

since it must always look forward to what exceeds it, to a future that cannot be predicted but which perhaps promises a future that could be otherwise, that would not be the continuation of pasts but would, for the first time, expose the claim of these pasts to another time – a time other than the time of the brutality and cruelty of a dictatorship. This is why this severed hand appears in another form in “Portraits of an Ancient Rain”, and I would like to close my essay with this small poem. Although it was written nearly ten years before Ritsos’ arrest in 1967, it already brings together nearly all the figures with which I have been concerned – blindness, sight, uncertainty, pain, and stone – and thereby suggests that the origin of the statue’s – and thereby poetry’s – responsibilities lies in blindness, in what I have referred to as the darkness of the lived moment. There, then, in a poem that asks us to bear witness to a future, to remain open to it, however uncertain it may be, he tells us that the poet holds

a long, harsh and tender song
like a magician’s wand wishing to transform life
like a blindman’s stick searching for a way to enter the
world.

The blindmen’s vision concentrates on
the tip of their walking sticks; the tip of the sticks
is their eyes, deep, familiar with darkness. The blind
strike their sticks, test the air, the silence, root, and stone,
they strike their own eyes against every stone and they hurt.

Where they hurt, they see and know.
Where they see and know, they point.

A poem is a stretched finger out in the rain;
it trembles as it points toward the sun.
Poets have conquered blindness.¹¹

If the poet has conquered blindness, however, it is only because he asks us to imagine what the world has never offered us: absolute freedom, justice, and equality – not oppression, injustice, and violence. This is why we must always, at every moment, invent the world anew, in all our blindness, in the midst of a life that is always touched by death. We must invent a world instead of being subjected to one, or dreaming of another – we must recognise a world where blind statues see and act responsibly toward one another, where the mute sing, and where, as in Ritsos’ “At the Harbour’s Edge”, “with such obscurities”, we may “seek to escape the dark” (*SB* 45).

¹¹ “Portraits of an Ancient Rain”, in *Yannis Ritsos Selected Poems (1935-1989)*, trans. George Pilitsis (Brookline, MA.: Hellenic College Press, 2001), p. 173.

*On Nikos Kazantzakis’
statement that “We do not fight
our dark passions with a sober,
bloodless, neutral virtue which
rises above passion, but with
other, more violent passion”*

Vrasidas Karalis

University of Sydney

This moral injunction by Nikos Kazantzakis can be found in his brief philosophical creed translated as *Spiritual Exercises* (Kazantzakis, 1960: 117), in one of its culminating chapters on “The relationship between Man and Man”. Unquestionably it stands out as one of the most interesting ethical statements contained in the book, expressing almost a complete reversal of a substantial tradition of Western moral theory. Since reflection on ethics as the study of interpersonal conduct began with the Greeks in an attempt to correlate facts and values, passions were to be understood as negative alterations of the human soul leading to behavioural wrong-doing, religious sin or existential inauthenticity.

The Greeks had a rather ambivalent understanding of how passions (*pathe*) influence consciousness. Passions decentre the self-reflecting subject from its own [proper?] goal by making it dependent on external objects or the approval of others. Detachment (*apatheia* and *ataraxia*) from passions can be found at the heart of Platonism, Stoicism and Christianity as the only remedy to the self-consuming excess of emotions that distort intellectual reason and moral dignity. In the Oriental traditions also, as

Vrasidas Karalis, “On Nikos Kazantzakis’ statement that ‘We do not fight our dark passions with a sober, bloodless, neutral virtue which rises above passion, but with other, more violent passions’”, *Culture & Memory*. Special Issue of *Modern Greek Studies* (Australia and New Zealand), 2006: 129-141.

stipulated by the *Bhagavat Gita* and more crucially by Buddhism, passions have been perceived as the central expression of ignorance: passions confirm the illusory character of existence and distract consciousness from its ultimate self-realisation. For most religions or religious philosophies, passions are not simply expressions of human irrationalism but also indicate the demonic influence of forces beyond human control, and inevitably lead to *hamartia*, that is, the existential failure to follow moral or divine law.

Only in some fringe religious movements has the idea of “redemption through sin” as the complete liberation of passions played a key role in redefining the relation between the individual psyche and the interpersonal world of societal rules. In certain ancient Gnostic sects, “sinning” became an empowering force destined to elevate the individual through the totality of felt emotion into a state of absolute self-knowledge and an oceanic feeling of total fusion with the cosmic continuum. Later in history, within Judaism, as in the strange episode of Sabatai Zevi, “lawless heresy” aspired to fundamentally transform the whole of creation through “lawlessness, antinomianism and catastrophic negation” (Scholem, 1971: 84). In the liberation frenzy caused by the Reformation, the Anabaptists of Jan van Leyden surrendered to “more violent passions” in order to bring the cosmic struggle between good and evil to an end. In modern times, some extreme enthusiastic cults led their members through the uncontrolled explosion of sexual passions to mass suicide in an attempt to bring about the end of history in an apocalyptic rupture of historical time.

But what did Kazantzakis mean by this statement? Not an extreme believer of any kind, but also not untouched by the apocalyptic mania of his generation, he tried to articulate a different creed of metaphysical, anthropological and cosmological dimensions in which moral behaviour and ethical predisposition were not understood in terms of the traditional elimination of passions but on the contrary as a constant liberation of emotional charge through acts of identification with the absolute *negative* other. Thus, passions lead to the exodus from the individualistic cult of the romanticised ego; they become expressions of a problematised relation with nature and history, in which the individual searches for a position and a *topos* for self-articulation. Passions indicate the need for a new language of differentiation between the self-examining I and the multiplicity of its feelings; they are not expressions of the “soul” or of the “ego” but negations of its grip over existence.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition between passion and virtue and more specifically between “neutral virtue” and “violent passions” expresses a

certain existential dysphoria that Kazantzakis felt towards the ideas of traditional morality as imposed by the Platonic purification of passions through the participation in the divine, by the Stoic ataraxia as detachment from all passions or by the Christian mortification of the flesh as expressed in a life imitating Jesus.

His statement leads directly to a question that has not been adequately dealt with by scholars in regard to Kazantzakis' moral problematic. It seems that his challenging ideas about the phenomenon of life and his unsettling vision of spirituality have kept the attention of scholars away from his ethical theory proper, or even from the study of the ethical implications of his thought. Yet his aesthetic quest through a number of literary genres and a variety of media presupposes an attempt to construct the most appropriate strategy of representation for framing his specific understanding of a moral vision of life. His novels in particular might give a vague articulation of his ethical perspective and the way that Kazantzakis understood the meaning of life (or even more, the meaning of the “good” life), but for reasons of dramatic economy and emotional tension the writer abstains from establishing a hierarchy of moral values: in the novel *Christ Recrucified*, the angelic and otherworldly figure of Manolios negates dominant morality by self-sacrifice whereas Panayiotaros, the embodiment of absolute evil and of purposeless wrong-doing, also negates prevailing social customs by doing completely the opposite: both are juxtaposed in a manner that complements and fulfils each other. The negative can thus be seen against the background of goodness: the grey area of motivation cannot be judged on the basis of what is done or achieved but on what precedes or follows action. The moral element in evil motives and actions can be found in the fact that they are a reaction to the existence of goodness. Panayiotaros wants to kill Manolios because he struggles with his own suppressed goodness: tormented by shame and divided by guilt he has to destroy the reason for his inner dichotomy.

If ethics, however, represent the translation into concepts of a specific way of understanding existence, relations between humans and ultimately the relationship between humans and nature, Kazantzakis always had much to say in exploring the various forms of human conduct and human intentionality. The vexed question of how acts relate to intentions and how intentions manifest the introspective conscience of the specific person seems to have tormented Kazantzakis' mind, especially in his novels and in many occasions in his long epic poem *The Odyssey*. In his epic poem especially, Kazantzakis does not seem to make any connection between facts and values. On the contrary, it seems as though facts are totally

devoid of values and stand apart in phenomenological neutrality. His epic poem represents the confronting phantasmagoria of negative dialectics; what is negated (moral action and quest for the good) emerges as the ultimate purpose of the quest without this being stated in any way. It is on the basis of negations that the realm of truth is constructed: “for you know well that life is but a game of scales” (Kazantzakis, 1958: 738). The plunge into negativity restores human equilibrium: the potential for good can be understood and experienced only through the exposure to evil; therein lies the problem of choice.

In his literary works, furthermore, Kazantzakis give the impression of being an amoralistic Nietzschean over-man, who toys with moral ideas and then rejects them when they become useless and somehow irrelevant to the changing conditions around his heroes. This strategy is extremely pertinent to his understanding of the issue of ethical values. Yet in all these cases, we must see such a perception of morality as a consequence of the quest for the appropriate form of self-articulation, a quest which also relates to the way Kazantzakis wanted to construct his complete moral theory. It seems that his main concern was to avoid any kind of normative deontological or regulative moral principles which did not emanate from actual experience and did not reflect the specificity of the person and the situation in which they occur. Such dedication and respect towards the specific gives Kazantzakis' overall moral theory an open-ended, pragmatic directionality, which never veers off to the pitfalls of relativism on one side or absolutism on the other.

For artistic purposes in his novels and his poem, Kazantzakis avoided articulating a coherent form of ethical theory which could easily slip into monumental didacticism. On the contrary, his works never begin with a moral or even psychological presupposition; through their multilayered structures, they seem to explore possibilities for acting and potentialities of intentions, so much so that they look somehow chaotic and highly flawed from a moral point of view. The multiplicity of behaviours and his curiously impartial approach to the question of judging acts and intentions, coupled with the destructive morals of his *Odyssey*, may give the wrong impression that Kazantzakis' moral theory was a mish-mash of unrelated notions that have not been able to be unified into a coherent perception of the world. For this reason, we have to go back to his *Ascetics* (or *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, as they have been translated) in order to detect the over-arching understanding of morality and discover the locus from which he viewed ethical issues.

His *Ascetics* bear the dual legacy of the word in Greek; first, the physical exercises of athletes in classical world and then the spiritualisation of its meaning through the Stoic-Christian moral vision of life. For Kazantzakis, the physical tends towards its moral self re-creation: from the moment it gains consciousness of its being, through its realisation of its place in nature, society and history, it achieves fulfilment only to the extent that it translates itself into a moral valuation of life. The natural yearns for moral transformation; it tends towards transforming its ordinary limitations into a reality of active relations that in many occasions remain beyond its own understanding. The fact that people behave morally doesn't mean that they know they do – even less, that they have to know it, and less still that they will be able to rationally reflect on their goodness. Morality for Kazantzakis exists not as a pre-existing set of values but in the active unfolding of innumerable potentialities through creative or destructive engagement with the real. Morality emerges during the exploration of reality as the pre-conscious recognition of the common human destiny.

Historically, his understanding of morality is the product of a deep crisis in the concepts of value, subjectivity and society. Such a crisis was looming already from the end of the 19th century, when the teachings of Charles Darwin started gaining momentum and gradually filtered through to the public sphere by re-interpreting the essential humanity of human beings. The Darwinian impact was considerable on Kazantzakis' thought (he translated an abridged version of the *Origin of Species* in 1912) and was to remain deep until the end of his life. The moral implications of Darwin are deep and have somehow re-written the way that moral philosophy articulates its values. If for Aristotle and Immanuel Kant morality mainly referred to the virtues of citizens or duties of rational beings, after Darwin moral behaviour was directly associated with the “naturalness” of humans: “virtue” was the built-in tendency towards mutual aid and solidarity that made society possible. What is moral is everything that makes society feasible and viable: sociality creates the sacred dimension and so the moral is an intrinsic value of the natural. The impact of Darwinian theories on moral reflections led to a fresh understanding of human solidarity with the natural and animal world, and as a matter of fact incorporated human history and conscience to the general “evolution” of life on the planet, creating the “species” or “planetary” conscience that permeates environmental ethics today.

Henry Bergson's *Creative Evolution* added a new layer of signification, problematising Darwin's dangerous idea with regards to ethics with the idea that humans could become autonomous from the limitations of their

nature and could transform their natural potential into action not determined by their “naturalness”. Creative evolution meant conscious intervention and active self-definition for modern ethical reflection. By being creative, humans detach themselves from natural constraints and reposition themselves within the natural environment by changing it. The source of the creativity that leads to autonomy is another question which not only Kazantzakis but his whole generation tried to solve by employing Nietzsche’s overman ideal. His life-long passion for Nietzsche’s *ubermensch* has given the wrong impression about the essence of his characters or even about the intention of his ideas. But it gives a very good idea about his moral psychology as theory of human action and of its intention. Both in Nietzsche and Bergson, Kazantzakis found a theory about human will, a theory of voluntarism that acts intentionally or unintentionally to change the environment, confront its own fears and finally posit the ultimate questions of purpose and death. Yet the question of death and dying is spectacularly absent from his moral theory. Both in Leo Tolstoy and Martin Heidegger, morality deals with the question of death, or is understood under the perspective of being-towards-death, but for Kazantzakis death does not have moral content. Death for him is fulfilment and completion, the culmination of life’s purpose, which does not have a cognitive and therefore an ethical content.

Finally, one can detect in the presuppositions of his moral theory an early presence which has not been analysed or even discussed: that of William James’ ethical pragmatism. In 1911, Kazantzakis translated James’ *Theory of Emotions* (a chapter from his *Principles of Psychology*) and pragmatist ideas can be detected indirectly throughout his work. Peter Bien in an incisive comment locates the influence of James’ pragmatism in his “distrust of a priori reasoning” (Bien, 1989: 24). For James “the essence of good is simply to satisfy demand. The demand may be for anything under the sun. There is really no more ground for supposing that all our demands can be accounted for by one universal underlying kind of motive that there is ground for supposing that all physical phenomena are cases of a single law. The elementary forces in ethics are probably as plural as those of physics are. The various ideals have no common character apart from the fact that they are ideals”. (James, 1962: 201).

So the inability to refer to a single unifying principle for ethical reasoning was strengthened by the voluntaristic idea behind moral action. Since will is highly idiosyncratic and therefore unpredictable, the traditional belief in the intelligibility of the self receded under a new vision of selfhood. Kazantzakis’ moral perspective begins not with the Socratic

understanding of ethics as self-knowledge but in a controversial manner as the existential need for self-alienation. The ego does not possess a nuclear structure which evolves or unfolds its potentialities in acts of self-expression becoming thus knowable. But in the pre-Socratic times, Heraclitus’ belief “ἐδίξασάμην ἐμᾶυτόν” (“I looked for myself” or “in myself”) took now a new axiomatic urgency: the self in its full emergence as consciousness is the end result of a trans-objective motion in time. By moving through space, the self internalises its existence as knowledge between chronotypes. As Bender and Wellbery who coined the term observed: “Chronotypes are models or patterns through which time assumes practical or conceptual significance. Time is not given but fabricated in an ongoing process. [...] Chronotypes are not produced *ex nihilo*; they are improvised from an already existing repertoire of cultural forms and natural phenomena”. (Bender & Wellbery, 1991: 4). Such cultural forms give to the self the potential for its self-imagining; through cultural representations it locates its presence and incorporates its existence into an ongoing process of significations through creativity; so it reaches the ultimate secret of self-understanding which does not belong to the lived world of the self.

Kazantzakis’ final statement in the book about the “great, sublime and terrifying secret: that even this one does not exist!” (Kazantzakis, 131) culminates the unfolding of the self when it confronts its own end. As Wittgenstein has said “Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through” (Wittgenstein, 1958: 185). This explains the absence of death as moralising (or demoralising) agent in his moral theory. E.B. Greenwood’s statement about Tolstoy can be also said for Kazantzakis: “death is terrible to those who have never really learned how to live” (Greenwood, 1975: 121). So his ascetics is not a *memento mori* and do not offer an *ars moriendi*; on the contrary the essence of life can be found in the banality of living the everydayness of existence. Thinking is not a study of dying but the knowledge of living; by eliminating death from the centre of moral reflection Kazantzakis raised the crucial question about the eschatology of existence: the meaning of life is found in the actual experience of living, it is not a reflection over that experience and it is not a verbal translation of it. For Kazantzakis death is an indecipherable secret because it is not beyond our experience and therefore we haven’t articulated the terms of its formulation or answerability.

Unquestionably this is a very interesting almost confronting moral vision of living. It has also created a lot of misunderstandings about Kazantzakis “amoralism” as so discreetly but persistently hinted upon by

his most faithful and most reserved disciple in Greece, Pandelis Prevelakis. Yet even amongst his best friends Kazantzakis' moral vision has been obscured by his dazzling cosmology and anthropology so much so that his ethics as such has been disregarded on the basis of the very obvious antinomian and somehow subversive characters of its stipulations. But are passions so negative as usually understood by traditional moral reflection? Aren't in their manifestation corporeal responses to the surrounding objective world of others? And even more that that, aren't they in their internalised form essential constituents of our self? How can we distinguish between passions if their "moral" content essentially depends on what happens around us?

For Kazantzakis the passions are not simple feelings appearing against reason as a Humean understanding of morals would have claimed; passions are the building blocks of being one-self which acquire meaning and value as movements towards exploring the realm of otherness. By exploring with is not the self, then the self emerges as self-understanding of limitation and potentiality. In Kazantzakis moral universe the Humean "Ought" does not exist deontologically but it happens naturally; unfolding passions construct mental maps of self-recognition. Morality is not an Archimedean point outside my position or situation; on the contrary it is the translation of the limitations of existence into terms of self-performance as societal presence.

So instead of viewing passions as negativity, Kazantzakis presents them as the voluntary movement of being towards its own finality. Their moral "essence" can be found in the will itself because the will as conscious choice implies responsibility and risk. So passions, in the wide range of emotions implied through this word, express the will to act as limitation. By showing our limits passions position the self not as an expansive and self-interested ego in pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction. Passions are not about pleasure because many of them cause discomfort and distress; passions also are not vices because in all their forms they manifest our existential truth. So Kazantzakis' passions are not the Kantian "reign of ends" or even they don't lead to "the happiness of virtue". In more elementary forms they are not even hedonistic indulgences or acts of transcendental justification. For Kazantzakis passions in all their forms delineate the fallibility of existence as personal affirmation. So moral action means bringing the others into yourself, into the inner self of conscious being; by bringing them in the unconscious, the prime abyss, according to Kazantzakis, is populated and flesh out with forms. Through them I can recognise its existence and can make representations of its presence.

The Dark Abyss of our origin and of our end becomes lucid as the representations of others construct words and images in order to situate our presence between them. So, the limits of my existence generate the desire to transcend them; this desire can happen only through the recognition of the other as the symbol of my limitations and at the same time as the recognition of my liminal position. Kazantzakis insists to "give a soul to a machine" and searches constantly for the "impassionment" of the inanimate world of objects around us. His bergsonian origins have in many occasions obscured this belief by translating into a vitalist understanding of life. But for him passions indicate existence and therefore self-consciousness. Self-consciousness means understanding limitations, the corporeal self in its historicity. It also means positive self-alienation: at the moment I recognise myself I use language to locate my presence. This primal word objectifies my existence: language links the individual to the life-continuum. Only when this incorporation happens, the I can unfold its potentialities and actualise its presence.

Kazantzakis expresses a moral organicism, in a manner similar to A.N. Whitehead's process philosophy. Darren Middleton has studied the theological implications of his organicism stressing the dynamic and active perception of the godhead: "For Kazantzakis and Whitehead, the divine is "active" through the taking into Godself all that occurs in the evolutionary advance, being "moved" in the emotional pole of divine becoming by our creativity, and by ubiquitously seeking to evoke our attachment to life. Our Knowledge of this help us to appreciate the value of striving for those special values –creativity, passion, spiritual ascension– congruous with god's character" (Middleton, 2000: 32). Morally the creative motion itself becomes passion for communication and relatedness. Passions therefore are not unruly and irrational, dark and destructive expressions of the unmasterable unconscious in our mind. But forceful expressions of the existential desire to become your self, be realising the potential in you.

Kazantzakis lived in the era of Andre Gide's *acte gratuite* as an expression of the quest for spontaneity. This idea can be found behind Kazantzakis' final virtue of freedom. Yet Gide's idea of a spontaneous act of self-expression has been expressed in his books as later in Albert Camus' *The Stranger* with inexplicable acts of self-gratification, even curious mythologisations of aesthetised murder. For Kazantzakis spontaneous action means quest for freedom: freedom to go beyond the immediate vital desires of the body to those "values" that situate individual presence in history and nature: "The identification of ourselves with the Universe begets the two superior virtues of our ethics: responsibility and

sacrifice" (Kazantzakis, 1960: 115). So virtues in ethics do not express a normative "oughtness" which imposes duties and obligations on us. Moral action is a condition of being one-self and therefore of self-definition: by acting the individual sacrifices itself because there is only action-for something and by going towards something the end itself changes my existence. Yet what about the level of intentions? Can we act morally from immoral intentions? Says Kazantzakis: "we leave our door open to sin. We do not plug up our ears with wax that we may not listen to the Sirens" (Kazantzakis 1960: 117).

This would definitely cause an incredible social panic on which the whole of the modern societies are based on: how can we surrender to sinning without our society collapsing into moral chaos and into the antinomian ethics of "anything goes"? Is Kazantzakis' "virtue" ethics amoralistic in its essence? Or is it an abstract exercise in unrealistic possibilities beyond the provenance of history and of historical consciousness as such? If we leave the doors of existence open to hamartia isn't then possible that hamartia will lead to false perception of our being, to a perception which will eventually create an endless fissure within the individual, culminating thus to the self-frustrating egotism of possessive individualism? Or maybe couldn't even excessive virtue become a tragic flaw in an Aristotelian way delivering thus the individual to the uncontrollable forces of its own contingency and ultimately abolishing its will to create?

Kazantzakis' belief that hamartia is something that happens and must happen is an extremely challenging parameter of his moral system. Yet can we extract an "ought" from the very simple "is", of what happens? Since we are exposed to the aggressive forces that decentre our existence from a meaningful end (imagined or real), how can we invite for such disruption and detraction? Isn't Kazantzakis claiming that sin (hamartia) is meaningful only if I have a pre-existing goal for my life? Otherwise is it possible that he meant that only through suffering and pain, by the constant detachment of the self from a collective goal to something individually beneficial can the self understand its position in history and act accordingly? And finally what about the hamartia actualised: is it expressed as evil or wrongdoing and therefore in return implies guilt, repentance, atonement? When I leave my door open to sin, do I open the door of guilt or shame in my conscience too?

The question of course can be re-articulated in order to understand what Kazantzakis meant with hamartia; if we understand this then we will be able to enter into the logic of his passions as ethicising factors. In traditional

Christian ethics, (Stoic in their essence and origin) passions lead to hamartia; but passions (pathe) mean emotions which differ from "impulses" (hormes). But emotions (passions) "include a characterisation of their objects as good or bad" (Brennan, 2003: 269). The act of committing a sin deliberately implies deeper pre-emotions, according to the Stoics (propatheiai), which are innately human and generate the need for reasonable action: by inviting sin I become aware of my fallibility and thus I choose to do what is appropriate under the circumstances and commensurate to my ability to know. In an interesting conclusion Brennan states that according to the Stoic ethical strategies "we are responsible for our actions because they spring from our impulses (that is, our assents and these are determined by our character (that is, our disposition to assent)" (Brennan, 2003: 294).

Opening the door to sin means bringing my character to the public sphere: there my individual morality finds a place within the social condition of time and place. By acting according to my character, I act well: sin has a paideutic function. By guiding people to goodness, Hamartia leads to self-realisation which for Kazantzakis can only be "responsibility and sacrifice". In a manner completely opposite to Paul's in his *Letter to the Romans*, hamartia shows the validity of the moral law by making the individual cognizant of its responsibility and sacrifice. Paul stresses that "Once, when there was no Law, I was alive; but when the commandment came, sin came to life and I died: the commandment was meant to lead me to life but it turned out to mean death for me, because sin took advantage of the commandment to mislead me and so sin, through that commandment, killed me" (7: 9-11). So for him hamartia means conscious naturalness: by verbalising my natural existence I dissociate myself from myself. By sinning I become someone other; sinning means "othering". For Kazantzakis by sinning I bring some one other into myself: I create a commandment that presupposes mutuality. So this "natural" expression of my being creates a new morality which is "natural" that is according to my nature. "All naturalism in morality, that is all healthy morality, is dominated by an instinct of life" as Nietzsche declared (Nietzsche, 1990: 55).

It is true that the central problem of ethics in the last two centuries is focused on the constant attempt to convince about its credibility and maybe about its applicability in a way that would transcend the specifics of cultural conditioning. Since it is rather impossible to aspire to the universality of Kant's categorical imperative or take for granted Rousseau's belief in the essential goodness of human nature, ethics has tried hard to

find a frame of reference which is not legalistic or relativistic. Even Heidegger's *mitsein* is the ground for an ethical theory and not the solid foundation of a form of theorising that would be inclusive of diverse moralities without reducing everything to situational and therefore ad hoc subjectivism.

Kazantzakis posited the problem of plurality as the central question of his moral problematic. Hamartia in this respect means also multiplicity of potential action, and of potential fallibility. "I open the door to sin" means I open myself to the unexpected; not by doing the moralistically scandalous or by imagining the ethically impractical but by yielding to the experience of sacrifice that exposes myself to its finality; the creative appropriation of life empowers humans to confront mortality. This is not pessimism or even more so nihilism; we can't employ such concepts in order to understand the "horizontal ethics" of Kazantzakis. In the same manner for Kazantzakis the opposite of hamartia is not virtue, *arête*, precisely as the opposite of good is not evil. The mistake of traditional metaphysics and its concomitant ethics to ontologically equate good and evil has led to the Manichean belief that if you are not doing good then you necessarily do evil. The ontological equation between good and evil implies their essential similarity and interchangeability. For Kazantzakis the opposite of good is the not-good-yet: "evil" needs purification, as Simone Weil has stated. The "road of evil" is the extension of the "road of virtue": Kazantzakis' polarities are born from within each other. They do not represent antithetic forces but synthetic tensions. Evil does not have an ontological existence; as in the Christian tradition evil is a parhypostasis, a derivative existent, incomplete good; it mediates for the moment of self-awareness. This is the ultimate expression of human fallibility: they do "evil" as misrecognition of the place in society and history. The Socratic dictum "no one is willingly evil" has to be extended to include the specific location of the individual. The other mistake of traditional metaphysics was because of their intellectual, their virtue or of religious enlightenment individuals are able to distinguish between intentions and results.

But according to Kazantzakis this is rather impossible: "these two armies, the dark and the light, the armies of life and death, collide eternally. The visible signs of this collision are, for us, plants, animals, men" (Kazantzakis 1960:119). This means that the position of humans in history is somehow volatile and that humans are not passive spectators of cosmic forces in collision or conflicting passions in their soul. For him, humans are "go-betweens", who move erratically backwards and forwards in an attempt to achieve balance with their environment and establish their inner

equilibrium. As Simone Weil, a thinker very akin to Kazantzakis, observed: "The essence of created things is to be intermediaries. They are intermediaries leading from one to the other and there is no end to this. They are intermediaries leading to God. We have to experience them as such" (Weil, 1963: 132). This is the ultimate experience for Kazantzakis, and the final secret of human life. The intermediary position expresses their open-ended ethical responsibility, the condition of living in the grey area of fallibility which prepares them for good even through the realm of non-existence, the realm of "evil" deeds and intentions. But for Kazantzakis the intermediary position of humans gives them the possibility to experience their freedom and their responsibility; only through freedom humans can be good and act accordingly. Freedom then is not liberation from passions but the discovery of the end of passions; by reaching these limits of my existence I can choose my action as a gesture of receiving the other in me, or of giving myself to the other. The horizontal ethics of reciprocity is behind Kazantzakis challenging injunction.

REFERENCES

- Bien, Peter (1989), *Kazantzakis, Politics of the Spirit*, Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press
 Bender John and Wellbery David E. (eds.), (1991) *Chronotypes, The Construction of Time*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
 Brennan, Tad, 2003, "Stoic Moral Psychology" in Brad Inwood, *The Cambridge Companion to The Stoics*, Cambridge University Press, 2003
 James, William (1962), *Essays on Faith and Morals*, Selected by Ralph Barton Perry, New York Meridian Books (1st edition *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 1896)
 Kazantzakis, Nikos, 1958, *The Odyssey: A modern sequel*, translated by Kimon Friar, New York: Simon and Schuster
 Kazantzakis, Nikos, (1960) *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, translated with an introduction by Kimon Friar, New York: Simon and Schuster
 Middleton, Darren J N (2000) *Novel Theology. Nikos Kazantzakis's Encounter with Whiteheadian process Theism*, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press
 Nietzsche Friedrich, (1990), *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, translated by R. J. Holligdale, introduction by Michael Tanner, Penguin Books (1st edition 1889)
 Scholem, Gershom, (1971) *The Messianic Idea in Judaism, and other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York: Schocken Books.
 Weil, Simone, 1963, *Gravity and Grace*, Ark Paperbacks, London and New York.