person of faith.

So the question becomes: How can someone who does not believe in a Supreme Being be a person of faith? An answer is provided by process-relational theology. Indeed, I would say that Dan is a process-relational theologian without knowing it.

It is strange that Friends are so ignorant concerning process-relational theology. When I inquired of Jerry Frost of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore if anyone had written extensively about this movement in relation to Quakerism, he replied, “I can’t believe that no one has done it.” Mary Ellen Chijioke, also at Swarthmore, did a computer search for writings containing subject headings for both “Society of Friends” and “process-relational theology.” She came up with only one item, a 44-page pamphlet by Winifred M. White entitled *Concern for Vision* (1993).² Then

she searched for writings linking “Society of Friends” and “Alfred North Whitehead,” the originator of process philosophy, and found nothing either in the library catalogue or in the past ten years of *Quaker Religious Thought*. My own search yielded only three pages in Ralph Hetherington’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Universalism and Spirituality* (1993).³ Yes, this ignorance is strange — very strange, indeed!

Process-relational theology ought to be a balm to Quakers because it posits a God that in many ways is congruent with Friends’ belief and, furthermore, is congruent with what science teaches us about the nature of being — namely, that everything moves, is in flux, is characterized by process. I imagine that one reason why the young Dan Seeger could not affirm belief in a Supreme Being is that such a Being seemed so incongruous with everything he had been taught by physics, his major at college.

Process-relational theology tells us that God really does not have to be a *Supreme* Being. Its approach is both negative and positive. Negatively, it works to undermine traditional Christianity’s dogma that God is complete, perfect, and immutable in all respects; positively, it works to articulate faith in a Being-in-Process. Let’s look at the negative portion first.

Alfred North Whitehead, whom I have already noted as the originator of process philosophy, “formulated his particular understanding of reality as a result of his work in physics and mathematics” (Suchocki 1982:5). Moreover, he announced his preference for a Galilean rather than an Augustinian Christianity, a faith that “dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and . . . [which] finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world” (Whitehead 1978:343). He saw this Galilean origin as far superior to what he terms the distortion perpetrated by official Christianity, declaring that when “the Western world accepted Christianity, . . . [the] Church gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar.” In sum, God was fashioned “in the image of an imperial ruler” (1978:342; cited by Middleton 1996:197).

Analyzing what he considers the orthodox view of God further, Whitehead (1928:343) identifies “the ruling Caesar, . . . the ruthless moralist, . . . [and] the unmoved mover” as three main strands of thought that have been emphasized. Process-relational theologians John Cobb and David Griffin formulate these unfortunate characteristics in more detail (1976:8–10), listing five connotations of the word God that, they insist, must be rejected:

1. *God as Cosmic Moralist.* At its worst this notion takes the form of the image of God as divine lawgiver and judge, who has proclaimed an arbitrary set of moral rules, who keeps records of offenses, and who will punish offenders. In its more enlightened versions, the suggestion is retained that God's most fundamental concern is the development of moral attitudes. . . .

2. *God as the Unchanging and Passionless Absolute.* This concept derives from the Greeks, who maintained that "perfection" entailed complete "immutability," or lack of change. The notion of "impasibility" stressed that deity must be completely unaffected by any other reality and must lack all passion or emotional response. The notion that deity is the "Absolute" has meant that God is not really related to the world. . . . These three terms — unchangeable, passionless, and absolute — finally say the same thing, that the world contributes nothing to God, and that God's influence upon the world is in no way conditioned by divine responsiveness to unforeseen, self-determining activities of us worldly beings. . . .

3. *God as Controlling Power.* This notion suggests that God determines every detail of the world. . . .

4. *God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo.* This connotation characterizes a strong tendency in all religions. It is supported by the three previous notions. The notion of God as Cosmic Moralist has suggested that God is primarily interested in order. The notion of God as Unchangeable Absolute has suggested God's establishment of an unchangeable order for the world. And the notion of God as Controlling Power has suggested that the present order exists because God wills its existence. In that case, to be obedient to God is to preserve the status quo. . . .

5. *God as Male.* . . . Not only have we regarded all three "persons" of the Trinity as male, but the tradition has reinforced these images with theological doctrines such as those noted above. God is totally active, controlling, and independent, and wholly lacking in receptiveness and responsiveness. Indeed, God seems to be the archetype of the dominant, inflexible, unemotional, completely independent . . . male.

Charles Hartshorne, Whitehead's most important disciple (and a student at Haverford College from 1915 to 1917 before his undergraduate ca-

reer was interrupted by the first world war) lists as follows the deficiencies of what he considers orthodox religion (1948:148-149):

Otherworldliness — the flight from the one task we surely face, that of human welfare on earth, to a questionable one, the winning of a heavenly passport.

Power worship — the divorce of the notion of supreme influence from that of supreme sensitivity . . .

Asceticism — the failure to genuinely synthesize “physical” and “spiritual” values . . .

Moralism — the notion that serving God is almost entirely a matter of avoiding theft and adultery and the like, together with dispensing charity, leaving noble-hearted courageous creative action in art, science, and statesmanship as religiously neutral or secondary.

These and other deficiencies, he concludes, “are all connected with the neglect of divine relativity.”⁴

With this statement, we begin to leave process-relational theology’s negative agenda, which aims to break down our faith in a monolithic *Supreme* Being, and to advance toward its positive agenda, which aims to shift our faith to a *Being-in-Process*. I hope that the relevance of this to Quakerism is already so evident that it does not need to be elaborated. Just to be sure, however, let me state what I trust will be obvious to many Friends—namely, that Quakerism, certainly in its liberal branch today and to some degree historically as well, (1) is open to “process”: the sense that revelation is ongoing as opposed to being encapsulated once and for all in Biblical texts, (2) is optimistic in its belief that the kingdom of heaven can be realized in the here and now, (3) is suspicious of authority other than that provided by Friends’ own collective discernment, and (4) is ready to come into *relation* with the divine because assured that the divine, too, is *relational*.

The last is the most important for process-relational theology. But it is connected with everything else, first because “relativity is . . . constitutive of existence, and not simply accidental to it,” existence being “through and through relational, with every actuality, whether a subatomic particle or God, demonstrating relational dynamics” (Suchocki 1982:9, 41), second because the Galilean tenderness and love so prized by Whitehead (and

Quakers) is logically impossible for the absolute Supreme Being, who by definition is impassive — i.e., not subject to emotion. As its name suggests, process-relational theology posits a God in flux as opposed to the static God of orthodox doctrine. Like the physics professors who taught Dan Seeger about motion and the biologists who taught him about evolution, process-relational philosophers, wishing to make religion reflect our contemporary scientific knowledge, take as their primary axiom that everything is fluid, advancing, changing. It is the “vicious separation of the flux from the permanence,” complains Whitehead (1978:346) that “leads to the concept of an entirely static God . . . in relation to an entirely fluent world . . .”

Before proceeding, let me interject that process-relational philosophers are not the only ones to take this view, nor were they the first to do so. There is “hardly a conception of God from Hegel onward,” claims the theologian Langdon Gilkey (1982:82; cited in Middleton 1994:61), “that is not dynamic, changing, and in some manner intrinsically related to the world of change. . . . God thus shares in the metaphysical categories of process: temporality, potentiality, change, relatedness, development, and dependence or passivity.”

Hartshorne comments à propos (1948:15):

Let us consider more closely the manner in which the great theologians of the past dealt with the absolute-relative problem. God, they said (not without misgivings, to be sure), is absolute and totally exempt from relations to the creatures. One might quote Philo, Aquinas, and many others. On the other hand, it was admitted that the absolute being or essence of God, what he is in himself, is unknown to us, apart from revelation. What we know rationally is only God as cause of the world. But how can we know God as causally related to the world, if he is not related at all, if he has no relative being?

To replace this “theism” of orthodox doctrine as well as the “pantheism” of heretical doctrine, process-relational theology offers “pantheism.” The God of theism “is impassive and immutable and without accidents” (Hartshorne 1948:44); he (always *he!*) is omniscient, omnipotent, complete in every way and therefore not at all dependent on us or anything else. Hartshorne calls theism “plainly an idealization of the tyrant-subject relationship” (1948:44). “In the pantheistic view,” on the other hand,

“all beings are internal to God’s experience, so that he literally shares their experiences with them” (Griffin 1990:190). In theism, God is not the created system in which we live, “but is in all aspects independent”; in pantheism, “God is merely the cosmos, in all aspects inseparable from . . . the system of dependent things.” Panentheism is the midpoint between the two, for it holds “that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items” (Hartshorne 1948:89).⁵ “A major feature of panentheism is its claim . . . that creatures have influence on God. While creatures cannot effect the destruction of God, they determine how much each new event adds to God’s concrete reality.” Panentheism holds that “because God can receive some benefit from our existence, there is an advantage in our existence. We decide something in God; namely, some aspect of the content of his knowledge. We perpetually create content not only in ourselves but also in God. And this gives significance to our presence in this world” (Sia 1985:87). We exist “to enhance, not simply to admire or enjoy, the divine glory. . . . According to Hartshorne, our immortality is God’s memory of us” (Sia 1985:104, 105).

I ventured above that Friends, despite some of the orthodox doctrines they inherited, have always believed that God is relational. This belief is supported with full philosophical elaboration by process-relational theology. Even more important, however, is process-relational theology’s discourse on the nature of love. We say that God is love. But how can love be practiced by a God who by definition is unaffected by anything or anyone? Traditional doctrine treats God as a father who, although having no feeling for his children, loves them “in that he gives good things to them” (Cobb and Griffin 1976:45)—i.e., immortality. Surely this is not the relational love that was exhibited by Jesus, who far from being impassive, responded feelingly to the woes of the oppressed. And as for us, how can we love a God who—being perfect, wholly content, needing nothing—must be indifferent to our love? Hartshorne (1948:58) sees this divine absoluteness as “a secret poison long working in religious thought and feeling, the poison of man’s wanting to be an ultimate recipient of value. Religion then becomes man’s self-service, not genuinely his service of God. For if God can be indebted to no one, can receive value from no one, then to speak of serving him is to indulge in equivocation.” So God, in order to love, to feel, to respond to our love, must be in need, in process

—in sum, incomplete, imperfect, no longer supreme. That is the bomb thrown into supremacist doctrine by panentheism and process-relational theology. More precisely, however, God must be both perfect and imperfect. At first this may seem impossibly illogical. But Whitehead asserts (1926:266-268):

A clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity. . . . In formal logic, a contradiction is the signal of a defeat: but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress towards a victory. This is one great reason for the utmost toleration of variety of opinion. . . . It is easy enough to find a theory, logically harmonious and with important applications in the region of fact, provided that you are content to disregard half your evidence.⁶

In any case, process-relational theology asserts multiple contradictions: that God is both Being and Becoming, both absolute and relative, both independent and dependent. To explain this, Hartshorne and other process thinkers, echoing Whitehead's dictum that "the nature of God is dipolar" (1926:345), admit that yes, God *is* perfect and absolute, in part. This pole is

God's unchanging essence, those characteristics which God always embodies. In this respect God is strictly eternal, unchanging, absolute, and infinite But this aspect of God is merely an abstraction from God. It is not concrete or actual The other pole is the concrete one. This refers to God as actual. . . . For example, God's omniscience belongs to his absolute character, his abstract essence. But to refer to God's omniscience is not to refer to his concrete experience . . . ; *what* God is concretely experiencing depends on what has happened. . . . In traditional terms, there were no "accidents" in God, i.e., no experiences which did not belong to his essence. In the dipolar view, there are accidents in God. For example, *that* God will experience every event is essential, but all those experiences that God actually has are accidental, i.e., they are not part of his essence. . . . In terms of this doctrine of God, one can say that God is constantly changing. For the content of his concrete experience is constantly changing, since new things are always happening in the world, which he knows infallibly. God as concrete is perfectly relative, affected by

everything. . . . [H]e does something new in each moment, responding to the world's decisions and then influencing it in line with his eternal purpose. (Griffin 1990:181–183.)

This may sound unnecessarily complicated. Nevertheless, what it means is really very simple: that God, although obviously absolute in part, is also relational — capable of feeling, of being affected. And what this means is that a God who, as we hope, is the God of Love, is actually capable of love. The dipolar God of process-relational theology is not the ruling Caesar, the unmoved mover, or the ruthless moralist. As Whitehead reminds us, “Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals. It does not look to the future; for it finds its own reward in the immediate present” (1978:343). The dipolar God is consistent with Christianity's Galilean origin, the aspect that dwells upon the tender elements in the world that slowly and in quietness operate by love, and that finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world.

This leads us to process-relational theology's Christology. For many, throughout the history of Christianity, Christ compensated for the defects of God-the-Father-as-Supreme-Being, enabling the faithful to feel truly connected with a divine “person.” In Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, this role has been played as well by the Blessed Virgin and the saints, so much so that one wonders if a supposedly monotheistic faith has perhaps become polytheistic. Quakers of course do not indulge in a cult of either the Virgin or the saints, but they do (or at least did) have a close relationship with Christ, who, after all, is the “Light” that Friends have been invoking for 350 years.⁷

The Christology of process-relational theology is compatible with the Christology of those who, like David Griffin (1990:12), believe that “Christian faith . . . is possible apart from belief in Jesus' resurrection in particular and life beyond bodily death in general.” Some Friends who agree with Griffin have reduced Jesus to nothing more than a moral teacher on a par with other great moral teachers inside or outside of Christianity. But others who discount the Pauline/Augustinian orthodoxy of a resurrected Lord are nevertheless drawn to what they call the Inward Light, which in theological language is the immanent Christ: the “light, seed, or grace [by which] God brings about . . . salvation” (Barclay 1967:106)⁸ — the essential presence of Love that is panentheistically inherent in all the uni-

verse yet, by virtue of being a “person,” is distinguished from the universe. Those who reduce Jesus to a moral arbiter make the mistake of equating moralism with religion whereas those who invoke the eternal Christ quite properly include a vigorous moral element within their larger metaphysical vision. Indeed, process Christology allows the eternal Christ to be as Galilean as the historical Jesus, since it insists that what is incarnate in Jesus is not supremacy, immutability, etc., but rather “God as creative love” (Cobb and Griffin 1976:108): God as tender, sensitive, and even vulnerable. Indeed, the immanent Christ who is the Inward Light cannot be an invulnerable power, because he is relational. If God is in Jesus, “then God reveals through him that every sin is a sin felt by God . . . ; every pain is felt by God, and is therefore God’s pain. . . . In a process universe, . . . God not only affects the world, but the world affects God” (Suchocki 1982:109–110,125). “Religion,” says Whitehead (1926:270), “will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development.” Process-relational theology goes one step further and declares, in effect, that God, too, cannot regain his/her/its old power until he/she/it can face change, can grow, can be affected by pain and joy. By conceiving the essence of Being as process, this theology allows people like Dan Seeger to affirm their faith at the same time that they deny any allegiance to the monarch/imperial ruler/unmoved mover who is so impossible for any scientific mind.

In his valedictory to Pendle Hill (1999), Dan ventured to predict that the twenty-first century would involve a “search for a spiritual vision” and that Quakerism “can speak powerfully to [our] contemporary dilemma.” Here are the reasons he adduced:

First, Quakerism is clear that the meaning of our existence lies in something outside of ourselves . . . in a principle of Truth which seeks to make itself known to us. . . .

At the same time Quakerism avoids the flaw of much traditional religion, which has tended to assume that our grasp of the foundational truths by which we must live is a static thing, that the faith which must sustain us has already been fully revealed for all time. . . .

For Friends, our faith is not akin to clinging to a shrine; rather it is an endless pilgrimage of the heart. . . . So our faith pilgrimage in-

volves motion, but it is orderly motion; it is not chaotic, random, or discontinuous. In other words, this motion towards Truth is like a dance. The great breakthrough that Quakerism represents is that, with our special attitude toward Scripture and ecclesiastical authority, and with our emphasis on living spiritual experience, we are prepared to participate in the motion of the cosmic dance.

I conclude that Dan Seeger, like so many other liberal Friends, is a process-relational theologian without knowing it. Like him, process-relational theology believes that revelation is ongoing, that the kingdom can be realized in the world of flux, and that motion and creativity are more important than power.

Notes

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to Darren J. N. Middleton of Texas Christian University and to Douglas Gwyn, formerly of Pendle Hill, for reading a draft of this essay and commenting upon it, the first from a favorable perspective, the second from a very critical one.

- 1 A recent example is the Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg. In his essay "A Designer Universe?" (1999:46), he writes: "I'd guess that if we were to see the hand of the designer anywhere, it would be in the fundamental principles, the final laws of nature. . . . We don't know the final laws yet, but as far as we have been able to see, they are utterly impersonal and quite without any special role for life. There is no life force. As Richard Feynman has said, when you look at the universe and understand its laws, 'the theory that it is all arranged as a stage for God to watch man's struggle for good and evil seems inadequate.'" Of course, this sort of reasoning is itself inadequate for people of faith. As Douglas Gwyn commented to me, "The quote from Steven Weinberg is typical of what makes me impatient with scientists making statements on religion. Scientific method is not going to see the transcendent dimension in what it objectifies."
- 2 *Concern for Vision* is not primarily about process-relational theology. It is about Winifred White's systematic attempt to discover a liberal faith "beyond the Bible" (1993:15), a faith consistent with the theory of evolution. In her quest she grazed against process-relational theology here and there. She notes, for example, that Charles Raven "set out the theory that God suffers because his people misuse their freedom" (1993:21), and that

Teilhard de Chardin “argued that the world was ‘in process of becoming’ and that Christ was Evolver rather than Redeemer” (1993:25). In Arthur Peacocke’s books, she found references to process-relational theology that, she says, “sounded promising” (1993:26). She even attended lectures at the University of Birmingham by Santiago Sia, whom I quote in this essay. And she decided that the ideas of Whitehead were “very much in line with some Quaker perceptions. Man is always on the road to becoming, and God is involved in that process” (1993:27). She also read Sia’s book on Hartshorne (1985), noting that “Hartshorne’s particular contribution to the debate was the idea that God should be considered as having two aspects — the term he used was ‘bi-polar’” (1993:28). “So,” she concluded, very perceptively, “Process-relational theology may be important for many who may never hear its name mentioned” (1993:29).

- 3 Hetherington is helpful in invoking Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 202), Bishop of Lyons, who “spoke of the world being made unfinished, and that it was our responsibility to complete it” (1993:16). He also devotes three pages to panentheism and “God as process,” concluding that “George Fox’s statement that there is ‘that of God in everyone’ is pantheistic” (1993:22). Thus he, too, like Winifred White, although not writing primarily about process-relational theology, grazes it here and there and finds it entirely compatible with Quakerism (at least in its universalist aspect). Regarding Irenaean Christianity, I would like to add, drawing from John Hick (1977: 214–215) that instead of presenting the fall of Adam as “an utterly malignant and catastrophic event,” as does the Augustinian tradition, the Irenaean pictures it as “something that occurred in the childhood of the race, an understandable lapse due to weakness and immaturity . . . And instead of the Augustinian view of life’s trials as a divine punishment for Adam’s sin, Irenaeus sees our world of mingled good and evil as a divinely appointed environment for man’s development towards the perfection that represents the fulfilment of God’s good purpose for him.”
- 4 Of course some will agree with Douglas Gwyn that the view of orthodox Christianity elaborated by Whitehead, Cobb, Griffin, and Hartshorne is “highly caricatured.” But even Gwyn concedes that perhaps “the Aristotelian systematizing of theology creates an absolutist and noninteractive conception of God.”
- 5 Cf. Hetherington (1993:21): “In [John Robinson’s] book *Truth Is Two-Eyed* [1979:26] he wrote: ‘If one wanted a label for this way of looking at the world, the best one is probably “Panentheism,” whose definition is the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole of the Uni-

- verse so that every part of it exists in him but (as against pantheism), that his being is more than, and not exhausted by, the Universe.' Pantheism thus stands between theism on the one hand and pantheism on the other, the latter simply stating that God and Nature are identical. This view has an important bearing on suffering and evil. The pantheistic view suggests that God suffers with those who suffer and shares their pain and grief." Douglas Gwyn expresses a dissenting view when he argues that "dialectical theology gets at the structure of relationship between God and the world without resorting to the metaphysical speculation of pantheism."
- 6 Hartshorne (1948:150) turns the entire issue upside down by asserting naughtily that it is the wholly absolute Supreme Being that is a contradiction in terms, "since relativity is as truly good as nonrelativity, each in its proper role. . . ."
 - 7 See, for example, Barclay's meditation on being "reborn by the light of Christ in the heart" (1967:106).
 - 8 Cf. Hetherington (1993:19): "The divine source has many names—the Logos, the Cosmic Christ, the Christ Reality, the Buddha Nature, the Brahman, the Tao. For Quakers it is the Inward Light. The second [proposition] of Robert Barclay might be rephrased to assert that there is an indissoluble link between the Inward Light and the Eternal Christ, this being one of the many names for the divine source."

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Words, Wordlessness, and the Word

Silence Reconsidered from a Literary Point of View

*Blessed be the man
who in this confusion,
this verbal muteness,
utters a truthful word or two.
Yet even more blessed be the man
who, wresting his meaning
from the bosom of silence,
acknowledges the perfection
of Unutterableness.*

— S. S. Harkianakis

*“I love to feel where words
come from.”*

— Chief Papunehang of the
Delaware Indians, after hearing
John Woolman pray in English.

IT MAY SEEM CHURLISH to discuss silence at length.¹ What can possibly be *said* about it? Most Quakers probably feel that silence needs to be experienced, not discussed, and that those who have known the spiritual power of a gathered meeting understand silence in their hearts as opposed to their minds.

All this is true up to a point. Yet early Friends were not loath to discuss silence: to defend it, justify it, explain it, even to understand it in their minds. Listen, for example, to Robert Barclay in his *Apology*:²

Nothing could be more unlike the natural will and wisdom of human beings than this silent waiting. . . . For when people are thus

gathered together, they do not merely meet to hear men, or depend upon them, but they are inwardly taught to dwell with their minds on the Lord and to wait for his appearance in their hearts. . . . Thus the forwardness of the spirit of man is prevented from mixing itself with the worship of God. The form of this worship is completely naked and devoid of all outward and worldly splendor. Any occasion for the superstitious or idolatrous exercise of man's wisdom has no place here.

Barclay's point is that silence subtracts from worship the intervention of the human will and all other forms of idolatry, enabling the worshiper, as he says, to be "actuated by God's light and grace in the heart," and "not merely to hear men, or depend upon them."

This is an understanding that should be as valid for Quakers today as it was in the seventeenth century when Friends were much more obsessed than we are with the alleged idolatry of Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and non-conformist Protestants. Indeed, when we gather in our silent meetings we still try, following Barclay's advice, "to abstain from one's own thoughts and to quiet the imagination. All of the mind's own labors and the roving of the imagination *on things that are essentially good as well as things that are evil* must be brought to a halt." If this is successful we speak of a gathered meeting because — again to quote Barclay — our soul, being "gathered out of all of its own thoughts and workings," is able "to possess and enjoy the Lord quietly and silently."

All that is fine. But a great deal has happened since the seventeenth century. Our religious and secular conditions are different, our patterns of thought are different, and so, perhaps, are our metaphysics, if we have any. We may still appreciate the emptying that occurs in a gathered meeting, but are we so sure any more about the meaning of a phrase such as "to possess and enjoy the Lord"?

So, while honoring the older understandings of silence, as well as the insistence that silence must be experienced to be understood, I nevertheless want to reconsider silence from a contemporary point of view. One of the major differences between our mentalities and those of the seventeenth century is that now we tend to place language at the center of every epistemological discussion — i.e., every discussion of the nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge. The whole purpose of the epistemologi-

cal beliefs and practices of early Friends was to remove language as a factor in human knowledge of the divine (although Friends employed a great many words to do this). I am suggesting that the divine may best be understood not by removing language but rather by investigating language's nature. And what better way can this be done than through literature?

One of the characters in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is an enigmatic Englishwoman named Mrs. Moore. She is old, tired, ordinary, and does not want to be in India. But she is tolerant of the Hindus, although at the same time she does not question her Anglican upbringing. In the end, after she dies, she becomes a kind of sibyl, a goddess even, breaking down barriers between English Christians and Indian Hindus or Muslims. Forster uses her to advance his novel from a clever examination of cultural differences to something much deeper: a mystical investigation of the nature of reality. He does this by making Mrs. Moore go on an excursion to a touristic site, a group of caves. These caves are nothing special, except that they have a peculiar echo, and even that is nothing special. "Whatever is said," the narrator tells us, "the same monotonous noise replies. . . . 'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum,' or 'ou-boum.'" But then he adds, broadly hinting at what is going to affect Mrs. Moore so devastatingly: "Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce 'boum.'" When Mrs. Moore enters the cave, we read:

[T]he echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life. . . . [I]t had managed to murmur, "Pathos, piety, courage — they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same — "ou-boum." If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present, and to come, for all the misery men must undergo . . . — it would amount to the same . . . [And] suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be Light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum." Then she was terrified.

What has terrified Mrs. Moore so exceedingly (or should we say, perhaps, has "made her quake"?) is that she has discovered a realm beyond lan-

guage, a realm that, because it refuses to make distinctions, undermines her previous religiosity, her Christian value system that is based precisely on distinctions between good and evil, Christ and Satan. Robert Barclay, too, must have had some intimations of the distinctionless nature of deity when, as we saw earlier, he admonished Friends in meeting to bring to a halt the roving of the imagination on things that are essentially good as well as things that are evil; but Forster's story, which draws on Hindu teaching, does this much more strongly and specifically. His "boum" or "bou-oum," or "ou-boum" is the Hindu mystic syllable *Om*, which may be analyzed into the elements a + u + m, which in turn transcend three-fold time — past, present, future — and lead to the fourth state, which is without an element. This alone is real. "He who utters the single syllable *Aum*," declares the Bhagavad-gita, "goes to the highest goal." He does so by way of a journey that the Mandukya Upanishad analyzes into the three steps of waking, sleeping, and deep-sleep that lead to knowledge of the "inexpressible Absolute" — the fourth state: silent, beyond language. We are left with the lovely paradox expressed by the Chandogya Upanishad as follows: "As all leaves are held together by a spike, so all speech is held together by *Om*." Poor Mrs. Moore, not being even a Quaker, much less a Hindu, and armed with nothing more than her Anglican form of "poor little talkative Christianity," can only feel undermined by *Om*, which seems to her to rob the world of value. How can she know that terror for some may be awe for others, or that wordlessness, the repository of speech, may be the precondition of meaning?

To pass beyond her terror we need Samuel Beckett as a guide, for he brilliantly employs words to examine wordlessness, and wordlessness to enhance the value of words. His novel *Murphy*, published in 1938, presents a character, Murphy himself, who might almost have been reading Robert Barclay, for Murphy's major desire is (to use Barclayan language again) to halt the roving imagination of the natural man. Said in Beckett's way, Murphy does not want to do, he wants simply to be. He does not go to Friends' meeting to accomplish this, since he is a seedy solipsist rather than a Quaker, but he has equivalent rituals. As the novel opens, he has tied himself into a rocking chair in his dingy apartment and is increasing the rock in the expectation of transcending threefold time — of rocking himself not only out of the body but out of all the self-workings and motions of his mind, in things that are essentially good as well as things

that are evil. But the telephone rings! Beckett's point, pursued with hilarious ingenuity throughout the remainder of the novel, is that whereas our noblest effort is to escape contingency, we are condemned ineluctably to remain the playthings of contingency, the only escape being death. In his masterpiece, the trilogy of novels called *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, which I am going to save for the end of this essay, he clearly views words themselves as instruments of contingency, silence as the precondition of transcendence; but he also understands, as did the Upanishads, that all speech is "held together" by silence. Beckett's debt to Hindu thought is already clear in *Murphy*, whose sixth chapter is devoted to steps toward transcendence that pick up language and ideas from the Upanishads.³ To be sure, Murphy's absolute is not a traditional Christian one; it is too influenced not only by Hinduism but also by the Nietzschean reevaluation of all values that replaced Being with Becoming, not to mention its corollary, the subsequent displacement of Newton by Einstein. Yet Murphy in his own way, a very twentieth-century one, is waiting upon the Lord.

Is this distinction between speech and silence really so esoteric as it seems when presented through Hinduism? Is it really so philosophically modern as it seems when presented through Beckett's *Murphy*? I think neither, because we find the same distinction in the tradition of the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. To illustrate this, let me present another story:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. . . . And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." . . . And God called the firmament Heaven. . . . And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. (Genesis 1:1-6, 8-10, RSV)

What this lovely story tells us is that God, in order to create the world, reached out (as it were) from a distinctionless, timeless, shapeless, placeless state of Being in order to *do* something, and that the realm of Doing involved making distinctions of time, shape, and place in the hitherto formless void, distinctions that were then ratified by language, by naming: He called the light Day, the darkness he called Night, and so forth. The centrality of naming in this creative process is confirmed in the second version of the Genesis story, the one in which Adam is created not last but first. Note what happens next: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field” (Genesis 2:18–20, RSV). Here we see what we all know from experience: that human beings, formed after all in God’s image, imitate the divine process of naming by which distinctions are ratified. Thus the infant gradually learns to separate the light from the darkness, its mother’s breast from its mother’s hand or mouth, its mother’s smooth face from its father’s hairy face, the waters from the waters (urine from milk), and then, like God, like Adam, the infant names things: mama, papa, wee-wee. But there is also an immense difference. The child eventually becomes aware that it, too, has a name, even if only “Baby” at first. And it calls itself by that name, thus separating itself from its parents and siblings. The immense difference lies in the fact that God does not do this for himself. God does not have a name because God (at least in the Judeo-Christian tradition that we inherit) is distinctionless and bodiless—omnipresent, eternal, without place, shape, time, or boundaries⁴—whereas a name, as we have seen, serves to separate, to distinguish, to assign boundaries to something, giving it a body in effect. Furthermore, God can no more be internally fragmented than cut off from the created world. But when we name ourselves, we split ourselves in two. The moment we become conscious of ourselves as distinct and ratify that self-consciousness by imposing a name, we divide the “I” into an “I” and a “me.” When baby says “Baby wee-wee,” baby as formerly unified subject has now established a relationship with itself as object—it should properly say “*me* wee-wee” rather than “*I* wee-wee.” God, who by definition is unified, cannot do

this and therefore cannot have a name; God is what Beckett calls “the unnamable.”

Thus when Moses wants to learn God’s name so that he can talk to the polytheistic Israelites about the one true God, the Lord replies, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14, RSV). God refuses to assume a true name, i.e., a noun — refuses, in linguistic jargon, nominalization. In the first half of the same verse the Lord gives this non-name as “I AM WHO I AM,” which in the Hebrew original also means “I will be what I will be.” God cannot be limited via tenses any more than via the boundaries established by nominalization. Instead, the Lord asserts beingness, transcending both space and threefold time.⁵ In the next verse, still playing it would seem with poor Moses, the Lord employs the ineffable Tetragrammaton Y-H-W-H, from which we get the supposed name conjecturally pronounced Yahweh. This is a “supposed name” because even the Tetragrammaton is not a nominal form but a verbal one, connected once more with “to be.” The pronunciation is conjectural since “the use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom He had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era.” Instead, vowel signs were attached “indicating that in [the Tetragrammaton’s] place should be read the Hebrew word *Adonai* meaning ‘Lord’ (or *Elohim* meaning ‘God’). The ancient Greek translators substituted the word *Kyrios* (Lord) for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word *Dominus*.” The King James Version, with few exceptions, renders the Tetragrammaton by the English words LORD or GOD printed in capitals, a practice followed by the Revised Standard Version, too, as a way of recognizing, as the editors state, that the use of any proper name for the one and only God “is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.”

Hence the distinction between naming and namelessness, and more generally between speech and silence, may be found in the Hebrew Testament. What about the Christian Testament? Here, the central text is the famous Prologue to John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . [A]ll things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 3–4, 14, RSV). It is noteworthy that John’s Greek starts with the exact

phrase, ἐν ἀρχῇ (in the beginning), that also starts Genesis in the Septuagint Greek translation, which is the version of the Hebrew Testament that John, a Hellenized Jew, would have known. In other words, John's Gospel begins with the same transition from Being to Doing that is the initial subject of Genesis. John explains the transition by assigning Doing to the Word — i.e., to the Son as opposed to God the Father. But he then complicates everything by saying at the same time, “the Word was God.” Hence “the Prologue announces clearly the two stark paradoxes of the Christian faith: (a) the trinitarian paradox of the relationship between the Son and the Father, distinct yet one in the unity of the Godhead, the paradox of distinction-within-unity; and (b) the paradox of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh.”

Needless to say, this short text has given rise to endless controversy. What precisely did John mean by the term *logos*, which our Bible translates as “Word”? Where did he find the term, primarily in Hellenistic sources or in Jewish ones? More importantly, at least for our own consideration: Is the Word to be connected chiefly with the Doing aspect of Godhead or with the Being aspect? If the former, it will be connected with words — with naming, with speech — whereas if the latter, it must somehow be connected with silence and be similar to the mystic syllable *Om* in serving as the precondition of speech, so that we could say “As all leaves are held together by a spike, so all words are held together by the Word.”

I shall have to rehearse some of the controversy occasioned by John's term before proceeding to George Fox's distinction between words and the Word.

* * *

Classical Greek usage of the term *logos* does not help us, because although the primary meaning was “speech,” the term also meant the precondition of speech, namely “reason” — hence our English derivatives “logic” and “logical.” The standard Greek-English dictionary, Liddell and Scott's, begins its entry as follows: “*Logos*, the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known; also the inward thought or reason itself, so that *logos* comprehends both the Latin *ratio* and *oratio*.” Liddell and Scott end their long entry by noting that usage in the Christian Testament comprises both of the above general significations, which the Fathers distinguished as “uttered words” on the one hand and

“reason inward-placed” on the other.⁶ It is this inward signification that seems eventually to have reached John, whether directly through Hellenistic sources or indirectly through Jewish ones, or both.

In the pagan sources, the internalization may have begun as far back as around 500 B.C. with Heraclitus, although scholars differ in their interpretation of his use of the term *logos* in key assertions such as “Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it. . . . That is to say, although all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be quite without any experience of it.” The general view, however, is that Heraclitus, striving to “explain the continuity amid all the flux that is visible in the universe, . . . resorted to *logos* as the eternal principle of order.” Stoicism, which flourished in the third century B.C., popularized the concept of God as the *logos spermatikos*, the “seminal Reason of the universe.” But the figure closest to John in this evolution was Philo Judaeus, the Graeco-Judaic philosopher who flourished in Alexandria, Egypt, *circa* A.D. 40, about a half-century before John’s Gospel was published. A neo-Platonist, he continued Plato’s notion, expressed most famously in Diotima’s speech in the Symposium, that elements of the sensible world are but images of eternal, unchanging Ideas that are the true reality — ideas that are always “one in form”: “absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality.” Combining this with Stoic thought, Philo posited the *logos* of God as the divine prototype of which the created universe is but a copy. But he also treated the *logos* as the instrument of creation — i.e., as the doer.

The parallels between Philo and John are striking. Nevertheless, most scholars now argue that “these parallels can be accounted for by the view that they are due to common dependence on the Hebrew Testament” — more specifically, that both Philo and John drew from Wisdom Literature: the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, a text actually not written by Solomon in Hebrew but most likely “composed in Greek by an unknown Hellenistic Jew, probably at Alexandria during the latter part of the first century B.C.,” a hundred years or so before John’s Gospel and perhaps fifty or sixty before Philo.⁷ We find *logos* treated here primarily as the intermediary between God and the world, the doer of God’s will whether that will be creative as in chapter 9, “O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who has made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom has formed man” (9:1–2, RSV) or destructive as in chapter 18: “thy all-powerful word leaped

from heaven . . . into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stem warrior carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command” (18:15–16, RSV). But we should note as well that *logos* (word) and *sophia* (God’s eternal wisdom) are commonly paired as synonyms, as in the passage from chapter 9 just quoted. This pairing eases the assimilation of *logos* in Wisdom Literature to the Platonic sense of the word as participating in God’s eternal, unchanging Being. Thus Saint Athanasius, for example, campaigning in the fourth century against the Arian heresy that considered the Son not eternal and therefore not God by nature but a changeable creature, retorted that the Word of God “endureth for ever, not changed. . . . For it was fitting, since God is one, that his Image should be one also, and his Word one and his Wisdom one.”

The issues raised here were discussed in post-Biblical theology long before Fox and others picked them up in the seventeenth century. The early Church Father Tertullian, who flourished around A.D. 200, equated the Word with Reason — *i.e.*, with Being instead of Doing. (Here and elsewhere, I use a capital R for Reason as signifying the divine rather than the human mind.) Tertullian argued that speech has its ground in Reason, is included in it, and that Reason therefore precedes speech:

For before all things God was alone—being in Himself and for Himself universe, and space, and all things. . . . Yet even not then was He alone; for He had with Him that which He possessed in Himself, that is to say, His own Reason. For God is rational, and Reason was first in Him. . . . This Reason is His own Thought, which the Greeks call λόγος, by which term we also designate Word [Sermonen]. . . . God had not Word [*Sermonalis*] from the beginning, but He had Reason [*Rationalis*] even before the beginning; because also Word itself consists of Reason, which it thus proves to have been the prior existence as being its own substance. . . . [Although God had not yet sent [out] His Word [*Sermonem*], He still had Him within Himself . . . as He silently planned and arranged within Himself everything which He was afterwards about to utter through His Word.

Saint Athanasius, whom we have already encountered rebutting the Arians in the fourth century, asserted, as Fox was to assert thirteen centuries later, that “the word of a man is composed of syllables and only signifies the speaker’s will, and then is over and lost . . . [whereas] God’s Word is

one and the same and, as it is written [Psalm 119:89], the Word of God endureth for ever, not changed.” So, the distinction between words and the Word can be attested in post-Biblical discussion. And so can the distinction between words and silence, with the implication that the Word should be identified with silence. If nothing else, when the Word was linked with Doing rather than Being, i.e., with speech rather than Reason, it was sometimes thought to issue from God’s silence. We have already seen this in Tertullian. Similarly, the Apostolic Father Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in the first century, wrote that God “manifested Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son — who, being His Word, came forth out of the silence into the world.” This being the case, if we then link the Word with Being rather than Doing, it follows that the Word itself — the Johannine Logos — becomes paradoxically silent. Compare the German mystical theologian Meister Eckhart (*circa* 1260–*circa* 1329): “I talk of the purity of the divine nature — that brightness of the divine nature which is ineffable. God is a Word but an unexpressed Word. . . . Saint John said: ‘In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God and the Word was God’ (Jn. 1:1). Now then, whoever should hear this Word in the Father — where it is completely still — must be quite still and cut off from all images and forms.” It is worth adding that, outside of Christian speculation, the rabbinic exegesis of Genesis 1–3 maintains that before God said “Let there be light” there was silence. Also, we know from Hellenistic papyri, and from pagan hymns to silence, that in the Greek milieu in which John existed “silence was a mark of the *Deus absconditus* [the hidden God].”

* * *

With the startling paradox in mind that the Word may be silent, we should be ready to listen to George Fox. The point I have been trying to make is that Fox did not invent anything new; rather, he picked up an existing line of interpretation. The difference between Fox and his predecessors is that he placed this interpretation at the very center of Christian faith and practice.

Fox follows John’s Prologue in identifying the Word with Christ. Moreover, he repeatedly distinguishes the Word from words, especially from the words of the Scriptures. Thus in the declaration drawn up for the governor and assembly at Barbados in 1671 Fox speaks of the Scriptures as “the words not *word* of God.” His *Journal* is characteristically pugna-

cious on this issue: “They asked me whether the Scripture was the word of God. I said, God was the Word and the Scriptures were writings; and the Word was before writings were, which Word did fulfil them.” “Many priests that came to me would be . . . saying the Scriptures were the Word, and I asked them how many gods there were, and they said, ‘One.’ I asked them whether God was not the Word, and they would say, ‘Yes.’ And so I let them see how they did confound themselves.” Note the similarity to Tertullian’s view, cited earlier, that Reason precedes speech and that speech has its ground in Reason. Furthermore, note the reiteration of Athanasius’s view, also cited earlier, that since God is one his Word is one — i.e., unified and unchanging — as compared to the words of a human being, which are composed of syllables and only signify the speaker’s will, and then are over and lost. Another well-known pronouncement in Fox’s *Journal* hammers the point home: “[T]he many languages began at Babel and they set them a-top of Christ the Word when they crucified him. And John the divine, who preached the Word that was in the beginning, said that the beast and the whore have power over tongues and languages, and they are as waters. . . . And Peter and John, that could not read letters, preached the word, Christ Jesus, which was in the beginning before Babel was.”

For Fox, then, words are inauthentic. Even the memorable words of poor little talkative Christianity from “Let there be Light” to “It is finished” are inauthentic compared with the unified, enduring, unfragmented Reason or Light or Life or Word that John says not only “was with God” but “was God.” Early Friends were obsessed with the inauthenticity of Babel, which for Barclay, we should remember, projected nothing more than the natural will and wisdom of human beings. Friends defended silent waiting as a means to enable the worshiper to be actuated by God’s light by avoiding the idolatry of self-worship. What we can now add to this understanding, by virtue of linguistic analysis, is the further understanding that silent waiting is not just a means but also an end. Why? *Because in abandoning the inauthenticity of language, the silent worshipers in a Friends’ meeting ritualistically participate in Godhead.*

Naming divides. Grammar divides, distinguishing subject from object, masculine from feminine, past from present, even the self-consciously perceived “me” from the perceiving “I.” But silence unifies. Barclay speaks of the soul in a successful Friends’ meeting for worship being gathered out

of all its own thoughts and workings. Should we not also speak of each isolated soul in a successful meeting being gathered *in to* an indivisible communality, a oneness possible only because words are absent? In the meeting's silence we enter E. M. Forster's cave with Mrs. Moore, hear the mystical syllable *Om*, and are not terrified. In the meeting's silence, we flee Doing and enter Being, rocking ourselves like Beckett's Murphy out of the contingency of threefold time. In the meeting's silence we ascend Diotima's Platonic ladder to unchanging Ideas that are always one in form.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of this linguistic analysis is that it works just as well for the Nietzschean concept of Godhead as for the Platonic. Fox follows Saint John — who follows Wisdom Literature, and Philo perhaps, and the Stoics, and of course Plato himself — in positing the Godhead as Being rather than Becoming, as the Form of Forms, unchanging, unified, inactive in itself although containing the potential for action. And this is probably the way most of us, too, picture divinity. But most of modern philosophy, not to mention modern science, disagrees.⁸ The modern view of “true reality” favors process — i.e., Becoming over Being — a tumult of non-Newtonian motion, nothing but forms becoming and crumbling into the fragments of a new Becoming. Nevertheless, this modern Godhead still possesses unity, although now a dynamic rather than a static one; indeed in Nietzsche's analysis in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a work that aspired to destroy the Platonic view, the dynamic unity of true reality is contrasted to a principle of individuation, namely, the force that produces separate individuals who are merely illusory images of true reality and are prevented from knowing Godhead until their individuality is broken down. But this same principle of individuation also produces separate words, produces them out of the Om-like true reality that holds all speech together. Words therefore become a barrier between us and Godhead, which can best be expressed in human terms, Nietzsche claims, by dance and music as opposed to speech, since neither dance nor music distinguishes or separates, the way speech does.

The process philosopher Henri Bergson, an important influence on Beckett, William James, D. H. Lawrence, Nikos Kazantzakis, James Joyce, and other rebels against traditional theism, takes Nietzsche's metaphysical critique of language and applies it to human psychology. For him, the true self is, like Nietzsche's Godhead, one in which conscious states are neither distinguishable nor separable, but melt into one another to form an

organic whole. This ever-changing inner life, he continues, is “inexpressible, because language cannot get hold of it without arresting its mobility.” No two experiences or sensations are the same; yet when I speak of them “I abstract this changeableness to give it a name . . . and solidify it. . . . [S]ensations . . . seem to me to be *objects* as soon as I isolate and name them, [whereas] in the human soul there are only *processes*.” In sum, “there is no common measure between mind and language.”

Whether we conceive of Godhead as Being or Becoming, language stands as an impediment whereas silence is a perfect ritualistic means to renew our connection with true reality. The great secret that Fox and the other early Friends discovered was to eliminate language from Quaker worship.

But language is *not* eliminated from Quaker worship. Try as we might to wait upon the Lord, beating down into silence the roving of our imagination, we cannot; indeed, we sometimes feel relieved despite ourselves when the dynamic processes of the silence that are so deliciously melting into one another to form an organic whole are interrupted by spoken ministry that arrests the silence’s mobility and gives it a name, stabilizing it. A meeting, after all, is still a human phenomenon, subject to the principle of individuation even though our purpose in worship is (momentarily) to escape individuation. In addition, the telephone seems always to ring precisely in the middle of worship! Even while waiting on the Lord we remain the fragmented playthings of contingency and as such are condemned to use words, those emblems of fragmentation. Perhaps this is not regrettable, however, despite everything I have been arguing. “The Word became flesh,” after all, which means in part that the Word became words, including Scripture and all the rest of “poor little talkative Christianity.” Richard Bauman, in his book on Quaker silence, has defined the essence of the Quaker religious experience as the “reconciliation of the human necessity of speaking with the spiritual need for silence.” That is well said. But we must avoid a dualistic separation between heaven and earth, remembering instead the central Christian paradox of distinction-within-unity. Quakers were accused of heresy in the early days (and later) insofar as they “rejected the notion . . . that language . . . could contain truly ‘substantial’ meaning.” They saw the Scriptures as “hopelessly insubstantial . . . shadows,” and this exposed them to the danger whereby “flesh melts into spirit, imitation of Christ slides into identity with Christ,” as in the case of James

Nayler. Let us hope that our own Quaker meetings may honor the paradox that the Word contains words within itself, just as the inactive Godhead contains within itself the possibility of action. Words — although inauthentic, inorganic, divisive, the instruments of contingency — are in us, derived from silence, just as the light and life of divinity are in us. Conversely, we are in them. As Samuel Beckett's narrator says in *The Unnamable*, "I'm in words, made of words, others' words, . . . I'm all these words, all these strangers . . . coming together to say . . . that I am they."

* * *

It is appropriate that this reconsideration of Quaker silence from a literary point of view should end with Beckett because his trilogy, more than any other text in modern literature, explores not only the conflict between silence and speech but also the ineluctable synergy — "together-working" — between silence and speech. Beckett's concern began at least from *Murphy* on and evolved through a series of characters who are fundamentally all the same although possessing different names — Murphy, Molloy, Moran, Malone, Macmann — until in the final novel of the trilogy these characters, who now may be seen as mere images of reality, come much closer to the true reality behind them all: the Unnamable. The long process from *Murphy* to the *Unnamable* carries Murphy's quest for authenticity ever further. The successive characters strive to *do* less and less and to *be* more and more, thereby escaping contingency; they strive to advance from the multiplicity, fragmentation, and divisiveness of words to the unity and integrity of the silent Word. And, of course, they fail. In religious language — appropriate because Beckett is such a profoundly religious writer — they yearn to unite with God; yet they remain inescapably God's creatures in a world that is incorrigibly inauthentic. They are us. They are every Quaker who sits in meeting week after week striving to escape the language of what Barclay calls the human being in his natural state, striving to escape language altogether, in order to participate via silence in something immeasurably more authentic, yet realizing again and again that this is impossible, that we are in words and, worse, others' words, that we are forced to keep on talking, talking even about silence, because the religious quest to escape language is predicated on self-consciousness and self-consciousness is impossible without words.

So, the synergy between speech and silence is finally what must interest

us most. What I mean is the understanding that silence is not speech's elimination so much as its seed-bed, or (to return to the metaphor used in connection with *Om*) the spike that holds all the leaves of speech together. This synergy is not too different from that between what the linguist Roman Jakobson calls the "code" and the "message." Code he defines as "the repository of all possible constituent parts"; any given "message" (notice that he uses the same term that Quakers do) is drawn from this code. What happens in meeting for worship is that we attempt not only to enter the integrity of unfragmented silence and in this way to simulate Godhead ritualistically, but we also attempt to enter the code — even, in a sense, to re-create it — via our own messages. Said in another way, we attempt to "give birth to something wordless in words." And this is precisely what happens in Beckett's novel. As in a gathered Quaker meeting, so too in the novel, we are made to feel that the messages (in Beckett's case, stories about named images of reality such as Malone, Macmann, and so forth) emerge from, and are then drawn back into, a namelessness that is the ground or code of all naming. It is good, by the way, that the messages in meeting (as in the novel) are disparate, sometimes incomplete, sometimes mere ejaculations of hope or sorrow or prayer. For it is this very disparity and incompleteness that continually reminds us of the synergetic relation between these messages and the silence that is an excess of potential messages still unexpressed (or perhaps inexpressible), whereas polished sermons composed in the minister's study, because they call attention to the powers of a particular human being, obscure the most basic religious truth that they are meant to reveal.

The extraordinary force of a successful Quaker meeting, then, is not only its reenactment of the nature of Godhead through silence but in addition its reenactment of the synergy between that Godhead and us through the spoken messages that emerge from silence and die back into it. I keep using the word "successful" because, as we all know, meetings do not always work. Yet — just like Beckett's characters — we keep trying. Like them, we yearn to be lifted out of contingency and become like God, yet realize that we cannot. Like them, we yearn to escape naming, to be unnamable ourselves and therefore to achieve an integrity impossible so long as the "I" creates a "me" by the mere fact of self-consciousness; yet, we realize that we can escape neither self-consciousness nor naming without escaping ourselves — i.e., dying. So, while still in this life, we are caught —

but caught deliciously, for the synergy between silence and speech releases extraordinary amounts of creative energy.

Nowhere is this energy more evident than in Beckett's trilogy, where the narrator yearns with part of himself to be silent. "Then I could stop," he says, "I'd be the silence. I'd be back in the silence, we'd be reunited, . . . then it . . . will be I, it will be . . . the silence, the end, the beginning, the beginning again." Yet he knows at the same time that the very yearning to be wordless cannot exist without words. So, like Quakers in meeting, he does not stop. Instead, he goes on, caught within this dilemma, yet also energized by it. We see this in the conclusion to *The Unnamable*:

I'll wake, in the silence, and never sleep again, it will be I, . . . I don't know, that's all words, . . . all words, there's nothing else, you must go on, that's all I know, . . . you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, . . . perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know. I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.

It does not matter if this passage presents silence and speech as an unresolved dilemma. In Beckett, as in meeting, the silence of the wordless Word paradoxically gives meaning to the messages, just as the messages paradoxically give meaning to the silence. Had poor Mrs. Moore known this, she might have reacted to the wordlessness of her cave not with terror but with religious awe.

Notes

- 1 This essay is a revised version of the third annual Rufus Jones Associates Lecture, delivered at Haverford College on April 10, 1991. I wish to thank Edwin Bronner, John Cary, Douglas Gwyn, Rev. Christopher Huntington, Larry Ingle, Rebecca Kratz Mays, Dorothy Steere, and anonymous members of the Pendle Hill Publications Committee for suggestions that have been gratefully incorporated. Documentation is excluded from the text; it is given immediately following these notes.
- 2 I cite Dean Freiday's "translation" into modern English.
- 3 Thus we read that for Murphy the inexpressible absolute contains "neither

elements nor states, nothing but forms becoming and crumbling into the fragments of a new becoming. . . . Here he was . . . a mote in the dark of absolute freedom[,] . . . a missile without provenance or target, caught up in a tumult of non-Newtonian motion[,] . . . in . . . will-lessness . . . (Beckett 1957: 112–113).

- 4 Cf. Swinburne, who sums up the central doctrines of traditional theism as follows: God is “a person without a body (i.e., a spirit), present everywhere, the creator and sustainer of the universe, a free agent, able to do everything (i.e., omnipotent), knowing all things, perfectly good, a source of moral obligation, immutable, eternal, a necessary being, holy, and worthy of worship” (1977:2; cited in Frankenberry 1987:26).
- 5 Compare Jesus’ answer to the Jews when they are scandalized because he seems to say that he has seen Abraham: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58, RSV).
- 6 λόγος προφορικός and λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (ἐν + διατιθημι, inward-placed). Anticipating our subsequent discussion of sources, it is important to note that the Fathers’ language derives from Philo (*De Vita Mosis* 2.129).
- 7 The Hebrew Testament background to the Christian Testament’s and later Christianity’s understanding of the Word can be investigated as well via the Hebrew *Dabbar*, “the word that gives birth to the blessing that creation is” (M. Fox 1980: 43), a concept that lies at the heart of Meister Eckhart’s theology. “This is the Word with which Genesis begins the Scriptures — it is the dynamic, active word that, when spoken, creates. . . . Thus Eckhart can say that the Father or Creator *is a speaking action*” (M. Fox 1980: 60).
- 8 For a lucid review of revisionist philosophical theism as opposed to traditional theological theism, see Frankenberry 1987: 25ff., et passim.

Documentation

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| p. 509 | Blessed be the man | Harkianakis 1985: 261.
<i>Μακαρισμός</i> (Beatitude),
translated by Peter Bien. |
| p. 509 | I love to feel where words
come from | Woolman 1971: 133. |
| p. 509 | Nothing could be more unlike | Barclay 1991: Proposition 11.
¶ VII. |
| p. 510 | actuated by God’s light and
grace in | Barclay 1991: Proposition 11.
¶ VII. |

- p. 510 to abstain from one's own thoughts
Barclay 1991: Proposition II, ¶ X, italics added.
- p. 510 gathered . . . out of all of its own thoughts
Barclay 1991: Proposition II, ¶ IX.
- p. 511 Whatever is said
Forster 1924, ch. xiv.
- p. 511 [T]he echo began in some indescribable
Forster 1924, ch. xiv.
- p. 512 mystic syllable *Om*
Mundaka Upanishad, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 53.
- p. 512 analyzed into the elements a + u + m
Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 56.
- p. 512 without an element
Mandukya Upanishad, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 55–56.
- p. 512 goes to the highest goal
Bhagavad-gita, ch. 8 §13, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 130.
- p. 512 waking, sleeping, and deep-sleep
Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 56.
- p. 512 inexpressible Absolute
Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 130.
- p. 512 As all leaves are held together by
Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 65.
- p. 513 revaluation of all values
Nietzsche 1990: 31, 197.
- p. 513 replaced Being with Becoming
Nietzsche 1990: 45, 47.
- p. 515 the use of any proper name
May and Metzger 1965: xii.
- p. 515 indicating that in [the Tetragrammaton's]
May and Metzger 1965: xii.
- p. 515 is entirely in appropriate for the
May and Metzger 1965: xii.
- p. 516 the Prologue announces clearly
Pollard 1970: 15.
- p. 517 Although this Logos is eternally valid
Fragment 1. Wheelwright 1959: 19.

- p. 517 explain the continuity amid all the flux Brown 1966: 520; cf. Kahn 1979: 130; Wheelwright 1959: 21–23.
- p. 517 seminal Reason of the universe Diogenes Laertius 1925: ii. 241 (VII. 136. Zeno); Arnim 1921: iv. 93; Wolfson 1947: i.325–326.
- p. 517 Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* Plato 1989: 210A–210B.
- p. 517 one in form Plato 1989: 211B.
- p. 517 absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted Plato 1989: 211E.
- p. 517 Philo posited the Logos of God as Philo Judæus 1929: *De Opificio Mundi* 25, cited by Sidebottom 1961: 32; also *De Vita Mosis* 2.127, cited by Wolfson 1947: i.331.
- p. 517 as the doer Philo Judæus 1935: *De Vita Mosis* 2.127, cited by Wolfson 1947: i.331.
- p. 517 these parallels can be accounted for Pollard 1970: 12.
- p. 517 composed in Greek by an unknown May and Metzger 1965: 102.
- p. 518 endureth for ever, not changed Migne 1857: xxvi, columns 224–225; cited in Pollard 1970: 196.
- p. 518 Tertullian argued that speech has its Pollard 1970: 61.
- p. 518 For before all things God was alone Tertullian 1870: 5.2–4.
- p. 518 the word of a man is composed of Migne 1857: xxvi, columns 220, 224; cf. Pollard 1970: 195–196.
- p. 519 manifested Himself through Jesus Ignatius 1949: 8.2; cf. Brown 1966: 524.
- p. 519 I talk of the purity M. Fox 1980: 57.
- p. 519 Saint John said M. Fox 1980: 128.
- p. 519 rabbinic exegesis of Genesis Brown 1966: 524.

- p. 519 silence was a mark of the *Deus* Brown 1966: 524.
- p. 519 the words not *word* of God G. Fox 1975: 604.
- p. 520 They asked me whether the
Scripture G. Fox 1975: 159.
- p. 520 Many priests that came to me
would G. Fox 1975: 160.
- p. 520 [T]he many languages began
at Babel G. Fox 1975: 333–334.
- p. 521 a tumult of non-Newtonian
motion Beckett 1957: 112–113.
- p. 521 principle of individuation Nietzsche 1956: §16.
- p. 521 a barrier between us and
Godhead Nietzsche 1956: §6.
- p. 521 dance and music as opposed
to speech Nietzsche 1956: §1.
- p. 521 to form an organic whole Bergson 1910: 128.
- p. 522 inexpressible, because
language cannot Bergson 1910: 129.
- p. 522 I abstract this changeableness
to give it Bergson 1910: 131.
- p. 522 there is no common measure
between Bergson 1910: 164–165.
- p. 522 reconciliation of the human
necessity Bauman 1983: 136.
- p. 522 rejected the notion . . . that
language Luxon n.d.: ch. 2, p. 31.
- p. 522 hopelessly insubstantial . . .
shadows Luxon n.d.: ch. 2, p. 26.
- p. 522 slides into identity with Christ Luxon n.d.: ch. 1, pp. 16–17.
- p. 523 I'm in words, made of words Beckett 1959: 390.
- p. 523 at least from Murphy on Beckett 1959: 295.
- p. 524 the repository of all possible
give birth to something
wordless Jakobson 1956: 61.
Abbott 1977: 40.
- p. 525 Then I could stop Beckett 1959: 417.
- p. 525 I'll wake, in the silence, and
never Beckett 1959: 418.

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The Mystery of Quaker Light

WHEN A PERSON in Quaker meeting is ill, bereaved, or otherwise troubled, someone typically advises the meeting, “Let’s hold this person in the Light.” The most predictable theological formula heard in spoken ministry is the “Inner Light.” James Turrell’s Quaker grandmother told him that in meeting for worship we go inside to greet the Light. Friends obviously value Light. Yet perhaps many of us are no longer familiar with the intellectual background that accounts for its predominance in Quaker thought and utterance. Many Friends will perhaps prefer to let Quaker Light remain a mystery; some, on the other hand, may be interested in examining the very non-mysterious process that led to the primacy of Light in Quaker theology. So let us look together at the major elements in the evolution of Light as a theological metaphor. Those elements are Genesis, the prologue to John’s Gospel, the Jewish and Greek sources for the crucial Greek term *λόγος* (*logos* or Word), the meaning of “Light Within,” how early Friends utilized the metaphor of theological Light, and finally how science has conceived of natural light.

I. Before Sun, Moon, and Stars

Natural light is pleasant, soothing, and safe; it makes us feel good. We cherish the creative power of sunlight, its source. But theological Light has nothing to do with sunlight. If we consult Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible, we will be reminded that when God declared “Let there be light” the sun had not yet been created. This is not a mistake in the text. The account in Genesis was borrowed from the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma elish* (“When on high”), which also places Light well before the creation of sun, moon, and stars. What this means is perhaps best conveyed by the Taoist creation myth that commences “In the beginning there was chaos. Out of it came pure light and built the sky.” Here, as

in our own creation story, the solar system and starry heavens are created by Light instead of being the source of light.

Genesis alerts us to Light as suggesting the divine power that gives form to the formless, separating in this case day from night (which at that point could not have existed as we know them, given the absence of sun, moon, and stars). More generally, the creation story's message is usefully summarized as "from one the many." What this means is that something unified created something non-unified — the multifarious reality in which we live.

II. The Prologue to John's Gospel

Creation stories tend to employ symbolic means, in this case Light. A provocative contemporary theologian, Don Cupitt, tells us to favor whatever symbol unifies our feelings most productively. That is precisely what the symbol of Light did for George Fox, Robert Barclay, William Penn, Isaac Penington, and other early Friends. Its role as their most cherished expression is attested to by Barclay's claim regarding "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" in John's Gospel (1:9). "This place," claims Barclay, "doth so clearly favour us, that, by some, it is called 'the Quakers' text'; for it doth evidently demonstrate our assertion."¹ To begin to understand why, let us see what some scholars have written. The following quotation is from Vladimir Lossky's standard book on Eastern Orthodox theology: "This light . . . can be defined as the visible quality of the divinity, of the energies or grace in which God makes Himself known. . . . It is immaterial and is not apprehended by the senses . . ."²

Two additional quotations that may be helpful come from a standard book on icon-painting: "At first, there was void; then, through an act of creation, nothingness appeared — that is, positive nothingness, the embryo, the beginning of a thing; then, as it is penetrated by light, the nothingness begins to assume shape . . ." Furthermore, "Icon painting depicts objects as forms created by light rather than as things lit by a light-source. . . . [T]here is a primordial light, which is the self-luminescence of primordial darkness . . ."³

In addition, we may refer to the medieval treatise on Light written by Robert Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln, who lived from about 1175 to 1253. After calling Light "the first corporeal form," he continues: "But light is more exalted and of a nobler and more excellent essence than all corporeal things. It has, moreover, greater similarity than all bodies to the forms

that exist apart from matter, namely, the intelligences.” He then proceeds to show how this first corporeal form “united with primordial matter to produce the material universe.” And he reminds us that the starting point for this theory of Light is the account in Genesis of “the light which God created three days before the creation of the sun and the stars.”⁴

All of these quotations should begin to dispel the obscurity of the Quaker text in the prologue to John’s Gospel. But things become more difficult when we consider this seminal text in its full context — namely, John’s first five verses. I cite them in the King James translation, the one used by early Friends:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

These verses are difficult. Light is declared equivalent to life. Life is declared equivalent to the Word (a translation of John’s Greek term *logos*). The *logos* is declared equivalent to God.

The rendering of *logos* is a real problem, yet a crucially important one for us because *logos* equals Light. Goethe’s Faust thinks rather amusingly in famous lines:

“In the beginning was the Word” — thus runs the text.
Who helps me on? Already I’m perplexed!
I cannot grant the word such sovereign merit,
I must translate it in a different way
If I’m indeed illumined by the Spirit.
“In the beginning was the Sense.” But stay!
Reflect on this first sentence well and truly
Lest the light pen be hurrying unduly!
Is sense in fact all action’s spur and source?
It should read: “In the beginning was the Force!”
Yet as I write it down, some warning sense
Alerts me that it, too, will give offense.
The spirit speaks! And lo, the way is freed,
I calmly write: “In the beginning was the Deed!”⁵

He progresses rapidly from Word to Sense (German *der Sinn*, which can also be rendered as Mind), thence to Force and Deed (German *die Kraft, die Tat*). We, however, will need to move more ploddingly because, in order to grapple with John's assertions, we must review his Jewish sources and also his Greek ones.

The major Jewish source is Philo Judaeus, who lived from roughly 20 BCE to 50 CE—that is, before John's Gospel was composed—and was the first philosopher who attempted to reconcile Biblical religion with Greek philosophy. It was Philo who introduced the concept of the *logos*. His purpose was to overcome the disparity between a totally infinite God and a totally finite universe. He accomplished this by declaring that God's infinite will does not act directly but, instead, indirectly through an intermediary—the *logos*. In other words, the *logos*, for him, is the creative power that orders the world—"the meaning, plan or purpose of the universe, conceived . . . as the thought of God . . ."⁶

Other Jewish influences include rabbinic Judaism, which is surveyed at length in C. H. Dodd's magisterial *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Dodd also notes many similarities between John's Gospel and the Wisdom literature of Judaism, citing passages in Proverbs and also in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, including Wisdom 7:26: "For she [Wisdom] is a reflection of eternal light . . ." "When all is said and done, however, Jewish influences on John are secondary, the chief Jewish source, Philo, being actually more Greek than Hebrew in sensibility.

Turning now to influences derived directly from Greek thought, we must remember that John's stimulus was not so much Platonism, which lacks the concept of the *logos*, as from Neoplatonism, a Platonic mixture adding elements of Stoicism and also elements of the so-called Hermetic literature collected as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Although probably not produced until the second and third centuries CE, the Hermetic texts, all originally written in Greek, carry forward the linking of Platonism and Stoicism begun in the first century BCE. Dodd gives several long lists of verbal resemblances between John's Greek and the Greek of surviving Hermetic material, even including a parallel for John 1:9, the verse identified by Barclay as the Quaker text. Dodd adds: "Beyond these verbal parallels lie real similarities of thought."⁷

To examine these similarities we must dwell on Neoplatonism's relation to the prologue to John's Gospel and therefore to the mystery of

Quaker Light. I choose to do this via the work of Plotinus (ca. 205–270 CE), even though he postdates John. But no matter, because he brought together thought that had been widely discussed at least since approximately 50 BCE.

Plotinus emphasizes unity and mind. In his fifth *Ennead* we read that the One — i.e., God — is the simple (that is, non-fragmented) cause of existence that precedes the multiplicity of the created universe. “From one the many,” as we saw before. The synopsis of this *Ennead* explains: “There must be unity before multiplicity, the One before the many activities of Intellect.” Furthermore, “The One remains absolutely at rest, and Intellect springs from it like light from the sun.” As a whole, the fifth *Ennead* shows us how our nature is transcended by “Intellect and the One or Good.” The last three chapters remind us how we, “being soul, can find Intellect and the One within us”⁸ (compare the “Light Within” of Quakerism). Light is God’s energy. But now it is equated with Mind, the divine Thought that creates multiplicity out of Oneness, differentiation out of undifferentiated chaos, myriad forms out of formlessness, the finite out of the infinite.

Plotinus may be drawing not only on Stoic and Platonic sources but also on the Greek myth of Apollo Pythius, who slays the serpent Python, whose name means “gangrenous.” What Apollo kills is the force of disintegration; what he upholds is the opposite, the “syntax” (arranging together) that is the essence of rationality. To change the metaphor, Apollo slays the darkness and dispenses light. Thus his epithet is also *Phoebus*, which means “bright.” We need to remember that the Greeks linked his brightness with reason. Even if *phoebus* suggests the radiant beauty of youth, as it often does, this still relates to reason, because Apollo “was beautiful because his body conformed to certain laws of proportion and so partook of the divine beauty of mathematics.”⁹

Indeed, the linkage of beauty and reason was always connected with light in Neoplatonic philosophy, which counseled *seekers* (Quakers were not the first to favor this term) to ascend from temporal beauty to moral beauty, then to the intellectual beauty of mathematics, and finally to the Beautiful itself: “the culminating revelation . . . [occurring] in a sudden blaze of light exempt from change and relativity.”¹⁰ The closeness of this Neoplatonic blaze to John’s “true light, which lighteth every man” should be obvious. What may not be so obvious, and must therefore be repeatedly stressed, is that Light (which, remember, has nothing to

do with the sun) is always linked with reason in Neoplatonic and Stoic philosophy.

Consider now another Neoplatonic philosopher, Dionysius the Areopagite. He declares: "Light comes from the Good, and Light is an image of this archetypal Good. . . . The goodness of the transcendent God . . . gives Light to everything capable of receiving it; it creates them, keeps them alive, preserves and perfects them. . . . It is the Cause of the universe and its end."¹¹ Note that Dionysius views Light as the source not only of our spiritual existence but of our carnal existence as well.

Finally, to see how all this illumines John's prologue, consider still an additional quotation, this one from Thomas Aquinas: "Brightness . . . agrees with the property of the Son [not Sun!], as the Word, which is the light and splendor of the intellect, as John of Damascus says. . . ."¹²

Fortified now with this background provided by scholars and philosophers such as Lossky, Grosseteste, Philo, Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Aquinas, we may proceed to grapple a bit more with the evangelist John's difficult prologue: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." We should now be aware that, from Genesis onward, Light is God's energy, the force and deed (remember Faust's definitions) that give form to the formless. In John's prologue the active power is the *logos*; God remains at rest, as the Neoplatonists taught. But the *logos* is also Life, which in Christian thought is equated in turn with Christ and Light. Thus this "true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"¹³ the quintessential Quaker text, refers to the divine energy that creates multiplicity and dwells therein. Quaker Light, invoked whenever Friends ask that someone in distress be held in that Light, is "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower," in Dylan Thomas's lovely expression. In philosophical language, it is Idea, which Dante Alighieri understood consummately when he wrote:

All that which dies and all that cannot die
 Reflect the radiance of that Idea
 Which God the Father through His love begets:

That Living Light, which from its radiant Source Streams forth . . .¹⁴

Let us concentrate some more now on John's difficult term *logos*, translated so unhelpfully as "Word." In Attic and New Testament Greek, *logos* indeed does mean oral expression, speech, oration, and/or writing, all conveyed well enough by the translation "word." But *logos* also means the unified cause—reason or mind—out of which these multiplicities of expression flow. Furthermore, *logos* as employed by the Stoics (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE) expresses the rational nature of the cosmos as ordered by eternal law. Little wonder, then, that the Church took over this term to mean the divine power that creates cosmos out of chaos. And little wonder that Light came to serve as the principal metaphor for the energy of the *logos*, which invades the world with its *Son*beams. And let us not forget John of Damascus's definition of Word that we noted Thomas Aquinas citing earlier: "the light and splendor of the intellect." Aquinas, quoting John of Damascus again, is additionally helpful when he asserts that Word is "the natural movement of the intellect, whereby it . . . understands, and thinks, as light and splendor . . ." ¹⁵ Dodd summarizes well: "The opening sentences . . . of the Prologue are clearly intelligible only when we admit that *logos*, though it carries with it the associations of the Old Testament Word of the Lord, has also a meaning similar to that which it bears in Stoicism as modified by Philo, and parallel to the idea of Wisdom in other Jewish writers. It is *the rational principle in the universe*, its meaning, plan or purpose . . ." [italics added]. ¹⁶ Indeed, some—e.g. the philosopher Rodney Stark—have claimed that of all the religions in the world Judeo-Christianity is the only one that conceives of God as a supremely rational being who created a coherent universe.

The entire complex has never been expressed more eloquently than by John Milton, George Fox's contemporary, in his invocation to Book III of *Paradise Lost*, where he shifts his focus from the "darkness visible" of Hell to the luminescence of Heaven:

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblamed? Since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,

Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
 Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
 Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
 The rising world of waters dark and deep,
 Won from the void and formless infinite.¹⁷

III. The Light Within

Contemporary Quakers not only ask that folks in trouble be held in the Light, they also speak about their own Inner Light. If you ask them what this Inner Light really is, they may answer “the indwelling Christ” but probably will not repeat Robert Barclay’s “The implanted ingrafted Word, which is able to save the soul.”¹⁸ Some Friends, of course, may come close to “the quality of grace by which God makes Himself known” — the beautiful summary of Light provided in the tenth century by Symeon the New Theologian. But how many contemporary Friends realize that George Fox never used the term Inner Light at all? He spoke instead, although seldom, of “Inward Light” and most often of “the Light Within.” John Punshon explains why “inner” is not appropriate. Light, he writes,

operates at a personal level to redeem those who turn to it; but it would be a mistake to regard it as a part of human nature, a personal possession, a fragment of divinity, our bit of God. The light is in all, but it is the same light that is in all, not sparks from the eternal flame. There are not many lights, but only one.

It is better, therefore, to speak of Inward Light — a power that enters us from outside — rather than of Inner Light, which sounds too much like something all our own that we possess internally. Punshon states categorically: “The light is that of God within you, and is not your conscience or intellect.”¹⁹ And John Milton, as always, says everything in few words in *Paradise Lost* (III.51–55) when, lamenting his physical blindness, he adjures the outward light to shine inward, entering his soul and enlightening him:

So much the rather thou Celestial Light
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers

Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

In ancient Greek philosophy, so much of which entered Christianity, Inward Light expressed knowledge of the metaphysical ground of being. Consequently, Friends, if asked what precisely they mean when they invoke the Inward Light, might now say something like this: “The Light Within is the divine power of creativity and reason that enters me without fragmenting its Oneness, enabling me to know and overcome my inadequacies, and also to appreciate the marvel of the cosmos that commenced to form when God said ‘Let there be Light’ and the Word (Christ), the true Light that enlightens every person, came into the world.”²⁰

Let us now see how the Inward Light is formulated by at least some Buddhists. Compared to our own rather convoluted language, the following formulation may be more immediately comprehensible: “Every sentient being possesses a spiritual light drawn from the . . . Storehouse of the Great Light.”²¹

This Light of which we inwardly partake — this force that divides the waters from the firmament, organizing chaos into cosmos — was never more beautifully expressed than in the opening stanza of the poem “The World” by George Fox’s contemporary Henry Vaughan (1621–1695), in which he compares Light with shadow:

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
 All calm, as it was bright,
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years
 Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled.²²

IV. Light and the Founders of Quakerism

Let us return now to the founders of Quakerism. I asserted at the start that they were familiar with the long history of religious thought summarized above. We have seen Barclay’s claim that John 1:9 is Quakerism’s central

biblical text. Fox in his *Journal* repeatedly explicates John's prologue, insisting, as Howard Brinton puts it, that Light "is that Creative Power that first dawned on chaos and that draws all things upward into nobler states of being. It is also warm, living, and personal, forever pleading with us to give up our selfish doing and desiring, and to follow its Divine Leading."²³ Entirely relevant is Samuel Caldwell's list of the characteristics of light offered to classes in Quakerism 101:

- *divine* — not equivalent to reason or conscience; not "natural"
- *single* — one and indivisible, not my Light vs. your Light
- *unifying* — brings us into unity, draws Friends together
- *universal* — works in the life of every person
- *eternal* — existed before time and will exist forever
- *pure* — perfectly good, unerring, and infallible
- *unchanging* — our awareness of the Light changes, but the Light itself does not
- *personal* — not an abstract force
- *inward* — implies action, dynamic; the Light shines *within* each of us
- *saving* — brings us into right relationship with God, ourselves, and each other
- *guiding* — will lead us into a more meaningful, richer life
- *resistible* — we are free to ignore the guidance of the Light
- *persistent* — our perception of the Light may dim, but we can't completely extinguish it
- *empowering* — will empower us to do what is required, even if we feel inadequate
- *ineffable* — cannot be fully understood and described²⁴

Regarding the first assertion on this list, that Light is not "natural," there is an amusing passage in George Fox's *Journal*:

And I was speaking of the heavenly divine light of Christ which he enlightens every one that cometh into the world withal . . .

This Priest Tombes cries out, "That is a natural light and a made light." And then I desired all the people to take out their Bibles; . . . and I asked them whether he did affirm that was a created, natural, made light that John . . . did speak of . . .

And he said, "Yes."

Then said I, "... The natural, created, made light is the sun, moon, and stars. . . . And dost thou say that God sent John to bear witness to the sun, moon, and stars . . . ?"

And so I made manifest to the people how that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and God was the Word, and all things that were made were made by him. . . . So all natural created lights were made by Christ the Word . . ."

"Oh," says the people, "he is a cunning fox."²⁵

Caldwell's characteristics were expressed in a very different manner by Fox's contemporary, Isaac Penington (1617–1679), who adds an important new element to this discussion:

. . . the particular waiting upon God in his Holy Spirit, light, and power . . . will discover what is disorderly, and unruly, and not of God in the particular, and lay a yoke upon it. . . .

How faith, or believing in the light, worketh out the salvation:

It causeth a fear and trembling to seize upon the sinner. . . . In this fear and trembling the work of true repentance and conversion is begun and carried on. There is a turning of the soul from the darkness to the light . . .

Belief in the light works patience, meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and long-suffering. . . .

It brings peace, joy, and glory . . . which glory increaseth daily more and more, by the daily sight and feeling of the living virtue and power in Christ the light, whereby the soul is continually transformed, and changed more and more out of the corruptible into the incorruptible. . . .

Here, in the light, I meet with certainty, assurance, satisfaction, yea, infallibility. . . . The spirit breathes infallibly, begets infallibly, leads infallibly, creates a new heart, a right spirit; which heart, which spirit, is of God's infallible nature, like him; for that which is born of the spirit is spirit.²⁶

As we can see from Penington's warnings, Caldwell omits what Hugh Barbour calls the terror and power of the Light. "The Light that ultimately gave joy, peace, and guidance," Barbour insists, "gave at first only terror. . . .

In such experiences the Quakers regarded the Light as being God's own goad and probe, the truth."²⁷ For Fox, too, the Light "was an overwhelming invasive force, not a vague mental illumination."²⁸

Rex Ambler, wondering what the Light really meant to early Friends, cites Thomas Ellwood's confession that, owing to an encounter with the Light, "now was all my former life ripped up." Ambler then remembers William Penn's "For of light came sight, and of sight came sense and sorrow, and of sense and sorrow came amendment of life." Finally, he offers Margaret Fell's "Now, Friends, . . . let the Eternal Light search you. . . . For this will deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, and lay you open . . . naked and bare before the Lord God, from whom you cannot hide yourselves. Therefore give over deceiving of your Souls." Ambler concludes: "It began to be clear to me that the light, for them, could be harsh, because it showed them everything, warts and all. In particular it highlighted their self-centeredness. . . . No wonder they were distressed and 'ripped up' before they came to an experience of peace."²⁹

For the founders of Quakerism, in other words, Light led to conviction. Today when we speak of "convinced Friends" we mean something like "persuaded to join a Quaker meeting" and we forget what the word meant in the seventeenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the following from 1610: "The faults of a church may be severely reprov'd and convinc'd and yet the church not condemn'd." The older meaning is clear: to expose and reprehend faults, to prove wrong, to convict. This is the common signification in Fox—e.g., "In that which convinc'd you wait, that you may have that removed you are convinc'd of" or "Be patient and still . . . in the light that doth convince you, to keep your minds to God."³⁰

Putting all this together, contemporary Friend Lucy Davenport writes that what we see in the understanding of Light by the founders of Quakerism is a divergence between (a) Light as "an invisible principle, hence 'essence' in the Platonic sense of a spiritual reality by which humans are 'indwelt,'" and (b) Light as pointing believers to their Savior and giving them "power over all sin and temptation that have been since Adam."³¹ The former emphasizes the eternal Christ—the bright effluence of bright essence increate—while the latter stresses the incarnated Christ of history. The importance of Light for the former rests in its inviolability, for the latter in its force.

Interestingly, in connection with our earlier discussion of Greek versus

Jewish influences on John, Light as an invisible principle is Greek whereas Light as conveying power over sin is Jewish. Interestingly, too, the former is essentially Platonic while the latter (insofar as we can think of it as Greek as well as Hebraic) is essentially Aristotelian, since Plato maintained that “forms” — for example Beauty — have an independent existence apart from the things that express their qualities, whereas Aristotle held that forms necessarily reside within the material things that express nonmaterial qualities. We need both Plato and Aristotle since both, although contradictory, express truth; similarly, we Quakers must conclude that the perhaps contradictory Hellenic and Hebraic backgrounds to theological Light are equally necessary. Indeed, the interplay caused by their divergence may account in part for Quakerism’s vitality. “In this essential divergence lies a divergence of emphasis on the experience of worship. For if the heart of worship is communion, as Barclay sees it, worship is an end. However if worship is the experience of being convinced [that is, convicted] by the Light Within and shown the deliverance that leads to a reordering of behavior, then gospel order in the outward affairs of human life is the heart of worship.”³²

Friends are generally able to practice the dual modes without difficulty. In so doing, they should recognize that the combined views of Light make Quakerism profoundly different from seventeenth-century nonconformist Protestantism in that “Protestants did not claim to have the power to walk in newness of life as a holy and sanctified people in the present world, but relied upon the final judgment of Christ over the world in His second coming. For Barclay, as for Fox, the effect of the saving Light of Christ was deliverance from the power of sin over our lives and the ability to live as God’s redeemed people in freedom and righteousness within history.”³³

What all these interpretations of Quaker Light as understood by the founders of Quakerism should say to contemporary Friends is well expressed (as always) by Howard Brinton, who first reminds us that the “Inward Light . . . is also the Inward Life” and then counsels: “Our present challenge is to save as much life as possible: not only our own lives, but life in all its forms.” After repeating John’s equation of Life, Light, and *logos*, he continues:

Since the *Logos* is the creator who first appeared in the primeval chaos to gradually create order and unity in the world, it must con-

tinue to exert its unifying power if anarchy is to be overcome. The present tendencies in our Western culture toward anarchy are taking us back to the time when life first arose out of chaos.³⁴

So, once again, let us invoke the divine energy that transforms Oneness into multiplicity, chaos into rational cosmos. Let us hold people in that great ring of pure and endless Light, hoping that they may be vouchsafed the vision so exquisitely expressed in “The Incomparable Light” by Richard Eberhart:

The light beyond compare is the light I saw.
I saw it on the mountain tops, the light
Beyond compare. I saw it in childhood too.
I glimpsed it in the turbulence of growing up.
I saw it in the meshes of meaning of women.
I saw it in political action, and I saw
The light beyond compare in sundry deaths.

Elusive element, final mystery,
The light beyond compare has been my visitant.
Some sort of angel sometimes at my shoulder,
A beckoning guide, elusive nevertheless,
Under the mind where currents of being are running,
It is this strange light I come back to,
Agent of truth, protean, a radical of time.

The light beyond compare is my meaning,
It is the secret source of my beginning,
Issuance of uniqueness, signal upon suffering,
It is the wordless bond of all endings,
It is the subtle flash that tells our song,
Inescapable brotherhood of the living,
Our mystery of time, the only hopeful light.

V. Scientific Light

I started by emphasizing that Light is the first-born offspring of heaven, preceding sun, moon, and stars. I continued by adducing expert assurances that theological Light is immaterial. The moral is that we must not

confuse theological Light with natural light—that is, with sunshine, electric bulbs, or any other common source of illumination in our day-to-day experience. Yet how can we subtract the sun, moon, and stars, not to mention the luminescence that makes us eager to get out of bed in the morning? When John speaks of the Light shining in the darkness, it is a nuisance to keep reminding ourselves that he is employing metaphorical language and that we are not allowed to confuse this Light of Christ and the Word with the lovely sunshine outside. Yet we must resist this confusion because every religious authority we have examined, including George Fox, is clear that the corporeal sun must never be the object of Christian worship. Sonrise may be OK; sunrise is definitely not.

To aid us in differentiating Quaker Light from the light of daily experience (or perhaps in not differentiating it), a little science may be of help. *National Geographic* once ran a lengthy article on light.³⁵ Right at the start, the article reminds us that “the color red is just the brain’s interpretation of a specific wavelength of light with crests that are roughly 700 nanometers apart.” Furthermore, it adds: “the sky is blue because the molecules in the air scatter blue light more readily than they scatter red, orange, yellow, and green.” The article goes on to note that light has no volume, that what we see is registered upside down by the eye and then corrected by the mind. Clearly, we might begin to understand natural light, too, as a metaphor! (Paul Lacey once overheard the celebrated literary critic Kenneth Burke declare that each of us is free to worship God in the metaphor of our choice.³⁶)

Indeed, natural light may be just as mysterious as Quaker Light. That is the premise of a course offered at Princeton University by Bas C. van Fraassen entitled “The History, Philosophy, and Mythology of Light.” In his introductory material, the professor notes that, as early as the seventeenth century,

all the properties that we associate peculiarly with light were said to be “secondary qualities,” mainly a creature of the human mind responding to nature—and not belonging to the real character of nature in itself at all. . . . Both our understanding of color perception and our understanding of light have changed drastically with the centuries—and yet, this same problem keeps recurring, each time in its appropriate new dress.

Not only that: light is always the problem child of science. . . .
[L]ight is always escaping the conceptual box we try to put it in.

The textbook for this course is subtitled *The Entwined History of Light and Mind*. Although not meant to be theological, it somehow is; at least it intersects easily with theology when it declares, for example, “Light is *not* a luminous ripple on the material substrate of the ether. . . . If we take . . . light to be, in some sense, a wave, then what is it that is waving? . . . One thing has become certain, whatever it is, it is not material!”³⁷

In the early modern period, however, from roughly the sixteenth century onward, a materialistic view tended to prevail. Isaac Newton erroneously believed that light was particulate, that it comprised “multitudes of unimaginable small and swift Corpuscles of various Sizes, Springing from Shining bodies at great distances one after another.”³⁸ That view is now rejected owing to the work of Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Max Planck, and of course Albert Einstein. Faraday in his famous lecture “Thoughts on Ray-Vibrations,” delivered in 1846, argued that light must consist not of substance but of force, contradicting the previous view that light is a vibration of something material called ether.

Clerk Maxwell strengthened this view in his paper “A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field,” completed in 1864, in which he concluded that light is an electromagnetic disturbance that operates in agreement with electromagnetic laws. This dispensing of the materialistic concept of ether was, in Einstein’s opinion, the “greatest alteration in . . . our conception of the structure of reality since the foundation of theoretical physics by Newton.”³⁹

Things were then complicated by Planck, who in 1899 assumed that light may exist in discrete units. In 1900 he challenged the prevailing belief that energy is absorbed and emitted continuously from all physical systems, proposing instead that atoms exchange energy in “quantums,” or multiples of a fundamental quantity.⁴⁰ Then, in his wonder year, 1905, Einstein predicted a fusion of the wave and quantum theories.

Subsequent developments added additional complications that cannot be considered here. What is important for us, theologically, is that scientific advances in the understanding of light have removed from it, as Zajonc declares, its “last vestige of materiality. . . . If one conceives of the universe as

matter or its movement, light is the exception that shatters that prejudice. The nature of light cannot be reduced to matter or its motions; it is its own thing.” Considering Einstein’s theory of relativity, Zajonc then asks, “Are we led full circle back to light eternal and omnipresent, outside of space and time?” It really does begin to sound like God! Zajonc continues:

When I try to imagine light without a particular color, direction of propagation, etc., I understand the struggles of medieval theologians . . . as they sought to picture God, and appreciate their choice of light as an attribute of the divine. . . . By now it should be evident that light possesses a nature unique to itself. Every natural assumption we make about it, assumptions common to us from daily life, leads to errors. . . . Particles, waves, location . . . all should be left . . . The light within [*sic!*] is of a different order than the objects without . . . Seeing light is a metaphor for seeing the invisible in the visible, for detecting the fragile imaginal garment that holds our planet and all existence together.⁴¹

Amen!

So, yes, let us continue to wish that ill, bereaved, or otherwise troubled souls may be held in the non-material effluence of bright essence that transforms Oneness into multiplicity! And let us appreciate the non-fragmented power of divine rationality implanted in us as the Light Within: that mysterious energy knitting the natural world’s myriad fragmentations into a harmony that, despite every impediment, we sometimes feel in Quaker worship when we go inside to greet the Light.

I will end with Dante because he understood so well the essence of the Judeo-Christian creation story: from One the many. His almost final verses, after the long journey in the *Divine Comedy* through Hell and Purgatory to Heaven, sing the Light that he is now vouchsafed to see:

O grace abounding and allowing me to dare
To fix my gaze on the Eternal light,
So deep my vision was consumed in it!

I saw how it contains within its depths
All things bound in a single book by love
Of which creation is the scattered leaves:

How substance, accident, and their relation
 Were fused in such a way that what I now
 Describe is but a glimmer of that Light.

I know I saw the universal form,
 The fusion of all things, for I can feel,
 While speaking now, my heart leap up in joy.⁴²

Notes

- 1 Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers* (first published in Latin in 1676, then in English in 1678), Proposition 6, §XXI. Compare *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, edited by Dean Freiday (Newberg, Oregon: The Barclay Press, 1967), p. 100.
- 2 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke, 1957), p. 221.
- 3 Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 145, 149.
- 4 Robert Grosseteste, *On Light or the Beginning of Forms*, translated from the Latin by Clare C. Riedi (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1942), p. 10, followed by pp. 4–5 from Riedi's introduction.
- 5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, A Tragedy*, translated by Walter Arndt (New York: Norton, 1976), Part I, lines 1224–1237.
- 6 C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 277.
- 7 Dodd, pp. 11, 34–35, 49, 50–51.
- 8 Plotinus, *Enneads*, vol. V, translated by A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994). The citations are from p. 133 (*Enneads* V.iii.17), p. 71 (synopsis to V.iii), and pp. 7–8 (introduction to V.i).
- 9 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude* (Bollinger Series XXXV.2. New York: Pantheon, 1956), p. 30.
- 10 Francis MacDonald Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium." In *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 77.
- 11 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 74.

- 12 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, question 39, article 8, objection 5.
- 13 As before, I cite the King James translation, since this was the one known by early Friends. More recent and presumably better translations make “that comes into the world” modify “light” rather than “man.” Thus the New English Bible reads: “The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world.”
- 14 *Paradise* XIII.52–56. Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, verse translation by Mark Musa, vol. V (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 125.
- 15 Aquinas, Part I, question 34, article 1, objection 4.
- 16 Dodd, p. 280.
- 17 Line 4: unapproached = matchless, beyond the reach of rivalry; line 6: increate = uncreated, always existing, eternal; line 10: invest = to cover with a garment (thus when God says “Let there be light” he is not creating light — which, after all, is “increate” — but, rather, is calling upon it to envelop the primal darkness as a garment does).
- 18 Barclay, Proposition 6, §XXII, citing James 1:21 for “implanted Word.” The King James translation reads “engrafted word,” but the original Greek (which Barclay reproduces in Greek) is *ton emphyton logon*, the primary meaning of which is “implanted word,” which indeed is used in the Revised Standard Version of the Christian Bible. Barclay cautiously uses both possibilities: “implanted ingrafted.” Compare Freiday’s Barclay’s Apology in *Modern English*, p. 101, which chooses “implanted.”
- 19 John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1986), pp. 50, 36.
- 20 Lest this sound too incrnational for universalist Quakers who may feel more comfortable with the Eternal Christ than with the Crucified Son of God, Friends might remind their questioners of George Fox’s seminal pronouncement (*Journal*, pp. 471–472, see Note 25 for full bibliographic citation): “And that light could not be the Scriptures of the New Testament, for it was before the four Evangelists and the Epistles and Revelation were written. So it must be the divine light which is the Life in Christ the Word, before Scriptures were written.”
- 21 Muso Kokushi, quoted in Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 167.
- 22 Vaughan’s “ring” may derive from the famous lines in Dante’s *Paradise* XXIII.95–96: “down from Heaven’s height there came a flaming torch / shaped in a ring, as if it were a crown” (*Divine Comedy*, p. 229, cited in Note 14 above).

- 23 Howard Brinton, *Guide to Quaker Practice* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet 20, 1955), p. 15. In his *Friends for 300 Years* (reissued in 2002 as *Friends for 350 Years*), Brinton devotes two entire chapters to the Light Within, first as experienced, second as thought about. These texts are so readily available that there is no need for me to summarize them.
- 24 These characteristics of Light are included in: Shirley Dodson, *Quakerism 101: A Basic Course for Adults* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1992).
- 25 George Fox, *Journal of George Fox*, edited by John L. Nickalls (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1975), pp. 295–296.
- 26 Cited in Robert Leach, *The Inward Journey of Isaac Pennington: An Abbreviation of Pennington's Works* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet 29, 1944), pp. 15, 33, 40–42. Pennington's *Works* were collected and published posthumously in 1681. Leach's "abbreviation" is from the *Works*' 2nd edition, 1761.
- 27 Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 94.
- 28 Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain 1646–1666* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 81.
- 29 Rex Ambler, "Inner Light." *Woodbrooke News*, Summer 1997, p. 2.
- 30 Fox, pp. 228, 283.
- 31 Lucy Davenport, "Christ Jesus the Covenant of God: Two Views of the Quaker Doctrine of the Light." *Quaker Religious Thought* 26, no. 2 (March 1993), p. 14.
- 32 Davenport, p. 8.
- 33 Davenport, p. 11.
- 34 Howard Brinton, *Light and Life in the Fourth Gospel* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet 179, 1971), pp. 6, 28–29. What would poor Howard Brinton, writing this in the early 1970s, say if he were alive today?
- 35 Joel Achenbach, "The Power of Light." *National Geographic*, October 2001, pp. 7–29. The information in the remainder of this paragraph comes from pp. 8, 23, 10, and 14 of this article, in that order.
- 36 Paul Lacey, "Finding Our Lights," unpublished typescript of a talk given at Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting on May 22, 2005, p. 4. Cited by permission. On pp. 6 and 7, Lacey comments further, "For many Friends, especially in the unprogrammed tradition, the light — either capitalized or lower-case — seems to be a preferred metaphor to represent our ultimate spiritual authority. . . . Light as divinity we might call a non-denominational, easily

universalized, easily secularized metaphor. . . . The metaphor God equals light tells the truth about divinity as supreme energy, power, order. It does so by leaving out any suggestion that God is a Person. . . . Every metaphor has the capacity to tell a truth deeply, but not a complete truth.”

- 37 Arthur Zajonc, *Catching the Light: The Entwined History of Light and Mind* (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 123.
- 38 Achenbach, p. 15.
- 39 Zajonc, p. 147.
- 40 Marcelo Gleiser, “Cosmic Birth.” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Spring 2005, p. 26.
- 41 Zajonc, pp. 259–260, 270, 320, 323, 343.
- 42 Dante, p. 327; *Paradise XXXIII*. 83–94.

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EDUCATION,
HEALTH, POETRY

Thoughts on Literacy, Past and Present

PRESIDENT AND MRS. FREEDMAN; Dean Wright; Colonel and Mrs. Brent; Andrew, John, Michael, and Nancy Beebe; Emily Beebe Williams; Bill Scherman; Stanton Davis; Harold Ripley; Art Buchwald; and colleagues, students, friends:

We are gathered here today to inaugurate the Frederick Sessions Beebe '35 Professorship in the Art of Writing. This professorship was established by Dartmouth's Board of Trustees in April 1989 by a motion that reads, in part, as follows: "Dartmouth College recognizes that a central goal in the liberal arts education of its students must be the development of a capacity for clear, effective writing. Frederick Sessions Beebe '35 exemplified the value of that ability."

Frederick Beebe — or Fritz, as he was known to his friends — accomplished this chiefly in his dual role as chairman of the boards of The Washington Post Company and of *Newsweek*. By profession he was a lawyer in New York City. His association with the *Post* began when he served as one of the legal team retained by Philip Graham, the *Post's* owner, to consummate the purchase of the Washington *Times-Herald* in 1954. Then, in 1961, it was Beebe who urged Philip Graham to purchase *Newsweek* as well. A month later he became board chairman of the Washington Post Company. In this capacity he was drawn a decade later into the *Post's* great dilemma: whether, despite threats of prosecution by the Attorney General, it should publish stories based on the Pentagon Papers, which documented the duplicity of our government's actions in Vietnam. In fact Fritz Beebe was the person to whom the *Post's* reporters, on the one hand, and the newspaper's lawyers, on the other, presented their arguments pro and con. At first Beebe hesitated, worried what would happen to the *Post's* \$33 million public stock offering, still under negotiation with underwriters, if the company were made to face a criminal indictment. But the reporters argued that freedom of the press was at issue. With the first story already

being set in type for the next day's paper, Beebe telephoned Katharine Graham, the *Post's* publisher, saying, "If it were up to me, Kay, I wouldn't publish those papers; but it's really up to you to decide." She replied at once, "I've decided. Let's go ahead!" Some years later, she reflected that if Fritz Beebe had said "No" she would never have proceeded. Thus it was Beebe's openness to the claims of freedom of the press, despite his better judgment as a businessman, that made possible one of this era's great triumphs of free expression, allowing the *Washington Post* to speak truth to power.

This relates directly to my thoughts on literacy past and present because literacy is an accomplishment that leads sometimes to truth (not to mention freedom), sometimes to power, and sometimes to both. The various goals may be at odds. In such cases, we professors who strive to develop in students a capacity for clear, effective writing may be faced with a dilemma similar to Fritz Beebe's and Katharine Graham's regarding the Pentagon Papers — not so dramatically, of course, but nevertheless in a way that requires us to favor one path at the possible expense of the other.

It is because this dilemma may not always be fully conscious even among the teaching profession, much less among lay people who worry about literacy and illiteracy that I offer these thoughts.

By "illiteracy" at the tertiary level of education we of course do not mean the absolute inability to read and write but rather the inability to do so up to an acceptable standard. Nevertheless, I do want to dwell momentarily on the absolute inability to read or write, if only to help us avoid taking the ability for granted. The ancient Greeks actually regressed to a dark age of absolute illiteracy. Let this sobering fact remind us that our own literacy could also be lost, owing for example to a nuclear holocaust. In the case of the Greeks, what disappeared was a syllabic script on account of a holocaust that destroyed the Mycenaean palaces around 1100 B.C. The disappearance was facilitated by the fact that writing was done by a professional class of scribes, since "only a trained scribe could master [the] complexities" of syllabic script. Thus when the palaces where these scribes were employed were razed, the skill was lost.

It was the acquisition of a relatively simple alphabetical system about 300 years later that encouraged a much higher proportion of Greeks to become literate. This system was borrowed from the Phoenicians at a time when many Greek goldsmiths were apprenticed to Phoenician masters.

The earliest alphabetic inscription in Greek that we possess dates from around 740 B.C. Thus we can imagine, sometime before this — say roughly between 850 and 800 B.C. — “a hitherto illiterate Greek craftsman memorizing . . . the names of the Phoenician letters . . . [and] learning to associate each name with a sign drawn by his Phoenician instructor.” What a great moment! And not just for the Greeks but for us, too, because it was the Greeks who took the Phoenician alphabet, which included only consonants, and added to it signs for vowels, thus creating the first phonemically complete system. Furthermore, it was the Greek colonists in Italy who later taught the new alphabet to the Etruscans, who then taught it to the Romans, whose version we employ.

But the acquisition of the alphabet, great in itself, was even greater because of the uses to which the alphabet was put. Writing was no longer confined to a priestly class or to professional scribes; it was taught to every Greek citizen. This means, in turn, that writing was employed not merely for commercial lists, official records, and legal codes, as it had been in earlier civilizations. It was employed first and foremost for poetry — for Homer. Of course, early writing was put to other uses as well, some of which can hardly be called elevated. A favorite was homosexual advertisements on the inside bottom of drinking cups, usually ones found near gymnasiums. You’d drink the contents and then discover on the bottom a message like “Chromius is beautiful” or “Phylakidas is lewd.” Cups also bore name-tags such as “I am the cup of Aristokleidas; whoever steals me, may he become blind.” Or they bore the name of the potter. We also have bits of pottery called “a-be-ce-daria” on which eighth- and seventh-century Greeks practiced their newly acquired alphabet. Lastly, we have inscriptions that proudly declare, “I wrote this all by myself.”

But the earliest surviving Greek inscription, the one datable to around 740, is a line of poetry. It’s not Homer, yet at least it is in the Homeric epic meter, the dactylic hexameter. Another early inscription, on a cup made sometime before 720, consists of two hexameters. Neither of these cups proves that Homer was written down by 740 or 720, but they do prove that he could have been. I stress this because of what happened later, namely the use of poetry, primarily Homer, as the central text for educating Greeks not only in grammar but also in mores — the modes of behavior and the ethical principles regarded as essential for the class of free men who were Greek citizens. In sum, Greece was the birthplace not only of

our alphabet but also of our system of liberal education whose twin concerns continue to be literacy and mores.

I wanted, as I said, to dwell momentarily on absolute illiteracy lest we take literacy for granted. Knowing how it all started should help us to imagine what our lives would be like if we, too, like the Greeks, lost literacy altogether. It should also help us to value our own ability to write as if it were a newfound accomplishment ending a personal dark age. All our children ought to be inscribing in exultation, like those eighth- and seventh-century Greeks, “Look, mom, I wrote this all by myself.”

From here we can move to literacy in the other sense: the ability to read and write up to an acceptable standard. The concern we have today to develop and maintain such a standard has been the concern of teachers throughout Western history. We inherit it from the Greeks via the Romans. The earliest university was the Greek Academy in which Plato and other professors instructed young men destined to become, like Dartmouth students, leaders of society. These fortunate students were taught the seven skills appropriate for free men — that is, the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music. Another Greek university was the Lyceum, where Aristotle taught. Still another was the Museum at Alexandria, whose heart, like ours, was a library, in this case an immense one containing 700,000 volumes, and whose faculty members busied themselves doing research not only on the Homeric texts, which were standardized by Alexandrian philologists, but on mathematics, astronomy, and physics. The Museum lasted for 700 years, from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 391, the Academy for 916 years, from 387 B.C. to A.D. 529. The first fell victim to Christianity’s zeal for humble faith as opposed to worldly learning; indeed its magnificent library was burned by Egyptian monks. The second, too, was closed as a threat to Christianity.

Yet early Christian intellectuals — typically educated, before their conversion, in the liberal arts in pagan schools — soon became aware of literacy not just as a road to falsehood but as a two-edged sword useful for truth as well. The most famous example is Saint Augustine, who lived from 354 to 430. He started as a grammarian, *γραμματικός* in Greek — that is, in his own formulation, a “guardian of articulate utterance.” In addition, like all grammarians in antiquity and, of course, like all professors of English today, he was at the same time a teacher of literature and, as

such, a “guardian of tradition.” What we see in Augustine is precisely the conflict between power and truth that I mentioned at the start. He resigned his professorship in his early thirties because of his reluctance to “sell words” to his students, his resolve being that the young should “no longer buy at [his] mouth weapons” for their “madness.” What we see in Augustine’s resignation is testimony against the misuse of literacy for the wrong kind of power.

One might complain that Augustine is a special case because, in renouncing his role as a guardian of articulate utterance and also of tradition, he was in effect renouncing what he considered a false tradition, paganism, in order to espouse Christianity, in whose service, of course, he then placed all his own immense talent for articulate utterance. Yet the evidence shows that you do not need to be a Christian to conclude that literacy, in Roman society, tended to be more a servant of power than of truth. Nor, let it be added, were Christians themselves always so averse to power. We have, for example, a child’s baptismal prayer that says it as bluntly as one might wish: “Lord, grant me intelligence so that I may learn to read and write and overcome my comrades.”

This reminds me of an encounter I once had in the Yale Club in New York City. A man in his mid-thirties, extremely well dressed, approached me and said, “Professor Bien, remember me? I was an English major and had you for freshman composition about twenty years ago.” “And what are you doing now?” I asked. “I’m an investment banker; in fact I’ve just been promoted to vice president.” “Well, you probably regret not majoring in economics.” “Oh no, not at all. In fact, it’s precisely what you taught me in freshman composition that has enabled me to do so well in banking.” “Really?” “You see, in freshman composition we learned to research a literary topic quickly, to take a position, and to convince the professor by means of effective writing. In banking it’s the same. Those who get ahead are able to research a financial topic quickly, to take a position, and to convince their bosses through good writing.” I felt pleased. At last I had done something useful: I had helped this man to employ his intelligence to become powerful and rich by overcoming his comrades.

There are those who might argue that clear, effective writing, being a liberal art, ought to be treated not as a marketable skill but as a self-justifying good, and that we grammarians ought to be like the practitioners of pure science, devoted to exploring, and teaching to others, the inherent

laws of our discipline simply because they are so beautiful. There are others who will argue that the purpose of literacy is to further the truth. The debate is presented in a little poem by Don Marquis that fans of *Archy and Mehitabel* will recognize. It's called "a spider and a fly."

i heard a spider
and a fly arguing,
wait said the fly
do not eat me
I serve a great purpose
in the world

you will have to
show me said the spider

i scurry around
gutters and sewers . . .
said the fly and gather
up the germs of
typhoid influenza
and pneumonia on my feet . . .
then I carry these germs
into the households of men
and give them diseases
all the people who
have lived the right
sort of life recover
from the diseases
and the old soaks who
have weakened their systems
with liquor and iniquity
succumb it is my mission
to help rid the world
of these wicked persons
i am the vessel of righteousness
scattering seeds of justice
and serving the noblest uses

it is true said the spider
that you are more
useful in a plodding
material sort of way
than I am but I do not
serve the utilitarian deities
i serve the gods of beauty
look at the gossamer webs
I weave they float in the sun
like filaments of song
if you get what i mean . . .
it is ridiculous to suppose
that i should be denied
the food I need in order
to continue to create
beauty I tell you
plainly mister fly it is all
damned nonsense for that food
to rear up on its hind legs
and say it should not be eaten

you have convinced me.
said the fly say no more
and shutting all his eyes
he prepared himself for dinner
and yet he said i could
have made out a case
for myself too if I had
had a better line of talk

Like it or not, grammarians have tended to side with the fly, not the spider. For the Greeks and especially the Romans, the study of language and literature was not meant to be “pure.” Good learning and good mores were considered inseparable. Schooling was meant to serve both ethical and utilitarian deities, the particular ethical qualities emphasized being those that were “conducive to stability and hierarchy,” conducive in other words to the maintenance of power by the governing class. The Roman

grammarian was embedded in a social system where what mattered were wealth, distinction, and eloquence amid a population vastly poor, anonymous, and illiterate. Whatever its other shortcomings, the grammarian's school did one thing superbly, providing the language and mores through which a social and political elite recognized its members.

These mores may be seen in a treatise by the grammarian Macrobius written around 430. The principal virtue here is *diligentia*: the “willingness to . . . behave with energetic scrupulousness in performing one's duty.” The opposite quality — that is, the quality that threatens stability and hierarchy — is *ingenium*: individual, idiosyncratic brilliance. Proper training in literacy was meant to inculcate diligence and not ingeniousness. What we are dealing with is a complementary relationship between nobility and learning. In a threefold way — first, by developing skills in analysis, interpretation, and expression; second, by awakening in students a reverence for tradition through the interpretation of classical texts; third, by inculcating ethical attitudes consistent with the mores of a ruling elite — school became, after the family, “the single most important institution . . . through which the governing classes . . . perpetuated and extended themselves.”

I have said very little so far about our own educational system even though my topic is supposed to be thoughts about literacy past *and present*. Need I say anything? Do we not already recognize ourselves in the foregoing description of schooling under the grammarians of ancient Rome — not in the whole, of course, but at least in part?

If we fail to see any connection in terms of our method of teaching literacy via the interpretation of literature, our obeisance (at least until very recently) to classical texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the rewards we give to students who are energetically scrupulous in performing their duty, our pride in training not academic specialists but a ruling elite who will be future captains of industry, banking, government, and the law — if we fail to see our affinity in these terms, positively, then at the very least let us recognize our connection with the ancient grammarians, negatively, in terms (1) of their marginal social position and (2) of their moments of despair.

Although literacy was so important to the ruling class, the man who conferred that attribute, the grammarian, like his descendant the professor of English today, was always a marginal figure, a social and financial

pauper in the world of the elite. We have ample testimony about this from the grammarians themselves. In fact, one way some of them managed not to perish, it seems, was to publish epigrams lamenting their condition. My favorite among these complainers is a certain Palladas who taught in Alexandria during the fourth century. He enjoyed a minor vogue in his time throughout the Greco-Roman world; one of his poems was even scratched as a graffito in a toilet in Ephesus, the ultimate proof of popular success for a poet, and even more so for a professor. His major problem was poverty. In one poem he plays with the opening of Homer's *Iliad*, the central text of his curriculum. Homer speaks of Achilles' "pernicious wrath." Thus Palladas writes: "When I became a grammarian, the wrath of Achilles brought to me pernicious poverty." Elsewhere, he plays with the double meaning of the word for "case": "I sell . . . all the cases in grammar, but myself am a miserable case of poverty." But he could also view his predicament with humor: "A grammarian's daughter, having known a man, gave birth to a child that was masculine, feminine, and neuter." Finally, worn out, he resigned. Yet even then he did not find peace. In the following poem he plays with the Greek words for "wife" and "grammar," *γαμετή* and *γραμματική*, respectively, which sound almost the same: "I cannot put up with a wife and with grammar, too, grammar that is penniless and a wife who is pigheaded. . . . I have just escaped grammar . . . but I cannot escape this man-eating bed-partner, for our marriage contract and Roman law prevent it."

I mentioned moments of despair. Augustine, Palladas, and other ancient grammarians testify to the recalcitrance of their students, who seemed less interested in learning than in getting a degree. But to illustrate the futility that we teachers of literacy sometimes still feel, let me move to a twentieth-century example. Here is an early poem by D. H. Lawrence, one more grammarian who eventually resigned:

LAST LESSON OF THE AFTERNOON

When will the bell ring, and end this weariness?
How long have they tugged the leash, and strained apart,
My pack of unruly hounds! . . .

I am sick, and what on earth is the good of it all?
What good to them or me, I cannot see!

So, shall I take

My last dear fuel of life to . . .
 kindle my will to a flame that shall consume
 Their dross of indifference . . . ?

I will not waste my soul and my strength for this. . . .
 What is the point of this teaching of mine, and of this
 Learning of theirs? It all goes down the same abyss.

What does it matter to me, if they can write
 A description of a dog, or if they can't?
 What is the point? . . .
 And yet I'm supposed to care, with all my might.

I do not, and will not; they won't and they don't; and that's all!
 I shall keep my strength for myself; they can keep theirs as well.
 Why should we beat our heads against the wall
 Of each other? I shall sit and wait for the bell.

Lawrence, of course, was not teaching at Oxford, Harrow, or any other elite institution nurturing its nation's future leaders. He was teaching in a working class school in England's coal mining district. This should remind us that the effort to develop the capacity for clear, effective writing is a democratic as well as an aristocratic enterprise.

The model I have presented so far, in this analysis of literacy as an accomplishment leading to power, is I trust correct for a place like Dartmouth, which inherits to some degree, via places like Oxford, the Roman aristocratic ethos. But it is correct only in part. Dartmouth and other prestigious private institutions of higher learning in America have inevitably been molded as well by the democratic forces that have produced mass public education in this country at all levels, including the tertiary. But are these democratic forces so different from the aristocratic ones? Let's examine them further.

The public education system as we know it is very recent; it developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. True, schools existed long before, as we have seen, but they were not required for everyone, and usually they were not funded and controlled by governments. Compulsory universal public education by the state came only with the spread

of the franchise in the second half of the nineteenth century, owing to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. The rulers knew that if everyone was going to vote then everyone would have to be taught to read in order to “think correctly.” An illiterate electorate was too scary for those in power, especially after large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants began coming to the United States. So the state, motivated it would seem by the “Orwellian paradox” that “compulsion create[s] liberty,” began to “compel citizens to send their children to school.” Those in power possessed either a genuine or a cynical faith in the ability of education to teach everyone to vote responsibly. At the same time, the development of industry and commerce required more and more workers, clerks, etc. who could add, subtract, multiply, divide, read, write — and, equally important, be well-behaved, punctual, industrious, obedient. An important factor in the eventual spread of free, compulsory education throughout the United States was the position taken by Horace Mann from 1842 onwards. Working in Massachusetts at the time, he sought “to show thrifty Yankees that education was a good investment.” As proof, he cited the testimony of businessmen who preferred educated over uneducated workers, and he concluded that “money spent on primary schooling gave an aggregate rate of return . . . of about 50 percent.” “Boston businessmen applauded him for proving that the common school was not only a nursery of souls, but a mine of riches.” By 1885, a Senate committee could report that both businessmen and employees across the nation “tended to agree that schooling increases the productivity and predictability of workers.”

Thus we can characterize the purposes of free, mass, public education as: economically, to train a work force capable of functioning in the increasingly complex modern system of production; politically, to produce an electorate capable of sustaining democratic government. What both of these purposes hide behind them is the implicit value of stability. Mass education is meant to produce people who, indoctrinated at an impressionable age in the dominant ideology, will not grow up to be troublemakers. The whole point is to teach just enough and not too much — enough to enable the graduates to function but not enough to make them overly critical, much less rebellious. Thus the ideal secondary educational system in an industrialized democracy is a mediocre one, an ideal in which the United States has of course succeeded brilliantly.

All this relates to Dartmouth and similar prestigious private institutions because they, too, despite their elitism, are embedded in a democratic society. Like mass compulsory education on the primary and secondary levels, mass non-compulsory education on the tertiary level, whether wholly state-funded, as at state universities, or partially, as at private institutions, has as its “central political purpose . . . to create citizens and legitimize the [democratic] state.” In the case of higher education, the goal is not only responsible voters but also responsible civil servants whether they are directly in government employ or indirectly in the infrastructure of banking, industry, commerce, the law, etc. that enables the state to function.

My point is this: Whether we view ourselves according to the aristocratic model or the democratic one, our efforts to champion literacy in the present, like the similar efforts of grammarians in both the remote and proximate past, are ineluctably political. Despite some liberal-arts rhetoric, learning is not pursued here for its own sake. We may profess, along with the spider of *Archy and Mehitabel* that we serve the gods of beauty or truth rather than utilitarian deities. We may pretend that the training we give in literacy is self-justifying. What we ought to realize, instead, is that now, as in both the elite and popular educational traditions we inherit, the study of language and literature is tied to ethical qualities that derive from the mores by which a social and political elite recognizes itself.

Is this wrong? Perhaps. But not necessarily. Let us transcend the simplistic dichotomy that views power and truth as implacable enemies. Reality is playful and devious. A Fritz Beebe, worrying about \$33 million in company stock, may paradoxically catalyze a triumph of free expression that speaks truth to power and eventually topples a president. A cadre of diligent governors devoted to stability and hierarchy may paradoxically open opportunities for the brilliant, idiosyncratic ingenuity that is diligence’s foil.

In any case, perhaps this is why we grammarians in places like Dartmouth struggle year after year, against all odds, to develop in our students a capacity for clear, effective writing. Palladas resigned and was left with his man-eating bed-partner. Augustine and D. H. Lawrence resigned to advance to greater glories. But we do not resign, and usually do not despair. Remaining social and financial paupers in the world of the elite, we sell all the cases of grammar and literature with a flame of concern

meant to consume our students' dross of either indifference or calculating self-aggrandizement. If we were naïve, we would believe ourselves apostles of truth or beauty. Not being naïve, we know ourselves servants of power, but continue nevertheless because we sense that power, like literacy itself, can sometimes be a two-edged sword.

At the very deepest level, however, we may persevere not so much because of anything connected with the effort to maintain literacy at an acceptable standard, but rather because of the specter I spoke of at the start when describing the Greeks' dark age: the specter of absolute illiteracy. Perhaps because we grammarians value writing so very much and are so very aware of the forces massed against it, we can, more easily than the layman, make the imaginative leap to a vision of the total deprivation of literacy. Suppose we lost our alphabet? Suppose we could no longer read or write at all? Would we still be human? Technically, yes, since humans possessed nothing but speech for eons before they acquired writing. But spiritually, culturally? Our civilized life since around 800 B.C., when the Greeks discovered the Phoenicians' consonantal alphabet and enriched it with signs for the vowels, has been so tied to literacy that it would be hard to think of ourselves as any longer human if literacy disappeared.

This, at any rate, is the insight given us by Samuel Beckett, with whom I wish to end, for it is fitting to end with one of the truly great virtuosi of language in our century. Beckett's moribundi in his remarkable trilogy *Molloy*. *Malone Dies*. *The Unnamable* are progressively stripped of all attributes of their humanity save one: the desire to write. To this they cling as the very guarantor of their existence. "I think, therefore I am," said Descartes. But thinking, which of course requires words, confers only individual, not collective being. To be as a society of connected individual thinkers we need writing. It is not that either language or writing is so perfect. They are imperfect, inexact, inauthentic, serving power as often as truth. But they are all we have.

That is why Beckett's final and most moribund narrator, who yearns with part of himself to escape language and enter the silence that is truly authentic, nevertheless realizes:

I'm in words, made of words, others' words, . . . I'm all these words,
all these strangers . . . coming together to say . . . that I am they . . .

words, they're all I have . . . there's nothing else, you must go on, that's all I know . . . you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any . . . , I can't go on, I'll go on.

*My inaugural lecture as the
Frederick Sessions Beebe '35
Professor in the Art of Writing
March 28, 1990*

Address to the Freshman Class

September 14, 1977

DEAN BLANK, Dean Rieser, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Class of 1981,

This week you are beginning the transition from public high school to university, and not to just any university, but to a private, liberal-arts, residential institution that happens to be elitist and prestigious, that is hard to get into, and that costs a great deal of money to attend. I thought it might be interesting, therefore, to talk today about the differences between high school and this kind of university, because the first thing you ought to realize before you begin classes is that Dartmouth is not a continuation of high school. Our kind of university has entirely different origins and purposes from those of high school. Its teachers have different professional expectations for themselves, and (we hope) its students will have a very different conception of their role than they had previously.

Let's talk about public high schools and private universities first as institutions. After that, we'll talk about the people in them. What are the origins of these two institutions, respectively, and what are the distinctive purposes of each? Those of you who went to independent schools will need to forgive me; I'm going to consider public schools only. But perhaps some of the things I say will sound familiar nevertheless.

The public education system as we know it is very recent; it developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ True, schools existed long before, but they were not required for everyone, and usually they were not funded and controlled by governments. Compulsory universal public education by the state came only with the spread of the franchise in the second half of the nineteenth century, owing (in this country) to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. The rulers knew that if everyone was going to vote (everyone at that time meaning, of course, every adult white male) then everyone would need to be taught

to read, and to “think correctly.” An illiterate electorate was simply too scary for those in power, especially after large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants began coming to the United States.² Those in power possessed either a genuine or a cynical faith in the ability of education to teach everyone to vote “responsibly.” At the same time, the development of industry and commerce in America and other advanced nations required more and more workers, clerks, etc. who could add, subtract, multiply, divide, read, write — and, even more importantly, be well-behaved, punctual, industrious, obedient. A great factor in the eventual spread of free, compulsory education throughout the United States was the position taken by Horace Mann from 1842 onward. Working in Massachusetts at the time, he sought “to show thrifty Yankees that education was a good investment.” As proof, he cited the testimony of businessmen who preferred educated workers over uneducated ones, and he concluded that “money spent on primary schooling gave an aggregate rate of return . . . of about 50 percent. . . . Boston businessmen applauded him for proving that the common school was not only ‘a nursery of souls, but a mine of riches.’” By 1885, a Senate committee could report that both businessmen and employees across the nation “tended to agree that schooling increases the productivity and predictability of workers.”³

So we may characterize the purposes of free, mass, public education as: (a) economically, to train a work force capable of functioning in the increasingly complex modern system of sustaining democratic government, (b) politically, to produce an electorate capable of sustaining democratic government. What both of these purposes hide behind them is the implicit value of stability. Mass education is meant to produce people who, fully indoctrinated at an early, impressionable age in the dominant ideology, will not grow up to be troublemakers. The whole point is to teach just enough and not too much — enough to enable the graduates to function, but not enough to make them critical, much less rebellious.⁴ Thus the ideal secondary education system in an industrialized democracy is a mediocre one — an ideal that has been brilliantly achieved in the United States.

The elitist, private university is very different in both origins and purpose, or at least we hope and pray it is, since it too is always under pressure to become a continuation of the kind of high school I have just described. Its origins are much older, predating both industrialism and the type of

mass democracy we now take for granted. These origins are both pagan and Christian. An early prototype was the Academy at Athens, where young men destined to be leaders of society came to listen to professors lecturing, or holding seminars, on philosophy, ethics, music, and the natural sciences. The one professor you have surely heard of was Plato (whose best-known student was Aristotle) but there were many other outstanding figures, which is hardly surprising when we realize that the Academy lasted for 916 years, from about 387 B.C. until A.D. 529, when — still flourishing — it was closed by the Byzantine emperor Justinian, who felt that pagan education threatened Christianity.

But this was surely not the only university in the ancient world. In Alexandria, Egypt, from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 391 we find the famous Mouseion, a university without students. Its center, like the center of modern universities, was a library, in this case a magnificent one of about 700,000 “books” (i.e., rolls) that attracted literary scholars, and also scientists like Euclid and Claudius Ptolemy, who busied themselves editing manuscripts, interpreting texts, and pursuing mathematical or astronomical experiments. Attached to the Mouseion was a medical school, whose facilities included “lecture halls, laboratories, observatories, . . . a dining hall, a park, and a zoo.”⁵ The Mouseion, like the Academy, fell victim to the early Christian zeal for humble faith as opposed to worldly learning. Nevertheless, it lasted for 700 years.

But Christianity, instead of killing the university, eventually absorbed it. The kind of person who needed an Academy or Mouseion we next find existing as a monk: once more close to a beloved library, once more engaged in scholarly pursuits, or at least those allowed by the Church. There is much in monasticism that has passed directly into the university as we know it: the cell-like dormitory rooms, the library carrels, the refectory, the chapel, the tranquility, the physical beauty of the cloister, the removal or at least postponement of any need to be economically productive or to engender children, the deliberate separation from the hustle and bustle of ordinary life, as well as a basic earnestness that I’ll return to later.

The monasteries, however, dedicated basically as they were to a life of prayer rather than to a life of scholarship, and severely limited in their areas of scholarly concern, could not equal the ancient universities. Nor could the cathedral schools that had developed in France and the Low Countries by the end of the eleventh century. These schools, like those of

Greece and Rome before them, taught the seven liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music—but did so, apparently, on a very elementary level. Universities came into being once again in medieval times in order to meet the needs of scholars and students who wished to pursue more advanced studies, needs that developed because Europe’s intellectual horizons were immensely broadened, in the twelfth century, when the Arabs enabled Europeans to know more extensively, among other things, Aristotle’s works, Euclid’s, and the astronomy of Claudius Ptolemy. The cathedral schools tried at first to meet this challenge, but the growing demands by the devotees of the liberal arts, as well as by members of the professions of law, medicine, and theology, led—from the eleventh century onward, but chiefly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—to the founding of the prototypes of our universities of today, which may be defined as corporations “for the conservation, dissemination, and advancement of learning, consisting of a group of schools, faculties, or colleges.”⁶

The University of Bologna had already been founded in 1088, specializing in law. The University of Paris evolved from the Cathedral School of Notre Dame, receiving a charter in 1200. “By 1231 it had developed into a corporation. . . . There were now four faculties, each under a dean: arts, canon law . . . , medicine, and theology.”⁷ The “university,” by the way, was in effect the totality of the organized body of masters, or in the case of Bologna, of students. “Historically, the word . . . has no connection with the . . . universality of learning.” It means that masters or students—or, in our own day, masters and students—conceive of themselves as a single, indivisible body or fellowship, a *universitas societas magistrorum discipulorum-que* [a total fellowship of professors and students]. Colleges developed at the same time. The college (Latin *collegium*, meaning “fellowship”) was originally just an endowed hall of residence, the object of the founders being “simply to secure board and lodging for poor scholars who could not pay for it themselves; but in course of time the colleges became normal centres of life and teaching, absorbing into themselves much of the activity of the university.”⁸ The Collège de la Sorbonne, for example, was opened in Paris around 1255 to provide quarters for theological students who were not monks. University College, Oxford (where, I’m happy to say, many illustrious Dartmouth graduates have resided in recent years), dates from 1249, Merton College from 1264, but the actual university in

Oxford began even earlier, when bands of young scholars congregated around the learned monks and teachers of that city.

“By the end of the Middle Ages at least eighty universities had been founded in different parts of Europe” in response to the growth of learning originally initiated in the twelfth century by the Arabs.⁹ The liberal arts moved upward, as we have seen, out of the schools and into the universities—or, more accurately, the schools were left to concentrate on only one of the seven liberal arts, grammar. Thus we get the “grammar school,” whose main purpose was to train students in the language they would need at university: Latin. The Faculty of Arts at the university produced teachers for these schools in a course of study normally lasting six years and leading to the degree of *Magister Artium*, Master of Arts, which means, literally, “Teacher of Arts,” and was in effect a license to teach. The bachelor’s degree was obtained somewhere along the way; it certified that you were not a master of the subject but only a bona-fide “apprentice,” *baccalaureus*, in the arts. But arts graduates, then just as now, also went on to be candidates for advanced degrees in law, medicine, or theology. Note that the term “degree” (Latin *gradus*, “step”) had—and still has, though we often forget this—its literal force of one of a succession of steps, as on a thermometer. You reached the “degree” of bachelor, then the degree or step of master, finally that of doctor (which again means simply “teacher”).

What we see already in the medieval university, then, is a preparation via the liberal arts either for teaching them to the next generation of students, or for continuing to qualification in one of the other learned professions. In short, we see an extension of the original Greek liberal arts system, passed on to the Romans and absorbed by the Church: the system of general rather than strictly professional education at the baccalaureate level. To gain proficiency in writing, speaking, and thinking logically, through a study of classical poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, was considered the proper preparation for whatever role one was to play in later life. These were the general “skills” (the Latin meaning of “arts” is “skill” or “technique”) for those who wished to pursue professions or to become political leaders—in other words, for those who were free men (Latin *liberalis* derives from *liber*, meaning “free”) and who therefore by definition were expected to take part in the culture and government of their society.

The kind of impetus resulting from the first revival of Greek learning, in the twelfth century, was repeated even more vigorously in the fifteenth

century because of the even more extensive revival of Greek learning that we call the Renaissance. What had filtered down before then had come via the Romans and Arabs; the actual Greeks, after Athens and Alexandria had died as cultural centers, carried on their scholarship and preserved their texts in their own Eastern monasteries and chiefly at the brilliant imperial court at Constantinople, despite the anti-paganism of the Greek Church. (Yet the Church itself helped to preserve ancient culture because of its firm adherence to the original Greek of the New Testament and also to the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament [ca. 280–130 B.C.].) When, in the fifteenth century, Constantinople and other centers of Greek learning were threatened and eventually conquered by the infidel Turk, many of the Greek monks and scholars moved West, chiefly to Italy, where they carried texts that had been lost to the West. In Italy, they translated these hitherto unknown Greek texts into Latin and, most importantly, taught Western scholars to read Greek, so that they too could encounter the classical texts at first hand. As a result, Western scholars of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were exposed to ever-widening areas of learning in their respective fields.

The jurists acquired a better knowledge of the meaning and historical context of Roman law. . . . The physicians, mathematicians, astronomers, and geographers . . . enhanced their knowledge by a study of the more advanced Greek treatises on their subjects — particularly [those by] Hippocrates and Galen, Archimedes and Diophantus [the father of algebra], Ptolemy and Strabo, of [which] this period produced either new or first translations. The philosophers improved their understanding of Aristotle and acquired for the first time a comprehensive knowledge . . . of Plato and the Neoplatonists, of Stoic, Epicurean, and Skeptic philosophy, and of the large body of Greek popular thought represented by such writers as Lucian or Plutarch — all sources not accessible in the Middle Ages in the West. Finally, the theologians applied classical knowledge to a textual study of the Greek New Testament, of the Greek and Latin church fathers, and occasionally of the Hebrew Old Testament.¹⁰

These last-mentioned implications of the fifteenth-century Renaissance — the religious ones — were to have immense consequences, especially when the newly enriched Western humanism moved from Italy into

the northern parts of Europe, consequences that were to form the direct background to the establishment of the first universities in America, one of which you are now entering. I am referring of course to the relationship between classical humanism and the Protestant Reformation. The passion for truth, and the scholarly techniques inherited by Renaissance humanists from the Greeks, led to opposition against Roman Catholic indoctrination. Erasmus, a precursor who remained Roman Catholic but who attacked the abuses of the Church, received his liberal arts education at the University of Paris and produced in 1516 a revised edition of the Latin New Testament, based on the original Greek text. Zwingli, humanistically educated at Basel, Bern, and Vienna, initiated Protestantism in Switzerland when he lectured on the New Testament using Erasmus's edition, his point being that believers should look to the Bible itself as the center of their faith, should investigate it themselves employing all the scrupulosity of the scholar, as opposed to accepting blindly the Church's interpretations. In Germany, the intense interest in the new humanistic learning led in 1502 to the founding of the University of Wittenberg, which nurtured Protestantism. Luther arrived there in 1508 in order to study, and to lecture on Aristotle, after having received his training in liberal arts first at the cathedral school at Erfurt and then at the local university, where he took his M.A. and then began the study of law, which he interrupted on account of a sudden religious experience that led him to enter an Augustinian monastery. He then completed his doctorate in theology at Wittenberg, where, as we have seen, he also began to teach. Preparing for his lectures, he studied Scripture intensely and, in 1513, arrived at his theological position of justification by faith alone. In 1517 he protested abuses by the Church; soon afterward, as a direct consequence of his humanistic learning, he denied that the Pope was the final interpreter of Scripture. If we turn to Calvin, we see a similar story. Like Erasmus, he studied at Paris, first theology, then, commencing in 1531, classics and Hebrew. Under this humanistic influence he began to question traditional doctrines and, from 1533 onward, devoted himself to the Reformation.

Although the Reformation obviously had political, social, and economic causes as well as the intellectual and theological ones I have been describing, it is safe to say that the liberal learning in the universities was a major factor. After Protestantism established itself in northern Europe and also in Scotland and England, the university's role in theological

training became more important than ever, since Protestant ministers were required to be able to interpret the Bible from the original texts and from the early church fathers — which meant that they needed to be proficient in Greek, Latin, and also Hebrew. At the same time, these events also strengthened the place of the liberal arts in Roman Catholic schools and universities, especially in Jesuit institutions from the 1540s onward, under the impetus of the Counter Reformation, since Catholics had to be able to deal with the Protestant criticisms.

All this forms the immediate background to the establishment of the first nine colleges in our own country. They were modeled for the most part on the British colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, and all of them except the College and Academy of Philadelphia (1755), the future University of Pennsylvania, were originally intended for training Protestant clergymen of a particular sect. Thus Harvard was incorporated in 1636 by the Puritans, William and Mary in 1693 by the Anglicans, Yale in 1701 by the Congregationalists, Princeton in 1746 by the Presbyterians, Columbia (King's College) in 1754 by the Anglicans, Brown in 1756 by the Baptists, and Rutgers in 1766 by the Dutch Reformed Church. Dartmouth, as we know, began to function in 1770, after Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregationalist minister, was able to raise money for the purpose of training Native Americans to become missionaries and teachers among their own tribes. Needless to say, all of these colleges, already classically humanistic in their approach to theological training, sooner or later extended their curricula to embrace advanced education in the remaining liberal arts, as well as in professions such as medicine and law.

The private university as we know it today — although obviously a great deal has happened since the eighteenth century — is still recognizable as an amalgam of: (a) the Athenian Academy, where general, liberal arts education was first used as a preparation for society's leaders; (b) the Alexandrian Mouseion, where scholars joined together to advance their fields of study; (c) the medieval universities, where the Greek heritage was preserved, and the liberal arts and the professions were carried to more advanced levels; and (d) the Renaissance and Reformation universities, where the passion for scholarly accuracy and integrity led to social revolution.

In this amalgam we begin to observe the fascinating diversity of the university. While on the one hand this institution is by nature a conser-

vative one, dedicated in part to keeping the past alive, and embodying a continuous tradition stretching back to classical times, on the other hand, in its devotion to truth, the university is one of the most progressive forces in society, forever discovering new ideas, and forever being a seedbed for change.

All this is of course miles away from the necessarily mediocre American high school, which is meant to be a dike opposed to change, while at the same time being susceptible to every latest fashion because it is cut off from any great tradition.

The key to this essential difference in purpose between the private university and the public high school is of course the very different relation of these two institutions to the state, a difference resulting from the very different origins that we have just examined. I'll emphasize once again that in the long history of the origins of our twentieth-century private centers of higher learning—a history involving the Academy, the Mouseion, monasteries, cathedral schools, medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation universities—the state did not play a role similar to the one it played in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in relation to compulsory secondary education. The early universities of course received royal charters, and sometimes were founded for quasi-political reasons by heads of state, but the truest initiatives came from students, as in the case of Bologna, or more generally from masters or private patrons, and the institutions were very largely self-governing.¹¹ I confess once more that my account omits important developments since the eighteenth century—for example, the spread of land-grant, government-controlled universities in this country. I have purposefully concentrated on private universities, on the one hand, and public schools, on the other, for the obvious reason that all of you have chosen a private over a public university and most of you have prepared at public rather than private secondary schools.

To return, then, to the diverse purposes of private universities and public high schools: Whereas the goal of secondary education is indoctrination in the dominant ideology in order to achieve the wider goal of social stability and docility, the goal of higher education is discovery of truth. This means—almost by definition, alas—that the university will be critical of the state. It will examine and expose the state's failures, its hypocrisy, its distortions of history, its euphemisms, its immorality. In high school you learn the "authorized" version, for example, of the American Revolu-

tion, a half-truth at best; in college you are exposed to various refutations of this nice, safely patriotic version, and are asked to decide for yourselves what really happened. In high school you must welcome, willy-nilly, Army, Navy, and Air Force recruiters during wartime, and quite properly, since secondary education is an arm of the state, whereas in private universities, if truth leads you that way, you can campaign for the abolition of ROTC and can protest openly against what you consider an improper foreign policy.

Why does the state stand for all this? Why does it permit the private universities to exist, when the very purpose of higher education is to produce critical intelligence rather than docile acceptance? Surely the answer is not that the private university is stronger than the state. On the contrary, we enjoy our independence largely on sufferance, because of a kind of gentleman's agreement by which the state, which could doubtlessly crush us if it chose, chooses rather to look the other way (most of the time). Why the state permits us to exist, why it stands for all we say against it in the name of truth, can be answered either cynically or idealistically. The cynical answer is that the state assumes the university's failure to live up to its own ideals — assumes that the critical minds will constitute only two percent, let's say, of faculty and students, whereas ninety-eight percent will remain docile, vitiating the university's true purposes and transforming it into an "advanced high school." The idealistic answer — and let us hope that this one, not the other, will always characterize the state's relation to Dartmouth — involves a government's awareness that complete stability, complete docility and acceptance, lead to a decrease in vigor; that vigor in any social or political organism is a product of tension; and that here precisely is the beneficial social role played by universities within their larger, national context: to provide tension, to criticize, to dare to be better than the rest of society, and thereby to threaten the status quo. Enlightened states, realizing the value of all this, allow the university to go its own way (most of the time). We have the good fortune to live in a relatively enlightened state and therefore we continue to enjoy a relatively large amount of intellectual independence — although always, let us remember, on sufferance. In any case, insofar as universities give way to the state, they are mockeries. Our purpose is not indoctrination, but the conservation, dissemination, and advancement of learning in the interests of truth.

Strangely, our rather arrogant stance of intellectual independence

is based on our churchly origins as well as on our traditional separation from state control. I say “strangely” because one could easily claim that the sectarian universities in this country originally considered religious indoctrination, rather than free thought, to be their primary goal. But we have already noted how quickly the humanistic impetus behind the strong religious fervor resulting in the Reformation broadened the curriculum of Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, and the rest, so that the narrow goal of producing Protestant ministers became subsumed beneath the broader scholarly purposes of conserving and advancing knowledge. Further developments in the direction of secularization — part of a general trend in Western society, to be sure — separated all of our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century universities from their sectarian beginnings. Now, of course, we are no longer the instrument of any church, despite our origins. In this sense, Plato’s Academy has eclipsed the monastic part of our heritage. We are secular, pagan, defiantly humanistic, by which I mean that the truths we seek are related primarily to the natural world in which we live and to our own earthly existence, as opposed to any supernatural world and to any existence after death. We are humanistic in the original sense of that word, because we celebrate not the glory or grandeur of God but the miracle of human culture and of human understanding.

Despite all this, our churchly origins do contribute to our present stance of intellectual independence, and especially to our rather arrogant attitude toward the state. In short, they too explain, and help define, our purposes. Obviously, I am not now referring to any of the medieval trappings that still remain — gowns, refectories, and the like. I am referring, instead, to the monastic earnestness and perhaps even the piety that continue to characterize the university even in the twentieth century. The monastery believed it was serving something infinitely important: God. Similarly, the university believes (perhaps blasphemously) that it too is serving something infinitely important: truth. Furthermore, the religious people knew that their service to God could not be fulfilled simply by proper doctrine; doctrine had to be reflected in behavior, faith had to manifest itself in morality. The monastery — indeed the Church as a whole — was a society on earth that attempted to approach the quality of society in the heavenly kingdom. Similarly, one of the purposes of a university such as Dartmouth is to attempt to exemplify and embody a total lifestyle that is civilized: moral, peaceful, compassionate, rational, beautiful. Like the

monastery, we dare to be better — that is our arrogance. Consider just one very visible example, the university campus. In its beauty and tranquility, its symmetries, monuments, trees, sculptures, and greens, not to mention the opulence of its academic, cultural, and recreational edifices, the campus is the City of God brought down to earth — a way of stating to the rest of society, “Your towns are designed by greed and crass utility, whereas our university-city escapes most of that, becoming the proper environment for humankind at its best, its most ‘angelic.’” The campus bodies forth the very meaning of the university. It is our most visible daily reminder that learning, because based on rationality, is most broadly an attempt to be civilized, and that the intellectual life is therefore a mockery if it does not make us better human beings. Consistent with our monkish heritage, we believe that doctrine must be reflected in behavior. Universities call us to a total manner of existence that is quintessentially civilized, something obviously untrue of high schools.

Pursuing the university’s purposes still further, as those purposes have developed out of higher education’s historical relationship to church and state, we must note that the private university, as opposed to the public high school, is, in both theory and practice, clearly undemocratic. Its most fervent desire is to escape the mediocrity of mass culture. Universities like Dartmouth are selective, hierarchical, prestigious, elitist, and expensive. They offer the kind of education that has been, and continues to be, the education of gentlemen (and we now add with pleasure: ladies). Institutions such as Dartmouth are endowed and maintained by the rich. The beauty and opulence all around us are made possible by persons of private wealth who are happy to continue their support because they rely on institutions such as ours to enable the ruling segment of society to reproduce itself educationally each generation. Everyone’s expectation is that all Dartmouth graduates, including yourselves, will be leaders, not followers, possessing a disproportionate, undemocratic share of money, power, and knowledge compared with the general population.

I realize that I am describing the university’s elitism in a way that will be repugnant to many of you. Let us remember, however, that our task here is to speak truth. The truths in this case are that private universities cannot exist without private money, and that money is always given in exchange for some expected benefit. I do not wish to suggest that we have delivered our souls over to Mammon. We have merely entered into a delicate

relationship with that seductively attractive individual, a relationship in which we hope that he, on the contrary, may deliver part of his soul over to us. Our hope is that he may desire from us, in exchange for his benefactions, a future aristocracy of talent rather than of only power and wealth. Our hope is that he may accept as gentlemen and ladies of Dartmouth not simply those who happen to be on top of the financial heap, or to come from a socially prominent family, but men and women who possess, in the words of Cardinal Newman, “a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life,” and who “never inflict . . . pain” on others.¹² In short, the university tries to be elitist and aristocratic in the best sense of those terms rather than in the worst. This means, of course, that to the extent it opens its doors to all strata of society, welcoming talent from whatever background, and to the extent a person’s university in many ways has more power than any other factor in his or her life to confer “pedigree,” the university is actually extremely democratic in its elitism. Yet our egalitarian gestures must not be confused with a basically democratic philosophy. The university is dedicated to the proposition that all human beings are created unequal, and it attempts to increase rather than minimize that inequality, by bringing talented men and women up to the very top of their natural potential.

I HAVE SPOKEN all this time about the university as an institution, examining its origins and purposes in relation to those of the public high school. It was important to begin with the institution rather than with the people in it, because the institution in its collectivity determines what the people in it, as individuals, should be like. There it stands, ancient and seemingly immortal. We individuals merely enter it, remain a short while — forty-odd years at most in the case of faculty, four or at most eight or ten years in the case of students — and leave. Entering it, we are meant to accept and cherish at least some of the characteristics that shaped it historically. By doing so, we help the university to continue to be itself. The beginning of success in this endeavor is the realization that we are all part of something bigger and more important than ourselves.

The people in a university are faculty, students, administrators, support staff (secretaries, technicians, etc.) and service employees (groundskeepers, carpenters, cooks, electricians, custodians). I am going to speak only

about faculty and students: faculty first and students second, because you are second in importance in a university, compared to the faculty. Universities can exist — have existed, do exist at this moment — without students, but a university without a faculty is unthinkable, since a great university today, just like the Mouseion of ancient Alexandria, is still most basically a magnificent library around which intellectuals of all disciplines flutter like moths as they pursue their scholarly or creative endeavors. Teaching is usually a factor as well, but in the university, as opposed to the high school, teaching is motivated by scholarship and thus in a very real sense is secondary. I noticed the other day an announcement in a professional journal soliciting applicants for a vacant professorship of the history of philosophy at a university in Holland. The announcement described in some detail the nature of the field, and then went on to say: “The nominee will be expected (1) to conduct and stimulate research in the above-mentioned field, (2) to teach introductory and advanced courses.” Note the order of priority. The reverse order would be unthinkable, and indeed if the order had been reversed, no self-respecting scholar would apply. The announcement continued — weakly, almost apologetically: “An interest in, and some experience with, modern teaching methods will be appreciated.” But it was entirely firm when it concluded: “Applicants should have a doctorate and should have published on the subject.”

So your faculty at Dartmouth, or at any other comparable university, is a different kettle of fish from the typical teaching staff at a high school. Typically, high school teachers do not aspire to advance the subject they teach, nor are they expected to. Their professional pride comes from the level of competence to which they can bring their students, and also (though they may not realize this) from the degree to which they convince their students to accept certain modes of thought and behavior approved by society at large. Those are not our purposes, although many people outside the university would like to impose such purposes upon us. On the contrary, very often we demand a salary for saying precisely what our employers, the Board of Trustees, do not want said.¹³ Our professional pride may come secondarily from the level of competence to which we happen to bring you, but it comes primarily from our contribution, however small, to the advancement of our fields of study.

Whom or what do we serve, then? Not the state, surely, not God any longer, and certainly not you, but the field — and, ultimately, the human

intellect. We the faculty are the inheritors, continuers, and transmitters of that double tradition, pagan and Christian, I described earlier. As such, we bring to our fields two opposite but complementary characteristics: playfulness and piety. The playfulness is Greek, deriving from the highest wisdom bequeathed us by Socrates: “I know one thing, that I know nothing.” Knowing this, the lover of wisdom, the “*philo-sophos*,” cherishes above all the play of the mind for its own sake: the process of learning, rather than what is learned. But complementing this playfulness is a piety that is Christian, and Talmudic. It is the outward show of our inward conviction that what we are doing is infinitely important.¹⁴ One effect of this piety is that professors do not think of themselves as holding a job. Instead, they are practicing a calling or vocation in the religious sense of those terms (are “*professing*” in the religious sense of that term, as we shall see in a moment), and they display toward the life of the mind and their chosen fields the same kind of awe, reverence, and dedication and even fear that ministers, priests, or rabbis display in their vocation. Regarding those words “*professing*” and “*professor*,” it may help if we recall some etymology. The words derive from the Latin *profiteer*, meaning “to acknowledge openly,” and they were regularly used in a religious way in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One “*professed*” Mohammedanism or Christianity — i.e., one publicly declared allegiance. A “*professor*” was someone who openly announced his belief in a particular faith. Although now in our secular society the term “*professor*” has been narrowed to mean only someone who publicly announces his skill in a field of study, even today something of the solemnity of the earlier meaning of the word adheres to the professoriate and to the profession in which professors profess.

Playfulness and piety, then. The two characteristics are decidedly opposite, but each acts as a check against the other, which is why they are complementary. The playfulness without the piety could easily degenerate into dilettantism or triviality, whereas the piety without the playfulness could become fanatical, messianic, or ridiculously self-important. Our effort is to strike a balance.

So, in our piously playful manner, we exercise the human intellect in our chosen fields. You might say that we are dedicated to the life of ideas; indeed I will be sufficiently bold to profess openly that we on university faculties are intellectuals, that we constitute a significant portion of the American intelligentsia. It was Max Weber who made the distinction

between living for ideas and living off them.¹⁵ The intelligentsia of any nation, by definition, live for ideas, not off them. In other words, we on university faculties, as openly professing intellectuals, do not pursue our subjects primarily in order to make a living, or to gain power, or even to solve the world's problems. Let's profess openly that we are extraordinarily impractical, something for which I do not wish to apologize, since impracticality is also precisely at the center of the concept of a liberal arts education, which does not aim to enable a person to live off ideas (although practical results may occur incidentally) but rather aims to initiate her or him — playfully, piously — into the intellectual life where the play of the mind is loved for its own sake.

What do we impractical moths actually do as we flutter day and night around Dartmouth's libraries, laboratories, and studios, or pursue our disciplines literally in the field? I'll give some examples, taken at random from the recent activities of my Dartmouth colleagues.

Item: We sit at a desk and struggle to solve a mathematical problem. Why? Because it exists, and no one has solved it. And if no unsolved problem is at hand, we struggle to invent one. Item: We fly during our vacations to a godforsaken village in Pakistan, five years in a row, suffering diarrhea, sweltering heat, bedbugs, and return with two bones. But they happen to be the perfectly preserved upper and lower jaw of an apeman 9,000,000 years old. Item: We gaze through a telescope in Arizona until we cannot see straight, and then suddenly note something that no one else has ever seen before: a new star in the heavens. Item: We are convinced that beneath the wallpaper of every eighteenth-century Vermont house there is a mural painted by a folk artist. We investigate, and write a book on wall-painting in New England. Item: We send experiments up in satellites in an attempt to learn more about electromagnetic waves, then sit for years puzzling over the data. Item: We are convinced that an arctic explorer was murdered by his companions, although the official account says that he died of disease. So we go to the North Pole, dig up his body, and discover arsenic in the remains. Item: We manage to translate a novel whose language is so special that two previous attempts at translation had been abandoned. Item: We pore over the real estate records of a slum ward in Philadelphia and from them reconstruct the effect of the Depression on the black middle class. Item: We wonder about the connection, if any, between painting and literature in nineteenth-century England, and write

a book that records our discoveries in that area. Item: We compose music, write poetry, paint pictures, sculpt statues. . . .

I needn't go on. The point is that the faculty of a university spends its time in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge or in the practice of artistic creativity, not primarily to accomplish some ulterior goal, but simply because, in our earnest way, we cherish the play of the mind for its own sake. We live for ideas, not off them. We serve not the state, not God, not you, but the human intellect.

Now if any of you already possess some of that critical intelligence that we hope you will encounter in abundance in the university, you may be saying to yourselves that the intellectual life as I have described it is really quite reprehensibly decadent, despite all the religious analogies you have been hearing. You may be saying to yourselves that these faculty people are just highbrow hedonists, gorging themselves on ideas in a way no different from the way other people gorge themselves on food, sex, power, athletics, money, danger, killing, drugs, or even television. "What is all the fuss about?" you may be asking. "Why all this inflated language about 'professing'?"

I want to answer these objections by trying now to articulate, in a slightly different manner, what we faculty are doing. I will grant you that each of us is pursuing the life of a gentleman (parasite?) — i.e., of a privileged soul relieved of any practical role in the production of goods or services — but I do not believe this to be as decadent as it might seem.

Let's begin the articulation by returning to the term "liberal arts." I have already mentioned that the word "arts" in the medieval formula *artes liberales* originally meant "skills." The narrowing of the term solely to the specific skills of music, literature, painting, and dance came later. Modern academic usage, alas, is quite confused, employing both the older and the newer meanings. When we speak of our entire Dartmouth curriculum as a liberal arts curriculum, we retain the broad meaning of the medieval formula, since we include mathematics, physics, psychology, sociology, and all the rest among the arts. But when we speak of our Faculty of Arts and Sciences we begin to approach the narrower, more modern meaning. To understand what the concept of liberal arts truly means, we must retain the broad definition. Only then can we appreciate the medieval distinction between *artes liberales* and *artes sordidae*, the latter signifying "manual labor" — literally, "sordid skills." Manual labor was the domain of the

“sordid” or servile elements of society whereas intellectual labor was the domain of the free man or woman. *Artes liberales* are skills appropriate for a freeman or gentleman. It was deemed proper for the slave to plough fields, dig ditches, attend to the practical business of life; free individuals, contrariwise, were “liberated” from all this: their sphere was that of human culture, not of human sustenance, and therefore they were meant to be concerned with philosophy, music, mathematics, theology, grammar — the liberal as opposed to the servile arts. The medieval nomenclature, by the way, goes back to Aristotle, who employs the adjective “free,” “liberal,” to characterize things sufficient unto themselves, not requiring to be justified by anything outside of themselves — in a word, “useless” and therefore, because useless, a luxury to be enjoyed only by free people, not slaves, who need to be useful in order to justify their existence.¹⁶

Pursuing this, and still attempting to articulate why we intellectuals are not as decadent as we might seem, I would like to think of our fields of study not only as “liberal” but as “liberating.” In the area of nomenclature, I wish that the entire curriculum at Dartmouth could be called the “liberating arts.”

Dean Rieser, knowing that I am hopelessly narrow in intellectual vision, took me aside earlier and adjured me to do homage to the natural sciences, which he called “the most liberating of man’s intellectual achievements.” He singled out the natural sciences because he is a physicist. But each one of us feels the same about his own infinitely valuable pursuit — feels that it is a liberating skill or art.

In what ways can an intellectual pursuit be liberating? I’d say in two ways, the first objective, the second subjective. Objectively, when we scholars do our thing here in the university, we liberate the objective material with which we are working. We release it from bondage and allow it to achieve its highest cultural or spiritual potential. A scholar liberates his materials of study because, by the very process of investigating or interpreting those materials, he frees them from the bondage of meaninglessness, enabling them therefore to play a role in human culture. When one of my colleagues brings home from Pakistan the perfectly preserved jawbones of an apeman drowned in a flood nine million years ago, when another discovers a new star, another interprets a difficult poem, another makes sociological sense out of the real estate transactions in a black ghetto of Philadelphia, in each case the professor has taken a natural or

cultural fact that had existence but no meaning, and has released it from the prison of its mere existence. Similarly, the creative artist — a musical composer, for example — releases his materials (sounds, in this case) from the prison of incoherent randomness, liberating them to actualize their spiritual potential for harmony and form.

Do not confuse these kinds of liberation with anything utilitarian. If I take a rock from a field and cement it into a foundation or wall, the practical man will say that I have liberated the rock from uselessness, enabling it to accomplish some purpose outside of itself, such as holding up a house or keeping sheep inside a fold. But I am saying something quite different — namely, that the scholar, scientist, or creative artist in a liberal arts university liberates the rock *to be itself*, its fullest self: in this case, to show forth not only its mere existence but its “rockiness” — solidity, firmness, longevity — all the attributes that give it meaning in human culture. Whether the rock also serves some utilitarian purpose in actualizing itself in this way is a secondary matter, and not what primarily motivates the intellectual efforts of humanistic scholars or creative artists.

Since scholars or creative artists liberate the materials with which they deal, we may speak of such pursuits as objectively liberating. But this very same process of investigation or artistic creation is also subjectively liberating, since it liberates not only the objects of study but also the persons who study those objects, the persons who bring their subjectivities to bear upon the objective world outside them. Why can this subjective activity be called liberating? Because to be human is to think, but not just to think for practical reasons. Lots of lower beings live off ideas, are ingenious in arranging the practical necessities of their lives; but only human beings are capable of pursuing thought for its own sake, which means for the sake of pure, disinterested understanding. A person who does not think in this impractical way, who uses thought only to gain food, money, or power — any ulterior goal that reduces thought to mere instrumentality — such a person is wholly or partially enslaved, i.e., denied the full actualization of his or her human potential. The pursuit of the liberal arts — impractical philo-sophia or love of wisdom for its own sake — liberates the human being, like the stone previously cited, from the bondage of mere physical existence. At the same time, because thinkers enlarge the world’s store of liberated objects, both natural and cultural, and because they simultaneously enhance their own humanness, they therefore very often make

possible immense practical advances as well; but they are *never* enslaved by practicality. Practical consequences may ensue, yet they are never the primary goal.

This way of articulating the pursuits of a university faculty will, I hope, make those pursuits seem less decadent than they otherwise might. Viewed in this way, scholarship is an impractical experiment in subjective and objective liberation. Engagement with the liberal arts, as one of my old professors at Columbia, Mark Van Doren, has so felicitously stated, frees us “from the animal within, [and] from the enigma without.”¹⁷ The miracle is that hardheaded businesspeople like your parents and our Dartmouth Board of Trustees are willing to pay us for being so obstinately useless.

Finally we come to you, the students. It seemed to me impossible to define your role at Dartmouth, and the very great transition required from your previous role in high school, without first talking at such length about the two institutions as institutions and then about the drives and motivations of a university faculty. From all I have said, you will realize that you are not necessarily wanted here. The university consists of libraries, laboratories, studios, and a collection of intellectuals playing piously with ideas. If anything, you tend to get in the way: a bunch of nuisances interrupting our scholarship and creativity. Of course we need you to foot the bill; though our heads are in the clouds, our feet are still on the ground at mealtime. The ideal university would be one in which you paid your tuition, received a week of orientation, and then went home again until next year, allowing us to get on with our work.

“Scandalous!” you’ll say. But things are not that bad, really. We will suffer your presence. We will teach you, begrudgingly at times, but perhaps at times with real enthusiasm and pleasure if you allow us to teach you in the spirit of the liberal arts ideal.

Actually, we will teach you in any case, for lesser reasons. Teaching is generally easier for us than scholarship. We can get away with more in the classroom, in oral give and take, than we can in print. The satisfactions are more immediate, compared to the years and years it sometimes takes to complete a scholarly project. An audience of students is generally more appreciative and responsive than an audience of our peers. Products as you are of that brilliantly mediocre system of secondary education I spoke of before, you are all sufficiently ignorant so that, no matter how ignorant we are, you will consider us learned — and this makes us feel important. Quite

aside from all this, and the money you bring with you, it is pleasant for us to be with young people. You look so much nicer than our colleagues (although you don't always smell so nice); your freshness, your vitality, your delicious idealism founded on naïveté, your pure animal spirits — all these are a tonic to our aged bones. So we will teach you with a certain enthusiasm now and then, just because teaching is a form of relaxation from the oppressive rigor of the scholarly pursuit. In some cases, moreover, we may be able to bring our scholarship and our teaching together so that teaching need not be either a threat to our scholarship or, worse, an excuse for scholarly torpor. In such cases you won't be quite such nuisances after all, since you will enable us to try out new ideas before committing them to print. Especially in the sciences, where teams of researchers are common, you may actually participate in the professor's research. And, in any field, you may give the professor the pleasure of foreseeing himself reproduced in you as he watches with pleasure your research, however elementary, and imagines you as one of a future generation of professors.

But none of these reasons is enough, in an undergraduate liberal arts institution, to explain the really genuine enthusiasm for teaching that you assuredly will find among faculty members, even though our primary sense of worth and achievement comes not from teaching but from research. There is a further reason, a crucial one that depends largely on you, since it will become a factor only if you allow it to become one. We will teach you with genuine enthusiasm if you permit us to sense in you the true "philo-sophia": the love of—thirst for—knowledge deriving from your exhilaration at the free play of your minds as, helped by our guidance, they engage with natural or cultural materials, liberating them and at the same time liberating yourselves. If you allow this to happen, you will no longer be impediments or nuisances at all, but will become our colleagues in liberal learning.

Of course, collegiality does not develop all at once, but gradually. First, from our point of view, you will be another enslaved rock, jawbone, or untranslated novel waiting to be liberated from mere existence into a self-consciously thinking existence, i.e., into humanness. But as that liberation takes place—as you become more actively intellectual—you in turn will begin to liberate other objects outside yourselves, in the very process liberating yourselves as well, and will thereby enter into collegiality with your faculty, who are doing exactly the same.

What I am attempting to do should be obvious by now. I am attempting to define the good student in terms of the good professor, whose own goodness must be defined, remember, in terms of the liberal arts university in its institutionality, as it evolved over more than two thousand years. I spoke earlier of the campus as an ever-visible sign of the university's goals, but the professoriate should manifest those goals in a deeper if perhaps less instantaneously visible manner. When we think of all three together — institution, faculty, and students — we realize that an extraordinary cultural energy passes in an unbroken current from the institution as it developed historically, to the professors, and thence to you. That is what I am hoping you will feel today, probably for the first time: some of that current, reaching you.

In any case, the good professor, consistent with the nature of the university as institution, may be defined as someone who is adept not only at professing his particular skill but, above and beyond this, at manifesting his love for the pursuit of knowledge. What has got to come through, somehow, is the exhilaration of spending one's life engaged in playing with ideas. The good student, similarly — the student whom we will not just accept on sufferance, but will delight in, and gladly teach — is one who becomes attached to the field, who catches the germ we spread, and who begins, in his or her own right, to organize that particular corner of chaos: to bring that particular enigma under the control of imagination or rationality, delighting in the free play of the mind for its own sake.

You will find some bad professors at Dartmouth (the faculty I described earlier is an ideal, not a reality) and we will find some bad students. The bad student in a place like Dartmouth is not the person who is dull; most of you are far brighter than we are. It is the person who is anti-intellectual, by which I mean the person who refuses as his or her highest joy the free play of the mind, who condescends perhaps to live off ideas, selling out to practicality, or — worse — who despises ideas altogether, and in effect worships and serves his or her belly, genitals, or muscles. The sellout to practicality, at this point in your lives, takes the form of obsession with grades. The clearest way you can vitiate the purposes of the university, and spit on the best efforts of your faculty, is by taking courses in order to gain a high average. We do not want calculating students who exploit ideas for the sake of future power, money, or prestige. But many of you, alas, will do just that. If you are here for “the Dartmouth degree,” as opposed to the de-

gree — gradation — of intellectual mastery that will come after four years of objective and subjective liberation, then you ought to go home at once and make your place available to someone who truly belongs in a liberal arts institution. By remaining here, you are committing a moral outrage against the persons who, as equally qualified as yourselves, were denied the place you received. As for the sell-out to bellies, genitals, or muscles, let me say simply that a gorilla has a belly, genitals, and muscles; so does a hippopotamus, and even a fish — and often far better ones than we have. All of you — all of us in the university — graced as we are with good minds, have been especially, specifically called to serve the distinguishing aspect of our humanity: the ability to subordinate the bodily faculties to intelligence and, beyond that, to use intelligence not only practically (gorillas do that, too) but impractically, passing from sustenance to culture, because although sustenance enables us to sustain life, culture makes life worth sustaining. Yet many of you will not just spit on the liberal arts ideal, you will literally vomit all over it on Fraternity Row in some desperate affirmation of what you take to be good fellowship as you drink your way through four invaluable years; or you will extinguish your sparkling intellects with drugs, or, most likely of all, will come to believe that athletics reside at the center of the university, at its very heart. And that is where your hearts will be too: throbbing for the life of the body and not for the life of the mind. Oh yes, we will admire your excellent bodies up to a point, and your endurance and coordination; we will grant that what you are doing builds character, cements friendships, and even that it represents the control of bone and muscle by mind. But only up to a point. Beyond that point, when athletics become a fetish and threaten to eradicate the rest, when the bodies lose classical grace and become muscle-bound exaggerations, when the life of the mind emerges second best in its competition with the life of the body, we will mourn the inversion of priorities, and conclude that you are misplaced in the university, which is devoted first and foremost to that which distinguishes human beings from beasts: the mind that understands nature and itself. Remember this: no matter how fast you can run, a deer can do better; no matter how gracefully and rapidly you can swim, the tiny salmon or ponderous whale will put you to shame; no matter how solidly you can “block that line” in football, a rhinoceros would be ten times more effective. In such activities, beasts are in their element, doing what comes naturally to them. For human beings like yourselves and like

us, thinking and articulating are what come naturally, beginning with the miracle of language, which comes as easily to us as flying does to a bird or swimming to a fish.

We will find many bad students in the Class of 1981, students who live off ideas and not for them, sacrificing the liberal arts on an altar of practicality, or students who despise ideas altogether and live for food, sex, or athletics. But we will undoubtedly also find many good students in your class, very good ones indeed, and it is these and these alone who will enable the university to continue to be its best self.

As you strive now to make that difficult transition from a public high school to the private university called Dartmouth College, remember that in entering here you are entering not just a collection of buildings and people, but a very special entity molded by clearly identifiable aspirations. In effect, you are entering a kind of secular temple dedicated with playful earnestness to critical intelligence, to the pursuit of truth, and to the free play of the mind. We are the priests in that temple. You are the novices or apprentices who we hope will become, by degrees — by gradations and graduations — bachelors, masters, and doctors of the barbarian within and the enigma without.

Remember that you are not necessarily wanted here. You are no longer part of a system of compulsory mass education. You come here by free choice, we accept you by free choice, and we can reject you or at least wish that you were replaced by someone else, just as you can reject us.

Remember that the university itself, qua institution, is more real than either the faculty or the student body. It is an extraordinary monument of human culture that has evolved over several millennia, one that invites us to participate in its form and content for forty years or four, as the case may be. Enter with the appropriate awe, reverence, and fear.

Remember that in entering the university you are being invited to join not so much the meretricious club of privilege, snootiness, and money called the Ivy League, but the most truly exclusive club or guild of all: the *universitas* of rational, imaginative, creative, ever-curious human beings who are being continually liberated to actualize their highest potential.

Remember, finally, that the university, as opposed to the high school, is a twenty-four hour a day enterprise manifesting itself in a total way of life. It is a grand experiment in civilization, an attempt to set an example, to be better — more inquisitive, beautiful, rational, sensitive, compassionate —

than the world of practicality outside. It is forever opposed to mediocrity, greed, violence, barbarism, and ugliness. The institution imposes these exalted, frightening ideals on us, and then relies on us to continue them during our brief tenure here.

We are letting you in, hoping for the best. Your chance will last just four brief years. In 1981 we will judge you in light of the origins and purposes that constitute the university; you will judge us, too; and heaven help us both!

Notes

- 1 David D. Tyack, "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 46, no. 3 (August 1976), p. 359 ff.
- 2 Documentation in Tyack, op. cit., p. 365 ff.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 378–79.
- 4 See Carl Kaestle, "Between the Scylla of Brutal Ignorance and the Charybdis of a Literary Education," in Lawrence Stone, ed., *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- 5 E. M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (Gloucester, Mass., 1968), p. 19.
- 6 *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., p. 2213.
- 7 Charles Homer Haskins, *The Rise of Universities* (New York: H. Holt, 1923), pp. 22, 24.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 27.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 10 Paul O. Kristeller, "Liberal Education and Western Humanism," *Seminar Reports* (Program of General Education in the Humanities, Columbia University), vol. 5, no. 1 (Fall 1976), pp. 17–18.
- 11 An exception was the Mouseion, which was entirely controlled by the Ptolemies.
- 12 John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse V, section 9 and Discourse VIII, section 10, in *The Works of Cardinal Newman* (London & New York: Longmans Green, 1910), vol. 32, pp. 120, 208.
- 13 Apologies to William Jennings Bryan, who once remarked: "A man cannot demand a salary for saying what his employers do not want said."
- 14 I take the terms playfulness and piety, and some of the ideas associated with them, from Richard Hofstadter's essay "Democracy and Anti-Intellectu-

alism in America,” in *The Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review* 59 (August 8, 1953), 281–95. The quote from Socrates comes down to us via Diogenes Laertius, *Lives, Teachings, and Sayings of Famous Philosophers* (London: R. Bentley, etc., 1696), Book II, ch. 5, sect. 16.

15 See Hofstadter, loc. cit.

16 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.5.15. Cardinal Newman translates thus: “Of possessions . . . those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those liberal, which tend to enjoyment. By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where nothing accrues of consequence beyond the using” (Newman, op. cit., p. 109). It is characteristic that the word *eleutheria*, which Newman translates “liberal” in order to show the origin of our own term, is glossed by another translator as “befitting a gentleman” (Lane Cooper, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle* [New York & London: D. Appleton, 1932], p. 26).

17 Mark Van Doren, *Liberal Education* (New York: H. Holt, 1943), p. 79.

Metaphysics, Myth, and Politics

An Examination of Dartmouth Student Radicalism

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ONE OF OUR unsolvable questions is: What is the relation between abstract thought (philosophy, metaphysics, theology) and everyday life (politics, morals, patterns of behavior)? It is, I suppose, a chicken-and-egg question: Does abstract thought filter down and produce certain behavior in the real world, or do real events and conditions produce abstract thought? I am sure that both answers are true at the same time. Nevertheless, looking at student behavior in the 1960s—in particular that of political activists such as members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and disaffiliated dropouts and copouts—while thinking back to the abstract thought of the past hundred years, I come to the conclusion that such thought does indeed slowly filter down. Over the decades it begins to pervade a society to such a degree that people act in terms of it, often without having direct contact with the thinkers involved, or indeed without even being capable of abstract thought themselves.

I shall give a single startling example before proceeding to the behavior I wish to discuss.

One of the main currents in theology at least since Kierkegaard (d. 1855) has been subjectivism. Kierkegaard insisted that faith is a subjective state. In his approach to religion he concentrated on the psychological attitude of the believer rather than on the question of whether God exists. If you believe God exists, that is faith, and faith is religiosity. The question to

ask is *how* you believe — that is, with what intensity and fervor — and not *what* you believe.

Kierkegaardian subjectivism was eagerly embraced by generation after generation of thinkers who strove to retain a religious or spiritual perspective in the face of what science was telling them about the existence of God. Rather than capitulate to mechanistic theories, they said that they would believe in certain things even though they knew they were not true, and from this we get what is called the “Philosophy of As If.” A good formulation of this may be found in “What I Believe” by E. M. Forster: “The people I respect most behave *as if* they were immortal and *as if* society were eternal. Both assumptions are false; both of them must be accepted as true if we are to go on eating and working and loving, and are to keep open a few breathing holes for the human spirit.” Another figure one could cite is the Spanish philosopher and novelist Unamuno, one of whose characters, the priest Manuel, does not believe but acts as though he believed. Unamuno presents him not as a heretic but as a saint — a modern, Kierkegaardian saint.

All of this, which began in erudite circles and might seem just a game played by intellectuals, important perhaps to them but really not very relevant to everyday life, has now entered everyday life in a most interesting way.

I speak of the most recent of the many liberalizations of the law regulating conscientious objection. First, one had to be a member of a historic peace church such as the Society of Friends, and believe in God; then one had to be a member of any church and believe in God; then one had simply to believe in God; then the term God was changed to Supreme Being, and one had to believe in that. Now, since the *United States v. Seeger* case (1965), one doesn’t need to believe in anything supernatural at all. Instead, one can have a moral conviction. But note how the Supreme Court formulated this: “The test [for qualifying as a conscientious objector] might be stated in these words: A sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualifying for the exemption.”

We see, in other words, a practical example in everyday life of the Kierkegaardian insistence that the *how* of belief is more important than the *what*. If the belief has the same quality as a traditional religious belief, if the moral conviction plays in your life a role the same *as if* the convic-

tion derived from a belief in God, then you qualify. Abstract thought has found its way from the study to what is termed (so revoltingly) “real life,” in the form of a ruling that has affected the actions of many young men. I would suggest also — by way of anticipation — that the Philosophy of As If has not been irrelevant to the actions of militant student dissenters either, though they themselves may never have read Kierkegaard or Unamuno, or may be incapable of abstract thought.

The philosophical trend, beginning in the nineteenth century and reaching its acme in the first decade of the twentieth century, which has molded these dissenters even more, filtering down until it affects their everyday actions and attitudes, is vitalism. This is the doctrine of the French psychologist-biologist-metaphysician Henri Bergson. It is almost ludicrous to hope to convey the essence of Bergsonism in two or three pages, but I must try.

Bergson, like Kant and Schopenhauer, was a dualistic philosopher. Kant taught that there are two realms: the first is the world of phenomena — namely, what we know through experience by means of sensation. Yet what we think we know in this world is really only that which conforms to our mode of knowing. For example, one such mode being causality, we can know the causal relationships between things. But there is another world very different from this knowable world of phenomena. Kant called this the world of noumena and described it as the world of *das Ding an sich* (“the thing-in-itself”), which, as opposed to the thing as it appears to an observer, cannot be known at all. In sum, Kant placed limits on what human reason can know, concluding that we cannot know anything truly essential such as whether God exists or human beings are free or determined.

Bergson modified this Kantian dualism, insisting that the essential realm can be known not through reason (here he agreed with Kant) but through intuition. In between Kant and Bergson had come the all-important Darwinian theory of evolution, and Bergson now said: The thing-in-itself, the very essence of life, is *motion*, motion toward something — in short, evolution. In a famous proof, which is still fascinating to read, he showed that motion can only be intuited, that the rational mind cannot comprehend motion at all.¹ Instead, in its clumsy attempt to do so, it divides motion into equal and homogeneous units of time — seconds, minutes, decades, and centuries. But in so doing, it really converts time into

space — that is, into little lumps, each distinct, each the same. Rationality then says that we go from lump to lump, leaving previous lumps behind us. But everyone knows intuitively, claimed Bergson, that this is not what time is, as a thing-in-itself. We have simply adapted it to the categories of the rational mind. Time is motion. In going from 12:01 to 12:02, we merely replace one lump with another; the actual process of moving from one to the next is omitted. Furthermore (and this is very important), we assume that 12:02 is identical to 12:01 and that 12:01 has been left behind. Intuitively, however, we know that no moment can be the same as another, for the simple reason that the previous moment has occurred before it. Time is not a jumping from point to point; it does not leave anything behind it but carries with it everything that has gone before. As we grow, we carry with us our childhood, and our parents, and the whole history of the race. Every new moment, because of this accumulation, must be qualitatively different from the moment preceding it.

The first realm, known by the rational mind, is what Bergson called the realm of clock-time. The second, known by the intuition, is the realm of psychological time, or what he called *durée* (duration), for the true quality of time is that it endures, not that it passes away. Time, he says, is succession without distinction. The first is the realm of all our outward activities. Though to measure time is to falsify it, we need to do this if trains are to run on schedule, goods are to be manufactured, and so forth. It is the realm of science, for science posits regularity and repetition. The whole effort of science is to know and, through knowledge, to predict. It can do this only in the realm of clock-time, where repetition is possible because time has been spatialized. Out of this comes, of course, our whole technological society. The second realm, says Bergson, is much more important because it is the realm of truth, the realm that conforms to the nature of things. Furthermore, if the essence of life is motion — existence in time — then that which is moving is vital and alive, and that which is stable or fixed is dead.

From this we get the implicit morality of Bergsonian vitalism: motion and change are good; stability is bad. Everything that contributes to motion and change is a step forward in evolution — is the *élan vital* (vital impulse) manifesting itself. Everything that hinders motion and change, everything that spatializes things by fixing them in strict patterns or forms, thus destroying their fluidity, is a force hindering evolution, the death principle battling the life principle.

Likewise, we get what could be called a vitalistic psychology. The human being, says Bergson, has “two different selves.”² One is external, one internal. The external self is a kind of spatial representation (and falsification) of subjective time (duration). We present the external self to society. It is a fixed self with fixed ideas and attitudes. Thus, in a sense, it is a shell and is dead. The inner self, the one that is truly alive, is characterized by a constant *becoming*, by states that are “not amenable to measure.” This qualitative inner inner self is alive precisely because of its fluidity. It is succession without distinction; you cannot pin it down; it is spontaneous.

It might be restful at this point to leave this abstract thinking for a moment and to consider now the “real world” as we have seen it in our dissenting students.

We know that a new radicalism developed in the 1960s, but no one has found it easy to say what the radicals wanted to hear, or to understand how they behaved—and for very good reason. Because the manifestations of dissent seemed so disparate, contradictory, random, and irresponsible, they, too, could not really be pinned down. But one can list certain “symptoms” discernible in the radicals.³

1. *A knowledge of what they wanted to destroy but no firm idea of what they wanted to put in its place.* Here they differed greatly from older radicals, who had a complete economic and social plan for their projected future society. I asked a revolutionary why more thought was not given to the new society that would supposedly replace the old one. She replied, “Oh, we can’t even think about that now. Ideas for the new society will come then, when the old one is finished and we have a blank slate. The ideas will come spontaneously out of those conditions, not the ones we have now. This is why we don’t bother to make blueprints ahead of time.”

2. *Collective responsibility: no fixed leadership.* I quote from the *Daily Dartmouth* for April 25, 1969: “The Anti-ROTC Group . . . resolved that there ‘are no leaders of the group . . . ; that we accept collective responsibility for our actions.’ John D. W. B. ’69, earlier reported as the group’s leader, was only temporary chairman for that meeting. A member of the group said yesterday that new coordinators will lead subsequent meetings.”

3. *Elimination of experts — that is, of the assumption that only certain people are qualified to do certain things or make certain decisions.*

4. *Particular antagonism toward the social and behavioral sciences, which claim to have expert, scientific knowledge about human beings themselves,*

and which feed this information in the form of data, statistics, and supposedly “demonstrated conclusions” to various bureaucratic power structures (such as college administrations). These power structures then make decisions accordingly, in a perfect cause-effect pattern. Scribbled on the walls of the university quarter in Paris during the late uprising was the slogan: “When the last bureaucrat is strangled with the guts of the last sociologist, then will we have any problems?”

5. *An equally hostile attitude toward the experts in engineering, physics, and chemistry, who — in the interests of solving problems and discovering facts — have produced hydrogen bombs, napalm, and germ warfare in defiance of the well-being of the human community as a whole.* Antagonism, in short, is directed against those who place the needs of their expertness before the needs of their humanity.

6. *As a positive alternative to decision making by experts — the “free tribunals” set up in Paris.* The right of “contestation” — that is, the right of everyone affected by a decision to participate in that decision. The observance of participatory democracy.

7. *Demand for changes in the educational structure.* Changes in governance, in line with the right of contestation, were desired, as were changes in the basic purpose of education as it now stands, since this purpose is — according to the dissidents — to produce experts (i.e., those who can contribute to a society whose ultimate value is quantitative productivity). Changes in curriculum were welcome, especially changes that permitted more interdisciplinary studies and thus broke down the bureaucracy of academic departments and the expertness that those departments represent and so tenaciously defend. The students demanded more education outside the classroom. Recommendations for course credits for Outward Bound, for working in ghetto communities, and for living with families in Europe — all based on the theory that facts are not as important as experiences, that being exposed to experts is not as important as being exposed simply to people, and that living is more relevant to education than is “preparing oneself to live.”

8. *The cult of spontaneity, as opposed to careful planning.* This manifested itself not only in the refusal to think ahead regarding the form the new society would take, but also in terms of suggestions for courses with no pre-arranged content, where students and faculty, starting from zero, would just meet together and decide as they went along what they would do.

9. *The cult of the imagination, as opposed to technological reason.* The motto of the revolutionary French students was “All power to the imagination.”

10. *The cult of joy, of spontaneous enthusiasm — of being keyed up, “turned on,” and in particular of being turned on by a sense of running one’s own world as one wants it run.*

11. A renewed sense of community or, rather, of a small, dynamic community within the larger community.

In any case, the dissident students were not lone voices crying out in the wilderness; they were bands joined together by a common purpose and experiencing what for many of them was the first true sense of fellowship, solidarity, and camaraderie they had known. At the same time they were also experiencing their worth as individuals. In this way community and individuality were reconciled. Instead of being opposite and antagonistic, they fructified each other.

I am sure that additional items could be added to this list, but I hope that many of the most important “symptoms” have been covered.

It might be apropos to cite a case that brings together many of the points enumerated above. One of my students was not attending class; he was spending his time instead on a farm in Vermont with five other students, taking drugs but also talking about the great questions of life and experiencing a camaraderie he had never known before. He realized that he was being irresponsible; nevertheless, all this was more valuable to him than going to class, learning facts, and exposing himself to experts. On the other hand, since he was curious, eager, intellectual, and eager to learn, he read certain assigned books that he felt might “turn him on.” Among others, he read James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and in this suddenly found his gospel. *Ulysses*, as he (correctly) interpreted it, is a hymn to fellowship and spontaneous joy, an exposure of the deadness of bureaucracy. The student wrote an ecstatic lyrical-psychedelic essay that was completely unacademic, devoid of analysis, more a dithyramb of praise, yet an essay that demonstrated a deep intuitive understanding of *das Ding an sich* — the real inner essence of the book. He assumed that I would reject the essay and perhaps report him to the authorities for using drugs. However, he did not care what I did because he had written the paper out of an internal need. It was its own justification. After much consideration, I awarded the paper an *A* because it seemed to me that in his own (different, intuitive, inex-

pert, but no less valuable) way, he had read the book meaningfully. He was surprised, and appreciative at first. We had a fine talk, exchanged many compliments, and parted. The next day he returned, looking very glum and angry. "I was weak yesterday," he said. "I've come now to tell you that I spit on your *A* and throw it back in your face." "Why?" I asked. "For two reasons: First, your *A* comes from you as expert, as professor, as faculty, and not just as person. This part of you, the outside self, I hate. Second, I reject this *A* because it was delivered from your professorial eminence and is simply part of the mechanism that transfers me from one department in the bureaucracy — college — to the next highest department — graduate school. The whole point of my paper, and of the life I lead here, is to show my contempt for the externals of the education that we get here: the facts, the rational analyses, the grades, the system of easy steps upward into expertness, a Ph.D., and a secure job in a hypocritical and evil society. Your *A* is part of these externals, and thus I spit on it as well as them. Good-bye!"

We have before us a group of disparate, contradictory, random, "irresponsible," disturbing symptoms. We have as well, in the anecdote just cited, an example of what some might call the "perversity," "thanklessness," or paranoia of the disaffected students. What I would like to suggest is that these symptoms, although perhaps disparate and contradictory when considered in themselves, make a great deal of sense when considered in light of Bergsonian vitalism. What we saw in the late 1960s was, I think, the filtering down of modes of abstract thought deriving from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These modes had pervaded society to such a degree that certain people acted in terms of them, often without experiencing direct contact with the thinkers involved.

Basically, what we saw in our disaffected students was the very dualism posited by Kant and then elaborated by Bergson in a new way that incorporated Darwin's theory of evolution. Bergson, we remember, divided life into intuition and ratiocination, motion and stability, duration and clock-time, heterogeneity and homogeneity, constant becoming and repetition of previous states, the nonmeasurable and the measurable, the qualitative and quantitative. In each of these pairs, the former is connected with life/soul/spirit/meaningfulness, while the latter, though necessary for day-to-day existence, is connected with death. Bergson was reacting against the mechanistic and technological trends of his day; it seems that dissident students, basically, were doing precisely the same thing. Their objection

was really not so much to Vietnam, ROTC, or any of the other individual issues that attracted the spotlight for a short time; rather, it was to the entire mode of thought, the entire value system and behavior system of Western technological civilization.

Bergson demonstrated how technological civilization operates by virtue of the spatialization of time. In contradiction to what our intuition tells us about the true nature of life—succession without distinction, continuous becoming—technological civilization hypothesizes distinct, homogeneous units or lumps. In one realm, these lumps are the minutes, seconds, and hours that masquerade as our understanding of time but that are really the spatialization of time. In another realm they are the facts, the observed empirical data that, amassed by science and social science, masquerade as our understanding (on the one hand) of the biological world around us and (on the other) of our own selves. But technological civilization cannot do without these homogeneous lumps because without homogeneity it cannot have repetition, without repetition it cannot predict what will happen on the morrow, and without prediction it cannot control its environment. Scientific knowledge aims at discovering constants, things that always happen the same way. Having done so, it can then anticipate—or exploit—their future occurrences and control and exploit the physical (and alas, all too often also the human) world. As the French used to say: *savoir pour prévoir*. to know in order to foreknow.

Our dissident students clearly rejected everything implied in Bergsonian clock-time. If we look at their antagonisms, we see that they refused to plan ahead for the future. They also refused to look upon their education as an amassing of facts that would supposedly enable them to deal with situations in the future, because they refused to believe that any “living” situation can be a repetition of any previous one or that it can be understood or controlled with facts inevitably arising from a previous situation. From this followed their lack of respect for tradition and history and, above all, their lack of respect for experts. They argued that the experts, as defined in our society and as produced in our universities, are simply individuals with facts, knowledge, and technique who are valued for what they know and are selected to teach the young not by virtue of their imagination or intuition but, rather, by virtue of the facts they have memorized and ordered by virtue of their analytical mind. Dissident students objected to the university as thus constituted; they saw it as merely

a product developed by technological society to supply its own needs. As such, it is dedicated (in their view) to reducing knowledge to facts that may then be used to solve problems. *Savoir pour prévoir*. Engineers are trained to solve technical problems, psychologists and social scientists to solve human problems. As an example, the university assumes (since its allegiance is to rationality and clock-time rather than to intuition and continuous becoming) that the problems of black students are amenable to scientific investigation and then solution. If only we can generate enough facts about the history and present condition of the blacks, we can then solve their problems. Since it is impossible for experts to amass knowledge of every black person who ever lived or is living now (impossible only because we still do not have sufficiently advanced computers), we need statistical techniques developed by the social and behavioral sciences to enable us to “predict what people will desire and choose even before they themselves realize it.” These facts and predictions can then be transmitted by one set of experts — the scholars — to another set, the bureaucrats and administrators, for implementation.

All of this, which probably sounds entirely sensible to the reader, was rejected by the dissidents because of their basic philosophic position (whether they knew it or not) that facts, predictions, and experts are all part of the external distortion of the true nature of life and consequently must lead to a maiming of the human spirit instead of — as the experts hoped — the spirit’s liberation and enhancement. “When the last bureaucrat is strangled with the guts of the last sociologist, then will we have any problems?”

It is easy to understand why students abhorred the type of expert whose fact-gathering and problem-solving led to napalm (I think, however, that we tend to see this solely as moral abhorrence; on a deeper level it was a metaphysical one).

But why the great antagonism toward bureaucracy? Why, as a corollary of this, the desire to replace bureaucratic organization and rule with free tribunals, participatory democracy, and the rest? Why did university students have the audacity to suggest that nonexperts such as themselves should play the roles now played by trustees, presidents, provosts, deans, departmental chairmen?

The answer, I believe, is again metaphysical: a Bergsonian rejection of separation as contrary to the thing-in-itself, which is life. Insofar as we see

such separation, we see only phenomena, not noumena. As Kant taught, we impose upon the world a pattern that conforms to our rationalistic mode of knowing, but that falsifies the true nature of things. Amassing facts, cataloging them, analyzing the results, we may very well conclude that the world itself is separative, with plants different from rocks, animals from plants, humanity from animals, and certain humans from others. Our intuitive mind, however, tells us that these separations are only external, convenient as they may be, and that evolution is a continuous succession without distinction; that no previous event, being, or object has been left behind; that we carry along with us, so to speak, rocks, plants, and animals; that time is elastic, the past reaching into the present, the lower forms reaching into the higher. Rather than in discrete moments, or facts, or supposed stages of evolution, we exist in Bergson's interpenetrating processes.

If this is the true nature of life, argued the students (and whether they had ever read Bergson or had even thought in these abstract ways is irrelevant, for this metaphysic had filtered down into them), these interpenetrating processes should be reflected in life's institutions; the fiction, however convenient, of separation should be exposed and destroyed.

No wonder, then, that they objected to the bureaucracy of the universities. "Bureaucracy is supposed to be efficient precisely because it allocates responsibility for decision [to] a pyramidal hierarchy [that operates] according to fixed rules. Every kind of decision has its own, specialized 'expert.' . . . The pyramid isolates the decision makers so that they do not come in contact with those for whom they are making decisions. They must decide on the basis of objectively proved facts which reach them through subordinates." Furthermore, the decision maker "must 'put on blinders' because otherwise he might be affected by matters outside his expert competence."⁴ We all know the classical response of bureaucrats when confronted by a new and imaginative request: "That is not in my department," or, "I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to make exceptions to the rules."

Bureaucracy depends on facts rather than intuitions, on hierarchical separation rather than interpenetration; thus it arrives at decisions about other people without direct, vital experience of those other people and, as often as not, without even having listened directly to what the affected people desire. All of this division into areas of competence and chains

of command is defended as the supremely rational flower of civilization, whereas in truth, argued the dissidents, it is an excuse for the manipulation of one group by another. Even if this is not the case, even if the decision makers have the best of intentions, the dissidents still saw this as a falsification of the very essence of life, hence bound to produce the wrong decisions and to humiliate those who supposedly are being helped.

We have observed how the dissident students' antagonisms can be explained in terms of Bergsonism. Their enthusiasms can be explained in the same way. Spontaneity, vital joy, and imagination are all fetishes of radical students; they are also characteristics of Bergson's inner, qualitative self—the constantly becoming self, which is the antithesis of everything organized and fixed. In particular, spontaneity is the antithesis of legalism, the mode developed by experts and bureaucracies; imagination is the antithesis of expertise; vital joy is the sign of the youthful, vigorous *élan vital* that pushes evolution forward. We return to the value system of Bergsonism—anything that moves, and thus furthers evolution, is good; anything that is stable, and thus hinders evolution, is bad.

The positive fetishes of the dissidents—spontaneity, vital joy, and imagination—may all be summed up in a word much invoked by them—freedom. We need to realize, however, that the dissidents' definition of this word is not necessarily our own. In a Bergsonian sense, to be free, by definition, is to behave in terms of the inner, not the outer, self; such behavior requires that one conquer and smash all habits of action and thought, everything that fixes us and is part of the outer self. The inner self is a constant becoming; freedom is the assertion of one's right to be irresponsible, to change at any and every instant, always to be "available." The radicals extolled spontaneity, imagination, vital joy, and enthusiasm; all of these break through habits and none of them can be measured, bureaucratized, spatialized into facts, or even comprehended by the analytical minds of experts.

Of course, this same refusal to be committed in advance and therefore spatialized into a lump explains what was perhaps the most startling characteristic of the radicalism of the 1960s—namely, its refusal to make a blueprint for the future society. This was a manifestation of Bergsonism not only in the ways I have already suggested, involving the constantly becoming inner self; it also reflected Bergson's sharp break with the teleological view, on the one hand, and with the mechanistic view, on the other.

The teleological doctrine posits an end, determined in advance, toward which history progresses. The mechanistic denies any direction whatever. Bergsonian thought insists that evolution is meaningful, that it does have a direction, but that this direction is not predetermined. Nor does it have a predetermined goal. Rather, it is governed by the spontaneous, “creative” will of each living and even nonliving object that exists—a will to be something different. The only “law” is that of motion or change; the precise direction is determined, as it were, along the way. This is why the Bergsonian theory is also called *creative evolution*.

The attitude of the dissident students was classically Bergsonian in this regard, as in others. The revolution was going somewhere, it had a direction, but it was not teleological: the goal could never be known in advance. I should add here that the students’ sense of individual responsibility for the “movement,” mixed with an equal sense of the corporate nature of the endeavor and the camaraderie implicit in this, was also classically Bergsonian. For the theory of creative evolution, while naturally dealing with whole species, places full responsibility on the individual will of individual beings to push evolution forward. If things are neither mechanistically nor teleologically controlled, then we are left responsible as individuals for a movement that can have meaning in history, and for the individual, only when it involves an entire mass. As I stated earlier, community and individuality, instead of being opposite and antagonistic, fructify each other.

We have seen how both the negative and positive aspects of the dissident students’ position may be explained in terms of the Bergsonian metaphysic. In the largest sense, what the students seemed to be against was the entire value system of our present technological civilization, all that in Bergson’s system constitutes the realm of the external and stultifying. What they seemed to favor was an entirely different value system that we could call, perhaps, aesthetic, or noumenal, or maybe even religious. But perhaps the best word would be mythic, or mythico-symbolic. If technological civilization maims the human spirit by favoring the external self and its chief manifestation, analytic rationality, then mythico-symbolic civilization, the students seemed to believe, will heal and foster the human spirit. It will favor everything that stems from the inner self—imagination, intuition, love, and freedom—everything that reaches into the contradictory, paradoxical nature of things in ways that analysis, or experts, or

facts, or technology can never do. Myth has precisely what rationality cannot abide and certainly cannot understand: infinity and sublimity. Myth must be taken in its entirety. Like Bergson's *durée*, it cannot be analyzed, cannot be spatialized into separate component lumps. Finally, myth cannot be refuted, since its validity is conferred upon it by belief, not by fact. A belief is not true or false, it is merely strong or weak. As a qualitative manifestation, it lies outside the realm of scientific investigation.

The point I wish to make is that the dissident students were already living in their own mythic world, with all the sublimity, infinitude, and indivisibility that implies. (Here, too, they were classically Bergsonian, for no one was more an invoker of the sublime and the infinite than this philosopher. Although Bergson refused to define the goal or end of evolution, as I have already emphasized, he nevertheless always thought in terms of some great and infinite consummation of the *élan vital*, and it is this element of the infinite in his philosophy that justifies us in calling it a metaphysic rather than a biology or psychology. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that creative evolution is Bergson's great myth.) When I maintain that the dissident students were living in a mythic world I mean something very specific. They believed that they were the participants in a social movement that at some undefined point in time would engage in a sublime, definitive, catastrophic battle and would emerge triumphant, at which point a new social order, undefined in its particulars but somehow infinitely good, infinitely sublime, would be instituted. In this new social order spontaneity, imagination, joy, and vital energy would parade for all eternity in some ideally nontechnological or posttechnological Elysian Fields. What we have here is an apocalyptic, catastrophic myth not too different from the eschatological myth of early Christianity, or the hopes for the New Jerusalem that spurred on the Protestant reformers. In every case it is a will-to-deliverance, a Salvationism that posits some miraculous and infinite fruition after a gigantically noble battle, a holy war wherein Satan is overcome by soul.

As the early Christians discovered, this single catastrophic battle or event is long in coming, or does not come at all. Christ's resurrection was taken at first to be the foretaste and guarantee of the general resurrection: the catastrophic, apocalyptic event that would soon follow. When the apocalypse did not come the Christians entered into the period of martyrdom, wherein each martyr, symbolically reenacting the original

crucifixion, thought of himself or herself as somehow helping to ensure the catastrophic event. To all these sufferers, and to their fellow believers, individual suffering possessed a universal and catastrophic dimension; it was the symbolic equivalent of the devil's final defeat by soul-force, the ushering in of the New Jerusalem.

We do not need to look all the way back to early Christianity, however, to see these characteristics; they are present in all holy wars, all campaigns that exhibit a mythic character, because the goal is infinite and sublime. What happens in such cases is that the hierarchical, quantitative situation we normally associate with armies is transformed into what our dissident students would call a free, qualitative situation wherein the individual soldier is of supreme worth while at the same time subordinate to the whole. Georges Sorel, speaking of the "Wars for Liberty" in France, called them "truly Homeric conflicts" because "on the battlefield the leaders gave an example of daring courage and were merely the first combatants, like true Homeric kings. . . ." "If we wished to find, in these . . . armies, what it was that took the place of the later idea of discipline, we might say that the soldier was convinced that the slightest failure of the most insignificant private might compromise the success of the whole. . . . All things [were] considered from a qualitative and individualistic point of view." "Battles under these conditions could, then, no longer be likened to games of chess in which each man is comparable to a pawn; they become collections of heroic exploits accomplished by individuals under the influence of an extraordinary enthusiasm."⁵

What gave the individual soldier the sense of his own worth, the courage to sacrifice himself, the desire for martyrdom, and the epic enthusiasm (all of which are characteristics we have seen in the dissident students) was the infinity and sublimity of his cause. And since the apocalyptic catastrophic change (as one always discovers) does not come in the first battle, or the second . . . , this courage could be maintained only insofar as each tiny, nonsublime, finite battle could somehow evoke the idea or the feeling of the cataclysmic event. In the particular terms of the syndicalist movement preached by Sorel, each little, individual strike needed to have "strength enough to evoke the idea of the general strike." In this way, wrote Sorel, "all the events of the conflict will appear under a magnified form." To put all this in slightly different language: courage could be maintained only insofar as each small battle or martyrdom (today we would say

“confrontation”) was a symbolic reenactment of the catastrophic, apocalyptic event.

Since we all know, however (we sober-minded, realistic types), that the apocalyptic event never comes or at least comes in a form stripped of its sublimity and infinity, and since at least some of the leaders of radical movements know this, too, what we have, then, is another very definite application in real life of the Philosophy of As If. We have a holy war consisting of relatively minor skirmishes, each one of which, however, is conducted *as if* the sublime, infinite, catastrophic event were not only possible but inevitable. At Dartmouth College on May 6, 1969, as militant students were occupying the administration building, a voice called out to me: “Well, Professor, this is the revolution, this is it!” It *was* the revolution for this student, but one hundred paces away other students were quietly playing softball!

Our dissident students were not only preaching (whether they knew it or not) a new mode of thought and behavior, a new mythic, or mythico-symbolic, value system; they were already inside that mode. These students had learned all too well the lessons taught by Georges Sorel to the violent working class syndicalists at the turn of the century (it is no accident that Sorel was a Bergsonian and that his entire program is “applied Bergsonism”). “When working class circles are *reasonable* . . .,” he taught, “there is no more opportunity for heroism.” Unreasonableness, heroism, self-sacrifice, a reaching for the infinite and sublime: all these are the staples of myth. But what we also must remember is that myth can be lived.

At this halfway point, I should cite the following conclusions:

1. Abstract metaphysical ideas do filter down and affect so-called real life, particularly in the realm of politics. Examples are the Philosophy of As If and the Bergsonian system of dualistic vitalism.
2. The dissident students of the 1960s were dissatisfied with everything contained in Bergson’s outer, quantitative realm. They were not dissatisfied primarily with ROTC, Vietnam, or any other specific evil; rather, students were convinced that overemphasis on this outer realm distorts the true nature of life and maims the human spirit.

3. Our students desired a new mode of thought and behavior, which we may call mythico-symbolic, aesthetic, or religious and which is equivalent to Bergson's inner realm.
4. Our students were already acting in terms of this mode, and were living in a mythical rather than a technological world. This is why they may have seemed so unreasonable to those of us still living in the other world.
5. If we wish to have any hope at all of dealing with them, we must look beyond the seemingly disparate, random manifestations of their behavior and try to understand what can only be called "the metaphysics of radicalism."

What can all this mean in practical terms? In other words, precisely how should we try to deal with student dissent? Surely such a question must be asked and an attempt at an answer be made. Otherwise, all the preceding theoretical analysis might be considered just one more example of the irrelevancies produced by experts.

My feeling is that ultimately the only practical, "physical" responses that will work are, paradoxically, metaphysical ones—that is, responses that have a wholeness and comprehensiveness corresponding to the wholeness and comprehensiveness of the problem itself. Since the manifestations of student dissent are not really disparate or random, the solutions should not be random or disparate either. Nor, necessarily, should they be rational. We should remember two of Shestov's sayings: "The habit of logical thinking kills imagination" and "Everything metaphysical is absurd."⁶ What I am going to suggest is that the university can best meet its crisis by creating its own myth and acting as if that myth were true. Why a myth? Because this, and only this, unites contradictions in a way that is creative, energizing, and cosmopoietic.

Let us look first at other possible solutions, all of which fall short of having the comprehensiveness of a metaphysic, and yet all of which are being practiced and defended by various factions. I contend that none of the following should be adopted, and that none is likely to work.

1. *Extermination. Brutal and systematic suppression.* Deny the offenders a living by excluding them from colleges, blacklisting them, and forcing them into exile. This worked against the Trotskyites in Russia, but it will not work here because it cannot be done efficiently enough in a democratic

society. One could add the obvious point that brutal suppression brutalizes the suppressors. We would conclude by doing the dissidents' work for them. Instead of letting them destroy our society, we would destroy it ourselves.

2. *Corrupt the leaders by educating them, opening up all opportunities, and giving them powerful well-paying jobs.* Recently, a leader of a militant group received a Rhodes Scholarship, which he was weak enough to accept. By the time he finishes Oxford, he may be thoroughly middle class in his desires and values. Of all the common solutions that we hear, this one of "easy upward mobility" into the power structure of the Establishment would seem the most likely to succeed. Colleges wishing to adopt this plan should admit great numbers of disadvantaged and revolutionary-minded students, even those who cannot qualify by ordinary standards, and should grant them their degree (i.e., their passport to prestigious professions) even if this means compromising the integrity of that degree. This plan is faulty in three respects. First, like any attempt at systematic corruption of a hostile group through the offering of "presents," it is immoral. Second, it fails to address itself to the true causes of the dissent. Any solution that says, in effect, that lack of opportunity to do well in this present system is the cause of dissent is extremely and complacently shortsighted. Dissent does not stem from any inability of large groups to do well in the present lifestyle; it stems from their conviction that the present lifestyle is not worth doing well in. Third, there will always be a sufficient number of dissidents who will be aware of this extremely unsubtle form of temptation and will resist it.

3. *Concede to specific demands — especially to those that, because they are just, involve less sense of capitulation — and assume that this response will satisfy the dissidents.* Experience, however, seems to show that concessions simply invite more demands, ending with what the dissidents like to call "an intolerable situation." This tactic will always fail because it operates on the assumption that a demand is a discrete, disparate lump of dissatisfaction. If this were true, meeting the demand would terminate dissent. But in the case of our dissident students, as I have tried to show, the demands were not discrete entities at all; they were symbolic expressions of a certain lifestyle — indeed, of a lifestyle characterized by the making of unreasonable demands. To view these demands as separate entities and to respond to them honorably and rationally, out of a recognition of their

justness, is to continue to function in the very lifestyle of reasonableness, which is the real target of the dissidents' anger.

4. *Defend oneself by reason and by reasonable, rational means.* One example of such defense has just been treated. I would extend it to cover all manifestations of "what we believe in as educators and members of a democratic society" — from arbitration to parliamentarianism. We must remember that all these are ways of defending the whole ethos of productivity, of problem solving, of *savoir pour prévoir*. The ethos is what really is under attack. Assertions of our own ethos in such rational ways, although certainly well meaning, will only confirm us in that ethos, close our minds to the true problems, and thus increase polarization. As for the revolutionists, they despise reasonableness because it has nothing in it of the sublime or the infinite. Also, as Sorel pointed out long ago, revolutionists operate on the assumption that since arbitration is valued, the Establishment will always respond initially in this "cowardly" way. Revolutionists know that such response tends to break down the polarization they seek; therefore, they themselves will respond only with more and more provocation, until the Establishment "loses its cool." This is important to remember, especially since revolutionists have insisted that our basically violent society will always react with violence, as in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. With this in mind, many people of good will insist that if we can only react reasonably and thus disprove the revolutionary statements, all will be well. I hope that my remarks above have shown the weakness of this reasonable approach as a way of meeting the substantive issues involved in student dissent.

5. *Defend oneself by violence or, as the euphemism puts it, by force.* (Sorel reminds us that the two words differentiate not the thing-in-itself but the users. When the Establishment uses violence to maintain a social order in which a minority governs, we call this *force*, and carefully avoid the word *violence*. When the disestablished use violence [force] to destroy that order, we insist upon calling a spade a spade.) I list this separately, even though it is perhaps the same as No. 1: Extermination, merely to emphasize the short-sightedness of the kind of thinking that vociferates, "If they don't want reasonableness, then give them the only thing they can understand." Nor must we ever be so silly as to imagine that police action will eliminate one cause of revolt by proving that the Establishment is indeed capable of sublimity! All that violence (force) will do is bring about,

easily and instantaneously, the polarization that the dissidents desire and that they would have been obliged to work harder and longer for had the response been reasonable.

My conclusion is that the usual solutions one hears are all hopeless. So are the endless discussions of whether a hard line, medium line, or soft line would work best, whether these “children” should be spanked or indulged, whether the universities should remain true to their ideal of rational discussion or call in the police. These are at best all just pleasant games played in a void, and at worst a very serious and tragic fiddling while Rome burns.

None of the usual solutions has a wholeness and comprehensiveness corresponding to the nature of the problem itself. For this, as I suggested earlier, one needs to ask the largest possible questions, not puny ones chiefly tactical in nature; in short, one needs to respond metaphysically, even though everything metaphysical may be absurd.

The type of large questions I mean are precisely the ones that Kant and Bergson placed outside the boundaries of rational knowledge — questions such as “Where have we come from?” “Why are we here?” “Where are we going?” “What is our essence?” and “What constitutes our wholeness?” One can have intuitive responses to each of these but can never prove one’s answers to be correct.

These are precisely the questions that should be asked by our universities. To illustrate, I am going to ask them as they might be formulated by any firm that manufactures a product, even though this may make me sound like Father Purdon, the priest at the businessmen’s retreat at the end of Joyce’s story “Grace”:

He came to speak to business men and he would speak to them in a businesslike way. If he might use the metaphor, he said, he was their spiritual accountant; and he wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they tallied accurately with conscience.

Joyce displays his bitterness in choosing this way to expose the Church’s worldliness, but when I use a similar metaphor for the universities, I am completely neutral. For it really is not a metaphor at all. The Church, pretending to be otherworldly, is really a business. The university has no need to pretend anything; it is openly and proudly a business, with a managerial staff, employees in various categories, raw materials (incoming

students), and a product, which is the refinement and *e-labor-ation* (in the root sense) of these raw materials. There is nothing sardonic implied, therefore, in my suggestion that the universities ask themselves the following very businesslike questions:

- 1 What business are we in?
- 2 How does one measure success or failure, assets and liabilities, in this business?
- 3 Are we in a business that the nation's ecology wishes us to be in?
- 4 Is our conception of our business, even if reasonably satisfactory, too narrow? For example, do we persist in believing that we are in the railroad business when the ecology of the nation tells us that, more broadly, we should be in the transportation business?

For a faculty to discuss such questions as a way of responding to student provocations may seem to be an absurd, impractical, improper effect when the cause is the occupation of a building. Yet these are the questions that ought to be asked; they are the only ones that are real, and not just games or evasions, given the nature of student dissent.

Such questions, of course, have already been asked and answered, but the answers are outmoded stereotypes. Developed during the growth of industrial civilization, they have not been re-asked or re-answered now that we are beginning the growth of postindustrial civilization. The business we are in, most would answer, is to produce a definable product — students capable of succeeding in their next stage. The business of a college, a dean stated recently, is to prepare students for graduate school. Sometimes we aim at producing responsible and informed citizens; at other times our main goal becomes supplying the manpower needs of the nation.

Given these formulations about the nature of one's business, success or failure may be easily measured according to the number of Rhodes Scholars produced, the percentage of graduates admitted to Ivy League graduate schools, and the number of alumni in *Who's Who*. The institution's assets become its laboratory and library facilities or its faculty-student ratio, its liabilities the deficiencies in such areas.

The ecological question is commonly asked as well, but also in a stereotyped way that has not been sufficiently reexamined. Before every expansion of offerings, such as the commencement of graduate work or the addition of a new undergraduate department, the prime argument is

always: This answers a national need; the larger environment wishes us to do such-and-such. This type of argument is naturally good, but we must continually inquire whether the ecological situation has been correctly interpreted and also whether the ecological question is not a ruse to hide from ourselves the real reason for our activities — namely, our own internal needs. More of this in a moment.

The final question is, of course, an extension of this. Granting for the moment that our business is to produce a product and to contribute to national needs, are we doing this in a way that is too narrow? In our changing postindustrial society are superbly trained individuals perhaps a liability insofar as their overspecialization makes them inflexible? Are we producing railroaders instead of transportation people; are even transportation people too limited in viewpoint and know-how? Do ecological imperatives perhaps ask of us something entirely new, which we have as yet not discovered?

I would venture (I cannot prove it) that this is the case, and furthermore that we are so out of touch with ecological demands that we are in the entirely wrong business — or, rather, that we are already in a business that we as yet do not admit to being in (which is just as bad). We keep saying that we are in the business of producing a product; thus, we measure our success by counting up graduate school admissions, Rhodes Scholarships, and entries in *Who's Who*. I would venture, however, that our true business should not be — and already is not — to produce a product but, rather, to satisfy the needs (intellectual, spiritual, social, aggressive, and egotistical) of the people who constitute our total community. We are already doing this in a partial way. Although we do not like to admit this, the real business of yesterday's and today's university has been to satisfy the needs of its faculty and administration. The university indeed can be defined as an institution developed in order to make a certain type of person — the academic — as intellectually, physically, economically, and socially comfortable as possible. When new programs are proposed and instituted, ecological questions such as “What is the national need?” are invariably asked, but these are in large measure a ruse to hide from us our internal need: the fact that a segment of the faculty will be more comfortable (in the best sense) — more productive, stimulated, and stimulating — if such a program existed.

This is the true business of the university, and one that we need not

be ashamed of, for what is the true business of any social organism if not to secure the welfare of its members? The great problem has been that the students have never been considered as members. Instead, they have been the raw material eventually turned into the product, the fashioning of which has constituted a meaningful enterprise for the faculty and administration. Faculty lives are complicated now by the fact that students no longer wish to be considered the passive, inert material upon which we work. Nor do they wish to be considered products. Their interest, and their fulfillment, is coming increasingly from the conscious role they play in their own development while students, as full-scale members of the academic community.

In our metaphysical questioning of our very being, therefore, we must revise our earlier answers in at least two ways. First, we must admit that the business of a college is to satisfy the needs of its members (i.e., to create an environment where they can function in the most creative and meaningful way). Second, we must accept students (not to mention secretaries and groundskeepers) into full membership in the community that has been defined in this manner.

If the first question — “What business are we in?” — were to be answered in this new manner, the modes of measuring success or failure, assets or liabilities would also change radically, and new answers would need to be developed for the second question. I am encouraged by the fact that they would necessarily shift from quantitative ones to qualitative. Perhaps the success of a university might then be measured (no, this is a contradiction in terms, since qualities cannot be *measured*) — might then be . . . *felt* — in terms of the kind of joy, or imagination, or love characterizing the university’s corporate life and the intensity with which studies (and also sports, drama, the administration of justice to offenders and all other functions of the community) were pursued. Success or failure might also be felt in the way in which the various groups within the community respected each other and were sensitive to each other’s needs. I emphasize this because it must not be thought that the new concept of our business that I suggest means the abolition of all differences or the complete homogenizing of specialized functions. A community is not a collection of people who are the same; rather, it is a collection of people who are different and do different things, yet who appreciate their need to be part of a larger, heterogeneous whole.

It has been said that a poem should not *do*, but *be*. The same can be said of the university. But if the emphasis were shifted in this way from the quantitative to the qualitative, and we asked of universities not “What do you do?” or “What do you produce?” but, rather, “What are you?” then ratings would change considerably. Many institutions whose alumni still enter respectable graduate schools or professions are characterized, as communities, by suspicion instead of trust, apathy instead of fervor, and dogged plodding instead of spontaneous joy. Their governmental systems are breaking down, their campuses are filled with tension instead of serenity, various groupings have established an artificial solidarity for the purpose of confronting other groupings as enemies, minds have become closed and narrowed, incapable of reaching out. And we hear continually the appeal: “Let us stop all this so that we can get on with our business [i.e., producing a product], which we were doing so well!” Very few are willing to say that the business is to enhance the welfare of all members of the community, for, once this is admitted, then it must also be admitted that we have been doing our business — our main business — very badly indeed. One essential reason we have been doing our business so badly and have amassed liabilities far in excess of assets is that we refuse to recognize what our true business is. We continue to be railroaders at a time when locomotives are already being displayed in the Smithsonian Institution along with buggies and other vehicles of the past.

At this point we must reconsider the third large question: “Are we in a business that the nation’s ecology wishes us to be in?” So far, my argument for a new definition of the colleges’ business has sprung from other grounds: the fact that we already operate in order to secure the comfort of our faculty, though we do not like to admit this; the fact that students are no longer willing to be considered as inert raw material to be turned into a product; and the fact that the new definition entails a welcome change from quantitative to qualitative evaluation. All of this might at first seem to involve a withdrawal, a denial of one’s duty to society. Yet it is ludicrous to think that a duty to society — always seen as outside — is incompatible with the attempt to create a decent society in the university itself. Certain societal questions inevitably will be posed: “What does the ecology require?” and “What is it asking us to produce?”

“Are we in a business that the nation’s ecology wishes us to be in?” I would like to suggest (for after all, I cannot prove what I say) that the

ecology will throw this question back in our faces and say that it no longer wishes our “products” at all, at least not in the older sense of people splendidly trained to perform a specific technological function. Just as business firms are discovering that the most useful employee in the long run is not the overtrained, inflexible “railroader,” or even the broader “transportation person,” but, rather, the person who can play a wide role, adapting him- or herself to the ever-changing spectrum of challenges and problems (which are surely predominantly human rather than technological), so, too, the society at large is discovering that the best citizen is the person who, instead of just producing something, can live well with others and inspire them to do the same. The ecology demands people with a talent for living in creative harmony with others. It asks for people who *are* something, rather than for people who merely *do* something. The *doing* must of course continue, but it will be subordinate to the *being*. In business terms, the quality and quantity of the product will no longer be ends in themselves, justifying everything else; instead, the quality and quantity of the product will be necessary to the well-being of those who engage in producing it. In educational terms, the universities will still produce Rhodes Scholars and prospective listees in *Who’s Who*, but this will now be seen as necessary to the welfare of the academic society, as the external challenge that helps make possible internal harmony and joy. The greater challenge, however, will be the quality of that society-in-miniature, the college or university. The ecology, interested as it is in people who are adaptable, loving, enthusiastic, spontaneous, and broad-minded (i.e., capable of maintaining a truly “human” society, which brings out the best in each) is no longer saying to our universities, “Produce something”; it is saying, “Be something.” For this reason the shift from *producing* trained graduates to *being* a true community is a shift that, far from denying our duty to the society at large, is precisely what the society at large demands of us. (I am returning for a moment to that ludicrous mode of thought that invokes the society at large while forgetting that societal problems are not things that can be removed from the academy in time and space. It is so much more convenient to think of spatialized lumps than of interpenetrating processes!)

The business of being a true community and ensuring the welfare of all members is a business that the nation’s ecology wishes us to be in. If the universities shift to this new conception of their business, they will simply

be following a generalized shift from the technological to the posttechnological mode of values and behavior. (The term *posttechnological* is fully honest in its ambiguity, since the new mode is not yet developed, and is definable, so far, chiefly in terms of what it has superseded.) In the first stage of modern industrial society all sights were focused on the product and the means of producing that product cheaply and efficiently. This is because the needs were so great and also because people could be kindled into fervor and creativity by the dream of the material ease that such productivity would bring about. Ironically, this dream of a better society coexisted with the exploitation of the labor for the new factories and (though this was not realized until much later) with the breakdown of older forms of cohesiveness, respect, spontaneity, and joy—the very things that the technological mode was meant to furnish in abundance. A great deal of this breakdown of precisely what technology longed to foster was owing (and here we encounter another irony) to the metaphysics of technology and the concomitant domination of all that Bergson would call the external and deathly—the cause-effect mentality, spatialization, the war in the name of rationality against myth (called superstition), the separation of time into discrete lumps of past, present, and future—all of which produced a maiming of the human spirit. This mode of thinking and valuing became so pervasive that by the time the exploited labor force developed sufficient strength to insist upon its dignity and rights, it too had adopted the same technological metaphysic. Thus the next phase of technological society, the one in which employers—first reluctantly and then out of enlightened self-interest—joined with labor in striving for decent working conditions, was characterized by rational procedures and policies such as arbitration, profit sharing, and higher wages. Soon every worker in the Ford plant could buy a Ford. In short, we entered the stage of mass production based on mass consumption. This presented problems that needed to be solved by both manufacturers and laborers, problems of a technological nature in the full Bergsonian sense of the term (involving spatialization and expertise). These problems were duly solved. While they lasted, they kindled both the manufacturers and the laborers into new kinds of fervor and creativity.

In the first stage, all attention was given to the product; in the second stage, equal attention was given to the product and to the conditions under which it was produced. The third stage—if we follow this progres-

sion — must inevitably be a further shift away from the product as such. We have already entered the third stage because: (a) we now know so well how to produce things that this aspect no longer needs to occupy our best energies; (b) we realize that productivity does not necessarily bring about a joyful, spontaneous, loving society. On the contrary, affluence seems to produce malaise. To quote the opening sentence of a recent magazine article on the subject: “You have to grow up in Scarsdale to know how bad things are.” The main reason the third stage can be called posttechnological rather than simply another phase of the technological era is this: the shift in emphasis has been away from the product, hence away from activity in the present, which is somehow meant to cause changes in the future (as though the future and the present were discrete and did not interpenetrate). The shift away from what a society *does* and toward what it *is* inevitably weakens the entire cause-effect, spatializing mode of thought, which has gone hand and glove with the rise of science and technology up to this point. Not only have the cause-effect mode and the tendency to spatialize time been weakened, but also another central concept of the technological mentality has suffered as well: the separation of subject and object. The early manufacturer — and the scientist in general — considered himself a discrete subject coming to grips with a discrete object in the form of a raw material or a labor force. This type of thought, together with the spatializing of time, made it easy for him to see future society as an object to be alienated by him and his workforce as subjects. However, when the ease of solving technological problems and the success in coming to grips with raw materials, coupled with today’s realization that society is no better than before, turns our attention to the welfare of the entire group that produces things and that was meant to have been affected beneficially by all these products, it is much easier for us to realize that those who were before considered as discrete subjects have now become also the objects. The manufacturer and his labor force are no longer producing something for a hypothetical society that the analytic mode of thought separates from them spatially and sets up as an object to be affected by them as subject (a separation that made possible the disparity between the ideals of technological productivity and the squalor of the conditions under which goods were manufactured); rather, the manufacturer and his labor force are affecting *themselves* and are doing this not so much by their products as by the way in which the products are made (i.e., the nature

of the society-in-miniature that is devoted to this work). They become the objects of their own activity as subjects; once this distinction between subject and object breaks down, what matters is not what one *does* (for here one is only a subject) but what one *is*.

The new era is posttechnological because technology itself has evolved to its own self-denial. When subject equals object, when *being* takes precedence over *doing*, when the analytical mind must give way to the synthetic, then we enter modes of thought that Bergson distinguished as internal, and that are much closer to symbol, myth, art, and religion than they are to technology.

THIS DISCUSSION began as an attempt to answer the prime question of how the universities should respond to the threat (blessing?) of student unrest. I have tried to show that none of the usual responses will work, and that the only thing that might work is a response that in its wholeness and comprehensiveness corresponds to the wholeness and comprehensiveness of the problem itself. The nature of the problem becomes evident once we go beyond the seemingly disparate, random manifestations of student dissent and come to grips with the dissenters' basic metaphysical position, which agrees with the Bergsonian one because it values imagination, freedom, soul, and creativity over and above technology and because it sees duration and interpenetration, not clock-time or spatialization, as the true nature of reality. Much of what the students are demanding also can be seen in certain tendencies in technological society itself—namely, the transition to a posttechnological period. Taken together, these two prodings would seem to indicate that the university, in turn, must answer the problems in a comprehensive way, by shifting toward what Bergson insisted is the thing-in-itself and away from the technological mode of analysis and from spatialization, which—if our students, Bergson, Kierkegaard, and the sorry condition of present-day technological society are any indication—distort and maim the human spirit.

In practical terms, this shift toward the synthetic and durative will mean the abandonment of our own spatializing of time whereby we think it our business to produce “products” who will be of some use in someone else's future, which is separated from the present. Once the emphasis is removed from what we produce for the future, it will be removed from production of any kind and will turn naturally to what we *are* in a present

that is a durative flux of succession without distinction. And once it turns to the present, defined in this way, it will see that our central task today is the one that — in our technological, spatializing mode — we deferred to a future time and place — namely, to foster the well-being of everyone, which in our case becomes the well-being of all members of our academic community.

The shift away from our previous technological mode of thought and behavior will also inevitably bring into question individual practices and attitudes, such as bureaucracy, the fetishes of expert facts and objective truth, the overvaluation of perseverance, rational analysis, and sober responsibility. It is not that all these must be abandoned; rather, they must cease to suppress all the other human possibilities, such as spontaneity, joy, intuition, imagination, and the aesthetic sense. These other qualities are probably more basic and more important — although obviously not very *useful* in a society devoted to production and thinking chiefly in Bergson's external mode.

This is not to suggest that we must revert to a type of being that is completely at odds with our present technological one or that might be confused with some sort of primitivism, orgiastic soul-brotherhood, or shamanism. To suggest this would be to fall into the worst kind of rhetoric employed by the student left. Furthermore, it would only echo the simplistic thinkers who believe that progress comes only when the old is destroyed. In my earlier remarks about the shift from technology to posttechnology, I tried to show that the new emphasis, far from being a reversion to anything, or even a denial of anything, is a natural, inevitable continuation of technology itself. Technology itself has willed that it be surpassed; it is not being threatened by forces imposed from the outside and disconnected from it. (To think this, as many radical students do, is — ironically — to perpetuate the technological, analytical, separative mentality that these same students wish to destroy.) The question is not one of destroying anything or reverting to anything; it is simply one of going forward in a way that reestablishes a balance that has been lost. Neither Bergson nor Martin Buber nor the others who have addressed themselves to this problem assert that technology in itself is evil or that we can live without rationality, clock-time, hierarchies, analytic organization, or any of the other ways in which we function in our *external* lives. All this is evil only when it usurps the whole of the human psyche and suppresses the

ways in which we function in our *internal* lives. At present, technological society and the universities as part of this technological society do suppress the inner functions; they either penalize them outright or, at best, indulge them, while leaving the intuitive, imaginative, spontaneous, joyful person with a feeling that he or she is guilty of some lapse of decorum. If the truth be known, the real reason these qualities are discouraged is not that they are wrong in any absolute sense — how could they be? — or even that they are potentially dangerous or violent, but simply that they are not at all useful to technological production. The society and the universities, instead of trying speedily and energetically to find new ways for people to live in Bergsonian duration (to *be* instead of to *do*), ignore these needs or suppress them. However, the student rebellion and the generalized move to a posttechnological era will perhaps induce even the stodgy universities to question their own technological assumptions and try to establish a situation in which the external life does not browbeat the internal, or the internal the external. If the dualism cannot be resolved, if being and doing cannot exist in fruitful harmony, if human beings' symbolic, mythical, and aesthetic needs cannot live at peace with their practical efforts to feed and clothe themselves, then society, and the universities in particular, will have failed to create a true community, and the extremes on each side will continue to be at each other's throats.

But this synthesis, even if it pays homage to rationality, cannot be achieved by rational means, certainly not by a continuation of the analytical, technological mode of thought that still dominates in the universities. Any synthesis of opposites transcends by definition the analytical and the rational. Thus, the universities must respond to their present crisis not in the tactical, rational manner presently employed, but in a comprehensive, metaphysical way, even though "everything metaphysical is absurd." How? Through myth, because only myth unites contradictions in a way that is creative, energizing, and cosmopoietic. Specifically, the universities must first create their own myth of a splendid academic community in which the practical and the imaginative do each other homage, and then must act *as if* this myth were true.

Notes

- 1 Bergson's theory of time, and the general outline of his philosophy, are set forth in his *Time and Free Will* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1960).
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 231. Bergson elaborated his philosophy of the human being's "two different selves" in his later book, *Creative Evolution*.
- 3 For the chief "symptoms" of student radicalism, I am indebted to Richard Stith, "Power to the Imagination," *Yale Daily News*, December 12, 1968.
- 4 Stith, *loc. cit.*
- 5 The quotations from Georges Sorel are from his *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: B. W. Huebsch, n.d.), 3rd edition, pp. 212, 213, 246–247, 282–283, 284. The opinion on "force versus violence" can be found in chapter five, part four.
- 6 Leo Shestov, *All Things Are Possible* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1920), pp. 37, 181.

Beyond Health and Intellect

A Letter Occasioned by Prostate Cancer

From *Dartmouth Medicine*, Winter 1996, pp. 46–49, 73.

Ἦγίεια καὶ νοῦς ἐσθλὰ τῶ βίω δύο.

(“Health and intellect are life’s two blessings.”)

— Menander

Friday, June 21, 1996

I’m sending the following letter out to all the good people who have wished me well.

Yes, health and intellect are life’s two blessings. But when one becomes ill with cancer one realizes that love and friendship ought to be added. For me, it was (almost!) worth getting sick in order to experience the inflowing of concern, care, and good wishes from so many quarters. First the hospital room and then our home received vase after vase of flowers; hot soup appeared on the doorstep; the telephone rang off the hook. John Rassias called every day for two weeks prior to the operation, finding me even in Philadelphia and Boston, to say only one thing: “All is light. Light! Light!” Jim Freedman shared his own anguish at the onset of cancer and his relief at its control, in many conversations. Dick Williamson and Allan Munck came round to the hospital and home. But the true hero in all this was Chrysanthi, who canceled plans to be in London for the entire month of June with our daughter Daphne and our first grandchild, Christina Sloane Tebbe, born on May 28 (my birthday!) in order to care for me, who, according to our children’s predictions, was bound to be an “impossible patient” (really, I wasn’t so bad). In any case a thousand thanks to

you and all the others who were kind enough to inquire, telephone, send flowers or cards, visit, or pray.

I can now report (1) that the operation itself went very well, not requiring transfusions of the blood I had previously donated for myself, and sparing one set of the nerves that govern sexual potency (in addition, as a special bonus, the surgeon repaired a bilateral hernia), (2) that the pathologist's report, received after a week of anxious waiting, confirmed that no metastasis had occurred to adjoining lymph nodes or other tissues, and furthermore that the cancer was wholly confined within the prostate gland itself, inside the capsule. Very good news indeed! Of course, there is always a chance of a recurrence; I will need to monitor the situation on a regular basis. But I have been told that if no recurrence occurs in the first four or five years, the likelihood after that is virtually zero.

A thousand thanks to medical science in the abstract for advancing so quickly. If all this had happened even eight or nine years ago, I would probably not have been diagnosed early enough for a cure. And then a thousand thanks to medical science in particular: to Dr. Paul Gerber, my primary physician, for tracking my condition and acting with alacrity; to the anesthesiologists who were so humanely professional; to Dr. John Heaney, a surgeon esteemed by his colleagues for both technical skill and human warmth (a native of Dublin and graduate of Trinity College — in my first interview with him I brought along a photo of me and a Dartmouth Alumni College group being greeted by Mary Robinson, the president of Ireland, in order to establish my credentials!); to the two urological residents, Dr. Samuel Hakim, who performed most of the operation, and Dr. David Cozzolino, who seemed on duty day and night (when did he sleep?) and was always prompt to reassure me regarding various forms of postsurgical distress; to Laura Stempkowski, the nurse practitioner, who gave expert instructions for exercises to help overcome incontinence; and to the splendid nurses on Floor 3, especially Steve and Mac. How fortunate we are to have the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in our backyard!

The procedure I underwent is called radical prostatectomy — good Greek, as many of my colleagues will know, for “slicing out of the [entire] prostate.” One must wonder what imaginative or whimsical anatomist named this little beast the “prostate,” meaning in Greek “one who stands

in front” (ο προστάτης) or, by extension, a “protector.” Yes, it does stand in front of the bladder and, yes, it does protect the sperm, I suppose, for the prostate secretes a milky, alkaline fluid into the urethra at the time of emission of semen, thereby enhancing the sperm’s journey to the egg, since semen is acidic and sperm needs a relatively alkaline medium in which to be optimally mobile. But when our little friend does his job of protection for thirty years or so and reaches middle age, he tends to grow fat, and then one of God’s mistakes (remember: “God” for Kazantzakis, and me, equals evolution) is revealed, for the fat little protector squeezes the poor urethra, which unfortunately runs right through his middle. And then the otherwise miraculous machine that is our body finds itself retaining urine — the first telltale symptom of what one hopes is merely BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia, hyperplasia meaning an abnormal increase in the number of a tissue’s cells, with consequent enlargement).

It is churlish, I realize, to criticize “God” for such a mistake, since it seems that in his original plan we were meant to be sexually active from about age 15 to age 45 perhaps, and to die soon afterward — in which case very few men suffered from prostate disease. In the revised plan imposed by technology and medical science, however, the little gland not only reaches middle age and beyond, not only grows fat in an innocent way that merely makes you go to the toilet five to seven times a night, but also becomes a prime site for carcinoma (καρκίνωμα, already meaning a malignant tumor in Hippocrates; Latinized as *cancer*; both from the Indo-European root *kar*, meaning “hard”). And that’s what happened to me.

Many of my male friends, apprehensive about their own condition, have asked about the details; thus I am emboldened to recite some of them here. How does one determine when BPH turns into prostatic carcinoma? First, your physician performs a digital rectal examination, attempting to feel abnormalities in the prostate. Since only one side is able to be felt, this is half-effective at best, but it can pick up hardness, asymmetry, or — heaven forbid — a lump that has pushed through the prostatic capsule (skin). Second, you have your blood tested every four or six months for PSA (prostatic specific antigen), a protein produced by prostatic cells. A score of 4 or below is meant to be normal. A higher score may or may not indicate cancer, but a continuous rise (which happened to me) is clearly a danger sign. My scores went like this:

May 1992:	6.5	February 1994:	5.4
September 1992:	5.6	March 1995:	5.8
January 1993:	5.5	September 1995:	6.2
May 1993:	5.7	March 1996:	7.6

My primary-care physician, Dr. Paul Gerber, feeling nothing suspicious in the digital exam (a finding confirmed by a urologist to whom I was sent just in case), interpreted the first seven of these scores to mean that the condition was still benign. This finding was accompanied by gallows' humor: "In any case, you're much more likely to die of many other causes before prostate cancer gets you." Dr. Gerber, although clearly a believer in "watchful waiting" rather than overreacting, nevertheless reacted speedily when the March 1996 reading showed 7.6, a significant jump over the previous reading, and the culmination of a steady rise for the past year. I was sent immediately for transrectal ultrasonography, which visualized some cancerous spots in the gland and directed Dr. Stephen Rous where to pinch little bits of tissue for analysis under a microscope. This procedure, called "biopsy," confirmed that the prostate was cancerous in one of its lobes, but apparently clear in the other.

The biopsy took place on April 12. On April 23 I went to Dr. Rous's office. "You have cancer," he pronounced without any circumlocution. Things could be worse, of course: it was only in one lobe (apparently), with a Gleason score of 6 on a scale of 1 to 10 (a Gleason score of 2 to 4 indicates a low-grade cancer, 5 to 7 an intermediate-grade cancer, 8 to 10 a high-grade aggressive cancer most likely to be untreatable and deadly). Since an intermediate-grade cancer can go either way, behaving like a low-grade one or, eventually, a high-grade one, obviously the best bet was to think about proper treatment.

For me at least (and also for my physicians), this eliminated the option of "watchful waiting," which I considered a stupid gamble, if not sheer suicide. The remaining choice—between radiation and surgery—also became clear, owing to my general good health, relatively long life expectancy (given my parents' history), and reasonably young age (66). But this last sentence makes a long, quite agonizing story deceptively short and simple.

When you go to a doctor and he says, "You have cancer," your life turns upside-down even if the cancer is only intermediate grade and even if it

is potentially curable, as prostate cancer is. The disease is still cancer. The next two or three weeks after April 23 were hideous, although I neither went into depression nor became incapable of working. I even traveled to Greece for two days to lecture, with ghoulish appropriateness, on Kazantzakis's postmodern conversion of the "Comforter" (ο Παράκλητος) from the Holy Spirit to Death. Suddenly, however, I was confronted with the very real possibility that a planned retirement likely to give fifteen fruitful years, a period in which four books (at a minimum) would be brought to completion, might never happen. "If the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes, it is incurable," the urologist informed me, "but we can probably keep you alive for up to ten years." Thank you very much! So the specter became not only one of relatively imminent death but also another of prolonged therapy usurping one's time and energy. I began to feel like Kafka's Herr K., whose "trial" displaces all other interests. Would the cancer be confined to the prostate or metastasized to the lymph or other tissues? Was it not at that very moment pushing its way through the capsule (although I was assured that intermediate-grade cancers are likely to be slow)? John Milton's lazar house of maladies shown to Adam in *Paradise Lost* XI.477–493 as a foretaste of what his Fall will cause, previously to me just a perfect quotation for doctors' offices, now became frighteningly real:

Immediately a place

Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark,
A Lazar house it seemed, wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
Demonic frenzy, moping melancholy
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
Dire was the tossing, deep the groans. Despair
Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch;
And over them triumphant Death his dart

Shook, but delayed to strike, though oft invoked
 With vows, as their chief good, and final hope.

When I passed children playing in the schoolyard near our home, or adults walking animatedly up and down Main Street, I wondered what right they had to be so healthy. Health, previously assumed — consciously or unconsciously taken for granted — became the obsessive desideratum, surpassing even intellect.

But one's life also turns upside down in certain ways that are positive. You acknowledge that dying, especially at age 66 or thereabouts following a marvelously full and rewarding life, is hardly a cosmic catastrophe. Indeed, you feel relieved that those four books hanging over you may not need to be completed after all. How nice to be delivered from responsibility in this way (since no one will accuse you of laziness)! Furthermore, you acknowledge that your service on boards of trustees, committees, and the like, although meaningful, is hardly definitive for your own being, and that you are anything but indispensable for the groups concerned. We all do our bit, to be sure, but someone else can always do just as well if not better. What a positive pleasure to say to a group, "Give me a leave of absence, please" or "Allow me to resign under the circumstances"! One is able to shirk without being accused of shirking — which is almost fun. What all this adds up to, perhaps, is the enhancement of what one *is* rather than what one *does* (although the latter surely conditions the former). Put another way, it adds up to the knowledge that relationships (especially with family and close friends) are more important than accomplishments. Is it worth becoming seriously ill to gain such knowledge? I said earlier that it was almost worth getting sick to experience the inflowing of concern, care, and good wishes from so many quarters. No one would wish illness upon himself in order to reap such benefits. But when illness does come, it is important to realize that benefits may come as well. Jim Freedman says that his cancer made him a better man. I hope that when all this is over I will be able to say the same.

Is it admissible to believe, as Kazantzakis does, that one has "cheated fate" in a case like this? I fear the arrogance of such a belief, for we all know that Charon will wrestle with us again and again, on this threshing floor or that one, until he wins. Nevertheless, and even at the price of arrogance, I feel right now like James Joyce's Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (6.995–96,

1003–05) when he ascends from Hades. Like Odysseus—like me—he has been allowed to visit the underworld and then to return. This is what he thinks: “Back to the world again. Enough of this place. . . . Plenty to see and hear and feel yet. Feel live warm beings near you. . . . They are not going to get me this innings. Warm beds: warm fullblooded life.”

Once again, thank you for your concern. May all of us be blessed throughout our lives with health, intellect, friendship, and love.

Sincerely,
Peter Bien

Seven Sonnets and an Ode

A Sonnet For George Draper on His (Dubious) Passage from Presiding To Presuming

Composed for George Draper when he retired
as president of the American Farm School in
Thessaloniki, Greece, in order to return to his
native Maine.

Presiding, George, is acting with authority
even when you do not know what to do.
Presuming is venturing with audacity
because something could or might be true.

Is this your passage from presiding to
presuming? Or do prexies presume more
than they preside? Is uncertainty taboo
in rules of administrative behavior?

Thessaloniki to Boston and Maine,
okhtapódhi tighanitó to cod
and baked beans, is a passage not to disdain,
nor to replace gallop with sluggardly plod.
Your (dubious) passage from presiding
to presuming is surely not backsliding.

A Sonnet For Mayme Noda On Her Eightieth Birthday

Eighty years are long but not too long
 if filled with care, love and some variation —
 city, farm, domestic peace, and a tiff
 with nuclear power and wartime preparation.

Nor too long if sweetened by the piping
 of recorder consorts after pruning
 humongous hours with minimum whining,
 or by friends regaled with sushi in the evening.

Mayme's eighty had all of these and more,
 plus detention camp and decades galore
 with industrious, compliant Lafayette.

But taught by Quakerism to abhor
 vi-o-lence, bellicosity to deplore,
 she never was a militant suffragette.

*A Sonnet for My Friend Mr. Stephen P. Fleming
 on His Departure from Kendal*

(with apologies to John Milton)

Steve, whose tenure here was far too short
 with only one New Hampshire chill endured,
 no time for Anne and Brooke to be inured,
 no ease to savor friends or home just bought.

Your eighteen months as Kendal's leader
 ought to serve as just an interim abjured,
 instructing Carolinans to be cured
 of ice, snow, frost, and horrors of that sort.

But how ripe with meaning that short time was,
 what guidance given, genial friendships made!
 Accreditation came, our apogee,

as one-and-thirty climbed to thirty-three. Yet
now, alas, your presence starts to fade.
Presbyterians' gain is Quakers' loss.

A Sonnet on My Evening's Sherri

(for Sherri Buckman)

My evening's quaff of flavorful Sherry.
unfailingly smooth, sweet and ever good,
even with a dollop of Levengood,
Fleming-lad, Cadwallader, and Brophy,
or Armstrong, Edgerton, Woolrich, or Smith,
not to mention our council presidents
splendidly galore. But now I am miffed:
no more nineteen-year-old daily essence:
that routine quaff of Harvey's Bristol Cream
that aided Sherri's vigor organizational
to upgrade each day's chaotic mess
to its identifiable proper nest,
making Kendal's life operational,
powered by brain and a bit, too, of dream.

A Sonnet Worrying about the Name Weezie

Why did they reduce the dec'rous Louise
to that demotic soubriquet Weezie?
Louise is surely not a Portuguese
corruption or anything quite so sleazy.
Without a doubt it puts us at our ease
while th' other makes us so very queasy
even sneezy when we voice its uneasy
articulation, causing us to freeze.

But Louise is Santa de Marillac
 while Weezie's a spoof, great fun to be sure,
 an open avenue, not a cul-de-sac;

quite the moniker for an epicure,
 not for a snooty hypochondriac
 but for our best friend, weeziely secure.

*A Bilingual Sonnet for Archbishop Stylianos
 on His Nameday*

Στύλιανε, thy name itself's a prop —
 στύλος, στύλωμα — a mainstay, pillar
 where Simeon legislated on top
 to pilgrims arriving from near and far.

And how much better than “Your Eminence,”
 since height for thee conveys a fatherly
 concern both strict and loving, assurance
 of *στοργή* ruled by faith, hope, and charity.

Therefore let the *στυλ-* in Stylianos
 ring out in thy nameday's celebration;
 for pillars, props, and columns keep the roof
 from caving in, sustain our Lord Χριστός
 the Pantokratoras's elevation,
 and provide each pilgrim with living proof.

November 19, 2000

Hanover Tax Collectors Versus Kendal: A Colloquy

“What the devil is a CCRC?

Affluent condominium for sure
if not a nursing home, as all can see.
No use pretending it is something more.

Given that all of you are so filthy rich,
town taxes you’re going to pay through the nose
’cause otherwise we’ll find just how to fix
this and that to eliminate your pose.”

“You ask what we are, dear tax collectors.
A Caribbean cruise boat on dry land,
an anthropoidal San Diego zoo —

difficultly taxable, yes, but true,
and one thing more you’ll never understand:
our values, puzzling to tax inspectors.”

June 2016

An Unsolicited Ode to the Teachers of Our Language

When our ancestors climbed down
out of the trees,
leaving the longer tailed apes behind,
they decided they needed a language
that would be worthy of mankind.
So . . .
to replace the old-fangled Ape Talk
that consisted of burps and grunts,
they went to work to invent a vocal vocabulary
based on *new*fangled linguistical stunts.

One very smart chap flustered his lips
 and invented the word for f-f-Fish.
 And his wife, to prove she was in the groove,
 invented the word for du-du-du-Dish.
 Someone sweated quite hard
 and produced glu-glu-glu-Glove.
 Some guy sweated harder,
 and brought forth lu-lu-lu-Love
 and the words for pa-Popcorn,
 du-du-Doorknob and Trout.
 And some brave guy fractured his epiglottis
 and came up with the word Sauerkraut.

Thus, young Mankind painfully struggled,
 giving birth to new words week by week.
 And this went on for a few million years
 before mankind was able to speak.
 And as people's tails kept growing shorter
 and all but disappeared,
 subtle things like verbs and adverbs
 and adjectives appeared.
 And in the space of a few more millennia
 we had a Language. And we could yell it.
 But nobody yet had figured out
 how the hell to write or spell it!

THAT took a bit of doing.
 They had to concoct squirly squiggles
 and alphabets and ampersands
 and assorted piggie-de-higgles
 and apostrophes, caesuras and diphthongs.
 But at last they *did* succeed.
 They wrote it all down
 and soon all over town
 Johnny could write and read!

Yet . . .

Despite the noble inventive sweat
that made our Language to blossom and soar . . .
Despite Chaucer and Milton and Shakespeare
and Jonathan Swift and Vidal Gore,
everybody now tells me:
Reading and writing's a bloody bore.
And Johnny's mother tells me:
Johnny don't wanna do that stuff no more!

WELL . . .

I'm getting *so* sick and tired of Johnny,
I'm asking you good people . . . PLEASE!
Give him a kick in the pants.
Let his tail grow back long.
And send him back up in the trees!

Dartmouthiad

SING, MUSE, the voyage through Hellenic lands
of Dartmouth's sons, in search of themselves.
What god was it brought them together in adventure?
Calvert's issue, Stephanos, immortal henchmen of
Michael McGean. In the bright halls of Crosbie
the other gods were all at home, and the son of
Calvert, taking up the scepter, spoke wingèd words.

“Let fifty sons of Dartmouth, with fifty comely wives
to share their beds, as is natural between men and women,
assemble at dawn at JFK, and let them mount my jumbo chariot.”
And swift-footed McGean of the slippery skate answered him:
“It shall be done; three immortal nymphs shall I send
to muster them, in the earthly forms of Margareta, Eleni, and Molly,
and four others, mortal guides filled with facts and sensibility —
Cleo, Maria, Nota, Vana —
and two seers from the many wise men of Dartmouth,
Robert, son of Grath, far the best of art interpreters,
who knows all things that were, the things to come, and things past,
and yet another, whose thinning hair betokens lucubration and
cerebration,
a prophet of gloom, to admonish Dartmouth's sons to ‘know themselves’
and never to fall into excess, least of all
at the time when Helios's golden chariot dips into the sea,
the time that mortal men call the ‘happy hour.’”

He spoke, and so it came to pass.

Like the multitudinous nations of swarming insects
who drive hither and thither about the stalls of the sheepfold

in the season of spring when the milk splashes in the milk pails:
 in such numbers the flowing-haired Dartmouthidae
 assembled with their comely wives at JFK.

Tell me now, you Muses, who have your homes on Olympus —
 for you know all things, and we have heard
 only the rumor of it and know nothing:
 Who then were the chief men and lords of the tribes of Dartmouth?

“Ted Selig led the tribe of ’27, William Ballard the ’28s, while
 John Maxon was commander of ’29,
 hoary sages all three. Younger, yet no less wise,
 were the many lords of ’50: Carver, McIlwain and McCulloch.
 A mere stripling, boyish fuzz still upon his cheeks, led the tribe of ’56,
 Spitzli of Virginia Beach. Others equal in renown
 swelled the Dartmouth ranks. Nor shall we omit the glorious allies,
 puissant though barbarian,
 a legion entire: from the Massachusetts Institute, William son of Robin
 from Princeton-town in the Jersey swamp, and Ned the Yost from
 a square that is a circle. But most noble and omnipotent of all,
 kings of kings, were Lords McCulloch and McKinley, diumvirate,
 trustees both.”

Armstrongiad

(Read on January 5, 1996, at the event celebrating the long-awaited end of Jim Armstrong's interim directorship of Kendal, with Jim and Carol, his wife, on stage.)

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many wiles,
James of the strong arms, lured into exile from seagirt Maine
by a hennessey Olympian, to do battle with monsters:
the one-eyed tax assessor in Hanover of the elms,
lotus eaters lounging in their long wood, drugged
by shared service fees, while Carol of the white arms,
his circumspect consort, withered in seagirt Maine,
faithful in her abandonment while beset by suitors
wooing surreptitiously by fax and e-mail, for they knew
that the Olympians of the Board had vowed to prolong the
strongarm's exile month after weary month.
But the man of many wiles, forewarned by Zeus
who thunders on high that Sirens were near, took a great wheel
of wax and with the sharp bronze cut a little piece off
and rubbed it together in his heavy hands, and soon the wax
grew softer, and he stopped the ears of his staff but then
commanded the Buckman to bind him hand and foot
to his throne. Then the Sirens approached and directed
their sweet song toward him. "Listen to my singing,
honored James," warbled Walter of the Franks. "Hear
the honey-sweet voice that issues from our lips, for
we know everything about shared service fees, and
Antonius of clan Robert knows everything that happens

over all the generous earth regarding not-for-profit corporations.” So they sang in sweet utterance. James’s heart desired to listen, and all would have been lost if the Buckman had not fastened him with yet more lashings and if his stalwart mates with the wax in their ears — Sir Daniel of the House of Ebbin, and noble Brent of Edgertown — had not persevered in their self-denying silence.

But when Dawn showed again with rosy fingers, James of the strong arms went down to Hanover of the elms to vie with tax assessors and eclectic anthropi. Their leader rose up as straight and tall as a Cliff, and next to him stood Black Willy. But it was Lord Donald of the Moonrows, a man like murderous Ares himself, who seemed most formidable of all the Hanoverians in build and beauty. “Come, friends,” he said. “Let us ask the stranger to compete with me in assessing — his ridiculous thirty million against my forty-two — for in his build he is no mean man, for lower legs and thighs he has, and both arms’re strong above them, and the neck is massive. He may be younger than he looks, for the crush of cares has used him badly, for I say there is no other thing worse than administering Kendal for breaking a man, even though he be a strong one.”

So they asked him. And resourceful James of the many wiles spoke in turn and answered them: “Why do you urge me on in mockery? Cares are more in my mind than assessments, for I long to return to Maine and to Carol of the white arms and to my letter press and all the sweetness of irresponsibility.”

Whereupon the tax assessor answered him to his face and spoke to him roughly: “Stranger, I see that you are one who grasps for profits. You do not resemble an athlete.” “Now you have stirred up anger deep in the breast within me by this disorderly speaking,” answered James of the strong arms. “Know, then, that build and beauty are not everything. There is a certain kind of man, less noted for beauty, but the gods put comeliness in his words, and they who look upon him are filled with joy, and he speaks to them without faltering.

In your case, the appearance is like the immortals yet the mind is worthless.”

He spoke, then grasped a discus bigger and thicker and heavier than ever seen, and addressed the Cliff and Black Willy: “O esteemed anthropi, let my throw determine the assessment.” His comeliness of speech won their assent. He spun and let fly from his ponderous hand. The stone hummed in the air to thirty-five, which pleased the eclectic anthropi, who invited him straightway to their hot tub and a feast of roast moose au jus, while Donald of the Moonrows slunk away in humiliation.

[Here the manuscript breaks off, so we shall never know how James of the strong arms fared with the lotus eaters drugged by shared service fees in their long wood. Fortunately, however, we do have one more fragment, a curious one, perhaps not quite authentic, but in any case clearly the very end of this overly long epic, since James is now back in Maine and about to be reunited with his long-suffering wife.]

When James of the many wiles had slain the suitors by disconnecting fax and e-mail, Carol of the white arms heard her lady in waiting announce: “He is here; he is in the house.” But circumspect Carol said to her in answer, “This is not true. You know and I know that the Olympians of the Board have vowed to prolong his exile month after weary month.” Then the companion said to her in answer: “My child, what sort of word has escaped your teeth’s barrier? There is another proof: that scar on his foot.” So circumspect Carol wondered, for she had also seen a dream that seemed now to be coming true. Meanwhile, unexpected gods appeared from South of Olympus, Carol’s own patron deities, the Carolinians, and they threw a beautiful mantle and a tunic about him as he came out of the bath, but left the scar carefully exposed, and Anne of the Carolinians made him taller to behold and thicker, and on his head she arranged curling locks that hung down like hyacinthine petals. Then he sat opposite his wife, who glimpsed the scar on his foot and relented. And as when the land appears welcome to men who are swimming after Poseidon has smashed

their strong-built ship on the open water, and gladly they set foot
on shore, escaping the evil, so welcome was her husband.
Then the gods held back Dawn of the rosy fingers so that
circumspect Carol of the white arms could relate her dream:
“Dear husband of the strong arms, I saw you in my dream
as a frog on a lily pad. Then a fairy appeared of the hennessey
type and with a swish of his wand transformed you into a prince
for nine long and weary months. But then in my dream
the fairy returned. With another swish of the wand
he transformed you — not back into a frog, but into the goodliest
form of all: a RESIDENT!”

And so the two talked into the night.
She, shining among women, told of all she had endured,
and wily James of the strong arms told of all
the cares and joys he had inflicted on others.
Nor did any sleep fall upon her eyes
until he had told her everything.

*(December 8, 1995, on Amtrak train 56,
Wilmington to White River Junction.)*

On Retiring to Kendal (and Beyond)

A Literary Excursion

“Do you want to die — and after five, six, or ten days, to be forgotten completely, as though you had never lived, as though you were a thing, a tree cut down, a dog, a lamb?” “No! No!”

— Kazantzakis

“Do not aspire to immortal life, my soul, but exhaust the field of the possible.”

— Pindar

IS DEATH AN unmitigated calamity? Upon moving into a retirement community like Kendal, one obviously thinks about such things, since such a community — although at first resembling a marvelously stimulating educational cruise boat, or a luxurious residential hotel, or an undergraduate college — is after all your final home, a place from which, sooner or later, you will leave in a box, ready for burial or cremation.

Why have Quakers been so active in creating such communities? And why do so many Quakers consider residence in a Kendal or similar community to be a natural, desirable alternative to remaining in their individual homes? Perhaps it is because their friends and relatives are already there, or because Friends do not wish to burden their children with old-age cares. I hope, however, that the primary reason is something else, whether or not it be consciously articulated — namely, Friends’ emphasis on the *corporate* nature of religious life and therefore the corporate nature of life in general. If worship is corporate as well as private, if business decisions are determined by a sense of the entire Meeting rather than by a pre-

ponderance of individual votes, then presumably aging and dying, too, is properly corporate. The reason for Friends' emphasis on corporateness lies in the central doctrine of Quaker theology: the belief that a divine light is in us all but that, as John Punshon warns, "it would be a mistake to regard [that inward light] as a part of human nature, a personal possession, a fragment of divinity, our bit of God. The light is in all," he continues, "but it is the same light that is in all. . . . There are not many lights, but only one. . . . Because it is common to all of us, the light calls us into unity with one another, into the community, . . . So you could not practice the sort of religion George Fox preached in isolation."¹

Hence many Friends at the nadir of life attempt to minimize the isolation that often enwraps aging people. As Dr. James Strickler, a wise geriatrician, concludes, "The major illness of older people is loneliness." And as Elizabeth Gray Vining wrote in her memoir *Being Seventy*, published just before she entered Kendal at Longwood, "Old people need desperately to talk. This is the real loneliness of old age — to be surrounded by people and yet not to have anyone to hear and respond." Thus, she concluded, "I find myself deeply satisfied — and grateful — that I am going to Kendal. . . . The prospect of being part of a community where I shall find some of my closest friends and hope to make many more, the opportunity of helping to make it a caring community, and the security for the future: all these are important to me."

And yet . . . and yet . . . , it will all be abrogated — all that community, friendship, service, security, and corporate worship — all that shared light.

Is not death, then, an unmitigated calamity? Surely we must worry about this even if an answer is hard to find. It is a question that philosophers and especially poets have asked and have tried to answer for millennia, since both are trained to see the full spectrum of human possibility and futility. Consider, for example, Jacques's famous speech on the seven ages of man in the second act of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

. . . one man in his time plays many parts,
his acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
and shining morning face, creeping like snail
unwillingly to school. And then the lover,

sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
seeking the bubble reputation
even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
in fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
with eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
full of wise saws and modern instances;
and so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
with spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
his youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
for his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice
turning again toward childish treble, pipes
and whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
that ends this strange eventful history,
is second childishness and mere oblivion;
sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

This is the total context of possibility and futility in which one must consider retiring to Kendal (and beyond).

Is all our worldly accomplishment futile if it ends in oblivion? Is “being” — the adventure of living — is clearly a good, is “non-being” — death — clearly an evil? Is our only real purpose on earth to reproduce and then nurture the newborn in order to perpetuate our genes, in which case most of us would be superfluous after, say, the age of thirty-five or forty? Conversely, would life be better if greatly prolonged or if death did not exist? Or is the necessary remedy for death some sort of otherworldly immortality?

I cannot answer all of these questions, but I will address some of them.²

Would life be better if greatly prolonged or if death did not exist?

This question needs to be subdivided — first, if death did not exist but aging did; second, if perpetually sound body and mind accompanied the absence of death.

The first is easy to answer. In literature, it is treated in Part 3, Chapter 10, of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, completed in 1725. Gulliver visits

the Luggnuggians, among whom live the Struldbruggs, rare creatures born with a red mark on the forehead which signifies that the child so marked will be immortal. Gulliver is amazed and delighted. “Happy nation,” he cries out, “where every child hath at least a chance for being immortal! . . . [H]appiest beyond all comparison are those excellent *Struldbruggs*, who being born exempt from that universal calamity of human nature, have their minds free and disengaged, without the weight and depression of spirits caused by the continual apprehension of death.”

He says that he has often contemplated how his own life would be if he, too, had been relieved of the anxiety of a certain death. (Perhaps we have done the same.)

But then Gulliver discovers that these supposedly blessed immortals do not enjoy “a perpetuity of youth, health, and vigour,” indeed that they “pass a perpetual life under all the usual disadvantages which old age brings along with it.” His hosts fill in the details, relating that the *Struldbruggs* “commonly acted like mortals, till about thirty years old, after which by degrees they grew melancholy and dejected. . . . When they came to fourscore years . . . they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection. . . . Envy and impotent desires are their prevailing passions. . . . The least miserable among them appear to be those who turn to dotage, and entirely lose their memories. . . . At ninety they lose their teeth and hair; they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite. . . . In talking they forget the common appellation of things, and the names of persons, even of those who are their nearest friends and relations. . . .”

After listening to this account, Gulliver actually sees five or six of these immortals. He concludes: “They were the most mortifying sight I ever beheld; and the women more horrible than the men. . . . [F]rom what I had heard and seen, my keen appetite for perpetuity of life was much abated. I grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing visions I had formed; and thought no tyrant could invent a death into which I would not run with pleasure from such a life.”

A similar vision of sickness and debility in which death is craved as a release may be seen in Book II of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* when the

archangel Michael shows Adam, after the Fall, the future that he and Eve have bequeathed to all of us in the now-fallen world:

A lazar-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
numbers of all diseas'd, all maladies
of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
dæmoniac frenzy, moping melancholy
and moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, despair
tended the sick busiest from couch to couch;
and over them triumphant death his dart
shook, but delay'd to strike, though oft invoc't
with vows, as their chief good, and final hope.

Adam is dismayed. Yet he still views death as an unmitigated calamity despite everything the angel has shown him. "Why is life giv'n / to be thus wrested from us?" he demands at first of Michael. But then, finally accepting the reality of his newly acquired mortality, he asks, "... is there yet no other way, besides / these painful passages, how we may come / to death...?" There is, replies the angel. With luck, he tells Adam, he may live

... till like ripe Fruit thou drop
into thy mother's lap, or be with ease
gather'd, not harshly pluckt ...

However, the familiar catch remains:

 thou must outlive
thy youth, thy strength, thy beauty, which will change
to wither'd weak and gray; thy senses then
obtuse, all taste of pleasure must forgo,
to what thou hast, and for the air of youth
hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign
a melancholy damp of cold and dry

to weigh thy spirits down, and last consume
the balm of life . . .

We are delivered again to Shakespeare's seventh age, "second childishness and mere oblivion," even if the worst forms of bodily and mental illness are avoided.

But what about immortality accompanied by perpetually sound body and mind? Certainly this might be a big advantage in wooing, for example, as we learn from Andrew Marvell's famous poem "To His Coy Mistress," which I will print now in part:

Had we but world enough, and time,
this coyness, lady, were no crime. . . .

. . . I would

Love you ten years before the Flood;
and you should, if you please, refuse
till the conversion of the Jews. . . .

An hundred years should go to praise
thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
two hundred to adore each breast,
but thirty thousand to the rest . . .

Of course Marvell realizes that he and the lady do *not* have world enough and time; indeed, he always hears "time's winged chariot hurrying near" — which puts a different complexion on the lady's coyness. But let's save the rest of the poem for later, in order to continue our exploration of an immortality with perpetually sound body and mind.

Would it really be so advantageous to live forever, avoiding sickness and debility? Again, we are helped by poets, beginning with Homer, who gives us an example of someone — his hero Odysseus — who was offered immortality and rejected it. On his way home from the Trojan War to his island, Ithaca, and his wife, Penelope, Odysseus has had a pleasant stay with Calypso, a goddess who promises him immortality if he will remain with her. "Can I be less desirable than [Penelope] is?" she asks. / "Less interesting? Less beautiful? Can mortals / compare with goddesses in grace and form?" Odysseus replies:

My lady goddess, . . .
my quiet Penelope — how well I know —

would seem a shade before your majesty,
death and old age being unknown to you,
while she must die. Yet, it is true, each day
I long for home, long for the sight of home.
If any god has marked me out again
for shipwreck, my tough heart can undergo it.
What hardship have I not long since endured
at sea, in battle! Let the trial come.³

Why would Odysseus, or anyone, deliberately choose mortality — indeed possible or probable hardship, not to mention guaranteed death — over immortality? Perhaps it is because immortality “hides from us what is truly precious. It is like an anodyne; in killing pains it also kills pleasures, at least the noble ones.”⁴ Time’s winged chariot brings beauties and delights, not just “pestilence, / dropsies, and . . . joint-racking rheums.” It produces, for example, the bloom on the child’s or young woman’s cheek. Therefore, as the poet Robert Herrick advises.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
Tomorrow will be dying. . . .

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
for having lost but once your prime,
you may for ever tarry.⁵

This brings us back to that other coy mistress, Andrew Marvell’s. The second part of his poem puts a different complexion on the lady’s coyness:

But at my back I always hear
time’s winged chariot hurrying near;
and yonder all before us lie
deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
nor in thy marble vault shall sound
my echoing song; then worms shall try
that long preserved virginity. . . .

The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
sits on thy skin like morning dew, . . .
now let us sport us while we may;
and now, like am'rous birds of prey,
rather at once our time devour
than languish in his slow-chapped power. . . .

Paradoxically, it is precisely the passage of time, and even the hardship, pestilence, shipwreck, and dying rosebuds which it brings, that gives life its savor, encouraging us—in youth, adolescence, maturity, retirement, and our final act on the world's stage—to make the best possible use of the gifts offered for each of our seven ages.

To return to the questions posed earlier, I have already given a negative reply to “Would life be better if greatly prolonged or if death did not exist?” Regarding “Is the necessary remedy for death some sort of otherworldly immortality?” many liberal Friends probably assume that an afterlife in which we retain our personal identity is a fairy tale that we can now discard. Of course many of these same Friends will find solace in a belief that in dying they return to the Spirit and Light that permeates eternity—and that is fine. But the teaching that this life is a trial designed to prepare us for eternal bliss (or eternal damnation if we fail life's test) is no longer a guiding principle for many of us.

The remaining questions are perhaps more difficult. Before proceeding to them, I would like to present another poem, Constantine Cavafy's “Ithaca,” because this is assuredly the best statement we have in our modern literature regarding the importance, indeed sanctity, of life itself as opposed to a goal—the afterlife—toward which life is supposedly leading. The subject brings us back to Homer's *Odyssey*.

We have already seen Odysseus's rejection of immortality because of his great yearning to return to Ithaca and his wife, Penelope. Cavafy treats this very differently:

When you set your course for Ithaca, pray
the route be long: filled with
adventures, filled with learning. . . .
Pray the route be long.

That on many a summer morning
(with what delight, what joy!) you enter
harbors you have never glimpsed before. . . .
That you go to many Egyptian towns
to learn and learn from the instructed.
Always keep Ithaca in mind.
Arrival there is your destined end.
But do not hasten the journey in the least.
Better it continue many years
and you anchor at the isle an old man,
rich with all you gained along the way,
not expecting Ithaca to grant you riches.
Ithaca granted you the lovely voyage.
Without her you would never have departed on your way.
She has nothing else to grant you any more.
And though you find her squalid, Ithaca did not cheat you.
So wise have you become, so experienced,
you already will have realized what they mean: these Ithacas.⁶

Is all our worldly accomplishment futile? Certainly not for Cavafy, for whom it is self-justifying. Is our only real purpose on earth to reproduce and then nurture the newborn in order to perpetuate our genes, which would make most of us superfluous after the age of thirty-five or forty? Certainly not for Cavafy, for whom the overriding purpose of our existence is to experience and exploit—intellectually, artistically, emotionally, physically—the amazing adventure and gift of being alive.

If, then, “being”—the adventure of living—is clearly a good, is “non-being”—death—clearly an evil? Should we not think about a balance between being and non-being, the assets of the former outweighing the debits of the latter? In other words, is life good in spite of death? Or may we venture the more radical opinion that death actually enhances life, makes it better? We have already heard the view that immortality “hides from us what is truly precious. It is like an anodyne; in killing pains it also kills pleasures, at least the noble ones.” Its author continues, thinking of Marvell’s poem: “Without time and its winged chariot hurrying near, love between a man and a woman would become lethargic, more like the dripping of a faucet than the rushing of an Alpine stream. . . . And what

of . . . all those pleasures which depend upon ardor and will and which require the overcoming of something or the pursuit of it? These too would be diminished rather than augmented [if death did not exist]. Achievements would become meaningless to immortals. Why run an under-four-minute mile today when you have infinite time to do so? A life is made by preferences, judgments, choices, and decisions and a life without accident, necessity and death would be a life in which such choices and decisions would be infinitely postponable. . . . In such a situation the life of the mind itself would be diminished. For it sharpens the mind exceedingly to make decisions which have consequences which cannot be postponed or reversed.” Consider as well that the supposed evil of non-being is what peoples the world with children. If death did not exist we would be relieved, to be sure, of the infant mewling and puking in its mother’s arms, but we would also be deprived of all the joys and beauties of the growing child as he or she learns to walk, speak, reason, and discriminate.

In sum, we may conclude, paradoxically, not that life is good in spite of death, but that death enhances life rather than necessarily diminishing it — at least it has the possibility of doing so in many cases. Indeed, as the Greek poet Stylianos Harkianakis has written.

Death is not a black angel,
 death is my brother.
 At every moment our journeys,
 parallel and equated,
 mark out an ideal relation that is given
 and wells up inside me
 because death is not a black angel,
 death is my faithful
 my twin brother.⁷

To quote another Greek author, Nikos Kazantzakis, writing about Spain:

Passion and nothingness! These are the two poles around which the Spanish soul revolves. Passion: the . . . ardent embrace of life, while at the same time the sense that everything is nothing . . . and that our ultimate heir is death. But the greater the sense of nothingness in a strong soul, the more intensely does that soul live each and every ephemeral, futile moment!⁸

The earth is a blossom-filled path that leads us to the grave. . . . But you can go to the grave . . . while harvesting the joys of the journey.⁹

Remember Cavafy:

When you set your course for Ithaca,
pray the route be long . . .
Always keep Ithaca in mind.
Arrival there is your destined end.
But do not hasten the journey in the least.

Kazantzakis has a memorable metaphor. Life, he says, places us in a rowboat on a river. With vigor and joy we row against the current as best we can, upstream, our backs to the deadly waterfall downstream. But as the years and decades pass, we row less well, less powerfully, and our boat begins to be carried more and more downstream by the current until the waterfall can be heard not too far away. At that point, we should turn around, ship the oars, face the inevitable, and sing!

This instructive metaphor tells us that our lives consist (or should consist) of two basic movements; an initial one in which we oppose non-being as an ultimate evil, then a subsequent one in which, strangely, we embrace that evil as an ultimate good. How can we understand this apparent inconsistency? How can we proceed beyond the surface clash to a deeper compatibility? To do so we need to employ the philosophical terms dualism and monism. Dualism is the view that reality is explicable as two fundamental entities, such as mind and matter, good and evil. Monism is the view that reality is a unified whole and that all existing things can be ascribed to a single concept. The initial movement described in Kazantzakis's metaphor is dualistic, the final movement monistic. Why? In the initial movement, we do everything we can to oppose our body's fatigue, hunger, and illness, keeping the body well rested, fed, and medicated; we also do everything we can to oppose our spirit's complacency, indifference, and self-interest, contributing as best we can to the moral and/or intellectual well-being of the world around us. These activities are dualistic because they presuppose a good and a bad, a desirable and a non-desirable. Our efforts are at least partially successful, for many of us do manage to retard our bodily and spiritual fatigue as we row upstream against the destructive current. Said in another way, we

create our own fate in defiance of fate itself; at least we do this to a relative degree.

But we cannot overcome either our own body's aging or the world's injustice to an absolute degree. Thus we must progress to the second movement, in which we no longer oppose death but welcome it, willing it upon ourselves as a supreme good. Owing to this collaboration, we once again create our own fate. Yet now we no longer do this in defiance of fate itself; instead, we transform fate into an instrument that paradoxically fulfills our earlier efforts instead of negating them. Why? Because by embracing non-being we practice monistically what we were able to practice only dualistically before. Before, we strove to end all divisiveness between body and spirit, justice and injustice. Stated theologically, we strove to approximate divine unity. But success in this endeavor is impossible in this earthly life of fragmentation, finitude, and death. Thus we fail ultimately, despite our temporary successes in life. Nevertheless, by embracing the force of non-being itself we paradoxically succeed, for this allows us to simulate the unity that comes only after death. At last, we understand our existence as a monistic whole.

Monism also posits that all existing things may be ascribed to a single concept: freedom. Rowing against the current, we are relatively free insofar as we succeed in imposing our inner needs upon outer necessity. Shipping the oars and calmly facing the dreadful waterfall in the second movement, we are absolutely free insofar as we ourselves accept as an ultimate good that which is willed inescapably by outer necessity.

Having completed this philosophical detour, we are now ready to resume the direct path of retiring to Kendal (and beyond). We have traveled on a literary excursion dedicated to the reality of retirement: the truth that, for those of us fortunate enough to experience some years or decades following our active careers, retirement leads to Shakespeare's sixth age, the one that then leads to the "last scene of all." Given this reality, I believe that our ultimate stance vis-à-vis the facts of life and death should be gratitude. Consider again the vision of Kazantzakis:

What is this luck, this miracle to be alive and healthy, to thirst, drink water and be refreshed down to your heels, to hunger, eat a piece of bread and feel your bones creaking with delight?¹⁰

But he continues:

And how did it happen that delight is so tightly entwined . . . with necessity?

Our gratitude in retirement needs to be compatible with a realization that life's benefits and joys could not have occurred without finitude: that the brevity, vulnerability, and even what we may still call the futility of life are paradoxically the herbs that supply its flavor.

Hence when we retire to Kendal (and beyond) we need not only to develop intellectual, spiritual, and emotional *gratitude* for what we have been given but at the same time to acknowledge and accept *finitude* as a paradoxical blessing rather than what Gulliver at first called "that universal calamity of human nature." We of course will not wish to hasten our extinction provided we still enjoy some mental and bodily health; yet we need to be ready to ship the oars, face the waterfall, and sing when our time arrives.

Let me conclude with Kazantzakis thinking now of his own death, and then with part of a very relevant poem by Cavafy:

I collect my tools: sight, smell, touch, taste, hearing, intellect. Night has fallen, the day's work is done. I return like a mole to my home, the ground. Not because I am tired and cannot work. I am not tired. But the sun has set. . . . I cast a final glance around me . . . To what should I say farewell? Mountains, the sea . . . ? Virtue, sin? Refreshing water? . . .

. . . [N]ow the day's work is done; I collect my tools. Let other[s] . . . come to continue the struggle. . . .

Farewell!

. . . I grasp earth's latch to open the door and leave, but I hesitate on the luminous threshold just a little while longer. My eyes, my ears . . . find it difficult . . . to tear themselves away from the world's stones and grass. A man can tell himself he is satisfied and peaceful; he can say he has no more wants, that he has fulfilled his duty and is ready to leave. But the heart resists. Clutching the stones and grass, it implores, "Stay a little!"

I fight to console my heart, to reconcile it to declaring the Yes

freely. We must leave the earth not like . . . tearful slaves, but like kings who rise from table with no further wants, after having eaten and drunk to the full . . .¹¹

And here is Cavafy's stanza, relevant to Kazantzakis's hope that we will all declare this most difficult Yes freely:

For some people the day arrives when they
must declare the great Yes or the great No.
Clear at once is whoever keeps the Yes
inside him ready; saying it he gains
honor and conviction. . . .¹²

May we all learn to say the great Yes freely when our day arrives. If we do, we will have planned well in retirement not only for the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional change needed to enter that transitional period but also, more importantly, for the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and above all physical change that ends the adventure — the amazing gift of having been temporarily alive. We will have been true to our Quaker belief in a Light that traveled inward to guide us for a few mortal moments but that is outward, unified, and eternal, calling us into unity not only with the human community but also, most importantly, with the universe's overall creative purpose, realized just as much by death as by life.

Notes

- 1 John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1986), p. 50.
- 2 In much of what follows, I am indebted to an unpublished essay entitled "Would Human Life Be Better without Death?" by my former colleague at Dartmouth, Michael Platt, kindly sent to me by my former student at Dartmouth, Geoffrey Murphy.
- 3 Fitzgerald translation.
- 4 Quoted from Michael Platt's "Would Human Life Be Better without Death?"
- 5 "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" (abridged).
- 6 Somewhat abridged; translated by Peter Bien.
- 7 «Ο θάνατος είναι αδερφός» in *Χώμα και στάχτη*, translated by Peter Bien.
- 8 *Ταξιδεύοντας Ισπανία*, 3rd edition (Athens, 1962), p. 50.

- 9 *Τάξιδεύοντας Ισπανία*, p. 106.
- 10 *Τάξιδεύοντας Ισπανία*, p. 108.
- 11 *Report to Greco* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), pp. 17–18.
- 12 “Che fece . . . il gran rifiuto,” very freely translated, abridged (and distorted) by Peter Bien.

PRESENTATIONS AND PERMISSIONS

KAZANTZAKIS

Report to Nikos

A mimicry of Kazantzakis's «Αναφορά στο Γκρέκο» (“Report to Greco”) delivered in English in London on February 18, 2013, as the keynote lecture at the celebration of the 130th anniversary of Kazantzakis's birth; delivered in Greek in Heraklion, Crete on November 10, 2016, when I was awarded the Nikos Kazantzakis Prize by the City of Heraklion. I also read it in part on ERT (Athens radio), third program, with commentary by Aphroditī Kosma, on October 30 and November 6, 2017. In my absence, Christos Alexiou read it at the symposium at Athens University honoring Eri Stavropoulou's retirement and Nikos Mathioudakis read it at a symposium at the University of Thrace, both in Autumn 2017. Published in *Νίκος Καζαντζάκης: ο Κοσμοπαρωρίτης* (Αθήνα: Μουσείο Μπενάκη, 2018), σελ. 26–40, edited by Nikos Mathioudakis. Permission to republish granted by Nikos Mathioudakis.

Η εσχρατολογική αισιοδοξία: η αμετάβλητη φιλοσοφία του Καζαντζάκη

Read in my absence by Ambassador Spyridon Theoharopoulos as the keynote lecture in the symposium at the Acropolis Museum in Athens on February 16, 2018. Published in *Καζαντζάκης και Πολιτική* edited by George Stassinakis (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2018). Permission to republish granted by George Stassinakis.

Renan's *Vie de Jésus* as a Primary Source for *The Last Temptation*.

Printed in *Scandalizing Jesus? Kazantzakis's The Last Temptation of Christ Fifty Years On*, edited by Darren J. N. Middleton (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005, pp. 3–18). Permission to republish granted by Darren J. N. Middleton.

Op-ed Statement Defending Scorsese's Film

Appeared originally in *The New York Times* on August 11, 1988, p. A25.
Reprinted in *London Times, International Herald Tribune, Los Angeles*

Herald Examiner, Miami Herald International Edition, The Arizona Daily Star, Friends Journal, Manchester Guardian. Permission to republish granted by *The New York Times*.

Kazantzakis and the Language Question

Unpublished lecture delivered at Colorado College, November 17, 2006.

Kazantzakis in Berlin, 1922–23

Lecture delivered in English at the European Center, Würzburg, Germany, on July 28, 2007, and at Princeton University on October 19, 2009.

Delivered in Greek at the University of Thessaloniki's conference on Kazantzakis's cosmopolitanism on November 1, 2007. Listed (abstract only) in *Ο Κοσμοπολιτισμός του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη: Πρακτικά διεπιστημονικής Ημερίδας Δημοτική Βιβλιοθήκη, Θεσσαλονίκης, 5 Νοεμβρίου 2007, επιμέλεια Γιώργου Φρέρη. ᾠκδοση Εργαστηρίου Συγκριτικής Γραμματολογίας, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2008.*

Ο Καζαντζάκης επιστολογράφος

Lecture delivered at the University of Thessaloniki on November 7, 2007, on the occasion of my receiving an honorary doctorate there. Delivered to the Toronto Greek community on June 1, 2014, and to the Astoria, New York Greek community on October 19, 2014. Printed in *Θέματα Λογοτεχνίας, τεύχος 53 (2014)*, pp. 141–152. Permission to republish granted by Christos Alexiou, editor.

CAVAFY

Constantine Cavafy

Columbia University Press Essays on Modern Writers, no. 5, 1964. Issued in Greek translation by Kedros, 1983. Reprinted in *Three Generations of Greek Writers* (Athens: Efstathiadis, 1983). Also reprinted in *European Writers: The Twentieth Century*, ed. George Stade, vol. 8 (New York, Scribner's, 1989), pp. 205–228. Presented in part as a lecture at La Trobe University (Australia) on June 26, 1983, also at Monash University (Australia) on July 14, 1983. All rights have been reverted to me by Columbia University Press.

Cavafy's Three-Phase Development into Detachment

Lecture given at the University of Sydney, July 25, 1983. Published in the *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 10/1–2 (Spring-Summer, 1983), pp. 117–136. Permission granted by Leandros Papathanasiou, publisher, for specific use of the designated material.

Cavafy's Homosexuality and His Reputation Outside Greece

Lecture given at Melbourne University, September 21, 1990, previously at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention on December 29, 1989. Published in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* (JMGS) 8/2 (October 1990), pp. 197–211. Permission acknowledge by The Johns Hopkins University Press, publisher of JMGS.

Twenty-Four Cavafy Poems

Recited in part at a Dartmouth Alumni Association Seminar, February 27, 1982, and also at the Helicon Society, Harvard University, on April 22, 1973, and at Loyola Marymount University on September 27, 2006, and Cambridge University in England on March 20, 2005, the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State on June 1, 2001, and the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Adelaide, on September 18, 1990. "In Alexandria, 31 B.C." is printed in *What These Ithakas Mean: Readings in Cavafy*, edited by Artemis Leontis, Lauren E. Talalay, and Keith Taylor (Athens: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, 2002), pp. 125–127, and also in *An Anthology of Modern Greek Poetry*, edited by Nanos Valaoritis and Thanasis Maskaleris (Jersey City, NJ: Talisman House, 2004), p. 26. "Kaisarion" is printed in *The Greek Poets: From Homer to the Present*, edited by Peter Constantine, Edmund Keeley, and Rachel Hadas (New York: Norton, 2010), pp. 448–449. Cavafy's poetry is no longer under copyright and thus can be published, recited, and translated freely.

MYRIVILIS

Life in the Tomb

Lecture delivered at the Onassis Center for Hellenic Studies, New York University, April 17, 1992.

The Accidental Modernism of Myrivilis's *Life in the Tomb*

Lecture delivered at the MLA convention, December 29, 1980.

OTHER GREEK SUBJECTS

Homer as Temporal and Spatial Geometrician

Lecture delivered on a Dartmouth Alumni Cruise.

Reading Notes for Homer's *Iliad*

Distributed on a Dartmouth Alumni Cruise.

Odysseus Across the Centuries

Lecture delivered at the law offices of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP, New York City, October 22, 2009.

Study Guide for Thucydides's *The Peloponnesian War*

Prepared for a Dartmouth Alumni Cruise.

Looking at America Through Fifty Centuries of Greek Longevity

Lecture delivered on a Dartmouth Alumni Cruise.

Inventing Greece

Lecture delivered at Harvard University on November 14, 1997, also at San Francisco State University on October 13, 2005, at Simon Fraser University on November 8, 2001, Cambridge University on March 24, 2000, Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State on November 20, 1998, Stanford University on October 29, 2001, and Dartmouth College on April 23, 1998. Published in the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* vol. 23, no. 2 (October 2005), pp. 217–234. Permission acknowledge by The Johns Hopkins University Press, publisher of JMGS.

The “Language Question” in Greece

Lecture delivered at the University of Cincinnati, February 11, 1976.

Introduction to *Modern Greek Writers*

“Introduction” by Peter A. Bien from *Modern Greek Writers: Solomos, Kalvos, Matesis, Palamas, Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Seferis, Elytis*, ed. by Edmund Keeley and Peter Bien, copyright 1972, renewed 2000 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission.

The First Phase of MGSA's Publication of a Scholarly Journal

Lecture delivered at the Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA) Convention in Vancouver, Canada, on October 17, 2009.

Problems in Translating from Modern Greek

Lecture delivered at the Professors' Colloquium, Kendal at Hanover, March 5, 2012.

Address at the Celebration for Margaret Alexiou

Delivered at the farewell celebration for Dr. Alexiou at the University of Birmingham, England, on December 13, 1985.

The Greek God Zeus and John Rassias

Published in *Breakthrough: Essays and Vignettes in Honor of John A. Rassias*, ed. Mel B. Yoken (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 145–146. Permission granted by Peter Lang, Inc.

“Soil and Ashes” by S. S. Harkianakis

Permission granted by the author on October 5, 2016, as follows: “I am the author of a book of poems in the Greek language entitled *Χώμα και στάχτη*, published in Athens, Greece, by G. Rodis in 1978 but not copyrighted. I am happy to grant permission to Peter Bien to publish his translation of these poems as part of his collection of previous writings.” S. S. Charkianakis.

OTHER LITERATURE

Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*

Lecture presented during a short course at Pendle Hill, March 8–13, 1998, entitled “Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* and Kierkegaard’s Aesthetic, Ethical, and Religious Modes.”

Thomas Mann’s Ghost in *Der Zauberberg*

Academic article never published.

The Critical Philosophy of D. H. Lawrence

Published in the *D. H. Lawrence Review*, vol. 17 (1984), pp. 127–134. Permission granted by Richard Kaye, current editor of the journal.

POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION

How to Be Happy

Lecture: “How to Be Happy: Kierkegaard’s Aesthetic, Ethical, and Religious Modes,” presented at Lancaster, Pennsylvania Friends Meeting Forum, March 1, 1998; also at Kendal at Hanover Interfaith Gathering, March 16, 2014. Published in *Friends Journal*, April 2001, pp. 14–16. Permission granted.

What I Believe

Unpublished talk given at Kendal at Hanover.

Quakerism, Darwin, and Process-Relational Theology

Published in *Keeping Us Honest: Stirring the Pot: A Book for H. Larry Ingle*, ed. by Chuck Fager (Fayetteville, North Carolina: Kimo Press, 2011), pp. 185–194. Permission granted by Chuck Fager.

Quakerism and Process-Relational Theology: The Motion of the Cosmic Dance
Published in *Stillness There Is Fullness: A Peacemaker's Harvest. Essays in Honor of Daniel A. Seeger's Four Decades of Quaker Service*, edited by Peter Bien and Chuck Fager, pp. 56–71 (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania: Kimo Press, 2000), pp. 56–71. Permission granted by Chuck Fager.

Words, Wordlessness, and the Word

Lecture: "Words, Wordlessness, and The Word: Silence Reconsidered from a Literary Point of View" given at Guilford College, October 6, 1996. Published as Pendle Hill Pamphlet #303, 1992. Permission granted by Shirley Dodson, Pendle Hill Pamphlet Specialist.

The Mystery of Quaker Light

Talk given at Hanover, N.H., Quaker Meeting, November 17, 2002, and February 15, 2009; also at a weekend course on Light at Pendle Hill, April 5–7, 2002, and a talk at Kendal at Hanover on December 3, 2012. Published as Pendle Hill Pamphlet #384, 2006. Permission granted by Shirley Dodson, Pendle Hill Pamphlet Specialist.

EDUCATION, HEALTH, POETRY

Thoughts on Literacy Past and Present

Lecture given at the Jakarta International School, Jakarta, Indonesia, October 2, 1990, also for New Hampshire Humanities Council, Peterborough, N.H., June 1, 1990, and for the New England Foundation for the Humanities at Mystic Seaport, Connecticut on June 15, 1990.

Address to the Freshman Class

Delivered on September 14, 1977, to Dartmouth College's Class of 1981. A copy exists in the Dartmouth Archives.

Metaphysics, Myth, and Politics: An Examination
of Dartmouth Student Radicalism

Published in *Excellence in University Teaching*, ed. T. H. Buxton and K. W. Prichard (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 157–188. Out of print. Permission granted by Vicki Leach, Business Manager, University of South Carolina Press.

Beyond Health and Intellect: A Letter Occasioned by Prostate Cancer

Published in *Dartmouth Medicine*, Winter 1996, pp. 46–49, 73. Permission granted.

Seven Sonnets and an Ode

Unpublished occasional poetry.

Dartmouthiad

Composed at the end of a Dartmouth alumni cruise, October 21, 1979.

Armstrongiad

Composed for the celebration of James Armstrong's release from governing Kendal at Hanover as Interim Director much longer than expected and recited at that event, January 5, 1996.

On Retiring to Kendal (and Beyond): A Literary Excursion

Talk at Kendal at Hanover, June 11, 2002. Published as Pendle Hill Pamphlet #368, 2003. Permission granted by Shirley Dodson, Pendle Hill Pamphlet Specialist.

