

The ‘Kakalidis Method’ for Literature Analysis: A Synthesis Approach

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This paper aims at presenting the work of philosopher and poet Dimitris Kakalidis (1943-1995), emphasising the method he developed for the analysis of short stories and poetry, termed as the ‘Kakalidis Method’. In his works, the two volumes on ‘The Wisdom of Poetry’ and ‘The Wisdom of the Short Story’, he presents an innovative method of analysing 100 poems and 36 stories by Greek authors; this, acquires a perspective that pervades and reveals the inner spiritual resources of each work, demonstrating universal messages. Each literary piece takes dimensions beyond the visible contours, revealing the infinite within the limited, bringing the unconscious into consciousness. His starting point for each analysis is ‘Man-Humanity-Entity’ in their everlasting, intertwined relationship, based on the belief that each individual is an enlightened being in their core, going through life’s path only for this to be expressed in action. ‘Kakalidis Method’ draws from ancient Greek schools of thought, i.e Pythagoras’ numerology, Aristotle’s assurance for matter-spirit co-existence, Heraclitus’s command about the endless flow, Plato’s argument that concepts are fundamentally numbers and Socrates’ maieutics that elicit the transcendent level of ideas lurking in the plot of each play. Hence, this method transcends the meaning of each word into a deeper spiritual journey of every aspect of human experience. Kakalidis ‘plays’ with symbols and numbers, invents new terms where the hidden message of the Word is deciphered, thus transforming every literary image into an Odyssey of the experience of the whole human race since the beginning of time. His method is acknowledged as an approach of spiritual revelation, bringing the synthesis of profound meanings and leading the reader to a state of uplifted awareness and spiritual expansion. In its innovative expression, his contribution is of worldwide legacy and this paper will demonstrate examples of such spiritual perspective.

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The Method

“... The Wisdom of every poem lays in the de-symbolisation the mind makes as it builds its own fictional construct, giving form to its inner content, externalising the importance of its own nature’s events...” (Kakalidis, 1994, p.235)

The ‘Kakalidis’ Method’ does not attempt critique or philological elaboration. The Philosopher-Poet, Dimitris Kakalidis, in each of his analyses, connects the daily with the eternal, the human with the divine, the “microcosm” with the “macrocosm.” His entire work focuses on inspiring man to achieve well-being in everyday life, delving into the truth concerning the approach of his ontological nature. Man, according to Kakalidis, is the group. The group is humanity. And humanity is the Universe. Through the small, limited and morhic he proceeds to infinity and the amorphous, always delivering a message of redemption. This method simply penetrates the inner spiritual sources of the creator and the creation, bringing to light the hidden essence of every literary work. The Wisdom that activates human consciousness reveals the truth and appears to join the ancient spirit of Greece with the contemporary, the myths and symbols with their essence.

Basic Principle

The basic principle with which the poet-philosopher Dimitris Kakalidis approaches and analyses literary works is one and unique:

*All creation is Spiritual
All creation is the Entity*

This is known unconsciously, possibly even consciously, to every writer, every poet who, once united with the Entity, he or she lives and experiences the indecipherable within, wears the symbols, the concepts, the ideas and creates the myth, grounding his/her truth to the world. Therefore, according to Dimitris Kakalidis, every creation is an intellectual work and, it is certain that it contains the knowledge, the truth, the light. This is compatible to Platos’s assertion about the hidden wisdom revealed through any form of art:

“Plato believed that behind the façade of fraudulent sensory impressions and turbulent emotions was a more real world, a realm of pure thought, that gave to the earthly experience any capability of understanding and value that it had. That's why he saw art as a window to immortality and imagined God as a craftsman. The true nature or structure of things is hidden and wisdom means revelation of these underlying realities.” (Rubenstein, 2004, pg.51).

Kakalidis takes that even further, when he discusses the role of the poet, as the one who is 'initiated' and invokes spiritual awakening to the reader; in his own words:

“An eternal teacher is the poet, his own century he teaches. He wraps his fiery spirit in paper and his Word is the everlasting light that illuminates the souls, the ancestral flame that burns and transforms his bodies, his Times into ashes. And those who seek initiation, to pass into knowledge, become poets, leaders of the world, guides of love, the visionaries of the pathway which, as Kipling also taught, leads to the glory of the ages, to the temple of freedom.” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg.14).

The Starting Point of the Method

The starting point of every analysis is the perpetual and inextricable relationship between Human - Humanity - Entity and the internal belief that every man is a complete Being whose spirit is expressed through every aspect and every creation, as he strives in various forms and roles to find and express his true nature. Man has the ability to dissolve the limitations, the barriers of his tiny self, to experience his universal Self and spread out to infinity in the course of his life. In Kakalidis' words:

“The value of life is man and his extension, humanity, the peoples of the world, his ongoing spirituality, the chosen sun, submerged in the depths of the subconscious, and the struggle for the emergence of the essence of things, of the true being...” (Kakalidis, 1992, pg. 313)

The 'Path' of the Method

With the above as a given, and with the utmost respect to the expression of the inner “genius” of the creator-writer, the approach to any literary work is always centered on the Human-Humanity; Dimitris Kakalidis starts from it and revolves around it drawing concentric circles, breaking the shells of the words and releasing their essence.

He de-symbolises the concepts, the numbers, the myths, the images, the ideas. He unifies the contrasting fields, he equates matter with spirit. He synthesises the philosophies and uses examples from science, history, mythology, technology, consolidating the analyses, always aiming to break the limitations and unravel man from the veils of ignorance, twirling him in the eternal spiral of infinity, proving that he has the ability and the strength to follow it and spread free into infinity. At most times a poem is analysed on three levels, one more extended than the other in order to show man's ability and the passage leading his small limited self to his infinite universal Self. This is eloquently demonstrated when he writes:

“... The poet uses the symbols to highlight the eternal course that the spirit follows in the dark perimeter of the controversial, having as a

guide its majestic formations, a result of mental powers which, emerging from its inner nature, are externalised assuming supreme dimensions, incorporating the features of the infinite mind for the realisation of its nature's work, nature of the world..."

(Kakalidis, 1994, pg.116)

The analysis of every literary work by Dimitris Kakalidis is purely of a higher intellect through the unwavering belief that each person, as part of the Entity, is a complete Being but is not aware of it simply because of one's limited knowledge. However, through the path to self-knowledge one has the ability to reach out and unite with this complete Self. The language he uses for every analysis is poetic so, on its own, every analysis constitutes a new literary work. This kind of awakening is described below:

"Man, oppressed by his time, trapped in Existence, in ignorance is condemned as a result of his own limited knowledge. During the process of his existence's evolutionary cycles he awakens and, on his way to his being, the rights to his omnipotence from the strength of his own weakness he demands." (Kakalidis, 1994, pg.212)

De-Symbolisation

De-symbolisation is the most important part of the analysis. It is the path bearing the message of hope that will reveal the infinity through the limited. Through the symbols of words and numbers, those that the author uses to emotionally move the reader conveying meanings and moral values, the unconscious is de-symbolised and the Wisdom of creation is presented. About the dark places of the unconscious Carl Jaspers (2012) will say: *"The path to authentic knowledge is an act of freedom and boldness."*

Dimitris Kakalidis says that, when consciousness is present and vigilant, it approaches completeness and anchors at the eternal source. From history and myth it passes into eternity and opens up to it. So, every literary work grows beyond the visible contours, surprising even its own creator.

Jung (1964,1991), in his theory of the collective unconscious and the archetypes in literature, argued that in a truly symbolic work of art, the source of the images lays not in the personal unconscious of the author but in the scope of the unconscious mythology whose primordial contents constitute humanity's shared heritage. To the appearance of these archetypes the great literary works owe their great power to move deeply.

When referring to symbols and their meanings Dimitris Kakalidis claims (1992, pg.291):

"The symbols, through their sequential presence in the cosmic alternations of the becoming, remain unchanged regarding the importance of the truth they conceal, even if they are not understood."

They always work in a magical way. They talk through people, through nature, seasons, objects and numbers, planets, suns, the universe, ideas, names. And, whichever way they are interpreted, they have their independence, they don't lose their importance..."

Thus, through his analyses, he tells us that:

"every poem is a vision, every vision a truth, that the human embrace is the embrace of God. The shadows are the dark aspects of existence, the stones are planets, the people suns... The domes of temples are the domes of heaven and the greatness of spirit is the white dove. The lands with the solid ground symbolise the stability of man, and the river symbolising the renewal, the rebirth of the spirit, separates or unifies the universe's fields. The tree is the tree of life, the swallow the symbol of eternal spring, the salt the essence of being and the poet is the Master, who transforms even into a dolphin to pass on to the other side his continuity, the disciple, until his hands, his divine hands holding the world learn to handle the energies and the forces of the soul." (Kakalidis, 1994)

Levels of Analysis

As we have already mentioned, the Kakalidis Method suggests three levels in every analysis of a literary work. That is why we see each symbol having more than one interpretation.

- ✓ **On level-A** the analysis focuses on what happens inside the man who, locked within himself, experiences limitation and ignorance.
- ✓ **On level-B** the analysis focuses on what happens in the entire humanity.
- ✓ **On level-C** the analysis focuses on what happens in the whole of creation, in the entire Universe, in the cosmic becoming.

On all three levels the human being is always at the center of the analysis. In the following excerpt from the analysis of the narrative by D. Kakalidis *Today I spoke with the sea* written by Giannis Tserionis, emerges the way the "sea" is de-symbolised and how a person is carried from limitation to vastness:

- ✓ **Level-A**
The sea has no definition, but the emotion of man is the pain and the sorrow of life...
- ✓ **Level-B**
... Ocean saliferous that gave man the bones, the flesh and the spirit, to have as company the secrets of infinity, to be reborn in sacred Word... focusing on the innermost reflection of the womb

that gave birth to him... irrefutable witness to his manifested immensity, he feels the need to return to the cradle and to the intimate contact with the Monad.

✓ **Level-C**

... There, in the troubled and yet still surface of the water, in the reflection of his being, universal himself, in the communication with the innermost he places his soul and contemplates..."
(Kakalidis, 1992, pg.375)

Another example of this three-leveled analysis comes from the poem *Mad Pomegranate Tree*, by Odysseas Elytis:

*In these all-white courtyards where the south wind blows
Whistling through vaulted arcades, tell me, is it the mad
pomegranate tree
That quivers with foliage newly born at dawn
Raising high its colors in a shiver of triumph?
On plains where the naked girls awake,
When they harvest clover with their light brown arms
Roaming round the borders of their dreams
tell me is it the mad pomegranate tree,
Unsuspecting, that puts the lights in their verdant baskets
On the day that it adorns itself in jealousy with seven kinds of
feathers,
Girding the eternal sun with a thousand blinding prisms.*
(Greek; trans. Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard)

✓ **Level-A**

In the all-white courtyards of the world, where the south wind blows, the poet plays, united with the wisdom of nature, asking people if this wisdom, if this same nature really is the pomegranate tree. There, inside the construct of its light, in the vaulted arcades quivers the spirit of the world into its own, the other light... making the newly born foliage quiver at its dawn as, in front of the triumph of the miracle of its existence, it opens all the colors of the iris. It awakens the naked girls, its female bodies, to reap with their light brown arms the clover, the symbol of the world's trinity...

✓ **Level-B**

On the new, the primary point on the horizon blows the mad pomegranate tree and life makes its appearance. In its infancy, full of light it scatters the seeds of its fruits that writhe from longing. These are that bring the dawn of colors... And they become the world, the desires, its feelings and ideas, its plans... Its visions, naked virginal girls destined to awaken their nature on the plains, provoke the nature of the world, the nature of the pomegranate tree which symbolises the perpetual regeneration, to participate in the

orgiastic game by fertilising **the wombs - the baskets - with the winged cravings of life...**

The poet symbolises the **newly born spirit with the south wind**, through which the **mad pomegranate tree** blows its will, whistling stubbornly to **the labyrinths of the cosmic light** its murmurs, desiring to make them spring up as conscious life. To disperse **on the day that it adorns itself in jealousy with its seven eternal wonders, girding the sun with a thousand blinding prisms - the cultures of the earth**. The numerological analysis of the word “pomegranate tree” gives us the number ten, which is the “all-perfection”, the deity, the sky, the eternity, the sun.

✓ **Level-C**

The poet wants to highlight the power of the Entity by using the pomegranate tree as a symbol. The entity is everything, it creates everything, is inherent therein. It whistles through **its vaulted arcades**. It is the **south wind**, like all winds, carrying its almighty spirit to all the points on the horizon... It is **the naked girls**, it is the singing of their names, of its names. It is the blinding presence of **the sun with a thousand blinding prisms...** It is the spiritual and physical ocean... It is the sun, the sky, the stars and the land of its miracle! (Kakalidis, 1994, pg.117)

The Wisdom of Numbers

“Everything happens according to numbers” argued Pythagoras of Samos and he was not the only one. Homer, Thucydides, Herodotus claimed that numbers are the beginning of everything. Plato argued that ideas are numbers (eidetic numbers). Words are, also, translated into numbers by Dimitris Kakalidis, using the essence of every number to describe the word’s secret message. Here is an example:

“... And in his heart he says that his mother had planted a hundred-petal rose for him. The word “rose” when analysed gives us the number ten, a number symbolising the source of eternal nature, and this is none other than the heart of the universe and of man, whom his mother lulls to the rhythms of the nightingales, the light of knowledge. Besides, the word ‘nightingales’, when numerologically analysed, gives us the number five, which symbolises the light...” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg. 258)

Synthesis of Philosophies

“Inquisitive but limited the human mind makes the error of searching outside of itself for the polar star that will guide it on its journey” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg.59)

Dimitris Kakalidis' method synthesises ancient Greek schools of thought using the numerology of Pythagoras, the certainty of Aristotle for the coexistence of matter and spirit, the endless flow of Heraclitus and his belief that “*From all things one is born and from one thing all are born*” (Heraclitus 10 p.43) and like another Socrates he elicits the high ideas concealed within the play's plot:

“... Unstoppable is the flow of the rivers. The poet knows. Galaxies do not cease their spinning. The universe does not stop the existence, perpetual is its journey through chaos. Man does not cease to think, to be tormented, to live. The desire for life dictates his will to continue wandering. His only expectation is the understanding of the cause that gave birth to dawn; his only care the understanding of the need for the illuminated sky's existence; his last hope the knowledge of his world...” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg389)

Socrates, always based on the fixed and immutable principles of reason, taught the *know thyself* and sought the beginning of every moral concept which is affected neither by historical and social conditions nor from each person's perceptive ability. In other words he sought the absolute and dismissed the relative, he studied the moral essence and rejected the moral phenomena. More specifically:

“*With his 'maieutic' method he managed to penetrate the soul of his interlocutor and bring to light the truth hiding inside it, releasing the spirit from the shackles of its vain nature.*”
(Plato, Timaeus, 171, p.15)

Another example is drawing from Plato:

“*The popularising and creative physiognomy of Plato shed waterfalls of light on humanity, aligning the ideas of the True, the Beautiful and the Good*” (Schuré, 2001).

Dimitris Kakalidis seeks and elicits the essence present in every poem or narrative which leads man to his perfection; the essence referred to in the One of Pythagoras, the End of Plato. He refers to the small human world and the large infinite world of the God that dwells within, as Plato was referring to the Mega and the micro.

Heraclitus accepted that the Word is the principle that governs the Universe and the Word is the *everlasting Fire*.

“Everything results from the transmutation of fire and in turn all become fire”. (Heraclitus, 90 p.87)

Dimitris Kakalidis seeks the Word inside the word of writers, the everlasting Fire inside the Being-Man that transforms the Fire to flames and through pain is called to repeat again the uplift of flames to Fire. In his words:

“Lord of the flames. The consumer of fire, the unseen, his creation without beginning. Not captured, not limited. He remains superior to light, inexhaustible. The Monad. And this is every Word, every idea, every situation, every soul individual or not. Flame of flames, existence of existences, completed breath, the breath of the universal world; the dazzling beauty of the becoming.”
(Kakalidis, 1992, pg.173)

Unification of the Opposites

“Creation is ever-flowing and ever-changing. ‘Eternally everything flows’. Within this change there is harmony because ‘there would be no harmony if there was no high and low or animals without the female and the male which are opposites.’ This way behind the apparent constant contrast and war between things there is a well hidden truth as expressed in the words of Heraclitus: ‘the adverse converging from opposite roads is the most beautiful harmony.’”
(Popper, Gigon, 1984)

The analyses of Dimitris Kakalidis refer to the existence of the entity’s two sides, of opposite forces that coexist within man and whose inability to unify them causes the problems and encumbrances in his function. He highlights their unification that leads man to inner freedom stressing that through spirituality there are no impasses:

“The poles separate and reunite consolidating their differences, the two in one and one in everything. Soul and body, spirit and mind, love and hatred, the eternal bipolar currents. Spirits of infinity that divide the universe and for the sake of its training disorient the human-being and its thoughts. Upward and downward tendencies that beam their fire, a spiritual power that flows eternally from the fountain of the universal mind, Mind of God, omniscience of His unfathomable life, life of the Supreme Being which, in human form, consisting of the kingdoms, as His perfect indication has been projected.”(Kakalidis, 1994, pg. 396)

Equation of Matter and Spirit

“The reality according to Aristotle consists of hidden ‘essences’ (the human being for example) each an inseparable and unique combination of matter and spirit, each in a process of the realisation of its natural potential.” (Rubenstein, 2004, pg.50)

The Kakalidis method highlights that, since all creation is spiritual and since everything contains the spirit, consequently in the analyses arises the fact that matter and spirit are the same. The analyst presents to us the matter that eagerly pleads to unite with its source, the spirit, in order to be redeemed. We can discern this in the following excerpt taken from the analysis of the poem *Inherent* by Giannis Koutsoheras:

*With the day of returning/ and of Icarus' hellenic wings
the path of return is heartfelt/ -Homer! /I look back in time.
I wonder pythagorean/ what good have I done/ I become sensitive.
I envision /for what is Beyond the mind and intellect.
Life giving is our country's insight/ -Plotinus!...*

“... Wisdom is Life, the state, the country, the land with its hellenic wings, Icarian wings, which seeks the life giving sun from which it sprang, shaping its spirit into a body, a myth, a history, to renew their ontological relationship, to continue pouring out from it, causing its drama, to have the strength to withstand time... Life giving is life, life giving is the country. Life giving is the source of social lyricism, the source of ever flowing sensitivity from which everything springs. Life giving is matter and the spirit that nurtures it, sculpting it to an ever-shining work of art, Plotinus!...” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg.243)

Science - History - Mythology

“The giant of fire, the fire-born Hephaestus, Prometheus in the descent of spirit into matter, winemaker Dionysus, god of the cosmic vision of his own creation, follows his fate.” (Kakalidis, 1992, pg. 254).

Dimitris Kakalidis, continuer of ancient Greek philosophy, uses historical data, scientific knowledge, examples of myths, predominantly from Greek mythology in order to enrich and validate the issue in question and to consolidate within man the *thesis* for his spiritual evolution. Paul Diel, in his book *Symbolism in Greek Mythology* (Diel, 2012), investigates and analyses the heroes of the myths and all the symbols contained in them, noting that behind every lust and desire is the ultimate desire for uplift, for the

spiritualisation of man. This inherent longing derives from the processes of creation itself, as demonstrated in the following extract:

“... In search of the truth about cosmogony, it could be assumed that the sun, as a fiery, flaming mass, has no shadow and to acquire one it projects both its physical carrier as well as its extensions, its planetary bodies, to represent its living existence in chaos. These perceive its power as their own power and, resisting the fire, they cool, embodying the will for existence in the chaos of their own desire. Authorising as their elected representative the planet earth, they raise in its realm their animal nature, they make it human and, confessing their inability for evolution, they demand the spiritual presence of the sun itself ...” (Kakalidis, 1994, pg. 24)

Objective

As evident from all previously mentioned, in any analysis what the analyst aims at is to guide his reader on a journey beyond appearances, beyond the restrictions of the limited mind; to help him overcome his weaknesses, his fears, his difficulties. And, as he too begins to learn to interpret the concepts and deepen in the ideas, he will begin to discern the hidden essence that will gradually lead him to knowledge which is none other than the Knowledge of the inner Self, of which all other knowledge is part; the eternal truth that everything springs from the spirit that permeates all beings equally. His anxiety is to convince Man that he is a comprehensive Being and to show him the way so that his conscience is awakened; he can then understand that the incentives, consciously or unconsciously, urging man to his actions are incentives given by the vast knowledge so as to acquire the individual knowledge and gradually reach its source, the pure source of his existence. That way he can be well, at any time, in his life. More specifically:

“Man is called to delve into his world, into himself, into the limited that encompasses the limitless, in symbols and ideas, into the processing of the concepts of life that the mind makes so that the spirit finds its way in the vast universe, the nature of which is illustrated in the micro-domains of its expression, proclaiming the messages of truth, describing itself in the scenes it directs for the play of its cosmic drama.” (Kakalidis, 1992, pg.43)

Conclusion

“When viewing himself, man is alone in the infinite universe. Infinite and finite, unique in the absoluteness of his existence, he embraces the dimensions of the whole with his spirit and, meditating on his

own nature, he wonders at the findings of his mental functions, of the number of think-processes that relentlessly alternate multiplying the conclusions that lead to the revelation of his omnipotence in absolute zero whose exact meaning is the actual depth of his entity..." (Kakalidis, 1992, pg.459)

Nature talks to people with all of its symbols. At its every stage, at its every happening the evolutionary course of the Universe is reflected - the evolutionary course of man. At every moment the great is disclosed to the small. The Poets have the gift to unite with the word, to reach sources transparent and clear; to create their myth with symbols. And every myth, every creation of work becomes a small Universe that evolves inside the soul of the reader, helping him along his way to *the return to the ancestral river* (Hickman, 2011), his pure spiritual nature. This is highlighted in the analytical method of Dimitris Kakalidis for literature and poetry. This is what he, also, points out in the daily happenings of life.

His two philosophical works, *The Wisdom of the Poem* and *The Wisdom of the Short Story*, are considered works of great intellectual value, a gem for Greek literature, as they represent an innovative worldwide intellectual legacy. As highlighted by Stafilas (1993), "*It is the beginning of a new literary school, a new Greek, distinctly Greek road that branches into global currents.*"

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