

MOON BEAMS FROM THE LARGER LUNACY

PART 16B

Throwing rocks at the mountain. Random reflections from a life in progress.



THE SLEEP OF REASON BRINGS FORTH MONSTERS

Illustrations BY GOYA



Let me tell a couple of stories.

Around the time the Proto-Americans were getting pissed and tipping tea into Boston Harbour the people of Corsica were also agitating for their independence. There were some attempts to get the British interested in supporting their claims but they had other fish to fry. Specifically, they were casting a speculative look at The Rock of Gibraltar and we all know what happened there. The French invaded Corsica and separate independence hopes were dashed. The Corsican leader, one General Paoli, was forced to leave and he chose to flee to London. With the general went his adjutant, who was accompanied by his wife. The first leg of his journey took them to Livorno, a port city in Italy (famous for its' chickens). As they were preparing to take

ship to London the adjutant's wife, who was pregnant and very close to term, threw a hissy fit. She didn't want to go to England where it was cold and wet and full of the English. General Paoli went to London on his own. In due course the couple returned to Corsica despite the presence of the French. A fine baby was born and became a French citizen. The child's name was Napoleon Bonaparte.

The recent Brexit poll has thrown the cat amongst the international pigeons. It has also profoundly affected the subsequent history of The British Isles. It is hard to think of a similar single event with comparable implications. Possibly the entry of the USA into the Second World War. It was a close run thing, The Baby Boomers, who were in the majority, (especially in the Midlands) came out in favour of exit. Young British citizens overwhelmingly voted to stay in the EU. A few percentages the other way would have reversed the outcome. It was a vote of fear, greed and prejudice by a group of people who had received the benefits of the Welfare State while presiding over its dismantling. They will all be dead in a few years, while the under 25's will live for a long time with the dismal consequences.

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So what do the stories have in common? The point of the stories and the point of these ramblings is that individual actions and decision count in the broad scheme of things. By the time you read this you probably will have cast your vote in the Federal Elections and we will be starting another parliamentary term under our glorious Coal-ition Government. It is not possible, at this time of writing, to predict what and affect the minor parties and independents will have on the Coal-itions freedom to act. We can but hope. In some seats the outcome will be decided on a few votes and recounts will be necessary. In these cases: the more or less considered opinion of a handful of people will decide the short and medium term history of our country. It will be the Baby Boomers, once again, who have voted consistently for decades for their individual comfort rather than the national benefit, that will carry the day and the young left to struggle-on in a hostile socio-political and ecological wasteland.

When it comes to those concerned with the ecological future in store for our children and their children, there are roughly two camps about what is appropriate action. Humans always want to plant a flag, take sides and pontificate. The two sides, put simply, are that on the one hand you have those in favour of the political process – agitation, political parties, petitions and public debate and on the other you have those who believe that the way forward is individual action in the matter of the manner in which life is lived. Why this is a dichotomy is not clear to me but debate is fierce.

When discussing things like Climate Change and other socio/political issues with the young people, of our own little community, what strikes me, most forcibly, is the overwhelming sense of hopeless nihilism. They are cheerful with it, but believe they are caught up in actions beyond their control. Due to the absences of a sequential coherent view of both history and the contemporary situation in education curricula they have no hooks for their understanding. There is no framework in which to think. Parents and teachers, for some reason, seem nonplussed and highly critical of our children's immersion in technological toys, social media, games and the most trivial aspects of pop culture. The reason is clear; our children are on a lifeboat adrift in the void with their heads under a blanket. Their parents and grand-parents in the single-minded pursuit of distraction and *stuff* have cast them adrift.



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Their elders have turned their backs on the political process and their community's functionality. There is a recognition that our politicians have failed us and we may as well eat drink, be merry, buy stuff and fly to Bali.

There is little respect left for our political masters. The reasons are clear enough:

- 1) Funding for our major political parties come from various sources who expect quid pro quo. The demands of these sources are often contradictory and mutually exclusive. The being damned if you don't is less nugatory than the damned if you do
- 2) The political process attracts psychopaths and narcissists who notoriously lack empathy. The most successful of these deviants achieve power and are ironically the least able to effectively wield it because they have no appreciation of human needs or aspirations beyond their own.



3) The world view largely shared by our power elites is dysfunctional in the extreme. An ideological mash-up of economic theory, half-baked religious debris and the old bones of 19th Century 'manifest destiny' offers no methods or solutions forward.

Paradoxically, we still barrack for opposite sides, like football supporters, as if

any real difference is discernible between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

So what price individual action on the political front or in your own home and garden? The answer to the rhetorical question is (in the words of The I Ching) 'perseverance further'. In the past the human story has plunged to such depths of madness and violence that it seemed to the victims embroiled in it all that there was no hope. We have seen countries and continents torn apart by wars based on religions the central tenant of which is: peace, love and harmony. We have inflicted genocides. However, largely because individuals and groups of individuals, through their own example, through their creative out-put or their leadership have created a road out of these self-inflicted messes. Millions have suffered and died because of the greed and arrogance of those in power but some have been saved by the actions of individuals. The broad future of the two once great nations of Great Britain and France may have been decided on the outcome of a tantrum from a hormonally turbulent mother-in-waiting.

So to return to the question on what is a more an effective change engine: political public activity or private 'do what I do' lead by example?

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What is clear – people who are vilified, belittled or antagonised are unlikely to view messages delivered in these manners cooperatively. People who are frightened, threatened and bullied may be cowed in the short term but will build up an ever increasing back pressure of resentment and antipathy till something bursts. ‘The sleep of reason brings forth monsters’- we have had fascism, communism and market driven economics. There has to be a better way.

The activities of our western societies, particularly in the last fifty years, have bought us politically and environmentally to a very dangerous place. The only way forward is to take responsibility. The argument of whether political action or personal example are the most effective is fatuous. It is a divide and conquer strategy. If our children and their children are going to have a future even a bit like the past my generation has enjoyed, then my generation must get off its collective arse. We must lead by example and we must agitate. We must give up selfish, self-indulgent aspirations, we must start to create a social-political landscape that our kids can inhabit and grow in towards some sort of meaningful future.

Once a bunch of women left their comfortable upper middle-class drawing rooms and went out into the street, into prison and even died to secure female franchise. Clearly to negotiate change we need to do more than click ‘like’ on some sanctimonious or epistemologically questionable meme, with a pretty picture, on Facebook. We need to do more than turn up bleating to the polls every other year. We need to show our children by example that you don’t need to fill up the house with Chinese manufactured ephemera for a satisfying life. We need to admit to ourselves the madness of dividing a community by spending millions on a facility to assist rich people to kill fish instead of ways to live sustainably. Was it sensible to build an art gallery, to sell pictures to

tourists, when the school so desperately needs an equipped art room, drama room and music equipment to teach our community to make their own art? Was it a great idea to build bike/walking tracks that don’t go anywhere instead of between out residential precincts and our village centre? Is it smart to promote the tourist trade that creates dead-end jobs



cleaning up after tourists? Shouldn’t we be developing social enterprises - sustainable activities where we can work for each other: building things, growing food and raising our children in hope and fulfilment? Then they can stay home

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after the end of school if they want and participate in an attempt, we must make, if we are to steer us all away from the coming catastrophe.?

Mallacoota is magnificently placed. Our climate will not deteriorate as quickly as the rest of Australia because of our geographic position. We are relatively wealthy. We are surrounded by both natural bush and prime agricultural land. We have some fine minds and people of great ability. We can agitate, we can lead by example. However, we must take control. As a community we must ask the difficult questions and attempt to answer them practically. Our community is used to punching above our weight. Neil Grieg has spearheaded the innovative Kitchen to Compost Project, what remains to be done is get the compost back into our community's gardens. Rosemary Martin has likewise spear headed the removal of plastic bags from our local environment. We have an alternative energy group waiting for the technology to mature sufficiently to make an independent local power supply affordable. You will find that all these initiatives are mostly being undertaken from within a small group of people. I must say I was fairly staggered when recently I was organizing the Mallacoota/genoa leg of The Water4life Action and not a few local people had not heard of 'Fracking' or 'CSG' or even more surprising 'The Greens'. The push to transform our community must become community wide if we are going to make our presence felt to make life worth living for our children and grandchildren.

DON ASHBY