

AFTERWORD

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AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD

I

I consider this novella as an 'exercise in writing' which took my fancy many years ago when I found myself in my early twenties unemployed for several months after my first sojourn to Europe in early 1982 including a short stay in Cyprus the country of my parents. While I waited for the Department of Education to give me the final approval to teach (I had in the previous year qualified to become a visual art teacher) I came across some old faded pencil literary scribbling from years before which I had written down while sitting in the back of the classroom during whatever high school lessons bored me (usually mathematics); as I and some other school friends were very much into Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* – in my youth I had read it four times – and so naturally enough I made several attempts at writing my own 'epic'. However, none of this literary endeavour came to any fruition. Nevertheless, when I found these old notes I was motivated to try and do 'something' with them. At the time the scapegoating 'dole bludger' ¹ myth was seemingly at its height – being stoked by a Federal LNP government (although one has since dismally discovered that there were those from the other major party at the time the ALP who also shared a similar prejudice) to irresponsibly shift blame away from its own economic sins to the most powerless who were disproportionately suffering from them – I as well found it curious to irrationally feel 'guilty' to be out of work when it was not my fault that the state education department was being so bureaucratically slow in organising my final approval to teach. For just a few of the months of the lengthy period when I was denied the opportunity to begin earning an income through casual teaching I received unemployment benefits and in such a malevolent social climate I shall never forget the dirty looks and surly behaviour of one particular young male clerk as I lined up with many other unfortunates at a crowded social security office in Belmore which is a suburb in a lower-economic area of Sydney. I also recall how one time while waiting in this dilapidated cream coloured sitting room I had looked around me to see how so many of the other unemployed appeared to be unskilled workers (usually migrants who many had the additional cultural burden of not being fluent English speakers), and who at the time always seemed to be among the first to be 'jettisoned' during any economic downturn.

II

Thus, the issue of the state and the individual remains a relevant central theme in this attempt at writing. I was, and remain, aware that this work follows an anti-utopian literary tradition which includes elements of Swift's satirical *Gulliver's Travels*; Butler's *Erewhon* and modern twentieth century novels such as Huxley's *Brave New World*; Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* as well as *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1924); it is said this Russian gem actually had an important influence on George Orwell. (I also feel inclined to place Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* within this dystopian literary tradition and while it is not a novel *The Rebel* which is a collection of essays by Albert Camus also comes to mind. Certainly, generally speaking the policies of governments – no matter

their ideological disposition on any quantum or traditional political spectrum - always need to be critically queried and when they are found wanting must be rectified especially when for any self-serving reason they lean more so to social coercion rather than showing a greater commitment to social conscience).

III

From the novella it may be seen that human corruption knows no bounds and that one of its common variants – among so many – is the use of official religion as a tool of social control by the state; yet I have chosen to still explore the possibility of a loving ‘Supreme Being’ so as to be somewhat even handed in regards to the legitimacy of this religious question; thus I hope whether one is a believer in a spiritual realm or is not - and as it is there are also those who are ‘somewhere in between’ as agnostics – will have an opportunity to ‘philosophically breathe’ on this age old theological matter.

With that said ideologically speaking there is also how a ‘political messiah’ may manipulate national and ancient mythologies – with their own somewhat quasi-religious undertones of a ‘superior otherness’ - as specific psychological/social vehicles for sustaining power.

IV

After perusing those first scribbling attempts at serious writing I finally accomplished my original task of finishing a ‘literary piece’ after many years of ‘forced labour’ in 1993. (As it is since completing this novella I have launched new efforts at ‘serious writing’ such as the inevitable attempt at ‘The Great Australian Novel’).

I wish to apologize for the rather dark military emphasis in this novella which can be unquestionably seen as a legacy from those school boy notations from which I originally worked on; after all, uninformed as to the actual horrific realities of war the spectacular battle scenes in *Lord of the Rings* were always preferred and one can find them echoed in the battering ram scene in *The Front Gate*. Although - rather pensively for the writer - a bleak and cynical mood prevails over much of the novella, to perhaps give it a haunting quality or even an aridly nihilistic psychological overlay there is actually meant to be a hopeful message amidst such totalitarian despair dealing in part with the noble and inspirational aspects of human resistance and human liberty that are apparent in humanity’s character and can come to the fore.

As to the underlying somewhat ‘boyhood influence’ in this novella it has come through in other ways such as the train hijack in Part II which was drawn from old-time WWII movies such as *Von Ryan’s Express*. While the platoon of soldiers introduced in *The Encirclement* is nominally reminiscent of the war weary retreating German soldiers fighting on the Russian Front in the movie *Cross of Iron*.

The First General in the novella reminds me of the grim but cunning leading Spanish conquistador in Werner Herzog’s brilliant film *Aguirre the Wrath of God* which is about the ruthless search for a South American El Dorado. While many years ago at Sydney’s State Mitchell Library looking for the title of this movie – as I had forgotten it and the internet was still in its infancy – I finally came across the International Dictionary of Films and Film Directors. I found a quote which spoke of this film as being relentless in its vivid focus on filthiness, sickness, and brutal cruelty. Thus, what is also implied is that there is a ‘bestiality’ that lies just below the surface of our so-called standards of

civilization.

Another cultural derivative involves conversations between the two main characters in Part III as it is somewhat reminiscent of the discussions to be found Aloyshka and Shukhov in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day In The Life of Ivan Denisovich*. I hasten to add that I am conscious of other derivative influences in this early work and so would also like to remark that Armistice Day is a strong reference – amongst other things – to the Midnight Oil song of the same title by this modern-day Australian rock music band (which is well known for its political advocacy).

Some of the remarks made by the old man in Part Three come by my readings in my early twenties of Paul Tournier's writings. I understood him to be an elderly gentle French-Swiss doctor whose practice was in Geneva. A Christian physician who insightfully had a holistic view of the human psyche; noting on many occasions that the physical ailments of his patients were often associated with a spiritual or emotional trauma.

The incident in the forest in *The March* was inspired by an incredible event I saw at the Stonehenge Rock Festival in 1982 held in the days preceding the summer solstice (which is observed by the Druid community wearing their robes and thongs on the dawn of the actual day). I saw a young hippie couple exchange their wedding vows at Stonehenge itself (they were actually standing with the marriage celebrant on one of the fallen ancient stone pillars) and the large crowd of 'multi-coloured' dressed people who witnessed the ceremony (which seemed to be a blend of Eastern rituals – I think predominantly Buddhist) – perhaps a few hundred individuals – all went into a wild noisy state of divine ecstatic frenzy when their chants for the sun to emerge from behind the clouds were finally answered. Assuming my memory is serving me correctly the marriage celebrant was a wizened, bearded guy with long red hair wearing frazzled denim shorts, bare-chested and being in his late thirties; I shall never forget the intense look in his eyes as he encouraged the crowd to wildly raise their arms and shout & chant at the sky.

The street scene in *A Question of Balance* is based on a personal memory of a fantastic night scene in New Delhi next to the main railway station; (it was in India at Varanasi that I saw a naked male corpse floating down the Ganges while I was on a small boat for the day viewing the never-ending funeral pyres where the many dead are honourably cremated and where the many living bathe themselves in this majestic holy river. I was told by a guide he was a low caste 'untouchable'; I could not help but think all humans deserve a proper, respectful sending off by their fellow human beings into the next world - no matter their earthy caste and whoever that man was he is still worthy to be mentioned and remembered now after so much time.

The factory workers in their work place hells may remind one of Blake's 'Satanic mills' or of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

The story about the origin of the English language at the end of *The Old Man* is a little anti-English folktale which my now late father told me when I was a child. The 'tanks' in *The Front Gate* may remind some readers of the Martian machines in H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*.

Furthermore, the human underworld in this novella did not seem so implausible to me during the time of writing for I remember reading in the very dim past an obscure newspaper article about an archaeological team discovering human-made underground

tunnels paved with stones ‘somewhere in Eurasia’. I have also heard of old legends such as in Ancient Sumeria that speak of blacksmiths working in underground caves but I do not know too much about the veracity of these tales to make further comment. The only modern tale I am aware of with subterranean creatures is a Hollywood B-grade B&W movie called *The Slime People* which a horror movie compere – of many, many years ago – named Deadly Ernest shown one Friday night and which dealt with frog-like upstanding subterranean men with spears who under the cover of a strange fog attacked L.A.

V

Notably, as to the main central character who originally pivots the narrative from the outset: there should be enough ambiguity about him both in his physical demeanour and real identity to remain open to various literary, theological, psychological, philosophical, political, spiritual and perhaps even cosmic or psychic quantum like explorations and interpretations. Nevertheless, in regards to his overbearing malevolence one may wish to view this ‘bruised, marked beast’ as a sort of ‘fallen angel’. At the grave risk of this comment sounding like an excuse this haunting character is an enigma even to the author and thus is perhaps one reason as to why his actual physical features are not really too well described except for his tall height and that it may be ascertained he is in very good bodily condition and along with also seemingly being ‘ageless’ he remains nameless; only to be labelled as: ‘messiah’ due to his public persona (whereby there are many in this underworld which he has entered into who have come to sincerely perceive him not as a Machiavellian personification of evil or a demonic ‘prince of darkness’ but rather as a ‘prince of light’ with nearly all of those in the subterranean military expedition that ascends to the surface world willing to blindly follow him even unto their deaths. Certainly, this ‘alien’ of the human condition does come across as a sort ‘super being’ (or ‘supra-being’) who knows only to lead (obviously there is an enormous ego there that would never abide to being led). There is also some sort of masterful ‘other worldly’ presence about him which attracts awe and respect from most mere mortals; although those two cynical scholars seem to remain always overtly unimpressed by him.

It could be argued that such an imposter leading figure can even allude to the mainly ancient Mesopotamian theocratic practice of the so called substitute king ritual which one has only recently come across when to remain safe during a special threatening period as can be signified for instance around the time of what was religiously viewed as a divinely ominous omen like a rare lunar appearance of a blood moon (there could also be other unusual cosmic scenarios which were seen in a negative way such as particular planetary alignments; certain lunar and solar eclipses etc). An authentic ruler would be nominally replaced for maybe up to a hundred days by a condemned criminal who once his ‘saviour role’ was over would be executed as if to also verify any evil prophecy which predicted the untimely death of the king. Although such ‘replacement kings’ were heavily guarded etcetera and were truly powerless with the true king still in administrative control while out of sight and although apparently it never did really happen one can still imaginatively envisage such a supposed impotent ‘substitute ruler’ if latently possessing extraordinary political skills which would now come to the fore could have had at least still initially attempted a martial takeover for supreme power. After all, one supposes the two scholars did recognise the ominously superior intelligence of their ‘prisoner from

the sky' who may have been a rebel leader of sorts in his own world and so keenly knew that he needed to be carefully watched.

As for Stephen he may be positively seen as an 'every-person' representative of the *whole* human race rather than in any other way as although he specifically belongs to a privileged society from a continental region that in relatively recent human history vows itself to be globally masterful over nearly all other human societies he has over time finally chosen to reject such vain human exceptionalism³ in order to not also sacrificially fight *against* human tyranny but to also triumphantly fight *for* human liberty. As it is, the central pivot of the novella changes over to Stephen who chooses to no longer place his trust in some 'saviour' – either religious or political – and to trust in the end in only his own clearing human conscience (as it redemptively emerges from the dark abyss it had entered into when he originally became a naïve – yet still willing – recruit to fascism; not 'cleared' for one can never be absolutely sure in one's own lifetime of having ever reached some 'perfect moral point'...one always has to be on one's guard to any ongoing human prejudice and this 'fluid' human principle can also apply to a whole nation including those that see themselves as mature liberal democracies as there is always need to further improve and build on the social advances that have been gained; for to rest on 'one's laurels' will only end up inviting the ominous possibility of democratic stagnation or much worse such as an unwitting populist detour to authoritarianism). Although he also suffers a cruel death one may wish to discern it is for the right noble reasons whether that be in service to his own individual sense of what it means to be a human being or for some 'higher truth' - or 'just cause' as earlier implied - such as for well-founded higher principle abstracts as 'justice' and 'freedom' (...rather than inversely for injustice and slavery). In any case, it is certain the rights and the wrongs of the fate of Stephen and even of other characters in the novella are open to debate.

VI

One should also mention that it maybe thought as improbable that someone in the *Wehrmacht* and especially in the *SS* would have turned on the Nazi regime the way the novella character Stephen did and to actually directly fight against it as a partisan.¹ However, with Stephen it could be argued that he may be more so seen as a foolish, impressionable idealist naively taken in by the promising grand rhetoric of the regime rather than – as yet – being a hard core fanatic and so is still psychologically able to eventually succumb to the harsh reality that any moral rationale the regime has used to justify the 'holy correctness' of its actual dehumanising, unprincipled murderous policies has been an abominable illusion which in an act of personal redemption Stephen eventually chooses to reject - at a time when whatever thankfully remains of his good conscious - not yet infused with the repugnant sophistry of National Socialist fascism – that compels him to fully reject what he had up to then fully placed his political, national and human faith in and which he knows may now cost him everything including possibly his life. Stephen, an ideologized 'sleepwalker' who finally wakes up (before it became too late to become a full-fledged mindless-eroded militarized zombie). In actuality there was internal active German resistance to the Nazi regime from its very inception at the masterful height of its political zenith and it did include heroic people from both civilian and military backgrounds (and so such subversive opposition was always there from

1933 onwards and not just later on towards the end of the war in 1944-45 when it was then clear that Nazi Germany would lose. There had been Germans willing to resist the regime from its inception and it is argued that such rebellious events as the 'July 20 plot' in 1944 was the culmination of a long arc of such internal resistance rather than being a coup attempt which only came about when it was by then obvious Germany could only avoid total defeat with the Nazis removed from power).

In recent research the author has come across Falk Harnak who was a German soldier who in 1943 would end up fighting with left wing partisans in Greece.² Harnak who had some association with the Munich based anti-Nazi White Rose³ would earlier in 1943 be caught up in a Gestapo round up of this anti-Nazi resistance movement. Yet, of the fourteen members caught Harnak would turn out to be the lone survivor partly due to a 'lack of evidence'. Notably, among those guillotined on a 'sunny day'⁴ would be brother and sister university students Hans Scholl and Sophie Scholl whose 'major crime' which was to bring on for them the death penalty was to circulate protest leaflets. As for Harnak it is thought he had escaped execution by the 'People's Court' and released as it was hoped that he would inadvertently lead the Gestapo to other underground resistance members. However, this did not happen and instead Harnak who in Germany was in the regular *Wehrmacht* was re-assigned to the 999 Penal Battalion⁵ serving in Greece fighting against a large partisan movement. As it is penal battalions were noted for their high casualty rates due to the often highly dangerous combat situations such 'expendable soldiers' found themselves in; yet, finally, a still much living, breathing Harnak was to be re-arrested and sent to a concentration camp but after being forewarned by a sympathetic officer Harnak would duly avoid such a harsh, foreboding fate and instead link up with a local partisan group with whom he previously had some initial dialogue with by way of local villagers.⁶ Notably, the 999 Penal Battalion which had many recalcitrant soldiers who would otherwise be political prisoners – and with a soldierly political operator like Harnak finding ways to encourage them – would end up having many change sides to fight against occupying forces in this Balkan theatre of the war.

One other German soldier of note in the 999 Penal Battalion but who unfortunately would not survive the war being killed by partisans in Croatia was August Landmesser best known from the famous 1936 photograph as the annoyed looking man with the crossed arms within a large crowd of his fellow workers at a Hamburg naval shipyard who all cheerfully had one of their arms fully outstretched dutifully performing the Nazi salute.⁸

While another man who is said to refuse to do the Hitler salute was George Elser who in November 1939 in an attempt to kill Hitler bombed a Munich beer hall during an anniversary event of the failed 1923 Beer Hall Putsch (Adolf Hitler was to spend months in jail where he infamously scribed *Mein Kampf*). After his capture by the regime Elser would be kept as a prisoner at Dachau until the last month of the war when the order was finally given by Hitler to have him shot. At the same time other death orders aimed at those who had resisted Hitler and especially been involved in assassination attempts on him and still alive (including, of course, the 'July 20 plot') were sadistically meted out by this dictator who would soon, rather ironically, infamously assassinate himself. Among those of the German resistance who would be barbarously executed as Hitlerism was about to go through its final death throes was the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as well as military personnel such as Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Generals Hans Oster, Karl

Sack, Captain Theodor Strunck and Abwehr Captain Ludwig Gehre. One also reads accounts of a smattering of individual German soldiers who did what they could to save whoever they were able to from the mass slaughter being methodically meted out on an industrial scale by rifle fire and gas chamber to so many millions of Jews. A case in point was Major Karl Plagge who repulsed by the atrocities he witnessed during the German advance east would in Lithuania try to save - albeit with mixed success - male Jews from the ghetto - along with their families - from certain death by issuing them with work permits classifying them as essential workers for the war effort and then when the ghetto was liquidated by eventually setting up a work camp for his 'essential workers' and families which apparently would at one time have up to 1,250 people. Vilnius's pre-war Jewish population of approximately 100,000 Jews would be reduced to 2,000 by war's end but at least a few hundred of these survivors would have also been murdered if Plagge had made no attempt to save Jewish lives. To still focus on Vilnius there was also Sergeant Anton Schmid who in a *Wehrmacht* administrative role helped up to 300 Jews granting work permits so those who obtained them could be protected from any round up of Jews to be shot; taking as well the grave risk to hide them in his own place and even helping out the ghetto underground until he was eventually arrested, court marshalled and shot in April, 1942.

Curiously in regards to German soldiers resisting their fascist overlords there is also the extraordinary case of the somewhat 'peacenik' known as 'Wedontdothat' from Gunter Grass's memoir about his time in the Second World War.⁹ He speaks of a recruit in the Labor Service who in terms of his physical physique was the perfect Nordic specimen having strong so-called Aryan features - including the archetypal blue eyes & blonde hair - who could have been used for a Nazi propaganda poster. Yet this youngster who was obedient in doing everything that was asked of him and diligent in every task would always refuse to even hold a rifle. As the rifle was handed to him by the instructor on rifle drill it was always dropped to the ground and he would simply say: "We don't do that." Gunter Grass would state that this fellow was not known for having any religious convictions and his pacifism would hold out even though his fellow recruits - who at first had sympathy for him - would turn against him when any punishment directed at 'Wedontdothat' would be extended to the whole group. Although admired 'Wedontdothat's' attitude was also seen as mystifying and nonsensical. Yet, there was sympathy for him when one day 'Wedontdothat' simply officially disappeared and it was guessed that he was taken to a concentration camp. It is not known what eventually happened to 'Wedontdothat' but the worst can be feared.

Although one could also mention in detail the high ranking military personnel that plotted to assassinate Adolf Hitler but failed on July 20, 1944 when he survived the bombing at his Wolf's Lair in East Prussia what can be noted is that much of the resistance who planned what was to be known as 'Operation Valkyrie' - and which was to be more than just an assassination but a coup to overthrow the whole Nationalist Socialist regime - is that they did all mainly belong to the officer class.

Notably as already mentioned this particularly well-known assassination plot is often seen as occurring due to the realisation that Nazi Germany was going to lose the war when as stated it is perhaps better that it should be seen as yet another point of an arc of German resistance to the Nazi regime that had its inception from 1933 onwards especially when for so long Hitlerism did seem invincible - at least up to the defeat at Stalingrad in

early 1943; when one can also mention along this resistance arc the Rosenstrasse Women's Protests in Berlin which actually occurred not long after this major loss at Stalingrad. In what was a national roundup it was the case in Berlin the Gestapo had placed two thousand Jewish men in mixed marriages into a Jewish community centre in Rosenstrasse which brought about hundreds of German women bravely publicly protesting for their release. Many of these men who had previously been afforded some protection by being married to an Aryan woman were actually released. From what one understands it can be presumed that Goebbels strategically thought it was the best course of immediate action to take so as to not risk further lowering German morale after Stalingrad as despite no publicity the unexpected public protesting of these brave women who on behalf of these men feared the worst had become public knowledge anyway through word of mouth. Goebbels knew at a time of his own choosing that he could later individually arrest these men again many of whom from what one understands who were to be sent to labour camps within the German Reich due to growing manpower shortages brought about by a war that was not meant to be so long and with it such high casualty rates for the once ever victorious 'master race'. In terms of raising German morale it was soon after Stalingrad that in Berlin in mid-February that Goebbels gave his infamous total war speech which also included him correcting himself when he mentioned the word 'extermination' in regards to the dire fate of European Jewry but apparently quickly changed to say 'exclusion'). Interestingly, in Berlin despite mass arrests and deportations since 1933 there were still a few thousand Jews who at great risk by way of various guises attempted to pass themselves off as Aryans thus living under the very radar of this virulently murderous Anti-Semitic regime and so were colloquially known as 'U-boats'; thus, one may intimate resistance can also come under many guises including as well silent ones which for such civilians still invariably involved a life or death risk to survive against the odds. (Goebbels would not have been impressed who publicly was of the opinion that by April, 1943 Berlin was essentially '*Juden free*'). Anyhow, to go back to the military in terms of high-level German soldierly resistance from say a superior cohort that would otherwise be expected to be dutifully loyal to Hitlerism there is *Waffen-SS* Major Kurt Gerstein who would do what he could to expose the Final Solution.¹⁰ It seems that Kurt Gerstein joined the *SS* in 1941 with the conspiratorial aspiration to infiltrate into the deeper secretive recesses of this abysmal organisation which was the Nazi regime and by doing so to understand its inner workings so as to then actually undermine the Third Reich.¹¹ Yet, rather ironically, Kurt Gerstein would dismally find himself intimately involved in the somewhat precursor 'experimental stage' of the Final Solution - which he claimed to abhor - due to his technical hygiene expertise (here was a man who had apparently invented a water filter for frontline troops and which helped to have his earlier 'waywardness' towards the regime now overlooked) and so he was at Belzec in Poland in August 1942 to witness first-hand the gassing of several thousand Jews by motor exhaust fumes. It was a slow process which would lead to the adoption of Zyklon B as the generally preferred lethal option for mass extermination. Kurt Gerstein would then go on to see exterminations at Treblinka. Apparently, Kurt Gerstein was quite shocked by all that he had seen and even chose to bury Zyklon B canisters in his possession which he was meant to handover (it is said he claimed these canisters were damaged); and which would lead to one of his even more overt instances of subterfuge: whereby on a train back to Berlin he had a chance encounter with a neutral Swedish

diplomat and told him what he saw. Apparently, Kurt Gerstein would go on to tell many others he trusted in Germany of what was happening including the Neimoller family as well as trying through back channels to have the Vatican know of the Nazi genocide program but all with nil results. At the end of the war Kurt Gerstein would hand himself over to the Allies and reveal what he knew about the Final Solution. Initially he was treated well being under sympathetic French jurisdiction at a hotel in Rottweil, Germany where he wrote his famous report in both French and German of all he had witnessed. However, when eventually transferred to a harsh military prison in Paris he no longer had any special privileges as an 'honourable' war prisoner only being seen there as yet another Nazi war criminal. On July 25, 1945 Kurt Gerstein was found hung in his cell. His death was seen as a suicide although it is suspected that other German prisoners had probably killed him.

VII

As to the SS and death camps one should encounter Vassily Grossman's account of Treblinka ¹ which due to the forensic accuracy of the unimaginable atrocities that were described was even given public airing at the post-war trials of Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. To read how dogs were let loose on naked human beings to have their bodies savaged as they were about to enter and die in the gas chamber. To have guards smirking at their victims who still did not really know what yet awaited them on arrival at a train station 'camouflaged' as being a normal arrival point to fully 'blind' these victims with such a meticulous deceit to orchestrate their full co-operation to their own harrowing end. To think that these fateful souls had only assumed they were going to simply have yet another 'normalized' abnormal day of dehumanization and abuse under the devious, malicious eye of their barbarian keepers for who could imagine even in their worst nightmare what was truly in store...? For such grotesque cruelty and mass annihilation to become a daily occurrence not only at Treblinka but throughout the Nazi occupied territories. To even read of those few occasional brave men and women who could see beyond the deception to then individually fight back against those who had whips and even with their bare hands against their captors while approaching the massive concrete block that guaranteed only death; to die anyway but at least by doing so with some struggle against the human demons who had damned them. To resist, even if it was so little. Apparently, it was after the defeat of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad that Himmler ordered that the bodies of those who had suffered such ghastly deaths be burnt rather than buried so as to hide any evidence of this crazed industrial scale genocide for even then it was thought by such high-ranking members of the Nazi elite that the war may possibly be lost. As for Treblinka which was 100 kilometres from Warsaw from whose ghetto over two hundred and sixty-five thousand Jews would be sent to their deaths between July and September 1942 (followed by hundreds of thousands of other victims deported from other parts of Europe) there would be a revolt on August 2, 1943 by a resistance group made up of prisoners who set fire to the camp destroying much of its infrastructure and with over 300 rebels escaping. 200 were caught and killed but the camp which had liquidated maybe up to nearly a million people by then could not function as murderously intended anymore so would be closed down. As one surviving escapee would say: "Hell has been burnt!" However, hades as devised by the SS was still relentlessly going on in Auschwitz and many other death camps (and let us not forget that so many massacres

also occurred by shooting) would re-appear in other awful ways as shown in the Russian movie *Come and See* (1985) ² famously known for its unrelenting realism and has SS madmen (apparently based on the worse convicted criminal recruits which made up the gruesome 'Dirlewanger Brigade'³ or 'Black Hunters' as it was also ominously known whose barbarism was so frightfully sadistic even other SS units were appalled) in Belarus viciously rounding up fearful villagers into a large wooden church to then burn it down. These fanatical militiamen laugh hysterically with joy as the many innocents die. The piercing, panic riddled screams of hundreds of men, women and children arousing only hateful disdain rather than pity. The steely, scuffed up German helmets with their typical extending outward ridge along their bottom edges seem magnified from some film angles so as to help give this whole apocalyptic massacre scene a historical sense of a medieval hell as vividly depicted by Hieronymus Bosch. The horror is graphic.

VII

Many years have passed since finishing this novella and I have only tinkered with it a little; ironing out any inconsistencies which seemed obvious to me; as well as adding a few sentences where it was felt there was a need for further information. ¹ However, I think it is best to leave the general form of the writing as it is as it represents a particular epoch in my own 'creative excursion'; (please excuse the pretentious resonance in this statement); the reader can judge for one's self as to the quality of the prose. However, somewhat in the spirit of Pasternek's *Dr Zhivago* there are a few poems included in the novella and I would like to mention that these, including the one at the beginning of the book, were written by me in my late teens. ²



Auschwitz

The Overall Cyclical Structure of the Novella

In my own terms I have attempted to be experimental in my approach to the overall structure of the novella ¹ (which also has a symbolic aspect), exploring a ‘cyclical vision’ which has included subordinating the characters and the plot to the central themes (or ideas) within the novella. For instance: the confined deadly space of the final scene in the book is meant to hark back to the closed world of the cavern in the beginning of the novella.

The novel ‘revolves’ around two circles – one representing the ‘messiah’ and the other Stephen – which overlap when these two main characters meet to briefly form a ‘Venn diagram’ during their crossover association.

A Reflection On The Novella’s Dystopian Setting With An Alternative Historical World.

‘It should be noted that for East Europeans who lived under Russian occupation from 1945 onwards the Second World War did not really end until decades later when the Soviet Union collapsed along with its stranglehold over them from the late 1980s through to the early 1990s. Furthermore, what is also often overlooked by the West is that while it remains well publicized that Nazi Germany invaded Poland from the west on September 1, 1939 to initiate WWII what still remains not so well publicized is that the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east a little over two weeks later on September 17, 1939. While in June, 1940 the Soviet Union would also annex the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania so that by then along with its occupation of eastern Poland from the year before had imperiously taken full advantage of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. August, 1939.’

Along with the dystopian underworld in the first third of the novella as to why it then continues with its dystopian theme set in an alternative history WWII Europe which remains occupied by Nazi Germany is due to a realisation that the author had in 1982 while travelling mainly in western Europe – including crossing East Germany to go to West/East Berlin ¹ when the Iron Curtain and Berlin Wall still both existed - and which would have him come to such a ‘road to Damascus’ awakening of how (i) for most Eastern Europeans who back then lived under Russian occupation from 1945 onwards that the Second World War had not yet really ended ² and (ii) how such an Eastern European perspective of the Second World War did not seem fully acknowledged by a seemingly self-interested West. Thus there developed an interest to recalibrate in the novella the history of this major war which would have the West possibly facing many more years – at least well beyond 1945 – of occupation by a still ruthlessly strong invader in order to prompt one to deliberately perceive the discordant reality that remained for the peoples of Eastern Europe who then only faced living under a different invasive foreign totalitarian power while the peoples of Western Europe were assuredly liberated with the full demise of another previously invasive foreign totalitarian power on May 7, 1945. ³

ANCESTRAL VISITATIONS

It is believed the ancestors referred to in the text accompanying the *Creation of the World* etching illustration - which is at the end of this section - always come and visit the earth during this major Balinese festival.

It should be noted that on the other side of the world in Guatemala there is a village near Antigua where the local Mayans fly kites over the graves of their loved ones passing messages to their visiting ancestors on the Day of the Dead which is held on All Souls Day on November 1st.

Thus, the notion of ancestors or gods visiting the earth seems to be a universal spiritual religious theme and in the West there is in 'apocalypse theology' the notion of the return of Christ; while in Judaism the Messiah is yet to come.

It seems some religious symbols also share universal spiritual importance: it is intriguing to see that while the writhing Rainbow Serpent who formed the features of the world is the pre-eminent creation 'totem' of the Aboriginal Dreamtime (or 'Creation Time') the serpent is also a major totem for the Mayan Indians. The Mayans astutely observe how the serpent can form the shape of a circle which represents the cosmos and that it can also take the shape of a square which represents humanity; thus, in a perfect order of the universe the square in a subordinate but harmonious fashion fits nicely within the circle.

In the Judaic-Christian tradition the serpent is also of major significance, though it was eventually used to represent Satan.¹

The theme of ancestral visitation on a political level includes the Latin American example of the sad, tragic murderous history of Indian exploitation and massacre which - after Columbus's initial accidental 'discovery' of the so called New World - involved the arrival of Cortes to the Aztec Empire - coincidentally in the very year that the Aztecs were expecting the return of the friendly deity of humankind Quetzacoatl - for it was briefly wrongly presumed that Cortes was he and this initial belief aided his small Spanish army with its modern weapons along with their local allies to defeat the might of Montezuma. It could be said Cortes was rather a false messiah who well represented the Aztec jaguar god of darkness Tezcapiloca. This savage introduction to European colonialism - a 'cancer' which like many other imperial impulses before and even after it has scourged the world - typifies what has bitterly happened over the centuries to many lands within the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia; with this in mind the search for national independence and the issue of dying for a just society has remained a political constant everywhere in the twentieth century and beyond especially so in parts of the third world (otherwise known as the Global South) such as Latin America and the other lands already mentioned (as well as in the so called 'second world' during the Cold War) with various levels of success and failure for such once colonized populations have had too often to also domestically face oppressive elites emerging from within their own societies.

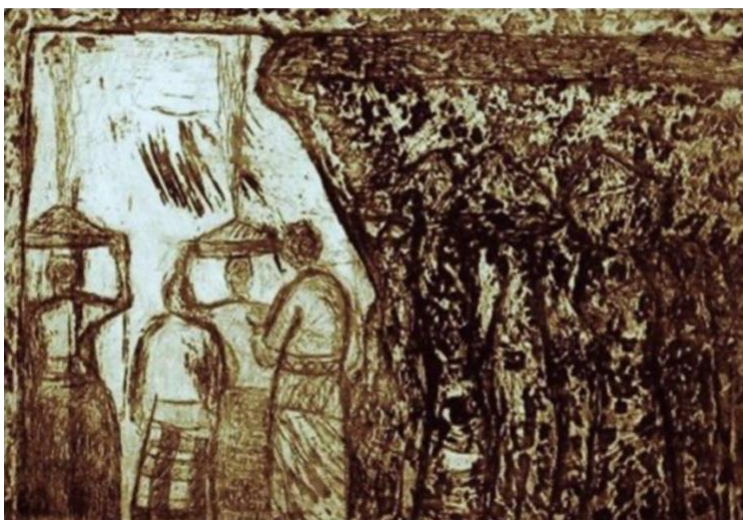
However, to get back more directly to the political theme of ancestral visitation in the context of a Divine-Human visiting the earth it should be considered that in regards to Christianity - with its messianic foundation and with the adoption of this original Middle Eastern religion by the Roman Empire - is what is revealed, perhaps, in this particular

western religious tradition, is perhaps in the western mind the first conscious synthesis between the spiritual and the political so as to maintain as well as unify imperial power (however, I'm sure there are other earlier instances). ²

Finally, such are the contradictory nuances of our human impulses and with them the relationship that exist between the gods and humanity (and of an apparent general human need of them also in mind) ⁵ there is the remark by Petronius in his 1st century work *Satyricon* which could be dwelled upon by which he states that it was first by way of fear that the gods were introduced into this world. ³



Two combined photographs of three large Guatemalan kites which high above one's head were hanging in a row much like as can be seen in this overall image at the former White Bay Power Station for the Sydney Biennale, 2024. The kites were produced by an indigenous all female artist group Orquideas Barrileteras.² I was pleasantly surprised to see these remarkable Mayan kites which reminded me of similar kites I had once seen magnificently flying beside the cemetery on All Souls Day at the Guatemalan village of Sumpagno in 1992 as well as seeing smaller kites occasionally flying over Guatemala cornfields.

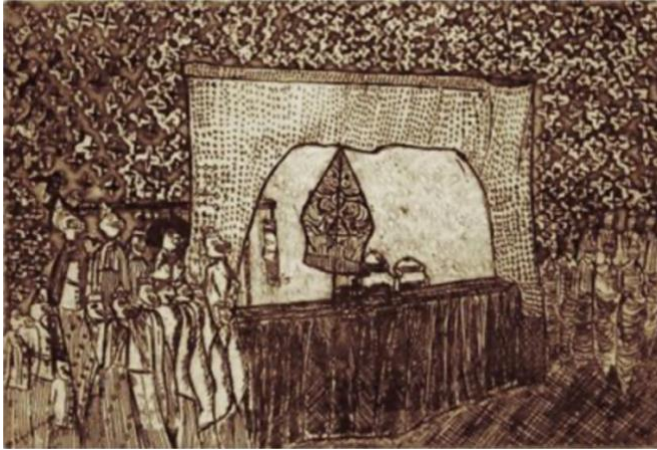


‘The Creation of the World.’
sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate. Ubud. Bali.

In Bali is a big Hindu festival Galungan that references the creation of the world with Idi Sang Hyang Widi the creator of the whole universe honoured and with the victory of Dharma (good) over Adharma (evil) also celebrated. Families go to the temple in the morning to worship this event that apparently lasts for ten days which ends on Kuningan when the supreme creator descends to earth and the ancestors and divine deities return to the heavenly realm. At the temple food is brought before the gods and ancestors who have come down to start their visit earth on this special day. After the food is blessed by priests the women usually carry it away on baskets they place on their heads to take to family households where the families hold a big feast. Lastly, within the Balinese sake year (which is based on the cycles of the moon) the festival period which lasts for ten days is held on the 11th week of the 210 day Hindu Pawukon calendar which apparently had as its traditional origin the harvesting of rice.

In this etching which I should mention is a personal interpretation you can see beings that still wait to be fully formed in the shadows of the temple. While in the light are fully shaped women.

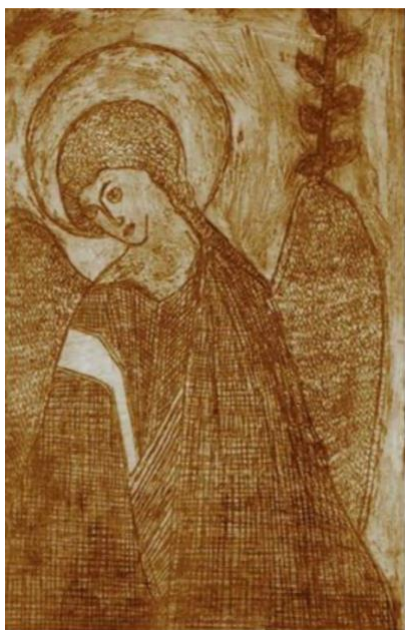
Iconography



‘Tree of Life.’

sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate. Java, Indonesia.

‘*Tree of Life*’ which references Indonesian puppet theatre. On display are rows of wooden puppets used during a play which is somewhat different from the usual shadow puppet theatre that is so common. The large leaf in the middle of the stage is known as the tree of life and is displayed before a play begins and also at the end of the play to signal to an audience that it is finished. Universally the tree of life in many cultures also references the idea of the earth being connected to the heavens. Although not spelled out in the novella it is an idea that could be implied when one considers the vegetation that grows in the underworld and could in theory organically grow upwards to connect to the surface.



‘The Angel.’
6" X 4". sepia on cream paper. copperplate.

The Angel. This etching by the author is based on of the three heavenly figures of Andrey Rublyov's *The Trinity*. (c.1411). Rubylov was Russia's master iconographer. An icon is not so much a work of art as a profound spiritual object; it can be viewed as an open window to eternity



‘Nicaraguan Boy.’
B&W. 8" X 6". drypoint. zinc plate.

Nicaraguan Boy is an etching based on a common scene of a beggar child selling chewing gum, cigarette lighters or other such small products. A melancholy portrait of a young boy struggling through his day; yet, it is hoped through the iconoclastic quality given to the work a sense of dignity has been instilled to him which he and all universally deserve.

NOTES

General

Author's Afterword

Ancestral Visitations

Plato's Shadows & Authoritarianism.

Along with the whole afterword further notes and remarks on a webpage which may be viewed as a 'work in progress' can be found online as what follows is an abbreviation. ¹

QR CODE. *Darkness & Light* Notes webpage.



Darkness & Light Notes webpage link.

<https://nicholasnicolaetchings.synthasite.com/darkness-and-light-a-novella.php>

This web page can be found via doing a web search for the website 'Nicholas Nicola Etchings' on which the web page is situated. ²

Direct website link: <https://nicholasnicolaetchings.synthasite.com>

1. Although depending on the particular edition there may also be extended footnotes included in regards to *Plato's Shadows and Authoritarianism*. (*A general overview along with an alternative view*) which can also be found online.

2. Look for the webpage relating to *Darkness & Light* by way of the accompanying sidebar on the website. All the best. NN.

Notes

General

I

1. *Heart of the Universe* is an etching based on a sketch of a coastal rock at Gordons Bay. Sydney. The image has been slightly cropped so is a detail of the etching although nearly all of it is on view on the cover. It is by the author who is a printmaker. (One may wish to even see the title as an inverse of the notion of 'heart of darkness').
2. *'Light of Paradise.'* Cooks River. Sydney. This B&W photograph in the frontispiece is by the author. Cooks River is a waterway in suburban Sydney. The original Aboriginal name of Cooks River is *Goolay'yari*.
3. Dedication. 'Vags' (a nickname shortening a surname) was an Australian-Latvian school friend who had an interest in *Lord of the Rings* & in history. Ironically the author has been to Lithuania & even spent a year there but the closest he has been to Latvia is to view a forest from the border with Lithuania as this country neighbours it.
4. Author's Acknowledgement. Although this acknowledgement was written in February 1993 a variation of a couple of sentences towards the end of it were made in May 2017. Yet the general sentiment of gratitude definitely remains the same. Cathy is a neighbourhood friend who along with her brother I have known since early childhood. Decades ago Cathy once worked at the Australian Film Commission as a secretary and in her own time would type up most of the original manuscript which was considerably longer. It was at a time in the early 1980s that was well before digital word processing even existed let alone be ubiquitous. This original manuscript which I had 'thesis bound' with a hard cover was used as the basis for the final form which was brought into existence with word processing.
5. *Black Fez Poetry Night*. Curiosity Café. Balmain. I thank the likes of Doug Wakefield & David Fenwick who more so than the author instigated these evenings. Famously started in the cushioned backroom at Emads Lebanese restaurant in Chippendale as a one-off poetry night it continued for many years – usually three or four times annually – being held in homes or cafes which were usually closed on Sunday night; establishments such as the Curiosity Café in Balmain and Weba's in Stanmore would open with the 'guarantee' of at least twenty to thirty people turning up. The evenings were intimate as well as having a real sense of community; they were always unplanned and democratically consisted of people reciting their own writing or the writing of their favourite author or poet; artists would explain their pieces; actors and musicians were also welcome as Doug would often perform; on one memorable night people were amazed by the poignant, bluesy guitar playing of David Delves. There are also memories of being entranced by ethnic singing, blues harmonica playing etcetera. The back porch of a friend's old house in the Sydney suburb of Drummoyn (now torn down and replaced with apartments) that overlooked the river was another favoured venue for the poetry evenings. There was also often a quirky, voodoo unpredictability to the poetry nights as one was never sure what the night would bring: one's soul stays sustained to this day.
6. *Looking into the Future* is also an etching by the author. The rough-hewn textures one can view in the print intimates to the weathered ancient coastal rocks that can be found on any Australian beach.
7. a. Firstly, it had been the original intention of the author to directly quote from the writings of both Arthur Koestler & Fyodor Dostoyevsky but instead have indirectly paraphrased them (perhaps awkwardly) in this prelude statement to sincerely not bring on any copyright transgression. One may wish to peruse the two books mentioned (Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* & Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*) to review what these two grand authors have actually scribed.

(As an aside while religion is often seen in a negative sense when one thinks only of a severe theocratic state or fundamentalist evangelism one can also have in mind how Tibetan Buddhism (with for instance its faith in the spiritual leadership of the Dalai Lama) plays a positive role in Tibet's independence struggle against China's oppressive occupation; how the 1960s U.S. civil rights movement would have - until his assassination - the reverend Martin Luther King as a leader; while in Latin America liberation theology has also had a positive social and cultural effect in working towards overcoming social, economic and political oppressions).

b. Secondly, I now mention the third literary reference which is to Milan Kundera that was only recently added as I did not know of it when I first only thought to include the Koestler and Dostoyevsky musings. To state again what is referenced by Milan Kundera is in his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Milan Kundera directly only mentions communism along with fascism thus what I have written is a little different and maybe seen more so as commentary rather than as an actual paraphrase (in any strict sense); thus I highly recommend reading what Milan Kundera wrote in full that is only partially noted by me and with a personal emphasis (although hopefully seen as truly representative of what Milan Kundera intended to express) which involves a female character who does not know how to explain to her Parisian friends that she could not stay on the rally with them which was a protest against the Soviet invasion of her country for the underlying reasons as stated by Milan Kundera and which I mention. I have also referenced in passing as I could not resist literary temptation comments from the likes of Arendt, Camus, Nietzsche, St. Augustine and Tacitus.

c. Another literary piece one may wish to think about it is Vasily Grossman's *Life & Fate* (1960). It is a novel which has been regarded as the Soviet Union's '*War & Peace*' and revolves around the Battle of Stalingrad which Grossman witnessed as a Soviet war correspondent. From my reading of this expansive novel I took away from it the tragedy of how ordinary human beings were trapped within either one or the other totalitarian state (Nazi & Stalinist) having to fight against the other state which would not grant them personal freedom in any case but grant them at least human survival.

In Antony Beevor's book about Vasily Grossman - *A WRITER AT WAR Vassily Grossman with the Red Army 1941-1945*. (Harvill Press London. 2005 edited and translated by Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova) – it is mentioned that the original objective of the Sixth Army- as part of Army Group South's 1942 summer southern offensive codenamed Operation Blue - Army Group B was to not take Stalingrad but to only head towards it so as to guard the Wehrmacht's flank while Army Group A swept towards the oilfields of the Caucasus (which had for now replaced Moscow as the Wehrmacht's main objective in its invasion of Russia codenamed Operation Barbarossa. July 1941). However, Hitler who had taken over ultimate command had some of the Fourth Army move back to supporting the Sixth Army to actually take Stalingrad which would eventually allow for the Soviet Union's surprise counteroffensive [Operation Uranus] in November 1942 which would encircle and entrap the Sixth Army in Stalingrad. The Sixth Army would finally be defeated in February 1943 and it is seen as the major turning point of the Second World War. This starting point of the Allies road victory which would end up by April-May 1945 in Berlin was followed up by Army Group Centre's defeat at Kursk in July 1943.

9. a. *the end of the world*. The absurdist mood this poem may convey, in particular the italic stanza, was influenced & inspired by Dadaist poetry. While modern culture can thank Samuel Beckett for the term 'godot'.

b. Additionally, to make an appropriate acknowledgement regarding the italic stanza which references an irrational man who is engulfed by the sand he is blindly smiling at is not at all an original allusion but somewhat paraphrases or rather echoes part of a line of prose from '*Dada and Surrealism*'. C.W.E. Bigsby. (The Critical Idiom series). Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1972 which in turn the author makes mention of two Samuel Beckett plays *Happy Days* and *Waiting for Godot*. (Specifically, if interested see Chapter 6 Origins, Aesthetics and Ethics). Notably, in an original typed copy of this poem – as it was written before home computers and laptops were common place this particular verse is in red ink while the rest of the poem is in black text. Please keep in mind this

sanguine act of literary appropriation within the poem written by the author occurred when he was still a teenager (misspellings and self-manufactured words included).¹

10. Appendix One. a. This appendix has at the beginning a black and white photo of a small sculpture that is only a few inches high of German soldiers under a Moscow sign in Russian. They are advancing towards the Russian capital expectant of victory. This prop was given to the author on his fiftieth birthday as an ironic reminder to the national hubris and tragic futility of war. So, that there is no confusion or incorrect interpretation this little sculptural piece is definitely both a visual anti-war and anti-imperial statement.

b. With the failure of the Nazi German invasion in mind which would lead in turn to the long lasting Russian occupation of much of Eastern Europe (which would also include a Russian zone in Austria until 1955) it doesn't hurt to reiterate yet again that for East Europeans who lived under Russian occupation after 1945 the Second World War did not really end for them until the Soviet Union started to internally implode from the late 1980s to finally dissolve in late 1991 which with this collapse would bring on the departure of all Russian occupation troops by the early 1990s. To put forward what may be viewed as a radical opinion that although the war against Nazism ended in 1945 it may be viewed as a sort of subliminal 'noble lie' in the West to optimistically presume that there was generally speaking then a return to democracy and national independence to all the countries that had been previously occupied by the Third Reich when this was obviously not the case in Eastern Europe and which would not be so till decades later; while thus far two decades into the twenty-first century Belarus as well as Russia itself could still be viewed as very much authoritarian in their political complexion along with the public guise of being so called 'managed democracies'. (It may also be worth noting that there also seems to be a selective historical amnesia in the West that while it is well known that Nazi Germany invaded Poland on the first day of September 1939 which would initiate WWII it is as if it is almost a footnote of history that the Soviet Union invaded the eastern half of Poland two weeks later on the 17th September 1939. Furthermore, the Baltic states would be annexed by Stalin in June, 1940 thus fulfilling the secret terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939).

c. The appendix is written as an official document to disguise the fact that it is actually a whole lie. It perhaps resonates more so now than when the appendix was first scribed as back then traditional/analogous media still prevailed but which has now in today's mind numbing accelerated technological modernity been overwhelmingly overtaken by digital/social media which has insidiously allowed for the further hundredfold magnification of any 'alternative reality' so as to serve a propaganda purpose - whether for instance, by and for nefarious state, national, political, corporate, thinktank, interest group, military etc. entities - with such terms as 'false flags'; 'disinformation'; 'alternative facts'; 'fake news'; 'falsehoods'; 'orwellian'; etc. ubiquitously becoming ever more common in one's every day lexicon with such an undemocratic duplicity of written and visual communications being accentuated within an increasingly relentless 24/7 news cycle of which it is certainly ever more difficult to trustfully discern truth from fiction. To publicly educate individual human minds to critically think has become an urgent philosophical matter in today's mass societies with a media landscape which presently so often 'offers' to the 'modern mindscape' so much information but so little knowledge - to mindfully paraphrase a poetic warning observation from T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. (Vilem Flusser's *Towards A Philosophy of Photography* Reaktion Books.1983 also comes to mind which deals with modernist visual culture).

d. The appendix follows on from a previous account of false history at the beginning of Chapter Seven The March whereby Nazi Germany is victorious in the East successfully occupying so called European Russia. Stalin is not totally defeated but he is no longer in a militarily effectual position residing with a much-depleted loyal armed force from beyond the Urals to hinder the Hitlerian obsession to found German colonies throughout Eastern Europe which will be accompanied with the deaths by way of extermination and starvation of maybe tens of millions of those defeated peoples who are now under German subjugation in this vast occupied territory. (See for instance *The Crime That Did Not Happen: Nazi Germany's Nightmarish Ambitions*. Philip Jenkins. 2018. ABC. Australia. Religion & Ethics). One says loyal as many diverse ethnic groups within the so

called 'Soviet Union' – which is a national label which disguises the political reality that the non-Russian peoples within the Soviet Union did not voluntarily 'unite' with a Bolshevik Russia but were enforced to do so under military threat which at the time could not be realistically resisted. 'Better' occupation rather than annihilation and with the hope that there would come about the real possibility of national liberation later on in the future and - if by a miracle - did actually come at towards the end of the twentieth century. However, in the alternative history of the novella for these same nations - such as the Baltics and Ukraine - Russian occupation would be replaced by German occupation as well as for all Russians up to the Urals; while beyond there would now possibly be the opportunity for various national groups to rebel against a now much weakened Stalin who while still facing up to an external threat in front of him would possibly have to also face up to widespread internal dissent from behind him that stretched from the Urals to Siberia and as well in Central Asia. (While one imagines in German occupied territory - as did happen – there would be partisan movements fighting the *Wehrmacht* just as there were partisan movements in Eastern Europe fighting the returning Russians and after 1945 up to Stalin's death in 1953; while some hard core anti-Russian partisan resistance would still go on for many more years and all this time also feeling betrayed by the West).

e. In later years since the main writing of the novella one was tempted to add the following segment to the introductory section of *The March* but it was decided to keep to the original text:

Along with the loss of territory a still all powerful Luftwaffe would relentlessly bomb into oblivion over the next few months the many war factories Stalin had moved to new industrial hinterlands east of the Urals. Also, a hasty, massive increase in Lend-Lease military supplies from the United States via Siberia was still woefully unable to sufficiently replace the Soviet Union's enormous war material losses.

It was only in recent times that one had learnt of the major extent of U.S. supplied military equipment which was important to the U.S.S.R.'s war effort as the Lend Lease program the U.S. had with Great Britain is better known. One has been more familiar with Stalin's keenness to heavily industrialize Russia's economy in the pre-war years and then at the time with the war with Nazi Germany to transplant Russia's heavy industry to beyond the Urals to maintain war production. Thus, the mention of the *Luftwaffe* to bomb this essential industrial base which one presumes would have been in aerial range due to the *Wehrmacht*'s occupation of Russian territory up to the Urals in the alternative historical scenario; although Stalin may still have stubbornly had the capability to move heavy industry further along the Russian hinterland to the east hitherto it was not helpful that he could no longer access the oil of the Caucasus which was now in his enemy's hands. One could imaginarily envisage other hypothetical scenarios from such a speculative alternative reality but suffice to say that war production in the various economies of the combatants would have a major influence on the outcome of the war along with war strategy. As it was it would have been vital for a German victory over the Soviet Union to occur earlier in the invasion as a protracted war - which is what actually happened - could not be sustained by the German war economy which would peak earlier than the war economy of the U.S.S.R. and which Moscow would also have later in the war better trained troops and more of them to help overcome the devastating losses of manpower and war equipment that had happened to the Soviet forces in the first opening spectacularly devastating blows of Operation Barbarossa. As well Nazi Germany would also experience acute manpower shortages as the war dragged on which was obviously to its disadvantage especially so as it ominously found itself fighting a defensive war after the Soviet victories of such monumental battles as happened at Stalingrad and Kursk.

f. One other speculative historical hypothetical to entertain is that the U.S.A would still have had through the Manhattan Project an A-bomb much earlier than Nazi Germany which for various incomprehensible short-sighted reasons had actually stalled its nuclear weapon programme for a while during the war and thus was still far behind compared to the United States in its progress in actually producing an atomic bomb. Thus by 1945 the Allies would still have had the upper hand in terms of nuclear ammunition to turn any enemy target to nuclear ash. (While, also the Nazi Germany of the alternative history being in such an advantageous military position may have also become

complacent in developing a nuclear bomb due to there being less need to actually have one to use while the war was going so well). In regards to the alternative history if one was to assume that other theatres of war went more or less as they did in reality e.g. (i). the Allies to still have won in North Africa and now to be steadily – but slowly – fighting up the Italian peninsula; while also gaining a technological advantage in the Atlantic War against a U-boat threat which had hoped to economically cripple Great Britain yet which may have been doomed to fail anyway due to the increased tonnage in Allied merchant shipping being manufactured that was outweighing merchant shipping losses which nevertheless when the U-boats at first had the upper hand was still devastating. (ii). A hostile Japan which by 1945 was still losing the Pacific War thus having the U.S. still target Imperial Japan rather than Nazi Germany for first usage of the atomic bomb especially after the Battle of Okinawa which with its overall huge battle and civilian casualties as well as the Japanese kamikaze plane tactics on U.S ships was an ominous forerunner to what would be frightfully expected from a planned 1946 invasion of Japan's main islands. (Historically, there had been an intention to destroy a Germany city with an A-bomb but with the war progressing well for the Western Allies and Soviets it became less of a priority and as well the war in Europe ended before it was deemed sufficiently viable to try out an A-bomb. After all the Trinity nuclear test in Los Alamos did not happen until July with the European theatre of the war already over in May. Hiroshima and Nagasaki could have occurred as did happen in reality which would have put Nazi Germany on notice (...as the Soviet Union was put on notice). Obviously, the Nazi effort to produce an A-bomb would have then become a top priority while the Allies may have still entertained the thought to use the threat of nuclear devastation in Nazi Germany. Although it has to be said that while Nazi Germany would have not been able to produce an A-bomb by 1945 – it is said it may have only been able too by the late 1940s at the very earliest – such a glaring deficiency in nuclear weaponry on the part of Nazi Germany it could be argued this was not yet common knowledge to the western Allies and so instead of any possible active nuclear policy by the USA a Cold War Mexican nuclear stand-off may have resulted as yes, did happen between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union (which incidentally, the USSR did not have an A-bomb until 1949) but this time between the U.S.A. and Nazi Germany. After all, from what one understands in reality it was only known after the war had ended as to how far behind the German nuclear programme actually was to that of the Allies – such as by being able to secretly listen in to discussions of ten high ranking German scientists who were detained at an English country house [Operation Epsilon] – as it was always feared that Nazi Germany was actually on the verge of producing an A-bomb; after all, advances in German physics had helped to lay the initial groundwork for a nuclear device and it was due to such eminent German scientists like Albert Einstein who faced persecution from the Nazis and left Germany – he and others were Jewish – that in a letter raised the possibility of a German nuclear secret weapon being developed to then U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt which would ultimately spark off the Manhattan Project. Ironically, when war did come other refugee German scientists who had also left Nazi Germany would help the U.S. to develop the A-bomb although Albert Einstein himself for various reasons – including his pacifist beliefs which would not enable him to gain a necessary security clearance – would not be directly involved.

11. *Auschwitz*. This photograph was taken by the author at the very end of the twentieth century in late December 1999. It shows the railway which led to the disembarkation point where people were taken off the train and selected for either immediate death in the gas chambers or to work in labour groups where the average life span was usually no more than six months. William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* provides a harrowing account of a gassing. It's been said this extermination camp along with the nuclear mushroom cloud over Hiroshima will remain as the two enduring images of World War II and possibly of the twentieth century.

I was at Auschwitz with some other Australian friends living respectively in both Germany and Lithuania on working holidays along with one Lithuanian friend. We had all met in Krakow to soon welcome in the new millennium. Auschwitz was a poignant reminder of the bestialities of the century that was about to end and before the Age of Terror and the other regional nightmares that would follow there was still the hope that the new century that was about to start would prove to be

more civilized. Amidst the snow we walked amongst the derelict wooden huts, the guard towers and the concrete remnants of the crematorium and death chambers. It was especially interesting for me as I had previously visited Auschwitz in the Spring on my first ever visit to Krakow. On that day it had been strange to go through the death camp on a beautiful, sunny day and so the subdued winter tones of this second visit seem to capture for me the truly murderous genocidal historical mood of this abominable site. In the museum section were the piles of shoes and other garments of the many victims in small cubicle rooms behind large glass walls.

After Krakow there would be a brief time in Lithuania and with an Australian-Lithuanian friend would visit Druskininkai which is a town in southern Lithuania. It is where the national icon of Lithuania – the mystical painter and composer M.K. Ciurlionis (1875-1911) – spent his childhood. Druskininkai is surrounded by forest and I could feel nature's 'spiritual sense' - which Ciurlionis himself would have felt - while walking through these beautiful Lithuanian woods. So it was here I ended up doing a sketch of some winter trees as I was struck by the way the branches were all spread out in the manner of the many pronged Jewish candle candelabras which I had seen at Auschwitz. I still cherish this drawing in my small square sketch book and consequently also did an etching titled *Winter Trees* (which can be sighted on the author's website). Thus, I am always reminded that amidst such natural beauty I was reminded of the human reality of maintaining one's faith at a time of insurmountable tragedy. Perhaps, a poignant counterpoint is to read Viktor E. Frankl's classic *Man's Search For Meaning* written after his nightmarish experiences in the concentration camps – including Auschwitz- and is considered a masterpiece to hope.



‘Winter Trees.’ *Druskininkai. Lietuva.*

II

1. In regards to the appendix it has been mentioned that a textual revision was considered but not carried through and so one would like to also briefly reference below a few other examples (among many) which one tentatively feels may be worth mentioning and although they too were not also adopted there curiously may possibly still be some cursory literary interest and so present them.

(i) In Chapter Three - The Front Gate I was tempted to add additional sentences to a paragraph right near the beginning of the Front Gate so it would read as thus:

"They are unintelligent slaves who would be killed anyway," stated Scholar A. "Much like some of the soldier slaves involved in your initial capture and imprisonment which it was felt could not be trusted to maintain any deception." Scholar A paused as if ruminating over several thoughts; to then only state: "With such bonded men and women we toy with their innate fantasy of expecting eventual liberty." He peered at the messiah lying on the soft lounge.

Yet also decided in the end to only keep what was originally written.

(ii) In Chapter Six – Stephen it is mentioned that Stephen's father has an interest in Platonism but had thought at one time to replace 'Platonism' with 'Stoicism' which is an Ancient Greek philosophical strand that is more to my personal liking. However, also no textual change to keep to what was originally written as Platonism has historically had an influence on official Church theology. (I muse on how my father came from the same vicinity in Cyprus as where the founder of Stoicism came from in Cyprus. I thus do also wonder if there is an instinctual influence in regards to my antipathy towards Platonic political philosophy in particular which to me seems so distinctively insularly authoritarian when compared to the apparent more cosmopolitan open-mindedness of the Stoics. For instance, in the paper *The Natural Law of the Greek Period* by Maurice Le Bel (1949) there is the rather astute observation that while class persists with Plato - and presumably its accompanying inequalities - there is with the Stoics - and also apparently with what would have been enlightened Sophists - that they saw themselves rather as 'citizens of the world').

(iii) In Chapter Six The March the May Day march in Moscow is referred to as a socialist festival yet one later thought not to have this direct reference so the word 'socialist' would not in this specific case be unfairly associated with Stalinism and as it is the word 'socialist' still remains co-opted by authoritarian ideologues. I had thought then of using the word 'worker' or something similar etc. which maybe more benign but as May Day actually advocates for labour rights etc. and thus has a socialist aspect in a genuine positive sense one has again ultimately made no textual change. As an aside one still thinks what a historical shame that Rosa Luxemburg imbued with a brilliant intellect and a social democrat spirit – she was critical of Lenin's political '*avant-gardism*' – was mercilessly murdered in Berlin in 1919 by the counter-revolutionary *freikorps* - the military far right-fascist minded precursors to the Nazis.

(iv) In Chapter Eight – The Encirclement it had been sanguinely thought to change 'precious Jew trains' to 'precious prison trains' in case of causing any offence but the reality is that although other significant cohorts were exterminated by the Nazis the largest cohort were still the Jews.

Although the German platoon is basically portrayed as a complement of ordinary soldiers I do let it be known that they are also indifferently aware that this really is no ordinary war with one of them quipping about Himmler's 'precious Jew trains' to intimate that they would know of the murderous fate of such innocent civilians under the jurisdiction of the SS. After all, *Wehrmacht* soldiers and others were aware of the genocidal war crimes that occurred in the occupied territories - as evidenced by the photos of them as fascinated spectators who curiously came up to the deep pits where massacres were carried out by roving *Eizentruppen* death squads; and if these soldiers were not there as witnesses they could have also been there as participants or as actively providing support to round up and transport the innocent victims who although a majority were Jews were also other racial or political 'undesirables' including the intelligentsia – as this is who the old man in the novella may have been - to the many massacre sites; while it should be noted as well the *Wehrmacht* did also directly commit war atrocities. However, it does not seem to be the case that this specific

battle unit in the novella was involved in any extermination process even though it appears that the soldier allegorically named 'Adolf' has a desire to do such murderous killing. Notably, Adolf is not liked by the rest of the platoon yet it still cannot be excused of having an indifferent moral ambivalence towards the scapegoated innocent victims of the fascist regime that they fight for. Yet, for most of these war weary combatants their sole interest is for the war to soon end so as to survive it. Personal survival is really the only 'moral rationale' which now pre-occupies their beleaguered minds, nothing else matters including as well what happens to others. To live. Not to die. Let it be that others will die. (No *who* and certainly not *I*). So many corpses and to even *cause* corpses so as to not be one them.

Thus, there can be a society that has become so self-debased it will blame others for its own moral decline. As 'victim' to 'judge' so as to persecute. To believe to have the 'right' to deny the humanity of anyone else so as to be 'rightly' saved. Us or *them*. *They* will be the corpses we will be the executors. *Having to* guarantee our lives by *having to* secure the death of *them*. Illogical. Inhumane. Nihilism. Fascism, like war, is hell. So also are ideological extremities.

2. What is missing from the appendix is reference the tragedy that up to 20,000 French civilians lost their lives during the Normandy campaign including to carpet bombing by the Allies. As it is the appendix presents an alternative history that focuses specifically on military operations.

3. In regards to the whole narrative I have tentatively discerned that the original novella was actually a large manuscript of 'novel size' which most probably was written from late 1982 through to the end of 1984 or the beginning of 1985. This large draft was edited down to be a novella probably from 1987 through to 1993 or a little earlier with many interruptions along the way which included further overseas travel. In fact, it was somewhat quixotic to take a bulky first draft in hard cover on an around the world trip which ended up lasting over 20 months from March 1985 to November 1986.

Author's Afterword

1. In Australia it can be argued that in one schema or another (e.g. 'work for the dole'; 'mutual obligation'; 'robo-debt' with its insidious algorithmic settings) this unfounded negative attitude of the unemployed can still be reflected in federal government social welfare policy to this day and as far as one can see on both sides of the major party political fence. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Employment Service that existed at the time I was briefly unemployed is essentially no more in the neoliberal era with its ideological penchant towards privatisation (and casualization). Private employment services it is said also have an officially endorsed capability to profiteer off the joblessness within a Kafkaesque administration that overall is punitively weighted unjustly against them. While welfare fraud does need to be outed – of which it should be said is often deduced to be a minimal percentage as most people who are unemployed do actually have a sincere want to be re-employed – it seems that while every official effort is made to minimize the illegal procurement of social benefits by individual recipients on balance one may argue that there does not seem to be the same government effort to at least officially identify and close down design irregularities within a privatised employment system which can place an unnecessary financial strain on the public purse. Along with growing concerns as to the moral adequacy of 'mutual obligation' there has also in recent times been an increasing call out to reintroduce the Commonwealth Employment Service which one assumes could shut down a 'profit motivation' that can be perceived as a corrosive driver within the private job search arena. (Although government management would be eternally enticed into looking at ways to initiate cost-cutting budgetary measures at least there may also be more transparent oversight by way of senate estimates inquiries to avert the worse aspects of placing financial interests above any genuine interest to meet the social value needs of a various, wide ranging cohort of welfare recipients who desperately need help to get back on track with their lives which, often through no real fault of their own, have been economically derailed and not just by job unavailability but also by other negative extraneous variables such as health issues, domestic

violence, accommodation difficulties etcetera). It should also be mentioned that in Australia unemployment benefits in particular also remain scandalously well below the Henderson poverty line which has been the perilous case for several decades. Yet during the covid pandemic when there was a sudden mass upsurge in jobless numbers unemployment benefits were actually considerably raised for a set time which may be seen as an official admission that the financial support available was inadequate and with the rise there was actually a positive social effect. However, when this particular unemployment crisis was seen as over unwelcomingly it was also seen fit to also have a financial reduction in unemployment benefits with even an incoming Federal ALP government choosing to maintain such a tight fiscal policy towards the disadvantaged, as was the case under the previous LNP federal administration – except, of course, for the brief covid period - it may also be argued that during covid the entire Australian body politic including government, the labour movement and social welfare NGOs perhaps missed a golden opportunity to experimentally introduce a Universal Basic Income if only on a trial basis. Furthermore, a government legislated protective regulatory regime that would provide adequate work rights, pay etcetera to all precarious workers in the so called ‘gig economy’ would also be welcome. Think also halting wage theft and drastically improving the working lives of those slavishly involved with food and parcel delivery services; labour hire and thus general speaking all casual staff in the nation. While one would also add that medicare afforded to all citizens along with work rights should also be fully automatically afforded to asylum seekers who are in Australia. Liberal democracies often rhetorically claim they maintain a high democratic bar when it comes to human rights etcetera thus the ‘political health’ of any liberal democracy can perhaps still be best diagnosed by objectively observing to what real extent beyond any performance ‘toxic positive rhetoric’ it truly inclusively treats its still prevailing marginalized citizens so as to see initiated a genuine commitment to social equality for all.

2. However, it should be stated that generally speaking most Commonwealth Employment Service employees had genuine sympathy for their clients even to the extent on one occasion - although only now a dim recollection thus unfortunately devoid of details - of taking industrial action on their behalf.

Ancestral Visitations

1.a Thus, the Fall of the Serpent who in this case being Satan had tempted Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. However, it should also be noted that the serpent as a creature who regularly sheds its skin so as to then have new skin can represent the cycle of life then death then regeneration is a natural process which can occur in the natural realm which Adam and Eve enter into after being cast out of Eden. The serpent in other biblical contexts also represents...’...*genuine wisdom (Matthew 10:16) or of healing (Numbers 21: 9) just as it was in Greek mythology.*’ Pg. 148. *THE GREAT CODE. The Bible as Literature* by Northrop Frye. Academic Press. Toronto. Canada. 1981. See also pg. 110 re: the serpent as symbol of the mortal cycle). As an aside in sacred descriptions of the creation of existence there can be mention of light triumphantly overcoming darkness. Hopefully, the kernel of ‘humane light’ within each human spirit along with an accompanying human intellect will overcome the vast tyrannical darkness which often curses humanity; to return to the Christian tradition – as it is the one I have some familiarity with - there is John 1: 5 in where it is inferred in such a ‘plain English’ modern translations as the New International Version of how the light shines in the darkness...which the darkness cannot overcome (in the King James Version it is the darkness cannot comprehend the light...).

2.For some further information regarding Orquideas Barrileteras one may choose by way of the following titles to carry out some preliminary research on the internet: a. *Orquideas Barrileteras – Biennale of Sydney.* (introductory exhibition notes). There are various other exhibition www sources. b. *Documental: Orquideas, barriletes hechos por manos de mujeres de Sumpango, Sacatepéquez* (video). Other information can also be found on the internet in regards to Orquideas Barrileteras. All the best.

There is also the Ancient Greek mythological notion of shadows as being physical markers of human souls. It could be suggested it is the struggle of the philosopher to focus human comprehension away from such darkly apparitions of reality which are actually transitory in their illusory nature so as to enlighten the human mind to what reality truly is which in Platonic terms is founded on the absolute forms which exist on a metaphysical level being both eternal and unchanging; to thus philosophically imply that they form the basis of everything that exists inclusive of both the earth and cosmos.¹

1a. When one speaks of the 'absolute forms' in the simplest terms there is for instance a metaphysical perfect horse (living form) of which all other horses are a lesser than perfect physical 'reflection'; there is a perfect chair (object) of which all other chairs are a lesser than perfect physical 'reflection' and so forth in relation to all things that exist in this deemed physical reality.

1b. Perhaps to further clarify what may be viewed as Plato's general outlook regarding the physical and the metaphysical it is more the case that this physical world we exist in is real and from what one understands Plato accepts it as real but for him this material existence with its passing ways is of an inferior reality compared to the superior reality of an absolutist metaphysical realm. Thus, there are two realities but for Plato one (physical) is to be dismissed and the other (metaphysical) is to be praised. Plato yearns for the absolute over the relative and this is translated into (i) the implacable rigidity of his social caste system which had to be absolute so as to be 'harmoniously' unchanging and (ii) his overt hostility towards the sophists who sought only to deal with what may be true in relational or relativist terms within this already sensory known transient world (rather than to philosophically speculate on what may be true in any other theorized reality such as the overarching 'objective truth' of Plato's metaphysical absolutist schema.

1c. In regards to the sophists who maybe criticized for teaching on how to rhetorically 'make the weaker argument stronger' and win with it either on the political stage (as well as in the courts especially if faced with litigation, being accused or to accuse etc) which can lead to an undemocratic charlatan diminution of political debate in the 'wrong hands'; yet, it could also lead to an inspirational democratic enhancement in what may be positively viewed in the 'right hands' and while these itinerant teachers in the Hellenic domain - who could also be foreigners which raised suspicion - were nominally perceived as philosophers it apparently went against the traditional grain in Ancient Greece to seek payment and thus was frowned upon, while it would be Plato who would outright disparage the sophists as shopkeepers selling spiritual goods. Yet such antagonism towards the sophists was also a haughty symptom of a distinctive class tension that in these democratic times (which was especially emerging after the Persian Wars) between the old aristocratic political class and those now with new merchant wealth that sought to enter into the political arena and who needed to develop such vital skills like public speaking in order to successfully garner widespread support throughout the *demos*. The sophists who were astute in the art of rhetoric could meet this political need and so aroused the hostility of the nobility one of whom was Plato. Apparently high education had been the exclusive domain of the upper class and the sophists by way of payment to make it affordable for them to do so was now making it openly available to any free citizen (which one may speculate would include anyone who was interested for either nefarious and noble reasons; thus was also the case with these 'new teachers' some of whom who would have only been interested in enriching themselves while one supposes there were also others who had a genuine interest in teaching for positive societal reasons. As always one can never dismissively judge any particular human cohort no matter what it may be from a simplistic monolith perspective.

**A general cursory superficial overview with an alternative liberal perspective also eventually intimated which in humanist terms maybe ultimately seen as more so theistic than philosophical in its social and political outlook. It should also be noted what is tentatively stated is a personal, subjective response so one may see this long account as merely a catalyst to formulating one's own opinions rather than for these limited (perhaps at times even overly mistaken) musings to be duly perceived as any sort of 'final word'; it is to be understood I am not an authority or academic expert and simply as a humble member of the general public am only putting forward - and rather briefly*

and pensively - a few observations that result from one's limited initial research looking only on sources available at the time. Thank you for your understanding.

II

There is the ultimately self-serving Plato's Cave of Shadows allegory whereby in part it mentions chained slaves who are forced to face only one direction to singularly perceive as being real those shadows of actual things cast on the cave wall by a fire that is behind them and having also never seen the three-dimensional object world that exists outside the cave.

It brings to mind how on one late night while watching SBS – an Australian television channel with multicultural programming – there was at the start of a 1970 Italian movie *Lady Caliph* – which revolved around a factory strike - a quote coming up on a black screen and attributed to Socrates which states that his true struggle is against shadows. Thus, reiterating that for Socrates and Plato it appears to be the philosopher's role to make others aware that what is envisaged as the real world which humanity has placed its faith in is only a 'shadow' when there is a true world beyond of the Absolute Forms; with this world merely being a distorted reflection of a universal harmonious reality.

III

With the 'world of the metaphysical' seen as superior to the 'world of appearances' one may also like to argue that this particular philosophical absolutist vision was also accompanied by a unique political filter - i.e. a world of 'ideological appearances'.

IV

It could be said that there was a Platonic inclination to see those aristocrats who preferred the political absolutism of oligarchy as 'soulfully worthy' to be more acquainted with the universalised metaphysical realm of the Absolute Forms. After all, while it has to be said that Socrates did have friendships that went across the whole political spectrum - due to his apparent socially gregarious nature being willing to talk with anyone in the marketplace – it can nevertheless also be argued that his well-known antipathy towards the Athenian democratic polis can still be taken into account in any overarching discourse of his philosophical outlook.

V

Pursuing further such a particular reading ¹ of Socrates (albeit more so a 'Platonic Socrates' than perhaps a historical one²) when it hopefully came to any philosophically inspired upward reformation of an individual as well as to any equally upward philosophical reform of the whole human polis. It was more so with the nobles that Socrates staked his hope to bring on any such philosophical elevation of the human condition to thus entwine his philosophical outlook with social and political imperatives that could possibly lead to a new re-organizing of human society.

1a. Note this preliminary analysis is subjectively speaking a personal reflection & should be clearly critiqued as not having any academic authority; the same can be said with all of these associated footnotes which it is felt only really provide a 'sketch overview' not being sufficiently 'in depth'. Thus, further research is advised in regards to any matter raised that may pique one's intellectual curiosity and which will possibly lead one to variously different perspectives and opinions from what is pensively presented here without the fullest knowledge of the subject matter. (Lastly, apologies for the inevitable repetition of some commentary points sprinkled throughout various footnotes).

1b. In the interests of transparency my view of Plato and the Socrates - that is perhaps known in a mythical, literary and historical sense all at once - does critically tend towards the negative in regards to the political implication of their philosophical outlook although it is hoped one's appraisal has a nuanced aspect towards this 'person of interest' who has historically aroused an otherwise polarizing academic discourse. One reading I am particularly impressed with is the following well measured paper *Socrates as Political Partisan*. Neal Wood Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique. Vol. 7, No. 1 (March. 1974). pp. 3-31 (29 pages). Published by: Canadian Political Science Association. Furthermore, when

it comes to Plato's three-tiered social class republic being equated with his three-tiered human soul there is a good visual representation of both polis and soul in the last two videos of Thelma. L. Zevine's four part series *Plato's Philosophy - Socrates to Sartre* (1978) by way of a Youtube account Philosophy Overdose. The series at times has a somewhat Cold War edginess to it but is still very much a valuable introductory overview and Thelma L. Zevine is splendidly authoritative and so one should always stay attentive to her wry commentary. The four episodes are titled *Shadow & Substance; Opinion vs Knowledge; The Three Part Man; The Ideal State*. She also references the totalitarian potential of Plato's ideal city and inquires 'who guards the guardians?'. An interesting paper to peruse is *On The Invention of Hierarchy* by PAGEduBOIS which looks at the play *Medea* by Euripides and ventures to the germination of the development of the hierarchical 'great chain of being' that will arise from the writings of Plato and Aristotle (especially when one thinks of the latter's biological top down differentiation of humans, animals down to plants while as an aside there is the Genesis assignation to have humanity to lord over the earthly creation which by way of the spiritual hierarchical formulations of the Ancient Greeks including of course the Neo-Platonists would lead to a full blossoming of the unequal notions of the chain of being in ecclesiastic circles of Medieval and Renaissance Europe and which are also still subtly with us to this day in this so called modern era following on from the European Enlightenment e.g. after all, eugenics rhetoric and ideological apologia for social class distinctions still very much exist. An internet article *The Great Chain of Being* by Nigel Tubbs. from *A History of Western Philosophy* series may be a sufficient starting point to look further into this matter along with various videos freely available on the internet such as *The Great Chain of Being* by Dr Scott Masson) and interestingly around the time and after the Peloponnesian War whereby Greeks had not as their main enemy aby 'barbarian' outsider such as the Mede but rather each other. Another interesting article is *Plato's Concept Of Justice: An Analysis* by D.R. Bhandari. J.N.V. University on an ancient philosophy website as well as an introductory video *Plato's idea of Justice/ Plato's idea of Justice in English* on a Youtube account titled Lyceum of Politics. (Of course one may out of academic curiosity peruse the internet to find many other articles and videos, after all there are too many to mention). As it is in the interest of balance if one would like to read a typically glowing appraisal of Socrates there is Moya. M. Mason's *Socrates: Bravest, Wisest and most Just?* on the internet which I recently haphazardly came across while researching and there is much to agree with in this positive portrayal of Socrates the person while also being at the same time critical of his fraught antagonism towards the democratic political model; thus if it needs to be said any intrinsic appraisal of Socrates whether for or against will lean towards being complex rather than simple). Italo Calvino in his *Invisible Cities* who notes Berenice which oscillates between transitory states of injustice and justice and which included in this ongoing historical cycle is a bitter seed that revengefully awaits to 'blossom' on Berenice's fertile soil for ongoing social change and resentfully characterizes itself to be 'more just than the just' by which one may choose to infer so aptly summarizes the Platonic sentiment that its static rational polis is 'virtuously superior' to any organic democratic one and in 'the name of justice' will lay waste any liberal garden to have only an authoritarian wasteland so no alternative just seed can take root to vigorously emerge and idealistically prosper over what has already been metaphysically perceived to be the 'ideal' As it is in the interest of balance if one would like to read a typically glowing appraisal of Socrates there is Moya. M. Mason's *Socrates: Bravest, Wisest and most Just?* on the internet which I recently haphazardly came across while researching and there is much to agree with in this positive portrayal of Socrates the person while also being at the same time critical of his fraught antagonism towards the democratic political model; thus if it needs to be said any intrinsic appraisal of Socrates will lean towards being complex rather than simple). Italo Calvino's speculative cities can perhaps be seen as a humanist antidote that allows the infinite options available to the human imagination to over-ride any inhumanly restrictive finite linear approach towards so called logical reason. In fact, the liberating wayward possibilities of a wholly open mind are artistically represented by Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* whereby he jokingly dropped three lengths of thread all a meter long to defy logic by the use of chance to randomly redefine three new versions of a meter which of course would no longer be even be straight lines having curves and which one can say can also be in deference to the standardised 'absolute form' of a metre length as first methodically defined in the modern day by the French Academy of Sciences in 1791. Then again, one should also at least take note of Eugene Ionesco's rueful observation in *Present Past Past Present* that throughout human history there has been an absurdist desire to achieve in absolute terms a 'paradise on earth', 'ideal city' etc with as for the Platonists even though they had above them the brightest sky they were still pessimistically of the sour opinion that humanity miserably existed in a dark cave which philosophically speaking could mindfully

only be illuminated by an eternal metaphysics so as to absolutely cast off the deep flickering shadows that apparently shroud human vision. In the present digital age the search for utopian perfection has brought on artificial intelligence induced absolute forms of computer algorithms which as the Spanish film *Artificial Justice* (2024) - which deals with algorithms replacing human judgement in the judicial system - could in the wrong hands acutely entrap humanity to yet another harrowing variation of human dystopia; while with artificial intelligence there can also be in cyberspace a false, deceptively convincing variation of absolute forms. (Regarding visual imagery in the modernist age one recommends Vilum Flusser's *Towards A Philosophy of Photography*. 1983). As for shadows one feels enlightened by the Japanese word *komorebi* which appears at the very end of the Wim Wenders film *Perfect Days* (2024) which refers to the shifting interplay of light and shadow that occurs as light invariably travels in between moving trees and leaves by which one may also meditate on the '*komorebi*' that also occurs on a 'cosmic tree scale' i.e. between the light of the stars and the lingering darkly 'shadow spaces' between them when for instance in Australian Aboriginal society it is the dark shapes defined by a surrounding cosmic luminosity that are looked upon to provide guidance and relevance to the human experience in relation to the fluctuating cosmic realm that is the universe as well as in relation to the earthly realm that is this unstable world dynamically in ongoing flux.

2a. To take into account the eternal argument that seems to ongoingly exist that the Socrates that Plato depicts in his dialogues may be a literary version whereby the character Socrates is merely a mouthpiece for Plato to express his own points of view versus the Socrates that Plato does depict as being genuinely him. Thus, in Plato's writings a 'Platonic Socrates as presented to the world may have markedly differed from a 'historical Socrates'

From one's ignorantly limited 'understanding' it seems that the Socrates of *The Apology* which is about Socrates on trial is more so the 'historical Socrates' while the Socrates of *The Republic* may actually be more so a 'Platonic Socrates' or a mixture of both a real and imagined Socrates. After all, the assumption has been entertained that that the Socrates in Plato's earlier dialogues along with his sympathetic reportage of the Socrates on trial are supposedly closer to the 'flesh and blood' Socrates rather than to any 'literary mouthpiece' or even later 'perfected metaphysical' Platonic version of this historically polarizing philosopher.

Nevertheless, one is certainly not at all qualified to academically differentiate between the two but wish simply to attentively raise this noted distinction of possibly there being 'two Socrates': a historical one as well as a literary one; however, with that said one is inclined towards the suspicion that the Socrates on trial is very much more so him while the Socrates of the *Republic* may at the very least be overlaid with a 'Platonic colouring' although one also suspects that if the real Socrates had lived long enough to read Plato's *Republic* he would have most probably agreed with much of what is Platonically attributed to have been said by him. (Interestingly, in the later *The Laws* by Plato there is no Socrates with an Athenian who remains unnamed speaking with a Cretan named Kleinias and a Spartan named Megillus).

2b. To reiterate on the Socrates as presented by Plato in the *Republic* and later dialogues who is often seen as a 'Platonic Socrates' and perhaps differed from the so called 'historical Socrates' as depicted in Plato's record of when Socrates was put on trial: it is generally understood that the Socrates presented by Plato at his trial is a more accurate depiction of him as many of those who actually witnessed the trial would have still been alive at the time Plato wrote about it and so could have pointed out any inaccuracies if any even though it is felt Plato's characterization of Socrates at his trial is overly sympathetic. (Note Plato's Ancient Greek title *Apology* dealing with the trial would be best titled as an English translation *Defence*). Overall, it is a matter of keeping in mind that most of the surviving records of Socrates come from those who favoured him such as Plato and Xenophon. Plato's positive bias towards Socrates is only mainly counterpointed by the satirical portrayal of him by the comic playwright Aristophanes. Interestingly, it can also be argued that Aristophanes like other Athenians may have misunderstood Socrates as being yet another rhetorician - much like the sophists that both Socrates and Plato criticized for deceptively making - as already pointed out - the 'weaker argument the stronger' - without discerning that Socratic philosophy was based on perceiving reality by way of logical reasoning which is beyond persuasive rhetoric. Nevertheless, for an outsider to see Socrates speaking to a young, impressionable aristocratic audience - of whom it should also be said were drawn to him - and who were anti-democratic in their political point-of-view would prejudicially have seen Socrates as a sophist who was validating the oligarchical sentiments of such an elite audience even though his philosophical focus was more so to educate such aristocrat

listeners to aspire towards a metaphysical Good to encourage an interest in having political power to enhance the possibility of rationally formulating a society wisely based on the rational application of virtue.

While on the other hand those who sought the wise counsel of Socrates would have projected from his seemingly positive faith in them to be capable noble leaders only a flattering remonstrance in regards to their personal ambition to have power but not so as to then selflessly bring on any wider social good. Ambitious men such as Alcibiades and Critias who in different ways would end up wielding immense influence and power (the former mainly militarily initially the latter mainly politically) were mostly only motivated by self-interest to become a threat to Athenian democracy; thus for their own self-centred reasons they both would have taken to heart the antagonistic attitude that Socrates had towards democracy as a philosophical way to re-align in their own minds a rationale to bring it down for their own gain and not as Socrates would have hoped for to replace 'mob power' with 'kingly virtue'. Therefore, in defence of Socrates who was mistakenly thought to intentionally encourage the tyrannical ambition of such failed 'pupils' he should not take any blame for their later actions against the Athenian democracy which can even be viewed as traitorous. (Although one may harshly speculate that a somewhat naïve Socrates could have seriously attempted to be far more discerning in perceiving that such self-absorbed men as Alcibiades and Critias would have never really taken up his genuine philosophical counsel to overcome their soulful weaknesses to then become wise rulers for the good of the state rather than for themselves. At least when Critias became a leader of the Thirty Tyrants Socrates would be openly critical of him which it can be reasonably assumed a murderously annoyed Critias would have eventually lost patience with his former 'teacher' which would have probably cost Socrates his life had the tyranny lasted much longer).

VI

It could be imagined that Socrates would have the aristocracy 'examine thy selves' so as to soulfully manoeuvre an awakened sense of virtuous human purpose towards a metaphysical universal conception of absolute justice that would then allow their more fully 'enlightened selves' to monarchically both bring on and maintain a prevailing absolutist just society in the material world.¹

1a. From one point of view politics is a *techne* like any other expertise so only experts should be involved in politics. It is a matter of competency and from Plato's point of view there is only the aristocracy who - as destined to be born to rule - can be expert at governing. It does not occur that anyone outside this elite circle can be educated to become competent as if comparably to disallow the potential of a sheet metal worker to be re-educated to become an engineer; or of a carpenter who could be re-educated to become an architect; or of a lowly school teacher who could be re-educated to become a philosopher king.

1b. After all, it seems that apparently, such nobles due to having a high social position was 'evidence' enough that they superiorly had more well refined souls and so simply needed to be philosophically encouraged to self-reflect in order to seek after wisdom so as to exclusively 'expertly' lead the polis in a manner that maybe envisaged as a 'just paternalism' that would idealistically supposedly veer away from the political temptation of 'sinning into tyranny' that 'inevitably' can unholy occur *en masse* in a decaying 'populist smeared' democracy. (Therefore, it could be ascertained that much like Plato the noble who had misgivings of a 'populist' form of government which involved a 'non-expert' citizenry Socrates did truly perhaps enjoy interacting most of all with those of the aristocrat class drawn to him; providing for their elitist sensibilities an apparently logically deductive rationale for their stereotypically pejorative 'rule by mob' assumptions).

As for most 'ordinary' citizens who 'obviously' had 'lesser souls' it was 'logically reasoned' that they would not at all be capable to fully comprehend the universal Good; so actually, it was no use that they 'self-examine' themselves other than perhaps to possibly dimly comprehend their 'pre-destined' role to diligently support by their labour and other 'menial' skills and services those 'rightly' societally above them being 'fatefully' destined to 'properly' govern over those who are socially lower having 'inadequate selves'.

So while a widespread modern day audience has access to and finds value in what Socrates has to say - and with no one denied the opportunity to do so based on social status (e.g. class, gender while especially in the present 21st century with its widespread global availability of digitized material that can be viewed even on hand held electronic devices) it could be argued that Socrates in fifth century Athens may have had a far more limited prospective audience in mind to hear what he had to say perhaps sincerely believing

only a few rather than a majority would even comprehend his post-modern premise that only those like himself who have at first realised that they were not wise at all had any chance to soulfully ascend from human ignorance to immortal knowledge and for this to be so for only too few and for those few to dismissively become even less with each descending social order; thus in regards to his overall philosophical commentary its original societal value may not have been as universal as one may like to generally assume (to even perhaps markedly differ from a modern day egalitarian perspective of human liberation).

As it is when it comes to a pejorative outlook towards 'the masses' as already alluded in Plato's dialogues one can find such arguably fear mongering 'scenes as (i) those living in the cave turning on the one who had left the cave to see the world beyond it and returning to tell the others of the real world of light that exists beyond the unreal world of shadows and (ii) of the so called 'ship of the fools' whereby a mutinous crew chooses by diabolical means to only satisfy its self-interests and irrationally sees anyone who can guide the ship as worthless – both extreme scenarios could certainly occur but are deceptively portrayed as the *only* scenarios which will occur and *certainly* will result if 'expert advice' is not taken into account by such an ignorant, self-seeking mass denied the philosophical education which Plato argues only the nobility is competently 'qualified' to obtain to then rule wisely for the cause of justice. (Never mind such Athenian aristocrats as the 'thirty tyrants' who were handed oligarchical power by Sparta after the defeat of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War to rule barbarically for over a year until overthrown by a democratic faction. Interestingly, in an act of progressive political foresight a general amnesty was proclaimed for most of those of the oligarchical faction so as to avert a cyclical return to political violence. It was in this fraught political climate that the newly established yet still fragile democracy that blasphemy charges were aimed at Socrates so initiated as to legally circumnavigate this amnesty and with the hope that Socrates would be silenced from encouraging anyone who impressionably still held onto any anti-democratic sentiments and one supposes especially among the aristocratic young. Unfortunately, Socrates who saw the charges against him as a mockery would in hubris manner overplay his hand in extolling the whole trial as a mockery for it to become so highly emotionally charged as to fatefully lead to the punishment of death rather than to exile which one may assume the latter judgement was what had been initially expected. Yet, even then it was generally thought Socrates would still make good his escape and no one would have seriously begrudged this elderly man the chance to live a little longer; however, he would stubbornly refuse the opportunity to save his 'mortal shell' to thus die and be heroized by his aristocrat followers such as Plato as a 'philosopher martyr' which one supposes also offered them more 'good reason' to wholly reject democracy. It is a historical irony that it being probable that Socrates would have faced the possibility of a show trial and execution if the bloodthirsty tyranny of the Thirty Tyrants had lasted just a little longer for possibly the same 'crime' as what would eventually have him later actually killed in a democracy where free speech was meant to prevail as if he had faced a show trial; with the actual political-religious 'sin' that Socrates had committed basically being that of 'speaking his mind' to his Athenian compatriots, yet as guided by his divine daemon to do so and as well as to query those around him in a way that may have touched upon matters which the state – whether it be a tyranny or democracy – may have found unfavourable and which would eventually call for his physical removal from the public space and while it may have been the tyranny that wanted him dead it would be the democracy that would have him dead even though all that it may have only really wanted was for him to leave Athens and carry on his 'madness' in another part of the Hellenic world so he simply would no longer be a possible threat to a resurrected democracy that was still re-establishing itself while still fearing another oligarchical coup; even though one could argue that to seriously perceive the verbose 'ramblings' of a seventy year old man as a real threat to the whole political system would have been envisaged as arising from overly anxious minds worriedly subsumed more so by a fearful paranoia rather than by any measured good reasoning. While Socrates may have been viewed as harmless before the murderous reign of the Thirty Tyrants after it Athenian hearts had hardened towards him especially when such a former 'pupil' as Critias had been a major leader of this tyranny. Although Socrates could not be blamed for this former pupil's cruelty of whom Socrates would also eventually face the risk of becoming yet another victim of Critias's murderous spirit. Socrates had refused to follow a command of the Thirty to aid in the arrest of Leon of Salamis (who apparently was a highly respected general who the Thirty saw fit to have killed) so as to implicate other citizens in yet another regime atrocity. This refusal by Socrates could have led to his own death if the regime had not fallen soon afterwards; yet, that Socrates somehow did survive even though he had also been a critic of the Thirty - with it even passing a law to have the likes of Socrates from entering into

discussion with men under thirty - still did not seem to dissipate the suspicion among his fellow Athenians that his life had still been spared due to an underhanding favouritism rather than due to any timely good fortune. A 'hearsay' suspicion further enhanced by Socrates choosing to stay in Athens during the reign of the Thirty when so many others with genuine democratic sympathies had chosen to go into self-exile while those democrats who took their chances to stay in Athens were either then forced to go into exile or outright murdered; yet, Socrates although not making himself malleable to the tyranny but as well believed to be antipathetic towards the democratic model had stayed alive. As for the claim that Critias was a pupil of Socrates there is the report by Socrates who claims how formally he had no pupils as he was not a teacher in the traditional sense but rather that others such as Critias were drawn to hear what he had to say with Socrates believing that one can only 'teach thyself' to reveal and bring out from within one's self that which is good which can align with the absolute good. It is clear in Critias's case that what he heard from Socrates to spark any self-enquiry was of no value to him to instead have his soul venture far away from the Eternal Good (rather than towards it as Socrates would have hoped). As Critias's later behaviour would terrifyingly display all that he had embraced was immoral rather than anything that was beautiful.

1c. Yes, a rather meticulous strong assertion to use the negative expression 'fear mongering'. Yet although those who remain in the cave do live in a world of shadows which denies them fully experiencing reality as exists beyond the cave (and to which we must keep in mind that our own sensory experience may not be as fully embracing of reality as what may be presumed) it does not necessarily follow that they automatically would violently turn on the person who has left the cave and then returned to it to tell the others about the outside world with its all-encompassing three-dimensionality. One could have equally speculatively written an alternative parable which could intelligently prescribe to the cave dwellers a variety of responses ranging from ignorant 'inspired' violence to a curious sympathetic embrace of what was being reported to them. In other words it is the case not to simply generally stereotype to suit one's assertions but to reflect upon other probable multi-possibilities so as to philosophically 'keep open the door' to other reasonable assertions apart from one's own. Thus to be more so complex 'multi-dimensional' in one's outlook towards humanity rather than simplistically one-dimensional. Nuance is needed. Not sloganeering. (Plato's 'parables' it seems are too often straight away taken at face value without being seriously challenged which is the issue at stake rather than what may be their ultimate philosophical - or political - value).

1d. As it is one supposes that many aristocrats could not help but defer to the one-dimensional view that such a participatory political model as democracy - although it must be said still only inclusive of those who were male citizens - could only be seen as deteriorating Athenian governance to 'mob rule'. Additionally, it is no surprise then that when the Peloponnesian War started to turn more so in Sparta's favour that such noble resentment markedly increased as it was the Athenian upper class who mainly had to pay for the war effort which due to what they saw as incompetency 'inherent' within the democracy was leading Athens to defeat and the nobles to financial ruin - thus an elite desire for oligarchical rule became more pronounced. One cannot help but think that in such an onerous political climate that Plato saw fit as did Socrates that - although they did not duly support tyranny *per se* - it was still best to have a government guaranteed to be rationally run by knowledgeable technical experts. Plato would assume as irrational to provide any inexperienced 'inexpert' even for a limited time the randomised or 'populist' opportunity - e.g. by lot and 'uneducated' popular vote - to make important decisions on state matters; the presumption being anyone with no 'inherent' wisdom being involved in state affairs would only lead to an anarchic effect on the whole polis which would surely negatively affect its very survival in the future; therefore - according to Plato's singular anti-democratic line of thinking which wilfully does not accommodate other political or societal possibilities - in the interest of averting its downfall a troubled population would simplistically 'emotionally' turn to a 'soothsayer demagogue' - probably 'trained' in 'duplicitous' rhetoric by a sophist - to replace any previous social semblance of civic human freedom with military enforced tyrannical rule. (Yes, such a horrendous scenario is a realistic possibility and has and will occur but so also is the possibility for people thoughtfully having sufficient political agency to regain power for themselves being capable to discern who is for them - rather than who only wants to use them - to re-establish and affirm genuine democratic rule. This line of history should also be considered and not have it stated as a given that people will unwittingly hand over power - or passively allow it to happen - to a tyrant; after all, it can be argued that more usually a demagogue populist after any initial foray into the electoral process to be successful even by legitimate means really only obtains, prolongs and maintains total power with the threat of force and which militarily has to be effectively in place to thwart any opposition from martialling

its own counter-forces which along with popular unrest may also necessarily involve civic military action; while there have been anti-democratic coups that have been thwarted by the mass mobilization of a resisting populous there have also at times been such mass resistance that has also led to civil war or revolution in order to restore a society's civil rights or alternatively to win them as a despotic regime falters. Plato should more so also take into account what happened in his life time when the tyranny of the Thirty which had been installed by the Spartans was eventually able to be overthrown by democratic forces with the democracy that was installed although imperfect could still be seen as a preferable political model than oligarchy and tyranny although for Plato I'm sure he would have dearly liked to have had a political revolution that would have given him the opportunity to have his idealized republic established to attest to its veracity that it would be superior to democracy despite the probability as one suspects that it would have politically – and even maybe philosophically - descended into outright authoritarian rule). It is notable that in two of Plato's famous allegories or 'parables' there is within them a 'validation' of the 'spectre' of 'common rule' leading to societal failure and as a consequence to political oppression that in my opinion is arrived at by 'faulty logic' (to be charitable) if not by outright 'charlatan sophistry' (if one in an accusative mood was to be uncharitable). The cave allegory towards its end has the other cave dwellers hostile to the philosopher who returns to tell them of the object world beyond the cave while the 'ship of fools' has a mutinous crew claiming it can steer the ship much better than the infirmed captain but they are no better and they ransack the ship's supplies while any person who is a 'true pilot' capable of navigating the ship which would actually be in every one's interest seen as a 'good-for-nothing' and not given the opportunity to take the helm the ship with its stupid people in control is doomed. These two particular allegories which are well known and voiced through the Socrates of the *Republic* has the person with knowledge being persecuted by an ignorant, self-serving crowd even though such a wise person can save them from their dire situation. Certainly, it is correct to point out the foolishness of those who are antagonistic to anyone who can help them especially when such an expert has the necessary skills to do so when those who are irrationally hostile do not. Yet, one may argue it is a false assumption that those with wisdom will always be rejected by those who are supposedly without it. Yet such a prejudicial narrative which stereotypes the common crowd as the 'great unwashed' conveniently suits Plato's partisan view that anyone from the lower classes are not to be trusted or cannot be capable to govern and especially to have any authority over the noble class who Plato emphatically sees as the only trusted cohort who can lead; it is to the nobility that the philosopher must direct one's effort to better wisely guide the polis and who Plato presumptuously assumes will not reject out of hand what is to be philosophically learnt from a 'wise seer' that will bring on virtuous leadership for a just society; to turn to anyone else outside such an elite cohort to be educated about 'higher things' is - as these two Platonic allegories allegedly propagandise with their blunt character assassination of the 'common' person - would be metaphorically likened in the Judeo-Christian tradition to throwing 'seed on stony ground' that will not take root and whither even when there maybe any positive first acceptance or perhaps better still throwing 'pearls to swine' as to not appreciate the soulful wealth that is philosophically thrown one's way in the first place. In regards to the cave allegory it is said that the inappropriate rejection of the philosopher by those who live in shadows is Plato alluding to Socrates who as Plato sees it wanted to educate Athens about the Final Good that will eternally liberate the mortally imprisoned souls of the citizenry; yet, only to be severely judged by an ignorant commoner jury that unjustly sentences this wise earthy transmitter of an 'absolute worthiness' to death relying not on logical reasoning but on emotional wrath to ineptly make its wrongful decision. Although capital punishment is rightly not to be no longer generally tolerated there is merit to point out the deficiencies that can exist within a judicial system which can allow for a person to be put to death when the apparent crime committed does not at all seem to warrant such a severe judgment or that there is not even any legal recourse to appeal against such a fateful sentence. Yet, it has to be pointed out that although the democracy that Plato rails against has executed his philosopher mentor of whom Plato certainly much revered it would perhaps have been the wisest course to not then argue for the abolition of Athenian democracy *per se* but rather to have for it to introduce safeguards to further guarantee human freedom so that would enable for a judicial query to determine whether the initial court decision was either misguided or correct; as well as look into the possibility of having a court system which could be overseen by a professionally trained judiciary. Athenian democracy certainly had its failings but the political model that Plato suggests as a 'rational' alternative with its seemingly severely rigid strictures on human behaviour does not seem to really be superior to any organic democracy even despite Plato's many 'Siren calls' in regards to such ethical principles as justice, wisdom and virtue that he 'righteously' utilizes to 'justify' his insistent

advocacy for a 'forever stabilized' societal harmony that is to domineeringly reflect the universal harmony of a non-negotiable metaphysical 'absolutist good'. It is also the dire case that the workers – otherwise known as the producers – will still not have access to any higher philosophical education as it still prejudicially deemed by Plato that they will always be incapable of acquiring it so as to also over time traditionally develop a cultural ethos and social expectation to become 'expert' at leadership even though their collective labour has made it possible for his precious utopia to exist on this earth in the first place; as one understands their education will be pragmatically limited to the training they will need in order to then be able to carry out their various tasks as metaphorical 'beasts of burden' to solely only benefit the republic as a whole with – one may presume – all individual will, ambition and desire to be 'voluntarily' suppressed for the 'greater good' of a state that can only be guided by a supposed superior philosophical rulership.

1e. It has been of interest to discover that the word 'govern' has its roots in the Ancient Greek sense from to steer a ship which one supposes could be extended to apply to the idea of steering a society thus it makes sense that Plato references a mutinous ship crew to disparage democracy being inappropriate as having the unskilled in navigation discerning as to who would be capable of such a necessary feat to competently guide a vessel on the high seas as well as disallowing anyone who was capable but without popular appeal to do so to allow instead a populist who could appeal to emotion over reason to govern which would ultimately be chaotic. (It is interesting to see in the 2003 movie *Master and Commander* set on an English warship during the Napoleonic wars how the militarily capable captain justifies to his humane surgeon of how it is essential to be a strict disciplinarian to maintain authority otherwise only chaos would arise while the surgeon is not so sympathetic to this realpolitik point of view suggesting such strictness is more akin to the characteristic of a dictator rather than to being a responsible leader. One senses that Plato's sympathy would tend towards the captain rather than to what he would possibly perceive as the 'misguided idealism' of the surgeon. On the other hand, it is also of interest that the surgeon due to his interest in evolution also provides the captain with the lateral strategy as typified by a stick insect that involves deception through camouflage so as to provide the ability to finally be victorious over a larger seemingly invincible French Man o' war. The English ship disguises itself as a whaling ship to draw in the marauding French privateer which in the end allows it to be ambushed for a much more even fight to occur which bloodily ends in English victory). Thus, it mattered that there only be a form of government that only gave access to those who were expert in governing (i.e. able to steer a ship) to direct a society along its proper course; when, as stated there could actually still be an alternative that a well-educated population in civic duty could be as responsible as anyone from a higher social class which could capably select the best person to govern and not due to social status but due to actual ability and although a populist – in the negative sense – may assume power and to manipulate it to one's own advantage instead of for the society as a whole after all, democracy is based on mass appeal which as can be seen is both its strength and weakness for with the right visionary leadership it can shift a society towards a new epoch – as one could argue was so for Athens under Pericles – that is for the good while it can also be the negative case that a populist of the worst sort can betray the trust of the population to entrap it, not to be wholly enlightened but to dictatorially enslaved – as so happened after Pericles died when there was no effective leader to follow him and Athenian democracy was degraded so as to allow a self-seeking oligarchical impulse to come to the fore; it must be said that while there was an expansive Athenian imperialism with Pericles which would ultimately dominate over other Hellenic states that despite the inherent moral hypocrisy of a dominant power which claimed to be a premier democracy limiting the democratic rights of its so called allies there was no more reasonable approach to come to the fore in Athenian foreign policy after Pericles was gone but rather for there to be in time of great war only a rampant descent towards barbarism as shown so infamously with the unprovoked savage takeover of Melos and prompted by a turning away from any democratic impulse towards a so called 'realpolitik' coming more so from anti-democratic factions only interested in ruthless power. (Notably, in Plato's *Gorgias* the Socrates of this dialogue points out the deficiencies of notable Athenians such as Cimon, Miltiades, Pericles and Themistocles who all protected and improved Athens materially and imperially in different ways yet are accused of being flatterers appealing to satisfy the desires of the populous to thus gain the approval of their fellow Athenians yet are found out in the end to not be so deserving of any merit so as to fall out of favour leading to them to be severely censured thus to have Miltiades the hero of Marathon to end up in prison and to die there while his son Cimon due to a military failure despite earlier successes to be ostracized with Themistocles the hero of Salamis to also go into exile while Pericles accused of public fraud to be fined yet to be returned to power but nevertheless to

die - along with two sons – by the plague that struck Athens with his untimely death occurring in the second year of the great war with Sparta. However, one cannot help but think despite Socrates' ruminations that despite any character faults that could be perceived as being self-serving so as to appease or shape the whims of the majority for individual benefit their superior leadership would from a logical and rational perspective also prove to be soundly beneficial for Athens such as with Themistocles's forward-thinking advocacy to build up the Athenian navy which would prove to be decisive in defeating the Persians in the second invasion. It is perhaps significant that Themistocles the general was also a popular politician especially with the lower classes and also being not from the aristocrat class so may have been prejudicially disliked by Plato who was from one of the wealthiest Athenian families; yet while one discerns that although he was a saviour of Athens at Salamis he was not a saviour of himself as his overriding arrogant sense of self-importance opened Themistocles up to political attacks from his enemies – there was also a major rival 'Aristides the Just' - who were mainly from the aristocrat class and which despite not committing any particular misdemeanour would eventually have him ostracized (although building a sanctuary to Artemis near his residence with a reference of being the best advisor (of 'good counsel') which was hostilely seen as hubris on the part of Themistocles in relation to his own efforts to defeat the Medes made him to be seen unfavourably; yet after his death his former preeminent reputation was restored. Ironically, Themistocles in his tumultuous wanderings through Ancient Greece to find sanctuary - due mainly to being tremendously disliked by the Spartans as they thought Themistocles had worked against their interests - he eventually settled in Persia where an Athenian of his stature was actually welcomed by the royal court; nevertheless, instructive to a curious Artaxerxes I (son of Xerxes) on Greek political and military matters it is argued by some that Themistocles could never commit to really being a traitor to Athens and so the actual cause of his death is disputed with some saying he nobly committed suicide when approached to be more active against his fellow Hellenes (who it could be argued had mistreated him); although it is likely he may have simply died of natural causes. However, to return to the Socratic claim that rhetorical illusion was a mainstay of the power of such leading Athenians one cannot help but think they had initially earned their high stature on actual accomplishments such as the incredible Athenian military victories achieved by Miltiades and Themistocles against the Persian Empire and which were certainly for the good of Athens. The political transference of being a defending democratic citizen polis to then become an imperial 'democratic' power as certainly occurred while the Persian threat still remained real and to only be enforced when the Persian threat subsided is certainly worthy of serious critique as although Themistocles would be brought down due a personal arrogance Athenian society as a whole despite its many achievements should also have taken heed that its emerging imperial arrogance which was only 'justly' proclaimed by its leaders rather than being soberly tempered could also one day bring down the inevitable downfall of Athens – never mind its glorious Acropolis - as eventually dismally occurred at the end of the Peloponnesian War. As it is Socrates argues that the gift of free speech which is afforded in the democratic polis has not been generally utilized by his fellow Athenians as well as by its leading citizens to sufficiently query themselves morally so as to truly lead them to an everlasting superior goodness – which Socrates sees as a 'good rhetoric' and which he claims he personally employs (and which one can present the point of view will inevitably lead to a hostile reaction) – when free speech is immaturely employed only to vainly serve one's material self-interests that can only lead to unedifying outcomes not only for the souls of individuals - and no matter their social stature - but also on the whole lead to a moral denigration of the collective soul of Athens. What is to be disliked in the democratic model is that those who are revered one day for satisfying or even rescuing the citizenry in times of peace and war can eventually be reviled when high expectation is no longer required so as to only then be accused of incompetence, corruption, even treason etc and so no longer deserving of veneration to only then be ostracized or in the worse, abominable case to face execution while it is of no use that afterwards, when dead, an inept citizenry in its ongoing fickleness has regretted such a shameful judgemental course of action. A Platonist would argue and rightly so that emotion overriding reason is democracy's fault line as - the Platonist point of view would go - not enough people are soulfully mature enough to always align with the wisest way to deal with any issue within the body politic (while presently one may also alternatively argue that in many of today's societies where universal education is more the norm whole populations could have civics; politics etc and other aspects relevant to the operations of government could be integrated into school curriculums to help have people make more informed democratic choices based on methodical intellect rather than on reactive feelings). Thus, for elite-minded Platonists, better to have the wise few – rather than the unwise many – to rule and guide the polis to what is good and just. Thus, is

the *ideal* of the Platonic republic which also aims towards what is eternal i.e. unchanging as change can be disruptive to the harmony of a society whose sense of justice is based on knowing one's place within it to work in unison whether in a lowly or high social position towards what is the eternal good for the good of one's self as well as for the good of all and to want to act out of one's destined social position especially when one wants to aspire to be greater than what one truly is to 'selfishly' break one's duty to the polis; democracy is not sufficient for a society that aims to be eternally harmonious as it always has society in an unsettled state of political and social turbulence as what is seen as for the good of all today is overtaken by some opposite interpretation to only stunt human souls rather than to have them blossom. Yet, in democracies human beings are not hemmed in to take up only one approach to life and the resulting 'chaos' that may ensue maybe best than to be ideologically suffocated leading only to human submission. Instead of democracy there can be oligarchy – or worse still: totalitarianism.

1f. Yet, in turn it could be pointed out that other leaders who did not favour democracy- for instance had a preference for oligarchy - would not also be guided by reason but rather by self-interest to arguably bring even greater disaster upon Athens as seen in the hubris of the Sicilian expedition which would be a military disaster and in the blood thirsty culmination of the dictatorship of the Thirty Tyrants after losing the war with Sparta; with Athens only able to save its savaged soul by restoring the democracy which despite its still ongoing imperfections as in the short term strikingly reflected in the mistrial of Socrates would in the long term at least have for this fallen once great polis also a return to some semblance of civilisation to even become despite a pervading cynicism still a sanctuary for philosophy - so much so that Plato a critic of democracy could ironically have his Academy exist unhindered by this political model which was relatively liberal - compared to other forms of government which were autocratic - until this revived Athens was finally militarily overwhelmed by the Macedonians about a hundred years later). Democracy has its faults yet human savagery can be corralled by it to a certain extent and thus it is important that rather than dismantle and overturn democracy – even for what is seen to be a utilitarian utopia it is actually far more vital that its timely developed safeguards against authoritarianism and oligarchy are rather always renewed and strengthened and at the first intimation of them being hollowed out it is as such a sure signal to the populous that there must be strong societal pushback to stop any such elitist led anti-democratic eroding process of the necessary checks and balances which cumulatively strive to secure human freedom rather than to impede it.

1g. One should also note the aristocratic sentiment at the time of Plato which disapproved of how there was then apparently an emerging wealthy merchant class that could also begin to gain greater political power through the 'populist' channel of a (male) citizen-based democracy.

1h. Democracy is based on mass appeal which can be both its strength and weakness which with the right visionary leadership can shift a society towards a new epoch that is for the good while it can also be the negative case that a populist of the worst sort can betray the trust of the population to entrap it, not to be wholly enlightened but to dictatorially enslaved. Thus, it is important that safeguards against authoritarianism and oligarchy are always renewed and strengthened and at the first intimation of them being hollowed out is a sure signal to the populous that there must be pushback to stop such an elitist led anti-democratic eroding process of such necessary checks and balances.

1i. As an aside tyrants in ancient Greece were originally popular leaders who were taking power away from an established aristocracy to then form a 'tyranny' and so the term 'tyrant' originally did not have a negative meaning as it later would when it became associated with populist leaders who would be authoritarian dictators; thus one can assume that democracy as a form of mass governing would hopefully avoid the rise of tyrants while for Plato with his reductionist view of democracy as unwise 'mob rule' thought that tyrants would still arise and so he would have in their stead his philosopher kings as wise rulers although one queries whether such an ideal benevolent rulership would have been at all possible or long lasting in reality and as it is a Platonic republic was never to be realised anyway.

1j. Although when it comes to wise leaders in full service to a community one thinks of the apparently semi-mythical Athenian king Codrus who selflessly sacrificed his life to a besieging enemy to save the city. It follows that a Delphic oracle prophecy to an invading Dorian force stated there would be success as long as the king of Athens was not hurt. Aware of the prophecy Codrus disguised himself as a peasant and went out to the Dorian camp where he succeeded in getting himself killed with Dorian soldiers angrily killed him. The Dorians finally realised who was slain so aware of the prophecy this invading army retreated to avoid defeat and so Athens was extraordinarily saved. Interestingly, Codrus would be the last king of Athens with all leaders after him to be titled as an archon.

1k. As another aside Plato's cave allegory is a dialogue between Socrates and Plato's brother Glaucon. Socrates goes on to suggest that if an enslaved cave dweller was to be freed of his chains and at first proceeded to the fire only his eyes would be unable to see properly due to its brightness. It would lead him to find it difficult to comprehend the objects whose shadows are cast onto the wall which mindfully in turn the query is put forward would not this momentarily 'blinded' person still put his faith in the shadows as being more real...?

Glaucon agrees with this rhetorical Socratic deduction.

Yet, then it is suggested by Socrates what if this prisoner was then forced up the steep incline of this apparently deep cave so as to leave it and be confronted by the Sun whose overbearing brightness would surely blind him again much like the previous fire only to discern in the meanwhile the outline traces of things and people as well as their reflections in water until his sight finally acclimatized and he could see things and people in their full physical actuality including the heavenly bodies of the stars at night and of the Sun in the day. (The moon of course can be seen both at night and at day.

Socrates suggests that this released prisoner would eventually reason that the Sun is the source of all light which registers on the human eye revealing a world of which shadows are actually phantoms within it. Eventually the philosophical correlation is made by Socrates that a human soul maybe motivated by way of internal contemplation to gradually seek out attentively step-by-step – much like warily climbing out from an enclosed human darkness (symbolized by the long steep inclined cave) to an infinite divine light (symbolized by the Sun) - towards the eternal Good which metaphysically akin to the cosmic furnace that emblazons the earthly sky can rightly encompass this whole world with justice; which ideally will also correctly lead to any now enlightened human mind which is overcoming a previous ignorance to ascendingly live a virtuous life which of course will ultimately also eternally benefit the human soul. A person would then prefer to dwell on 'things above' rather than on the 'earthly mundane' and much like the original prisoner who leaves the cave yet who altruistically chooses to return to tell the others of his revelation - only to be met with ridicule and possible execution by those who keep on living in a world of shadows as they see that the returning slave is now incapable of doing so – the enlightened philosopher can also face human resistance in any similar attempt to incite the souls of others to also be motivated to seek out the Good.

Intriguingly, in this famous dialogue Socrates also mentions to Glaucon - almost as an aside - how there are teachers who are of the mistaken belief that they can impose knowledge onto someone which is not already known by the person. Interestingly, Socrates and Plato are of the metaphysical belief that the Good is already inherit within every human soul before birth and it is a matter of every human soul whilst within a human body of entering into dialogue with the Good in order to become a virtuous person. It is not an ethical quality that can be educatively enforced onto an individual but must be initiated by an inner desire of the soul to seek after and to be virtuously entwined by the Good. (Thus, from what one pensively understands one reason behind why Socrates queries someone when in conversation is to inculcate by way of deductive reasoning the knowledge that already resides in someone else so that through by say a step-by-step process of logical enquiry it can come to the fore of that person's consciousness almost as if to be a personal revelation. Which may be seen as more substantive than to have any knowledge induced from a teacher. One also presumes that the knowledge that is to be ascertained deals more so with morality, ethics, virtue, justice etc as against knowledge that deals with manual or technical skills although a person may have a better aptitude or 'be gifted' in a particular skill to be more so a musician or carpenter or surgeon or artist or orator or soldier or nurse or even philosopher. However, if a person is designated to be a producer in Plato's *Republic* one wonders what societal hurdles would have to be strenuously overcome to eventually realise one's full potential when even in fully realised liberal democracies it can be already be an arduous path to do so). It could be assumed that one's human virtue will thus be genuine rather than performative and it is hoped that the society as a whole can become virtuous so that individual and polis alike can be in harmony with a universe that reflects the justice of the Good. It is what humanity must aim for and once achieved to be secured within an ideal society that perfectly reflects the triune aspects of the immortal human soul: reason; spirit; appetite. Human reason by way of logical precepts wisely seeks after truth; spirit involves emotion which can include an abhorrence towards human behaviour which is unjust and dishonourable and so for instance there is a virtue-bound motivated willingness to steadfastly defend what is right and to act justly. Appetite deals with the basic instincts and physical needs of the human body which can involve seeking out pleasure and requiting earthly desires which one may philosophically argue actually need to be moderately tempered by the other two more elevated features of the human soul. In

fact, as previously stated Plato has the analogy of a charioteer being reason controlling a chariot that is being pulled by a white horse that is spirit and a black horse being appetite. The charioteer who holds the chariot's reins has to masterfully harmonize and balance these two contrasting horses to complementarily work with each other so as to guide all of the soul towards the Good. This hierarchical formation of the human soul is to be mirrored by Plato's ideal society which has the philosopher king as the charioteer intellectually leading the republic; the guardian class who correspond with the soul's spirit which will martially defend the republic and at the bottom of this social hierarchy the mass of workers who through their labour will perform the essential physical tasks which will keep the republic functioning just as human appetite maintains the human body.

VII

In Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510-11) ¹ it is notable that Raphael chooses *Timaeus* for Plato to hold which has him make a distinction between this seen physical world which is ever changing and temporary as well as always more open to be interpreted by way of subjective human opinion and the humanly unseen spiritual world of the eternal which is always absolute and unchanging and can be methodically envisaged by objective, rational human reason - which is not so arbitrary - and thus to be a firm foundation on which to refashion human society being so based on unchanging principles rather than on any humanly wayward oscillation. It is perhaps as to why it may be seen that Plato as well as Socrates discounted democracy which saw its apparently ever shifting human dynamism evermore so as a disadvantage rather than as a positive feature as it would from their point of view always threateningly leave open an inevitably anarchic way to societal instability. It was preferred to have a rational model for society guided by an apparently knowing elite who being philosophically wise and virtuous were eligibly qualified in maintaining a polis consistent with a consistent universe to stably align any otherwise unwanted erratic human discourse with a perceived universal harmony. Plato thought that democracy despite its idealistic promise of enhancing human freedom would always due to an inherent instability in human nature ultimately degenerate with a sophist populist deceiving an emotively driven populous so as singularly gain the reins of power to establish a tyranny oppressively not based on justice. In Plato's mind as well as one supposes also in that of Socrates better then pragmatically to have an aristocratic class imbued with an eternal sense of justice to be in control of a stable society with a moral outlook that is wisely cast over this new utopia. It is to the aristocrats that both Plato and Socrates place their political faith in for they represent the 'head' of the body politic and so it is simply assumed that the aristocrats are 'naturally' qualified to lead the republic.

1a. What is perhaps critical both to the body's soul and to the body politic is a belief in a perfect universality that is readily beyond any human dimension but which is to be humanly understood. Plato with his emphasis on non-material Absolute Forms as the metaphysical basis of the material world in which we live can be viewed as a mystical interpretation of reality with him envisaging what is unseen but real by abstract thought. It is through human reason that Plato comes to his Theory of Forms mindfully by way of deductive argument which is logical and which can be reasonably regarded as leading to truth (with rationality therefore being opposite to rhetoric which can dismissively rely emotionally on persuasive oration which is sophistry and that leads only to falsehood - a veering away from what is wholly true); thus the application of logic over speculation.

1b. Yet to reference again Raphael's famous painterly depiction of Plato there is the counterpoint portrait of Aristotle beside him to have both of them being central in the *School of Athens* (1510-11); for Raphael to have them standing side by side as if in serious discussion; with an older silver long haired, long bearded Plato holding his *Timaeus* in his hand and pointing skywards as to the heavens while a younger Aristotle points more directly out to the world around him holding a copy of his *Ethics*. Aristotle although a pupil of Plato would discount what was not distinctly evidential yet would still apply reason to develop his own view of the world which in modern day terms can be determined as being more scientific and which in any case have a long, influential effect on western thought for many centuries.

1c. It is also worthwhile to point out that the *School of Athens* with its array of ancient pagan thinkers is a painting full of ancient thinkers that are not to be viewed as adversaries to a Christian worldview but rather

as pre-Christian precursors to it i.e. to partner with Christian theology so as to enhance it. It is in a room which at the time of the commission was a Papal library and there are four large major frescoes in dialogue with each other or more specifically to have the *School of Athens* as Philosophy opposite and interaction with a fresco representing Theology and the other two frescoes specifically in discussion with each other being Law and Poetry. An internet video on the *School of Athens* titled *The School of Athens by Raphael: Great Art Explained* well points this out along with many other remarkable features in regards to one of Raphael's main signature works.

VIII

In the strict social hierarchical world of Plato's *Republic* that despite there to be a harmonious non-interference between the three classes - so one could dutifully play out one's prescribed role in peace - there was, as well to be, even if sublimely, an enforced eugenic underpinning of the republic's social organisation that disallowed any social mobility from commonly occurring between the three major classes. (Non-interference '*par excellence*'). The lowest class which would also be the largest and which had 'ordinary' people generally labelled as workers or producers they in particular would be disadvantaged by such biologically based 'spiritual determinism'; it seems their social worth was 'only' in being the necessary human 'components' to maintain the physical well-being of Plato's 'utopia' with its metaphysical rationale to exist along with its corresponding metaphysical 'justification' to be guided only by its apparently virtuous philosopher kings; along with the second-tier military auxiliaries who were to protect the republic from any external aggression or 'internal threat'. Notably, these soldierly defenders who were also to be philosophically well learned were consequently as well to be socially privileged.

Interestingly, the pyramid three level social structure of Plato's *Republic* reflects what Plato the aristocrat philosopher speculatively rationalized to be the predominate triune aspect of an immortal human soul: Reason; Spirit; Appetite. Reason = philosopher rulership; Spirit = armed defenders; Appetite = working class.¹

1a. As already inferred such a pyramid three level social structure of Plato's *Republic* - which one may also suggest is imbued with his relativised view of 'absolute justice' - reflects what this aristocrat philosopher rationalizes to be the triune aspect of the human soul (which he also regards as being immortal). Reason; Spirit; Appetite. Human reason by way of logical precepts wisely seeks after truth; spirit involves emotion which can include an abhorrence towards human behaviour which is unjust and dishonourable so there is a virtue-bound motivated willingness to steadfastly defend what is right and to act 'justly'. Appetite deals with the basic instincts and physical needs of the human body which can involve seeking out pleasure and requiting earthly desires which one may philosophically argue actually need to be moderately tempered by the other two more elevated features of the human soul.

In fact, Plato has the analogy of a charioteer being Reason controlling a chariot that is being pulled by a white horse (positive) that is Spirit and a black horse (negative) being Appetite. The charioteer who holds the chariot's reins has to masterfully harmonize and balance these two contrasting horses to complementarily work with each other so as to guide all of the soul towards the Good. (Notably, a whip has to be used to keep the 'wild' black horse in line from falling off a cliff while the charioteer only needs his voice to guide the 'serene' white horse). So the inflexible triune hierarchical formation of the human soul is to be mirrored by Plato's ideal society which has the philosopher king as the charioteer intellectually leading the republic; the militarized auxiliary class who correspond with the soul's spirit which will martially defend the republic and at the bottom of this social hierarchy the mass of workers who through their labour will perform the essential physical tasks which will keep the republic functioning just as human appetite maintains the human body.

1b. One may coyly suggest the specific use of a whip by the supposedly good charioteer to 'harmonize' the unruly black horse is of particular interest when one also contrastingly thinks of various Athenian views of justice which Plato mentions and which he disassociates from yet which one may argue he does inevitably somewhat align with some of their opposite features although this proud aristocrat would certainly not agree with such a pessimistic assertion. In summary Plato with his dialogue literary approach critically presents three main views of justice he criticizes which range from (i) it being about doing what is right which can mean stating what is true as well as paying one's debts yet which is queried by Plato's Socrates who states that innocents may inadvertently be harmed despite any good intention to pay back

what is owed when for instance one returns a blade to someone who is now insane which would be both irresponsible and unjust. (Yet, one supposes that such an action which is so clear in its possible negative result would excuse the borrower of the blade to return it until some alternative arrangement could be made to responsibly return the blade whereby no harm would occur). Anyhow, it is also intimated that justice is to help your friends and harm your enemies which is also queried while another notion of justice that Plato critiques basically revolves (ii) around the idea that the strong and powerful can deem what is correct behaviour (that will always ably be to their advantage) which in its crudest reductionist form brutally whittles down to 'might is right'. Plato's Socrates rebukes a dependent justice aligned to power with an independent justice based on wisdom. While another view of justice (iii) which serves the needs of the weakest in society which can also be a defence against the stronger is also not tolerated as it has mass impulses 'weaponised' - again - against the independent virtuous quality of justice which can be regularly best rationally expressed through the wisest (who 'naturally' are few) in society and not through the impulsive (which it is assumed can be an irrational feature of the many to more probably have a predilection towards irregular judgements which can be unwise. In all such definitions of justice saw it as an exterior principle all with arbitrary features brought on by various or differing societal demands rather than seeing justice as an internal moral aspect that can be better understood as uniformly delving within the soul of every human individual who thus has the responsibility of harmoniously aligning one's self to do was is right according to an eternal good that is absolute and thus not arbitrary; while the manner to be in harmony with this eternal good is to seek out the right balance between one's reason, spirit and passions and the character of a person who seeks this 'right balance' which is the moral essence of a personal justice is to incline towards becoming wise as human injustice is more so prevalent with those who do not seek out any such soulful balance and so remain ignorant of the eternal good leaving the way open to human violence; accordingly societal justice leads on from such individual justice when society as a whole also equivalently seeks out a right balance to correctly arrive at a harmony which has all three major aspects: reason, spirit and passions - or 'lowly' appetites - in harmony with each other which becomes possible with the philosopher king (reason) and with the backing of the auxiliaries (spirit) being dutifully followed by the many labourers (appetite) to have a social harmony which is justice for such magnificent cohesion between all these different elements of this just society being much like the differing harmonized elements of an individual human soul make for a virtuous alignment with the eternal good which one may view as the spiritual purpose par excellence for human existence while still in material form on this physically materially eroding earth.

1c. Uniformity. Stability. Regularity. Three ordering universal features that can lead to Harmony which for Plato is the essence of a notion of a wise justice that can permeate both the individual and society corresponding to a wilful triune proportionate soulful balance between Reason, Spirit and Appetite. Yet another ordering feature of Plato's ideal 'wise' realm - which is a negative one - is Inflexibility. For while Plato rightly discounts a 'might is right' justice he diligently abides by a 'wise is right' justice which in of itself in a common sense way one may have no issue with yet it is only an elite of a strict hierarchy who solely can prescribe what is just within the republic which one may argue against is not a just situation for those 'lesser souls' who must only trust and obey. Yet, according to Plato's 'logic' how can those who are 'unwise' or rather are 'ignorant of wisdom' be given the opportunity - as is the case in the democratic model - have an influential say in state affairs when 'surely' only disharmony will 'inevitably' result...? Surely such lesser souls can be as equally influential as 'higher souls'...? Although to counter Plato there is no legitimate reason that all souls could not be universally educated to make informed policy decisions for the polis and while Plato emphasises the importance of education and to even allow women to be highly educated from what one understands he also sees it as a sifting process to find out who would eventually become eligible to be a philosopher king so as to still only have an elite govern the polis without the possibility of any universal suffrage.

1d. One can reasonably suppose Plato as being mostly hostile to the democratic polis yet in fairness it is a hostility which one should note would apparently be tempered down when one examines his last major treatise *The Laws* in which he seemed to realize that his metaphysical orientated republic would philosophically really not survive politically in the actual physical world of imperfect human action and wavering societal values. Thus, to have Plato reluctantly infer instead to a 'second best' polis which would have a combination of monarchical and democratic constitutional features working to overcome political corruption and any supposed inevitable shift to outright tyranny which was opposed by Plato who properly recognized that dictatorship was the most detestable political model.

1e. To digress one should keep in mind how mathematics was important to Plato as geometric forms for instance were objects that existed in their own right and intimated towards the absolute forms of a higher metaphysical reality which was both eternal and unchanging. To speculate as one certainly does not have an intrinsic understanding of Plato's interest in mathematics but one could envisage how he and many other ancient thinkers would see how there was an absoluteness to mathematics as for instance such a basic formulae as $1 + 1 = 2$ is an absolute truth that could never be changed to be something else in any relativist sense and how such absolute truth exists not in any physical sense but is a metaphysical one so as to suggest a reality invisibly beyond what is seen by mortal eyes and of which is also relied upon in a very real sense to actually build the human world in which humanity exists which includes its physical forces such as gravity, weight etc. After all, a mathematical process has to be mindfully implemented to put to good use for instance in any engineering project and if defied such as in making a bridge or building will only lead to destructive failure as natural forces will always defy human ignorance. One senses that for Plato such unwavering absoluteness as there is in mathematical truths is a philosophical undercurrent in his political outlook to envisage the perfect polis yet making the mistake that human societies cannot be formulated in the same way as any inanimate object for human beings are not still but thriving, living organic forms which cannot be 'harmonised' to be like perfected shapes yet this seems to be what he hopes to achieve with his 'just republic' which from my point of view would lead to only a repressive stagnation of the human spirit rather than to any dynamic revitalisation.

1f. As an aside when one thinks of the ancient association of mathematics and philosophy especially in regards to Platonic metaphysics one thinks of a Yale lecture by Professor Giuseppe Mazzotto on the internet covering the cantos XVII, XIX, XXI, XXII of Dante's *Paradiso* when the geometric shape of the circle is referenced in regards to God's Will such as in one example with the rays of the sun which it seems in the Italian can also intimate the radius of a circle as if to say in geometric terms how this perfect shape allows one to envisage the perfect goodness of God's Will which is thus a perfect justice which the Christian pilgrim can have faith in and to personally add how in Platonic terms the human soul can also place faith in the absolute forms of the metaphysical realm in a virtuous quest to be in full unison with the Eternal Good. Nevertheless, one feels one has not provided an adequate overview of this topic in the lecture and so suggest to view it especially from 10.35 covering a chapter involving space, place and justice. The Yale lecture title is *20. Paradise XVII, XIX, XXI, XXII* can be found on Youtube along with an excellent series of lectures which covers overall Dante's *Divine Comedy* and has been a pleasant surprise to come across this series of lectures on Dante's poetic masterpiece.

1g. To further digress it could be suggested there was perhaps a relativist aspect to Plato's political outlook which corresponded to the social historicity of his particular human environment which in his case was fifth century Athens. (To be speculative Plato would probably abhor he could be perceived to be beholden to 'relativist standards' when he was so against what he saw to be the relativising of truth by the 'professional lecturers' – who were the sophists so assured was he with the absolute value of his perspective of the world which he would evaluate mirrored those absolute principles by which through philosophical calculation were understood to be eternal and unchangeable to actually exist outside historical time and space beyond this ever changing physical world and human society. Yet there were human equalities that did not exist during Plato's time on earth which this aristocrat thinker never forcefully advocated for such as to have an end to slavery a widespread embedded oppressive social practice which perhaps was an intrinsic aspect to the economy of his own 'destined wealth' which was really based more so on the ownership of land accompanied with human exploitation than on the supposed divinely metaphysical disposition of his own soul (although it is said slaves in Athens were often treated well yet to have a class of human beings who nominally lacked all human liberty can still be seen as an anathema for a state that prided itself on having a political system which extolled human freedom - a societal contradiction of the Athenian democratic polis which Plato could have magnified in order to morally resolve. It should be noted that as Plato was apparently from one of the wealthiest noble families in Athens it could be reasonably assumed that such massive wealth would have relied on land ownership and presumably slave labour would have been employed).

1g. It was Voltaire who intimated that every person is a creature of the historical moment that one is born into with only a few with the ability to raise ideas above those of the times in which one lives; yet, one has been a little charitable to suggest that it was a 'person of his time' oversight on Plato's part to not be sympathetic to those human beings who were slaves as he would have been more so someone who would have wanted to reorientate the thinking of his times so as to view such human beings as having souls which

were not as spiritually refined as say those of the aristocrat class and thus to validate an inhuman opinion that they actually were 'deserving' of their 'lesser soulful' societal status; with it thus being only 'natural' that in any 'value ordering' of all things on the earth and of this cosmos that slaves would be deemed of much less social worth being 'rightfully' at the bottom of a societal ordering that graduated the merit of human beings according to where they were hierarchically positioned by way of their spiritual development in relation to the divine - which was perfect and eternal - so as to theocratically justify - in Platonic philosophic terms - that an aristocrat was deserving of one's high social status accompanied with much wealth and power to 'morally' accord with one's maturing 'soul of reason' which was so far more stably developed than those of increasingly less social rank whose impetuous 'passionate ridden' souls were of ever diminishing divine quality; with the lowest spiritual value to be afforded to slaves whose subordinate instinctual lives on this earth were 'truly' of no real significance in the great schema of this grand planetary universe and of the immaterial eternity that lay beyond it. The body is mortal and will decay while the soul is immortal and will not decay and thus that was everlastingly immaterial was to rule over that which was materially transient and so it made 'perfect sense' that one's individual sense of self in relation to one's personal spiritual standing along with one's social position of self in relation to all other selves should be viewed in light of where one's soul stood in relation to a perfect divine. The philosopher and certainly the philosopher as aristocrat as 'philosopher king' was the human soul at the zenith point of any divine pinnacle while the slave was the human soul at a lowly point of mortal nothingness which made his or hers 'guaranteed inferiority' 'surely fated' to be 'gratefully' beholden to the 'wise' guidance of any supposedly divinely qualified 'soulfully enriched' human leader - and most importantly one does not challenge one's social or soulful status as that is to defy from false assertion that the divine has been misplaced in assigning one's destiny for this life and to believe to 'know better' than the divine that knows 'all things' one surmises is to commit a sin 'worthy' of being flung into the deepest soulless underworld abyss. No, Plato did not challenge slavery, he was for it, or at least excused it as it was a necessary element for the smooth functioning of his ideal society where a 'justice' extolled by social harmony needed everyone within it to 'know thyself' enough to 'know thy place' so as to stay put and be a stable part of a sum whole that was to be a perfect material reflection of an absolute immaterial ideal. (Thus, it makes to be the 'ideal' from a Platonic point of view that so called 'impure souls' can only be led by 'pure souls' and to argue otherwise is 'absurdly unthinkable' to the elitist mind - and, of course, a 'pure soul' is 'divine like' and thus cannot be questioned for on what possible 'rational' grounds can that which is 'only' mortal query that which is 'more akin to the divine'...?).

1h. Although Plato took into account that there could be the exception to the rule that an 'iron soul' may show exceptional qualities to deserve merit to be elevated to be a 'silver soul' or even to be a 'gold soul' one wonders if in his republic there could ever be such a spectacular case of social mobility as with the special case of the Syrian slave Pasion who in fourth century B.C. Athens would become a leading Athenian banker. Notably Pasion's masters were bankers and being such an exceptional clerk that he would earn his freedom. Pasion would even eventually inherit the bank of his masters such was his high reputation in regards to financial matters and incredibly so much so as to even become the most celebrated banker of Athens especially with him gifting the city many shields and supporting the building of warships for this once slave to now become an essential citizen for the defence of Athens.

1i As it is when it comes to slavery one could reference the first intimations of the so called 'chain of being' - initially by Plato and more so by Aristotle and to then be further developed by the Neoplatonists of whom all (i.e. Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonism) had a strong influence on Church thinking - whereby with this ancient schema of nature there was perceived a hierarchy of organic and material substances to this physical reality which to give a very skeletal outline would have minerals at the bottom followed by plants then animals with human beings at the top and above so with the known cosmos and then beyond to the divine which from the Platonic point of view an unchanging immaterial realm has real overall ascendancy over any ever changing material reality; one supposes within each category there would again be other various levels of importance such as having gold as the premier mineral or to have the lion popularly perceived as the 'king of the jungle' and so forth with even the Sun for instance having greater status than the Earth (even though the Earth was the central focus of the then Ptolemy minded universe); thus in human society it could be 'sensibly' presumed that slaves were part of the natural order which would also have women at a lower status with males as citizens and 'naturally' enough the aristocrats at the top of this social hierarchy and which in Platonic terms made sense for those at the social zenith of human society were those who were closer in their very being to the eternal aspects of the divine. The chain of being

became a heightened political notion for instance in medieval Europe whereby royal and church leaders perceived as closer to God as well as being direct representatives on this earth had 'divine rights' to lord over all others in a society that would strictly grade social positions (for example with aristocrats, knights etc to be above the common peasant while spiritually in divine terms angels were above human beings). Thus, to speak generally, in the Platonic sense there was no serious challenge to slavery as it would have been 'reasonably' assumed that the soul of a slave was 'fatefully' less akin to the Eternal than that of a high-ranking or leading aristocrat.

1j. The immaterial is ordained superior to the material so more a soul aspires towards the immaterial the more so superior it is than a soul less focused on the immaterial; so it could be 'rationally' surmised in Platonic terms that a philosopher king would have a soul which with a dedicated lifetime focus on the immaterial would be deserving to rule over those who as evidenced by their strong relationship with the material world by way of their very 'craft' work that they had lesser souls and so certainly in 'need' of 'guidance' from those who were more immaterially ensconced with the world of absolute forms which in Platonic terms essentially offers an eternal harmony to a worldly politic which by way of such a philosophical focus will allow for its long term societal enrichment and which in Church terms has essentially layered on such a philosophical foundation the spiritual world dominating over anything that this 'passing world' can offer for setting one's being towards the eternal kingdom and by way of the Church at the helm correctly guiding one in the right moral direction is to be soulfully rewarded with eternal salvation.

1k. It is ironically notable that Plato whose family wealth would involve land ownership downplayed private property in his ideal republic - especially for the communal living guardians - recognizing that the ceaseless aspiration for increasing one's personal wealth would negatively open up the way for the human corruption of his perfect state. It is only the lowest class including the farmers who provided food for the higher guardian classes who could have their own property but as it is this would be viable as those without any real political power in the first place could not really become a threat especially if they could remain politically complacent due to the duplicitous advent of the so called 'noble lie' (to be further examined) which would have them not realise their latent collective economic power which could be utilized to greatly unsettle the militarized auxiliaries and philosophical rulers who obviously were societally far above them in political power.

1l. To have from the producer class a collective sense of group resistance develop which could threaten the philosophically supreme rulers would have been akin to centuries earlier in Greek social history when in military terms it was seen as proficient to fight as a supportive group in a long hoplite line clasped together with wide broad shields with long spears and short swords and to be far more well protected with metal helmets, breastplates and leg greaves. A well-formed interlocking battle formation which could threaten the military prowess of the noble class who previously as Homeric like champion fighters had a battle superiority fighting on horseback when dealing with individual or less organised groups of lower-class troops brought to battle by opposing aristocrats. It would be the Spartans that communally would fully develop the military discipline required to fight as such well-coordinated warriors that would have them perceived for a time as invincible while ironically it would be the Athenians with the democratic sense that could also come to the fore through such unity who for the first time would cover themselves with glory fighting together as a free citizen army to miraculously defeat the so called barbarian Persians at Marathon. (One has a dim memory of reading long ago of how that the delayed Spartans -who apparently came a day late 'to the party' - were suitably much impressed by this spectacular Athenian military achievement and dutifully viewed the battlefield with its many Persian corpses much like admiring tourists).

Marathon followed later by the extraordinary naval victory of Salamis by the Athenians that would be the beginning overtures of a still then provincial Athens through the fateful momentous historical circumstance of its monumental wars with an invasive powerful Persia for it in turn to also become an imperial power which would see a national cognitive dissonance eventually come into play whereby Athenian male citizens would be proud of the political freedoms of their so called 'radical democracy' while at the same time willingly maintaining its imperious dominion over allies in the newly established defensive Delian League which it led even if it meant inhibiting the liberty of such other Greek city-states and if necessary by force as if forgetting or denying or dismissing that it was for the national right of each such city-state to maintain its sovereignty against imperial aggression for which this Aegean Sea alliance of free and often as well also democratic Hellenic states had at first been initially established.

Nevertheless, at a debate in Sparta in which there was a Corinthian complaint - to its still somewhat insular minded greater ally - that was against an Athenian siege of Potidaea a colony of Corinth but paid tribute to Athens. Yet Potidaea strategically placed on the way north to Thrace it was feared that Potidaea would eventually side with the Peloponnesian League thus Athens had pre-emptively demanded that Potidaea take down a defence wall, send over hostages to assure it would not become a threat and as well break all official ties with Corinth. Nevertheless, Potidaea now fearing it would lose all independence had chosen instead to revolt against Athens. (This followed the Corinthians losing a naval battle to a combined Corcyra-Athenian fleet after neutral Corcyra now asked for help from Athens when the Corinthians had come to the aid of Epidamnus a Corcyra colony whose democrats had just overthrown the aristocrats but who was now besieged by them; Corcyra feared Corinth an ally of Sparta which it saw was exploiting the civil war in Epidamnus in order to threateningly broaden its influence in its region which was certainly the strategic case rather than being interested in any democratic cause *per se*. As it was this local dispute between Corinth and Corcyra which a tentative Athens had now been drawn into would prove to turn out to be the preliminary hostilities before outright war between the alliances of Athens and Sparta. (Athens was at first cautious to involve itself as there was presently in place a truce between the two opposing leagues so on one hand it did not want to threaten breaking it yet on the other hand helping Corcyra to earn the friendship of the Corcyraeans would help Athens in case of war with Sparta as the Corcyraean fleet was second only to the Athenian one and so would be of great military benefit. While it may also be argued that Athens did not want to appear weak to appease and do nothing which would benefit the Corinthian cause; yet, for Corcyra by 'doing something' Athens also risked looking aggressively opportunistic which would only heighten Peloponnesian suspicions that the Athenian imperial impulse was still in an expansive mood). An Athenian delegation which was in Sparta - as Thucydides says on 'different business' - heard the Corinthian complaint and took offense at what it thought was harsh, untoward, ill-informed, hypocritical criticism so asked for the opportunity to also speak to put forward the Athenian case and which was granted by their Spartan hosts of whom they were not yet officially at war. When it came to the Athenian empire the Athenian delegation was of the point of view that it was not an empire gained by force but one which was acquired by smaller city states through their own volition pleading for Athens to lead them due to a mutual fear of the Persian threat (and later to seven eek protection from a rogue Spartan general Pausanias who was originally trusted but who nevertheless began to put his own interests above his supposed fellow Hellenes whose states he started to treat more as vassals to even be suspected of willing to pursue Persian interests if his own pursuit for more self-serving power could benefit).

With Athens having become an imperial power as if by 'default' it was now only 'reasonable' that Athens maintain its supremacy by disallowing any city state to leave the grand alliance that was the Delian League for it would mean not only becoming weaker but also allowing Sparta another leading Hellenic polis as head of the Peloponnesian League to become stronger with any city-state having successfully rebelled against Athens to now have the available opportunity to not be a neutral but to ally with such a powerful rival. The Athenian delegation saw it as unfair and hypocritical that anyone would think it was out of place that Athens would allow itself to become a weaker power and to have another power obtain an advantage to seriously threaten Athenian security; for no great power such as Sparta as well as the complaining Corinthians would tolerate a similar weakening of their own strategic power. A major democracy could thus rationalize to itself that although it respected the free will of its own citizens entrusted to act responsibly within the legal framework as has been mutually agreed on by the demos it was not acceptable that citizens of other city-states who had freely chosen due to their military impotence to surrender their independence so as to be protected by a greater city-state could no longer exercise their free will to leave such an alliance and restore their independence when it may also be the case that the former ally may become an enemy if it allied with a rival power. It was often seen as the norm that smaller states faced falling under the sphere of influence of a greater power and the Athenian rationale was also the case that was it not best that a vulnerable city-state ally itself with Athens which was a democracy rather than with martial Sparta or for those of the Hellene diaspora in Asia Minor to risk falling under the tutelage of despotic Persia? The Athenian delegation are adamant the weak are in no position to defy the strong that will allow for a recalibration in the balance of power that will mercilessly swing to the benefit of the former at the cost of the latter. The weak know it is intolerable for the strong to allow any diminution of their supremacy to occur for the natural law of power is akin to the laws of physics and the logic of mathematics which cannot be argued with and defy all human subjectivity with an ironclad absoluteness of which with total certainty if their proven actions and reactions or incontestable equations and answers are ignored or

incorrectly surmised will lead *only* to one's death. One plus one equals two is an absolute fact of the universe no matter the symbolic language that may be used to signify its unchanging actuality just as gravity is an absolute property of the universe no matter its various effects that may be observed occurring in time and space depending on physical location such as within the totality of the universe as an expanding whole or on the earth or on the moon or at the event horizon of a black hole and for the small city-states they too must face the fact that they must exist in perfect balance with the event horizons of empires if they want to exist or otherwise by military or diplomatic means they will be swept in and swallowed up to cease to exist as separate entities by the greater gravitational forces that are always bearing down upon them that swirl out from the human empires of this world which always clash with other empires like the tectonic plates that forever shift and slide amid the earth's crust to destroy old landscapes to make new ones and empires always know to hold onto what they have now so as to increase the possibility of surviving any such inevitability towards obliteration and at best to even achieve greater necessary heights of wholesale domination standing on the relics left of former once glorious imperial domains which could no longer generate the cosmic energies of physical force needed to regenerate their life force that must come at the expense of the deaths of others who are weaker who must be made weaker who must always remain weaker so the stronger can always remain pre-eminently strongest and the weakest to suffer as they must such as the Athenians stated to neutral Melos who bravely did not immediately cower and used moral arguments to impotently pursue an ethical line of reasoning that it was unjustifiable for an empire to arbitrarily come along without cause to impose its will upon it simply because it had the military strength to do so ironically just as the Athenians of an earlier defiant generation had also properly seen it as blatantly wrong for the Medes to try to militarily do the same to them and so would fight to fortuitously win against all the odds; just as an equally hopeful Melos now also rightly prepared to fatefully stand up to a supposed greater power with similar malignant intent yet the higher 'moral' dictum in the imperial outlook of a faltering grand democracy due to the unceasing ruthless hardships of a seemingly ceaseless war now further eroded from within by an increasingly menacing oligarchical faction is that if there was any 'unrealistic foolish resistance' from such a much lesser state then it was to no longer 'fairly' threaten it and instead mercilessly carry out the 'only' option that was left for not meekly surrendering which was to have it cease to exist for all time and with no sign that it had ever been with the further reach of empire to be pre-eminent in the history of the world with the conquered buried out of sight in the substrata of its expansive imperial foundations.

There Can Be A Grievous Karma For All Those Who Mercilessly Follow The So Called *Real Politik* Foreign Policy Of 'Might Is Right'.

'Athens struck by the plague towards the very beginning of the Peloponnesian War would fatally bring down her finest leading statesman and after the death of Pericles a strong democrat as exemplified by introducing reforms such as payment for jurors (and although he had emphatically saw to it that the Athenian empire would not be downgraded he was at least also not of tyrannical personal intent) while after him there would be more often than not only less principled morally weaker men who only would aspire to improperly lead Athens so as to so often side with oligarchy to put forward a demagogue self-interest to maintaining the empire with a national hubris that entailed ignoring the Periclean warning that Athenian hegemony should not extend itself while at war with Sparta yet which would disastrously seek to do just that to have the narcissist and wealthy likes of Alcibiades once bodily saved on the battlefield by his friend Socrates (although Socrates obviously in the end could not morally salvage from within him his malformed soul) with Alcibiades seeking for glory to shine upon himself if due to him the glowing glory of Athens was to shine ever brighter yet as was intended by his promotion of the Sicilian expedition yet for it to all nihilistically come to nought as the undertaking to Sicily would lead only to inglorious cataclysm which ironically Alcibiades would not in the end lead having been accused beforehand by his enemies of offending the gods due to the mysterious night damage of statues of Hermes to instead seek sanctuary from prosecution and possible execution by pragmatically finding sanctuary first with the Spartans then the Persians to provide both adversaries of Athens with valuable military and political advice. Yet, always, ultimately putting his interests first there would remain the arousal of new suspicions circling around him; so eventually to seek redemption from Athens and to be accepted back with his false promise that he could have Persia to side with its strongest foe yet still to brilliantly fight again with his fellow Athenians in only dismally in the inevitable end to be assassinated in Asia Minor due to Spartan intrigue; for there to also be the aristocrat merchant general Cleon of demagogue intent notably critical of anyone critical of him in

the democracy and who in his speech to the assembly regarding the revolt of Mytilene advocated for the execution of all male citizens and for the women and children to be slaves to forcefully enforce the code of empire for the honourable sake of Athens no matter how unjust it maybe yet although his foul argument was accepted there would be a second debate which would refute this command of mass execution and enslavement with Diodotus more so of democratic temperament stating bye-the-bye in his arguing that it is perhaps better that Athens treat her allies justly in the first place to avoid rebellions yet although a wholesale massacre had been averted this time there would still come later the needless massacre of the males of Melos after the unprovoked invasion and conquest of this neutral island which apparently was indulgently suffused with Alcibiadean intent although Alcibiades was not present had led only to an imperious Athens gaining an inglorious reputation which would have Euripides furiously compelled to write The Trojan Women to rightly repudiate Athens's immoral action and then seemingly by way of divine karma for the day of judgement to come for Athenians themselves to cower after their eventual defeat to the Spartans – victors who saw fit to have the protective Long Walls torn down - to fearfully know that the arrogantly supposed 'real politik' of 'might is right' which Athenians had arrogantly raised over decent moral principle could now also work terrifyingly against them to suffer as well as 'they must' at the mighty hands of their victors who could rightly become their executors with the same unjustifiable cruel end that they themselves had mercilessly brought about at Melos.

Although any direct Persian threat finally had at last sufficiently receded the allies still had to pay tribute to Athens for the upkeep of the Athenian naval fleet which was certainly the backbone of her supposedly protective maritime power in the Aegean and Ionian regions (which could also be put to good effect to police any Athenian ally if it showed an interest in wanting to be independent); to have Athenian coinage with its owl representative of the now domineering goddess Athena to be universally utilized throughout the alliance and to have the treasury at Delos also moved to Athens on the supposed pretext that it could possibly fall into Persian hands as a last revengeful consequence of the Athenian misadventure into Egypt first initiated to nominally support an Egyptian rebellion over Persian jurisdiction. Yet it was clearly to the imperial advantage of Athens that the treasury money was now more directly accessible as Athens where upon it would be spent to expansively rebuild anew the Acropolis whose old temples had been destroyed by the invading barbarian; in Athenian eyes the re-energizing magnificence of the Parthenon would gloriously be the architectural centrepiece that grandly reflected to the world the now majestic status of the Athenian democratic polis so heroically earned after defiantly bringing forth a combined Hellenic victorious defence against a bellicose mighty foe; to have fantastically risen to the historical occasion that the ominous opportunity the Mede invasion had presented and to have been proven right to do so with the Athenians to also become mighty and who now with imperious rationalization commended themselves that they should rightly remain imperial in order for their individual 'radical democracy' (for it was only supposedly radical for male Athenian citizens who could benefit from it with all others of the Athenian population e.g. such as women and slaves discounted from it) to survive and prosper in a harrowing world of aristocrat empires. The Athenians from their self-interested point of view believed they should command a strong Delian League metaphorically akin to a battle line or phalanx of hoplites with it already proven that by fighting together any supposed stronger enemy could be defeated and as would be the case to then also go onto further harass mainly under Cimon so as to fully make good such an overwhelming victory against the odds (and bye-the-bye to also thoroughly deal with that universal timeless scourge of the sea for all merchant nations: piracy); so Athens would not tolerate any allied city-state to be rebellious in order to pursue separate interests not in line with its imperial stewardship which would weaken Athenian power especially when Sparta had restored its own league and whose relations with Athens over time had worsened more or less corresponding with the ascension of Athenian hegemony and to sour so much as for these two former leading allies to eventually see each other as hostile rivals to eventually even express greater enmity towards each other than with Persia. There already had been conflict between Athens and the Peloponnese and a long-term treaty was in place to stop another hostile escalation; yet an otherwise insular Sparta could probably be drawn into an outright war with Athens if it was apprehensively sensed Athenian imperialism was duplicitously extending into Sparta's sphere of influence and the Corinthians aware of Spartan hesitancy argued that that this was what was deliberately occurring with the hostile situation that had first arisen locally with Corcyra and now with Potidaea which had been crises that had inevitably magnetically drawn in an otherwise wary Athens. Although an offended Athenian delegation thought it had good cause to complain against the Corinthian accusation that it wanted to break the treaty.

'Trojan Horse' Alliances That Could Also Be Punishably Akin To The Brazen Bull

Yet it was nevertheless not wholly correct on the part of this particular Athenian delegation to provide the impression that the Athenian empire was an inherently benevolent one for there would be the imposition of force on rebellious states such as Naxos which apparently no longer wanted to pay an expensive subsidy to Athens with the immediate threat of another Persian invasion now passed and a belligerently resistant Thasos which had gold mines coveted by Athens and which even sought out military aid from Sparta which it was not possible to deliver due to a massive helot revolt that with both allies forcibly brought back into the alliance there was for all to drastically see a political threshold had been perilously crossed whereby a voluntary league which at the start even had available to all allies equal voting rights with mighty Athens yet whereby now it was petulantly mutating into an involuntary empire with any independent minded ally 'treacherously' opposing the 'good will' of Athens faced at its own peril the now vulnerable potential to be militarily reduced to subject status by its imperiously transformed former 'protector'. (With Sparta although it did not require its allies to pay a tribute they were expected to provide military forces when Sparta required them as would happen during the Peloponnesian War yet with oligarchy to remain the preferred political model within the Peloponnesian League Athens would initially find that apparently as a supreme democracy it gained the trust of many city-states that their interests would also be faithfully served which with hindsight would for some Athenian allies be a regretful, misplaced expectation but perfectly understandable when at the time the Spartan Pausanias the victor at the Battle of Plataea which finally brought about an immediate end to the Persian invasions and who later to the east would clear most of Cyprus and Byzantium of Persians would fall out of favour when he began to act more so in a heavy-handed way towards those who were his supposed allies to even be suspected of colluding with Persia which towards his bitter end such traitorous intrigue would be proven to be true to be one means by which he hoped to establish absolute power in Sparta along with stirring up an internal helot revolt. Although his fellow Spartans would have this discredited victorious war leader walled up in a temple of Athena to slowly starve to death in regards to Sparta's reputation with those Hellenes outside the Peloponnese too much diplomatic damage had already been done to not be quickly retrieved; sufficient diplomatic space had thus now been opened up for Athens to become the premier leader of the new defensive alliance that was the Delian League aimed at inhibiting any exterior imperial threat yet to ironically become an ideal foundational platform for imperial impropriety. The Aegean and Ionic Greeks had unwittingly through diplomatic co-operation devised for themselves a trojan horse which would have them inside it in preparation for war just as the Hellene warriors hid inside Homer's trojan horse in act of Achaeans unity which would result in victory over Troy not realizing that its champion rider which was Athens would if it saw fit to leave them inside entrapped to only be freed if the ally would do as directed by the Athenian polis doing what was 'democratically willed' for the good of empire in the only Assembly that truly mattered within which it was supremely assumed that what was good for the Athenian empire was what would also be for the 'good' for every subject within it.

To speak even more so metaphorically what would be worse for those allies who would still question the supreme will of the builders of the Acropolis was for them to terribly realise that they were actually inside the warming interior of the infamous bronze bull in which victims would be slowly burnt to death - so potentially it could also ruthlessly be for those living with the illusion of freedom when in reality they were only living in a benign state of Athenian ownership at best and which at worst could become tyrannical when it was imperiously decided by a majority vote that so called 'rebellious' subject lands needed to be made waste with all surviving males not executed along with women and children to be entreated to slavery. As it was also so with the Spartans who for instance at the siege of Plataea which was carried out with the Thebans and which would lead to the surrender of the city. However, the terms of surrender for the exhausted Plataeans to give into the still strong besieging Peloponnesians was viewed by the former to be broken by the latter when instead of any fair trial in order for Plataeans to be justly judged by their Spartan victors who would see to it that only those amongst the defeated who were deemed explicitly guilty from a Spartan point view would face punishment that instead Plataeans were individually asked if they had done anything to help serve the Spartan and that of her allies in this war of which the obvious and lone honourable answer would be no. The Plataeans pointed out that they were not deserving to be treated so dismissively when for instance it had been they that had helped out Pausanias at the Battle of Plataea to defeat the Persians once and for all and that the Spartans who had fallen and welcomingly buried on their soil to be honourably respected and so there were other moral arguments such as to treat them unfairly would be to dishonour the freedom the Hellenes had fought for by valiantly defying Persian

barbarism. Yet it would all come to nought for despite the merit of the debating points brought forward by the Plataeans the Spartans would rationalise that they would still side with the counter-arguing wishes of their allies the Thebans who hated the Plataeans even though it was common knowledge that the Thebans had sided with Persia at the Battle of Plataea to which the Thebans presently put up as one of its defences - so as to 'clarify' to its now Spartan ally - that at the time the decision to fight with Persia had been a minority oligarchy decision as if to argue that ordinary Thebans had no choice but to obey the demands of a dictatorship that wanted to further tighten its grip on power by allying with a powerful foreign autocracy...and so it went on...such as there being the Theban accusation that the Plataeans could not talk about fighting oppression when they would stay in an alliance with Athens who due to their increasing imperial posture could be viewed now as the oppressors of Hellas ...and so it went on...and any neutral observer present may have had sympathy with the Plataean analysis but not so the Spartans who would dismiss all moral calculations when coming to their final decision to put forward the same question to the Plataeans which would end up having two hundred of them put to death. The Spartans saw to it that they would not displease their Theban allies for in the final calculation the alliance with them was what numerically mattered more than doing what would have genuinely been the right thing to do in regards to the Plataeans for it is not for the weak but for the strong to determine what to rightly do and the action which is seen as just by the strong is that which cannot be to its disadvantage which would irrationally be a self-inflicted punishment and so it was only correct that Plataea was sacrificed like a lamb on the altar in order for Sparta to keep their Theban friends on side to imperiously stay the right course in the ultimate 'just pursuance' of a final victory in this war against - what was rationalised to be from the Spartan point of view - a seemingly far more worse imperious Athenians with her 'lackey allies'.

In the lauded historical telling of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides there is a horrendous literary section which is more so novelistic narrative than precision detail yet is an account that well provides an apocalyptic sense of wholesale anarchy breaking out throughout all of the Hellenes with unmentioned city-states involving themselves in rebellions and revolutions so as to re-align their internal politics along either oligarchic or democratic lines and then to align themselves externally with either Sparta (oligarchy) or Athens (democracy) and which throughout this violent political process the most cruelly murderous aspects of human nature terrifyingly come to the fore. Human savagery. Human revenge over even human self-preservation. The human lust for power. Human greed. Human fanaticism. Human terror. Human malevolence. To tear to shreds human beings and human societies murderously arriving at a miserable point of no return with the human character in such a state of general deterioration that there could not be any full human restoration. Human civilization overwrought with human tragedy. All was mania. All was hysteria. An overarching madness prevailing. All to be perverse.

VIII

The Noble Lie.

Nevertheless, what is of immediate interest is the Platonic/Socratic suggestion that to ensure that this stable world did not face social rupture or outright rebellion there needed to be inculcated in a mesmerising way into the mass psychology of the citizenry a diligent state-assured sense of fate that decisively left them unequivocally accepting - rather than 'ungratefully' querying - their particular social station.¹ Thus, the so called 'noble lie' spoken of as if the citizens have the earth as mythically being their mother and with a founding generation as if divinely attributed with various metals which would have (i) a few imbued in their perfect souls with the rare metal of gold to qualify for high status so therefore - of course - destined to be philosopher rulers; (ii) while in societal terms directly below them and with a wider social base would be the defending auxiliaries whose perfecting souls would be imbued with silver and (iii) lastly with the largest social base will be the majority of citizens who 'naturally' enough would have predestined within their 'imperfect natures' only ordinary abundant metals such as iron and brass thus duplicitously enabling their 'life purpose' to solely be servants of the Good rather than to also have the opportunity to one day be rulers or protectors of it. Thus, for the designers of this supposed socially flawless society to guarantee to have overall a passive society whereby one must 'willingly' submit to 'the all'; in order to have such a great loss of individual freedom for the 'greater' off-set benefit of an over-riding social harmony; yet, that ultimately, will only be induced by an overbearing authoritarianism of

which it may be argued must exist in order to effectively suppress the organic dynamism of human life itself.

So, what is stable is actually still born.

So, as it is with every such mendaciously so called 'wise' meritocracy whether it be a religious, economic or racial one – to mention just three societal variances that can lead to a political sifting of the population; to be either favourably heralded as 'deserved' or unfavourably maligned as 'undeserved'. Thus, in every such strictly tiered societal circumstance there can be an immoral foundational 'noble lie' so as to rhetorically rationalize a specified social hierarchy that will 'unquestionably' validate the ideologically entrenched power base of a privileged elite. Heaven on earth is the political promise. Yet there will only be a false harmony at best – as perhaps typified by Plato's imaginary 'utopia' - and a true hell at worst – as typified by real world authoritarian or totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany (it mentioned as a typical example of tyranny being the main one referenced in this novella). At first Stephen in the novella was loyal to a regime which politically infused him to believe the 'noble lie' that it was striving to better the human cause and that the war was a 'necessary work' in order to defeat 'aggressive inhuman forces' that would only lead humanity to a bestial fate until he was directly confronted through his war experiences first in Greece and then in Rumania that he was no superior heroic 'noble Aryan' but actually an atrocious unwitting human cog in the cynical service of human beasts. There was only the abyss. Stephen's ultimate resistance was thus a moral 'stepping back' from the very edge of such an immoral abyss and really there was no choice for him if he was to seek – and at least for himself as alone he did not have the technical capacity to overthrow the regime a moral chance to achieve personal redemption. After all, a personal nihilism was all that otherwise awaited him. Ultimately, Stephen would morally atone for his political sin of following National Socialism although tragically it would come at the sacrificial cost of his very life. In general, in political terms, it is always the human dilemma as a social being whether to know one is living for a lie and do nothing to survive and even thrive or knowingly take the risk to oppose it to then not only face losing everything but in the extreme case if also existing in a wholly totalitarian state to inevitably also die.

1a. Apparently in mythic terms what Socrates had in mind was to tell a kind of 'Phoenician tale'...thus referring to the mythical legend of the Phoenician Cadmus who founded Thebes doing so by following the goddess Athena's advice by planting the teeth of a dragon he had killed after the dragon had massacred some of his men. From the ground arose armed soldiers who fought Cadmus until five were left and these warriors would be loyal to Cadmus and aid him to build Thebes. The implication being that from the ground also can come the rulers, defenders and builders of the 'philosopher republic' with all supposedly in social accord with each other with a belief that one's destiny has been determined by the metal associated with one's being and which should not be challenged being best not only for one's individual life but also for the ongoing harmonious functioning of the whole polis. What good could come from defying fate...? It was the Platonic hope it would be sensibly determined by the 'good citizens' of such a highly stratified and rigid society that there would be no good at all and thus there would be no real risk of social rebellion. In ancient Greece no matter a gradually increasing emphasis towards a rational inclination to view the world, generally, at the time, myth still had much social power.

In much the same way that despite the secularization that has occurred in the West since the time of the scientific revolution which first came to prominence several hundred years ago and coupled along with an overall governing shift from monarchy to parliament it is still the case that official religion presently still has much social sway to remain an influential factor in shaping public discourse and political direction.

As it was in ancient Greece there were those in high authority who would validate their commanding social position or hold on power by claiming to have a genealogy that went back to a divine ancestral beginning. A well-known case in point is King Leonidas who heroically led the Three Hundred Spartans at Thermopylae. It is said that Leonidas who also died in this famously brave but eventually doomed holding off of the 'One Hundred Persians' could trace his family tree back to the famed demi-god Hercules. There is even the case of Plato's aristocrat father claiming his family lineage going back to the god Poseidon by way of the last king of Athens Codrus who famously sacrificed his life to save Athens. The Delphic Oracle had claimed that Athens would not fall if the besieging Dorians killed the Athenian king and thus Codrus went out disguised as a peasant and coaxing an argument enticed the Dorians to kill him

and when his true identity was found out the Dorians withdrew. (While Plato's mother could claim the Athenian legislative reformer and one of the so called Seven Sages was an actual family ancestor; an irony for Plato - due to his antipathy towards democracy - as Solon would initiate reforms that would lead open the way for Cleisthenes (the so-called father of Athenian democracy) to later radically shift Athenian governance from familial autocracy to citizen democracy).

Of perhaps more relevance to this particular discussion is that Plato's father claimed that his family lineage went all the way back to the god Poseidon which comes by way beforehand through a supposed family association with the highly regarded last king of Athens who was Codrus of whom it is still debated as to whether he was either a mythical or real historical figure being a character who is of the Dark Ages in the Hellenic past; yet what mattered to Plato's father is that he was surely a son of Poseidon. Yet of perhaps of greater import is that Codrus is the king who would sacrifice his own life to save Athens when the city was threatened by invaders known as the Dorians. The Delphic Oracle had proclaimed that Athens would not fall if the Dorians killed the Athenian king and learning of this prophecy Codrus disguised himself as a peasant and as if to collect wood went beyond the city walls and out to the Dorians by a river with whom he initiated an argument and by way of this provocation the Dorians would kill this unruly local. When it came to light that it was the Athenian king who they had killed and also knowing of what the Delphic Oracle had ominously said the Dorians retreated and Athens was saved. (Out of deep respect and honour for Codrus he would actually be the last king of Athens and afterwards there was the leading position of 'archon' which meant ruler or perhaps chief magistrate. Certainly, Codrus was certainly a ruler of virtue who was to be admired yet curiously he does not apparently appear as any sort of role model for aspiring philosopher kings in Plato's *Republic*). Leonidas would claim Hercules as an ancestor and Plato's father would claim Poseidon. Ironically in terms of claiming of an actual historical figure of high importance for Plato who despised Athenian democracy, on his mother's side it would be claimed that Solon the Athenian legislative reformer and one of the so called Seven Sages was an actual family ancestor. To manoeuvre away from Socrates' problematic (or even facile) myth making to actual political reality it may be of interest to mention that it was Solon who would bring in such legal changes as ending land owner 'debt slavery' and with all Athenians to be free (although there would be slavery but they had to be foreigners) would historically put into incremental motion the political tectonic plates that would eventually under Cleisthenes (the so called father of Athenian democracy) radically shift Athenian governing from familial autocracy to citizen democracy.

1b. Although it may be viewed as a questionable decision it is perhaps worthwhile now to also have a cursory 'sketch' look at the social standing of Socrates. According to tradition Socrates father was a stonemason (who thus would have benefited having such a craft during the Periclean period with the building of such grandiose temples as the Parthenon) yet this tradition is not universally accepted by historians while his mother was a midwife (and of course Socrates would come to see himself as a 'philosophical midwife' for the polis in order to hopefully facilitate for it the birth of greater wisdom) and it seems that Socrates who may have been of less financial means later in life was at the very least born into a family of some affluence which also had some good social associations with those of high social standing (including those in the Periclean circle with the assertion even being made that Socrates would come to know the philosophically minded Aspasia who would be the mother of Pericles the Younger) while when he went to war there is the claim that he could afford to be a hoplite having his own weapons and armour and possibly to have may be also accompanied by a servant. Apparently, Socrates would also inherit a house and his wife Xanthippe who was much younger than him was also of a high social status so it could be presumed Socrates was of enough good social standing for such a marriage to be possible. Interestingly enough his decision to fight in his mid-thirties is said to have been a voluntary one and while he may have been motivated as a patriot to defend his city state during a time of war against a hostile powerful adversary such as Sparta it has also been pointed out that there is no public record of him directly questioning Athenian imperialism which would ultimately involve the carrying out of many war crimes and massacres as so infamously epitomised by the unprovoked invasion of Melos. In passing it should be noted that Socrates while seen as an eccentric during his time as a soldier was respected for his extraordinary self-discipline and bravery and having what can be seen as a resilient stoic attitude towards the physical hardships involved in war campaigning as well as not panicking in the aftermath of any defeat. As it is one time from a battlefield at Potidaea (which would become a disastrous siege for Athens) Socrates aided and defended not only an unhorsed, injured Alcibiades and to also retrieve his armour but he would also aid the unhorsed Athenian general Laches in a later retreat after a battle at Delium. (One wonders

though becoming a hardened battle veteran into his fifties if the war ultimately had some harmful psychological effect on Socrates which in today's medical terms would be envisaged as PTSD yet that is pure speculation on my part as he was known to be mentally resilient).

1c. It is somewhat an irony that Socrates found himself fighting the Spartans as both he and Plato were sympathetic towards the supposedly rational well-ordered austere organisation of Spartan society based on a monarchical approach (rather than a democratic one) which was so intrinsically regulated as to thoroughly prepare its ever physically hardened people for the unflinching demands of war. All individuals as well as all families had to subsume their own interests for the 'greater good' of the welfare and survival of the state and is a selfless attitude that Plato sees as vital in his republic where a justice epitomised by a social harmony was reliant on all human beings dutifully playing out their distinctive roles to achieve a necessary state of static stability that would allow for this supposed passive utopia to predictably endure. (It seems Plato found it disdainful the 'anarchic' 'populist' competition of individual interests that could occur in democracy which for him only 'disastrously' trended towards an individualised 'societal selfishness' and 'foreseeably' resulting a social disorder that could only deeply hinder any morally virtuous quest to communally correlate human existence with the Eternal Good). The manner in which male Spartans were separated from their families at a young age to live together in communal barracks to prepare for life in the military until the age of thirty and whereby presumably one's loyalty to the state can supersede one's loyalty to family was perhaps a 'real world' inspiration for the separation of auxiliary children in Plato's so called 'utopia'. The Spartan communal military model whereby the individual is diligently subordinate to the state epitomised guaranteeing a supposedly uniformly achieved static world whereby it was Platonically desired to have no chance of social rupture in a metaphysically envisaged 'other-worldly' philosophically modelled city-state to be streamlined with the perfect harmonious formation of an eternal Good.

1d. Thus Socrates a loyal citizen hoplite – which it can be presumed also meant he originally had some decent assets which were most probably inherited from his stonemason father; which had allowed Socrates to personally finance his armour and weaponry and who bravely fought in at least three battles in a long war (that ironically as also aforementioned was against his favoured Sparta with its preferred steady governance) which, speculatively speaking, may have also reinforced for him through harsh military experience an appreciation of the human necessity of human discipline *per se* which while of qualitative worth to the individual was in terms of the polis could also function as an effective social lubricant as so uniformly utilized *en masse* by the Spartans; for a single-minded adherence to discipline strongly underpinned their rigidly monarchically guided hierarchical civic realm (distinctively with two kings - who along with their political sharing supremacy were also in religious terms Sparta's chief priests – both from separate family lines who ultimately could supremely claim the great Hercules as their ancestor yet would have (i) a council of elders and (ii) the ephors who were officials actually elected (iii) both to serve as a 'check and balance' on monarchical power so as to not be wholly absolute) which was in such strict close accord to their martial character in order to fully guarantee for themselves a smoothly operative stable polis; a harshly acquired social guarantee further maximised by a regular martial suppression of any rebellious impulse from the lowly third-tiered helot-slave class; which unduly also brings to mind how Plato's military auxiliaries as defenders of the state were to not only deal with any external threat but also with any internal dissent which most probably would have arisen from the lowly producer class.

1f. As for Socrates the soldier as for Socrates the philosopher there was in both cases the dedicated belief that the individual must wholly put the higher interests of the state first (although seemingly not necessarily its present political model) - and be willing to die for its divinely sanctioned laws (the ancient Greeks generally believed the gods to be the original source of what was understood to be 'natural law') which for Socrates he had earnestly abided too all his life even risking his life for them in middle age as a combatant and by which he would eventually be given the ill-fated opportunity to zealously do so again in his old age not on the battlefield but in court and this time 'armed' with his words rather than with his sword.

1g. To further look at the regrettable legalized fatal fate that was to befall Socrates perhaps it could also be perceived that one of the underlying dramas in Plato's sympathetic depiction of the Socrates on trial is that it was a verbal melee – rather than a calmly reasoned out dialogue – which had an individual's sound philosophical rationale being up against the irrational 'mass paranoia' of his zealously misunderstanding damning detractors. Yet, at the very least it should be pointed out that when the democracy overcame the tyranny in an act of first-time political maturity there would - in the interests of an ordered political

transition that would not be anarchically threatened by revengeful bloody upheaval - be a forgiving general amnesty meted out to those who would have - during the barbarically murderous time of the Thirty Tyrants - callously wanted every democrat dead. However, Socrates would openly carry on as before with his public advocacy to philosophically make good his fellow Athenians which before was more or less seen as a harmless if irritable activity but now after the recent horrendous experience of the dictatorship along with the known antipathy Socrates held towards the democratic model there was now an accentuated anxiety that he could somehow insidiously provide a rebellious rationale for those who still secretly harboured any unwarranted ambition to still mount an oligarchic coup especially among any impressionable aristocratic young even though it was obvious that this now elderly man and supposedly apolitical was not of himself a direct threat to this resurrected but still very much fragile democracy. It is supposed that suspicion also fell on Socrates for when the Spartan established rule of the Thirty Tyrants were in power he had not left Athens when many others had chosen to do so fearing for their lives as if to suggest he sympathised with it as it was also noted that a leading tyrant who was also the worst in having many Athenian citizens murdered was once a pupil of Socrates even though he had long ago departed ways from Socrates thus 'teacher' could not be blamed for the atrocities that had occurred during the rule of his 'pupil' and as it was if the tyranny had lasted much longer there was a reasonable chance that Socrates also would have been yet another innocent victim. To give Socrates his proper due although not a sympathetic democrat he also did not respect the tyranny and at one time came under direct threat from it when he refused to carry out an order to help in the arrest of a highly regarded citizen who was not favoured by the dictatorship and which would ultimately lead to his death. (Apparently, there was a treacherous policy to coalesce other citizens to work with the dictatorship so criminal responsibility could become a 'shared sin' between the leadership and the citizenry). In fact, the tyranny had even passed a law with Socrates specifically in mind whereby one would not be allowed to teach the 'art of speaking' which with Socrates so often involved speaking to a receptive audience of young males (which one assumes was often also from the aristocrat class as had usually been the case in the years preceding the tyranny when he was not soldiering) which inevitably involved his questioning style that would lead to a critical analysis of the form of governance-of-the-day which had once been the democracy now a tyranny. In turn again there would be a critiquing of democracy when it was restored of which it was feared may resoundingly emerge an ill effect upon it and thus the arbitrary accusation of 'corrupting' the young supposedly morally on religious grounds to legally get around the political nature of the general amnesty with the somewhat fraught reasoning seemingly being any such negative critique even if only philosophical could still 'somehow' openly lead to an ideological justification for those - as already mentioned - young impressionable listeners who engaged with Socrates to undermine the state's renewed democratic authority which was still in the delicate process of being fully established. It seems Socrates was to become a damned man no matter what political model was to sway over him in the latter years of his life; while it is clearly apparent he was misjudged by his fellow Athenians who had wrongly assumed he had a favourable relationship with the tyranny (cruelly led by a former 'pupil') when it seems that he would have also eventually lost his life if the tyranny had lasted much longer. An ill fate which would have been assured when Socrates could only openly mock this law aimed at him and as well as if to mock also his former 'pupil' who literally had the power of life and death over Socrates just as much like at his trial he would mock the accusations made towards him with the returned democracy which would only raise the ire of those who were to judge him as if what was on display was a foolish hubris rather than any humble remorse which presumably is what would have been preferred; to thus dissipate any sympathetic chance of acquittal or any lesser punishment - like exile - that would not call for his death in what would be to the disadvantage of the defendant an overly emotional charged court procedure.

1/ Democracy can allow for equal opportunity. Yet for Plato and Socrates (whether be the historical one or as depicted by Plato in the trial and his later writings) any such universal access to power is a liability (if it allows 'lesser souls' to go above their political station) and it seems the fraught outcome of the trial seems to verify this restrictive point of view which is what Plato wanted to suggest with him being of the opinion that only those few - i.e. his philosopher kings who well understand the principles of justice - being qualified to mete it out (and presumably also when it comes to life and death outcomes). It is duplicitously suggested as much in the well-known story of the cave in which it is stated how the person who returns to the cave after seeing the world outside it faces being killed by those still entrapped inside the cave and who firmly believe that a world of shadows is the only reality; as if it is an impossibility that they could never reasonably come to their senses to be guided towards any grand revelation; as well it is often cited there is

the inference this returning philosopher is Socrates who was killed because of his attempt to stir the souls of Athenians to realise the metaphysical world of the absolute forms that could lead them to virtue, justice, wisdom etc.

1g. Certainly, in modern times professional judges with years of legal education and legal experience are officially appointed to systematically carry out judgements on his or her fellow citizens; with a society as a whole - as has become the case in many liberal democracies (notably not so in the United States) - determining through a legislative process to end the death penalty for any crime; often preferring the legal option of life sentencing so as to at least generally preserve the sanctity of life with anyone who has taken a life kept alive yet as societally perceived proportionate just punishment (rather than say, for instance, outright human revenge which may be seen as wrongly crossing a moral line that arbitrarily distinguishes between righteous justice and immoral illegitimacy) to potentially have denied for the rest of one's life any universal human right to human liberty that otherwise the society *as a whole* upholds to those who abide by its laws which are collectively determined to be for the common good and historically speaking may have taken centuries or much longer through both religious and political upheaval to reach any viable just point as now daily experienced in liberal democracies and which cannot be arrived at in societies which still have various authoritarian complexions whether they be of a theocratic or political nature or an illiberal mixture of both and with no viable liberal opportunity for positive social reform. Although, in many liberal democracies today what does not exist are totally politically neutral environments in regards to their 'highest courts in the lands' yet what is usually attempted whereby judges to a supreme court or high court rely on the political class for the appointments of supreme and high court judges is to have a balanced or diverse panel of judges who hold various views across the political spectrum from right to left so as to minimize or cancel out political biases with any forthcoming judicial decision which can especially be of national significance. A clear sign that a democracy maybe faltering is when a political leader chooses to blatantly select a number of judges that align with his or her political outlook so as to have executive and legislative power in collusion with each other rather than remaining independently separate; the hollowing out of judiciaries for political ends are after all an authoritarian symptom of so called 'managed democracies'. With that said in a healthy democratic state whereby the independence of the judiciary is clearly respected it can serve vitally as a useful institution to nullify any negative shift towards political extremities within the democracy.

1h. Athenian democracy did not have a professional class of judges with court decisions left to a many membered jury mainly drawn randomly by lot and numbering up to 500 jurors (although one reads they could even number up to 1,501! While an odd number of jurors could also come into play to prevent ties; institutionally with Athenian direct democracy there were also Athenian tribal loyalties to take into account with there being ten tribes with a council made of 500 by lot with ten councillors from each tribe to assure equal representation and with an intermediary role of setting Assembly policy agendas - the Assembly made up of the male citizenry - and ranging anything from foreign affairs to various domestic and legal matters) which one may say was a procedural way to overcome biases and bribes and with legal corruptions hopefully nullified it was hoped that any resulting impartially there would certainly be a fair trial. Yet one looks at the trial of Socrates as well as the trial of the ill-fated Athenian generals who were accused of not rescuing sailors who drowned after the Athenian sea battle victory at Arginusae over what was supposedly a superior Spartan fleet towards the very end of the Peloponnesian War. The Athenian crews were not experienced seamen (being rapidly recruited from all classes of Athenian society and to including even slaves as this hastily organised armada which included newly built triremes was a rescue fleet of sorts due to a main Athenian armada being blockaded by a large Spartan fleet) so it was something of a miracle that they overcame the Spartans but it should be noted that the high calibre of the leadership was an essential ingredient to this unexpected victory as an unusual tactic was employed whereby the Athenian ships were in two lines against one Spartan line which allowed for an Athenian ship in the second line to nullify the attack of any Spartan ship that attempted to break through the first opposing line so as to then wheel and ram the side of an Athenian ship; (an effective tactic no longer possible due to a threatening second Athenian line. The unexpected Athenian victory was met with great celebration in Athens but it was relatively short-lived when it was learnt that sailors were not rescued and drowned; the victorious Athenian generals were recalled to face trial who defended themselves by stating that the sailors had not been overlooked but rather a storm had unfortunately prevented any successful rescue. This legitimate reason may have been the end of the matter as it was initially accepted but of the six of the eight generals who had been recalled to face trial by those who still persisted they should not be so easily forgiven would

ultimately also face another misfortune of fate (the other two generals ominously sensed it was not best to go back to Athens) along with the storm as the trial was held at the time of a major festival whose first day apparently involved family reunions which magnified the tragedy of the loss faced by those families whose sons had not only returned from the sea battle but had not been properly ritually buried. It was a serious issue which can be understood that the generals would not face the punishment of exile but rather execution. A body not buried was seen as deeply offensive to the human dignity of the unburied as well as to the gods while the soul of the unburied also faced the grave risk of remaining restless finding no avenue to the underworld (or Hades) where the soul could be at peace in the afterlife. (One has even come across the observation that it was abhorrent that a human corpse would also fall prey to a being well below the supposed natural hierarchical order such as in terms of the food chain whereby a human is feasted on by fish). Even at time of war those who were killed in battle were also deserving to be properly buried and it was traditionally appropriate to organise truces so opposing forces could collect and bury their dead and it was such a sacred duty to bury a corpse and with funeral rites that anybody who did not do so could face capital punishment which explains why the generals were to be executed rather than face some lesser punishment such as exile which occurred with other leading figures in Athenian society and even to those who had lost battles rather than in this spectacular case which the generals had actually pulled off against the odds a resounding miraculous victory. Yet still, despite such good military fortune for Athens no mercy was shown to these successful generals by their Athenian compatriots so their lives would not be spared which as well only led to a further downslide in skilful leadership for the Athenian military and only a year later Athens would be dealt a knockout blow on the sea which would leave it practically defenceless and thus the war was finally lost with Sparta victorious. Thus fate had worked against these generals due to a storm that impeded them from rescuing or recovering those lost in the battle and as already stated fate had proceeded with a second fatal blow when any initial thought of lenience for the generals evaporated when at the time of a major festival which had families communally coming together there was to also be the grievous sight of bereaved relatives of those deceased combatants - who had not only died at sea but whose exposed corpses were to remain drifting in its waters - now dressed in mourning clothes who harrowingly called for these generals to be duly punished; for apparently in divine and civic terms to sin against the dead was a greater betrayal of holy and human duty than to have stupendously defeated one's mortal foe. Interestingly, Socrates was publicly involved in this tragic drama as he held apparently by lot a leading high office on the initial day the generals would be judged to courageously state in deference of a heightened emotional majority opinion that it was unconstitutional to have the generals collectively put on trial citing that to fully respect Athenian law it would be only properly legal to have the generals face any judgement with singular trials. It seems Socrates was a lone voice of an executive council who on this day feared as well for their own lives when a main hostile instigator who had no sympathy for the generals had resoundingly spoken to say that even any official who sought for any defence of the generals should also wrathfully face the possibility of capital punishment. Thus it was certainly a brave act on the part of Socrates which also fortuitously put on display his personal deference that the law was so worthy of respect that it had to come before any consideration of one's life as had already been the case as a soldier he was also prepared to respect and die for the laws of the state and for which at the end of his life from his point of view he would ultimately sacrifice his life so as to abide by the law. As it was the final fate of the generals would not be determined on this day and on the day it was Socrates had returned to the status of ordinary citizen and despite one account by another leading voice that the generals - who would heinously face their destiny collectively and really without fair trial - that they should not be blamed for matters outside their influence such as the storm or the failure of lower ranks to carry out orders Socrates would see how the unfortunate defendants were summarily executed and as if to be a precursor to his own latter doom it seems their unjust deaths were also achieved by hemlock. The death of these generals along with what would later grievously happen to Socrates by all accounts can be viewed as being equivalent immoral blights on Athenian democracy and it is known that in the former case there was actually deep regret that the generals had been so hurriedly judged and to lose their lives in the 'heat of the moment' and it came to pass that those who were ruthlessly keen for the generals to be killed were themselves to end up out of favour with many Athenians who eventually demanded that they in turn be put on trial yet the accused would go into self-exile to avoid the courts although the main instigator would return to Athens at the time of the general amnesty when democracy was restored after the overthrow of the Spartan installed tyranny and one reads he was so despised by everyone he was to die of starvation (although one has not yet been able to come across the particulars of how such an ignoble death came about).

It seems there is some dispute as to how really influential Socrates could be in this Athenian drama which involved the generals; yet, in the end, any brave attempt by him to secure a just outcome for them was to come to naught anyway; nevertheless, it is said that in his apparently preeminent presiding position over the assembly for the day Socrates refused that the innocence or guilt of the generals be determined as a group but rather that it should legally be more so the case that each general be singularly judged which was also the correct position of others who also sought for a fair trial rather than for a vengeful one. Apparently, it was a brave stand that Socrates took as there was in what were tumultuous proceedings also the threat that the presiding officials should as well face a life and death vote if the proposal that the generals face a life and death vote was not carried through which in the end it fatefully was on the following day with the generals found guilty and summarily executed. (One of the generals killed was the son of Pericles mothered not by the wife of Pericles but by Aspasia who was charmingly highly intelligent including in regards to philosophical matters which a younger Socrates is said to have associated with and is claimed taught him the art of rhetoric; while she was also severely publicly maligned in comedies to even be accused of being a prostitute. One may even speculate that in urging that the generals be judged in separate trials Socrates was perhaps also hoping that the son of this special woman would at least be one of those who could be saved from the death penalty. Furthermore, also of interest is the accusation that Xenophon who mentions this event accentuated Socrates role as Xenophon who it is argued was no friend of democracy would due to such a bias have looked forward to vehemently portray a historical scene which exaggerated a lone stand 'voice of reason' against an irrational 'vengeful mob'.

1i. Although it would be remiss not to mention that this is the same Xenophon who was the leader – by vote – who guided the 10,000 out from hostile territory in Persia to the sea and which it has been remarked some decision making was made not only by a top down command structure as expected in an army but also by soldier assembly which also intimates to a more democratic approach thus while it is thought that Xenophon's political sympathies lent more so towards oligarchy it seems he was not wholly dismissive of Athenian democracy but perhaps saw that it could not always guarantee political competency or social stability which probably could prevail more so with a pragmatic leadership arising from a traditional social elite such as the aristocracy. So, although Xenophon has been mostly portrayed as someone who supports oligarchical rule from what one has read about him there is also a sense that if democracy could be improved in his mind to be an efficient form of government to what he desired good governance should be he would not be inclined to wholly abandon it. (For better or worse one only mentions this probability in regards to Xenophon's political leanings as an example to not portray every historical individual from a purely one-dimensional point of view and every historical figure from ancient times at least should be given some leeway seeing so many historical records from a long ago past have been lost to us; interestingly when it comes to Socrates it is more so the case that existing records of his trial have been authored by Xenophon (*Memorabilia*) and Plato (*Apology*) who both basically took a sympathetic view of this polarizing philosopher; while it is in a comic play by Aristophanes that one finds an outright sarcastic negative view of Socrates which may actually be seen as a misunderstanding of his philosophical process being perceived by the playwright as akin to a sophist which one may wish to deduce as being unfair. Socrates is a complex character and this should be acknowledged to also try to avoid the 'one-dimensional trap' and it is a pity that other records of his problematic trial written by those who may have taken a more objective view of it – if they existed - have not survived).

1j. Yet, as in the case with all anti-democrats who pounce on any miscarriage of justice within a democratic polis that while such judicial grievances should be rightly criticized it does not necessarily follow that the democratic model should thus be abandoned for failing to live up to its lofty ideals as mistrials can occur no matter the political model within which they grievously happen (and in authoritarian models there are usually only show trials where the defendant is already deemed guilty before publicly entering a court). Rather, admittedly from my point of view at least, when a democracy fails in its duty what should be advocated is reform rather than abandonment so injustices can be further limited (if not wholly extinguished which would be the supreme ideal) by having extra legal safeguards and additional political checks and balances so governing realities can better meet societal expectations in a free society.

1k. However, to focus back on Socrates in regards to the Arginusae affair his response to this dire situation whereby the lives of the generals were still at stake – hanging by a thread, so to speak – there seems to have been no hesitation by Socrates to see to it that publicly what had to be made clear is that Athenian law had to be upheld for throughout his whole life and even unto to his death his first loyalty was to the law even when towards the end of his life it was to work not in his favour. After all, despite all his

misgivings of the democratic model as a soldier he was ready to die for the law of the polis just as at the end he would then as a civilian citizen, that in his mind, he would ultimately die to uphold it.

1f. Yet, to present a personal view which may or may not hold up to any forensic scholarly scrutiny it is perplexing that Socrates carried through with his death sentence when it seems to be the case he had little faith in the many who voted for it who in his mind may not have had the personal qualifications in terms of soulful wisdom to correctly come to a proper interpretation of the law to arrive at a just judgement in regards to his mortal bodily fate. (For Socrates it was not the soulful wise who had judged him – which would be fair enough – but unfairly by the materially minded foolish; yet, he would still abide by their fraught decision). Doomed to die at the hands of those spiritually ignorant of the ‘natural law’ brought down to humanity as intended by the divine it is for me a perplexity that Socrates would not push back on their emotionally charged misjudgement by refusing to drink the hemlock and take advantage of the real possibility made available to him to escape and go into exile which seems to only provide misguided credence to this misuse of the laws he so much respected even more so than his life. Although Socrates had argued that to go against a legal judgment that was adverse to him would have been disrespectful to the laws he had willingly always been loyal to and from which throughout his long life he had benefited from as a citizen one cannot help but think he also disallows the necessary opportunity for the laws – or any process to more justly carry them out – to be further developed so that any future miscarriage of justice would be more difficult to occur and which would have been a more befitting legacy of a life that claimed to want to enhance human wisdom. In my mind all Socrates achieved by fulfilling his death sentence was to sanction a miscarriage of justice when he should have done with all the living force still available to him to challenge it by *any means* – both practically and philosophically – possible for it was so obvious that his legalised execution was not a just one. Socrates is lauded for what is seen as a heroic calmness to drink the hemlock while all his admirers around him desired only that he would choose to live; certainly Socrates was no coward who had trust in a belief to go to the ‘other side’ was immaterially beneficial for his soul even though it would be materially detrimental for his body; yet, it was the case with Socrates that the soul which was immortal was always the aspect of human existence which should have first priority for every individual who chooses to be wise and in defence of Socrates it could be argued that although the law worked against him and he went through with this wrongness it perhaps would have been a greater wrong to defy the gods – from whom the laws were ultimately founded – who, beyond all human understanding – had deemed his fate from before the beginning of earthly time and which would have forsaken his soul to a worse eternal fate than any ill timing of his physical death, (for, after all the body is fated to die anyway...while the soul will always live on and so certainly one’s eternal fate should be the first priority).

1g. On an ideological level which is to take into account Plato’s belief in the wisdom of his philosopher kings it can be seen that it was untenable to defy their judgement as, after all, if the wise philosopher Socrates was willing to commit fully to the law – even in a ‘corrupt democracy’ – then how could any common person have the ‘soulful audacity’ to challenge the ‘justice’ of a harmonizing ‘philosophical utopia’ which was to ‘obediently’ be ‘rightfully’ viewed as being ‘supremely’ just...?

1h. As an aside it should be noted that the courts played quite an influential equalising role in Athenian democracy as many a major military or political figure would fall foul of the legal process so as to be exiled. e.g. Themistocles (of Salamis victory fame over the Persians); Thucydides (general and recorder of the Peloponnesian War); Anaxagoras (the philosopher who had to go into exile by way of making the claim that the moon a supposed divine entity may actually be made of rock) and there are so many other superior citizens who one would think Athenians would show some judicial leniency for previously doing what had been supremely good for the polis. After all, defying all common sense it is extraordinary that those audacious generals who had skilfully brought about a great miraculous sea victory for Athens would ultimately be rashly executed. A foolish outcome as well strategically for Athens when such superior leadership would be sorely missed for only a year later Athens would suffer a major naval defeat which resulted in Athens losing the whole war to Sparta.

1i. One appreciates how in Athens there were those with prestige and power who could still face a formal legal judgement from Athenian citizens and to their detriment; yet, one cannot help but think of this observation of Solon’s laws – which would lay the foundation for democracy – can, alas, still ring true so there is always an ongoing need to have legal reformation so that laws remain fluid rather than static so as to always be striving towards a justice that is equally available for all. Anacharsis a Scythian of philosophical disposition who had travelled to Athens made the remark that the laws that Solon had decreed were really no different from the web of a spider as essentially they would only mostly catch the weak and

poor while those with money and power would still be able to rip them apart so as to never be caught. One only mentions this negative observation as it is interesting how with Socrates who was of less economic means that his wealthy admirers would have been able to rely on them to make it possible for him to escape and find sanctuary away from Athens yet he refused their offer of help which would have saved his mortal life.

1j. While also from what one understands – which is limited – that justice as doing what is right was mainly a moral right preserved only for the Athenian male citizen class to estimate or judge each other in political or judicial arenas; with no moral equivalence readily available to those of the Athenian populace who were not citizens and so there was no universal justice which has to be a major social aspiration of a truly liberal democracy which proclaims that all within it are politically treated equally by the state and have equal legal rights.

X

In the novella with its underworld is the description of the inner sanctuary of Ashur's capital city Telsh known as Sheol which comes across as a human made 'heaven on earth'...as one of the scholars explains in Chapter Two *A Question of Balance*:

"Sheol has no one seeking heaven when her citizens live so well here in this world. Sheol is with authority, philosophy, culture and science for those who wish to be knowledgeable and wise throughout their long lives."

Of which the enigmatic stranger - falsely labelled as the messiah - also observes when escorted by soldiers through Sheol as a prisoner:

'His eyes were startled by the white marble buildings the escort passed, and he was amazed by the smooth skins of the people who walked amid these serene streets. Their well-proportioned bodies befitted the perfect harmony of this human paradise which he nevertheless felt was cold, sterile and unnatural.'

As it is I duly undermine the underlying hubris behind the scholar's proud claim in regards to this supposed utopia as the biblical name Sheol - which is of Hebrew origin – more or less refers to an underworld which is a still, dark place of the dead; while in a Christian sense it may be argued that Sheol can translate to mean Hell, cursory

Although only having a passing 'cursory inkling' of Plato's *Republic* as if perceiving it through a 'glass darkly' when I wrote this novella on a subconscious level at least I certainly seemed to have been mindfully channelling against the authoritarian *zeitgeist* of this major philosophical hallucination. ¹ The way I see it Sheol with its illusion of justice would be the pristine sheathed world of 'philosopher' rulership and military guardianship with the producing workers in the outer city of No-Sear only to endure impoverished living conditions with their labour-intensive existence and in the most bitter ironic sense to 'necessarily' build up, provide and support Sheol's 'civilized' grandeur and luxury comfort (on whose 'essentially esteemed' occupants Ashur's existence, its future and thus 'very survival' apparently 'depended' on). No-Sear is 'reason' spelt backwards and of course there is no reason that can justify any society - especially a strict hierarchical class based one - of having an extreme unequal disparity of wealth distribution which inevitably so often also comes with an equally extreme unequal disparity of social value and political nous. The high quality of life in Sheol would if fully known about be envied by the hard working occupants of No-Sear but the socialised 'noble lie' at work that inhibits social rebellion from occurring seems to malevolently operate on eugenic class-based meritocratic principles with the still somewhat necessary 'spiritual' backing of a historically diminished chief priesthood which duplicitously still finds by such unashamed theocratic compliance some high level of social and political relevance in what is becoming a highly secular 'rationally' based scientific society with a militarized ruling elite that firmly dominates the state's managing apparatus allowing it overall to be in authoritarian control.

As it is the Platonic noble lie will also extend into how future generations will be formulated with there to be mating festivals whereby upper echelon candidates of this brave new world will believe they have been randomly selected to produce the perfect offspring. Yet, it is a lie that both women

and men are together by mere chance - with at 'best' fate involved and which cannot be questioned - as they have actually been summarily selected to achieve the best biological results and although it is said that Plato was of the opinion that women should have equal civil and political status with men if they display the equivalent capabilities it does not seem to be the case that a woman who did not want to be involved in a mating festival could withdraw from it and thus to sleep with someone that they do not want too would have to be tantamount to slave endorsed rape. Yet in the Platonic 'ideal polis' any unco-operative individual must not be 'selfish' when state interests must come first. Thus, one also thinks of the unmentioned women in the novella who have had no choice when it came to the state decision to have all male foetuses be born in order to alleviate manpower shortages in Ashur's armies due to the unexpected long duration of the war.

As is well known the offspring of such mating festivals are to eventually be brought up in common nurseries in order to break the family bond so these new citizens will be loyal only to the state to assure its ongoing 'just existence' and its 'social harmony'. While for any child with a clear disability there can be the worse fate but in the Platonic sense a 'necessary' one in order to 'holistically' enhance and maintain a particularly well-balanced social unity in this eugenic devised human universe (which one may also suggest also asserts that its resources not be 'wasted' on those 'faulty beings' who will 'only' have a negatively, disturbing ripple effect on this apparently positively desired 'unified' societal tranquillity). Human 'sin' not to be redemptively forgiven but rather to be pragmatically liquidated. Lesser human beings cast away like scraps of clay thrown away by the 'knowing' potter as he moulds his perfect ceramics which by way of fine glazes will glisten with beautiful colours and intricate designs so there will be no longer any thought of the ungainly refuse that will now only be out of sight buried deeply back into the earth. To never be inconveniently discovered, but only expediently forgotten.

Plato and Socrates regularly accuse the sophists² of rhetorically peddling falsehoods to their deceived audiences yet they are both hypocrites to think it is justifiable to implement a myth as truth in order to 'pragmatically' facilitate a sort of 'moral' self-censorship within the individual conscience of every person in their 'perfect republic' so as to guarantee a high level of insidious social control in order to maintain social cohesion in this strictly hierarchical three-tier society. Thus, in actuality there is a counterfeit coherence with the implementing of a state methodology of 'rational' class selection that can be seen as coercive when the only available individual 'choice' for any person is to 'accept' one's designated social position. For the guardian class which with access to arms it is even more essential to have it keep its loyalty to the state and so any semblance of individual will to be eroded away by having a collective approach to the bringing up of children all of whom will never know their real parents (which in turn also means for the parents to never have the opportunity to be with them). An unnatural approach to child rearing being adopted in the name of achieving an ideological purity for the supposed ideal state.

While those many human beings on the lowest social rung may actually live more freely without any apparent state selective breeding process they are still slavishly dehumanised in the rhetorical name of humanity by generally having no real opportunity to be upwardly social mobile. No empathy. Only order. Not people. Only workers.

Although in the interests of the state there will opportunistically remain the exception to the rule as seen for instance in the novella when the state recognised Scholar A's rebellious spirit - yet highly intelligent and politically capable - could be malleably transformed from seething resentment to devout loyalty once lured with the coveted reward to finally become a highly prestigious state servant so as to well serve it (rather than to hinder it as was previously the case). No matter the mutual cynicism the state at times could 'idealistically' be selectively amiable to what paradoxically could desirably turn out to be with such a self-absorbed individual a perfect coupling of individual will with state will. It could be insinuated social mobility was to occur only as long as the state's interests are actually enhanced which in reality would result in strengthening such a tightly managed, social order with the socially manipulative use of the illusion of social freedom. There is no empathy.

At this moment as a final comment - in regards to this particular interrogative scholar who has been able to personally succeed in the regime he was once against only to be astutely co-opted by it - one

cannot help but also think of Hannah Arendt's wry intimation of how the committed revolutionary will immediately become a committed traditionalist once the revolution has been won. After all, Scholar A's personal revolution was won when the system cynically played to his seemingly aggrieved ambitious psyche by surprisingly offering him the 'reformatory' opportunity and the personal rewards that would go with such self-interested collusion for him to 'properly' use his criminal talents to serve the rhetorically good - but truly criminal - self-absorbed interests of this authoritarian social order.

1a. (i) One has a particular antipathy towards the *Republic* which I must honestly admit is more so an emotional response rather than being a particularly reasoned logical one. After reading the *Republic* many years ago I actually felt physically sick in the stomach and perhaps that was due to the section dealing with the separation of the children from their parents so as to serve the state which seemed so grotesque. I had expected to come across an enlightened utopia to only be presented what was for me beyond the rhetoric to what would result in practice the darkest dystopia so I must admit this personal negative attitude towards Plato's perfect world 'discolours' all of my insight (and perhaps I could be stand accused to have misread Plato and this may be so thus it is advisable to review the literary and philosophical analysis of others who have a far more favourable opinion of the *Republic* so as to come up with one's own balanced view; I simply admit due to my subjective emotional response to my own lack of disinterested objectivity which must be taken into account when reading this treatise. With that said I as an 'ordinary citizen' am caustically not so favourable in my opinion in regards to the scholarly plaudits that have been attributed to this 'philosophical masterpiece' over the ages. Perhaps to my own disadvantage I cynically see how any treatise which extolls the superior virtues of an 'expert class' over all others can historically - and to the present day - serve the intellectual purposes or justifications of elites - whether they be political, theological or corporate - to verify their claim of 'authenticity' to gain and hold onto power which at times can be absolute and to discount any effort 'from below' to take it away from them. (As to the separation of children from the natural family unit so as to become members of the 'state family unit' a Colombian friend was somewhat sardonically bemused by my response as she thought the *Republic* was for her actually a statement of reality as from her experience she had some inkling as to the harsh reality of a human world that would dispense of parents all together to have children reared and trained as child soldiers. It is not what Plato actually directly has in mind but whether rightly or wrongly it could be perceived that a Platonic - or Neo-Platonic approach - to 'child rearing' could aid in terribly facilitating such a final 'logical' hellish destination; as for instance in Australia there has been - and as feared still presently exists under a different 'social protective' guise - the Stolen Generations whereby indigenous half caste children were literally taken from their mother's arms and placed in institutions to become domestic servants or labourers akin to Plato's lower classes for that is all they were 'worthy' and as well as to eventually be 'civilized' by being integrated into and brought up by 'white fella' families so that such assimilation would, by eugenic 'inspired' cultural means, bring on the final genocide of the Aboriginal peoples after a hundred odd years of outright massacres, subterfuge poisonings and frontier wars had not yet quite achieved the same horrendous aim.



neo-platonic form: in
Plato's 'perfect society'
children were to be
deliberately separated
from their mothers so as
to be brought up by the
state to become 'perfect
beings.'

(ii) I also cannot help but think of my own situation, I the son of migrant shopkeepers, who by way of a relatively high standard general public education system that was open to all I eventually gained the opportunity to go to university – albeit while it was free in Australia under the Whitlam years and for a little while beyond that domestic reformist period until, somewhat ironically a ('Platonic') neoliberal approach was adopted by the next Federal ALP administration - to enter into the professional class i.e. a teacher. So I cannot help but think that in Plato's system no chance of similar upward social mobility would have been equitably possible. I as an 'iron and brass' child would have had to display exceptional intelligence or aptitude to have had any slight chance of moving up to even the lower echelons of the auxiliary class (maybe at least to be a minor public civil servant if not to be a warrior) for from what I understand Plato did not necessarily have much interest in the education of the lower class other than it be trained to carry out particular purposes for the physical upkeep of the republic - i.e. not to have direct access to a higher end philosophical education but one based simply on learning say manual skills - thus being a shopkeeper's son I would have perhaps become a shopkeeper myself and be 'satisfied' with my lowly lot 'harmoniously' placing the interests of the state ahead of any individual ambition or desire. (As it is I had my own 'Platonic moment' in primary school when I summoned to see the principal in his office and was asked several general knowledge questions such as who invented the steam engine which I must have answered correctly James Watt while as it is he actually made many technical advances on earlier less superior invented prototypes. The principal eventually stated that I was actually more intelligent than first assumed as it was thought I had cheated on a recent major test. As an Australian boy of Greek Cypriot heritage I was then in class 4D and the next year I found myself in 5B - as if in Platonic terms I as a child of the producer class now found myself socially manoeuvred to at least the lower echelons of the auxiliary class. Whether my ethnicity played any role in the underestimation of my educational ability is open to speculation; although one suspects it did and as it was an old school friend reminded me I had to promise the principal that he could have a free milkshake when he went to my parent's milk bar. I should add I don't buy into the argument that I am the one that has to deal with living between two cultures as I think the onus of any mythical cultural burden should be foisted back on a particularly insular Anglo-Australiana streak that should have to query as to why it societally limits itself within a 'narrow band' monoculture).

(iii) Yet, despite one's personal antipathy towards Plato one would as a very young first year university arts student sympathise with the philosophy lecturer who provided a one semester course titled Plato when at times during his lectures he had to deal with and in an admirably bemusing way if I recall correctly – a few evangelical fundamentalist alpha-male students who would disrupt his lectures by claiming out loud that there was only one way to truth and it was not by way of Ancient Greek philosophy; it was actually both bizarre and comical to observe this wildly out-of-line juvenile behaviour which of course was also anti-democratic and one wondered if they had only bothered to do this course in order to nonsensically 'spiritually' downgrade it. A strange memory which I can still visualise to this day. As it is this introductory course to Plato was worthwhile so as to intellectually engage with one of the philosophical 'prime movers' of Western thought; even though I did not even then necessarily agree with the line of reasoning of every dialogue such as in the case of the *Phaedo* where it is assumed the soul existed before birth and it is a matter of recollecting the absolute forms which by way of the soul's pre-birth existence a human being had already some prior experience of their metaphysical existence. (At times its philosophical discussions seemed to my late teenager mind so much like 'baby talk'). I must have also been introduced to the basic tenets of the *Republic* along with some of its passages but so many decades later one does not recall the actual lectures etc and one did not actually get around to read the *Republic* until middle age although when I look at some of aspects of my novella I can see that there is a Platonic undertow to the underworld presented which I critique. Yet I found having some understanding of Platonic thought to be of immense value when I later did a Fine Arts course on the Renaissance at another university as a non-degree student whereby I became more favourably familiar with the neo-Platonic thinking prevalent in the sculptures of Michelangelo such as in his so called Slave series which apparent reflect a desire of the human soul to leave the physical body in which such an eternal spirit is mortally entrapped.

(iv) As an aside following on from Pythagoras and Orphic ideas it is thought that both Plato and Socrates had a belief in the transmigration of the human soul with it being an immortal entity which could also lead to the possibility of rebirth or what is known as reincarnation (although it seems that Plato was a greater advocate for the possibility of any such reincarnate spiritual realisation of the soul in a new physical body than Socrates). In any case it was perhaps seen as possible for a human soul to pass through various multiple stages to although being eternal could still also be further perfected to have everlasting union with the

eternal forms. (On the matter of transmigration amongst the dialogues one may as a starting point focus on the *Phaedo* and the Myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*).

(iv) Those of the *Republic*'s social class and perhaps especially so those of the lower caste producers have to understand and accept the 'moral' case that one must see or focus only on one's *necessary* role in the overall upkeep of the state's stability and tranquillity. It is as if this duty alone should bring on any personal satisfaction: to do what is good for the good of all. It would be a liability both on a personal and social level to question one's 'fatefully well designed' social role and social placement for it is 'justly' clear that any individual good must remain subordinate to the social good.

(iv) In regards to present times while one feels liberal democracy is still a political model worth pursuing when it comes to social mobility (as well as with any accompanying positive social change) there are still negative limitations in many modern day democracies that need to be overcome and which do not only have a political dimension but also an economic one (including also in regards to justice in its strict legal sense as it can also be detrimentally limited for many due to monetary restrictions). If in an ideal social democracy - which to think for now only of the economic sphere - it would have as a rudimentary baseline: free education; free health (including dental); affordable social housing and rental controls, cheap public transport (if not free), subsidized energy and water utilities, adequately funded social services and social programs including financially decent benefits for the unemployed and other such social service beneficiaries which would be financially above the poverty line; full community based support for anyone with a disability and long term physical and mental illnesses (rather than profit based); a financially able pension and retirement system and so forth in regards to all social indices that make for a civilization to be maturely just and which will also include a fair national approach to wealth distribution slanted to adequately finance on an ongoing basis such a civic baseline and a maturing democracy could also be open to the social possibility of a universal basic income - UBI - which it is thought by its supporters would also adequately bring down unwanted social costs; then there should also be universal financial support in the legal system (if there is Medicare then there can also be 'Legalcare') so there can be a level playing field for justice to be played out when generally seeking legal help as well as within the judicial court system. (In Australia in regards to the judicial system one also thinks of implementing much needed humanitarian reforms as suggested in a royal commission from the early 1990s aimed in bringing down the escalating rate of indigenous deaths in custody for they are yet to be fully carried out over thirty years later). While a liberal democracy may attempt to remain generally fair minded in providing anyone with various opportunities to move up the social scale when it comes perhaps to finally arriving as a high office member of the political class it can admittedly - if to meditate now in passing from a negative point of view - to only often be achieved individually by being willing to join and abide by the domineering strictures of party machines which can at times be accused of being self-serving - rather than for the social good - thus the essential vigilant need for regular elections with all the accompanying transparent checks and balances associated with having an open society so as to not be undermined by ever existing nefarious political forces which can include financially well off business people setting up a party and bankrolling candidates so as to have some direct parliamentary say or as the familiar case can be to monetarily influence the policy direction of political parties e.g. through donations or media campaigns) as financial impediments often restrict most citizens from individually initiating any successful foray into electoral politics; with the exception being in those electorates where there is sufficient dynamic community grassroots support. It is said that independents can have no real effect in parliament when having to face the bloc votes of major parties but - from a positive point of view - such alternative voices can at times informally coalesce and even ally with a like-minded major party to bring about a policy change as occurred when refugees in off-shore detention (an immoral major party bipartisan policy which can be argued also defies international law) would be legislatively be given the opportunity to be evacuated to the mainland for medical help. Yet in Australia both major parties have to deal with a gradually decreasing primary vote and its splintering to other interests will have an otherwise intransigent political class having to finally deal with the inevitable prospect of ongoing multi-coalition government which at the moment is still the exception-to-the-rule (having occurred only once thus far) but eventually will possibly become the political norm in the future. (It could also be argued that having many various voices in government may also help to offset a negative populist diminution of a democracy which relies on one voice overwhelmingly suppressing all other alternative points of view. It is what is also disturbing about Plato's 'utopia' which seems to have a philosopher king class that has a uniform, static monolith approach in designating what reality has to be with a paternalistic 'know best' approach which cannot be queried by any divergent voice that is below

this elite class. It is a domestic version akin to a colonial paternalism that has historically existed between the elites of the Global North and the masses of the Global South. Thus the almost inevitable need for civil resistance or revolution when no democratic process within societies with a domineering elite or in societies ruled by a domineering external actor (be it corporate or national) is allowed to exist so as to have any alternative political expression be powerless; suppressing political dialogue rather than enhancing such necessary free speech can only ultimately lead to political anarchy rather than to political cohesion; it is the 'fatal flaw' of Plato's 'perfect society' which by way of the 'noble lie' would supposedly defuse any 'discordant' sense of political aspiration in those 'lesser' individuals who were meant to grievously accept that their present less powerful social position was their divinely designated 'destiny' and it was a 'sin' to studiously attempt to 'selfishly' aim for a higher more beneficial social place. (Akin to the relatively modern era's religious, racial, eugenic etc. 'justification' whereby those who are 'richly blessed' believe they have the 'right' to rule over the 'unblessed' who are also 'undeserving' to civilly query or audaciously make a claim that they are actually socially deserving of an equitable prosperous state of being as the so called 'righteously chosen'). Plato sought for a stable society that would overcome the instabilities of Athenian democracy and which he thought would only lead to authoritarian rule and this can certainly be the self-prophetic case; yet, ironically, one may argue rather than dispense with democracy all together in order to avoid any discordant competition that can lead to its self-destruction it may be more useful to avoid such possible self-destruction of the democracy by sensibly regulating the channelling of such competing voices - which will always variously exist in every society no matter the political model at least in a democracy they are out in the open thus more transparent while in a dictatorship they are simply hidden, but never fully extinguished - with the institutional strengthening of political checks and balances that can hopefully further diffuse political tensions rather than have them one fateful day finally violently explode. Human liberty disaffected by human trauma. Plato was right to recognise the societal need for a further level of regulation of the human spirit so that there could be a more harmonious balance between human rationalism and human emotion but it seems from any cursory observation that he was mistaken to tend towards any absolutist ascendancy of the human mind over the human heart. Although in fairness it has been inferred that in Plato's later treatise *The Laws* he somewhat attempted to make an accommodating compromise between a philosophical monarchy and a multi-faceted democracy; although he did regard such a mixed political model as 'second best'.

1b. As a final aside one cannot help but think that in Plato's 'safe', 'harmonious' republic there would be little or no real risk taking which is discouraging as it has been proven time and time again that with trial and with error that it is necessary to take risks for human progress to occur on so many fronts of human endeavour and ingenuity; to allow for human creativity is also essential for human freedom as well as for human advancements from say science to medicine to art to engineering to technology to politics to culture and so forth as otherwise there can only be a debilitating stagnation when there is no mobility socially, mindfully and so forth...

2.a To hark back to the sophists as one has read - and sense it is a valid point - that it should at least be appreciated by Plato - and as well be grateful - that a sophist such as Protagoras (who, by the way, was befriended by Pericles who obviously held him in high regard which helps to discount the stereotypical notion that sophists in general were all merely deceivers) aided in generally shifting the philosophical outlook of the Ancient Greeks towards the nature of humanity superseding a previous major cosmological focus on the nature of the universe (which for instance pre-occupied the so called Pre-Socratic philosophers of whom it is said those such as Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Parmenides of the Eleatics school also had an influence on Plato). It was Protagoras who stated that 'man is the measure of all things' which one may liken to interpret (& not to discount other more plausible interpretations) that through ourselves reality is both perceived as well as understood and made relevant only with what matters to us and in relation to human action what comes into play is human motivation and what of it is of a correct value and should be encouraged and what of it is of harmful consequence and should be avoided - in other words - human ethics which also allows for conceptual thinking i.e. abstract thought 'within the mind' etc to dominate over simply confining the human mind to take into account what is only observable reality in the world around us which allows for Plato to open the way to take into consideration his metaphysical theories which cannot be 'seen' with the eye but only be 'viewed' with reason.

2.b. Although it has to be said that even with the pre-Socratic philosophers that although they were interested in observable data it was also the case with this physical world being in a state of transience with nothing really remaining static and always in motion that such ongoing change led to the prohibitive

situation that any accurate analysis by way of sense perception could not always be trusted to bring further into play human reason - i.e. the mind over the eye – to establish what possibly was the underlying bonding composition of this world and the cosmos.

2.c. Thus to focus on just one ancient philosopher there is Pythagoras – of whom some may nonchalantly see as extraordinarily esoteric in his philosophical outlook - who did vitally surmise that it can be by reason rather than by the senses that one may discern reality and that for instance mathematics aids the human mind to objectively calculate the very structure and character of what makes up what is real in a way that is not possible by mere sight (the eye being more so subjective) so as to mindfully understand the way the universe and all things within it including each individual are universally ordered and so by way of the reasoning aspect of one's human soul one blissfully can fully requite one's ultimate destiny within such a beatitude cosmic harmony. (As if to have mysticism entwined with science so as to reasonably and perhaps even instinctually understand one's physically living spiritual purpose which may also be afforded an eternal quality).

2d. In regards to the Pre-Socratics of whom one feels that these earlier Ancient Greek philosophers should be held in much higher regard than the term 'pre-Socratic' seems to imply as if somehow what they had to say was possibly lesser; instead they should surely be impeccably be on an equal footing – if not better – than Socrates even though there is a distinct variance in philosophical emphasis between him and these earlier ground breaking thinkers (one may also like to muse on the so called 'Seven Sages' or wise men of Ancient Greece).

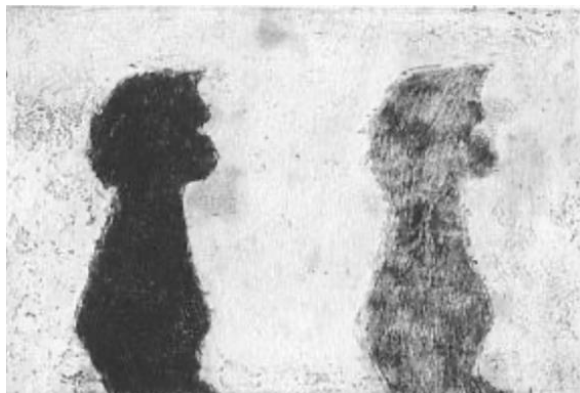
2e. Notably, what apparently ties many of these earlier Ancient Greek philosophers together is an obsession to discover which may even be seen as more scientific than philosophical as to what was the underlying unifying element to all matter of a physical reality.

To be instances that there be a realization that what may unite all things could not readily be ascertained with matter always in motion and ever changing to prohibit an accurate analysis to lead to the summation that sense perception could not be readily trusted bringing further into play human reason - i.e. the mind over the eye – to establish what possibly was the underlying bonding composition of this world and the cosmos. (Anyhow, it is of interest to point out that the logical process that Platonic thought developed was to seek and verify that there was an absolute quality to all things which one may argue built on the suspicion or theorization of the pre-Socratic philosophers of such a singular aspect to reality and taking the mindful course to resort to reason rather than observation to develop a metaphysical explanation. However, it may also be ascertained that there is also a reaction to what was considered beforehand as while earlier philosophers may have focused on 'object' Plato in particular as already been stated would take a metaphysical approach to delve more so to perceive any absolute truth by way of the mind – rather than the eye - which would leave him – as one may wish to argue to also build on Protagoras's emphasis on the human as central in the world – to also delve on the absolute character of 'good' values as related to ethics such as justice, virtue, wisdom etc. to be accommodated in human reality; while, more so generally speaking in regards to the physical world overall Plato also by his reason came up with his absolute forms of which in this sensory physical dimension can be viewed less perfect imitations – or perhaps even apparitions – of what exists in pure form in his stated metaphysical dimension).

2f. The so-called Pre-Socratic philosophers - who argued their case from various points of view - that with changes of matter which involved going from one form to another it was eventually surmised there still was with all substance an underlying factor to everything on this earth as well as the cosmos which was yet to be ascertained; it is of particular interest that a naturalistic explanation was sought that went beyond a mythological perspective of the world around them. Thus, the advent of various speculative theories with, for instance, to provide a smattering of examples there is (1) Thales of Miletus presuming water to be the major element; (2) while Heraclitus presumed it was fire; (3) with Anaximenes stating it was air and (4) with Leucippus as well as Democritus acknowledging that it could be atoms. (As an aside one perhaps could coyly suggest that matter still very much remains a mystery in this modern age with an overall unifying theory still being sought after to bring together the bewildering quantum reality that exists on a micro level with the comparatively more uniform semblance of reality which on a cosmic level especially revolves around the space-time continuum of Einstein's general theory of relativity of which it should be said also incorporates gravity. Esoterically it is even theorized that matter is an illusion anyway with all things essentially being energy. Ironically despite so much scientific advancement over the centuries and having along the way seriously queried and dispensed with mechanical models of the universe our comprehension of the real now seems to be heading back to a philosophical level in order to comprehend

a universe that apparently has its fixed laws but is also a mobile enough entity that also has with it an 'elasticity' that for us keeps its underlying formation a mystery; as if while we keep going on our forays into its multi-dimensional fabric it seems to paradoxically be the case as we penetrate further into it, to us it all seems evermore impenetrable ...).

2g. As a 'curio aside' Democritus was known as the 'laughing philosopher' somewhat sympathetically bemused by humanity's absurdities with its narrow focus on passing earthly things which can in the eternal wonderous schema of the universe in mind can be a foolishly vain preoccupation.



'Fading Justice'. B&W. 6" X 4". aquatint, drypoint, copperplate. In reference to the Stolen Generations in Australia (as well as other racial discriminatory practices which also includes the high percentage per capita level of Aboriginal Deaths in custody).

XI

What is of interest in the novella is how the fallen false messiah who is involved in the first two-thirds of the novella is thematically countenanced in the last third of the novella with its European setting with the mention of Jesus Christ by the old man who humanely portrays him as a true messiah to a disbelieving Stephen whose had enough of so called saviours – whether they be political or spiritual; especially now when it is certain that he will soon no longer exist with his mortal body to be sent to the gas chamber thus also belligerently believing there was no hope for his soul. (Although possibly his last dying words seem to reflect perhaps if even only in a forlornly defiant rhetorical way a literally last gasp change of mind).

In any case whether Jesus Christ was both divine and mortal can remain a debatable point yet what may be agreed on as being authentic is his inclusive attitude to the new kingdom whereby anyone willing to be spiritually renewed - i.e. to forgo 'the old' to become a 'new creature' - could be accepted. The collective implication to potentially be a breakdown of such social barriers as class, race, gender and many other distinctive human indices of (then and recent) human history (e.g. sexuality, indigenious, religion, ideology) that in stratified societies have been meritocratically utilized - and often with preferential religious or ideological rhetoric - to specifically rank who would be the 'chosen ones' to have elite social, economic and political advantages with middle and lower classes then below them until finally getting down to supremely marginalized outcasts imperiously deemed as 'undeserving' of any societal empathy and who can even be viciously scapegoated as the 'cause' of any social calamity.

XII

To have Christ radically state the first shall be last and the last shall be first. To borrow two terms from Walter Brueggemann in his *The Prophetic Imagination* it was the desire of Jesus Christ to introduce an 'alternative consciousness' which can be viewed as a new politics imbued - as Walter Brueggemann implies - with God's true freedom, compassion and justice to supersede a 'royal consciousness' that goes back to the oppressive time of Pharaoh which Moses wanted to overturn; yet only to eventually have a monarchic Israel to prolong it and which the prophets would rail against up to and including the time of Jesus Christ and who the old man in the novella also prophetically rails against and to hope that Stephen may take into account the 'alternative consciousness' that the person/a of Jesus Christ actually represents.¹

1. No matter whether the Saviour be divine or human when actually in shifting from a one-dimensional viewpoint to a multidimensional one it can be argued he was simultaneously both divine and human at the same time and even more so when resurrected with a transformative new body which seemed immaterial while miraculously also ably existing within this material dimension. To take into account Ancient Greek sensibilities: for Christ to also be sacrificially opposite to the premier Ancient Greek demi-god hero Achilles whose legendary *kudos* revolves around him being a 'warrior-king' who prefers to only 'offer' eternal death to his enemies rather than to allow for any consequent liberating provision of forgiveness which can lead the way to eternal life. (Although it maybe said the Christ of judgement as so majestically depicted by Michelangelo in his *Last Judgement* has a new Christ of the *Revelation* who with powerful raised hand harks not to the crucifixion but of someone divinely akin to a classic warrior-king of ancient mythology; of whom it is even stated [Revelation 1:16] has a two-edge sword coming from his mouth such now is the power of the authority behind his words. If anything, like Achilles, Christ too died young and who in his relatively short earthly life would also live a spectacular impression on the human psyche although not with merciless sword like Achilles but rather with a sharp-edge wisdom).

XIII

An embryonic church as a still developing entity had an approach to leadership which was pluralistic rather than solely singular with only still living apostles having any premier authoritative prominence. Thus, a forming church of believers would have several elders 'brotherly'¹ sharing 'according to one's gifts' to be teachers, leaders, etcetera and accompanied by various supportive helpers with only Christ - after the ascension - as the only overarching spiritual authority to now also be envisaged as One of the Three of the holy mystery that was the triune God with Father, Son as well as the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. In these early days which of great theological significance also involved the message of Christ being brought also to non-Jews there was also a hopeful expectation that in the very near future there would be the victorious return of Christ - mainly portrayed in Revelations not as his crucified self but more so as a *mythos* warrior which would have especially encouraged those Christians who were presently facing persecution - to bring Heaven to earth. Belief in such an imminent apocalypse would have further accentuated a psychological fluidity that focused not on establishing any long term or normative religious presence amid the temporal reality of this soon-to-pass-away fallen world but rather to faithfully prepare for an eternalized 'otherworldliness' suffused with the holy presence of God (with its initial millennial era).

However, as time went by and no Second Coming to divinely redeem the earth looked immediately forthcoming any spiritual ferocity in an imminent 'end times' would dissipate to give way to a metaphysically recalibrated accommodation with this still ongoing spiritually corrosive material world. A more static organisational approach to church order would therefore further develop to have well-defined tiers of authority which exclusively culminated with ranked priestly headships which apparently on Roman territory would gravitate to having leading bishops as the heads of established urban centres thus paradoxically to have the social topography of this world to enable an emerging hierarchy while also duly proclaiming to be not of this world.

Yet it should be said that Christian communities were apparently having a positive effect on the lower echelons of any such imperial social topography by doing what could be done to charitably alleviate poverty and other social ills; also positively speaking with ever growing communities there was with increasing numbers an intermingling of believers from various economic, national and social backgrounds; yet, any corresponding administrative hierarchical streamlining may be viewed as a shift away from an earlier organic communal approach to various church roles and which would become obligatory when this relatively new yet steadfast 'foreign cult' - at times persecuted as well as marginalised - moved from the peripheral to the centre of the empire when after at first being initially legally enabled it would a little later on actually become the sole state religion; one may say ironically due to the church's foundation traits which at first seemed so objectionable and a distinct threat to state polytheistic paganism and state citizen allegiance: (i) its universality: for *all* were welcome to join it and (ii) its monotheism: to only believe in one uniform all powerful omnipotent everlasting divinity - two now appealing socially cohesive and universally loyal aspects of a religious faith with its one god for all; just as all should have one complementary political faith in imperial rulers who now wanted to claim allegiance to that which before they wanted completely extinguishing but which they now wanted to overwhelmingly thrive over such an expansive heterogeneous empire - that covered so many different territories with its competitive multiplicity of cultural, social, political, civic and religious features - so as to establish full secular control by way of such a new theocratic veneer which would hopefully provide an overall homogenous unity at a foreboding time when internal civil strife was as much a serious political and military threat to the empire's ongoing existence as any pressing external aggressor.

While Christianity would become dominant throughout the Roman Empire there would in 410 A.D. be the Sack of the Rome by the Visigoths which led to the embittering accusation at the time that Rome had paid dearly for abandoning the old gods for one new divinity who had failed to protect the so called 'eternal city'.² St. Augustine (354 AD-430 AD) would write his *City of God* to defend the Christian faith as still being superior over all other beliefs which despite any earthly tribulation would in eternal terms bring salvation; one may argue it is the failure of a human society without virtue rather than because of any divine abandonment that causes any supposed great city to fall thus to encompass virtue and now in the Christian sense can it become spiritually possible to eternally restore what was spiritually fraught. One's Christian faith should be in a divine city that is timeless and incorruptible rather than in an earthly one which no matter how glorious it may be seen in human terms but by being in time it can never be everlasting just as one's body cannot also last yet whose soul can be immortal and can be redeemed by divine grace to become a holy citizen.

In regards to Augustine the *City of God* is a lengthy book with many points³ and amid its wide range of topics Platonism is discussed. From what one tentatively understands it is recognised that Platonism is at fault to imply that the human soul through its own means can find immortal sanctuary with the Eternal Good as unity with what is holy can only be truly achieved through divine means i.e. by the singular spiritual way of the Christian God's grace as achieved through Christ - but otherwise Platonism with its emphasis on the metaphysical is seen as having some worthwhile similarities with Christian theology; take for instance the unchanging perfect absolute eternal Forms which seem to intimate the same universal, all-encompassing qualities of the biblical deity. Platonic philosophy would have a significant influence on Christian thought as take for instance the Platonic immortal soul entrapped in a mortal body which corresponds with how a Christian immaterial soul is also to be liberated at the point of physical death of material flesh which always withers to die.⁴

It would be that Augustine with a theological emphasis on the metaphysical viewed the millennium as a spiritual process that was now occurring in this world with believers through the Holy Spirit on this earth ably aligning with Christ in heaven while also intricately involved in presently extending God's presence in a world that at least for now was still sinfully marred by Satan.⁵ Nevertheless, it was faithfully the Christian hope that in accordance to God's (mysterious) Will that the holy 'City of God' would eternally triumph over its spiritually failing opposite the unholy 'City of Man' which for now temporarily existed at the same time and intermingled in the same morally fraught space

that is this still fallen earth and thus no matter Platonism could be seen as being philosophically closer to the Christian ideal it still fell spiritually short of the glory of God.⁶

Thus to reiterate human systems are not to be trusted to bring human salvation so while Plato's republic ideally aspires to be just and wise and in strident universal harmony with a metaphysical Eternal Good it was still a human apparition of the City of Man even though there would be an appreciation of the divine in the laws - as generally it was appreciated by the Ancient Greeks that what was known as 'natural law' was first universally laid down by the gods and which had to be morally respected by humanity. Yet, these mythological divine beings from the Christian point of view like all other stated divinities from other religions are to be seen as false gods compared to the true God of the biblical old and new testaments; who also as an all-encompassing monotheistic one called for a full and singular committed allegiance from every follower.⁷

In regards to human systems it seems the acceptance of Christianity by a human empire as grand as the Roman one was seen as fortuitous for it signalled a spiritual triumph over a human power that had wanted to suppress the Word and yet the Word could now supersede over human hubris and to for the Word to also have a ready audience within such a vast swathe of the known world. Yet, with such imperial acceptance came an imperial uniformity as the Roman imperial system wanted to utilize the Word to unite the empire - not dispel it - for from the Roman point of view it was not a matter of whether the Word had come into the world to save the souls of all humankind but rather to exclusively be in the service of saving the grand soul of Rome in order for the empire to remain grandiose. The emperors may have nominally forgone their previous pagan right to be seen as directly divine but immortal glory was still sought with the empire itself to remain immortal and this new religion was to aid in guaranteeing such an eternal outcome for this earthly kingdom in which all may pass away except the 'eternal city' and its dominions and with even perhaps also holding onto the hope of returning Rome to the earlier glorious period of *Pax Romana*. In any case, the Romans feared their empire which already divided in two was in decline and this had to be at least stymied if not reversed. Although the church would exist without hindrance the state was to remain pre-eminent and yet it would be the church that would still prevail when the state did not fully revive with destructive instances such as the sack of Rome in 410 A.D. being symptomatic of what would historically turn out to be an ongoing gradual decline.⁸

The church itself would survive - as it still does - beyond the empire which had first persecuted it and secondly tolerated it. Nevertheless, one may still like to ascertain that what at first sight appears to be a spiritual victory over secular power it could be argued that on deeper analysis it could be spiritually recalibrated as a somewhat statecraft victory over the church; with the state diplomatically accomplishing from within its imperial space - with accommodating imperial edicts - to overcome an ever growing 'sect' which could not be forcefully achieved by the sword; for by having been officially accepted by the state and then later made the state religion the church 'victorious' was now inevitably collaboratively entwined with its official oppressors now protectors. It could be presumed that although the church was pursuing a vastly different agenda from that of this earthly empire there would be an accompanying self-interest to appease its former persecutor so as to impeccably secure its apparently attained moral high ground over a vast still secular lowland which still needed to be 'spiritually seeded' by God's fertile eternal providence. (The Lord's pastoral 'good shepherds' to become urban 'good tillers'). Thus, a unifying codification of church orthodoxy that uniformly aligned with the ingrained imperial worldview of the first Christian emperors would inevitably give this initial Judaic sect an overlaying Romanesque character which involved an unwavering habitual belief in stable order by way of a strong social hierarchy that theologically really had nothing in common with Christ's original egalitarian spiritual schema which he had progressively encouraged when briefly on this earth.

Thus, the alternative consciousness that Jesus wanted to assert as heir to Moses and the prophets would historically not stay the course when a diversely heterogenous early church once persecuted and then accepted by the state became unwittingly homogenously similarly aligned with the state's royal consciousness so as to uniformly carry out its unifying role within a discordant empire which was especially the case in the western half. Yet for the purpose of spreading the gospel the church

being grateful that it could now formally establish itself within such a large empire with unhindered access perhaps saw any fusion of its divine missionary self with an earthly imperial state not so much as an unspiritual compromise but as a spiritual accomplishment. After all, this uniquely favourable new political and social situation could perhaps be compared on an individual level whereby although a Christian soul is within a worldly body it can still stay faithful to God rather than be a slave to the desires of the body which can then even be spiritually re-oriented to become a temple to the Lord; so the Church invited to be within the body of empire can also be a transformative antidote rather than as previously imperiously perceived as a threatening virus could and as well be a faithful universal logos and not fall prey to the bodily appetites of empire but rather have this mortal empire serve the greater goals of a spiritual empire which in immortal scale surpasses all human comprehension. Human collusion has its many bewildering rationalisations yet any wilful gratification to requite human fulfillment may ultimately involve surrender of one's self. A suffering church which had recently gone through a great purge was as if by some divine miracle given the unforeseen opportunity to be tolerated by its earthly imperial persecutor as if to truly be a providential blessing rather than truly to be a worldly temptation. Why endure further pain from doing what was one's will while harshly there was no respect of you when there could now be the satisfaction of *furthering* one's will and with *authority*...?

Rightly or wrongly one cannot help but think there is so much of Old Testament lore in what historically happened towards the start of the third century when a fatefully sympathetic emperor had an insignia vision as if it came from 'Yahweh'; followed up by a battle victory as if brought about by Yahweh so as to then 'humbly' dedicate one's self as well as one's empire to the 'service' of Yahweh so that one will have ongoing imperial success which all befits the royal consciousness that ultimately exults in ascendancy over sacrifice - the latter moral quality which is truly only with the alternative consciousness of Moses and Christ.

The supposed priestly representatives of the alternative consciousness (of whom one should not discount there were sincere adherents) to mostly historically fall back into line with a monarchical human approach to supreme authority as critiqued in the old testament which the new kingdom aspired to overcome.

While particular new testament verses dealing with the apostles would be highlighted to give theological credence to a hierarchical approach it would also be that Platonism along with a later philosophic reiteration of it i.e. Neo-Platonism would offer a philosophical underpinning to such a pyramidal orthodox church order which especially with the fall of the western Roman Empire would secularly gain from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages not only political power but generally speaking⁹ would religiously have a highly stratified priestly caste to be as if similarly akin to Plato's ruling philosopher guardians 'shepherding' over a mainly theologically illiterate Christian community which would have to trust, obey and seek out those theocratically ruling over them to metaphysically intercede on its behalf in order to be 'thankfully' granted any blessing or forgiveness from a now spiritually distanced Christ who when he was directly on this earth had been compassionately willing to have people no matter their social background directly approach him in order to directly ask so as to directly receive.

1. Nevertheless it should be pointed out that while in this initial mainly non-hierarchical approach to church organisation in which one can find welcome instances in the new testament of women in influential roles; disappointingly an ingrained patriarchy would over time uniformly come to the fore which one can only intimate how such arbitrary gender discrimination actually went against Christ's original inclusive vision which did include full gender equality. (Although the twelve disciples were males one does see merit in the cultural-orientated argument that Christ's singular gender selection was not due to any overt patriarchal prejudice but diplomatically to do with having twelve men mirror the twelve sons of Jacob who all representative of the tribes of Israel of whom Christ's Jewish audience would have understood these particular twelve male disciples to be. It may also be pointed out that with these twelve many of them had no special social status e.g. some being fishermen which one may ascertain as being a thematic representation of having the traditional monarchical kingdom being hopefully replaced by a radical egalitarian new one and in which - as can be seen by Christ's many deeply respectful interactions with

women would have the daughters of Israel and ultimately as well women from the non-Jewish world to have equal social status. After all, outside this deeply theologically significant symbolic inner circle of twelve which simultaneously both linked and set apart the old and the new and which culturally also served to theocratically give to Jesus the necessary legitimate social status to significantly be viewed as a rabbi there were women followers of Jesus who he saw as of upmost importance to his ministry; notably there is Mary Magdalene who was even one of two women to first witness the resurrection; while Luke 8:2-3 specifically points out there were even women willing to support him which one may presume would have occurred due to his overall non-patriarchal outlook).

2. Notably, the chief of the Visigoths Alaric who had previously been a leader of the Goths in the Roman army was also a Christian. Thus, the churches in Rome were mostly left alone and as Augustine points out both Roman pagan and Roman Christian could universally find sanctuary in the churches or basilicas as their mutual enemy plundered outside these fortuitously protective divine spaces for three days. Although the ransacking and often for riches was devastating it has been seen as relatively measured for while there were killings, rapes, tortures, ransom kidnappings and captives enslaved there was at least no outright mass slaughter and although imperially great public buildings were furiously targeted by the rampaging Visigoths the overall destruction of the city could have been much worse with perhaps the psychological damage that befell its many surviving citizens being a greater tragic legacy.

3. Including the apt observation by St. Augustine that kingdoms without justice are criminal gangs on a large scale.

4. Even a damned soul lives eternally metaphysically yet will suffer being devoid of God's love which of course is enjoyed by the soul deemed holy. As for the mortal body no matter how resplendent it may appear in the glory days of youth it will inevitably decay and the same maybe said about human empires which will also inevitably decay while a soul can be immortal it is also the case that God's empire can remain ageless and if anything eternally become ever more glorious rather than have any hint of a decline.

It should also be mentioned, if only in passing, that Aristotle would also influence Christian thinking being especially noted by Thomas Aquinas 1225 AD-1274 AD who was an exponent of natural theology.

5. It is thought that God knows who on earth is predestined to enter the heavenly kingdom as God already has foreknowledge as to what every free will human decision will be.

6. Yes, in a spiritual sense the holy and unholy intermingle on this earth still yet to be eschatologically separated; yet also for heaven to ultimately have sovereign reign over a new reality which a believer may faithfully envisage to be pure and thus sinless. (One may like to infer that the time-space reality of this physical mortal realm will be overcome by the timeless-spaceless reality of a metaphysical divine one; in other words what is envisaged as 'past-present-future' from a human point of view is not so from a divine one which has no dimensional limit in any worldly sense and to speculate may even be mystically beyond the absolute/logical mathematical precepts/proofs which the Pythagoreans and Platonists apparently take a strong interest in. As for Augustine would see the 'one thousand years' time period of the millennium as a symbolic 'perfect number' with any return of Christ and accompanying final judgement to be a decisive apocalyptic moment that cannot actually be ascertained from an earthly perspective).

7. Interestingly enough such an absolutist divine uniqueness would correspond with the Neo-Platonist Plotinus who Augustine would also appreciate who stated there was ultimately a transcendent One - like the Sun that shines over all things - that although as one understands was not God *per se* as God would become understood in the Christian sense i.e. with the One being an impersonal philosophical precursor to such a universally creative powerful divine *person* who not only embraces the just or liberating quality that is 'good' but also as equally the gracious or salvation quality that is 'love'. The One took into account all reality and which one assumes inclusive of both the metaphysical realm i.e. the forms as well as the physical realm i.e. the cosmos and the earth; am ancient total reality in which the immortal human soul would fatefully manoeuvre.

8. Particularly in the western Latin half of the empire where it would be much more sudden while the eastern Byzantine half would actually endure for a thousand more years.

9. It should be noted that there would arise from within the Catholic Church various religious orders which ventured to be more akin to Christ's egalitarian vision. While eventually there would also be the Protestant departure from the Catholic Church; although it had not been originally intended to break away from Rome but rather to prompt a reformation of what was meant to be a holy institution which had been unfavourably deemed to have become far too spiritually corrupt.

A simplified visual summary of the egalitarian versus social hierarchy argument in relation to what is presented in the novella:

Christ _____ vs ▲ Platonism (State/Church)

egalitarian vs hierarchal

alternative consciousness vs royal consciousness

ALCIABIDIES

As a follow on if *realpolitik* could be personified as one individual it could be argued that Alcibiades (450 BC – 404 BC) would be a strong historical candidate for such a personification.

I

There was the youthful statesman and military leader Alcibiades – handsome, wealthy, womaniser, charismatic, brilliant – yet an orator and general who was extraordinarily self-serving.¹ An Athenian who would for instance betray Athens for Sparta; betray Sparta as well as Athens for Persia yet would also betray Persia for Athens and with him to finally be murdered in Asia Minor at the behest of the Spartans.

1. Born into a family of the nobility and while still young his father would die in a battle during the so called First Peloponnesian War to have Pericles as the guardian of this apparently ill disciplined, tempestuous boy.

II

In an early battle an injured Alcibiades would be saved by Socrates who is said to have fought bravely as a helot. (Which would bely to his original financial status of being able to afford his own armour and perhaps even a servant). Alcibiades like many other aristocratic youth was a ‘pupil’ of Socrates (Socrates would claim he was no teacher and that he had no pupils; for him it was more the case of someone freely coming to hear what he had to say although apparently with Alcibiades the philosopher did hope to have a good influence on his wild character) and despite his admiration for Socrates (apparently it was mutual) it is apparent that a narcissistic Alcibiades would eventually not take serious heed of any Socratic suggestion to live a life of virtue.

III

It is said the ill-fated Athenian expedition to Sicily was an idea by Alcibiades brought on by personal hubris; which brings up a core criticism of Alcibiades that despite his superior military leadership which suited Athens his arrogant egotism also had the potential to become a serious threat to Athenian democracy. After all, the Sicilian misadventure would eventually provide political kudos for those who favoured oligarchy over democracy. It was the comic playwright Aristophanes who inferred that mistrustful Athenians both loved and hated Alcibiades, and yet could not do without him; of whom it has been said that due to his intrigue and double dealing with a Spartan envoy to Athens would even sabotage the Peace of Nicias so as to re-ignite the Peloponnesian War as if emblematically for his own benefit.

IV

As for Sicily Alcibiades would never lead this over-reach of Athenian military adventurism as his enemies conspired to blame him for impiety due to a religious scandal that occurred in the lead up to the Sicilian venture which involved the damaging of Hermes statues. (The sailors in particular saw this as an ill omen of the expedition). Alcibiades was also accused of exposing secret details of the Eleusinian mysteries to which Alcibiades demanded an immediate trial to clear his name but it would turn out he would be put on trial in absentia while on the Sicilian campaign. Alcibiades was recalled to Athens but having been found guilty of impiety and facing execution he instead in his ship defected to the Spartans while initially heading back to Athens.

V

Alcibiades who was first suspiciously seen as a revengeful ‘hunted man’ would prove to be a valuable military advisor for Sparta; due to his oratory he convinced the Spartans to aid the

Syracusans and as well he had the Spartans build a permanent fort at Decelea village in eyesight of Athens which forced the Athenians behind their Long Walls; to rely solely on the port for their supplies now that, for instance, they could not freely go out to grow their own crops or access silver mines thus helping to undermine the economic capability of Athens to stay in the war. (Notably, as the economic burden increased there was growing disquiet amongst the aristocracy being the social class that was bearing evermore the cost of the war which would further open up the possibility of an oligarchy taking over from the democracy).

VI

This man who it is said by his intrigue and double dealing with a Spartan envoy to Athens would sabotage the Peace of Nicias to be historically accused of re-igniting the war for his own benefit. Yet Alcibiades would never lead this over-reach of Athenian military adventurism as his enemies conspired to blame him for impiety due to a religious scandal that occurred in the lead up to the Sicilian venture which involved the damaging of Hermes statues. (The sailors in particular saw this as an ill omen of the expedition). Alcibiades was also accused of exposing secret details of the Eleusinian mysteries to which Alcibiades demanded an immediate trial to clear his name but it would turn out he would be put on trial in absentia while on the Sicilian campaign. Alcibiades was recalled to Athens but having been found guilty of impiety and facing execution he instead defected to the Spartans along the way. Alcibiades who was first suspiciously seen as a revengeful 'hunted man' would prove to be a valuable military advisor for Sparta; due to his oratory he convinced the Spartans to aid the Syracusans and as well he had the Spartans build a permanent fort at a village in eyesight of Athens which forced the Athenians behind their Long Walls; to rely solely on the port for their supplies now that, for instance, they could not freely go out to grow their own crops or access silver mines thus helping to undermine the economic capability of Athens to stay in the war.

VII

Within the Delian League which although nominally an alliance had Athens firmly as an overbearing leader of it there would, for instance in the wake of the Sicilian quagmire, be Greek cities in Asia Minor such as Chios - that in opportunistically seeking independence - would revolt against Athens as happened in 412 BC; Alcibiades apparently encouraged Chios to do so and the Spartans who willing to support to this Ionian insurrection against the Athenian empire - that would spread to Miletus the largest city - were also willing to seek out the help of the Athenian Alcibiades as Sparta was still relatively inexperienced in naval matters.

VIII

Pragmatically, there would be support from a Persian governor Tissaphernes in southern Asia Minor in Lydia and Ionia who following Persian policy had helped to subsidise the Spartan fleet reinforcing this rebellion in Asia Minor.

As it is with this Ionian revolt Athens would gain the upper hand to quell it with Rhodes to be in Spartan hands.

However, as for Alcibiades he dangerously fell out of favour with Sparta and partly due to rumours that he had seduced the Spartan king's wife and for her to have even borne a son of whom it was suspected that Alcibiades was the father.

VIII

Alcibiades now found sanctuary in the Persian court of Tissaphernes. It is generally proposed that Alcibiades advised Tissaphernes on how it would be in Persia's best interests to allow Sparta and Athens to wear each other down rather than for Persia to count on supporting a swift Spartan victory; after all in regards to this 'civil war' between the Hellenes it would be much easier for Persia to

subdue a victor who was war weary rather than face a strong victorious Sparta that would not only be much harder to militarily defeat but may also become a powerful rival that could threaten Persia. It could also be proposed that Alcibiades was playing the Persian governor to serve his own interests which was to hopefully regain the favour of the Athenians so he could make a triumphant return to Athens (while also to spite the Spartans who were now hostile towards him and it would be no good for Alcibiades to them be victors of the war).

X

As for Tissaphernes his support for the Spartans would become lukewarm as for instance his expenditures for the Spartan fleet would be infrequent which would have the Spartans simply maintaining their fleet; while they also held onto the promise made to them by Tissaphernes that he would send a Phoenician fleet to help them dispense of the Athenian navy. A naval manoeuvre which was never to eventuate as if to suggest Tissaphernes was not fully committed in proceeding with it. As it is only the Persian king had the authority to initiate such a valuable naval call-out although Tissaphernes would have been given the leeway by Darius II to utilize these Phoenician ships. After all, the primary aim of Tissaphernes to keep an equivalent military balance between Sparta and Athens so that both sides would weaken was a variant policy course not appreciated by Darius II. The Persian king favoured Sparta finishing off Athens which, ironically, was a royal desire accentuated by the first actions taken by Tissaphernes upon his arrival to Asia Minor. Tissaphernes had been sent to put down a rebellion by the then Persian governor so Tissaphernes would replace and once doing so would form an alliance with Sparta against Athens so as to have Spartan aid to defeat the governor's son who had carried on the rebellion with Athenian support.

XI

Cyrus the Younger the younger son of Darius II who took over from Tissaphernes would properly finance the Spartan fleet which under the effective leadership of the Spartan admiral Lysander would eventually become powerful enough to decisively defeat Athens on the sea; thus making Athens so vulnerable on land as to have Sparta win the Peloponnesian War.

XIII

The Spartan victory suited an ambitious Cyrus the Younger who while accomplishing what Darius II had wanted could rely on Spartan support to go against what his father wanted with his personal quest to overthrow his elder brother Artaxerxes II who became the new king after the death of Darius II in 404 BC. The Battle of Cunaxa in 401 BC would result in which Cyrus the Younger would not just lose the battle but also his life. Notably Tissaphernes was a commander in the opposing Persian army while in the aftermath of this battle what is best recollected is the incredible journey of the Ten Thousand Greeks - who had fought for Cyrus the Younger - who under the command of Xenophon would venture their way deep out of hostile territory to reach the Black Sea.

XIII

Alcibiades had no faith that the Athenian democracy would welcome him back and so remarkably for his own benefit he knew how to offer a receptive audience what it wanted even if he could not deliver and so he passed on to those sympathetic to oligarchy at the Athenian fleet stationed at Samos that if the democracy in Athens was overthrown and an oligarchy took its place that due to his supposed strong influence over Tissaphernes - there would be the possibility of advantageous Persian support for Athens. (There was also the thought that Persia would also perhaps think it better to deal with an Athenian single-minded governance oligarchy with a 'many-minded democracy' while working through Alcibiades who supposedly had a close relationship with Tissaphernes any ongoing Athenian mistrust towards such a historical enemy could also be allayed).

An Athenian general Phrynichus who although was supportive of oligarchy was nevertheless suspicious of Alcibiades who knew only too well that Alcibiades always placed his own interests above anyone else's so rightly thought the claim by Alcibiades that Tissaphernes could be swayed to wholly support Athens was a dubious one; thus to surmise that a self-absorbed Alcibiades could only have a potentially destabilizing effect that would only be harmful. (Phrynichus wanted an oligarchy but certainly not one that gave Alcibiades a chance to be at the helm). It certainly was the case that for Alcibiades the removal of the Athenian democracy that had 'wronged' him and the establishment of an oligarchy would in his mind tremendously improve his chances of a successful return to Athens which would also include all charges and accusations against him including behaving traitorously against Athens on behalf of the Spartans would be extinguished. Phrynichus's apprehensive estimation of Alcibiades was rebuffed as Alcibiades optimistic assertion that there would be Persian backing for Athens was politically providing a plausible rationale to bring on oligarchical change at a turbulent time for Athens when there had been the major military setback of the failed of the Sicilian expedition with its ensuing financial crisis and so occurred in Athens the brief rule of the Four Hundred. Unfortunately, for Alcibiades when the oligarchical elements in Athens who had initiated the rule of the Four Hundred (which due to internal failings would then briefly become the broader rule of the so called 5,000 before full democracy was finally restored) saw that the hope of Persian support for Athens would not be realised they became inclined to simply sideline Alcibiades seeing that for them he did not have any useful influence over Tissaphernes (which also would have suited Phrynichus¹ and his ilk).

1a. As for Phrynichus who would be involved in the oligarchical coup his animosity towards Alcibiades was such that disappointed his misgivings in regards to Alcibiades were dismissed he sent a letter to Astyochus a Spartan naval commander for Asia Minor of what Alcibiades who really could not be trusted by anyone was up to who while nominally was counselling the Persian satrap who formerly was in an alliance with Spartans was also in correspondence with the Athenians on Samos in order to suit his own interests which would be in deference to the interests of the Persian-Spartan alliance. Astyochus chose to show the letter to Alcibiades in the presence of Tissaphernes and this is what Phrynichus may have wanted even though he would now stand accused of betraying his fellow Athenian – an Athenian though who Phrynichus thought would do good only for himself and not Athens – for ultimately is such a presumption is correct what Phrynichus wanted was for Alcibiades to be discredited in the Persian court. As for Alcibiades he was furious and to those he was in touch with in Samos he called for the execution of Phrynichus. Phrynichus wrote a second letter to Astyochus in reference to the Athenian defences at Samos as if to tempt the Spartans to attack yet this letter too was shown to Alcibiades who wrote to Samos to highlight what seemed to be a second act of betrayal; Phrynichus was to find out about this accusation of treason who now forewarned the Athenians of a possible Spartan attack and so when the accusatory letter from Alcibiades arrived it was not believed and he instead was suspected of working for the enemy which is what Phrynichus may have hoped for.

1b. To speculate: in regards to the first letter it makes sense that Phrynichus wanted to discredit a political rival such as Alcibiades who was known to self-serving but as for the second letter it seems peculiar that it could have been written outright as an act of treachery against the Athenian fleet but rather as to serve the purpose that eventually resulted which was to attempt to show to his fellow Athenians that Alcibiades was spuriously capable to defame anyone who he saw as a threat or rival. It is said that Astoyochus betrayed Phrynichus by presenting both letters to Alcibiades but it may have actually been what Phrynichus wanted or at least in regards to the first letter to pass on to Tissaphernes that Alcibiades was double dealing. As for the second letter and to further speculate it may have been the case that Phrynichus did want to draw in the Spartans to do battle to distract away from any Alcibiades inspired oligarchical coup as although Phrynichus wanted a change of government he would have wanted it to occur on his terms and certainly not to benefit Alcibiades. As for Astoyochus the Spartan general he is due to Thucydides historically portrayed (perhaps even in stereotypical terms) as militarily ineffectual despite some success, a poor paymaster which even caused protests; apparently hesitant to fight the Athenians and whose loyalty is even questioned accused of being in the pay of Tissaphernes; yet blame for military inaction and troublesome issues over finances could also be directed at Tissaphernes who one may argue was thwarting Sparta from

reaching its full naval potential; (as it is it does seem the Spartans were also not pleased with Tissaphernes due to the intermittent financing and with the promise of the Phoenician ships seeming more so to be a mirage while also taking into his court Alcibiades who was not to be trusted and who may have been swaying Tissaphernes to sympathise more so with Athens). An article *Astyochus, Sparta's Incompetent Navarch?* Caroline Falkner. Phoenix. Vol 53. No. 3/4 (Autumn-Winter.1999) – that can be found on JSTOR - if one has discerned it correctly tends to argue that Astyochus could be viewed more so as a scapegoat rather than as the singular cause of Sparta's then difficulties in Ionia. However, what is of immediate interest is his activist intermediary role in the hostile situation between Phrynichus and Alcibiades as Phrynichus would have assumed that Astyochus was a competent enough officer to do what was right for Sparta so on this assumption Astyochus behaved as expected which was to do what he could to discredit Alcibiades in front of the Persian court which would cleverly nullify his apparent influence on Tissaphernes which would be a satisfactory result for Sparta in lieu of there being no assassination of Alcibiades (thus far from being manipulated Astyochus was opportunistically using the letter to achieve a character assassination of Alcibiades if not a physical one); while one may also argue that for Phrynichus if it became clear that Alcibiades did not have a strong effect on the decision making of the Persian satrap there could also perhaps be an end of what he solely saw as the corrosive influence this wholly self-centred individual was having on his misguided fellow Athenians.

1c. What is interesting and what does not see as referred to in any reading is how Tissaphernes did not readily sanction Alcibiades in any way when it became clear that he was in secret communiques with the Athenian fleet on Samos. One cannot help but think that as much as Alcibiades thought he was playing Tissaphernes it was perhaps also the case of the other way around and one may also assume that an enigmatic Tissaphernes who upheld an ambiguous approach in his policy dealings with the Hellenes (after all one is of the belief that playing off the Athenians and Spartans was already on Tissaphernes's mind with Alcibiades's mirroring point of view simply energetically affirming this policy) vividly aware of the unreliable reputation of his tremendously egoistic yet charming Athenian guest it would have not come as any real surprise that he was involved in being duplicitous behind the satrap's back. All one can say is that Tissaphernes was never to be persuaded to fully align with Athens so Alcibiades's ill dealings would have no real effect on Persian policy. Thus Alcibiades was sidelined by the oligarchy yet in another unpredictable turn of fate for Alcibiades he would gain support from an unlikely quarter: those democrats on Samos who victoriously resisted an oligarchical takeover of the Athenian fleet.

XVI

To reiterate it was unfortunate for Alcibiades that the oligarchy of the Four Hundred noted that the hope of a strategic shifting Persian alliance was dashed that it then became so angrily inclined as to not recall Alcibiades. However, all was not lost for Alcibiades as, ironically, this supposed anti-democrat would find favour in Samos where there was the Athenian fleet and whose sailors and troops had defiantly chosen to stay loyal to the democracy.

XVII

While Persia not outright backing Athens would certainly not to be Alcibiades's benefit it would be to his benefit that for now a still even-handed Persia would also not wholly back Sparta as well for the previously promised Phoenician ships would still not be employed to embolden the Spartan cause. Thus among those who resisted the oligarchy's push in Samos was the newly appointed general Thrasybulus who argued for his compatriots on Samos to still welcome Alcibiades of whom it was felt may still be able to dissuade Persian support away from Sparta to Athens. It was a welcome reprieve for Alcibiades that there were Athenians who still had faith in him whether it before in regards to his advocacy with the Persian satrap to influence Persian policy in favour of Athens or to be a driving force to help in the push to remove the oligarchy in Athens from power (which now became a possibility especially when it was presently the case that he had been frozen out of it). After a speech by Alcibiades in which he expressed his bitterness in regards to how he had to go into exile as well as emphasising how he had the ear of Tissaphernes the assembly of gathered troops voted him to be general.¹

1a. To have human illusion at play whereby Alcibiades was also to rhetorically build up the mirage of a 'victory' by him that really never was: having personally 'succeeded' in averting the destruction of the Athenian fleet at the combined hands of a Spartan-Phoenician navy which was never going to come anyway. It is even suspected that Alcibiades knew Tissaphernes was never going to send the fleet even when he claimed at Samos it was a possibility. Illusion dominating over reality seems to be a general political principle for the populist and to emphasise: it is an irony that Alcibiades who due to his overbearing personality there was the fear that one day he would become a demagogue found sanctuary with democratic-minded Athenians who in the end would facilitate his successful return to Athens.

XVIII

Alcibiades now a general for Athens would soon after have a revenge of sorts with the oligarchs as the Four Hundred not lasting much longer and once overthrown to be replaced by the Five Thousand which although still an oligarchy would open up the way to a democratic return for Athens in late 410 BC. The Five Thousand would on the instigation of Critias who would later become a leading figure of the Thirty Tyrants brought about a call back of Alcibiades to Athens and who would eventually do so and to a now restored democracy in 407 BC after several successful naval engagements.¹ Alcibiades this 'Athenian prodigal son' was enthusiastically welcomed as a hero with all blasphemy charges dispelled; his properties would be given back to him and remarkably he was also to now be the supreme commander of the land and naval forces of Athens; it is also noted that he would with typical bravado lead the procession of the Eleusinian festival by way of the road that went near the very Spartan fort that he had instructed the Spartans to build in the vicinity of Athens.

1. Notably one occasion after an Athenian naval victory in the Hellespont (at Abydos) Alcibiades actually had the opportunity to meet Tissaphernes and with gifts in hand assumed he would be welcomed by the Persian satrap and to even again influence to back Athens. Instead, Tissaphernes arrested Alcibiades which he also knew would have been welcomed by the Spartans who had been making complaints to the Persian court in regards to insipid support they had been receiving from Tissaphernes. However, after a month imprisoned in Sardis (in Asia Minor) Alcibiades was able to escape running away from his guards and mounting a horse. (Now clearly aware that he was no longer favoured by Tissaphernes with it now also clear to the world that he could also no longer claim to be able to influence this Persian satrap to support Athens Alcibiades would mischievously claim that Tissaphernes helped with his escape with the aim of having the Spartans and even the Persian king to be angry with this seemingly wavering Persian satrap. (It is interesting that Alcibiades felt he could meet up with Tissaphernes as although the Persians could nominally claim to be neutrals at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War it certainly was not a viable claim as Persia increasingly slanted its loyalty towards Sparta; Tissaphernes ambiguous behaviour in stating he was also of loyal like mind yet not so in practice perhaps made the anomaly of a person he knew from the opposite side to meet him; one also finds it curious that Phrynichus an Athenian was able to send off letters to a Spartan opponent yet one does not have sufficient knowledge of the particular social customs of the times that made such meetings and communications between hostile forces possible.

XVIII

Yet, unsurprisingly Alcibiades still had his enemies and when there was a naval defeat in 406 due to him entrusting command of eighty ships to his helmsman who ignored Alcibiades specific command not to attack the Spartan fleet that was nearby Alcibiades was still blamed for the loss and after losing his command would go into exile to far north Thrace. (Alcibiades had gone off to help Thrasybulus whose fleet had besieged a northern Ionian city yet which would have to be abandoned due to the naval loss). As it was the Spartan fleet under Lysander's command was now very much in the ascendancy especially with Cyrus the Younger supporting and so with having lost the accomplished leadership of Alcibiades (as well as others) there would come the day that the whole Athenian fleet would be incompetently lost in battle which occurred at Aegospotami in the Hellespont by way of a surprise Spartan attack (405 BC) which left a now exposed Athens unable to stay in the war and so lost to Sparta.

XX

Although in exile Alcibiades again became outright a hunted man and one may like to have the point of view that it was not only the Spartans who wanted him gone but as it has been thought also the Spartans installed Thirty Tyrants who as pointed out to Lysander saw in Alcibiades someone with the political authority and military capability who although presently an outsider could still potentially gain sufficient support from a downtrodden Athenian populace to become a real threat to their vicious rule to herald a return to an independent Athenian democracy. (In such a scenario it would be for the second time this intensely self-serving prodigal son once aggrieved by the democratic polis which he thought had treated him so unjustly as to severely work against it for a time would once again unwittingly be at its service but this time to also restore from a worse tyranny). Certainly, if not directly involved in the assassination of Alcibiades – that responsibility is generally slated to the Spartans - the Thirty Tyrants (which included the leader Critias who once had stood up for Alcibiades) would certainly benefit from his death.

XXI

In any case, Alcibiades who was at least aware that the victorious Spartans would still want to do him harm ventured over into neighbouring Phrygia a region in northern Asia Minor ¹ on a journey in which he hoped at the end of it to gain the support of Artaxerxes II with his value to be as counsel in any issue with the Spartans who could now prove to be a powerful foe (and as it would turn out in the near future help to strengthen the hand of Cyrus the Younger in his self-seeking attempt to ascend to the Persian throne) and perhaps even to strike first against Sparta who was not the war weary state that it may have been if Tissaphernes's policy of mutually eroding the military strength of both Athens and Sparta had been sustained.

1. One may even say Alcibiades was following a tradition of other notable Greek exiles much like Themistocles who as a former foe still did successfully find sanctuary in the Archaemenid Empire.

XXII

The murder of Alcibiades was a secretive event with little or no public witness and so there are various versions including it being a killing committed by villagers offended by the seduction by Alcibiades of a local woman from a highly regarded family. However, one of the versions which involves political intrigue has it that Lysander received orders from Sparta to do away with Alcibiades who would call upon the services of the Persian satrap of Phrygia Pharnabazus to organize the assassination. (It is even thought that Pharnabazus who had a far more energetic alliance with the Spartans than Tissaphernes was really no friend of Alcibiades and so may have even independently initiated his murder). Thus Alcibiades who was with his mistress at the time would strut out of the house they were in and which had been set on fire maybe naked and as Plutarch mentions with his cloak wrapped around his left arm and with sword in hand only to be cut down by a flurry of arrows for it seems his 'barbarian' assassins would not dare to enter into close-quarter fighting with this complex figure who had such a great 'wildcat' public bearing on the grandiose course of the monumental Peloponnesian War to only ingloriously suffer a near lonely death at some obscure backwater 'pit-stop' of a vast foreign empire then apparently buried anonymously by his lover really with no military honours and all at the relatively young age of forty six. (His admirers may thus even see him as a 'lone wolf' Achilles).