



## Hawkwood Books Blog: January 18<sup>th</sup> 2021

### A WORD ON FUTILITY

Lockdown has been in place, unbelievably, for almost a year. Plenty of time – too much time – for reflection. Being of a somewhat gloomy nature, my reflections tend to be a touch on the negative side. In the heart of winter, amidst cold, rain, snow and an entire world shut down by bugs, it's easy to slip into depression. Even in the best of times, we have to fight the lurking futility of all things, but now there's ample opportunity to do so. There is also more opportunity to wonder at the ways others deal with the self-same life experience. Some are unaware, others turn to all manner of preoccupations.

What they have in common, these techniques, is being humanly manufactured. There is no obvious defining purpose, unless it's faith in one divine belief system or another, or perhaps it's the thirst for knowledge or understanding, but of what - in the *modus operandi* or the intention?

I suspect that we each have to come up with our own local utility rather than futility service, our own coping mechanisms. Mine, at present, is this – publishing. So, as the reach and influence of Hawkwood tends, in all honesty, towards zero, how do I keep focus?

To a great extent, like the soldiers of the Great War, we're here because we're here because we're here. There is nothing beyond the actions and motivations of men and women, and of societies in general. Whatever forces motivate particular communities, these are the ones that are supposed to turn futility into meaning, be they communist, capitalist, democratic or autocratic. The predominant local philosophy tends to govern our world view and life choices.

In freer societies, this can be difficult. There are far more choices, more complexity and more ways to lose direction. We try to carve our own way, to avoid The Void, but it doesn't always work. It's of course much easier to follow tried and tested guidelines, or charismatic leaders, but they all seem to fail. Universal truths remain stubbornly elusive.

Lockdown accentuates this, or gives us more time to be aware of it. On the other hand, it might also give us time to slow down and appreciate time itself. There was no great meaning in the pre-Covid frantic ways of living. Perhaps, strangely, this new reality might be an opportunity rather than a hindrance, to stare down cosmic futility. Even if, in the end, we reach the conclusion that everything is founded on nothing, I'm not sure that it matters. There is meaning in the moment, in planning, hoping, trying and loving.

Professionally, we would all no doubt be more satisfied if the hoping and trying resulted in some measure of Earthly success, but this might not come to pass, and might not, in the great scheme of things, be that important. Whatever the outcome, facing the infinite silence does not void the light but lights the void.