

COMPARISON OF THE PHILOSOPHIES  
OF ALFRED TENNYSON'S IN MEMORIAM AND  
NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS' THE ODYSSEY: A MODERN SEQUEL

THESIS

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Socrates' statement that "an unexamined life is not worth living" expresses a view very close to Alfred Tennyson's as well as to Nikos Kazantzakis' philosophy. That both poets adhered to the idea of exploring life is obvious in Tennyson's elegy In Memoriam and Kazantzakis' epic The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, which alike explore the main themes of man's existence--loss, isolation, despair, accumulation of knowledge, challenges to faith in God, love, freedom, heroism, and life as a quest.

In Memoriam is a personal poem based in part on Tennyson's background. Most directly it expresses Tennyson's lamentation over the loss of his beloved, Platonic friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, and deals with the stages of grief and challenges to faith he came through. As Martin Svaglic says, In Memoriam was something of an anodyne to Tennyson.<sup>1</sup> But it was also a vehicle, as great elegies are, of a fruitful philosophical quest--of Tennyson's

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<sup>1</sup>Martin J. Svaglic, "A Framework for Tennyson's In Memoriam," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LXI (1962), 824.

working out poetically a view of life that both he and (to a large extent) his age subscribed to.<sup>2</sup>

The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel is an allegory of Nikos Kazantzakis' life and views. It reflects his travels all over the world, and it was his traveling experiences as well as his background that motivated him to write his great work--a poem in epic form that attempts to show the spiritual evolution of the individual as portrayed in the seven souls of a symbolic totem.

As I intend to compare and contrast the philosophical ideas of these two metrical products of modern thought, I will proceed in the following introduction to sketch the personal backgrounds of the two poets and to note some general characteristics of their times pertinent to my study. The first main chapter will outline Kazantzakis' philosophical views as expressed allegorically under the seven souls of the totem. The second chapter will examine the derivation of the philosophical structure

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<sup>2</sup>That In Memoriam pleased Tennyson's age is clear from his appointment to the Laureateship upon its publication in 1850. Furthermore, Tennyson was praised when he died as "a great Christian, a great Englishman, and a great 'singer'" according to J. B. Steane, Tennyson (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1969), p. 148.

underlying the seven-souls mythopoesis in The Odyssey. The third chapter will present an interpretive summary of Tennyson's In Memoriam, and it will define the philosophical similarities between In Memoriam and The Odyssey. The fourth chapter will examine basic differences between the philosophical views in In Memoriam and The Odyssey. In conclusion, I will attempt to state definitively what the major philosophical likenesses and differences between Tennyson and Kazantzakis are and to put their chef d'oeuvres into a clear perspective as a result of my analyses and evaluations.<sup>3</sup>

A look at Tennyson and Kazantzakis against the backgrounds of their times will suggest to the reader how importantly background influences contributed to the composition of these works.

Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) lived in England in a period of conscious cultural transition and of much

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<sup>3</sup>That The Odyssey is Kazantzakis' masterpiece may be inferred from John Ciardi's remark that "The Odyssey is not a book of the year nor a book of the decade, but a monument of the age." See John Ciardi, "The Seven Stages of the Soul," Saturday Review, XLI (December 13, 1958), p. 17. Also, Peter Bien calls Kazantzakis' Odyssey "the most ostentatiously 'total' of all his [Kazantzakis'] works" in Nikos Kazantzakis, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 27. That In Memoriam was Tennyson's masterpiece is the opinion of such modern critics as William E. Buckler, The Major Victorian Poets: Tennyson, Browning, Arnold (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), pp. xvii-xviii, 637.

anguish. Several radical historical events--the continual and rapid development of sciences, the progress of industrialism, the spread of the ideals of the French Revolution--brought constant social, political, and religious changes looking to the betterment through "progress" of the individual and society. The reform bill of 1832 introduced parliamentary democracy in England and led the rising middle classes to a more representative government pursuing economic and political freedom under the laissez-faire idea. This liberalism and Benthamite utilitarianism, with the materialistic and empirical orientation of the industrializing Victorian era, were connected with the testing of government, church, and law, and proposed a view of man as an economic entity motivated by self-interest. There was great material progress and the wealth of the nation grew. But this progress created many abuses and masses of human victims, as little care had been taken for the workers and their families who in large numbers lived, often near starvation, in the slums.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Walter E. Houghton, "Character of the Age," in Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard A. Levine (California: Chandler Publishing Co., n.d.), pp. 15-21. This omnibus volume on the Victorian age will henceforth be referred to as Backgrounds.

Religious belief became problematic in the Victorian era, as scientific writings challenged people and led them to doubt, confusion, scepticism, and even to atheism.<sup>5</sup> Some Benthamites rejected religion as superstition. The Anglican church developed three ruling factions, the Low, Broad, and High Church factions. The Oxford Movement defended the High Church and led to the Catholic revival in England. For many, traditional religious belief gave way to a religion of humanity, a religion demanding active worship and being concerned with the freedom of thought and action based on reason and utility (some of its advocates were the St. Simonians and the positivists--followers of Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill).<sup>6</sup>

What primarily shook the foundations of religious beliefs were the discoveries in the developing physical and biological sciences which questioned the traditional orthodoxies. People, nevertheless, increasingly looked towards science because they believed that science would

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<sup>5</sup>Asa Briggs, "Religion and Science," Backgrounds, pp. 88-89.

<sup>6</sup>J. S. Mill, Autobiography (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 140-141.



improve their life.<sup>7</sup> Many workers attended night schools to be educated after their work. Here they were often first informed about the traditional Copernican and Galilean cosmic theories of the past and began to hear of geological theories current in the 1830's and 1840's. They read Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology (1830-33) concerning the catastrophic natural forces which destroy earth and change it pitilessly, stressing the nothingness to nature of man's existence and raising questions of God's goodness. They also read Robert Chamber's Vestiges of Creation (1844), which put man in the zoological kingdom and emphasized nature's indifference to man.<sup>8</sup> The publication of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest with its evolutionary basis (a theory long in the making though published almost a decade after In Memoriam) led still more Victorians to scepticism as it was against the Biblical account of man's origin and man's peaceful life.

The Victorian intellectual environment with its probing of law and duty and its conflicting religious

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<sup>7</sup>Briggs, "Religion and Science," pp. 84-90.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Tennyson, influenced by this theory, asks in In Memoriam: "Are God and Nature then in strife . . . ?" (See In Memoriam: Section LV, l.5)--a shocking question to the faithful public.

attitudes naturally led many people to a spiritual crisis. Poets were influenced. Their works reflect their struggle to reconcile faith and science, desire and conscience, the past and the future, social progress and moral deterioration, and art and morality. For Victorians tended to regard poets (at least until the Pre-Raphaelite Movement of the 1850's) as the philosophical leaders of mankind having as an objective to inform, inspire, and instruct the public; and, so, poets could not be indifferent to the new evolutionary philosophies.<sup>9</sup>

These intellectual influences upset Tennyson's intellectual and emotional worlds and made his poetry in the In Memoriam period (1833-1850) philosophically modern, as it is concerned with the modern themes of loss, isolation, despair, the challenge to man's faith in God, and the meaning of man's existence and his potentialities.

Tennyson was one in a family of twelve children and a son of a disinherited clergyman who drank, mistreated his family, and created many why's in Alfred's inner world.

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<sup>9</sup>Kristian Smidt, "The Intellectual Quest of the Victorian Poets," British Victorian Literature: Recent Revaluations, ed. Shiv K. Kumar (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp. 56-57. This collection of essays will hereafter be referred to by author and short article title.

At times during his boyhood, to escape his irate father, Alfred had to hide in the churchyard in order to avoid punishment, sometimes praying God to take his life.<sup>10</sup> The home environment was, however, Christian in teaching. Thus Tennyson's later religious doubts created an intense inner struggle in him and an intellectual anguish, as the new ideas he met challenged those of his childhood. This anguish is clear even in his poem, "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," written in 1830, in which the persona-narrator concludes, referring to his conflicting religious doubts, "O dammed vacillating state!"<sup>11</sup>

In letters to his aunt, Tennyson expressed the sense of isolation he felt at the University of Cambridge, to which he was sent for his education.<sup>12</sup> There he met Arthur Henry Hallam, a scholar who encouraged Tennyson to gain self-confidence to work seriously at his poetry. At Cambridge, also, he joined the Apostles, a club of high-minded idealists with the ambition to enlighten the public on intellectual and spiritual matters. They also

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<sup>10</sup>B. C. Southam, Tennyson, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971), p. 20.

<sup>11</sup>Smidt, "The Intellectual Quest," p. 59.

<sup>12</sup>Steane, p. 26.

contributed much to Tennyson's self-realization, especially to the development of his poetic talent, and pointed him up as the "poetic spokesman" of the group (of which Hallam was the "born leader").<sup>13</sup>

But on his father's death in 1831 he left Cambridge without a degree, as he had thereafter to support the family financially.<sup>14</sup> Tennyson had, however, published a volume of poems in 1830 and had another one coming. He was making his mark as a poet and had ambitions to become a poet first and then a poet of significance. Two years later, in 1833, and after a failure at a financial enterprise, Tennyson lost Hallam, his intellectual helper and prospective relative (for Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily).<sup>15</sup> This loss increased the intellectual doubts of Tennyson and brought him near metaphysical despair.<sup>16</sup> The grievous effect of these events on Tennyson marks the immediate genesis of In Memoriam. But the poem's true background is Tennyson's age. Tennyson began writing In Memoriam immediately after Hallam's death but did not

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<sup>13</sup>Southam, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>Steane, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Smidt, "The Intellectual Quest," p. 59.

publish the 131 poems that make up the elegy until seventeen years later in 1850.<sup>17</sup> Among other objectives Tennyson undertakes in the poem, his attempt to reconcile "mind and soul" (Prologue, l. 27) is similar in certain ways to Kazantzakis' attempt to reconcile "flesh-spirit"--a trial Kazantzakis (like Tennyson) pursued throughout his life through scientific investigation, philosophical quest, love, and poetry.<sup>18</sup>

Nikos Kazantzakis (1885-1957) was born in Crete and buried in Heracleon, Crete--a crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Kazantzakis was a man with broad education, and his studies in Athens and Paris together with his traveling all over the world motivated him to create philosophical works, dramas, poetry, and travel books.<sup>19</sup>

The period in which Kazantzakis lived was one of transition and cultural upheaval, too, and his works almost epitomize philosophical conflicts of the modern world. He himself declares:

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<sup>17</sup>Steane, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup>Kimón Friar, "Introduction," in Nikos Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, ed. and trans. with Introduction, Synopsis, and Notes by Kimón Friar, a Clarion Book: Seventh Paperback Printing (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p. xxii.

<sup>19</sup>C. A. Tripanis, "Kazantzakis, Nikos," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1972), XIII, 261.

"The epoch through which we are passing seems to me decidedly anti-classical. It seems to break the molds in political, economic and social life, in thought and in action in order to achieve a new balance--a new classical age--on a higher plane: to create that which we have called a new Myth and which might give a new and synchronized meaning to the world at last. Our age is a savage one; the Bull, the underground Dionysian powers, has been unleashed; the Apollonian crust of the earth is cracking."<sup>20</sup>

He also adds that there is no nobility nor harmony in the present life, which is nothing but a "constant tension and flux of the élan vital," and that the sweet and happy balanced life belongs either to the past or to the future.<sup>21</sup>

Kazantzakis' childhood together with the local national problems in Crete played an important role in the formation of his personality. He was a son of an untalkative, unsociable, uneducated primitive villager, whom he admired even though he was afraid of him, and of a subordinate saint-like mother--a mother who smoothed their misery under the Turkish brutalities. During the Turkish occupation in Crete, Cretans were fighting against Turks, and their vision of freedom was sung in lullabies and

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted by Friar, "Introduction," p. xix.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. xx.

ballads. As a result of this war, Cretans were exiled in 1897, and Kazantzakis' family left for the Island of Naxos in Greece, where he attended a French school and so was introduced to Western civilization.<sup>22</sup>

Kazantzakis took his law degree from the University of Athens<sup>23</sup> and then went to France where he studied philosophy under Bergson at the Collège de France. Here he also studied Nietzsche.<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche's "tragic optimism" about life, together with his emphasis on the Dionysian type of nature, and Bergson's élan vital, which presents life as a vital, creative impulse, abandoning the individual to this force, are present in Kazantzakis' theory with this difference only--that Kazantzakis' hero never abandons himself to a chaos until the moment of death when he faces it bravely with his "Cretan Glance."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>P. Prevelakis, The Poet and the Poem of The Odyssey (Athens: n.p., 1958), pp. 17-20. The present writer has translated Prevelakis' Greek work in the quotations appearing in this thesis, as the translation by Philip Sherrard is not available to her.

<sup>23</sup>Current Biography Yearbook 1955 (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1956), p. 321.

<sup>24</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xvi.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. xv-xviii.

Although the deepest influences were the relatively early ones of Nietzsche and especially of Bergson, Kazantzakis also reflected the impact of a rich diversity of philosophies, including those of Buddha, Lenin, Christ, Spinoza, Spengler, Darwin, Homer, Frazer, and Dante.<sup>26</sup>

After leaving France, Kazantzakis continued his studies, devoting himself to literature and art in Germany and Italy. Eventually he mastered five modern languages, in addition to both ancient and modern Greek, and Latin. His facility as a linguist and translator led to his appointment as a United Nations translator in 1947.<sup>27</sup> His books on philosophy have been used as textbooks in several European universities.<sup>28</sup> In 1950 he was elected President of the Greek Writers' Society and in 1952 was a leading candidate for the Nobel prize in literature. Kazantzakis' perspective was significantly widened, too, by prodigious

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>27</sup>In that year he was named "Director of Translations from the Classics" at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Friar, "Introduction," p. xxiv.

<sup>28</sup>Current Biography, p. 321.



travel in, among other countries, Egypt and Palestine in the Middle East and China and Japan in the Far East.<sup>29</sup>

Kazantzakis' traveling was not unlike that of Odysseus, seeking the meaning of life and of salvation. Kazantzakis had a strong element of asceticism in him and prepared himself for The Odyssey, his masterpiece, by spending two years of physical and spiritual exercises of control in the monastery of Mount Athos in Greece.<sup>30</sup> In his "Credo," Kazantzakis explained,

I tried many different roads by which to reach my salvation: the road of love, of scientific curiosity, of social rebirth, and finally the difficult and solitary path of poetry . . . . Finally, in despair, I sought refuge on Mount Athos, the holy mountain . . . .<sup>31</sup>

After mortification of the body and spirit, Kazantzakis reported: "Then suddenly a great light was born within me."<sup>32</sup> He left his confinement in the

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<sup>29</sup>He was attracted by the Japanese sense of mission and destiny in the 1930's, especially noting the fact that they sought to create a "new human type which has no fear of death; which, on the contrary, aspires to death as to the supreme crown of life." See "The Poet Armed," Time, June 7, 1963, p. 108--a review of Kazantzakis' The Rock Garden.

<sup>30</sup>Andrew Wordsworth, "The Lion-Stench," New Statesman, LVIII (May 16, 1959), 696.

<sup>31</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xxiii.

<sup>32</sup>Kimon Friar, "The Kazantzakis Report," Saturday Review, XLVIII (August 14, 1965), 34.

mid-twenties to begin writing his allegorical epic. Instead of abstract terms he used narrative, metaphor, and characterization. His perspective was universal and words were his tools: "God took mud to create the world, I took words."<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt that his Odyssey is his master work. He wrote: "From the point of view of poetic form and philosophical content, The Odyssey represents the highest peak I've been able to attain, the efforts of an entire lifetime in the service of the spirit."<sup>34</sup>

Several biographical and cultural influences reflected in The Odyssey are readily discernible. The Cretan element based on the Greek customs of marriage, death, singing, food, and heroism are treated extensively in The Odyssey, and they come to Kazantzakis with complete familiarity. The autobiographical elements in the book are strong. Kazantzakis' experiences as a director general in the Greek Ministry of Public Welfare in 1919 after the First World War influenced his works. Also his acquaintance with the poverty and starvation that Greeks in the Caucasus and in Russia suffered in 1919 are stressed in

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, Nikos Kazantzakis, trans. by Amy Mims (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 468.

The Odyssey. His objective as a Minister of Public Welfare in 1919 was to make people of different nationalities communicate; so he traveled in Asia, Europe, Africa, Russia, Spain, etc.<sup>35</sup>

Kazantzakis, like his hero Odysseus, wished to explore life for knowledge (as Tennyson's Ulysses and Tennyson did), because he was by nature "Dionysian" and "Apollonian" by turns. Kazantzakis' "Appollonian" world represented his peaceful, intellectual nature and his "Dionysian" world consisted of his loose, underground, pleasure-seeking nature; so, in seeking to fulfill himself, he often turned from expression of one of his natures to the expression of the other.<sup>36</sup> His idiosyncrasy was an arena of opposites: even though he admitted violence, he had led an ascetic life, a life in which the explosive conflict went upward to a higher spiritual level based always on his sense of an abyss of nothingness. He was aware of nature's "antinomies" and contrasts, and both he

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<sup>35</sup>Current Biography, pp. 321-322. A prolific writer, he gave up his literary activities during the Greek Civil War in 1945 in order to act as Minister of State, but, as he was disappointed in his ministry, he retired because he failed in his effort to make an adjustment between the Greek political parties.

<sup>36</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xxiii.

and his hero, Odysseus, accepted them by synthesizing their dualism in their personalities by what Kazantzakis calls "The Cretan Glance" or the "Third Eye." In this Third Eye two conflicting currents of sentiments and experiences meet, one going up to life and immortality, the other going down to death and mortality; the "Third Eye" accommodates both, and this accommodation or synthesis of the two seems to have brought a harmony to his own life.<sup>37</sup>

Kazantzakis' personality as well as the above mentioned influences, apart from any political and religious coloration, are relevant to the themes based on primitivism, mysticism, realism, and nihilism, all found in The Modern Odyssey in the translation by Kimon Friar, an American poet of Greek descent.<sup>38</sup> This Odyssey is a new and dramatic attempt to produce an epic of the twentieth century. Three times the length of the Homeric Odyssey, it was first published in 1938, in Athens, at a time when few scholars would accept a long narrative poem based on myths. It consists of twenty-four books, one for each letter of the Greek alphabet, and of 33,333 lines of seventeen-syllable unrhymed iambic measures, eight beats

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. xxiii-xxv.

<sup>38</sup>Tripanis, "Kazantzakis, Nikos," p. 261.

to the line. It contains (in the original Greek) the language of shepherds and fishermen of the Greek islands and villages, men whom Kazantzakis knew and loved.<sup>39</sup>

Kazantzakis began writing his Odyssey during the period of 1912-1922, trying to analyze his experiences which derive from the ancient and Christian myths and to express his intellectual anxiety and his quest for Truth in the period in which he lived. He felt lost and questioned himself, "Am I a poet? Am I a prophet? What is my responsibility?" In 1927 he completed writing it in the Greek Island of Aegina at a time when he was starving.<sup>40</sup> Friar's translation of the work into English, which is marked by the close collaboration of Friar and Kazantzakis, was finished only in 1958.<sup>41</sup> It presents Kazantzakis, his hero, or any modern man trying, writes Friar, "to find deliverance by passing through all the stages of contemporary anxieties and by pursuing the most daring hopes."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Friar, "Introduction," pp. ix-xii.

<sup>40</sup>Prevelakis, pp. 21-43.

<sup>41</sup>Friar, "About the Translator" (Note in Friar's translation of The Odyssey), p. 825.

<sup>42</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xii.

As both of these writers faced the sceptical scientific views of modern life, the purpose of this thesis will be to examine and compare their philosophies as found in their major poems, In Memoriam and The Modern Odyssey.

## C H A P T E R     I

### THE TOTEM IMAGE IN THE ODYSSEY: A MODERN SEQUEL

Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel is not a repetition of the Homeric Odyssey but a literary sequel going back to antiquity, and it starts where the Homeric epic ends. Homer finishes his nostalgic epic, a ten year adventure after the Trojan War, as soon as Odysseus reaches his kingdom and reestablishes his domestic environment, while Kazantzakis starts his epic exactly after the hero's arrival in Ithaca, i.e., when Odysseus kills his wife's suitors. Homer tried to bring his hero back to his wife and bind him with his home responsibilities, while Kazantzakis takes him from her because the driving forces of his life require that he be bondless as far as family ties are concerned. Kazantzakis' hero finishes his odyssey only with his death.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tennyson's hero in his poem "Ulysses" (1833) is close to Kazantzakis' as he also aims to free himself from the domestic responsibilities in Ithaca, fully indifferent to a settled life with his wife, father, and son. He also is lured to look for new adventures and knowledge in a new unknown world, as Friar points out: "Introduction," p. xi.

As the explanatory subtitle--A Modern Sequel-- suggests, Kazantzakis' Odyssey is modern; first, because it is a post-Homeric extension recreated since 1912 in its hero's own native land and in his own language and, secondly, because it is concerned with a melodramatic age when old myths are vanishing or losing force and new ones are being created. The Modern Odyssey (as it is frequently called) presents man not only as suffering from nostalgia while away from home or country--Odysseus' and his crew's dreams and complaints reveal this sense--but also as thinking he will die if he stops his restless looking for youth, knowledge, and freedom and if he ceases trying to find redemption, deliverance, and finally salvation--although salvation is not for him a state to be attained but a development to be experienced through the anxieties and uncertainties of his problematic and dramatic life.

The framework of Kazantzakis' Odyssey is similar to that of Homer's as both works consist of twenty-four books dealing with an adventurous sea-voyage and as some of Kazantzakis' heroes and demigods are Homeric, such as Helen, Menelaus, Idomeneus, Tantalus, Heracles, and Prometheus.<sup>2</sup> The multiminded Odysseus is mentioned in

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<sup>2</sup>Prevelakis, p. 42.



both works as a wandering soldier and destroyer, but in Kazantzakis' epic he also deals with laws, politics, different kinds of philosophies, ascetic life, and even humor.<sup>3</sup>

There are new gods in Kazantzakis' sequel. Odysseus in The Modern Odyssey kills the Homeric Olympic gods when he slaughters six hens and six cocks for the foundation of his Ideal City and when one of his crew carves a god with no head but with a big belly. Also, he frees himself from the traditional religious beliefs both Homeric and post-Homeric, as his aim is to create his own religious values through adventures of intense living, traveling, and thinking, which lead to his soul's perfection.<sup>4</sup> So he creates the harmonized "Cretan Glance"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. x.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. xi.

<sup>5</sup>The "Cretan Glance" represents the Greek and especially the Cretan ideals of freedom, faith in life, recreation, rebirth, and progress through investigation and new experiences. Cretan civilization is based on different cultures and civilizations, as Crete is situated between cultures to the North, South, East, and West and, because of its conflicting needs, is characterized with heroism and patriotism and with confronting life and death bravely. This mysterious faculty is a philosophical formulaic power that Kazantzakis invokes to solve the "problem of evil." Ibid., p. xiii.

which enables him, while aware of the good and evil in human experience, to accept both with equanimity, even with a certain élan because otherwise his personality would be only an arena of antithetical sentiments.<sup>6</sup>

The language of The Odyssey is a combination of the Homeric roots, of the contemporary formal and informal Greek language, and of the idiomatic language of simple shepherds and fishermen. It is an epic story-telling language which represents both the intellect and the instincts of the human being.<sup>7</sup>

A short narrative synopsis of Kazantzakis' Odyssey at this point may help the reader to follow the philosophical perplexities that the subsequent part of this chapter and the next chapter will explore.<sup>8</sup>

The Odyssey revolves around Odysseus, the seven-souled man who, through these seven souls, struggles to find himself, and only when he reaches the seventh soul cries, "All roads are good"--that is, are means for man's

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. xxv.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. x.

<sup>8</sup>This synopsis is the present writer's reduction of Kimon Friar's excellent "Synopsis of The Odyssey," for Kazantzakis' The Odyssey, pp. 777-813.

ascending properly to the Unseen, to Nothingness. The seven souls which make up Odysseus' personality and which are figured as seven heads on a carved totem of his god are concerned with Bestiality, Battle-Hunger, Lust, Pure Intellect, Despair, Detachment, and Pure Soul.<sup>9</sup> Kazantzakis will "sing the sufferings and torments of renowned Odysseus!" in his *Odyssey*<sup>10</sup> (Prologue, l. 73).

When the book begins Kazantzakis' *Odysseus* is back in Ithaca after the Trojan War. Odysseus settles his domestic environment by killing his wife's suitors and then has a bath in order to get rid of all the blood on him. He calms his subordinates, who have lost their husbands and sons, and orders that celebrations take place, and at these events Odysseus tells his adventures in war. But he is restless and cannot be satisfied with the well-ordered--and for him monotonous--environment. He ignores his old wife, Penelope; he is disappointed with his father Laertes' decayed old age; he is not interested in his son,

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<sup>9</sup>Ciardi, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>References to The Odyssey will henceforth be given parenthetically by Book (in Roman numbers) and line (in Arabic numbers) in Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, A Clarion Book: Seventh Paperback Printing.

Telemachus; so he gives over his responsibilities to his son (after settling him with a fair wife, Nausicaa), warns him of possible future troubles in his kingdom, and one morning after he has built his new ship, takes supplies, chooses some hard rogues as a crew, and leaves for the unknown. His crew, consisting of Captain Clam, Hardihood, Kentaur, Orpheus, and Granite, generally represent the basic enduring qualities of humanity--the necessary sterling qualities coming from people who will teach Odysseus and who will contribute to the creation of the Ideal City. Captain Clam is a trustworthy old sea-wolf; Hardihood, a man from the mountains and a bronze-smith, who will lead Odysseus to the god of Iron; Kentaur, a glutton, a drinker, and an affectionate humanitarian; Orpheus, a timid poet-aster piper, attracted by food and revelry; and Granite, a mountaineer of good family carrying within him the guilt of killing his brother. In a dream Odysseus has before leaving Ithaca, he sees that Helen, over whom the Trojan War was fought, is unstable and bored and that she wishes to leave her husband, Menelaus. So Odysseus sails for Sparta, where Menelaus' kingdom is rebelling because of poverty, and Odysseus faces the dilemma of whom to join and help, the nobility or the people. Finally, he joins

Menelaus to calm him down, but after this offer of aid he elopes with Helen, betraying the trust of his old comrade in arms.

Fate leads his ship to Crete where Odysseus destroys Idomeneus' corrupted society because the nobility, in their masks, have become irresponsible and indifferent to their people's starvation. Both Menelaus and Idomeneus were Trojan co-fighters and old friends, but Odysseus ignores friendship, and, when he faces reality, Odysseus readily sells the emblem of friendship that Menelaus has given to him. To take its place he buys a seven-headed god from a Cretan peddler. Helen is now no good to him, and so he leaves her in Crete, married to a blond barbarian who will create a new civilization with their descendents. Odysseus makes Hardihood the King of Crete and advises him to rule in justice and love, and he himself again sails, this time for Africa, where he will drink the deathless water. He takes with him Dictena, who represents flesh, but, as he was not interested in carnal desires anymore, he leaves her at the shore untouched. In Africa he also finds a rotten community oppressed by famine, death, and tortures. The inhuman suffering of the people causes Odysseus to utter an inner

cry (a cry that becomes always more poignant as an expression of his deep soul) which commands him to join their painful crying in their rebellion against the vacuous Pharaoh (vacuous because he is interested only in finishing the lyric he is working on while his people are dying). Odysseus fails in fighting against the Pharaoh, who is too strong, but he manages, through his crafty mind, to free the prisoners and himself, and thus he escapes and sails southward up the Nile. His ambition now is to find a place where he can build an Ideal City, with laws, justice, and love, and to settle there, as he is tired of the cruelty in the chaotic places he has visited. He takes with him those people who can stand hunger and thirst while looking for freedom, and they finally reach a suitable place. He ascends the mountain alone and lives isolated in a cave where he hopes he may find immortality, as he is now higher than other people, close to God's created nature, and far from any temptations; in this isolation he composes his ten commandments for his new Ideal City. But while he is living isolated in the cave with only a leopard as a close companion he feels that in some ways he does not differ from animals which live in caves, and he thinks of his ancestors, the ape and beasts

which, through evolutionary progress, have become men. When he returns to visit his people, he finds them fighting one against the other, but he straightens things out. Then, when everything is ready for the inauguration of the Ideal City, an earthquake swallows Odysseus' men and man's creations, laws, order, and friends, throwing everything back into the abyss. Odysseus with his ambitions to improve society is now abandoned to the naturalistic forces he had sought to shape and is led again to isolation, wandering around Africa. He recalls the advice of Tantalus, Heracles, and Prometheus and turns to scepticism, as he does not know whose advice to accept. Tantalus has urged Odysseus not to build a city and settle down because, if he does, he will betray his restlessness. Heracles has urged him to finish his city, and Prometheus has appeared in chains crying out for freedom, as he has been betrayed by man. In doubt, what Odysseus does now is just accept life as it is, i.e., as a delicate, weak fabric woven over a bottomless abyss, over nothing but death. He becomes a beggar in order to survive, is taken as a god or as a wise man by simple people, and is worshipped. People come to consult him. Motherth (Buddha) asks him for immortality, but Odysseus says, "Death is the salt that gives to

life its tasty sting" (XVIII, 912). Motherth also complains about man's destiny; he asks why people should be born only to die and feed the worms. Odysseus next meets a dying ascetic, who asks him a similar question: "'Why were we born? Toward what do men and beasts proceed?'" (XIX, 495). In these last stages of his life, Odysseus feels his loins disjoin, and Death is closely following him. He builds a coffin to his measurements, as he will not now take anyone along on his voyage but only a bow and an ax. Odysseus also meets a bard singing of Prince Elias, who has killed his seven sons in order to make his lyre sing. As Prince Elias is cursed by his king father, he sits on a rock, a form of the abyss, singing of his sons' loss, and so creates a tragic joy. In his isolation, Odysseus feels nostalgia for Greece, and when he sees a peacock devouring a viper he cries about the struggle in life. He is not disappointed even though he cannot accept the Negro fisherman's (Christ's) theory concerning peace and love, but he believes that "'God is a labyrinthine quest deep in our heads'" (XXII, 416). Unable to settle, now Odysseus is ready to say good-bye to the hospitable villagers and leave for a new seafaring, for the unknown again. But another earthquake



occurs, and this time it swallows the starving African villagers who were full of future plans. Odysseus, escaping the destruction, continues his seafaring, as he believes that there is "no safe haven home" but only Death, fighting against Gods and Fate. But a worm on his forehead informs him that his life is about to end. He welcomes death as he is sitting on the prow of his ship, and an iceberg crashes both him and his coffin. He throws his ax and bow away now and summons all the spirits of his friends and acquaintances, dead and alive, as well as those of the beasts, the birds, and the plants with which he has shared life. They all run to Odysseus to help, and through them his mortal life passes in review before him. More spirit than man, he objectively assesses his past experiences, using a "third eye"--the "Cretan Glance"--which helps him synthesize good and evil experience into one balanced view. Argus, his faithful dog, is the only spirit he summons from Ithaca. While Odysseus' body undergoes dissolution, Motherth is dying in a monastery, leaving a permanent smile but no words to his disciples. Odysseus tries to cry in his last moments, but his cry chokes. Then Temptation, as a Negro boy, appears, and, while both he and Odysseus look into each other's eyes,

the universe turns into flame, and the mind soars like fire and burns everything into nothingness. In his day-dreaming Odysseus hangs himself on a mast while the Negro boy sleeps. Now there is no earth, no fire, no water, no mind, as all are grabbed by an eagle ascending into the sky, free from its last cage, its freedom. Odysseus' last cry urges his lads to "'sail on, for Death's breeze blows in a fair wind!'" (XXIV, 1396) while the sun, that has loved Odysseus, laments his death.

Such, in barest outline is Kazantzakis' narrative of man's odyssey. A closer analysis of his mythopoesis is needed to reveal the philosophical structure of the work. Rational man could hardly trust his life to a totem, but the totem given to Odysseus by a Cretan peddler in The Modern Odyssey was of no ordinary significance. Kazantzakis through the seven carved heads on it tries to reveal the whole spiritual journey of man in this mortal life. It symbolizes an internal and external struggle based on man's bestiality, war-hunger, lust, mind, despair, detachment, and ethereal soul (the "seven souls") which possess Odysseus' spirit in the entire Odyssey (V, 598-629). This struggle appears sometimes as a dream, sometimes as an outcry of conscience, or mere consciousness

leading Odysseus or any man from a low stage of thinking through mind into final scepticism and inarticulateness.

The first head of the totem depicts a man with bestial features consisting of flesh and bones, governed not by reason, but by sentiments. Man of this stage behaves like an animal for personal satisfaction or for the destruction of a decadent society. Odysseus belongs to this stage after his return to Ithaca (I). His first acts are on an instinctual and bestial level. Like a beast slaying beasts, Odysseus turns his palace into a slaughter house to destroy his wife's suitors, an act which frightens not only his subservients (I, 58-59) but also his wife, who says, "That's not the man I've awaited year on year, O Gods,/ this forty-footed dragon that stalks my quaking house!" (I, 26-27). Odysseus' son Telemachus, too, being frustrated with his father's animalistic behavior, turns to his father observing that his eyes "are brimmed with blood" and his "fists are smoking!" (I, 158). Odysseus ignores them, however, intent on reconstructing his unsettled kingdom.

Kazantzakis, in order to emphasize man's lack of spirituality when rationalism is governed by blind sentimentalism, presents several other episodes in The Odyssey.

For instance, on one occasion Captain Sole is in danger of being cooked by the cannibals in Africa who, with their low state of mind and actions, turn man into an eatable thing (XX, 164-166). But what this primitivistic narrative implicitly asks is whether there is any difference between man and an animal if the individual is nothing but a beast that does not distinguish between bestial and human flesh. Odysseus, who in this stage of mind is not governed by his bestial soul but by a rational human faculty (some form of intellectuality), saves Captain Sole from the ignorant cannibals. But man ancestrally derives from the animal world, a heritage which frustrates man. In this case, Odysseus, daydreaming in the cave alone with his leopard, sees the revival of the paintings of primitive animals (XIV, 740-751). As he is a caveman among beasts, he admits that man does not radically differ from that first caveman who developed from lower beasts to an ape, then to a man (XIV, 763-800). To Odysseus' thinking at this point, which is well along in Odysseus' development of his several souls, Kazantzakis brings a balance to man's animalistic nature, for he has Odysseus articulate his "commandments" through his creative mind, an act which animals other than man cannot perform.

But if, on the one hand, the cave episode allegorically (from an evolutionary perspective) represents man's intellectual soul as being higher than his bestial soul--and such seems the implication of the episode (and also of the order of heads on the totem)--must not, on the other hand, Odysseus' encountering of the African princes who kill their father in order to attain his position (XX, 1200-1205) represent the continuance or unabated power of bestiality in highly intellectual beings?<sup>11</sup> Do the princes lack the virtue of thinking or, as a result of their minds' not working properly, do they return to the primitive state? What man has to believe, it appears, is that he may be both a thinking and a thoughtless beast, fighting to be purposeful and to accomplish something, either good or bad, either serving man or destroying him (XX, 1247-1250). It is the reality, not the human ideal, with which Kazantzakis' Odyssey presents us.

The predominance of man's bestiality over his humanized intelligence is also clear in the case of

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<sup>11</sup>Much of the material in Kazantzakis' Odyssey reflects, as does this story of the king being killed by his sons, Kazantzakis' acquaintance with James Frazer's anthropological studies of religion. Friar, "Introduction," p. xiv. See also James A. Notopoulos, "Kazantzakis' Golden Extremes," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXV (1959), 324.

Idomeneus' bull rituals in Crete when human beings lament their daughters' death while the inhuman king under the guise of seeking light indulges himself in brutal and lustful orgies in the "labyrinthine darkness" (V, 577). And is it not vanity also that Pharaoh deals with his lyric (IX, 1085), a song, while his subjects starve and suffer slavery and oppression? What about Prince Elias' lyre? His lyre would never have sung unless he had killed his sons (XIX, 1250-1254); so he drank his sons' blood in order to accomplish a vacuous ambition, an ambition stressing the lack of reason in man and the importance of a lyre to smooth his inhuman acts toward human beings. (As we shall see in Chapter II, this episode also represents the possibility of tragic joy through art and the "Cretan Glance" - ideas developed throughout The Odyssey by Kazantzakis.)

After the "man-slayer's" leaving his "heavy-fated wife" (II, 1117) who has "felt ashamed/ to come before her people after so much murder" (I, 1025-1026), Kazantzakis states that "'man's greatest duty on earth is to fight his fate'" (IV, 411) in order to "'surpass god!'" (IV, 413). So, Odysseus continues his literary and spiritual journey and after a strong sea fight against his

fate reaches Crete. But as "fire is good when governed by man's inner light" (VII, 626), man's next step in the development of his humanity is up to heroic deeds through which he may effect progress and development. In Crete Odysseus fights against the Cretan bulls, symbols of immorality in Crete. Being tortured by them, he tries to escape from their "twisting" and "torturous guts" (V, 1303). Finally, urged by the inner cry "Odysseus!," he feels "as though he were responsible for all man's pain" (VI, 431-432). Odysseus attacks and burns the kingdom of Idomeneus which he has seen to be rotten throughout with its orgies and its pretentiousness under "'various hides and bestial masks'" (VI, 700). The fire and dust of Odysseus' dynamic and catastrophic activities in Crete serve, one gathers, to show Odysseus as the savior of the poor and the destroyer of an old sterile environment (VI, 1129-1130; VII, 995-998). Man at this stage becomes more of a humanitarian, abandoning merely thoughtless bloody deeds; and, through his profound war-hunger, by revolutionary actions he accomplishes some improvement by destroying a decadent society. Therefore, one assumes, war is useful sometimes, even though it is so close to bestiality. Valor, in this case, becomes a virtue (VIII,

339), and man, a descendent of Hercules, pursues the possibility of accomplishing through strife "the last labor," as "'fire must fall from all four winds to save our souls!'" (VI, 1138)

Another episode stressing man's spiritual development through his using physical power to serve humanity is Odysseus' joining the revolutionaries in Egypt. While living temporarily among oppressed slaves in a decadent community, Odysseus feels "A harsh voice [rising] within him as his new god groaned" (X, 210). But, not knowing whom to assist, he suffers: "'still I don't know if I love that beast called 'peasant'/or scorn to live much longer with the lords, their masters'" (X, 549-550). Finally, since Egyptians "'struggle on to bring the whole world justice, bread,/ and as much freedom as [they] can to enslaved mankind'" (X, 571-572), he joins them because his "'heart cries'" in him to do so (X, 560). So, Odysseus in this second totem head has been concerned with nonself-regarding actions and has grown into an altruist through his war-hunger.

The third head on the totem depicts a head with "voluptuous eyes" which reminds man of an epicurean life, a life which is concerned with eating, drinking, and living



a loose life (I, 1238), together with his other animalism --bloody and heroic deeds.

In the entire Odyssey the need for a woman, not only of the main hero, Odysseus, but also of other heroes, is obvious. Man, apparently because his life requires both kinds of love, tries love as lust and love as an ideal friendship or sacred agape. Odysseus' lusty love is a continuation of his Homeric Trojan experiences with goddesses such as Circe, who offered him flesh; Nausicaa, who offered him an ordered domestic life, which he rejected immediately, leaving her to his son later; and Calypso, who offered him immortal youth (I, 533-540). In this present post-Homeric Odyssey Odysseus' Tantalean restlessness makes him feel subconsciously Helen's restlessness, too (III, 237), and think that Helen might serve his pleasure-seeking desires with her beauty and erotic nature. He elopes with her, ignoring even the bond of friendship between him and Menelaus, as he feels that Menelaus' incapability to rule his people efficiently does not deserve his friendship (III, 1157-1160; III, 1239-1243). Odysseus sells the emblem of friendship given to him by Menelaus because he cannot retain this kind of a friendly bond, especially after he has eloped with Helen.

But, no matter how old he grows, man needs to fight toward youth renewed (II, 680). Therefore, Odysseus, not only in Sparta where "he liked to sport with women when he came from battle" (II, 1046), but also in Crete gives flavor to his fleshly desires. At the Cretan Bull rituals he gets involved with Dictena (VI, 848-852) whom he takes to the African seashores and abandons there, because on the black continent where everything looked dark and depressed and where Odysseus and his crew were trying to find the "deathless" water, "there [seemed] to be no place for woman" (VIII, 1325).

Friendships, if they are to command loyalties, must be renewed or sustained by living, shared values. Between Odysseus and Idomeneus there is a mutual dissolution of an old friendship because Idomeneus, knowing that Odysseus has eloped with the wife (Helen) of his past friend, Menelaus, cannot trust Odysseus and treat him as an old friend (V, 1299-1300). Odysseus, too, being aware of Idomeneus' sterile, rotten, and completely indifferent nobles and eunuchs, rejects any friendly bonds because he observes that this society lacks humanity, as he sees it, its leaders only looking for personal entertainment at a time when Crete's virgins--one of them Idomeneus'

daughter Krino (V, 736-746)--are taking the last "gyre" of their life. Odysseus, disgusted by all these carnal events at the Cretan bull rituals, feels a humanitarian inner cry (V, 431) urging him to join the oppressed subservients who can only cry or lament. He, therefore, as a human being feeling pain for others, turns the decadent society of Knossos to dust (VII, 995-998), dissolving the old friendship between himself and Idomeneus while bringing salvation to the poverty-stricken masses of Crete through following man's urge to "duty" and "victory" (VII, 995).

But isn't there any altruistic love among people? Odysseus believes that there is. He finds it when he is among African people who feed him when he is begging for some bread. Also, his crew are simple, unsophisticated human beings who have been used to handling hardships as they occur and who have no clear sense of morality, but they can sacrifice even their own lives for him, as happened with Kentaur and Rocky (XVI, 314-315). These events bind Odysseus' inner world to his crew to such an extent that he calls them "brothers," and, when he loses them, he feels lost and laments their loss because "friendship is greater still . . . and conquers all" (XVI, 330); he

feels "desolate" and "lone" (XVI, 406) and has no words but only secret cries to express his grief (XVI, 406-407). Friendship gives color to Odysseus' life as well as to man's generally--a color which appears to Odysseus with different faces. Sometimes it relaxes his anguish, hunger, and misery as happens with Orpheus' songs, poems, and riddles (VIII, 1323). Again it serves as the basis for cooperation and gives purpose in life as happens with Odysseus' conspiracy on Crete (VII, 635-655). Odysseus, not being interested in bearing any governmental responsibilities, makes Hardihood the King of Crete (VIII, 732-734) in order that he himself may be free to taste other flavors of life (VIII, 896-897), a necessity of his Tantallean, Heracleian and Promethean restlessness (I, 1184-1200), knowing "the heart of a strong man . . . can find no comfort" (VIII, 650). It is apparent that with friendships come interactions resulting in obligations and heartaches if one is to succeed in this mortal life--a depending on other persons, often manipulating them. But, also, man suffers the bittersweet experiences of pursuing his life's quest among other humans. He variously loves them or creates with them, and, in doing so, he learns some of life's secrets. Kazantzakis, through Odysseus, observes

that man out of his friendships accumulates knowledge. Clam's death, while fulfilling his duty in furthering his master's plan to eradicate the Cretan decadent world, also brings bitterness to Odysseus' emotional world. He says to the rest of his crew, "The better man has gone, the best, the master boatman / our central mast has gone" (VIII, 794-795). Granite, who had led Odysseus' troops in the desert, after the earthquake, leaves forever for another place where people may live and not be swallowed (XVI, 410-411). How, then, can Odysseus, or any other man having sentiments and mind, be unmoved by the loss of his comrades who die sharing his own ambitions, plans, troubles and miseries? Odysseus even at the last moment of his life calls for his crew's spirits, which all run to serve him again: "'O, faithful and beloved, O dead and living comrades come!'" (XXIII, 1315)

To Odysseus, both sacred and erotic love are necessary. He abandons one or the other at times according to the cosmic caprices or circumstances. Sometimes he feels he loves all men (III, 1444); sometimes he acts like a misanthrope, as when his troops starve (XII, 474-475) and he decides to leave the cripples to the "wolves"; but his animalism gives way to his humanity and he tries

to entertain his people and make them forget their hunger with jokes and tales (XII, 279-281).

Up to the point when the main hero in The Odyssey is leaving the rotten community of Pharaoh, he has been shown dealing with bestiality, war, and lust, not having used his mind much for any investigation into life nor for any creativity, but mostly for conquering and for expressing the sentimental nature of man in action. Thus far, he does not display capabilities very different from those symbolized by the first three heads on the totem. His behavior up to this point is based largely on the Tantalean nature in man, and his philosophy presents mainly the Dionysian and aesthetic world in human beings when reason and spirit are at a very low stage.

But as loose morals, fire, and blood do not solve the problems of life effectively man seeks creativity by making use of his thinking power and by rejecting the Dionysian or Tantalean part of his nature. Thus, Kazantzakis believes that man may develop life spiritually according to his Heraclean philosophy and even "recreate the very world God shaped!" (XV, 649) But even though he uses his mind and his intellect for creating positively, feeling that in doing so he is closer to God, he fails. But this anticipates Odysseus' development.

Odysseus wanted to settle down after his disappointment with the decadent societies in Sparta, Crete, and Africa, but, as his heart would never say, "Enough," he continues his voyage in another world of Africa where he hopes to settle in a moralistically-bound place governed by the intellectual part of man through logic, laws, and evolutionary advancement looking to the betterment of the individual and his society. Through pursuing these ideals man reaches the stage where the totem depicts a head with a pure mind. Pursuing this higher development, Odysseus leaves people and turns to Nature as a shelter where he can stay alone, close to animals, plants, fruits, and flowers (XIV, 1091), close to God's creations, even though these creations were made by God's words only (X, 840). This shelter might be the top of a hill, a riverbank, or even a jungle. Whatever it is, his withdrawal from human beings frees his mind. His freed intellect now turns to skepticism, or returns to the past, or envisages the future through daydreaming, or creates through the intellectualized imagination, as in the case of his composition of the laws and commandments of the Ideal City. While on the mountain where he isolates himself for seven days away from any trace of life other than a leopard and

the primitive paintings (XIII, 1397; XIV, 99-100), Odysseus daydreams of immortality and tries to communicate with "God"--a God of knowledge, maybe--and so to be helped by Him to formulate new laws and plans for his city.

Thus did dread God command within the lone man's breast, / and the lawmaker's mind grew light, the air grew mute, / and he sped swiftly toward his city with great joy / to find smooth slabs of upright stones on which to carve / the great and difficult laws entrusted him by God (XV, 824-828).

Man's nature at this phase of his development turns to the Apollonian part of his life which is able to constitute laws through the mind. This turn is felt to be undesirable by his heart, for his heart and mind are in a continual strife "like an ancient married couple" (XIV, 287-288). His withdrawal is unbearable and Odysseus says: "'I need companions!'" (XIV, 597) But he still has to stay away from any vital temptations in order to accomplish what Heracles and Prometheus, his two now dominant Fates, are urging him to do--i.e., to go ahead, strive, create intellectually, and enlighten people in order to show the way to spiritual progress, a course which is against the dynamism of Tantalus, his first Fate. Also, when Odysseus wanders in the jungle alone, after he has



lost his comrades, he again turns to asceticism away from men and actual life, to the beauty of Nature, perhaps knowing Aristotle's statement that "living close to Nature is living close to Virtue." Here, close to Nature, man is free from all social bonds and restrictions; through his senses, he understands Nature and can communicate with creatures in a mystical way without words or language (XIV, 475-477). But here lies the paradox: how can this hospitable Nature be the same as the Nature which turns Odysseus' hair grey and causes him to age? Is not the earthquake part of this Nature? And why does it destroy Odysseus' laws or God's laws, his friends, and the Promethean flame which is to burn and enlighten people enduringly? Who or what makes the earthquake damage God's creation if Nature and men and their plans are made through His mouth and words? Or is it true that "'God had created man but now he bitterly repented / and raised an earthquake'" (VIII, 691-692) because man's pride brought disobedience and God cursed him since the old times? (VIII, 675-682) Why this cruelty against His own achievements? Is an earthquake stronger than God, or is there no God any more who defends His creations and belongings? Or is destruction man's reward for his accomplishments and

plans and for his striving to bring progress and to lead an ordered and happy life? Man builds "bridges" and Nature sends storms and knocks them down (VIII, 698). Is God, then, "'earless,'" "'eyeless,'" and "'heartless'" (VIII, 831) when suffering created human beings seek His assistance? Earth swallows man, sending him to nothingness, to an abyss, to a "'bottomless mouth'" (VIII, 328), leaving no secure place for him to retreat to: "'No master God exists, no virtue, no just law, no punishment in Hades and no reward in Heaven'" (XVI, 1241-1242)--such is the conclusion of man's mind, which is not destructive any more, nor creative, but in a stage of despair, full of questions and doubts about man and his existence in this world. Therefore, man may draw the conclusion that the individual is destined to rebuild what God destroys and to accept life and naturalistic laws as they are and as they appear.

Odysseus reaches this state of mind--the Despairing Soul--gradually. Kazantzakis' stage of despair in the development of man and his many references to the "Abyss" which entraps man have led some observers to regard him as a nihilist or an anarchist.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation

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<sup>12</sup>Friar, "Introduction," xx.

however, will seem to be based largely on the power with which Kazantzakis describes what is in fact merely another and a transient stage, although a traumatic one, in man's overall quest. Indeed, as Kazantzakis reportedly replied to a critic who accused him of being the "completely despairing man": "'Only beyond absolute despair is the door of absolute hope found.'"<sup>13</sup> The magnitude of his despair emphasizes the glory of his victory. Just as the power of the individual eventually to abandon his bestiality, sensuality, and all carnal sensation reflects Kazantzakis' belief in man's ability to develop powers beyond his sensual soul, so the conquest over despair reflects the development of a higher spiritual soul.

Odysseus' Ideal City is the product of his reactions to the decadent societies based on immorality, injustice, and bad communication (XIII, 1365-1382), which he had encouraged to revolt in Sparta, Crete, and Africa. He hoped that a newly created place with new social, political, and religious foundations would offer him and any man stability, happiness, and a proximity to God (XIII, 1365-1390). Thus Odysseus' despair was cured by

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., xx-xxi.

hope (XV, 822) though hope itself was to turn to dust after the earthquake (XV, 822; XXII, 1465-1475).

Odysseus, however, is not the only victim of the whims of nature. When he, alone, was crossing the African desert moving toward the South, he learned of some poor villagers who, despite their hospitality to Odysseus and man in general, were devoured by another earthquake and flood which plunged them into the unknown, to nothingness (XXII, 1444-1451). Odysseus cannot explain these cosmic flaws and thinks that there is no "'safe haven home'" but that only Death and darkness surround man in his endeavors in the universe (XXII, 1468). Odysseus' creative mind built his Ideal City to introduce to man, who up to that moment had disappointed him, a new moral life based on a new-created God (XIV, 1128-1131). It was to be a city which would make the son "'better than the father.'" An inner Outcry, however, mocks him while he is visualizing his Ideal City, saying even then that words and plans differ from facts (XIV, 1260). But Odysseus could never believe that the "'most glorious man who lives and fights to give [God] shape'" (XV, 1454) has no control over his life and that life itself comes to be but "'the blinking of an eye'" (XV, 1216).

However, Odysseus' depression is not a permanent state of despair. Instead, his passions come increasingly under control, and Odysseus begins to observe the world more keenly and objectively. This tendency to greater emphasis on intellectualism promotes an ascetic phase in which control of the physical or natural environment is not so significant as understanding the causal factors of existence. Odysseus observes life as it is and reflects on it, seeking the meaning of the odyssey. On seeing a hungry wolf approach a sheepfold in the jungle, Odysseus reflects on the inevitable order of life (XVIII, 153-184); he observes a peacock devouring a viper in order to survive; large fishes eat the smaller ones in order to continue living (XXII, 391). Where is love and peace in God's Nature as created in the ten commandments of the Ideal City? "'What is this life, what secret yearning governs it?'" (XII, 409). Is it just created to be turned to a jungle without any care on His part? What, he wonders, can man do if a more powerful force or creature attacks him to take his life? Acceptance is a lesson man must learn.

Odysseus has not been mistaken in these thoughts. An iceberg crashes into his coffin and, being unable to

resist, he accepts the last event of his life, Death. Not having found the mystery of existence, Odysseus concludes:

"God is a labyrinthine quest deep in our heads; /  
weak slaves think he's the isle of freedom, and  
moor close, / all the incompetent cross their oars,  
then cross their hands, / laugh wearily and say,  
'The Quest does not exist!' / But I know better in  
my heart, and rig my sails; / God is wide waterways  
that branch throughout man's heart" (XXII, 414-419).

As life and death start and close the totem of man's experiences in this world, now the question of life and death arises. Life can be considered as a vision in which memory brings past experiences to mind and in which future plans are made; this vision thereby constitutes the present. Odysseus has several visions in the course of his odyssey--visions of his Trojan adventures (I, 528-558), visions of Helen's boldness and instability (III, 235-239), and visions of his three Fates urging him either to continue exploring life or to remain in his city and enlighten humanity (XIV, 380-581). Also, in a vision, his son reminds him that man was created by God to walk the earth and not to fly in the air--a feat surpassing man's potentialities (XVI, 614-620). Telemachus has urged him not to go beyond the limits of kings but to do as other

old kings do, that is, to stay and be satisfied with his kingdom and family (I, 173-177). But as Odysseus' philosophy holds that the good life is an active seafaring and not a static property, as his father Laertes' life seemed to be, Odysseus, rejecting bounds, answers: "'My soul, your voyages have been your native land'" (XVI, 959).

Visions, song, and dance, together with strife, make up man's present life, a life based on simultaneous despair and that laughter which is the creation of mind and which can be blown out as easily as a song through a flute. Odysseus, talking about his country at the fishermen's tavern in Africa (XXIV, 1089), feels nostalgia about his home and about his being mingled with Trojan gods and goddesses (in his Homeric youth), and he feels as if he belongs to the past. Under the pressure of hunger and thirst in the desert, he entertains his "brothers" by telling stories in order to lessen their misery and by carving the Olympic gods on wood (XI, 712-722), thus satirizing their power and ridiculing their nonexistent compassion toward man. Man is to lead a life with free will, but his freedom is subject to natural processes and catastrophies and full of social restrictions, injuries, and nervous upsets mainly caused by man's mind,

which can both create and destroy (XVIII, 1170-1221) and which causes an inner struggle with the heart, which is usually against the mind's creativity and restrictions. The heart is completely aware of the bottomless abyss where virtues, plans, and laws created by the mind are finally thrown (XIV, 298-302). So the suffering man sacrifices his life in trying to find a solution to reconcile mind and heart in order to have a balanced life, expressing satisfactorily the intellectual, the sentimental, and the carnal natures of man. The seeking of this solution is what the entire Odyssey reveals in the adventurous life of the main hero, the archetypal man, and in the supporting roles of the other characters in the story. This balanced life includes many roads, such as freedom, intellectualism, sentimentalism, and asceticism, all which make up the "roots" and the "branches" of the tree of life; each part nourishes the other.

Freedom is perhaps one of the principles in this world for attaining spiritual progress. Therefore, several other heroes in this vast epic fight for liberation or transcendence in some form. For example, in a dream (XIX, 839-855), Odysseus sees a king who is melancholy, even though his domestic life is peaceful, and who cries



for freedom from the responsibilities of his crown, though he cannot leave his position because the sea around enslaves him. Here, water instead of a lyre, as sung by the minstrel, creates the abyss (XIX, 1210-1373). Prince Elias, the lyrist, having lost his seven sons and his crown, sings of his tragedy, cursing life while he sits on a rock that suggests the abyss and plays the bloody lyre. In another case Krino, Idomeneus' daughter, fights for her chastity, but her struggle for freedom brings her death (VI, 594-596). Likewise Phida (VI, 1136-1138) and Rala (X, 188-190), representing feminism, die because they rebel against traditional slavery and oppression (XXIV, 1277-1281). The workers, intellectuals, and idealists in Pharaoh's society also revolt against unbearable poverty, but they achieve nothing, for they lack power and "God entrusts his fate to the strong" only (XVII, 1153). In one of Odysseus' visions a king and a queen ask him to unearth the treasures in their tomb because they cannot stand their burden. Odysseus obeys (IX, 830-835) but, as he, too, cannot stand this heavy load, he throws everything away (IX, 939-944). Motherth (Buddha) also burns his golden garments to free himself from the overloaded life, and after this he leads an ascetic life

in a monastery (XVIII, 1315-1335). Prometheus laments his failure both as a man and as a god, for, even though he is above man, he is still bound with chains on the rock not able to move (XIV, 555-572).

So what freedom has man to lead a harmonious life? What is life and death that make up this earthly "gyre"? Kazantzakis' probable answer to this question is "all roads": Dionysian roads, Apollonian roads--roads which lead up or down, to the right or to the left, and which stress that "'double is life, double our cups, and double our faces'" (VII, 564). Kazantzakis sees the passivity of the hermit as unacceptable. To develop freedom as a means to transcendence, man must try various paths, experience life in the full, raise a challenging song, and take the bit of life in his teeth if he hopes to maintain his "deathless flame" glowing brightly.<sup>14</sup> A double life enriches man's experiences, makes him conceive its peculiarities, and so turns him to a wiser individual. Odysseus, through the following episodes in the epic, is introduced to these different "roads," and so he makes his mind more capacious and capable. As he says, man

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<sup>14</sup>Friar, "Synopsis," p. 806.

must never say "'I'll go to the right,' 'I'll go to the left,' / but let the four winds range the crossroads of [man's] mind" (XIV, 607). According to the Lord of the Tower (XX, 479-543), man confronts death with irony and indifference, just gathering pleasure. Margaro, the great whore, finds her hope for a good life in lust, which is all that attracts her (XVIII, 1154). Motherth, looking for immortality inquires, "'Why whould we breed our children for Death's bottomless mouth?'" (XVIII, 671-672) and rejects life as of no importance (XVIII, 1315-1335). Kentaur believes that life takes a certain order from his believing in "wine, women, song, and faithful friends and shining weapons" (VII, 528-529). The piper, Orpheus, gives an Epicurean taste to life without any depth or quest (I, 1238). Heracles, as he cannot attain immortality through creativity and heroic adventures while lying with "'worms in the cold ground,'" cries in anguish that he will never see the "'greatest task of all [his contributions]'" (XVI, 1170-1171). An ascetic, asking for salvation and eternal life, addresses himself to the same subject--"Why are we born? Toward what do men and beasts proceed?" (XIX, 495), and his dead hand closes only after some earth was put in it (XIX, 1004-1105),

symbolizing the fact that he came from earth and will again become earth and that he must accept earth and nature's laws. The Negro fisherman (XXI, 1221-1240), who appears to represent Christ, preaches that life is only peace and love while other people believe that life is evil and unjust (XXI, 1198-1204). Finally Odysseus with the balanced "Cretan Eye" accepts life and death in all its aspects, both evil and good, by synthesizing both into one new aspect which makes him face the hopeless and annihilating abyss of Death with a smile, indifferently and bravely. Therefore he says: "'Both life and death are good! Grab what comes first to hand!'" (XVII, 169) His several experiences make him think that "'The people's eyes are not permitted to see further'" (VI, 678) because if they do, they will fall flat one day (VII, 617). He affirms life fully, in all its thousand faces, and he loves all its faces through the power of a third glance where "end and beginning close the circle spun by fate" (XIX, 109). Odysseus, having experienced God as "earless," "eyeless," and "painless," giving place in the Heaven only to Himself (XXI, 1293), pities Him and the inhuman earth, the soul and the flesh (XXI, 1338-1339):

"I pity them all and sing, I pass, and they pass with me. / My brains have filled with knowledge, my wide hands with deeds, / and to this day my heart's remained bold, joyous, warm, / and loves all things, both life and death, but with no trust" (XXI, 1340-1343).

Odysseus, feeling that his heart bothers his spirit, in the last part of the story abandons his heart's desires, since he knows that "comfort and pleasure" can never be reconciled (IX, 621), and he looks for the liberation of his soul in silence (XIV, 1-19). He leaves his comrades and climbs a high mountain alone in order to shape a holy city under supernatural inspiration. He would return after seven days, i.e., after he had completed the whole plan (XIII, 1373-1382). But his crew, feeling that this isolation is a hard task, say: "'Dear God, help him to bear his savage solitude'" (XIII, 1388).

After catastrophe ruins his city, Temptation (Death) urges him to commit suicide by saying "'What a great crime, lone man, that in your troubled cares / and pains you still can't quell your pride and wrath'" (XVI, 877, 878). But Odysseus, even though he feels wearily that solitude is cruel and the heat oppressive (XVI, 1302-1303), is encouraged by the dark which states:

"When you have purified your heart of gods and demons, / of virtues great and small, of sorrows and of joys, / and only Death's great lighthouse stays, the glowing mind, / then rise, my heir, and sternly cleave your mind in two: / below will lie your last great foe, rotten-thighed Hope, / above, the savage Flame, no light, no air, no fire, / scornful and superhuman in man's hopeless skull" (XVI, 1177-1183).

So Odysseus turns to skepticism and mysticism trying to recall "in silence his lost youth, his empty life" (XVII, 318). But, "He was once more alone, and . . . his soul spread like an open sea, and roads ran everywhere" (XVIII, 1442-1445), he not being able to stop wandering. In this wandering, "he had no God or master" (XIX, 16), but sees Death to be his partner. At this stage he has no friends, no home, but hunger and thirst which represent the everyday death. He turns, so, into a weaponless being with no questions, no strife, nude of responsibilities, detached; he is just useless flesh and bones and a passive mind without any alertness. He is no longer creative physically and his mind engages in memory only. Man at this stage has reached to the sixth head moving toward the seventh and trying to change the trivial daily life "from flesh and bone into pure spirit, lightning, deeds and joy" (XXIII, 33). Just before the disembodiment of Odysseus occurs, he summons all good and bad into one

thing through a glimmering "glance" joined by Love (XXIII, 1294-1315). No longer able even to cry, he leaves a smile to this mortal world. Then Death seizes him, turning him into a spirit, into the shapeless head on the totem. This last head, which has no animalistic, sentimental, or intellectual power now, but is pure spirit, has experienced both the Dionysian and Apollonian<sup>15</sup> nature of man in this mortal life because of Odysseus' Tantalean, Heracleian, and Promethean fates as well as the natural forces.

The terrible conflicts Odysseus suffers as a consequence of the pressures placed on him by his diverse fates as well as by cruel nature have created a more fully experienced and understanding man--imperfect as man's nature is imperfect, yet heroically struggling for immortality.<sup>16</sup> Life is a delicious challenge in

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<sup>15</sup>Some reviewers refer to the Dionysian element in man as Asian, and the Apollonian as Greek. See Anne Fremantle, "The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel," The Catholic World, CLXXXIX (April, 1959), 70-71.

<sup>16</sup>Notopoulos, p. 323, writes: "Episode after episode unravels this outburst of titanism." See also: Dudley Fitts, "No Rest for the Restless Hero," The New York Times Book Review, LXIII, No. 49 (December 7, 1958), p. 20: "Kazantzakis' purpose was to celebrate the mind of man, the invention of man, the death-bound power defiant of time and change and capable of becoming God."

Kazantzakis' view, and all men have the potential to be Odysseus. Life has trapped his mind (XX, 346-347), and therefore he builds life on a chaos, giving it meaning, beauty, worth, value (as Rala's God did, by naming things), even though he knows this attempt is only an illusion (XVIII, 1216-1244). So he plays with life and death, facing them courageously. His "third eye" enables Odysseus to confront life with both agony and joy based on a creative impulse that creates a war between flesh and soul in which the soul becomes purified through flesh as knowledge brings some wisdom concerning life and death; therefore he concludes that "'Death is the salt that gives life its tasty sting'" (XVIII, 912). That is why Odysseus is not scared by death when it appears to him in his misery. He only asks for its coming back a little later, after he will have taken his last sea-voyage (XIX, 208). When it returns on the prow of the skiff with the worm in the middle of the forehead, the third wise eye warns him that the last moments of his temporal life are come (XXIII, 175).

Odysseus has never been influenced by Temptation which may urge man to commit suicide at his difficult times (XVIII, 488-492), as Odysseus accepts life and death in their own times equally. In the last moments of his



life-voyage, when "his loins disjoin," he declares that he has tried all values of his life. "'Old Man,'" he addresses Death,

"I took a rule and measured my heart and mind, / I measured earth and sky, I measured fear and love, / the greatest happiness of all, the greatest pain, / and from my measurements, . . . this coffin came / (XXI, 924-927).

All are gone and only memory and love remain, while his good and evil experiences have sublimated into one thing, into an amorphous flame leaping upwards to the Unknown, to the Unseen (XXIII, 1312-1313). Who knows if in the Unseen there is any of the basic elements that make up life with its pleasures and pains (XXIII, 248-251) when these elements (water, fire, earth, air, mind) depart together with man?

Odysseus was born fated by three gods (I, 1167-1210): Tantalus, the god of restlessness and of the exploring life for knowledge; Heracles, the god of heroism leading to perfection via deeds and progress; and Prometheus, the god of inner flame and enlightenment. All these make up the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of man's life. Joined together, The Odyssey tells us, they lead man to the broad and wise "Cretan Eye," the balanced view

of this mysterious life. But at what cost may man attain to this positive synthesizing capability? Odysseus in order to satisfy his first Fate, Tantalus, rejects stability and domestic settlement in order to try all contrasting values of life. He starts as a beast, killing and fighting, tasting love as lust, which he rejects later as he also rejects rotten friendships. Being led to despair after experiencing life with his animalistic nature in control, Odysseus decides hopefully to settle in an Ideal City and so satisfy his two other Fates, Heracles and Prometheus, by creating morals, laws, and justice--all leading to progress and to the "last labor" wherein the flame of wisdom will guard the City. But natural and catastrophic forces more powerful than man's potentialities are unleashed, destroying his ambitions, his plans, his humanitarian goals, and he, being alone, with no human society but only death close by, continues his way trying "to unwind what fate had woven" (XV, 1460) and grab as much as he can from life. Death has appeared to him as a worm, as a wolf, as a temptation, as an earthquake; but he is never afraid of it.

Man's life is, thus, a quest, a school, and a bottomless pit of knowledge where man is fated to expose

himself and to obtain all kinds of experiences. It is full of why's which he cannot answer; confused, lost, puzzled, he is doomed just to float without his getting to the bottom of his life or of knowledge. So at Odysseus' death,

The flesh dissolved, glances congealed, the heart's pulse stopped, / and the great mind leapt to the peak of its holy freedom, / fluttered with empty wings, then upright through the air / soared high and freed itself from its last cage, its freedom (XXIV, 1390-1393).

What Odysseus' spirit leaves behind is just his weaponless and nude body with the useless bones which will be devoured by worms and finally turned to dust, carrying no knowledge nor wisdom. Therefore, while he is in a state of silence remembering his past life and envisioning advancements concerning new civilizations, he comes to the conclusion that life is a myth made up by God's words (X, 840) and man's mind. Rala put it this way: that there is only one God, the mind (X, 730). Full of visions and daydreaming, life is an adventurous voyage just floating on a skiff, as the black minstrel sings to Prince Elias:

"All flow on toward the sea and down in that dark stream, / great towns and all their souls submerge, all women rot, / all gold crowns rot, and even gods rot like the trees . . ." (XIX, 1224-1266).

Life consists of tragedies and joys at the same time, following a "gyre" in a dance which conquers thirst and hunger, joining friends and enemies (XIII, 66) and even scaring death with its music (I, 941). Songs sung by the mind (XXIV, 1383) direct this circle, songs or cries which derive from man's sentiments, his thoughts, his lack of freedom, his pain or conscience when he feels lost or is in utter despair and unable to identify himself. Cries like "Help!" or his own name, "Odysseus!" urge him to accomplish something under the heart's or mind's control: he may join the poor fighting for their rights (X, 559-560), or he may try to finish an ideal city (XIV, 420). When failure comes, he must go forward to new triumphs.

So Odysseus' Dionysian dynamic nature and his Apollonian peaceful world are united in a third eye, the Cretan Glance, which accepts life and nature as it is, keeping perhaps Orpheus' words in mind: "Don't dig too deeply in the soul or you'll go daft" (XIII, 566). So he stops questioning man's existence and nature's or God's responsibilities toward man when he is at the stage of his great silence. He faces Charon bravely at the end, his body becoming weak and his soul turning to a shapeless flame that ascends into the sky and vanishes in the Invisible, in the Unreal. But where is the Invisible or

Nothingness? Do Odysseus' three Fates, which have determined his life, know? Perhaps they would have known if they had not been foiled in their attempt, too. And an answer comes directly, which is Socrates' statement, "I know that I know nothing," as nothing can inform us about this abyssmal, phantasmal, cruel nature which is so full of melody and wrath. We need to continue investigating it.

So ends Kazantzakis' "singing the sufferings and the torments of renowned Odysseus!" (Prologue, 73). His poem has profusely, if rather chaotically, revealed the truth and power of the carved seven heads on the peddler's wooden totem which clearly created Odysseus' spiritual journey. He starts from the bestial nature of man and ends, through progress, in a refined clear head with a flame and no flesh. He summons the spirits of his beloved dead and living comrades (XXIII, 1315), urging them to "'sail on, for Death's breeze blows in a fair wind!'" (XXIV, 1396). His soft "smile . . ., more brilliant than the mind" (XXIV, 1041-1042) is a farewell to intellectual Greece, his country.

## C H A P T E R     I I

### PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES AND KAZANTZAKIS' TOTEM

It has been claimed that Nikos Kazantzakis was a nihilist. From his entire work, life and correspondence, however, the opposite emerges.

How did he describe himself? A "tragic optimist." A person who has confidence in man, who looks straight at the demon of destruction, hates it, but is not afraid of it, because he knows that all destruction is but the preparatory stage to new creation.<sup>1</sup>

The above paradoxical description of Kazantzakis' philosophy by one who knew him well, Helen Kazantzakis, his wife, was the result not only of his Cretan heroic background (discussed in the introductory chapter) but also of the Nietzschean and Bergsonian influences on him that recent studies have shown to be profoundly important in The Odyssey. Therefore, a brief identification of Nietzsche's and Bergson's philosophies in so far as they are pertinent to Kazantzakis' main views on evolution, striving, and individual development will be necessary to put the themes of The Odyssey's totem-imagery into philosophical perspective.

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<sup>1</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, p. 472.

Kazantzakis' indebtedness to Nietzsche lies in the "rhythm" of life that Nietzsche taught to Kazantzakis. This "rhythm" helped Kazantzakis transform abstract concepts into feelings, passion, and more realistic views about life.<sup>2</sup> These views as found in The Odyssey are concerned with the concept of the superman, with the rejection of the old and dogmatic social, political, and religious institutions, and with the search for truth via the basic values of life, associated with the concepts of man, family, the state, religion, morality, and law.

A basic Nietzschean concept pertinent to Kazantzakis' philosophical point of view is the concept of the superman--a mortal, imperfect man struggling for perfection and even trying to be godlike through his search for truth and for solutions to problematic life. Odysseus is precisely such a type in The Odyssey because he fights for an improvement in his own life as well as in the life of society. This search for truth necessarily involves the rejection of the traditional, ethical, political, and

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Bien, "Kazantzakis' Nietzscheanism," Journal of Modern Literature, II, No. 2 (1967), pp. 265-266. The definition in this thesis of Nietzsche's early and important influence on Kazantzakis' thinking relies largely on this study by P. Bien.

social values. These values, which for Nietzsche have no foundation in reality, and in which, therefore, we can have no vital faith, may lead to a condition called nihilism--the state in which one realizes an "antinomy between ideals and reality." To Kazantzakis, Nietzsche was the supreme diagnostician of this condition.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis Richards in his study of Kazantzakis demonstrates that Kazantzakis adopted the strong belief in the superman (Odysseus) from the Nietzschean philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Man, as he is fighting in his life against natural forces, fates, and social reconstructions, in order to survive and even transcend all these destructive factors, has to be a superhuman, a dragon. Peter Bien, in his discussion of Kazantzakis' early (1910) dissertation on Nietzsche, observes

Nietzsche's sincerity, says Kazantzakis, made him constantly delve deeper, constantly refuse to be satisfied with any given conclusion, always desire to surpass himself by creating more complete and perfect formulations. . . . Out of this union of sincerity and arrogance came . . . the impetuosity

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 253-254.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis A. Richards, "Christianity in the Novels of Kazantzakis," Western Humanities Review, XXI (1967), 49.



with which he defended his new Idol, the Superman. All this . . . is an acute analysis of Kazantzakis himself.<sup>5</sup>

Another Neitzschean concept which contributed to Kazantzakis' philosophy in The Odyssey--Nietzsche's "main contribution to Kazantzakis' thought-system" as Bien states--was a special view of nihilism. This was Nietzsche's "insistence that nihilism need not be a symptom of decadence, that it might be instead a positive force, a homeopathic medicine to hasten the end of the nihilistic impasse characterizing our own transitional age. The influence was thus largely negative."<sup>6</sup> Kazantzakis takes Nietzsche as a physician who is trying to cure humanity.<sup>7</sup> Just as a "daybreak" is needed for the development of a "full day," man, Nietzsche taught Kazantzakis, must destroy the old and false metaphysical religion, morality, and social institutions in order to have new ones emerge.<sup>8</sup> This overturning and challenging of

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<sup>5</sup>Bien, "Nietzscheanism," p. 252.

<sup>6</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup>Bien, "Nietzscheanism," p. 254.

<sup>8</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 12.

the old order will develop a new and healthier civilization.<sup>9</sup> Odysseus abandons dogmatic or traditional institutions because he finds no reality in them and because they are generally sterile, corrupted, and inhuman. He leaves home and country and deserts friends. He destroys the rotten Knossos and fights against the indifferent Pharaoh in the belief in a new and justly created society with morals and humanitarian principles. He renounces all exclusive philosophies.

But no man or superman can destroy an existence without searching for truth. This search for "truth," as Kazantzakis saw it in Nietzsche, was in effect an attempt to reconcile two contradictory psychological tendencies: on the one hand, man's need for heroic struggle; on the other hand, man's almost hysterical abhorrence of reality.<sup>10</sup> It also created a "continual agony," because Nietzsche's rejection of traditional religion and its moral values caused him enormous pain--as it would any sensitive man who rejects his own past.<sup>11</sup> And, yet, as

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<sup>9</sup>Bien, "Nietzscheanism," p. 249.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

Kazantzakis perceived him, Nietzsche felt an absolute duty to attack and hasten the end of values he considered as already moribund--ideals left over from the Christian concept of the universe which had, for both Kazantzakis and Nietzsche, been proven outmoded by science and replaced by the unavoidable conception of Nature as "red in tooth and claw."<sup>12</sup> Such was the belief Odysseus had after the destruction of his Ideal City which turns him to scepticism and to a constant search for truth as far as the relationship of Christianity and Nature is concerned.

Nietzsche's attitude toward man and man's moral and social bonds also influenced to a great extent Kazantzakis' view. So a belief in man's purposeful existence, immortal soul, and free will is, according to Nietzsche, false, and if the individual of this present transitional age relies on it, he will surely be led to pessimistic nihilism. Therefore the only solution is to destroy these traditional axioms. This belief in an immortal soul of man and in an afterlife has been proved to be untrue through science, Nietzsche felt. To him, this was considered as a liberation since people will not hereafter

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

be concerned with eternal happiness in an afterlife. Therefore man will try to experience whatever is offered to him in this mortal life.<sup>13</sup> As we have seen, Odysseus, too, in his mortal voyage rejects social bonds because of his hunger for all kinds of experience, freedom, and joy of life. He wants to be free from family, political, and any other social responsibilities in order to seek knowledge and find as much as he can in this life. Therefore he leaves his wife and kingdom in Ithaca, and he seldom restricts himself to one and the same place. For Odysseus, the restless urge to move on to new experience and to new adventures dominated any desire for rest, peace, or stability.

Nietzsche rejected, of course, any notion of a divine purpose guiding human destiny. But he also found little reason to find comfort in any "Darwinian" supposition of evolutionary progress toward "higher" types. On the contrary, Nietzsche suggested that it is precisely the "higher" types who are not suited for survival, while the weak and mediocre flourish.<sup>14</sup> Odysseus embraces all

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 255-256.

<sup>14</sup>Bien, "Nietzscheanism," p. 255.

natural forms of life, rejecting only socially decadent elites. However, as we shall point out in discussing his relationships to Bergson, Kazantzakis does not at all reject the notion of a natural evolutionary process toward spirituality such as, in fact, is suggested by the totem in The Odyssey.

To Nietzsche, family seemed to be a decadent domestic environment for the individual, spawning pessimism, because of increasing feminism and democratic pressures towards equality between sexes. Man, he believed, is to dominate, and woman is to create a family having her husband and children as her main job and the ground of her happiness. When man ties himself completely to the woman, he degenerates, as he is entrapped by marriage. This produces a situation that is against his fulfillment; thus woman must be rejected.<sup>15</sup> A man, he held, should marry only when he is able to control his physical needs and when he desires to create, thus subordinating the family role to his role as a superman. Otherwise the single man must regard woman as a challenge--a "sport"--rather than as a need; he must see woman as just another

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

opportunity for his experiencing life and developing himself more fully.<sup>16</sup> Odysseus, not being willing to sacrifice his manhood to only one woman--his wife--leaves his old Penelope and experiences other women in his voyage. The women were only a "sport" to him which he finally rejects when he wants to evolve to a more perfect man. That is why he leaves Helen in Crete and Dictena in Africa.

Insofar as Kazantzakis' interpretation of Nietzsche's view of the state is concerned, it is significant to point out Nietzsche's belief that democracy is detrimental to man's natural development. Democracy brings equality which tends to make everybody alike, but not all men are alike. There are those, in Nietzsche's terms, who are supermen and are capable of strong and aggressive actions. Democracy does not allow them naturally to develop in the democratic state. The response of supermen to this state tends to political nihilism because they feel they cannot develop their individual wills to power in such a state. From Nietzsche, Kazantzakis interpreted democracy as being too often a degenerate state, which must be abolished whenever it becomes an impediment to

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

self-development.<sup>17</sup> For the same reason Odysseus fights against monarchies in Sparta, Crete, and Africa--because they impoverish life. And so it is that Odysseus, in order to establish a healthy democratic state, appoints and advises Hardihood as governor of Crete--to be a just ruler who will free the slaves, love his people, and apportion his land to them, and be patient but never statically proud of fulfillment, as man must always move in order to go forward in this world (VIII, 855-866).

Nietzsche was not opposed to all religions, but he valued a god deriving from strength and projecting human superiority. Therefore, he condemned the Judaeo-Christian faith because its god demanded repentance of sins and so reduced all individuals to the equality of worthlessness. The potentiality for human greatness destroyed by the ideas of religious brotherhood and Christian love, together with ethical compassion, degenerates the individual and the state, and the ideals turn to mediocrity, timidity, and obedience instead of strength, beauty, and superiority; therefore, Nietzsche held, traditional Christianity must be overturned.<sup>18</sup> Morality,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 257-258.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 258-259.

in Nietzsche's opinion, comes from man's basic drive, the will to power, and all human activities are properly manifestations of this drive.<sup>19</sup>

But man, Nietzsche taught, is perplexed as far as morality is concerned because Western morality creates a war against his nature, since, as the Christian ethic teaches, to be virtuous is to curb the will in the interests of pleasing conscience. This leads man to moral pessimism and moral nihilism because Christian morality makes man deny virile qualities; so it has "robbed him of the self-respect which--in a healthy ethos--is the source of all virtue."<sup>20</sup> Therefore Nietzsche calls for the destruction of morality based on free will, since such a morality is based on nonexistent foundations. He recommends instead that man must judge actions according to their results and, according to this new morality, "good" will derives from a strong and vital life-instinct and "bad" from weariness or defeat.<sup>21</sup> Odysseus' dynamic life in his odyssey depicts this moral attitude toward life

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 259-260.



and makes him accept the "good" and "bad" forms of it equally.

Nietzsche believes that equality is not inherent in man's nature. Therefore, true justice must be "the unequal distribution of unequal rights and obligations among unequal beings."<sup>22</sup> But in present times, he observed, instead of this, we have the Judaeo-Christian law's system of punishing and the free-will emphasis on intention. Law should be concerned with transgressions against the life-instinct because otherwise societies will dissolve under false ideas of freedom. Therefore, Nietzsche saw a change or overturn of the false values as necessary.<sup>23</sup> This change is tried by Odysseus several times in The Odyssey in the decadent societies of Sparta, Crete, and Africa where false values of law and unnatural inequality dominated and the common people suffered. Odysseus, thus, fights for truth and a new settlement in this world, as he is disappointed by the present situation.

Peter Bien finds that "Nietzsche's greatest effect [on Kazantzakis] was to prepare Kazantzakis for Bergson."<sup>24</sup> According to Bien, the major Bergsonian

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 12.

concepts influencing Kazantzakis are the concept of the élan vital, the concept of the downward stream and the upward stream, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of spirituality based on the evolutionary change of matter from rocks to self-consciousness, and the concept of man as the center of this evolutionary development. Definitions of these Bergsonian concepts as, according to Peter Bien's study, they were understood by Kazantzakis, will enable us to determine their relevance to the philosophy of The Odyssey.

In scientific terms that greatly impressed Kazantzakis, Bergson proves that "the central, driving force in the universe is an evolving vitality which transubstantiates flesh into spirit."<sup>25</sup> This idea was a new "true" god to Kazantzakis, who, when he discovered Bergson's explanations, was obsessed with cosmological questions concerning where man comes from and where he goes. Kazantzakis finds the answer to these questions in Bergson and states that man comes from a dark abyss and ends in a dark abyss, with life turning to a "luminous interval" between two dark voids. So, the whole life is a transition

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

from one void to another.<sup>26</sup> In this cosmos or life of matter and spirit, which Kazantzakis calls "antagonistic" forces, there are two streams, i.e., the downward stream and the upward stream of Bergson. The downward stream, necessity, is pushing matter toward decomposition. The upward stream consists of the sexual and mental aspects in man's nature which make up "the upward-surgings god."<sup>27</sup> Man's struggle is to resist the former, the "killer-god," with man's sexual and mental powers. If man does not resist the "killer-god," the god will bring about "stagnation, homogeneity and inertness" in all man's affairs. The "upward-surgings god" is, according to Bien, to be regarded also as a "killer," the result being that man deals with a "trihypostatic monad," which consists of the downward stream and the two elements deriving from the upward stream, i.e., the sexual and mental powers of man's nature. Bien explains the "killer" nature of Kazantzakis' "upward-surgings god" as a "self-incineration."

Sexually, man burns himself out in order to evolve by means of progeny. The over-all upward surge is

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

accomplished only because each generation produces vibrant successors and then dies. If we truly understand this god who devours man, we will love him for the opportunity he gives us to participate in the universal process which demands our own extinction.

Furthermore this same god pushes man to incinerate himself mentally. Thus the ascetic drive that leads to Odysseus' triumph over Despair--and to the tragic joy of the "Cretan Glance"--is the result of a fragmentation of the mental principle itself. It is in response to the mental pressure of this drive that the supreme new faculty, the "Third Eye," occurs.<sup>28</sup>

Another factor pertinent to the question about "where someone comes from and goes to" is the absolute freedom or absolute spirituality which belong to the voids of either end of life and which, in a paradoxical manner, make up the fulfillment of life's struggle. In order to give a solution to the paradox, Bien states, Bergson invokes the explanation of evolutionary changes in the cosmos:

Evolution shows us that life is a . . . change which moves toward inertness, heterogeneity which moves

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

toward homogeneity. Our solar system, says Bergson, is "ever exhausting something of the mutability it contains." In other words, death is not something that negates all the "desires" of the cosmos, but rather something toward which the cosmos itself, life itself, is moving. The black abyss at the end of life is not a sudden, arbitrary, "unjust" negation of life, it is the . . . logical conclusion of the very process it seems to nullify. Death in effect, is life burning itself out; both life and death are willed by the same "god."<sup>29</sup>

Consequently the dissolution of matter releases the primal force and brings a complete freedom and spiritualization of "what had previously been weighed down by its own congealments." Thus life evolves through transubstantiation toward increasing spiritualization: rocks evolve to plants, to animals, to man; sensation evolves to instinct, to intelligence, and finally to self-consciousness. "But life's crown in this regard is death, when all materiality is dissolved" and "annihilation equals fulfillment."<sup>30</sup>

But what is man's place in the universe? Bergson puts man in the center of the universe, but not according to the Christian "anthropocentricity." Rather, according to Bien:

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

He gave man both individual and universal significance, enabling an individualistic voluntarism to serve transindividualistic ends. By realizing our own potentialities, by overcoming sluggishness and exerting our vitality, whether sexually, martially, or mentally, we save god and push evolution forward.<sup>31</sup>

Let us now examine these ideas of Nietzsche and Bergson to show how they contributed to Kazantzakis' philosophy in The Odyssey.

Kazantzakis' view is that God is found in man and depends on man for his existence. God can "be saved" only through the transmutation of man's matter to spirit. In this occurrence God will never save people but people will save Him through creativity, and by changing flesh into spirit.<sup>32</sup>

"My God is not Almighty. He struggles for he is in peril every moment; he trembles and stumbles in every living thing and he cries out. He is defeated incessantly, but rises again, full of blood and earth to throw himself into battle once more,"

Kazantzakis states.<sup>33</sup> Kazantzakis analyzes his god into

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>32</sup>This idea, a theme of the last part of Book XV 915f, is confirmed to be a central theme of Kazantzakis' major works by Lewis Richards: see "Christianity in the Novels of Kazantzakis," Western Humanities Review, XXI (1967), 54.

<sup>33</sup>Phoebe Adams, quoting Kazantzakis in "Reader's Choice," The Atlantic, CCVI (September, 1960), 114.

two different and opposite "persons," much as Bergson analyzes spirit and matter as based, on the one hand, on the sexual and mental natures of man leading to perfection, and on the other hand, on the materialistic part in Nature which leads to decomposition.<sup>34</sup>

Another aspect of Kazantzakis' god is seen in man's invocation to the fundamental force which drives man to push life upward. This force is the "Cry" which urges man to evolve, to reach for what he cannot grasp.<sup>35</sup> The "Cry" for evolutionary purposes appears to Odysseus several times in his mortal voyage.<sup>36</sup>

Bien refers furthermore to Kantian epistemology as an influence on Kazantzakis' Odysseus. It is Kazantzakis' means of justifying the visionary power in man's

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<sup>34</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, pp. 14-15.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>36</sup>For various manifestations of the "Cry," see the following passages in The Odyssey: Book VII, 463, when the god of freedom cries for liberation; Book X, 559-560, when Odysseus' heart urges him to help the common people; Book XIV, 941-1410, when he dreams of god and also when the Outcry mocks him about his Ideal City as a city built in the air with words; Book XIV, 390-581, when Odysseus is urged to stop or continue his restlessness by his three Fates; Book XVI, 1125, when Heracles urges Odysseus to raise his head and carry on after the catastrophe of his City.

nature--here Odysseus' "Outcry" and Tennyson's "I felt" in In Memoriam--whenever the mind cannot rationally respond to man's paradoxical life. Reason, in other words, is not always the problem-solver; it is often the heart as an intuitive mystical impulse that provides the solution.<sup>37</sup>

Kazantzakis stresses the contrast between organized Christianity and the primitive religion.<sup>38</sup> As Richards points out, Kazantzakis in his works reveals his view that primitive Christianity has been corrupted by the organized church.<sup>39</sup> Prevelakis, who likewise sees this theme in Kazantzakis' Odyssey, says that "in order to fill the gap, Kazantzakis wishes, from the very beginning, the resurrection of Evangelical Christ, free from ecclesiastical dogmas."<sup>40</sup> In some of his novels (The Greek Passion, The Last Temptation) Kazantzakis tries to "re-discover" and "reassert" the primitive Christian values of love, brotherhood, humility, and self-renunciation which, he believes, do not exist in today's Church.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, pp. 23-25.

<sup>38</sup>Richards, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>40</sup>As quoted by Richards, ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.



Nietzsche's nihilistic influence, though not fundamental to the philosophy of The Odyssey, is present in it.<sup>42</sup> When the Ideal City is destroyed by a life force, Kazantzakis makes Odysseus turn to accept the futility of action and the meaninglessness of existence. This nothingness makes him move toward the eternal silence which brings fulfillment.<sup>43</sup> Odysseus is the upward stream which brings a universal evolution. He defies the killer god--the force that brings out degeneration--by warring against all material, sexual, and intellectual forms of stagnation, always burning himself out, using up all his energies, for in the creation of progeny, of societies, of fuller self-consciousness (which is the most spiritual aspect of the "trihypostatic monad"), evolution occurs and God is saved. The bestial nature of man is reduced as the flame is freed from flesh and turns to the shapeless face, "to air," where this god is again changed into his initial ethereal purity.<sup>44</sup>

Bergson's élan-vital is a profound concept in Kazantzakis' philosophy in The Odyssey, as Kazantzakis asserts

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>43</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

that man should act favoring motion, sensation, creativity, heterogeneity, self-consciousness, and freedom. Man must somehow get beyond himself to convert flesh into spirit. Satisfaction stops mobility, and thus is a sin because it makes life static; vitality is the greatest virtue, as actions deriving from man's intensive and sincere vital center are good. Actions and thoughts bringing completion stop further progress and therefore serve the forces of stagnation and inertia and so become bad.<sup>45</sup> Therefore Andreas Poulakidas states that for Kazantzakis "life is not static, inert matter but progressive and dynamic consciousness."<sup>46</sup>

Kazantzakis' views on an evolutionary process are well portrayed by his use of the totem in The Odyssey. By this symbol Kazantzakis shows that the spiritual progress that occurs after Odysseus rejects domestic, social, and religious settlements is the outcome of conquests and affirmations.<sup>47</sup> The Odyssey shows that man starts as a

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>46</sup>Andreas K. Poulakidas, "Kazantzakis and Bergson: Metaphysic Aestheticians," Journal of Modern Literature, II (1971-1972), 267.

<sup>47</sup>Andonis Decavalles, "Two Views of Kazantzakis," Poetry, XCV (December, 1959), 177.

beast, a warrior, with carnal desires and reaches the highest point of his development in the amorphous flame going up to the Unseen. In order for man to attain this, he has to struggle on earth like a superman and try as fully as he can both bodily and mental experiences of life. Fleshly desires, which make up so large a portion of life, lead man to better understanding of the futility of existence and life. This acquaintance with life is a step towards wisdom because of the universal vanity.<sup>48</sup> As Richards points out, the accomplishment of the "highest aim" is shown by Kazantzakis to come only "through a continuous and idealistic struggle." Struggle is the "marrow of man's existence" and the essence of God. However, struggle cannot be understood by man because he is human and thinks in human terms while the struggle is super-human. But he still struggles because otherwise life would be purposeless and because through struggling man can achieve the highest point of freedom, an insight.<sup>49</sup> Odysseus is fighting for freedom in the entire epic; he frees himself from women, from social and political bonds,

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<sup>48</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 29.

<sup>49</sup>Richards, p. 55.

from physical strife, and turns to hermitism before he reaches the highest point. Though Kazantzakis denounces inactivity (it is the major aspect of "the killer god"), he is attracted to hermitism, asceticism, and Buddhist meditation. The final peace--pure spirituality--is not far from Nirvana, though it comes only through extinction.<sup>50</sup>

Restless creativity, destroying the old and creating the new, is a means of looking for perfectability in life. But this constant struggle is accompanied at the same time by an acceptance of necessity, of eternal uncertainty, and by the conquest of hope for life beyond Nature. This Amor fatis, or "Erotic Stoicism" in the phrase of Joseph C. Flay, is a "limitless expanse of energy unleashed in a hopeless battle for self-fulfillment" which finds its freedom in necessity, and its meaning in its hopelessness.<sup>51</sup>

Odysseus, as we have seen in the epic, abandons his ordered domestic security in order to attain immortality. As Notopoulos points out, this is to be accomplished by "a return to the search for excellence through

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<sup>50</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 26.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph C. Flay, "The Erotic Stoicism of Nikos Kazantzakis," Journal of Modern Literature, II (1971-1972), 297.

restless creativity which is destined throughout the poem to destroy the old and create anew."<sup>52</sup> He finds in Kazantzakis' The Odyssey that the "abandonment of security [is] the only gateway to immortality"; man's soul must ever strive "for excellence in the human potentialities."<sup>53</sup> This excellence evolves from "brutishness to refinement, [from] sexuality to intellectuality, [from] martial exploit to imaginative exploit, from instinctive responses to deliberative ones and thence to a self-conscious playing with the shadows which we mistakenly think are real."<sup>54</sup> In his way Odysseus is defying satisfaction and stagnation by moving, as he does, from the outwardness of destroying, copulating, and building to an inwardness in which his outward actions are recapitulated in the imagination.<sup>55</sup> But Kazantzakis does not "whitewash the human situation."<sup>56</sup> By synthesizing man's Dionysian and Apollonian nature (in the Cretan Glance) he projects the possibility of a reconciliation without rejecting any experiences in life but

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<sup>52</sup>Notopoulos, p. 322.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 29.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>56</sup>F. W. Dillistone, The Novelist and the Passion Story (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. 82.

trying both, which Notopoulos calls "Golden Extremes."<sup>57</sup> The "Golden Extremes," including flesh and ideas, are one and the same thing.<sup>58</sup> This unity represents reality while stressing that the contrasting streams are co-workers deriving from a unified primordial source.<sup>59</sup> This synthesizing vision was found in Kazantzakis' new god, the god of truth that makes up the evolutionary process of life consisting of antagonistic "persons" or hypostases.<sup>60</sup>

Man can only achieve the high point in his effective life if he believes that there is no ground for hope. There is likewise no ground for fear. If man wants to triumph over hope, he must realize that there is no salvation and so find pleasure in this awareness; this recognition turns pessimism to optimism. This is Odysseus' way<sup>61</sup> (XVI, 1195-1270).

Fulfillment also is accomplished through heroic deeds. Kazantzakis' hero in The Odyssey appears as a

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<sup>57</sup>Notopoulos, p. 325.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>61</sup>Richards, p. 54; see also Friar, "Introduction," p. xxi.

nonhuman figure but also as a non-nihilistic superman who fights altruistically and even sacrifices himself for "'the greatest virtue on earth [which] is not to become free / but to seek freedom in a ruthless, sleepless strife'" (XV, 1171-1172); for evolutionary change and the direction of change seem to come from the instinctive, impulsive life force. He fights in Crete and in Africa for his own freedom as well as for the freedom of other people, which could not be attained without his heroic deeds. But these heroic deeds bring fulfillment through destruction and so turn annihilation to perfection, as fighting is a great virtue, ἀρετή, when it is constructive.<sup>62</sup> Kazantzakis' hero in The Odyssey destroys rotten communities in order to settle man in a free, vital environment and in order to transmute flesh into spirit progressively in man's nature.<sup>63</sup>

Odysseus, in his odyssey, does not abandon himself to the free flow of the élan vital: he seeks direction in ascetic contemplation before creating his plan for an Ideal City and creating his ten commandments. But

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<sup>62</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup>Richards, p. 54.

he realizes ever more the need for asceticism as the way towards development of the "Cretan Eye" after his city is swallowed up, because asceticism is a means of bringing a balance to man's nature. Kazantzakis' character as a Cretan has led him to asceticism when his brilliant mind is challenged and alienated by the influence of dogmatism and brutal force. His nature was under such stagnant and restrictive circumstances that he had to acquiesce in the friendly call of asceticism in order to avoid fleshly desires.<sup>64</sup> This withdrawal is apparent in Odysseus' ascending the mountain in Africa in order to communicate with God in a mystic way and formulate a new ideal decalogue.<sup>65</sup> The god he communicates with is the mystical, intuitive impulse who inspires the ten commandments, which manifest god by the groans in man's heart. This god cries for help, chokes in the ground, and leaps from the grave; he also stifles living things, which he considers as co-fighters. Man, according to these commandments, must love humankind, plants, and animals since he derives from them; he must love earth, and everyday he must reject his joys,

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>65</sup>Notopoulos, p. 324.



riches, and victories that lead to stasis, looking always for freedom and creativity (XV, 1161-1172).

But who would try this heroic and titanic life? Only a human superman with a strong mind. Odysseus through his titanic ancestry uses the human spirit for destroying rotten civilizations and societies and for creating new, more moral ones--i.e., more vitalistic and spiritual ones. He destroys or rejects the outworn gods (Olympic gods, Christ, Buddha) and gives divinity to human mind as Rala did in the epic. This superman even scares Death. This restless titanism is explicitly shown in the entire epic.<sup>66</sup> The Odyssey depicts the splendor and potentialities of the human spirit in its diverse moods.<sup>67</sup> Kazantzakis' superman is not that of Nietzsche--a being who is a strong, powerful, aggressive--but the human being who attains life's fulfillment in the abyss of pure disembodied spirituality.<sup>68</sup> Mind is the self-contained creative force out of which reality comes, a man must love all things but stick to none. Mind is capable of destroying things of

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>68</sup>Bien, "Nietzscheanism," p. 263.

constructing things, of turning into the aethereal spirit, but not always able to overcome the paradoxes of life.

Kazantzakis may, then, be characterized as a "tragic optimist," and such is his Odysseus in The Modern Odyssey. The modern Odysseus is a Nietzschean, non-nihilistic human "superman" who destroys decadent environments in order to rebuild vital ones. As he looks for truth, he is confused, but he never descends into an abyss of despondency because he sees life fundamentally as a bright day between two dark nights, an opportunity for furthering ascent. In order to solve unsolved universal problems and in order to attain individual perfection, he struggles in his entire mortal voyage. Through his physical, sentimental, and intellectual powers, he tries to find freedom and evolve his spiritual world. Completely aware of the evolutionary process in which man starts from the inhuman stage of rocks and reaches at last the pure flame of the visionary spirit, he puts himself in the center of the universe, where he becomes a restless, creative, and altruistic fighter synthesizing the upward and downward experiences of the life force in a single sophisticated attitude he calls the "Cretan Glance." This Glance joins the tragedy and comedy of life together with complete and

joyful acceptance. The carnal and intellectual nature of man, the Dionysian and Apollonian philosophies, also based on a "hopeless" world, still are evolutionary and pleasant. This balance can be accomplished not only through the Nietzschean and Bergsonian philosophies but also through asceticism, where matter can be translated into pure spirit when the mind is not destructive or constructive but at peace, just a shapeless aethereal flame ascending into the Unseen. This great end of the bright day of man's life is an outcome of the two streams creating life; so Kazantzakis' statement that "all roads are good" is an optimistic thought stressing that the totem is primarily valid as individual development, and both life and death are good.

## C H A P T E R     I I I

### SIMILARITIES IN THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE ODYSSEY: A MODERN SEQUEL AND IN MEMORIAM

However much we may be led to consider In Memoriam as an "autobiographical" poem, we may infer from Tennyson's own statement in his Memoirs that it is an objective philosophical poem:

It must be remembered that this is a poem, not an actual biography. It is founded in our [Tennyson's and A. H. Hallam's] friendship, on the engagement of Arthur Hallam to my sister, on his sudden death at Vienna, just before the time fixed for their marriage, and on his burial at Clevedon Church . . . . The different moods of sorrow as in drama are dramatically given, and my conviction [is] that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. "I" is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him.<sup>1</sup>

In Memoriam has been studied by several critics who have analyzed the poem and its unity. All of them have noticed that the seasons and Christmases (three) mentioned in the elegy show Tennyson's emotional development in a spiritual journey from depression to hope, from

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<sup>1</sup>Hallam Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1897), I, 304-305.

a funeral to the birth of a new life, and through three Christmases, the last of which prepares the reader for the New Year and Tennyson's sister Cicelia's and Edmund Lushington's wedding with its hopeful anticipation of a child whom Tennyson foresees as bringing a "closer link/Betwixt us [Tennyson and Hallam] and the crowning race" (CXXXI, 127-128). The link is that imagined by Tennyson between the human types of the Victorian age and the higher type to come--a type imagined and, he implies, furthered by the idealistic love and friendship shared by himself and Hallam.

A. C. Bradley divides the poem into four mood stages marked by three Christmases progressing from despair to faith in the existence of a God of love. Stage one (poems 1-27) includes the poet's reaction of despair over Hallam's death. Stage two (poems 28-77) develops a mood of philosophical doubt. Stage three (poems 78-103) expresses a crescent hope, and stage four (poems 104-131) shows a firm statement of faith.<sup>2</sup>

E. D. H. Johnson divides the poem in the same way but according to the spiritual and artistic progress

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<sup>2</sup>A. C. Bradley, "The Structure of In Memoriam," A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), pp. 20-35.

of the poet. Starting with poems 1-27 the overtones are of despair and emotional release. Poems 28-77 refer to doubt and escape from thought, and poems 78-103 reveal hope and self-discovery displacing doubt. Finally poems 104-131 show Tennyson's emerging faith and his commitment to poetry as a mission in life.<sup>3</sup>

Tennyson recognized nine divisions in his elegy; but as he never explained clearly the basis which made him analyze and divide the poem this way, Martin J. Svaglic offers a rationale for Tennyson's nine divisions, interpreting Tennyson's sequence of feelings and thoughts as possibly structured by his memories of experiences at different places and times.<sup>4</sup>

Since the main theme of Tennyson's spiritual development essentially falls into three categories--despair because of death and the sense of loss; doubt of God's love for man because of Nature's cruelty toward his beloved friend and, consequently, toward humanity in general, and Tennyson's intellectual confusion from the

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<sup>3</sup>E. D. H. Johnson, "In Memoriam: The Way of the Poet," Victorian Studies, II (December, 1958), 147-148.

<sup>4</sup>Svaglic, pp. 811-825.

failure of accepted rationales of "Hope" resulting from scientific thought; and, lastly, hope, which he feels he has attained, of his being spiritually reunited with Hallam in an enduring and eternal love--a division of the elegy into three sections suits the need of the analysis this thesis undertakes. Section I encompasses poems 1-50; section II poems 51-82; and section III poems 83-131.

In order better to define these categories and the philosophy they develop, however, a short summary of Tennyson's elegy showing Tennyson's emotional progress from uncertainty and fear to a measure of trust and hope will be helpful. The Prologue, which was written after the whole poem was completed, is an invocation to "Strong Son of God, immortal Love" (Prol., 1), which Tennyson speaks of Victorians' adopting by faith only and not by any proof. Its tone is more positive than the general tone of the entire elegy.<sup>5</sup> Life and death were made by God "in man and brute" (Prol., 6), and Tennyson expresses trust that God will not "leave us in the dust" (Prol., 9) since He is just. He refers to knowledge as something "we see," i.e. something sensual, like "a beam in darkness,"

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<sup>5</sup>Clyde de L. Ryals, From the Great Deep (Columbus, Ohio: University Press, 1967), p. 73.

and he prays that the new knowledge will be made consonant with religion "again" ("mind and soul") in a vaster music (harmony) than in the simpler old philosophies. Further, he implores God in His wisdom to make him wise (Prol., 44). Tennyson is also apologetic for his "wild and wandering cries, / Confusions of a wasted youth" (Prol., 41-42) as he laments "one removed, / Thy [God's] creature, whom I [Tennyson] found so fair" (Prol., 37-38).

The first poem starts with the statement "that men may rise on stepping-stones / Of their dead selves to higher things" (I, 3-4), revealing the possibility of some spiritual progress in man even though he questions the rationality of this forecast by asking, "But who shall so forecast the years / And find in loss a gain to match?" (I, 5-6)

In this depressed state of mind, sorrow offers him "cruel fellowship" (III,1) and suggests that he embrace her as "his natural good." His heart beats slow (IV,8) because he has lost some pleasure from his early years, which make him turn to chilling tears that grief shakes into frost. (IV, 9-10).

Therefore, Tennyson, in order to avoid being the "fool of loss" (IV, 16) turns to writing, even though



words are deceptive, as they, "like Nature, half reveal / And half conceal the Soul within" (V, 1-4). "But, for the unquiet heart and brain," he believes "A use in measured language lies" (V, 5-6). Consequently he will use words in order to express his grief, although words will present only an "outline" of feelings and "no more" (V, 9-12). Nevertheless, he offers his poems as expressions that have been therapeutic to him.

The arrival of the ship carrying Hallam's body from Venice<sup>6</sup> makes Tennyson feel a calmer despair, but still the griefs that can be truly expressed in words are only "The lesser griefs" (XX, 1). There are no words which can express his deep feelings. So Tennyson says:

I sing to him that rests below . . . , (XXI, 1)

I take the grasses of the grave,  
And make them pipes whereon to blow . . . , (XXI, 3-4)

I do but sing because I must . . . (XXI, 23).

Tennyson also remembers Cambridge days which, though they were loaded with school activities, were light

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<sup>6</sup>Tennyson here and elsewhere in the poem follows roughly some formal conventions of the traditional pastoral elegy, as is described by Jerome H. Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 115-116; but this fact is not particularly important for this study.

because of the love and understanding between him and Hallam (XXIV-XXV). Tennyson through these memories tries to prove the value of a strong and enduring love while he is in a state when sadness and sorrow are his companions. Turning to the question of whether the soul survives death, he defends the simple Christian believer's hope in immortality (XXXII-XXXIII). Yet, in what is perhaps the most moving poem of this first section, poem XXIV, he expresses the desperate need of the poet to believe in immortality. If there is no immortality "earth is darkness at the core, / And dust and ashes all that is" (XXXIV, 3-4). If everything is mortal, "What then were God to such as I?" (XXXIV, 9), and in the darkest image of his grief, presuming death is the end-all, we may see a foreshadowing of his later meditations on Nature, for then--

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
 Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
 To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
 Of vacant darkness and to cease (XXXIV, 13-16).

Neither Christ's birthday--the first after Hallam's death--nor the following springtime changes his bad mood (XXIX-XXVIII). And Tennyson's mood of grief and despair are maintained even till poem L where he invokes Hallam's spirit to

Be near me when the light is low  
 When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick  
 And tingle, and the heart is sick,  
 And all the wheels of being slow (L, 1-4).

Poems LI-LIII supply a kind of modulation from grief to a more meditative mood as Tennyson expresses his fears of unworthiness toward his beloved Hallam. The closing lines of LIII--"For fear divine Philosophy / Should push beyond her mark, and be / Procureess to the Lords of Hell" (13-16)--clearly prepare us for the philosophical abyss to follow, making a transition from personal grief to philosophical doubt and quest. The influence on Tennyson of Lyell's and Chamber's evolutionary geological theories increase his doubts about God's love for man in this section. Geological changes and Nature's indifference to create things confuse him and lead him to search for man's purpose on earth and God's responsibility toward man. He plays with the idea that Nature is the beginning and end: "I [Nature] bring to life, I bring to death" (LVI, 6). His quest for understanding becomes broader with the idea that God exists in conflict with Nature: "Are God and Nature then at strife, / That Nature lends such evil dreams?" (LV, 5-6) In greater detail Tennyson's poems LIV-LVI focus the crisis of intellectual despair

created primarily by his understanding of contemporary natural science. Poem LIV, shot through with doubt, poses the faint hope that "somehow good / will be the final goal of ill" (LIV, 2-3) and, above all, "that not one life shall be destroy'd / Or cast as rubbish to the void, / When God hath made the pile complete" (LIV, 5-8). Yet the poem ends with a cry of confusion and anguished ignorance, as Tennyson compares himself to "An infant crying in the night, / An infant crying for the light, / And with no language but a cry/ (LIV, 18-20).

Poem LV focuses more sharply on the evidence Nature affords for immortality--evidence which appears so entirely negative as to lead the poet to ask, "Are God and Nature then at strife, / That Nature lends such evil dreams?" (LV, 5-6) After "considering everywhere / Her [Nature's] secret meaning in her deeds" (LV, 10-12) and finding that "of fifty seeds / She often brings but one to bear," the poet, in the face of such indifference and wastefulness, ends the poem in such doubt of Nature's evidences of a God of love that he can only "faintly trust the larger hope" (LV, 20).

Poem LVI, which continues the meditation on Nature, confutes even the minimal proposition advanced

earlier that Nature is "'careful of the type'" (LVI, 1). Thousands of species, Tennyson now observes, have disappeared, and he entertains perhaps the cruelest of all possibilities--the idea that man, "Who trusted God was love indeed / And love Creation's final law" (LVI, 13-14)--that even man himself might disappear. To such doubts he closes rhetorically--"What hope of answer or redress? / Behind the veil, behind the veil" (LVI, 27-28).

After this intellectual frustration, Tennyson's emotions via "The high Muse" inspire a more optimistic song while Tennyson is grieving at his ideal friend's tomb:

Wherefore [asks the high Muse] grieve  
Thy brethern with a fruitless tear?  
Abide a little longer here,  
And thou shalt take a nobler leave (LVIII, 9-12).

Tennyson, after leaving Hallam's burial place, asks, "Does my old friend remember me?" (LXIV, 28) At this psychological stage he believes that dreams of their academic life in Cambridge will reunite them and relieve his mind if they do not remind him of Hallam's death. So, these enjoyable memories of the past will create a pleasant present. At this point we may see, specifically in poem LXXXII, both the beginning of a resolution in Tennyson's attitude toward Death, and the renewal of hope.

"I wage not any feud with Death" (LXXXII, 1), the poet says and adds, in an impressive evocation of immortal spirit: "Eternal process moving on / From state to state the spirit walks"(LXXXII, 5-6). Perhaps even more important psychologically are the closing lines which though an expression of frustration, indicate the renewal of desire--

For this alone on Death I wreak  
The wrath that garners in my heart:  
He put our lives so far apart  
We cannot hear each other speak (XXXII, 13-16).

This new optimistic attitude is developed in the closing section above all by the renewal of the poet's sense of Nature's eternal renewal: "Can trouble live with April days / Or sadness in the summer moons?" (LXXXIII, 7-8) "Mixing memory and desire," in Eliot's phrase, the poet's memories of Hallam quicken his desire to be united in some fashion with his departed friend. Such a reunion cannot best come as a vision, Tennyson thinks, for respectful of scientific skepticism, he recognizes that a vision might be thought to be a mere "canker of the brain" (XCII, 3). Tennyson realizes that such a mystic visitation as he longs for can only come to a soul which is itself "at peace with all" (XCIV, 8). One quiet summer night, as

he reads Hallam's letters, the soul of his departed friend comes to him at last. The opening stanzas, with their mood of tranquility and calm evoke a spirit "at peace with all" (XCIV, 8). But left to himself "a hunger seized [his] heart," as he reads his dead friend's letters:

So word by word, and line by line,  
The dead man touch'd me from the past,  
And all at once it seem'd at last  
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd  
About empyreal heights of thought,  
And came on that which is, and caught  
The deep pulsations of the world,

Aeonian music measuring out  
The steps of Time--the shocks of Chance--  
The blows of Death (XCV, 33-43).<sup>7</sup>

Even though Tennyson's trance vanished, and was "stricken through with doubt" (XCV, 44), and even though he recognized the difficulty of describing in words, or even of reaching "in memory that which [he] became" (XCV, 48), the experience, as we can feel even from the closing lines of this poem--on which East and West at dawn are seen "to broaden into boundless day"--leaves him in a new spirit of hope.

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<sup>7</sup>Tennyson's last official version of the poem substituted "the" (l.36) and "this" (l.37) for the more personal "his" of the original--an indication that Tennyson was indeed "stricken through with doubt" about his trance.

On another occasion (actually the night before the poet is to leave his old home), a dream vision of Hallam occurs to Tennyson: "I dream'd a vision of the dead," he writes (CIII, 3)--in which he sees a statue of one "which tho' veil'd was known to me" (CIII, 13). Then, accompanied by maidens of whom "one would chant the death of war, / And one would chant the history / Of that great race which is to be" (CIII, 33-35), the poet sails down a foaming river to a great ship on the deck of which appears "the man we loved" (CIII, 41), who invites them all to join him on his [Hallam's] journey. Without attempting to interpret too literally each detail of the dream vision, we may at least see in it a clear index of the newly attained state of hope Tennyson was experiencing. Surely the image of the journey over the sea indicates a new faith in immortality and a clear hope for the future of all mankind. What mainly "left [this] after-morn content" (CIII, 4) was the thought that Tennyson had again communed with Hallam. This mystical reunion not only strengthens his faith in an after-life, but it also renews his confidence in the progress of the human race. It further renews his own belief in a guiding power deriving from love which can conquer doubt.



The following two poems prepare us for the third and happier Christmas and New Year season, a season with a new faith and new life. The jubilant poem, "Ring out, wild bells" (CVI), expresses a significant spiritual change in the expectation of better times not only in Tennyson's life but also in his native country. Christmas stands now for new hope, for spiritual rebirth, instead of for Hallam's death.

In poem CVII, Tennyson celebrates his friend's birthday with good cheer "even as if he were by" (CVII, 20). And in poem CVIII we find the clearest statement of the poet's new resolve: "I will not eat my heart alone, / Nor feed with sighs the passing wind" (CVIII, 3-4), and:

I'll rather take what fruit may be  
Of sorrow under human skies:  
'Tis held that wisdom makes us wise,  
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee (CVIII, 13-16).

The next poems, continuing to develop the theme of wisdom, culminate in the poet's contrast of knowledge and wisdom. We are told that "she [knowledge] is earthly of the mind / But Wisdom heavenly of the soul" (CXIV, 21-22). In CXVIII, Tennyson clearly attempts to resolve his prior doubts about the course of Nature and about human immortality.

Most striking is a new tone of strengthened faith--faith in immortality (CXVIII, 4-7), faith in man's higher destiny on earth, if not elsewhere (CXVIII, 14-15), and the transcendent meaning of evolution for the individual's struggle here and now.

Arise and fly  
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;  
Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die (CXVIII, 25-28).

The strong imperative here strikes a tone which is a far cry from that of Tennyson's earlier "faint hope" or the "infant crying in the night." And in poem CXXIV, where Tennyson reaffirms his faith in God despite the evidence from Nature, the concluding stanzas consciously mark the progress he has made:

But that blind clamor made me wise;  
Then was I as a child that cries,  
But, crying, knows his father near (CXXIV, 18-20).

In poem CXXVI Tennyson answers his previous doubts as to whether love is "Creation's final law" (LVI, 14) and declares "Love is and was my lord and king" (CXXVI, 1). In the dark night a sentinel whispers "all is well" (CXXVI, 12). Just before he ends the elegy, Tennyson also invokes faith that social truths and changes

will occur (CXXVII, 5-6). His strengthened faith is reinforced by his new intuition:

I see in part  
That all, as in some piece of art,  
Is toil cooperant to an end (CXXVIII, 22-24).

The last part of the poem, the Epilogue, becomes an epithalamion on his sister Cicelia's marriage to Edmund Lushington, a common friend of Tennyson and Hallam (CXXXI, 25-72). Thus celebrating a profound change in his emotions and his "knowing all is well" (CXXVII, 20), the poem leads the bereaved Tennyson both to believe in the psychological improvement of the Victorian society and to trust in the reality of a universal God of Love. The turning point leading from doubt to this optimistic spiritual purification was attained through the inspiration by the mystic "communion with the dead" (XCIV, 4) while his "spirit [was] at peace with all" (XCIV, 8). After this communion, "East and West, without a breath, / Mix't their dim lights like life, and death, / To broaden into boundless day" (XCV, 62-64). In addition to this communion, Hallam's appearance (CIII) in the vision of a "veiled statue" and then as a "man on the deck" (CIII, 41) make Tennyson embrace humankind (CVIII).

With Tennyson's hard-won faith comes a new attitude toward knowledge. Whereas knowledge of this world before had led Tennyson to despair of a loving Divinity, he can now ask and respond, "Who loves not knowledge? . . . Let her work prevail" (CXIV, 1-4). Yet Tennyson's acceptance of knowledge is now tempered by his realization that knowledge must be guided by wisdom: "For she [knowledge] is earthly of the mind, / But wisdom heavenly of the soul" (CXIV, 21-22). What has changed in Tennyson is not his conception of the limitations of knowledge--he had always believed that science could not answer the essential problems posed by religion, "For knowledge is of things we see" (Prol., 22); nor is his belief new that knowledge might be used for evil purposes if cut off from faith:

Hold thou to the good, defining it well;  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark, and be  
Procuress to the Lords of Hell (LIII, 5-180).

What is new is a sense of personal conviction which knowledge could never refute or confirm that there is a Divine plan guiding humanity toward a higher state of being. It is this conviction which allows him to adopt, instead of fear and anguish, an almost paternalistic attitude toward

Knowledge: "What is she, cut off from love and faith, /  
But some wild Pallas from the brain / Of demons?" (CXIV,  
11-13) "Let her know her place; / She is the second, not  
the first" (CXIV, 15-16).

At the heart of his new faith is the belief that knowledge must serve the higher goals of humanity's evolution and show "That life is not an idle ore" (CXVIII) but "iron dug from central gloom," tempered by the suffering of humanity to "shape and use" with the wisdom born of that suffering. Above all, he believes man should and may "Move upward, working out the beast / And let the ape and tiger die" (CXVIII, 27-28). The end of it all Tennyson sees as (one far-off divine event, / To which the whole creation moves" (CXXXI, 143-144).

So both Kazantzakis' peddler's totem with the seven heads and Tennyson's In Memoriam start from a low spiritual stage and move the personae upward "on stepping-stones" to "higher things" (In Memoriam, I, 3-4; The Odyssey, Prol., 73). From this observation, demonstrated broadly by the summary analysis above, let us move to a more detailed analysis of the philosophical similarities of the two poems. We will reserve, as far as possible, a consideration of their differences for Chapter IV.

Although it is impossible to find a one-to-one correspondence between two poets of such diversity, we may, in general, find remarkable similarities in their poems; viz., the emphasis of both Odysseus (Kazantzakis) and Tennyson on life as a struggle to ascend spiritually; their nondogmatic conception of God as active and "creative;" their attitudes toward knowledge and intuition; their mysticism and views on the function of communication; their profound belief in evolution both as a biological and a spiritual phenomenon; and their concern for both individual and social progress.

Kazantzakis's Odysseus faces personal destruction consciously only in the middle of The Odyssey when his Ideal City is destroyed by an earthquake and when Temptation appears urging him to commit suicide. Tennyson starts his elegy with death. Both poets go on to cope with man's mortality by spiritual growth. Their anodyne was to create a metrical work offering peace, relief, even salvation, as composed words can revive the experiences of the past and finally express a sense of transcendence.

Both poems display similar patterns of movement from struggle, despair, and suffering to acceptance of

the hopeless hope, and even transcendence. Both poems, through spiritual growth, come to terms with and arrive at an acceptance of man's mortality. Likewise we may feel in both poems a sense of personal evolution toward a more harmonious balance of feeling and intellect, mind and soul. Each poem, for example, begins from Kazantzakis' Dionysian stage of spirit--where sentiment and feeling are in ascendance over reason and intellect (omitting the Propogue of In Memoriam, Tennyson's poem begins with black despair)--and each progresses toward a transcendence through mystical experience of the agonizing limitations of the intellect itself. Just as both poets found hope in the external notion of process leading toward ever-higher stages of being, so both poets reenact this process internally through their own self-overcoming.

A basic similarity in the works is the concern about the meaning of God. In The Odyssey the idea of God was explored in connection with several philosophies. Odysseus, as we have seen, rejects paganism and formal religion. As Richards puts it, "Kazantzakis is putting forth a concentrated effort to rediscover and reassert the important Christian qualities of primitive Christianity such as love, brotherhood, humility, and

self-renunciation."<sup>8</sup> Odysseus believes in a creative God which can change through man's deeds according to the circumstances. Therefore this God is called

Epaphus, the God of touch, who prefers flesh to shadow. . . . He even wants to turn the soul into body so that he can touch it. The most reliable and industrious of all the gods, who walks on earth, loves the earth, wishes to remake it "in his own image and after his likeness."<sup>9</sup>

Odysseus' God is, then, a very human God, and life is a battle in which man's spirit conquers his body and prepares him for perfection. The greater the struggle the more glorious the victory. Kazantzakis' struggle as well as Odysseus' is of epic proportions where "a mortal may work with One who is immortal, and . . . spirit--as much as is possible--may become more and more immortal."<sup>10</sup> Odysseus finally leaves this world with a smile and Love (XXIII, 1294-1315)--the value that remains in his voyage before he gives his symbolically weaponless, nude body to death.

Tennyson's God or salvation, as we see most clearly in The Idylls of the King, is also a god of

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<sup>8</sup>Richards, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, pp. 293-294.

<sup>10</sup>Friar, pp. xxiii-xxiv.



creativity. When the Knights of the Round Table in "The Holy Grail" withdraw from duty and their responsibilities in order to seek the Grail (i.e. spiritual perfection by ascetic pursuits rather than by service to the Round Table) what they effect in most instances is only personal and general corruption, and thus the failure of King Arthur's mission ensues. Their failure brings Arthur's death. Arthur believes that man generally serves God best if he deals with God's creation, especially with his fellow men, serving duty, as duty brings progress and salvation not only to the individual but to the community. Tennyson's god, in other words, is largely the god of creativity and not the spiritually contained object of ascetic contemplation, far from facts, and existing only in theory. As we shall see in In Memoriam, Tennyson was himself by no means immune to the purely visionary; like Arthur himself he had his visions, but not before "his work be done" ("The Holy Grail," 905). What Tennyson deplored was a self-absorption into some ideal of personal holiness which led to a disregard for others. So holiness concerning self-regard does not serve humanity as a whole but individuals only. On the contrary, when it appears as dedication "with strength and will to right the wrong'd" it serves God ("The Holy Grail," 309-310).

As was Kazantzakis', Tennyson's attitude toward religion was nondogmatic. Above all, Tennyson saw religion as a means of serving mankind. His distaste for ritual, for Roman Catholicism, and even for Christian asceticism are explained by Hoxie Neale Fairchild as being due to his strong belief that they diverted one from the task of serving human justice.<sup>11</sup>

Fairchild's points are well-taken. Tennyson's approach to faith in a benevolent creator and providential guide was a problematic one. The difficulty he grappled with in In Memoriam was precisely how one can know God. In particular, as Ralph B. Crum suggests, Tennyson faced the problem that "His understanding of the scientific currents of the time was forcing upon him the painful question whether Nature as revealed in science was not utterly opposed to the idea of a benevolent and just God."<sup>12</sup> For Tennyson any argument for the existence and benevolence of God which derives from the "design" of Nature was unconvincing: "I found Him not in world or sun, / Or eagles's

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<sup>11</sup>Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Christianity and Romanticism in the Victorian Era in Religious Trends in English Poetry, 6 Vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957) IV, 104-105.

<sup>12</sup>Ralph B. Crum, Scientific Thought in Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 172.

wing, or insect's eye" (CXXIV, 5-6). On the contrary, whatever "purpose" one might find in Nature would seem hostile to God's, a fact that leads Tennyson to ask, "Are God and Nature then at strife / That Nature lends such evil dreams?" (LV, 5-6) But even in the following poem Tennyson recognizes that Nature does not care for "the type," not even for the species of man. Indeed man, who "trusted God was love indeed / And love Creation's final law" (LVI, 13-14), is a fantastic deviant from the norm of "Nature, red in tooth and claws" (LVI, 15). Furthermore, Tennyson suggests that any other "proofs" of God's existence are merely "petty cobwebs we have spun" (CXXIV, 8). In short, Tennyson finds little reassurance in reason or science; on the contrary, the evidence from Nature only leads him to further doubt.

In the midst of this impasse, Tennyson repeatedly insists on the limitations of knowledge concerning God and immortality and suggests that such matters are only apprehensible through faith. Even in the positively toned Prologue of In Memoriam he speaks of God,

Whom we, that have not seen thy [God's] face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing when we cannot prove . . . (I, 2-4).

And again, he declares, "We have but faith we cannot know" (Prol., 21). E. Hershey Sneath, supporting our argument, writes,

In the Prologue to In Memoriam which was written practically after the rest of the poem was completed, and which, in a sense, seems to sum up his belief after many years of struggle with doubt, he says: there is a domain of knowledge and a domain of faith.<sup>13</sup>

Such assertions have seemed to more than one modern reader to be merely confusions, signs of failure, or evasions. Yet throughout In Memoriam there is a strong current of personal conviction or "internal evidence," to use Fairchild's phrase,<sup>14</sup> on which Tennyson grounded his faith.

A sense of inner certainty that we associate with "intuition" more than abstract "faith," or a merely intellectual commitment to an idea, is seen, for example, in lines such as these:

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep  
I heard a voice, "believe no more,"  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That trumbled in the Godless deep;

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<sup>13</sup>E. Hershey Sneath, The Mind of Tennyson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>Fairchild, p. 103.

A warmth within the breast would melt  
 The freezing reason's colder part,  
 And like a man in wrath the heart  
 Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt" (CXXIV, 9-16).

"Who loves not knowledge?" (CXIV, 1). Tennyson asks in In Memoriam. The right answer would be immediately given by Tantalus, Odysseus' first fate. But Odysseus, a little before he dies, declares: "My brains have filled with knowledge, my wide hands with deeds, / and to this day my heart's remained bold, joyous, warm, / and loves all things, both life and death, but with no trust" (XXII, 1341-44). Odysseus thus admits that he has obtained knowledge about life, but this knowledge he has obtained is no more than "A beam in darkness."

Kazantzakis, according to Bien, accepted the Kantian distinction between "phenomena" and "noumena" and felt that the latter could be apprehended only through the Bergsonian "intuition."<sup>15</sup> We find a parallel in Tennyson's distinction between the realm of knowledge and the realm of faith or, indeed, "intuition."

In the Prologue of In Memoriam Tennyson believes the mind or knowledge will be reconciled with the soul or wisdom in order to harmonize life and make it "a music as before, / But vaster" (Prolog., 29-30). He also hopes

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<sup>15</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 23.

he has become wiser about the meaning of life and death through vision. For he has come to believe that neither reason nor science, nor religion as science, can give a complete answer to his questions about eternity (Poem CXIV).

So both works accept the value of knowledge, but neither accepts the view that knowledge creates wisdom. Knowledge for Tennyson is limited in value as a guide; for knowledge is "of things we see" (Prol., 22), and "on her forehead sits a fire" (CXIV, 5). Also, "She cannot fight the fear of death" (CXIV, 10). Therefore "She is the second, not the first" (CXIV, 16), and "she is earthly of the mind, / But wisdom heavenly of the soul" (CXIV, 21-22).

Therefore, both Kazantzakis' hero and Tennyson himself accept knowledge as it contributes to wisdom but neither expects it to answer all questions. Therefore, when Tennyson says, "Let knowledge grow from more to more" (Prol., 23-25), he conceives knowledge to be a series of bad and good experiences not able to solve man's problems and confusions in this life, but able to contribute to progress in this life. That is the reason Tennyson invokes the help of God, "And in thy wisdom make me wise" (Prol., 43). Knowledge enriches man's life and leads man to a

mere exploration of but not to knowledge of immortality. Only "the heart" can do that. On the other hand, it is by no means implied that Kazantzakis shared the same beliefs as Tennyson in regard to the "noumenal" world, or in regard to God, immortality, divine love, etc. These differences will be explored in Chapter IV. What the two did share was the conception that rationally derived knowledge is limited to the phenomenal world and that non-rational perception is an essential supplement in the direction of life.

The relation of language to knowledge is fully discussed both in Kazantzakis' The Odyssey and in Tennyson's In Memoriam. Tennyson as we have seen, thinks that only "lesser griefs" can be expressed through words as words cannot substitute for feelings and perceptions. Language is a problem, as it does not help man to communicate with his emotions or with the spirits of the dead which may exist somewhere else. Therefore, Tennyson says of his relation with the spirit of Hallam: "But in dear words of human speech / we two communicate no more" (LXXXV, 83-84). Language, to Tennyson, is, however, capable of creating a tragic joy very much like that of Prince Elias in The Odyssey, who is able to sing, and make

his lyre sing his tragedy only after he has lost his sons. Tennyson with "grass and soil" makes up a pipe with which he sings a song bringing a relief to him as it expresses lamentation and ultimately optimism.

Language may be also a cry expressing confusion, pathos, strong emotions of fear of being lost in darkness like a child at a stage of confusion, a child who is looking for light to enlighten his inner world, thoughts, fears, and anguish and to lead him to a better life, a life which will give him a "gleam" to follow or a flame of wisdom and make him able to find a relief and some answer to the tantalizing uncertainty besetting him. Such a cry was Tennyson's asking:

But what am I?  
 An infant crying in the night;  
 An infant crying for the light,  
 And with no language but a cry (LIV, 17-20).

This means of communication--language--serves man inadequately since psychic and emotional truths cannot be analyzed and communicated in language completely. In fact, words may be complemented by facial expressions, by silence, or by a smile and thus attain a mystical and intuitive power of communication which cannot be explained by the mind. This happens in The Odyssey when Odysseus



communes with the inspiring god on the African mountain. Also, there is a mystical communication when Odysseus, with the sight only, accomplishes a friendship with the hungry wolf in the jungle. It is in this respect that the vividly imaginative mythopoesis of Kazantzakis' epic style may best be recognized as a supplementary tool to the more personal and abstract style of Tennyson's elegy. Tennyson uses the "fond hands" as an instance of communication with the statue and vision in In Memoriam.

Tennyson's opinion on problems concerning the value of words is clear when he says:

I sometimes hold it half a sin  
To put in words the grief I feel:  
For words, like Nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
A use in measured language lies . . . (V, 106).

But beyond what we call "faith" or "intuition" there is in In Memoriam Tennyson's description of the experience in verse XCV, an experience which most critics called "mystical." As Tennyson reads Hallam's letters,

So word by word, and line by line,  
The dead man touch'd me from the past,  
And all at once it seemed at last  
The living soul was flashed on mine (XCV, 33-37).

According to Jerome Hamilton Buckley, this experience, the crucial turning point in In Memoriam,

has for the poet a profound religious implication. Lifted through and beyond self-consciousness, his individual spirit attains a brief communion with universal Spirit; "what I am" for the moment beholds "what is."<sup>16</sup>

Though the trance is eventually "stricken thro' with doubt" and the poet cannot sustain the vision, this experience, Buckley thinks, gives Tennyson the inward "certitude that 'science' could not establish and therefore cannot destroy."<sup>17</sup> Epistemology, therefore, as Bien puts it with reference to Kazantzakis, cannot find solutions always through the mind;<sup>18</sup> so in this case, for Tennyson as for Kazantzakis, only the heart can give an answer to a question through a vision, or a cry, or a muse, or memory, or even a dream.

A belief in progress or evolution in life is necessary for a commitment to a struggle for improvement or advancement in man's life or in the life of the whole

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<sup>16</sup>Buckley, p. 124.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>18</sup>Bien, Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 23.

world. Man struggles in order to attain the last stage of perfection. The feeling for the creative force of life is profound in both works. Odysseus strives for his own spiritual development as well as for several social, political, and ethical improvements. Tennyson fights in In Memoriam to grasp a truth, and so he fights for his own spiritual advancement as well as for the whole universe. We noticed earlier how deeply Tennyson was troubled by his vision of the cruelty and wastefulness of Nature as revealed to him by his readings in science. Much of Tennyson's trouble came with his reading Sir Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology from its demonstration of the enormous changes the earth has undergone through the slow influences of wind and water and, especially from its demonstration of the previous extinction of species.<sup>19</sup> All of this shook to the depths, not just Tennyson's belief in a benevolent God, but more especially his hope for personal immortality. If Nature cares so little even for "the type," how improbable seems any notion of the importance of

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<sup>19</sup>Eleanor B. Mattes, "The Challenge of Geology to Belief in Immortality and a God of Love," in In Memoriam: Alfred Lord Tennyson, ed. H. Ross (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 120-126.

the individual life. We have already seen, especially in poem LVI, just how much Tennyson was troubled.

Tennyson partially resolved this dilemma with a belief in a "forward moving design controlling the evolutionary process."<sup>20</sup> If there is a purpose behind the apparent random cruelty of Nature, and Tennyson clings fast to such a hope, it would be enough to reconcile men to their place in the large scheme of things. Not only is there the comfort of universal law--"For nothing is that errs from law"--but also the insistent promise of some purpose behind the law: "I see in part / That all, as in some piece of art, / Is toil cooperant to an end" (CXXVIII, 22-24).

According to Eleanor B. Mattes, Tennyson genuinely felt that he had found scientific justification for this optimistic view, particularly in the work Vestiges of Creation by Robert Chambers.<sup>21</sup> For although Chambers' work provided no reassurance of the survival of man as a

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<sup>20</sup>Ryals, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup>Eleanor B. Mattes, "Further Reassurances in Herschel's Natural Philosophy and Chambers' Vestiges of Creation," in In Memoriam: Alfred Lord Tennyson, ed. H. Ross (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1973), p. 131.

species, it did suggest, according to Mattes, "a meaning and purpose underlying the seemingly ruthless sweep of development" in the grand process of organic development toward a "nobler type of humanity."<sup>22</sup> It would be bold to suggest that Tennyson was intellectually convinced by Chamber's work, for we have seen already how sceptical he remained in regard to deriving knowledge of God's benevolence from Nature. And as Mattes points out, even Tennyson's contemporaries were able to see little logical connection in Chambers' leap from the idea of development to that of progress or God's benevolence.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it would be more consistent with the whole effect of In Memoriam to say that in Chambers' work Tennyson found exciting scientific evidence for what he most fervently needed to believe, but that in the final analysis he believed because he had "felt."

Part of that belief was that man can "move upward, working out the beast" (CXVIII, 28), toward a "crowning race" that will be "no longer half-akin to brute" (CXXXI, 133). And Tennyson seems even to imply that the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

"Christ that is to be," the superior man toward whom evolution advances, is the "one far-off divine event / To which the whole creation moves" (CXXXI, 143-144). Moreover, that particularly satisfied the poet's original need to find meaning in the death of Hallam:

An ideal man Hallam, who is closely identified with Christ, becomes the heroic redeemer, "the noble type," who, through furthering moral development, will save mankind from extinction. "Appearing ere the times were ripe" (Epilogue), Hallam is that "herald of a higher race" (CXVIII) who will lead mankind to a perfect state of existence.<sup>24</sup>

Finally Tennyson finds even in the evolutionary process the intimation of a resolution of what is perhaps his most important concern--the continuance of the individual spirit after death (but here, precisely, he takes an evolutionary step beyond Kazantzakis' naturalism):

Eternal process moving on,  
From state to state the spirit walks;  
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,  
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one (LXXXII, 5-8).

Just as Tennyson used the idea of process to resolve his doubts concerning man's place in the universe, so, as William R. Rutland points out, the idea figures in

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<sup>24</sup>Ryals, p. 72.

In Memoriam as "the spiritual evolutionary process in the life of an individual."<sup>25</sup> This evolutionary process is found in both spiritual odysseys and refers to the ape as man's ancestor. The fact that man is a descendent of the animalistic world is not bad since through struggle and "self-reverence" or discipline ("Oenone"), he can improve himself and his society. This idea is clear in Tennyson's injunction to man to "Move upward, working out the beast" (CVIII, 27).

Man evolved to be the king of the earth and of all beings, and the fact that he fares no differently from the rest of the animals fighting in a jungle upsets Tennyson and Kazantzakis. Man reaches the point of depression when, oppressed by the sense of mutability and time, he asks himself, "What fame is left for human deeds / In endless age?" only to conclude: "It rests with God" (LXXIII, 11-12). Man returns to dust from which he was created as the other animals do, even though there are "So many worlds, so much to do, / So little done" (LXXIII, 1-2). Man fights to ascend the spiritual scale, but as

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<sup>25</sup>William R. Rutland, "Tennyson and the Theory of Evolution," in Essays and Studies, collected by A. Esdaile, XXVI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 27.

he is condemned to belong rather to the top of the animalistic world than to the bottom of the angelic world in the chain of being, he can seldom accomplish perfection.

So man's nature can improve from working on the lower instinctual stage and achieving a higher stage through a spiritual struggle. The struggle is at once a struggle of the individual for spiritual growth and a struggle of the species toward a higher stage of evolution. For Tennyson, the significance of individual higher types such as Arthur Hallam lies in their heroic ability to lead and inspire others in the fight for mankind's advancement.

King Arthur in "The Coming of Arthur" in The Idylls fights against his unsettled kingdom, killing men who did not differ from beasts in their deeds, in order to bring peacefulness and better organization to his people. Such, as we know, was Odysseus's mission, too, in clearing up his domestic surroundings and the corrupted societies of Knossos. Thus both heroes present the higher man (Kazantzakis' superman) fighting for excellence and improvement. Of course neither Tennyson nor Kazantzakis believed that there is an automatic, straight-line of progress in human society or even in the species. Even



as Odysseus' Ideal City is destroyed by natural catastrophe, Arthur's kingdom (in the Idylls) is ruined by human failure. Yet both poets see the immense course of natural history as leading, however slowly, toward the production of higher forms of being. And it is precisely their realization of the role humanity must play in this development which leads them to affirm the necessity of heroic leadership.

Tennyson in In-Memoriam presents the struggle as his own when he says that "Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death" (CXX, 4) and through this struggle he is able to "Move upward, working out the beast" (CXIII, 27)--which means that man can "rise from high to higher, / As mounts the heaven-ward altar-fire, / As flies the lighter thro' the grass" (XLI, 3-5), but only after a strife. Finally, through the mystical vision, he accepts the view "That we may lift [ourselves] from out of dust" after we have cried for light and struggled to achieve it:

No, like a child in doubt and fear,  
 But that blind clamor made me wise;  
 Then was I as a child that cries,  
 But, crying, knows his father near (CXXIII, 17-20).

Nature is God's creation; traditionally it was supposed to offer shelter and beauty to man. Tennyson was unable to give an answer to the paradox of Nature and God being in strife. The paradox also vexed Kazantzakis. The more both writers explore the symbols of Nature the more perplexed they become as they cannot interpret them to harmonize a fatherly God and Nature. Odysseus finally accepts Nature's caprices with a smile, no fear, and no hope; Tennyson accepts them with faint trust and hope. The concept of spiritual evolution was important to both Tennyson and Kazantzakis. The view that Nature seems to be evolving towards a "higher race" of man suggests to Tennyson a divine meaning and purpose at work in the world giving significance to the spiritual ideals of men like himself and Hallam. The evolutionary development of Odysseus leads him to higher spiritual powers and joy in life--a possibility for meaningful life for all men.

We have noted already, however, that epistemologically Kazantzakis accepted the Kantian distinction between "noumena" and "phenomena" and quite clearly believed that the intellect is limited to knowledge of the latter. As for reality beyond the phenomenal world, Kazantzakis--like Tennyson--seems again and again in The

Odyssey to rely on a sort of intuition, an inner prompting he calls the "Outcry" for guidance in his life. As for the Odyssey's making any mystical revelation of the sort Tennyson experienced--if it is possible to distinguish between "intuition" and mystic insight--the difficulty is of course that The Odyssey is not a literal, personal record of experience. Yet it is equally difficult to understand how else we might interpret, for example, Odysseus' communion with God on the mountain except in terms of the possibility of an extraordinary noetic experience. And The Odyssey is filled with such glimmerings from "behind the veil"--Odysseus' conversation with the leopard, his talk with Death when Death appears after the destruction of his Ideal City, his confrontation with the wolf in the jungle, to name only a few events. Yet, it would be far from the spirit of The Odyssey to suggest that Kazantzakis is engaged in otherworldly contemplation; Nietzsche's injunction, "Remain true to the earth!" comes much closer to the spirit of the poem. God remains a mystery, even though one might see in the Odyssey's last line an implication of continuance: "Forward, my lads, sail on, for Death's breeze blows in a fair wind!" (XXIV, 1396)

There remains to be discussed one more basic similarity between their concern for social progress, for a more just society, and for the elimination of man's inhumanity toward his brothers. Tennyson's most fervent hopes for such progress were expressed in In Memoriam in poem CVI, where he welcomes the bells of the new year:

Ring out the feud of rich and poor;  
Ring in redress to all mankind. (11-12)

Ring in the nobler modes of life  
With sweeter manners purer laws. (15-16)

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times, (17-18)

Ring in the common love of good. (24)

Ring out the narrowing lust of gold; (26)

Ring out the darkness of the land  
Ring in the Christ that is to be. (31-32)

Like Tennyson, Kazantzakis was passionately concerned for his fellowmen and felt intensely the duty to help alleviate poverty and oppression. The Odyssey, for all the contradictions of its hero, is permeated by a sense of human misery and pain. So for example, in Crete, Odysseus, horrified by the conditions of the slaves and the cruelty of the archons, plots the destruction of Knossos and afterwards advises Hardihood to free the slaves

and distribute the land. Likewise, it is from a fierce desire to establish the good life that Odysseus plans his Ideal City.

We have remarked that neither Kazantzakis nor Tennyson was blindly optimistic. Tennyson, even though he believed in the ultimate moral improvement of man, realized the ever-present possibility of "reeling back into the beast." And Kazantzakis, with his dialectic of tragic struggle, at one point has his Odysseus declare: "'If I could choose what gods to carry on all my ships, / I'd choose both War and Hunger, that fierce, fruitful pair!'" (IX, 1001-1002) Odysseus says this not only because he realizes that the greatest enemy of progress is comfort and security but because only out of the crucible of suffering and strife can true compassion come.

Both works are creative writings which present a spiritual journey of man in the life he is leading. He starts his life with the lower instinctive nature, that of animalistic desires and physical deeds, and through suffering and strife, he progresses in developing a higher nature; and through a vision transcending the intellect, through the cultivation of self-control, self-reverence, "working out the beast," mankind in general

and individuals in particular may accomplish the "higher step." Tennyson's emotional struggle in In Memoriam progressed from despair and loss to a more optimistic view of life which, although it had started with a sad Christmas and a funeral, ends with a New Year, new birth, and joyful bells expecting Cicelia's baby to inform humanity about the afterlife with a better certainty. And as Ryals puts it, In Memoriam, "was far more optimistic about the fate of the human race than he [Tennyson] himself was."<sup>26</sup> This optimism is similar to that in The Odyssey as the main heroes in both works attain perfection through strife and evolution while rejecting any dogmas in religion and ethics. They both accept that the mind is limited and that intuitive impulse may lead man to a specific goal in life. This impulse is what Tennyson calls "I felt" and what Odysseus calls the "Outcry." Each hides within himself the experience of mysticism.

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<sup>26</sup>Ryals, p. 73.

## C H A P T E R     I V

### CONTRASTS IN THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE ODYSSEY: A MODERN SEQUEL AND IN MEMORIAM

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Kazantzakis and Tennyson shared important philosophical similarities. At the heart of both of their thought, as we have explored it in The Odyssey and in In Memoriam, is the concept of an evolutionary force, a creative force that is leading humanity toward ever higher, more spiritual states of being. And through these beliefs, both found transcendent significance for the individual in his attempt to overcome suffering, loss, and even the fear of death. Yet there remain important differences between the two, as much ideological as temperamental. This chapter will explore the most important of these, namely, their differing conceptions of God and immortality, transcendence, love, sensuality, and asceticism; and these differences, in turn, will be seen in the light of a more fundamental divergence of value between the two poets, namely, love versus freedom.

We have noted that Kazantzakis and Tennyson accepted the limitations of knowledge and reason, and

gave priority to "intuition" in regard to knowledge of what, in Kantian terms, is the realm of "noumena." Yet from this similar epistemological standpoint, Kazantzakis and Tennyson arrived at quite different positions concerning the question of God and immortality. In sharp contrast to Kazantzakis, who took no such steps, Tennyson, on the basis of his "internal evidence," went on to affirm the existence of a God of love and a belief in immortality.

Fairchild has argued that Tennyson felt, above all, the need of two essential beliefs: belief in the survival of the individual after death; and belief in a loving God who insures personal immortality.<sup>1</sup> The death of Hallam brought into immediate focus these two needs for Tennyson, since the thought that a beloved one can die and cease utterly to exist is insupportable. Given the fact of love, Tennyson derives God and immortality as necessary to satisfy the "demands of the human race."<sup>2</sup>

My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for ever more,  
Else, earth is darkness at the core  
And dust and ashes all that is . . . (XXXIV, 1-4).

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<sup>1</sup>Fairchild, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 118.



Sir Charles Tennyson also sees in In Memoriam the primary need for a belief in immortality. "The main theme of In Memoriam is the possibility of a life--or continued existence of the human spirit--after human death," he affirms, and the question "thus links itself with still more fundamental problems--for example that of the Divine guidance of the universe."<sup>3</sup> We trust, says the poet,

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete (LIV, 4-8).

Above all then, to Tennyson, God must be a God of love, or rather, as Fairchild puts it, "Tennyson holds that Love is God rather than that God is Love."<sup>4</sup> Victorians had doubts about this God, as they believed in Him through faith only and not through any rational proof (Prol., 1-4). But Tennyson asserts that "Love is and was [his] lord and king" (CXXVI, 1), Lazarus' uncommunicativeness about God, immortality, and man's purpose in life to the contrary. That Tennyson assumed that God, if He

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<sup>3</sup>Sir Charles Tennyson, Six Tennyson Essays (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1954), pp. 83-84.

<sup>4</sup>Fairchild, p. 103.

exists, must be a God of love is perhaps best indicated in those very lines which expressed his gravest doubts: "Are God and Nature then at strife / That Nature lends such evil dreams?" (LV, 5) In the face of the cruel indifference of Nature toward human love, Tennyson at no point ever suggests that God Himself, as opposed to Nature, might be responsible for the imperfection of this world, although this is clearly a logical alternative. That Tennyson saw no logical solution to his problem, we have seen; and we have traced his progress from doubt and despair to the affirmation of faith in a Divine Guidance accessible only to man's suprarational faculties. The heart of this faith was in his belief--a teleological imperative for him--that no individual life shall be "cast as rubbish to the void, / When God hath made the pile complete " (LIV, 7-8).

These two beliefs--articles of faith, rather, for Tennyson--are in sharp contrast to Kazantzakis' theology as it is embodied in The Odyssey. For even though he shared with Tennyson a mistrust of rational modes of arriving at any knowledge beyond that of the "phenomenal" world, Kazantzakis clearly did not arrive at the same results as Tennyson in regard to either God or immortality.

For Kazantzakis, as Kimon Friar suggests, God is élan vital itself--the unceasing struggle of life to liberate itself into pure spirit.<sup>5</sup> God, as much as man, is Himself involved in a ceaseless metamorphosis toward liberation. So it is that in different epochs, in different classes, God takes on different forms--often moribund, often vital, but always as much dependent on man as man is on Him. Thus it is that one of Odysseus' most common epithets in The Odyssey is "god-slayer;" at the same time, he is a man in quest of God, for God is the "labyrinthine quest deep in the mind of man." Pandelis Prevelakis expressed Kazantzakis' conception of God in The Odyssey as follows:

Odysseus himself names God the "inconceivable, invincible Breath" which draws upward men and peoples, plants and beasts, gods and demons . . . . God's essence is the unceasing struggle. God, however, is not almighty: God's comrade and fellow-fighter is man. Whatever a man undertakes, so long as he undertakes it with heart and soul, "liberates" God. God is imprisoned in every particle of matter, is in peril in every doubtful battle . . . . The forms of God cannot be numbered. Whatever springs from nothingness to life, whatever is whirled upward, is inhabited by God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xxi.

<sup>6</sup>Prevalakis, pp. 155-156.

Odysseus himself, eternal rebel, never remains satisfied with a static conception of God--and he never treats God as a transcendent Being who might "save" Odysseus. After the destruction of the Ideal City, Odysseus declares:

"No master God exists, no virtue, no just law, / no punishment in Hades, no reward in Heaven" (XVI, 1241-5). And later, he reviles those who think they have found God--even those who seek God--because they have not realized that "by God is meant to hunt God through the empty air" (XVIII, 1017).<sup>7</sup>

Though some people might object to a notion of God which admittedly seems contradictory, our point here is simply to show how far removed Kazantzakian theology is from Tennyson's. God, to Kazantzakis, is not a God of love; He is a God of struggle and challenge. Nor is He, somehow, "beyond" the processes of natural evolution; He is, if not that process itself, Himself in the process

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<sup>7</sup>The variety and frequency of Kazantzakis' use of the word "God" is, however, remarkable. Indeed, we might define Kazantzakis' Odyssey as a spiritual odyssey in search of God. Another clue perhaps in Kazantzakis framing the work between invocations to the Sun-God in which the "heavy soul, freed of its flesh, / shall like a flame serene ascend and fade" (Prologue, 29-30).

of evolving. And the final law of creation is not "love," but the struggle for liberation from the material. This liberation does not imply any attempt at suicide. On the contrary, Kazantzakis' attitude toward it suggests his holding to a purpose of life beyond liberating of spirit.

Concerning immortality, as well, Kazantzakis--or rather his hero Odysseus--avoided taking the "leap of faith" as Tennyson did. It may be that Kazantzakis, under Bergson's influence, believed in the immortality of the "life-instinct" itself, beyond its individual forms. But as for personal immortality, there is no evidence from The Odyssey to suggest that Kazantzakis, seriously entertained the possibility. One is tempted to believe that perhaps it was only one more "rotten Hope" to Kazantzakis, the need for which man must overcome if he wants to face death bravely; but Kazantzakis is strangely silent on the subject, although it may be possible to see in the closing line an allusion to continuance after death.

Both Tennyson and Kazantzakis found a kind of transcendence through the concept of evolution, but we must be careful to stress the following differences.

In the case of Tennyson, who was always sensitive to the scientific theories of his time, God is the guiding principle behind and beyond the enormous process of natural evolution. In negative terms, God is that Being without Whom the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death is meaningless. To Tennyson, the scientific evidence of an evolutionary "progress" toward ever-higher forms of life not only seemed to him confirmatory evidence for his faith in divine guidance; it also allowed him to place in perspective the suffering and death of every individual--all contribute to the spiritual advancement of mankind. In this perspective, suffering gives meaning to life, which is not as "idle ore,"

But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,  
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use.

(CXVIII, 21-25)

This is what we mean by "transcendence" in relation to Tennyson: the transcendence of knowledge through faith; the acquisition of wisdom through sorrow; and the ability thereby to give cosmic significance to the suffering and death of individuals. It is the function of the poet-seer and of literature to point the way.

But when we speak of the kind of transcendence Kazantzakis achieved, we are on quite different grounds. Nowhere is there the promise of a final reward, of immortality, or the consolation of a God of love. For God is Himself, as we have seen, intimately involved in the evolutionary struggle toward liberated spirit. This is the extent, or almost the extent, of Kazantzakian intuition, for we should add that there is an openness to non-doctrinaire mystic humilities ever-present in his work.

This acceptance of eternal struggle brought Kazantzakis transcendence as well, but transcendence of a clearly different sort. Whereas Tennyson's faith in a loving God might have resolved an emotional need for certitude which he could not satisfy intellectually, Kazantzakis' intuited God of élan vital--which by its very nature breaks all barriers in its ceaseless upward thrust--this God allowed Kazantzakis to embrace uncertainty itself. God remains a "labyrinthine quest deep in the mind." Kazantzakis's God (if indeed that is the word for it) also allowed him to transcend, and resolve in a higher synthesis, the eternal antinomies of peace and war, creation and destruction, and to embrace the necessity of eternal struggle, discord, and even the hopelessness itself of

the "quest." For Kazantzakis, "transcendence" is not faith in God's love, or in personal immortality; it is the "tragic joy" of a courageous man who faces death and failure without blinking, who accepts his fate even as he struggles against it, self-sufficiently. Kazantzakis, envisages no "otherworldly" consolations; he remains "true to the earth."

This contrasting attitude may also be seen in their respective attitudes toward love. We have already seen how, for Tennyson, the primary fact of love (his love for Hallam) led him to speculate on immortality. For Tennyson, Love itself is almost an argument against death as a finality: "If Death were seen / At first as Death, Love had not been" (XXXV, 18-19). Love, that is, its highest expression on earth and not its "coarse Satyr-shape," is for Tennyson an image of "divine" love. Love is the "strong son of God" and creation's "final law." It is clear enough that Tennyson uses love in a sense far different from sexual love. It is, rather, exemplified by his Platonic friendship with Hallam and by the sense of Christian brotherhood which Hallam himself embodied. But more to the point, it seems to me, is how Tennyson hints that love is meaningless without immortality; if death



is final, "Twere hardly worth my while to choose / Of things all mortal" (XXXIV, 10-11). For Tennyson, the very existence of Love itself is an argument for immortality: "If Death were seen / At First as Death, Love had not been," (XXXV, 18-19) or would, he continues, have been confined to mere sensual dissolution. Tennyson here seems whether consciously or not, to have accepted that idea first conceived in Plato's Symposium; compare the priestess Diotima's lecture to Socrates on the nature of eros:

And why all this longing for propagation? Because this is the one deathless and eternal element in our mortality. And since we have agreed that the lover longs for the good to be his own forever, it follows that we are bound to long for immortality as well as for the good--which is to say that Love [eros] is a longing for immortality.<sup>B</sup>

This passage suggests that the final, ultimate object of eros is immortality--in which case, it can be argued, we can never "truly," i.e., psychologically, accept the belief that we die or that loved ones die. At any rate, for Tennyson, Love is the primary psychological fact which argues against the finality of death.

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<sup>B</sup>The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns with Introduction and Prefatory Notes and translated by Michael C. Joyce (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), p. 559.

All of this is foreign to Kazantzakis, and not only because he refused the support of a God of Love, as we have seen. For one thing, although Kazantzakis shared Tennyson's love of humanity and the sense of brotherhood with his fellow man, he by no means made a strict distinction between lust and love. Kazantzakis saw clearly that the procreative urge of the vital life-force finds one of its strongest forms in the sexual attraction between humans. And sensuality, for Odysseus, is one of the necessary stages of growth toward higher spirituality. The "coarse Satyr-shape" of human sexuality, in his view, is as real and necessary for human growth as is asceticism. It is only when sensuality becomes a bondage, a lazy habit of the spirit, or to use Tennyson's phrase, "mere fellowship of sluggish moods" (XXXV, 21) that Kazantzakis rejects it as decadent. The difference between the two is, however, more than one of tone and emphasis. Tennyson was of course no prude; and Kazantzakis, as we shall see, has his hero entirely renounce sexual love. Tennyson did fear unbridled passions and by no means thought impulsive nature man's best guide. And Kazantzakis's work does exhibit a nihilistic license for passions, apparently in the philosophic faith that exhausting passions is good per se, however destructive of

order, and leads naturally to transcendent asceticism and joy. The more important point is in their attitude toward death. Kazantzakis, far from seeing Death as an argument against Love, sees Death as "the salt that gives to Life its tasty sting!" (XVIII, 912) Death, in this light, is a positive value, since it gives value to life.

The subject of love and death leads us to another remarkable difference between the poets: their attitude toward asceticism. Asceticism, one of the stages on the symbolic totem that man comes through in order to attain perfection, Kazantzakis sees as bringing balance in man's active and creative life because it makes the body obey the spirit.<sup>9</sup> It is one of the "roads" in man's mortal life which prepares man for spiritual ascendancy in the "higher" stages of development of soul and, in the more active, for a new creativity and inspiration, even though it is a sacrifice as far as the physical desires are concerned. But as man cannot always be a Dionysian, because this nature in man covers only part of his personality, he needs, in order to find spiritual peace, a remote refuge from temptations. Odysseus became an ascetic several

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<sup>9</sup>Friar, "Introduction," p. xxiii.

times in The Odyssey. In order to formulate his laws, he ascends a high mountain where he is alone and gets inspiration from the god of knowledge. Also, he withdraws from womankind and later from all human beings before he reaches the last head of the totem--the head of the amorphous flame. At this last stage he is remote from people, thoughtful, full of memories and dreams. During a long stage of his later life (XV--to the end) he is the "famous ascetic." It is the stage that prepares man's spirit for the final refinement.

The difference in Tennyson's and Kazantzakis' views on asceticism is not only remarkable, but it is surprising, too, because of the nature of the poets. Kazantzakis, a poet preeminently appreciative of man's sensual side, sees asceticism as a necessary stage (indeed, one of the highest) in man's spiritual ascent. On the other hand, Tennyson, by instinct a contemplative, even mystical poet, as we have seen, finds the strongest grounds for mistrusting asceticism and the search for a merely personal purity. Perhaps the difference stems from Kazantzakis' being strongly influenced by Nietzsche, who believes man's first duty is to himself qua individual, regardless of the social consequences of his actions.

Tennyson, on the other hand, mistrusted the ascetic impulse precisely because he placed more emphasis on man as a member of the family of man--as a Victorian social animal bound by bonds of love and responsibility first of all to others. In asceticism, he saw a force at least potentially destructive of these social bonds, as it brings holiness to few people --to monads only. The Nun and Galahad alone in the entire Round Table in "The Holy Grail" attained a spiritual personal perfection through a mystical and intuitive transcendence; the other members of Arthur's society could not manage such a holiness and therefore brought the final catastrophe to the kingdom because of their self-indulgence and their withdrawal from duty. Arthur believes men serve God when they are altruists, good fighters in this life, devoted to duty and creativity (realizing the Christian ideals in this life) and so serving humanity and consequently God, as God is found in men and progress. But as this creativity cannot be accomplished through asceticism, Tennyson rejects the self-regarding holiness as static. We said the difference is remarkable, but we should add that it is one of emphasis. For as we have seen, Kazantzakis celebrated the virtues of brotherhood, of humility, and of charity, while Tennyson saw the necessity of an "ideal" to guide men toward self-improvement.

This brings us to a final contrast between the two poets, perhaps implicit in what has gone before. If we imaginatively posed to Kazantzakis and Tennyson the question: What do you believe man most deeply desires? What is his most basic urge? I think Tennyson would state his answer in terms of love; and Kazantzakis, in terms of freedom. For Tennyson, love in its highest manifestations is the foundation of an ordered and just society and almost proof in itself of man's promise of immortality. It is the source of our feelings of duty to our fellow men as well as the motive force of self-development. It is the example of his beloved Hallam which Tennyson continually keeps before himself in his poem: Love leads us to emulate the beloved and rise to higher things.

For Kazantzakis' Odysseus, on the other hand, the overwhelming desire for freedom--Kazantzakis clearly faces this--is potentially destructive of all social bonds, personal relationships, even of entire societies. This continual restless thrusting forward moves Odysseus to leave his family, his wife, his property. It moves him to overthrow whatever is static and rotten with comfort--even at the expense of order, even at the expense of justice. And finally it moves him to asceticism, to the

attempt to free his spirit itself from the flesh. Odysseus, during his last days, confesses his lonely hatred of peace and contentment to Fire: "I don't love man, I only love the flame that eats him!" (XXIII, 884) Even death takes on for him the appearance of a new journey, a new odyssey, and perhaps a new liberation. It is the primacy of Odysseus' search for freedom which is perhaps most at odds with Tennyson's thought.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to explore, compare, and contrast the many philosophical similarities and differences in Nikos Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel and Alfred Tennyson's In Memoriam. That two poets of such disparate backgrounds could provide an opportunity for fruitful comparison is an idea which might surprise some, but it is easily explained when we consider that universality--the capacity of an artist to transcend his particular milieu and to speak to the larger audience of mankind--is a capacity shared by every great artist. The extraordinary extent to which both poets were concerned with ideas and their ability to infuse those ideas with feeling and give them dramatic expression contributes to that universality. Moreover, Tennyson and Kazantzakis seem particularly relevant to modern readers because of the specific nature of their ideas. Probably the most exciting of these ideas to both Tennyson and Kazantzakis was the notion of progressive evolution. Man's purpose in life, as Kazantzakis shows us in The Odyssey, is to strive, create, and evolve toward a higher spiritual world. He starts from a lower sensual, emotional, physical stage



and evolves to an intellectual and then to a spiritual stage through the struggles of his mind and heart. He may attain the "last labor," as Tennyson with heart and hope attains, or he may reach the last amorphous head on the totem, as Odysseus does, without any hope or fear about the world beyond death. Any answer to this mystery would check creativity and the explorations of this earthly or aethereal life. Therefore trust, hope, and love would rather keep the reader away from any traumatic feelings and thoughts for the Unseen. Perhaps Tennyson's "Pilot" when he crosses the bar and Helen's and Cicelia's children may give man a definite answer of the purpose of life on earth and beyond it.

Kazantzakis' view about life is that "everyone has his own particular road which leads him to liberation--one road of virtue, another the road of evil."<sup>1</sup> The Bergsonian influence on him is seen in the impulse to ascribe to spirit vitality, movement, and intuition, which make life not static and inert matter but progressive and dynamic consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chad Walsh, "Soul's Laureate," Saturday Review, XLIII (July 23, 1960), p. 36-37.

<sup>2</sup>Poulakidas, p. 267.

Life according to The Odyssey is a tragic joy as it is a light between two abysses. This beam enlightens man's chaotic world. Man has to take advantage of the interval between the two dramatic ends of the cycle he has to follow, which provides both joy and agony. Life for Kazantzakis then has been described as a game "ensanguined, ephemeral, exquisite with thousands of tiny hopes, unworthy and at the same time worthy of man. Happy is he who can revel in them without being blinded and can see far off."<sup>3</sup> But in order for someone to "see far off" he needs the luminous objective eye which will accept all "roads" leading to it: such is "The Cretan Eye," which is the result of the evolutionary process in man's nature which turns "rocks" to "self-consciousness" and to perfection of the individual and societies. Through this process man changes "from flesh and bone into pure spirit, lightning, deeds, and joy" (XXIII, 33). Alan Sinfield writes:

The tendency to invest external objects with qualities indicative of the mental state of the speaker is also shared by Tennyson . . . . This too can be explained in terms of Hulme's Bergsonian account of

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<sup>3</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, p. 418.

the relationship between consciousness and the material world.<sup>4</sup>

But Tennyson, in reference to life's problems, says in In Memoriam, "'T is held, that sorrow makes us wise" (CXIII, 1). This sorrow, in his case over the death of a friend, leads to a struggle to obtain knowledge about the benevolence and omnipotence of the Power that rules the universe, and causes an intellectual crisis which leads the individual to scepticism and permanent doubt. Finally, a vision, a dream, or the imagination of the heart itself, can bring a resolution beyond reason and science; it gives some hope that there is life after death (Tennyson's view) which makes this life of some value. Because mind, according to Kazantzakis' Odyssey, cannot grasp all in life (XIX, 180-181) and because knowledge is not to be trusted (XXI, 1338-43) and the mind is nourished by flesh (XIV, 1313), the heart may guide man as it did Odysseus in making him decide about assisting the slaves (X, 559). Quoting Tennyson, Buckley observes that, according to Kantian epistemology,

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<sup>4</sup>Alan Sinfield, "In Memoriam and Modern Poetry," In Memoriam: Alfred Lord Tennyson, edited by H. Ross (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc.), p. 256.

Knowledge is painfully limited in its reach; we cannot prove our immortality or our mortality or even our identity; indeed "nothing worthy of proving can be proven, / Nor yet disproven." Pragmatically, then, faith is more availing than denial. Faith will bring us a prevision of the ultimate wholeness and harmony of experience.<sup>5</sup>

Man in order to survive needs love. Tennyson even wished to die because of his friend's death. Kazantzakis felt isolated when he lost his "brothers" with whom he had shared experiences. Therefore even in his last moments of this mortal life he calls on the spirits of his friends, "O faithful and beloved, O dead and living comrades, come!" (XXIII, 1315) He also refers to love as brotherhood when, to make a better society, he invokes goals of improvement and peace: "Come let's embrace like brothers in each other's arms" (XXI, 1103). Tennyson's primitive Christian belief concerning brotherhood is profound in In Memoriam when he invokes love for all humanity. For Kazantzakis even love as lust is one of the necessary stages of man's struggle to evolve.

Another reaction to life's problems concerns freedom. Kazantzakis stresses that "the anguished battle to transmute darkness into light, slavery into freedom"

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<sup>5</sup>Buckley, p. 236.

is one of the basic struggles of life.<sup>6</sup> Therefore he believes man must free himself in order to find self-consciousness and create accordingly. But this freedom does not mean irresponsibility, such as brought about the decadences in Sparta, etc. People fight for freedom, but even Phido asks after the vain fight, "Ah, though I've spilled my father's blood, where's freedom now?" (XXIV, 713)

Tennyson, in order to calm his despair deriving from death, tried to explore the nature of deity and Universe. Tennyson, reacting to the scientific currents of his times, accepts God as the guiding principle behind the huge process of evolution. In negative terms, He is the One without Whom the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death would be meaningless. To Tennyson, the apparent scientific evidence of an evolutionary "progress" toward ever-higher forms of life not only seemed to him evidence of divine guidance, but it also allowed him to place in meaningful perspective the suffering and death of every individual--all contributing to the spiritual advancement of mankind. For as we have seen, Tennyson's

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<sup>6</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, p. 507.

faith was in a God of love--a God who cares for every soul. Thus it is that much of the tension of In Memoriam arises from the need of the poet to reconcile this loving God with the indifference of Nature. His God must be the immortal unchanging Spirit who guides from beyond all creation. Tennyson resolved his emotional need for certainty by a faith grounded in the heart or intuition. Therefore his concept of God is not only a God of creativity but also a God of love that he can trust as his "lord and king," a "Pilot" whom he will meet when he crosses "the bar" and under whom "all is well."

With Kazantzakis as well, under the influence of Bergson, we find a conception of divinity strongly influenced by the notion of development--the exciting notion of élan-vital, the upward creative thrust of the life instinct which lies beneath evolution. He even includes God Himself in the upward struggle of evolution. It is as if God, instead of being removed from the evolutionary struggle, is intimately involved, and nowhere in Kazantzakis do we find the traditional notion of God as a being unchanging, perfect, or all-loving. God is, rather, imperfect spirit struggling ceaselessly for freedom and born of tragedy and strife. God is the god of

"Epahpus"--of touch--which exists in human beings and strives with them. "'God is a labyrinthine quest deep in our heads'" (XXI, 414), something mystical and unperceivable through man's mind. Only inner impulse--the "Outcry"--may give some inspiration or light about the concept of God.

To Tennyson Nature is God's creation, and, as nothing can err under "creation's law," he accepts the idea that both God and Nature cooperate and take care of man's immortality even though scientifically and religiously no specific information has been given to man.

In Kazantzakis' opinion Nature is both good and bad, and he accepts it as it is. "'Life [has] a thousand faces and [he] loves them all'" (XXII, 598) and "'death has a thousand shapes'" which he cannot explain, so he faces them with his heroic "Cretan Eye" keeping in mind that, at least in Nature, "nothing remains" (XXIII, 288). He is indifferent to immortality, as he is uncertain, and he sticks to earthly joys accepting Nature, God, life, and death as they are, without any resistance, and with scepticism closing the "gyre" because knowledge is limited. Possibly his last line in The Odyssey gives the reader a mere hint of the soul's existing after this

life: "'Forward, my lads, sail on, for Death's breeze blows in a fair wind!'"

There remains a word to be said about the function of the creative effort in regard to Tennyson and Kazantzakis. Poulakidas, in his article on Kazantzakis, says:

Bergson felt that a great philosopher cannot but be a great artist and a great artist is bound to be a great philosopher. An artist transcends the daily realities and necessities of life and through different media expresses the essence of things, the ever-flowing and internal rhythms . . . . This Kazantzakis has attained through Bergson's inspiration and guidance . . . , mystically versing the unheard life.<sup>7</sup>

Kazantzakis himself declared,

From the point of view of poetic form and philosophical content, The Odyssey represents the highest peak I've been able to attain, the efforts of an entire lifetime in the service of the spirit.<sup>8</sup>

And therefore "the aim of The Odyssey is to be read by the young people at all costs. This work was not written for old men. It was written for the young people and those who have not yet been born."<sup>9</sup> Kazantzakis thus

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<sup>7</sup>Poulakidas, p. 283.

<sup>8</sup>Helen Kazantzakis, p. 468.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 365.



clearly places his own art at the service of the evolutionary thrust toward expanded consciousness and the future of man.

Like Kazantzakis, Tennyson rejected any notion of art-for-art's sake, and felt that the duty of the artist is to serve mankind. He even chides himself in In Memoriam for sometimes singing in a mode too personal, too self-centered, for the benefit of others. And no doubt Tennyson saw in In Memoriam his own humble offering to mankind in its spiritual odyssey toward the "far off divine event": an offering of hope and encouragement.

As we have seen, the validity of these two works is not only that man can evolve in his mortal life but that he can also get this evolution through art.

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