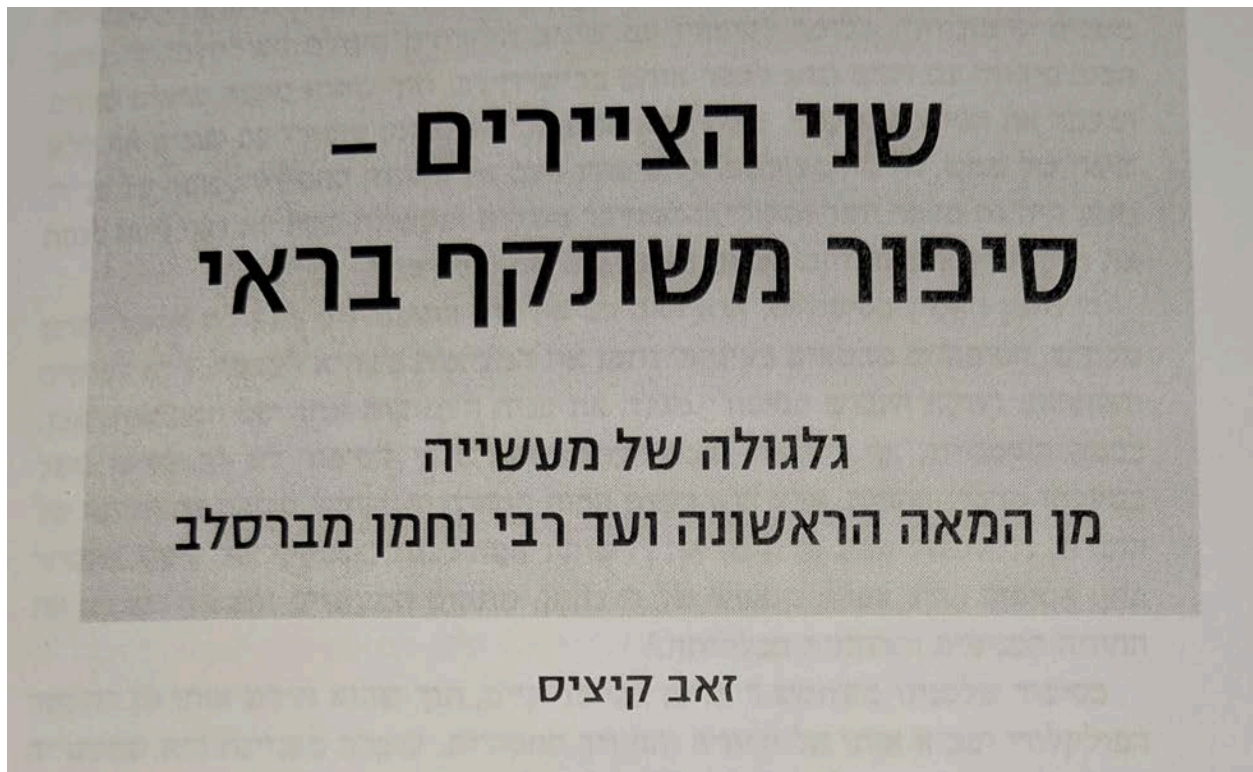


The Lazy Artisan II

You use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul.

- George Bernard Shaw



Prof Zeev Kitzis has investigated the source for the parable of the lazy artisan (<http://www.jyungar.com/theological-essays>).

He cites Rumi as a possible source for The Akedat Yitzchak as well as a Greek source (Pliny The Elder).

Let us examine these.

The contest of Zeuxis and Parrhasias

[from D. Kunze, *The Art 3 Idea: A Third Way to Study Art*, 2000]



There were two famous painters in ancient Greece, Zeuxis and Parrhasias. Each was at the pinnacle of his abilities, no one knew how to choose between them. They, however, decided to resolve the issue for once and for all, with a “painting duel” held under strictly controlled conditions.

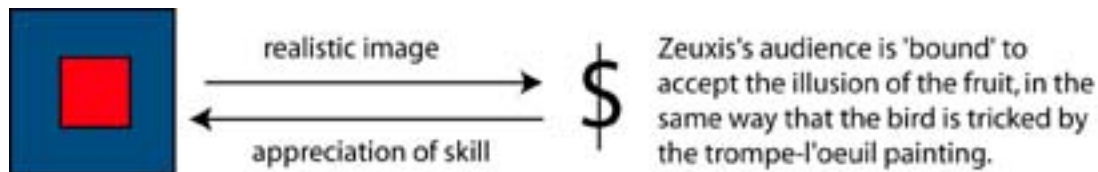
They assigned themselves two areas of a wall, each invisible from the other so that they might work in private. Each artist was to paint a mural, a fresco of pigment in wet plaster. A carefully assembled audience-jury was to view both paintings and award one the prize, ending forever the tedious and insoluble rivalry.

Zeuxis was actually thought to have the edge in this contest. While his paintings were not ultimately judged better than Parrhasias’, they always had a strong initial effect. They could “knock your eyes out,” as they say, by using the tricks of *trompe-l’oeil*, or super-realism. Parrhasias knew the same tricks but was more subtle. You got to like his paintings because of their time-release effects, which sometimes made them less likable in the beginning. Parrhasias, subtler and probably more talented because his works took time and endured, was ironically less likely to win out over Zeuxis, who was a master of initial surprise. The contest was really about Parrhasias’ ability to think his way through this dilemma.

When it came time to judge the freshly completed paintings, the audience of select critics assembled, and, behind them, a large crowd of onlookers. Zeuxis was outwardly calm and

confident. He had produced, he seemed to think, his best work for this crucial occasion. Behind the curtain (it was important to reveal the work all at once) was his life's masterpiece.

The spokesman for the jury asked Zeuxis to draw the curtain. When he did, the crowd and jury gasped to see a bowl of fruit, plaintive and simple. How could a great painter be content, in a situation such as this, to paint a bowl of fruit? It was admittedly a finely painted still-life. The glint of light off the pale green surface of the pears made them seem moist and firm. You could practically taste the pomegranates.



After a long period of silence, a bird flew down from its vantage point on the top of the wall, straight into the painted bowl of fruit, from which it had hoped to steal a grape. Hitting the wall with a smack, the bird fell to the ground, a victim of illusion.

Without a doubt, this proved what the jury and audience could scarcely conclude that the realism of the painting had made it escape its limits, as artificial; the real judge had been the bird, whom no one could accuse of favoritism. When the gasps of the crowd died away, Zeuxis was sure he had won, no matter what Parrhesias' entry. For what better demonstration could he have hoped? Zeuxis's confidence now caused him to straighten up, breathe deeply, and radiate a newfound humanity, which he turned on to Parrhesias who was standing at the edge of the open circle of onlookers. "Now, let's take a look at the undoubtedly excellent work of Parrhesias. "Now, let's take a look at the undoubtedly excellent work of my esteemed colleague" he suggested, with a tone that suggested he would be magnanimous in his victory, always sending a bit of work Parrhesias' way if his own studio got too busy.

Parrhesias feigned or honestly exhibited (one could not say which) a meek but genial tone. Slightly bowed, he did not speak but turned slightly towards the area where his mural was to be revealed. The crowd shuffled and murmured. Zeuxis by now had become their leader.

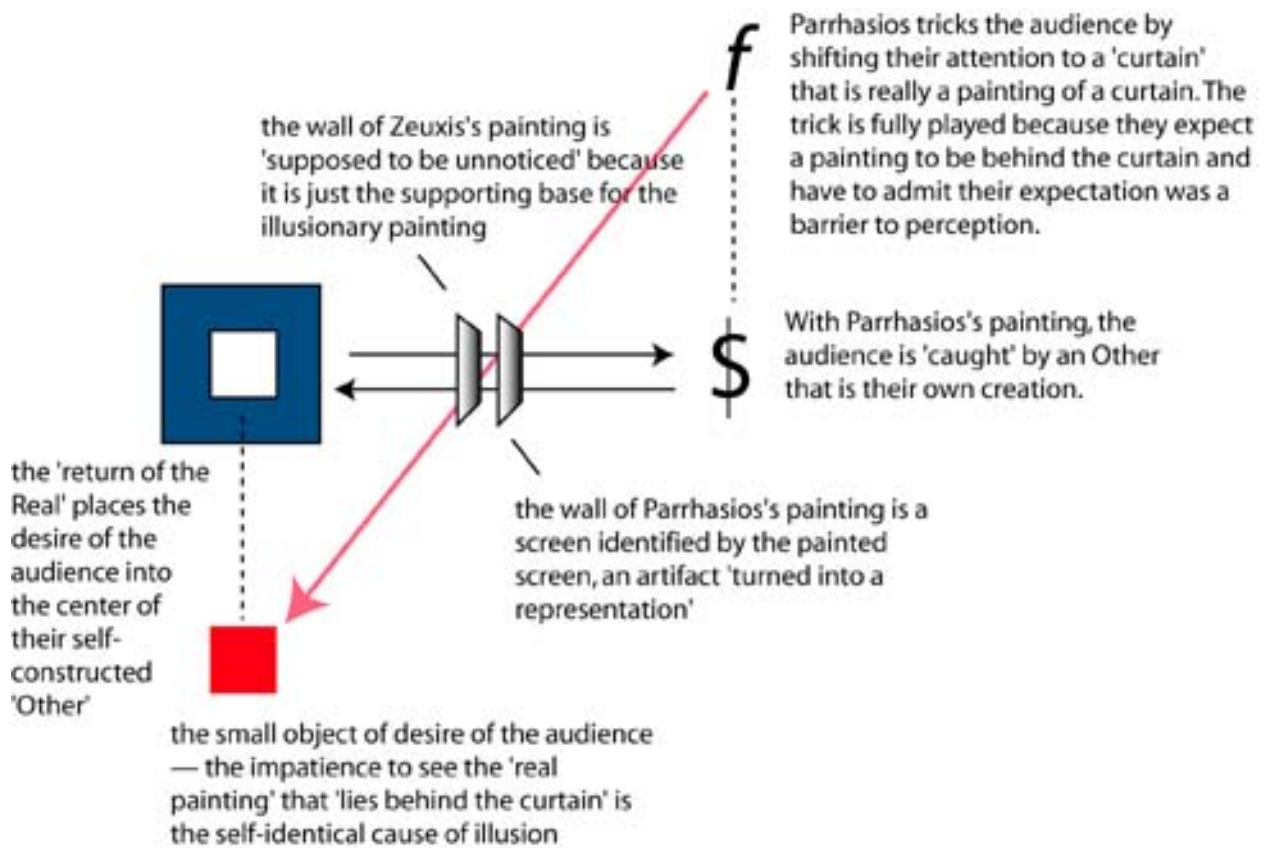
Now standing around Parrhesias' wall, the crowd grew impatient. Even the curtain began to look a bit dowdy. Zeuxis, not wishing to over-embarrass his rival, came forward after a longish interval and directly addressed the painter. "I think," he said, "it is time to see what you may have done. Would you honor us by drawing the curtain?" "

Can't be done," Parrhesias replied. The jury, audience, and Zeuxis thought that Parrhesias was at the breaking point, that he was emotionally crushed by the nearness of defeat. "Surely," Zeuxis put in, trying to soften the blow of the inevitable, "we would be very happy to see your work, but we're getting a bit impatient standing in the hot sun. Just show us the painting."

After a pause, Parrhesias replied, "You're looking at it." The onlookers focused more carefully on the wall, realizing at last that they were looking at a painting of a curtain.

You don't have to be Greek to conclude that the prize went to Parrhasias, or that the reason was that, while Zeuxis had tricked a bird, Parrhasias had not only managed to trick human beings, but his fellow-professional at that.

A subtler truth within the story is about human perception versus animal perception. The bird went for the food and was dependent upon the appearance of the grape which it would, in some eternal moment in bird-heaven, be able to eat: a sort of behavioristic “operant conditioning” situation where stimulus and reward follow each other in close succession. The human situation is different, in the evidence of this anecdote. The humans saw not a grape-like thing, but the cover of that which they wanted to see. They were tricked because they were expecting a concealment of what they wanted. They automatically valued only what was invisible, inaccessible. Used to concealments, they did not inspect the painting of the curtain closely. They were tricked by their own expectations, even if the curtain had been painted poorly.

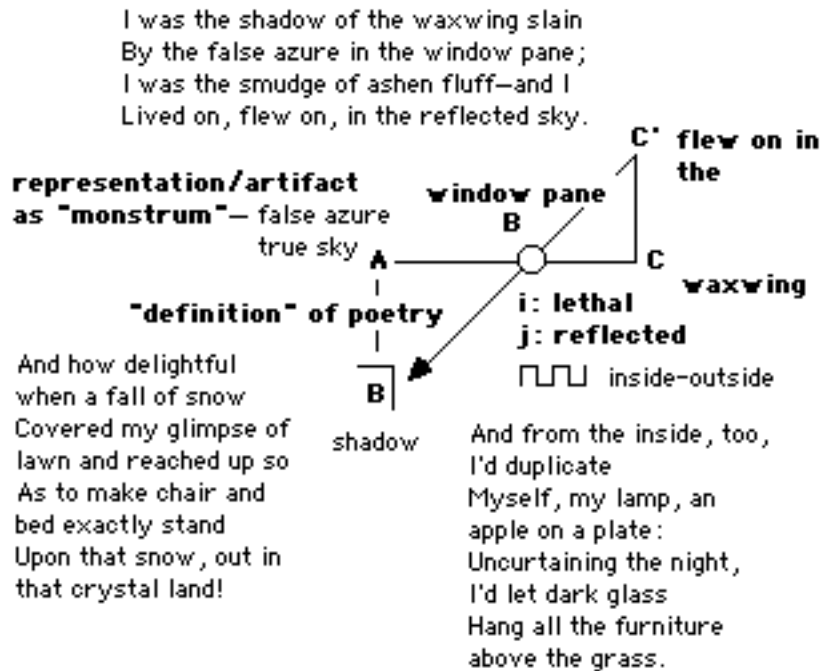


The first moral of the story might be called the audience's take-home truth. Good artists can fool our natural selves, great artists fool our cultural — our real — selves. The deeper moral is for artists and student-critics of the arts. This has to do with a rule to follow. When it comes to tricking humans, you can rely on them to help you with their own expectations. And, humans expect tricks! — In this case, a simple curtain. The good artist therefore gives a good trick: a painted grape that fools our natural selves. The great artist gives a great trick: a trick₂, as it were. The great artist anticipates our predilection for trick₁ tricks, and tricks the trick, making a trap for humans.

The bolagram contrasts the transitive relationship between an audience and an illusion (suspension of disbelief remains silent — the audience 'knows' that the painting is an illusion) with the 'intransitive' relationship between the audience's impatience and their gullible consumption of the painting of the curtain. The anecdote strikingly demonstrates the 'two-screen theory', since there are 'two walls', the Zeuxis wall, supposed to disappear through the collaborative consent of the audience willing to be sucked in by the illusion (\$) and the Parrhesias wall, that really DOES appear although it (with the curtain on it) doesn't exist. The small object of desire, impatience, the surplus of the event, returns to the 'center' of the Other that the audience has constructed, the authoritarian basis of the painted illusion.

Compare this story with the opening lines of Nabokov's 'fictional' poem (a poem supposedly written by one of the characters of the novel, *Pale Fire*). The poem clarifies the anecdote in a strangely coincidental way.

I was the shadow of the waxwing slain
 By the false azure in the window pane;
 I was the smudge of ashen fluff—and I
 Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.
 And from the inside, too, I'd duplicate
 Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate:
 Uncurtaining the night, I'd let dark glass
 Hang all the furniture above the grass.
 And how delightful when a fall of snow
 Covered my glimpse of lawn and reached up so
 As to make chair and bed exactly stand
 Upon that snow, out in that crystal land!



Rumi: Chinese Art and Greek Art

“... *Art gives a teasing taste of surrender without the full experience. Beautiful poetry can keep one on the verge of the oceanic annihilation in God. Rumi says, we’ve been walking in the surf holding our robes up, when we should be diving naked under, and deeper under.*”

That is Coleman Barks’ contextual prose (partial) for the chapter titled: **Art as Flirtation with Surrender** ... indeed in this poem (from that chapter) Rumi gives us a taste of this “surrender” – deeper and deeper ... as “practiced” by the Greeks, who are like Sufis, in this regard! ...

¹ http://art3idea.psu.edu/boundaries/bolagrams/zeuxis_parrhassios.html



*The Prophet said, “There are some who see me
by the same light in which I am seeing them.*

Our natures are one.

*Without reference to any strands
of lineage, **without reference to texts or traditions,**
we drink the life-water together.”*

Here’s a story about that hidden mystery:

*The Chinese and the Greeks
were arguing as to who were the better artists.*

The King said,

“We’ll settle this matter with a debate.”

*The Chinese began talking,
but the Greeks wouldn’t say anything.*

They left.

*The Chinese suggested then
that they each be given a room to work on
with their artistry, two rooms facing each other
and divided by a curtain.
The Chinese asked the King
for a hundred colors, all the variations,
and each morning they came to where
the dyes were kept and took them all.
The Greeks took no colors.
“They’re not part of our work.”
They went to their room
and began cleaning and polishing the walls. All day
every day **they made those walls as pure and clear
as an open sky.**
**There is a way that leads from all-colors
to colorlessness.** Know that the magnificent variety
of the clouds and the weather comes from
the total simplicity of the sun and the moon.
The Chinese finished, and they were so happy.
They beat the drums in the joy of completion.
The King entered their room,
astonished by the gorgeous color and detail.
The Greeks then pulled the curtain dividing the rooms.
The Chinese **figures and images shimmeringly reflected
on the clear Greek walls. They lived there,
even more beautifully, and always
changing in the light.**
The Greek art is the Sufi way.
They don’t study books of philosophical thought.
They make their loving clearer and clearer.
No wantings, no anger. **In that purity
they receive and reflect the images of every moment,
from here, from the stars, from the void.**
They take them in
as though **they were seeing
with the Lighted Clarity
that sees them.**²*

In1 Rumi, Mathnawi, 3480–3508 (trans. Alan Williams). The translation is as follows:

The Story of a Dispute between the Greeks and Chinese on the Art of Painting and Drawing1

If you should like a dose of hidden knowledge, then tell the tale of Greek and Chinese painters.
The Chinese said, ‘We are the better painters.’
The Greeks replied, ‘Ours is the power and the glory.’

² **The Essential Rumi**, By Jalal al-Din Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks and John Moyne

The sultan said, 'I wish to test you on this, to see who of you lives up to your claim.'
And then the Chinese and the Greeks were ready, the Greeks were more experienced in the skill.
The Chinese said, 'Will you consign to us a whole apartment, also one for you?'
There were two such adjacent sets of rooms, and one the Chinese had, the Greeks the other.
The Chinese begged the king for a hundred colors; that dear man opened up his vaults to them.
Each morning from his treasury the colors were paid out to the Chinese as a gift.
The Greeks said, 'In our work no paint materials are suitable, except to clean the rust.'
They closed the doors and took to burnishing, and they became as pure and clear as sky.
There is a path from many hues to none: a hue is like a cloud, a moon is hueless. And all the light and shining in the cloud is from the stars and moon and sun, you know.

Now when the Chinese had performed their task, they took to beating drums in celebration. The king came in and there he saw the paintings; they robbed him of his mind and understanding. And after that he went to see the Greeks; they drew the curtain back between the rooms. The image of those pictures and those works was mirrored on those walls with clarity. And all he'd seen in there was finer here – his eyes were stolen from their very sockets.

The Greeks are like the Sufis, my dear father, free from contention, books and artifice. Instead they've stripped their hearts and purified them of lust and greed and hate and avarice. The mirror's purity is like the heart's, receiving images beyond all number. The endless formless form of the Unseen shone from the heart's mirror on Moses' breast, although that form is not contained in heaven, nor on the throne nor earth nor sea nor Pisces. Because they have a boundary and a number, the mirror of the heart is free of limits. The mind is silenced here, or led astray, because the heart's with Him, or is Himself. No image is eternally reflected as one or many except within the heart. Each image newly formed upon it forever appears in it with no concealment there. The burnishers are free from scent and color; each moment they see instantaneous beauty. They left behind the form and husk of knowledge and raised the flag of certainty itself. Mere thought is gone. They have attained to light; they've got the strait and sea of recognition.

Rebbe Nachman's Tale revisited

In The Lazy Artisan (www.jyungar.com/theologicalessays) I ended with the Parable from Rebbe Nachman as follows:

In Chayei Mehoran (Ch 98,18) Reb Nossen writes:

(יח) מעשה במלך אחד שבנה לעצמו פלטין וקרא לשני אנשים וצוה אותם שיצירו את הפלטין שלו וחלק להם את הפלטין לשני חלקים. הינו שמחצה הפלטין יהיה מטל על האחד לצירו, ומחצה השני יהיה מטל על השני לצירו. וקבע להם זמן שעד אותו הזמן מחיבים הם לצירו, והלכו להם אלו השני אנשים. והלך אחד מהם ונגע וטרח מאד ולמד עצמו זאת האמנות של ציור וכיור היטב עד שיציר את חלקו שהיה מטל עליו בציור יפה ונפלא מאד. ויציר שם חיות ועופות וכיוצא בזה בציורים נפלאים ונאים מאד.

והשני לא שם אל לבו גזרת המלך ולא עסק בזה כלל. וכאשר הגיע סמוך לזמן המגבל שהיו צריכין לגמר מלאכתם, הגה הראשון כבר גמר מלאכתו ואמננתו בחלקו בציור נאה ונפלא מאד. וזה השני התחיל להסתפל על עצמו מה זאת עשה שפלה הזמן בהביל וריק ולא חש לגורא דמלכא. והתחיל לחשב מחשבות מה לעשות, כי בנדאי באלו הימים המועטים הסמוכים לזמן המגבל אי אפשר לתקן עוד ללמד לעצמו ולעשות אמנות הציור, לציר חלקו בזה הזמן המועט, כי היה סמוך מאד למועד הקבוע להם. ונתישב בדעתו והלך והטיח כל חלקו במשיחת סמנין (שקורין פאקיסט [סוג צבע]) ועשה פאקיסט שחור על כל חלקו. והפאקיסט היה כמו אספקלריא ממש, שהיו יכולין להתראות בו כמו באספקלריא ממש, והלך ותלה וילון לפני חלקו להפסיק בין חלקו ובין חלק חברו. ויהי כי הגיע מועד הקבוע ששבע להם המלך הלך לראות תבנית מלאכתם אשר עשו באלו הימים. וראה חלק הראשון שהוא מציר בציורים נאים ונפלאים מאד ומצירים שם בחלקו צפרים וכו' בדרכים נפלאים מאד. וחלק השני היה תלוי בוילון וחשך תחתיו ואין רואין שם מאומה. ועמד השני ופרש את הוילון והזרים השמש ובאו והאירו כל הציורים הנפלאים כלם בחלקו מחמת שהיה שם הפאקיסט שהיה מאיר כמו אספקלריא. על-כן כל הצפרים המצירים בחלק הראשון ושאר כל הציורים הנפלאים כלם נראו בתוך חלקו וכל מה שראה המלך בחלק הראשון ראה גם-כן בחלקו של זה. ונוסף לזה שגם כל הכלים הנפלאים וכל הקרידנצון [כמו רהיטים] וכיוצא שהכניס המלך לתוך הפלטין כלם נראו גם-כן בחלק השני. וכן כל מה שירצה המלך להכניס עוד כלים נפלאים לתוך הפלטין יהיו כלם נראים בחלקו של השני, והוטב הדבר לפני המלך וכו'. (ויותר מזה איני זוכר) כל זה שמעתי מפיו הקדוש בעצמי:

A story about a king who built himself a palace, and he summoned two people and ordered them to decorate his palace, and he divided the palace into two parts: one half was the responsibility of one person to decorate, and the other half was the other's responsibility to decorate. And he fixed a time limit within which they had to decorate it, and the two men went their ways.

One of them went and struggled and toiled a great deal, teaching himself this art of decor and fresco very, very thoroughly, to the extent that he decorated the part for which he was 10 responsible with the most beautiful and wondrous murals. He depicted animals, birds and so forth, with the most wondrous and pleasant depictions. And the second man paid no attention to the king's order; he did nothing about it at all.

And when it came close to the time limit when they had to finish their work, behold, the first man had already finished his work and his art with the most exquisite and wondrous decor. And the second man began to look at himself: what had he done, wasting the time with vapidness and emptiness, without so much as thinking about the king's order. He began to think about what to do, for surely within these few days before the deadline it is impossible to fix this and learn the art

of decor so as to decorate his part within this short time, for it was very close to the time appointed for them.

And he came up with an idea, and he went and plastered his part with a compound called pakist, and he plastered dark pakist on his entire part. And the pakist was just like a mirror, and could reflect just like a mirror, and he went and hung a curtain in front of his part to partition between his part and the other's part.

And when the time came, which the king appointed for them, the king went to see the form of their work which they had done in these days. And he saw the first part, that it was decorated with the most pleasant and wondrous images, and birds and so forth were depicted there, in the most wondrous ways. And the second part was covered with curtains, and behind it, darkness, and nothing at all could be seen.

The second man got up and opened the curtain, and the sun was shining, and all those wondrous images came and shined in his part, since there was pakist (poor low-class fellow) there, shining like a mirror. So, all the depicted birds in the first part and the rest of the wondrous images all appeared in his part, and whatever the king saw in the first part, he also saw in this man's part.

In addition to this, all the wondrous objects and all the credenzas and so forth that the king brought into the palace, they all appeared in the second part as well.

*And so whatever additional wondrous items the king wanted to bring in his palace, would all appear in his second part, **and this pleased the king.***

[I remember no more than this.] I heard all this from his holy mouth himself.

Reb Chaim writes as follows: “What I heard is that even if a person is lazy or lackadaisical his entire life, he can still better himself by at least mirroring the tzaddik's activities, doing whatever he can!”

Reb Mota Frank directs me to Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender: (Diburei Emunah Vol #)

ה"פאקוסט" המאיר – תמימות

אותו פאקוסט, שדרכו האיר מעשה יצירת האומנות הנפלא,
בדומה למקור ללא שינוי – היו אומרים אנשי שלומינו –
מרמוז על ענין התמימות והפשיטות, שאף היא הנהגה של
הצמדות למקור ביושר ובכנות – ללא כל שינויים
והתחכמויות.

כי אמנם, האומן הראשון שצייר את כל הציורים הנפלאים,
היה חכם וצדיק גדול וידען גדול, ובקי בכל הלימודים, בנגלה
ובנסתר, ורק מכוח חכמתו וצדקותו יצר את יצירת
האומנות הנפלאה.

ואילו השני היה אדם פשוט, שקורין "פראסטער", שכמובן
מכוחו לא היה מגיע לזאת, לעשות מעשה שייטב בעיני
המלך, אך היה בו תמימות ופשיטות חיובית ומועילה, ללא

THE "PAKUST" WHO ILLUMINATES: SIMPLICITY

That lazy artisan, who mirrored the wondrous mural without any change, our (Breslover) group used to say, this story refers to the concept of simplicity and no guile (in the spiritual path). Getting close to the source with integrity and honesty, with no changes or philosophies. For in fact the first artisan who created the wondrous mural, was also a wise man and a great Zaddik, and full of knowledge, and fully acquainted with manner of studies, in revealed and hidden aspects of Torah, and from his own knowledge and wisdom was able to create the wondrous mural.

However the second artisan was a simple man, called "*proster*" (uncouth) and obviously by his effort was unable to reach this artistic standard, whose handiwork was sufficient to impress the king, yet nevertheless through his simplicity and honesty without any personal guile, or knowledge, meaning from his perspective he had no illusions about self, transforming himself into a mirror and a "clear lens"³,

³ Moses prophesied through the "clear lens" ["*Aspaklaria D'meira*"] while the rest of the prophets prophesied through the "opaque lens" ["*Aspaklaria D'eina Meira*"]. (*Yevamot* 49b, and throughout the *Zohar*).

קלה

דיבורי אמונה

הכמה עצמית, כלומר שמכוחו לא היה לו כלום, אלא הוא
שם עצמו להיות כ"מראה" וכ"אספקלריא מאירה" - ועל
ידי כך השתקף כל העומד לנגדו, בדיוק נמרין, ללא כל
שינוי.

זוה מכוון ממש לענין התמימות המוחלטת, דלית ליה מגרמיה
כלום, שאין לו מכוחו כלום. היינו שהשני זכה בכוח תמימותו
והתבטלותו המושלמת והמוחלטת במידה שוה (ואולי אף
יותר...) כמו החכם הגדול, שעשה הכל ביגיעה רבה - על ידי
הכמתו ולימודיו ואומנותו הרבה.

And through this he included everything that faced him (in his mural) with exact precision, and without any change.

This tale then refers to the matter of simplicity, of never showing any light of its own, admitting that he is powerless, meaning that the second artisan merited through the power of his simplicity and self-abnegation, that was complete and decisive, in equal measure, (maybe even more..) compared to wise great man, who achieved greatness through much toil and effort, through his knowledge and wisdom and great craftsmanship.

לימוד ומוסר השכל לכל!

זוה לימוד ומוסר השכל גדול. כי הרי יחידים המה חכמים ונבונים כאלו שיכולים להוציא מתחת ידם אומנות נפלאה כזאת באמצעות חכמתם ומדעם. אך בכוח תמימות ופשיטות, בשפלות וכביטול מוחלט לצדיק ולעצותיו הקדושות, ללא כל סטייה והתחכמות, אפשר גם אפשר להגיע לטוב נפלא כזה... כמו אצל ה"אומן" הפשוט השני שהגיע לכוח כזה, שראו אצלו אומנות נפלאה וציורים מרהיבים ביפיים, שכל המעלות והאורות המיוחדים במינם שהיו אצל הראשון – האירו גם כן אצלו, וזאת ללא כל חכמה ומדע, רק על ידי ביטול מוחלט.

זוה מוסר השכל נורא, עד להיכן כוח מעלת התמימות והפשיטות מגיע...

A learning and instruction for all:

There are those unique individuals who can produce amazing works of art using their skill sets. However, using purity and simplicity, humility and total self-abnegation to the Zaddik, and his holy ideas and suggestions, it is also possible to come to the same wonderful outcome.

Like in the tale of the artisans...whereby the second lazy one achieved the same results, for all the wondrous exalted singular aspects in their own light, which were in the first artisan's mural, were mirrored in the second. And he achieved all this without all the sophistication and knowledge.

And this is precisely the message of the tale, the power and extent of a life driven by simplicity and humility, just how far it reaches (achieves).

The orthodox Breslov community focuses on the simplicity of the second artisan without seeing any guile or laziness. He is able to achieve precisely because he has "no light of his own" a reference to the sefira of Malchut, which can only reflect the light of the higher sefirot. The laziness and vapidness of his life are redeemed by his simplicity integrity and earnestness. The king is pleased precisely because he mirrors the other artisan.

This notion of “p’shitus und t’mimus” is the very hallmark of Breslov theology that resists all philosophy and learned erudition in favor of integrity, humility and self-abnegation to the Zaddik.

Howard Schwartz has spent his career investigating folklore and his latest book on Rabbi Nachman (“A Palace of Pearls”) cites this tale of two artisans.

Howard Schwartz writes:⁴

⁴ A Palace of Pearls, The Stories of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, Oxford University Press, 2018

This parable is a well-known tale from the East with an ironic ending. Yes, the lazy artist seems to have gotten away with his assignment to decorate the walls of the palace by creating a reflection of the true artist's beautiful creations. In the well-known version of this story, however, the king rewarded the first artist by placing two sacks of gold by his mural and said, "These sacks of gold will be your reward." Then, pointing to the reflection of the sacks of gold in the lazy artist's section, the king said, "And those will be yours." Thus the king cleverly rewarded the true artist and punished the lazy one with the same deception that he had used on the king. In this version the moral is clear and the punishment appropriate.

Rabbi Nachman, however, while retelling this tale, deletes the ironic ending. That way the king does not appear to choose between the two artists. This is difficult enough to accept if we think of the king as a human king who has been deceived. Surely God, who can see into the hearts of men, could not be deceived this way. Thus it may be more useful to interpret the story as an allegory. It's safe to say that almost any appearance of a king in a rabbinic parable represents God. And there are indications of the mythology of heaven in this tale—God is said to live in heaven behind a curtain, called the *Pargod*. Furthermore, according to Kabbalah, "As above, so below; as below, so above." Heaven is said to be a mirror image of this world. There is, for example, a heavenly Jerusalem as well as an earthly Jerusalem. In the earthly Jerusalem the Temple has been destroyed, but in the heavenly Jerusalem the Temple is still standing, and always will be. There the angel Michael serves as the high priest, who sacrifices the souls of the righteous to God. Perhaps the king's acceptance of the mirror image alludes to this tradition about how the world above is a mirror image of that below. There is also a subtle hint in the tale that Nachman recognizes the illusory nature of art, which is, as Socrates put it, "a reflection of a reflection." As Reb Nachman said: "The eyes are like a polished mirror. Everything that stands before them is seen within them."²

He correctly notes that Rebbe Nachman's tale omits the king's ironic reward, as noted in the *Akedat Yitzchak* version whereby the king gives the lazy artisan a reflection of the sack of gold he had rewarded the first artisan. This would fit with moral of the tale as one of a punishment fitting the crime, the guile and craftiness of the lazy artisan is rewarded with a similar clever trick.

In both Rebbe Nachman's version as well as the Ruzshiner's the king was pleased!

וְהוּטָב הַדְּבָר לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

The deception of the king is met with approval!

For me, the mirror is the critical instrument by which both the deception and the king's pleasure is evoked.

There is something within the king that relates to the deception. Did he achieve his throne by a similar method? Was there something in his past that related to the lazy artisan's craftiness?

Kabbala teaches as Schwartz points out, *just as below so above*...so the mirror image might refer to the reflection of the supernal world.

The Rumi version points to a tale without deception, for the polished glass indeed reflected the painting but enhanced it with all manner of light during the day. It is as if scholarship and erudition and theology makes sense of the universe but only through the prism of human intellect, whereas the Greeks understood that an even more authentic approach is to mirror reality in a finely polished glass that also allows the light to alter the image as time passes so that not only is one "seeing" reality change with time but that, this type of seeing is with the heart that requires purity of vision to the point where *"as though they were seeing with the Lighted Clarity that sees them."*

There is a mirroring effect whereby the purer the heart's vision and clarity the "as though" the human clarity becomes approximate to the very divine that is seeing back. The king is pleased precisely because finally an artisan has cracked his code and sees the world like he does.

Postscript

In "For Self-Examination", Kierkegaard claims that the Word of God acts like a mirror for us, so that what we are really seeing and learning about is ourselves. "If you are to read God's Word in order to see yourself in the mirror, then during the reading you must incessantly say to yourself: It is I to whom it is speaking, it is I about whom it is speaking."