

Existential Investigation: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and History

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To fully understand a piece of writing requires a grasp of its historical context. It follows then that an understanding of Czechoslovak history is necessary for the full appreciation of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Kundera, however, disagrees.¹ What is a reader who is seeking to do an historical analysis of Kundera's novel to make of his opinion, and what implications does his opinion bear on the historical analysis itself? Even if the contents of the novel cannot be directly related to Czechoslovak history, it may nevertheless be the case that Kundera's opinion is itself rooted in historical circumstances. To determine the relation of Kundera and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* to history, one must first make sense of his attitude towards history and the ways in which it has influenced the creation of his novel.

Kundera explains in his non-fiction work *The Art of the Novel* that history has traditionally been thought to be an expression of the progress of humankind through time which can be explained rationally. To Kundera, this definition is not simply idealistic but downright delusional. Having experienced life under Soviet totalitarianism, he believes that there can be no rational explanation for what he found to be the absurdities and cruelties of the regime. "[W]hy does Russia today want to dominate the world?" Kundera wrote. "To be richer? Happier? Not at all. The aggressivity of [this] force is thoroughly disinterested...it is pure irrationality."²

To appropriately comprehend history, Kundera feels that it "must be understood...as an existential situation."³ He draws his

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definition of an existential situation from the philosopher Heidegger's text *Being and Time*.⁴ Heidegger describes an existential situation as being a spatial, temporal, and cultural designation in which human beings are involved and are presented with a particular set of possibilities for the realization of their individual selves.⁵ Soviet Czechoslovakia, for instance, comprised an existential situation. It was defined by its location in Czechoslovakia, the period of Soviet control from 1948-1989, Czechoslovak culture, and the nation's historical background and current state of affairs. Based on these defining aspects of the Czechoslovak situation, a number of possibilities became open to the people involved; these included the submission to authority, self-exile or flight from Soviet territory, and resistance to the regime.⁶

Kundera's conception of history as an existential situation prevents one from analyzing *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in a traditional manner, making it difficult to draw conclusions on the novel's historical connotation. Under the traditional definition of history, any piece of writing, including a novel, can be understood in an historical perspective with relative ease. Because traditionally defined history is a rational progression in which all things arise for a specific purpose, a literary work thus appears as the logical result of an historical movement or event as commentary on current developments in culture, economics, politics, science, etc.⁷ Kundera, however, believes that the novel must be singled out as a unique form of writing, one which works in conjunction with existentially conceived history. He defines the novel as an investigation of both real and hypothetical existential possibilities based on a particular situation. The novelist, as the investigator, creates characters or personas in each of which a single possibility or set thereof is explored.⁸ Each character, in realizing his or her existential possibilities, expresses a different viewpoint, but because the novelist is an investigator, definitive judgement is not passed on any particular character. Neither the author nor the reader can be completely certain which character is right or wrong, and for this reason, the novel does not present a clear-cut ideology. Such a text with its debatable meaning cannot be the direct result of a single, traditionally conceived historical movement or event.⁹ To Kundera, history, like the novel, is a multifaceted entity in which conclusions cannot be easily drawn, if

they can even be drawn at all. In the novel, history thus acts as the existential backdrop in which the novelist articulates his or her characters to express a number of different and often disparate ideas.¹⁰

It would seem then that the best way to approach *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is as a philosophical text which investigates existential questions.¹¹ In fact, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* looks more like a volume of Nietzschean aphorisms in its structure than a novel. Kundera has broken from the structural conventions of his genre to adequately go about his investigations. He places the story and linear character development in a position subordinate to his investigation, turning the traditional aspects of the novel into tools through which he may explore an existential situation.¹² As such, elements of the plot arise only when they are pertinent to his existential concerns, causing *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* to take the form of a series of vignettes.¹³

Freedom from the constraints of plot chronology also allows Kundera to insert discussions from his own perspective and to reach outside the plot for examples from history, philosophy, literature, etc.¹⁴ He begins *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* with a discussion of Nietzsche's concept of eternal return to establish the novel's overarching existential situation. He then develops his own theory of "the unbearable lightness of being," the inverse of eternal return, and he uses his characters to play out existential possibilities in relation to this issue.¹⁵ Perhaps it is in Kundera's choice of theme that one may find a way to relate his novel to history, but one must first gain an understanding of these foundational concepts.

Kundera explains that the doctrine of eternal return states that all things in existence recur over and over again for all eternity. This is to say that human history is a preset circle without progress, the same events arising perpetually and doomed never to change or to improve. Existence is thus weighty because it stands fixed in an infinite cycle.¹⁶ This weightiness is "the heaviest of burdens" for "if every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross."¹⁷ At the same time, however, it is necessary for events to occur in the cycle of history exactly as they have always occurred for the cycles to be identical; consequently, everything takes on an eternally fixed necessity and meaning. This fact

can be seen as something of a comfort because it prevents one from believing things to be fleeting and worthless.¹⁸

The reverse of this concept is “the unbearable lightness of being.” Assuming that eternal return were impossible, humankind would experience an “absolute absence of burden,” and this would “[cause] man to be lighter than air” in his utter lack of weighty meaning.¹⁹ In other words, every event and individual throughout history would be a totally unique phenomenon with no possibility of recurring.²⁰ Something which does not forever recur has its brief lifetime, and, once it is complete, the universe goes on existing, utterly indifferent to the completed phenomenon. To human beings, past events and historical figures become ever more distant as time progresses, and these become vague, lose their proper context and significance, and, “[turn] into mere words, theories, and discussions.”²¹ Ultimately, even the most significant events will be forgotten, whether due to the extinction of the human race or through being gradually forgotten over time.²² “[L]ife which disappears once and for all, which does not return” writes Kundera, is “without weight...and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime...mean[s] nothing.”²³

Although it is not certain as to whether Kundera himself believes in either eternal return or unbearable lightness, it is unbearable lightness that he chooses to explore in the characters of the novel. The vignettes of the novel are organized into seven parts each corresponding to an aspect of the central theme of lightness: the realization of lightness, authenticity, the sensation of weakness, mind-body duality, and kitsch.²⁴ In each vignette, Kundera explores one or more of these aspects through the development of the four central characters: Tomas, Tereza, Sabina, and Franz.²⁵

The principal character Tomas, although a seducer, initially leads a relatively predictable and satisfied life. One might assume that as a seducer, Tomas experiences much excitement and romance, but excitement and romance are precisely what Tomas seeks to avoid. He establishes a system of “erotic friendships,” brief or detached sexual relationships, with a “rule of threes” by which he sees each of his mistresses either for three days only or once every few years and for only a three week interval. By establishing this system, Tomas keeps

himself busy with a steady stream of women in a set schedule which is meant to prevent him from becoming emotionally attached to anyone in particular. His life thus seems to him to be well-ordered, pleasurable, and entirely in his control. He lives as if eternal return were the rule of the universe, repeating his routine again and again, and this makes his existence appear meaningful, as something fixed and unshakable.²⁶

Tomas finds his sense of meaning brought into question, however, when he falls in love with his future wife Tereza. Love, being inexplicable, seems to him a violation of eternal return and the meaningful repetition of his life. His love causes him to realize the lightness of being, shattering eternal return by showing him that arbitrary events which are entirely out of his control can occur. He is awakened to authenticity.²⁷ As Heidegger explains in *Being and Time*, authenticity is the state of being which is reached by an individual in the discovery that existence is essentially meaningless, and that any meaning that may seem to exist is actually generated by human beings themselves through their activities repeated over time.²⁸ Tomas' routine of seeing other women is not in itself meaningful; nowhere is it written that he must engage in erotic friendships. He only feels that his schedule is meaningful because it has become a major part of his day to day existence by his having repeated it over and over again.²⁹

Tomas initially finds his authenticity disturbing³⁰ but comes to realize that the implications of being's lightness can actually be taken as comforting. He adopts the attitude that because life cannot be relived and changed, what has occurred must be. He transforms the arbitrariness of being into a sort of meaningful structure for existence in which the unchangeable past has weight.³¹ This further implies that actions performed in the present are absolutely free and take meaning only as they become the past. In this way, Tomas is free from all sense of duty bearing down upon him. Whatever choices he does make, however, are decided by his own free will as what he deems worthy of bringing into being to be immortalized in the past. "I have no mission," he says. "No one has. And it's a terrific relief to realize you're free, free of all missions."³²

His one difficulty is the struggle to preserve his authenticity. The secret police desire that he sign a statement denouncing an editorial

he had written which was critical of the Soviet government. To sign the statement would allow him to keep his job and social standing, but at the same time, it would mean that he, as an authentic individual, would be compromising his ability to make free choices.³³ He is also asked by a dissident group to sign a petition symbolic of the fight for Czechoslovak freedom. To sign this document would also jeopardize his authenticity because it would mean becoming a part of an ideological movement which denies the lightness of being and believes in the existence of intrinsic meaning in the concept of freedom.³⁴ Tomas turns down both requests and flees, making the free choice to retain his authenticity and ability to exercise his free will. "He was not at all sure he was doing the right thing," Kundera explains, "but he was sure he was doing what he wanted to do."³⁵

Unlike Tomas, Tereza is unable to fully accept the lightness of being. From early childhood, Tereza believed in a mind/ body duality but refused to acknowledge that under the rule of lightness both the body and the mind are of equal worth; that is, they are equally worthless. Everywhere she looked, she saw the physical world as vulgar. Living in her mother's home, she felt perpetually humiliated because her mother walked around the house naked, made obscene bodily noises, and ruthlessly poked fun at of her in front of other people. In her humiliation, Tereza began to believe herself to be a vulgar creature, a physical body which must eat and excrete, which has lusts, which gives off odors, and which ultimately must grow old and ugly and then die and decay in the ground.³⁶ Feeling weak and insignificant as a vulgar body, "she yearned for something higher" than the physical world to be meaningful and so made the claim that her soul has worth.³⁷ In this way, Tereza created for herself a secret, higher realm to which she could retreat when the physical world pressed in on her and threatened to make her realize the lightness of being.³⁸

When she meets Tomas, she interprets several fortuities such as his carrying a book and the radio's playing Beethoven as indicating that a higher realm really does exist, that somehow their meeting was engineered from above. This seeming confirmation of her beliefs makes the world appear significant to her. She is convinced that the entire universe has moved the totality of its parts in harmony just so that she

and Tomas would meet and fall in love.³⁹ Her beliefs collapse, however, when Tomas, her symbol of a higher reality, continues to sleep with other women according to his system of erotic friendships. Her beautiful romance proves unable to conquer the vulgarities of the world, and she is once again authenticated by her realization of the absolute meaninglessness of existence.⁴⁰

Despairing at the apparent disintegration of her higher realm, Tereza allows herself to utterly give in to her bodily desires and attempts to have an affair of her own.⁴¹ “Making love ...in the absence of love,” however, “finally restore[s] her soul’s sight;” she achieves a fuller authenticity. Before her affair when she had been faced with absolute meaninglessness, she had refused to accept lightness as it seemed to deny her the higher realm of the soul, placing it on the same level as the body. In finally confronting her bodily needs and desires, she now realizes that her body is not meaningless because it is *her own* body, just as she believes that her soul derives its meaning from being absolutely personal and separate from the physical mass of the world. While this meaning is in no way connected to a universal higher realm, it is real meaning nevertheless. She exists in an active relationship with the world around her in which her body plays just as large a part as her soul, actively creating meaning which is known to her and to her alone.⁴² Although she continues to feel an occasional weakness in the face of the physical world which bears down upon her day in and day out, she is less inclined to fall into despair at the lack of higher meaning and to flee into false glorification of the soul.⁴³

Franz, like Tereza, also wishes to believe in something higher. Unhappy in his marriage, he enters into an affair with Sabina and makes her his idol, dedicating his life to her and seeking to please her in every way possible. Because Sabina had been forced to leave Czechoslovakia, Franz is convinced that she is a refugee/protestor whose greatest desire is to see the obliteration of injustice, such as that of the Communist regime. When with his mistress, Franz feels that his life has purpose and so dedicates his life to pleasing her. Unfortunately, Franz believes that the best way to go about pleasing Sabina is to adopt as his own the ideals that he wrongly supposes her to espouse.⁴⁴ According to these ideals, Franz worries that his mistress must be terribly distressed that

she sleeping with a married man, an act which violates the ideal of truth by forcing them to conduct their affair in secret. To rectify the situation, Franz leaves his wife so that he and Sabina can live together in truth. However, binding herself to another person is precisely not what Sabina wants.⁴⁵ She departs, leaving no clue as to her whereabouts.⁴⁶

Even though Sabina, his feminine ideal and source of meaning, has abandoned him, Franz guards himself against the unbearable lightness of being through dreaming of his beloved, “liv[ing] in [her] imaginary eyes”⁴⁷ and “nourish[ing] the cult of Sabina...as [a] religion.”⁴⁸ Franz, thinking that she would have been proud of him, becomes a political activist, championing the ideals of truth, justice, and freedom. By pursuing this occupation for his idealized lover, Franz creates for himself a metaphysical value of life similar to Tereza’s assertion of the soul’s intrinsic value. Both characters believe in a higher realm in which their soul’s purpose has been dictated, making their life meaningful according to some cosmic scheme of things. Tereza’s higher realm is perpetually crashing down upon her, however, because it is directly pitted against the physical world of the here and now. When she experiences something absurd or vulgar, her soul is powerless to affect her physical situation, making her feel weak and causing her to lose faith in her higher realm. Franz’s higher realm, on the other hand, is distant from the world and is governed by his “invisible goddess” Sabina. He lives his life in the perpetual, vain hope that by following the moral code he believes Sabina laid out for him he will someday, against all odds be reunited with his former mistress. No matter how dreadful the present world may seem to him, it is tolerable because of the possibility of his reunion with Sabina.⁴⁹

Distant as she is from reality, the Sabina in his mind is not strong enough to protect Franz from the unbearable lightness of being forever. He joins a group of foreign protesters in Vietnam, but while they attempt to persuade the Vietcong to end the fighting, Franz realizes that his political ideals have been blinding him to reality. As the protesters shout their demands at the Vietcong across a river, they are met with a profound silence. No matter how hard they cry out, they are unable to touch the physical reality of the Vietcong’s resistance

and struck a fatal blow to the head, driving home to Franz at last the absurdity of the world.⁵²

Sabina, on her journey to authenticity, struggles against what Kundera calls “totalitarian kitsch.” Kitsch in general, according to Kundera, is the shared experience of a particular group which, because of the fact that it is shared, is glorified as what is most sacred. Because kitsch is common to everyone, it seems to be something eternal, something which all future generations will also experience. Kitsch seems to be repeated again and again, instilling in the group a belief in eternal return; kitsch is thus a popular delusion which protects a particular group against the unbearable lightness of being.⁵³ While this is problematic in terms of the group’s authenticity, it is generally not particularly harmful. In a free society, there exist many groups, each possessing a different form of kitsch. An individual who does not fit in with a particular group’s kitsch values can live outside these groups and still function as a member of society. Kitsch becomes dangerous, however, when it takes the form of totalitarian kitsch. In a totalitarian society, the government, in its efforts to gain absolute control over the people, seeks to establish a uniformity of beliefs, values, and practices; one of the methods totalitarianism employs to gain control is the creation a form of kitsch and the ruthless enforcement of it. In such a society, living outside kitsch is no longer an option, and anyone who does not comply with the established kitsch is silenced.⁵⁴

Although kitsch can be used to gain control over people, “as soon as [it] is recognized for the lie it is, it...los[es] its authoritarian power.”⁵⁵ While in art school, Sabina initially painted exactly as she was told, in the realistic style mandated by the Communist government. However, a splotch of red paint fell by accident onto one of her paintings, causing the factory which was painted on the canvas to look like a flimsy backdrop with a crack in it. This transformation of her realist painting into a backdrop hiding another scene behind it gave Sabina the idea that behind kitsch, there exists a reality deliberately kept hidden by those who espouse it. She realized that kitsch is meant to hide away the fact of lightness, and her self was thus authenticated.⁵⁶ She left Czechoslovakia for Switzerland and then for America, fleeing totalitarian kitsch but never tying herself down in a way that would fall

with their ideals.⁵⁰ Franz “find[s] out once and for all that neither [his political missions] nor [his conception of] Sabina” is reality, “that reality [is] more than a dream”⁵¹. Even though he learns this, he is still distressed by it. When a man at his hotel asks for help, he eagerly agrees to assist him, hoping that this is a sign that he still has a mission to perform for his idealized Sabina. The man leads him into an ally where he is robbed and struck a fatal blow to the head, driving home to Franz at last the absurdity of the world.⁵²

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It would seem that Sabina and Tomas, because of their similar personalities, ought to have stayed together rather than have taken on lovers who proved to be so different from either of them. While it is true that they are a well-matched couple under the system of erotic friendships, had they broken the rule of threes and becoming more romantically involved with each other, the relationship would likely have been unsuccessful. Tomas' love for Tereza springs from the fact that he sees her as someone who desperately needs his protection. Sabina, on the other hand, is strong-willed and independent, the opposite of his image of Tereza. Sabina is also wary of love, believing it to come under the jurisdiction of kitsch as something that blinds an individual to reality. In a relationship outside that of erotic friendship, Tomas and Sabina would likely have not been able to achieve authenticity or remain authentic. Tomas, because Sabina does not fit his image of a person in need of his protection, might never have experienced the disturbing realization of love, and Sabina, by becoming more devoted to a single man, might over time have lost her authenticity to kitsch.⁵⁸

Having seen the ways in which the main characters of the novel deal with the lightness of being, we may pursue the question of what Kundera's choice of theme indicates about the novel's historical significance. It is important to note here that an author can create his characters based only on his own experiences. In this way, the characters in a novel and the situations and settings in which their existential

possibilities are explored reflect the author's own life in some way, whether it be directly or indirectly.⁵⁹ Because each of the characters in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* represents a different way of dealing with the central philosophical issue of weight and lightness, it is likely that Kundera was concerned with the issue on a personal level. In fact, many of Kundera's Czechoslovak contemporaries have expressed similar concerns in their own writing. This similarity can be explained by the fact that the writers in question shared a common experience in Soviet Czechoslovakia. It is therefore probable that the concern with meaning and lightness is tied directly to this period in Czechoslovak history.⁶⁰

After the death of Stalin in 1953, totalitarian policy began to relax across the Soviet Union.⁶¹ In Czechoslovakia, protest groups and petitioners became inspired to actively challenge the Soviet regime and demand reform. Protest activity came to a crescendo in 1967 in Prague when Antonin Novotny, largely responsible for preserving totalitarianism, was driven from his office as Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party by reform-minded Party officials. He was replaced by Alexander Dubcek, who immediately began to overhaul the government, putting an end to censorship and liberalizing the political system. This period of reform in the spring of 1968, now known as the Prague Spring, was brought to a sudden end, however, when Russian-controlled Soviet tanks arrived in Prague and reinstated totalitarian government.⁶²

During this period, Kundera himself became involved in the protest against Soviet rule. In 1966, he published his first novel, *The Joke*, which presented an only partially veiled critique of the regime. Due to the wane in Soviet control, it managed to pass the inspection of censors.⁶³ In 1967 at a congress of the Czech Writers Union, Kundera openly denounced what he recognized as writing's devolution to political propaganda because of writers' submitting to censorship or becoming directly involved as spokesmen of the Communist Party.⁶⁴ Until the end of the Prague Spring, he continued to involve himself with intellectual protest groups such as the Club of Critical Thought.⁶⁵

Following the suppression of the liberalized Dubcek government, the reinstated Soviet regime began to punish those involved in the protest during the previous years. Kundera's publishing privileges

were revoked, and he was given the option of emigrating to France. Rather than allow himself to become a writer manipulated by the Party, precisely the type of writer he denounced, he chose to leave the country and continue to write and publish freely in self-exile.⁶⁶

Kundera's choice, it seems, reflects a pessimism on his part towards the situation in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet government was too powerful a force for an entire nation to stand up against even during a time of slackened policy, so to continue the battle alone against a renewed totalitarianism is likely to have seemed hopeless to many. The failure of the people to withstand the Russians, a profoundly disheartening development to these individuals, may have brought Kundera to question both the meaning of the Prague Spring and his position as an author and reform advocate.⁶⁷

If this is the case, then *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and the views Kundera expresses through it can be said to be symptomatic of this period in Czechoslovak history. The immense power of the Soviet government was too great to challenge, bringing those who were dissatisfied with the regime feelings of weakness and meaninglessness. This in turn brought these individuals into Heideggerian authenticity with a realization of the absolute lack of meaning in existence. Some fled the unbearable lightness of being while others were able to cope with it and chose to maintain their authenticity.⁶⁸

Kundera seems to believe that either submission to totalitarianism or reaction against it involved a loss of authenticity, leaving self-exile as the only possible choice for an individual wishing to retain his authenticity. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* all of the characters are forced to abandon their homes at one point or another, but it is only for Tomas and Sabina that this abandonment takes on the characteristics of authentic self-exile. Tereza tolerates the Soviet regime only in so far as it makes her feel secure, but when it makes her feel weak and thereby authenticates her self, she flees to find a place that provides her with inauthentic security again.⁶⁹ Franz, although not Czechoslovak but Swiss, is called by his ideological mission to seek out oppressed countries; therefore, his movement around the globe cannot be viewed as self-exile but as a search for targets for his ideology.⁷⁰ Only Tomas and Sabina enter self-exile for the purpose of maintaining

authenticity. Sabina's self-exile is a total removal of her person from Czechoslovakia which takes her farther and farther from the country of her birth to ever more democratic countries in which her authenticity is in less danger.⁷¹ Tomas' self-exile is limited to local changes. His emigration to Switzerland is simply a pursuit of Tereza, but his deliberate self-demotion to a window washer and later move to the countryside are movements of self-exile to avoid the perils of the secret police and protest groups.⁷²

Is it really the case that self-exile was the only option that can be said to have allowed for the preservation of authenticity in the face of the Soviet Czechoslovak situation? Many famous Czechoslovak dissident intellectuals such as Vaclav Havel and Jan Patocka developed their own theories of authenticity which stressed that the active fight against oppression was the key to maintaining an authentic self.⁷³ It is conceivable that there were also those who chose to submit to totalitarianism but would argue that they too remained authentic. Assuming that they too recognized the lightness of being, they may have decided to remain in the Soviet situation as non-dissidents out of a somewhat Epicurean desire to maintain as much personal happiness as possible with the least difficulty or danger.⁷⁴

Kundera's opinion that his own choice of self-exile was the proper one makes *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* look rather like a justification of the choice he made. This approach, of course, does the novel injustice. "The characters in my [novel] are my own unrealized possibilities," Kundera writes; "[but it] is not [my] confession; it is an investigation of human life."⁷⁵ Nevertheless his opinion and the fact that he wrote an entire novel which explores the notion of authenticity in connection to the lightness of being illustrate the powerful effect that the Soviet Czechoslovak situation had on him was capable of having on any individual, for that matter.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being is thus anything but a traditional reaction to history. It is the product of an author whose belief system has itself been shaped by historical circumstances. Kundera's reinterpretation of history and his questioning of existence and of himself, inspired by his experiences in Czechoslovakia, warn against historical situations which compromise an individual's ability to make

free choices and which make it easier for people to fall into a harmful type of nihilism. Although *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* appears to champion authenticity in the face of the lightness of existence, it remains unclear, because of the book's very nature as a novel, as to what method of achieving authenticity is correct. It does, however, seem to say that totalitarianism and oppression are inappropriate ways of bringing people into any sort of authenticity. While some individuals in the Soviet Czechoslovak situation were able to achieve true authenticity, others, because they were forced into their realization of lightness by oppression, found authenticity before they were ready and thus experienced side effects such as nihilism and perpetual doubt. While an understanding of history may not be necessary for an understanding of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* clearly Kundera feels that it is important to understand the novel as a genre in order to better understand history and to guard against the intolerance of totalitarianism.

NOTES

¹ Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (Grove Press, 1986), p. 39.

² Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 10.

³ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 38.

⁴ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 10.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Harper and Row, 1962), p. 346.

⁶ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 123.

⁷ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 39-40.

⁸ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 36-37.

⁹ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 7, 36-37.

¹¹ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 36-37.

¹² Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 82.

¹³ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁴ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 76-77.

- ¹⁵ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* trans. Michael Henry Heim (Harper Perennial, 1984), pp. 3-6.
- ¹⁶ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 3-5.
- ¹⁷ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 5.
- ¹⁹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 6.
- ²⁰ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 3-4.
- ²¹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 4.
- ²² Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 3-4.
- ²³ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 3.
- ²⁴ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 3, 33, 47, 73, 222, 248.
- ²⁵ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 29.
- ²⁶ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 12-13, 21.
- ²⁷ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 6-8.
- ²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 399.
- ²⁹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 12-13, 21.
- ³⁰ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 8.
- ³¹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 33-35.
- ³² Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 313.
- ³³ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 189-192.
- ³⁴ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 215-218.
- ³⁵ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 220.
- ³⁶ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 45-47.
- ³⁷ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 44.
- ³⁸ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 48-51.
- ³⁹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 48-51.
- ⁴⁰ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 16-17.
- ⁴¹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 156-157.
- ⁴² Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 157, 161.
- ⁴³ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 162.
- ⁴⁴ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 102-103, 112-113.
- ⁴⁵ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 114-115.
- ⁴⁶ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 118.
- ⁴⁷ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 270.
- ⁴⁸ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 126

- ⁴⁹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 270.
- ⁵⁰ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 258, 266-268, 274.
- ⁵¹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 274.
- ⁵² Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 274-275.
- ⁵³ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 248-249.
- ⁵⁴ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 251-252.
- ⁵⁵ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 256.
- ⁵⁶ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 63.
- ⁵⁷ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 255.
- ⁵⁸ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 10-11, 22-23.
- ⁵⁹ Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, p. 35.
- ⁶⁰ Arne Novak, *Czech Literature*, trans. Peter Kussi (Michigan Slavic Publications, 1986), pp. 347, 354-355.
- ⁶¹ Novak, *Czech Literature*, p. 344.
- ⁶² Lynn Hunt et al., *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures* (Bedford's/ St. Martin's, 2001), p. 1137-1139.
- ⁶³ Kenneth N. Skoug, *Czechoslovakia's Fight for Freedom: An American Embassy Perspective* (Praeger, 1999), p. 27.
- ⁶⁴ Harry Schwartz, *Prague's 200 Days: The Struggle for Democracy in Czechoslovakia* (Praeger, 1969), p. 43.
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- ⁶⁶ Novak, *Czech Literature*, p. 356.
- ⁶⁷ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. 123.
- ⁶⁸ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel*, pp. 70-71.
- ⁶⁹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 75.
- ⁷⁰ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp.102-103, 258.
- ⁷¹ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 102-103.
- ⁷² Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* pp. 192, 222.
- ⁷³ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel*, pp. 70-71, 142-143.
- ⁷⁴ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel*, pp. 123, 215, 219.
- ⁷⁵ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* p. 221.