

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

There is a famine in the land, a famine of hearing anything exciting. There is a famine in the land, a famine of any relevant word addressed to my life. Or maybe it comes to you, "...if there were any spirit trains leaving this morning, I've missed them all." I'm standing at the station with my dry desert tongue hanging out, and other people went on some kind of a trip today, maybe, but they left me. I'm left at home; I'm left at home all alone, with some, maybe, indefinite longing, some indefinite longing for a great trip to the East, some great trip to the home of the Spirit. But there isn't any trip today; the Spirit train doesn't stop here anymore, as far as I can tell, not today or tomorrow.

Then, in the midst of that, it seems to me that the mystery of the Missing Mystery seems relevant. The absence of awe is awe-filling in a subtle sort of way. And you are in a kind of a subtle awe at the desert itself, the desert of awe. As you realize that there's always a gap, between me and any home, any home in this world, or any home in the other world. I think this gives you a sort of deep patience with life, to have been at moments such as these, a deep patience with life, to know somehow that life never arrives at home. My Eastern home of the spirit is always out there, ahead of me. There's always a gap between me and any home in this world or the other world, and I'm trying to express the kind of deep patience with life that is comparable to the description of this state.

I want to talk to the form, the chart. I've not yet got names for these. I know they are all one, and these various names help you get a perspective on the one that they all are. "Wracking Self doubt" I like that name. I don't care what name they call it here. "Wracking Self Doubt" is my name for it, or I can get by with "Strike Three." And then, "Reality is Beyond." "Reality is Beyond," or I can get by with "I Love the Mystery."

And then this third one; how do you get a name "Abandoned to Remoteness" from the "Final Oneness with the Mystery?" "Abandoned to Remoteness."

Now this fourth one might have a name like "The Fire, and I Rejoice." There's this deep paradox in it. I think Kazantzakis is working on it in this passage, which has been for a long, long time a hot one for me, I realize:

In the voracious funneling whirlwind of God, God laughs, wails, kills, sets us on fire, and then leaves us in the middle of the way, charred embers, and I rejoice...(That's the line that gets me!)... and I rejoice to feel between my temples in the flicker of an eyelid the beginning and the end of the world.

It seems to me that Kazantzakis takes this picture and intensifies it in another place in the book where he talks about standing between the two pyres. I remember how shocked I was when I first saw what those two pyres were, that those two pyres of fire were my birth and my death, and to hold that up with the fact that "I come from a dark abyss and I end in a dark abyss and the luminous interval I call life,..." to suddenly take that same picture and flip the imagery so that the very birth that was a dark abyss becomes a fire, and the very death that was a dark abyss becomes a fire, and I stand between two fires, two blazing fires, and my body is illuminated from both directions by the light of the fires. This is the picture, another picture to hold this kind of "...and I rejoice,..."; ...and the world begins and the world ends...."

That also lets me understand why I've been fascinated by those monks - remember those monks who burned themselves with gasoline? Just the picture of those guys going up in smoke always fascinated me. I never did quite get ahold of it. I now see what it was. It was just that idea of death and my death in the fire. There must be some kind of genius in the funeral service in India, where the way you end is to put that body on the wood and set her

ablaze. What an image that established in the minds of the people standing by -- that your death is a pyre, and your birth is a pyre, that the dark abyss has been turned to flame! Well, this is the image of this Final One. And there is sort of a paradoxical feel of being radically consumed and yet radically attracted to the consuming. It's like you wouldn't have it any other way. You would not have it any other way. But I mean you're being consumed; your whole being is being burned, and you wouldn't have it any other way. Or maybe you might try to get ahold of it as "Sweet Exhaustion". There's a sense of powerful weakness; you are the weakness of ash, and yet you're flaming. Or you have been robbed of all passion, and yet you are passion, burned.

I don't know how you really say the results in the practical life of these kinds of conscious moments, but maybe it's something like the courage to go on in any kind of a circumstance. Or maybe it's like all your death urges have now become pets. I mean you still have death urges. As a matter of fact, I think it's true that the more aware you become of the spiritual terrain, the more forceful your death urges are. The more aware you become of the potential of your being, the more overwhelmed you become to get out of it by dying. So you've got lots of death urges, but your death urges have become pets, and you just -- when the death urges come -- you say, "Sit down over there in the corner." And they, just like obedient dogs, go over there and sit in the corner and cower there over against your command. There's a powerful weakness; there's no getting away from the powerful weakness, and yet you rejoice. The powerful drive to live is there in the midst of the powerful weakness.

I'm going to close with a psalm. It seems to me like this psalm is working in the area of the last couple of these categories. And whether it is or not, it's good psalm.

Oh, Mystery, Mystery, Thou art my God.
I seek Thee early with a heart that thirsts for Thee,
And a body wasted with longing for Thee.
Like a dry and thirsty land that has no water,
So longing I come before Thee in the sanctuary to look upon
Thy power and glory.
Thy true love is better than life;
Therefore I will sing Thy praises.
So I bless Thee all my life,
In Thy name lift my hands up In prayer.
I am satisfied as with a rich and sumptuous feast.
Awake the echoes that vibrate.
When I call Thee to mind upon my bed and think on Thee
in the watches of the night,
I remember how Thou hast been my help.
I am safe in the shadow of Thy fluttering awe,
And I humbly follow Thee with all my heart,
And Thy right hand is my support.

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