
NOTES & ENDNOTES: GENERAL

Darkness & Light A modern political allegory by Nicholas Nicola

General

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 Drummoyne (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 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.

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

(1) At the same time the author wrote the following '1970s zeitgeist' poem which perhaps also was inspired by an immature schoolboy interest in an alternative cultural reality as envisaged by both Dada and Surrealism. As it is it is only Dada and especially the version as typified by Marcel Duchamp that deeply interests me these days. Note the many references to the atomic bomb which would not be seen as out of place during the Cold War era.

A Surrealist Poem

*Down from the sky come the four legged arms
To land in a field of yellow machine guns.
Hour by hour come the four legged arms...
To praise and worship the cerebrum of a Broken Doll
Which stands silhouetted upon a prole
Only to be hidden by the epochal second of an echoing atom bomb.*

*And so the four legged arms come and go
Still praising the cerebrum of a Broken Doll...*

*But up above the planet Venus
The moon still hides the sun
Chained by a reference to the plectrumical drum*

*And so the four legged arms come and go
Still praising the cerebrum of a Broken Doll
Come...
For in the seventh second of a disgusting pun
Emerges a hand without no existence
To simply become a pestilence...*

*And so the four legged arms come and go
Still praising the cerebrum of a Broken Doll*

*From which are cast a thousand knives
From which are cast into the rock like surface
Of some unclarifiable, unusable thing...
Alas the embodiment
Alas...*

...the four legged arms which come and go

WHIZ! BANG! POP! goes the cerebrum of a Broken Doll

*Oh... Alas...the four legged arms and a broken doll
A baby crying from her soul
What of machine guns? What of the BOMB?*

AND WHAT OF ECLIPSES UNFINISHED BY GOD?

And so...a baby crying from her soul Unfinished? POEM

*And so the four legged arms still come and go
Still praising the cerebrum of a Broken Doll.*

10. APPENDIX. The 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 there is no confusion for incorrect interpretation this little sculptural piece is definitely both a visual anti-war and anti-imperial statement. (Nevertheless, with the failure of the Nazi German invasion in mind which would lead in turn to the long lasting Russian occupation of so much of Continental Europe - which would also include a part of Austria until 1955 – it really doesn't hurt to reiterate yet again that for East Europeans who lived under Russian occupation from 1945 onwards the Second World War perhaps did not really end for them until decades later when the Soviet Union etc. collapsed over the late 1980s-early 1990s).

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. 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 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.

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 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 (Mathew 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 - being the one I am familiar with - there is John 1: 5 where upon it is inferred in such ‘plain English’ modern translations as the New International Version of how the light shines in the darkness of which the darkness cannot overcome (in the King James Version it is such that the darkness cannot comprehend the light...).

Plato’s Shadows and Authoritarianism. (Initial general introductory notes).*

1b. 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 somewhat founded on the ‘absolute forms’ which exist on a metaphysical level; being eternal and unchanging and thus by this philosophical implication form the basis of everything that exists here on earth and the cosmos. ¹

There is 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 while having never seen the three-dimensional object world 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, to reiterate it appears to us 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 which consists of the Absolute Forms; with this world merely being a distorted reflection.² Yet appearances can be deceiving and so on this point it could be implied that Plato would agree as to him the ‘world of the metaphysical’ was always superior to the ‘world of appearances’³; nevertheless, one may also like to speak of ‘ideological appearances’ that can deal with one’s presumptive mind rather than just sensory appearances which deal with one’s physical senses.

To compare ancient times with the modern era the public ‘others’ can presently be an ‘every-person audience’ for the writings of Plato can now be widely published and so what Socrates

said – at least according to Plato - can be easily accessed; while in fifth century Athens Socrates actually preferred the undemocratic ‘others’ which was the aristocrat class with oligarchical tendencies to be his main audience. Apparently, such nobles due to having a high social position was ‘evidence’ enough that they superiorly had more well refined souls and simply needed to be philosophically encouraged to self-reflect 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 rightly well away from the political temptation of tyranny. As for ‘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 of no use that they self-examine themselves other than perhaps to possibly dimly comprehend their ‘pre-destined’ role to support by their labour and other ‘menial’ skills and services those ‘fatefully’ destined to ‘properly’ govern over their ‘inadequate’ selves; thus one may choose to critically argue that it is from an elitist point of view by which particular popularized philosophical statements made by Socrates at the very least may first need to be filtered through so as to gain some contemporary insight in regards to what arguably may have possibly been their original societal value as supposedly intended by Socrates which may have had an antithetic social meaning that may purposely markedly differ from any modern day egalitarian perspective of human liberation. Politics can define ethics.

The Noble Lie. Nevertheless, what is of immediate interest is the Socratic suggestion that to ensure that this stable world does not face social rupture or outright rebellion there needs to be mesmerically inculcated into the mass psychology of the citizenry a diligent state assured sense of fate that decisively leaves them unequivocally accepting rather than ‘ungratefully’ querying their particular social position; thus, the so called ‘noble lie’ where upon it is spoken as if the citizens have the earth itself as mythically⁶ being their mother to have it reverently come to pass and apparently with divine attribution that there be a founding generation differentially imbued with various metals which will have with a few with the rare metal of gold in their perfect souls to qualify for a high status so as to therefore ‘of course’ be destined to be philosopher rulers; while in societal terms directly below them and so with a wider social base will be the defending auxiliaries whose perfecting souls will be imbued with silver and lastly with the largest social base will be the majority of citizens and ‘naturally’ enough they will have predestined within their ‘imperfect natures’ only ordinary abundant metals such as iron and brass; thus for the designers of this supposed socially flawless society duplicitously enabling a definition of their lives to be as servants of the Good rather than as being either rulers or protectors of it.

As it is with every ‘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’ - there can be a foundational ‘noble lie’ to immorally rhetorically rationalize any 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 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 being the one referred to being the main one historically mentioned in this novella.⁷

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 experience first in Greece and then in Rumania that he was no heroic ‘noble Aryan’ but actually an atrocious unwitting human cog in the cynical service of human beasts.⁸ There was only the abyss. Stephen’s ultimate resistance was thus a moral ‘stepping back’ from the very edge of such an abyss and really there was no choice for

him if he was seeking to at least give himself a chance to achieve personal redemption. A personal nihilism was all that would otherwise await him. 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.⁹

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.

Although I knew of it I had not yet fully read Plato's *Republic*¹⁰ when I wrote this novella but on a subconscious level at least I certainly seemed to have been mindfully channelling against the authoritarian *zeitgeist* of this major philosophical hallucination. 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).¹¹ 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.¹² The high quality of life in Sheol would if fully known about⁹ be envied by the hard working occupants of No-Sear but the socialised 'noble lie' at work that inhibits social rebellion from occurring seems¹³ 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 by doing so in what by all first societal appearances is now more so a highly secular 'rational' come 'scientific' society with a well ensconced militarized ruling elite with an accompanying loyal state apparatus that is all judiciously in overall authoritarian control.

*These preliminary notes are subjectively a personal reflection & should be clearly critiqued as not having any academic authority; the same can be said with the 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. Apologies for the inevitable repetition of some commentary points sprinkled throughout various footnotes. Lastly, in the interests of transparency my view of Plato and the Socrates that is known which is perhaps mythical, literary and historical all at once critically tends towards the negative although it is hoped one appraisal has a nuanced aspect. Amongst one's reading I am particularly impressed by the following academically 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 and although one is not certain of everything stated within it one accepts its general outlook and duly acknowledge some of its astute points 'surfacing' in the notes to both influence and provide them with their somewhat critical slant that is not really in regards to any pure Socratic or Platonic philosophy *per se* but rather more so to what one may term as their 'political philosophy' or 'ideological outlook' of which on a personal level I find much cause to disagree with while at the same time one acknowledges there can be commentators far more academically versed and intrinsically well informed on both Plato and Socrates who hold a more amiable position as one has found out has been the case throughout history with Socrates actually proving to be a polarizing character with his detractors and admirers both being equally certain with the authenticity of their opposing attitudes. In short, it is best that one simply judges for one's own self. (Apologies also to Mr Wood if I have at all misinterpreted or read him the wrong the way). Best regards. NN.