

ALDOUS HUXLEY: THE PROGRESSIVE INTEREST IN MYSTICISM
SHOWN IN HIS PROSE WORKS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to indicate and describe the interest in mysticism apparent in the prose works of Aldous Huxley, and to show that this interest has developed consistently throughout Huxley's literary career. The books, articles and theses referring to Huxley as a mystic, or accepting Huxley's basic interest in mysticism, make no attempt to account for the progressive stages of mysticism, nor to compare Huxley's pattern of development with that of the traditional mystic. This thesis will indicate at least Huxley's genuine interest in mysticism, and will show that, as work follows work, each displays a growing comprehension of the progressive stages of mystical experience described as typical of the traditional mystic. As a result of this comparison, it will be shown that an interest in mysticism has become a dominating influence in all Huxley's writing.

The introduction contains a sampling of criticism to show that critics have generally tended to accept the idea that Huxley went through a conventional religious conversion period in the thirties, but an examination of his works shows that his interest in mysticism began with his earliest writing and developed consistently.

Chapter I attempts further to substantiate the contention that Huxley's interest has been progressive, by showing that he is not a personality type likely to undergo sudden religious conversions. The biographical data available suggest that Huxley belongs to a psychological type that usually does not experience conversions, at least according to his own theories of personality classifications.

Chapter II includes a general description of the phenomena of mysticism presented in the terms of Western authorities and a description of mysticism taken from Huxley's non-fiction. The comparison makes apparent the variance between Huxley's theories and those of the authorities. The basic difference stems from Huxley's determination to explore the rich and complex fields of Oriental, as well as of European, mysticism.

Chapter III will attempt to trace and evaluate, through his fiction, Huxley's developing interest in mysticism, and it will be shown that the stages of development discernible in the fiction are not directly comparable to the Five-fold Mystic Way -- stages considered necessary by Miss Underhill for normal mystical development.

Chapter IV will discuss Huxley's latest publications in an effort to show how he has related his interest in mysticism to the problems of contemporary life.

On the whole, the thesis is primarily concerned, not with what Huxley, as a man, privately believes, but with the manifestations of mystical apprehension that occur in his writings.

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On a huge hill
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must and about must go;
And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so.

John Donne, Satire III.

INTRODUCTION

Aldous Huxley is doubtless one of the most controversial of contemporary writers. He has been labelled everything from "elegant futurist", "sceptic", "satirist", "nihilist", "hedonist", "pyrrhonist", "communist", "pacifist", "religious fanatic", to "humanist", "moralist", "mystic", and "prophet". In literary terms he has been referred to as a "brilliant novelist", an "erudite essayist", a "writer of tiresome religious tracts".

During the forty years that Huxley has been the object of critical controversy, surprisingly few attempts have been made at a synthesis either of his work as a whole, or of the conflicting critical opinions that have been expressed about it. Only two book-length studies of Huxley exist. Alexander Henderson's Aldous Huxley, published in 1936, though a fairly perceptive analysis of the early novels, is limited because it attempts to evaluate Huxley at the mid-point of his career. John Atkins' excellent book, Aldous Huxley, A Literary Study, published in 1956, is as the sub-title suggests a literary analysis of everything Huxley has written.

To my knowledge, three unpublished doctoral dissertations have been written on Huxley. One, "Aldous Huxley: Humanist and Mystic", written by Wilson M. Lowry¹ deals primarily with the problem of value in the literary thought of the Twentieth Century. Mr. Lowry considers Huxley's belief in mysticism (which Mr. Lowry equates with quietism) and D.H. Lawrence's belief in the dark gods of the blood as part of a regrettable but general revolt against reason. Mr. Lowry approves Huxley's humanism as expressed as the

1 Wilson M. Lowry, "Aldous Huxley: Humanist and Mystic. The Revolt Against Reason in the Twentieth Century". Graduate School, University of Illinois, 1941.

life-worshipper's creed in Point Counter Point, but regrets his interest in mysticism which developed after 1928 and which, in Mr. Lowry's opinion, is a philosophy which negates the value of life on a strictly human level.

The second thesis "Aldous Huxley: The Defeat of Youth", written by Hermann C. Bowersox², deals mainly with Huxley's poetry. According to Mr. Bowersox, the early poems show that Huxley's main concern is with the old problem of disparity between what is, and what should be, between real and ideal. The poetry attempts to reconcile this disparity in life. Mr. Bowersox contends that the poetry contains the basic subject matter of everything Huxley has written and forecasts Huxley's development as a mystic. Mysticism is Huxley's solution to the problem of disparity, but Mr. Bowersox suggests it is not a real solution, but merely a shifting of the problem to a plane of no existence.

The third dissertation, "Aldous Huxley: The Development of a Mystic",³ deals only with Huxley as a developing mystic, not with his interest in mysticism. The thesis postulates that Huxley is a mystic. This being the case, Mr. Dykstra assumes that a study of everything Huxley has written should reveal how a mystic develops, and he proceeds to summarize and survey in chronological order Huxley's total literary output to 1957. He makes no attempt to explain the phenomena of mysticism nor to evaluate Huxley as a mystic in terms of other mystics such as Saint John of the Cross or Jacob Boehme, or in terms of what other reputable students of mysticism such as Evelyn Underhill, Dean Inge, or William James have said. Mr. Dykstra does not show how Huxley's interest in mysticism might compare with either the

2 Hermann C. Bowersox, "Aldous Huxley: The Defeat of Youth", Graduate College, University of Chicago, Illinois, June, 1943.

3 Emanuel David Dykstra, "Aldous Huxley: The Development of a Mystic", Graduate College, State University of Iowa, August, 1957, Microfilm.

Christian or the Oriental mysticism or with the religion of mysticism in general. The thesis is essentially a chronological summary of Huxley's development as a mystic.

Huxley's interest in mysticism has stimulated a host of critical articles and seems to be the least understood phase of Huxley's development. Few critics have attempted to see any real unity in Huxley's works, or to see that the novelist and mystic are one and the same man. G.K. Chesterton placed Huxley among the "witty, brilliant and fashionable bankrupts",⁴ and considered him only as a destructive mocker and an idol smasher with no positive aims. The serious interest in mysticism that marked Huxley's very early short stories seems to have been totally missed by readers and critics alike. As early as 1924 in the story, "Uncle Spencer", Huxley wrote, "Now it is possible - it is, indeed, almost necessary - for a man of science to be also a mystic."⁵ Yet, in spite of this and many similar remarks scattered through the early fiction and essays, reviewers and critics seemed in 1936 to be surprised by the exposition of mysticism contained in the novel, Eyeless in Gaza. Mr. Grube writes of this novel as "clearly a new start, a reorientation in the literary, as also, one imagines, in the personal life of the author".⁶ Newton Arvin speaks of Huxley's "about face", his "change of front".⁷ The general feeling expressed by most critics in 1936 was that Huxley had experienced a sudden conversion as a result of his acquaintance with Gerald Heard. The conversion was regretted, for it was thought to have changed the brilliant young sceptic into a somewhat dull mystic. A new

4 G.K. Chesterton, "The End of the Moderns", London Mercury, vol. 27 (January 1933), pp. 228-233.

5 Aldous Huxley, "Uncle Spencer", Little Mexican, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948 (1st ed. 1924), p. 78.

6 G.M.A. Grube, "Philosophy of Balance", Canadian Forum, vol. 16 (September 1936), p. 25.

7 Newton Arvin, "Huxley's New Novel", New Republic, vol. 88 (August 19, 1936), p. 51.

fashionable view questions the sincerity of the mysticism and represents Huxley as something of a fake yogi. Professor King, however, protests against the "Academic smart alecks [who] like to represent Huxley today as sitting out in the California desert, contemplating his navel, and thinking about the identity of Atman with Brahman".⁸

The adverse criticism of Huxley during the twenty-five years since Chesterton described him as a "fashionable bankrupt" seems to fall into three classifications: that which asserts Huxley's sudden conversion; that which deplores or discredits his mysticism; that which attacks what it considered Huxley's morbid interest in disparaging life because it contains manifestations that are unattractive. The examples which follow (arranged chronologically rather than according to types) show that critical opinion changed very little during the past twenty-five years, and also that, because it failed either to recognize the consistency of Huxley's development, or to estimate his work as a whole, it tended to be superficial.

Messrs. Kunitz and Haycraft, editors of Twentieth Century Authors, in a thumbnail sketch of Huxley written in 1942, claim that "his thought and work may be divided into two sharp chronological sections, the change coming somewhere between 1930 and 1935".⁹ To illustrate the current criticism of Huxley, they quote from William Soskin and David Daiches. Soskin writes of Huxley,

8 Carlyle A. King, "Aldous Huxley's Way to God", Queens Quarterly, vol. 61 (Spring 1954), p. 80.

9 S.J. Kunitz and H. Haycraft, eds., "Huxley, Aldous Leonard", Twentieth Century Authors, New York, H.W. Wilson Company, 1942, p. 699.

...he adopts a rather childish manner of revulsion against phenomena, people, and manners which most men, perhaps healthier but no less sensitive men, can accept quite humanly. Mr. Huxley's manifestation of learning and wit are impressive. His personality... is not.¹⁰

David Daiches writes,

Huxley, starting with a preconceived romantic view of life, turns to disillusioned satire on finding that life as it is lived by his contemporaries does not justify his view.... [He comforts himself in the end] with a personal mysticism, a romantic view that will not require to be tested by the facts.¹¹

Messrs. Kunitz and Haycraft conclude their sketch by pointing out that "the severity of the criticism Aldous Huxley meets is a gauge of his proved ability". They say the critics are mistaken in demanding more of the early satire when obviously Huxley has grown beyond that type of thing.

William York Tindall, in an article published in 1942, dismisses rather caustically the Huxley-Heard association:

But after composing their manifestoes, master and disciple retired to California where, when they are not walking with Greta Garbo or writing for the cinema, they eat nuts and lettuce perhaps and inoffensively meditate, Huxley in Hollywood and Heard on a convenient mountainside.¹²

Mr. Tindall asserts that these "wisemen from the East" have only a vegetable diet, a method of yoga, and Buddhistic contemplation to offer as a solution to modern man's dilemma - a most inadequate offering in his opinion.¹³

10 William Soskin, quoted in Kunitz and Haycraft, p. 699.

11 David Daiches, quoted in Kunitz and Haycraft, p. 699.

12 William York Tindall, "The Trouble with Aldous Huxley", American Scholar, vol. 11 (Autumn 1942), pp. 452-464.

13 William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1956, New York, Vintage Books, 1956, pp. 172-175.

Norman Nicholson seems to agree with Mr. Tindall that Huxley writing as a mystic has little of a constructive nature to offer to a contemporary reader. Mr. Nicholson claims that Huxley's development is progressive but insincere. The progression is totally in the direction of negating human value whereas it should be affirmative. According to Mr. Nicholson,

(Huxley) has taken up the Manichean heresy, so attractive and dangerous to some minds, that the material world is of itself evil and that salvation is possible only by escape from it.¹⁴

Derek Savage, also, considers that Huxley's development is progressive only in negation. Huxley, he says, continues from a negative philosophy of futility into a negative philosophy of mysticism - of non-attachment. Writing in 1952, and using After Many a Summer (1939), as his source of information, he claims that "Huxley's mysticism is...a-historical, anti-personal and atheistic". Huxley talks, he says, of the futility of life on the strictly human level, and can suggest as a way out only a total withdrawal from human life to the level of eternity.¹⁵

Some of the critics have not seen a consistent development either in Huxley's supporting of spiritual values or in his denying of ordinary human values. They simply assume that there is no relation between the Huxley of the early novels and the Huxley of the period following 1937. Harold H. Watts, Professor of English at Purdue University, wrote in 1950 that Huxley settled permanently in California in 1937 and "subsequently became interested in mysticism".¹⁶ Dr. Watts has not even bothered to give the correct facts

14 Norman Nicholson, "Aldous Huxley and the Mystics", Fortnightly, vol. 161 (February 1947), p. 134.

15 Derek S. Savage, The Withered Branch, New York, Pellegrini and Cudaby, 1952, pp. 150-151.

16 Harold H. Watts, "Aldous Huxley", Colliers Encyclopedia, New York, P.F. Collier and Son Corporation, Publishers, 1950, vol. 10, p. 295.

of Huxley's life. Huxley did not settle in California until 1939, and those critics who see Huxley's interest in mysticism as the result of a conversion fix the conversion period as falling between 1930 and 1936. If such an interest in mysticism was a sudden departure for Huxley, the evidence seems to support the contention that he became interested in it prior, not subsequent, to 1937.

In 1955, The London Magazine, in an attempt to get some accurate critical evaluation of Huxley, presented a critical symposium. A number of distinguished and reputable critics contributed articles. These indicated that the critics were less impressed by Huxley's interest in mysticism than by his horrified fascination with the physical functions of the human body. Evelyn Waugh gives unstinting praise to Antic Hay as a novel. Angus Wilson praises all the early novels as "house party novels" and novels of discussion or conversation, but admits that the "pathological wallowing in physical disgust" in Point Counter Point and Eyeless in Gaza bored him. Francis Wyndham feels that Huxley's treatment of sex verges on pornography, but he sees the emergence of the teacher from the early novels. John Wain, writing of After Many a Summer, sees no relation between the sex activities described and those of a "normally poised human being". Mr. Wain sees the novel mainly as a tract against materialism. Peter Quennell finds that "no intermediate stage between the ecstatic and the repulsive" exists in a Huxley novel, but Huxley's treatment of sex, if somewhat distorted and ugly and allowing for no harmless human pleasures, at least serves to electrify his audience for more serious discussion.¹⁷

17 "A Critical Symposium on Aldous Huxley", The London Magazine, vol. 2 (August 1955), pp. 51-64.

The more serious discussion is, of course, of mysticism. John Atkins, in his book, published as late as 1956, and in spite of having made a comprehensive literary analysis of everything Huxley had written, still speaks of Huxley's "sudden conversion". Huxley inhabited this practical world, claims Mr. Atkins, "until the Perennial Philosophy routed him out with the violence of a high explosive".¹⁸

Considering Mr. Atkins as a representative critic in 1956, it becomes apparent that what the critics are saying now about Huxley's adoption of mysticism is very little different from what they said in 1936. Huxley himself has continued to grow and develop as a thinker and writer, but the critics seem to have failed to keep pace with him. On the whole the idea of a sudden conversion still seems prevalent in the minds of most readers and critics. Such a view can be held only by those who look at the outside of the man and his works. They may see only his disguise. Gumbriel, in Antic Hay, warns against this very thing. "Every man is ludicrous if you look at him from the outside, without taking into account what is going on in his heart and mind". Not all his critics, however, have failed to take into account what is going on in Huxley's heart and mind. Charles I. Glicksberg attempts to see Huxley as both artist and mystic. He writes,

For a man is all of a piece; he is not first an acidulous satirist, given to mordant observations on character and conduct, definitely amused by the spectacle of the world's incredible follies, seemingly nihilistic in attitude, and then suddenly a saint who has renounced the pleasure of the world and adopted an ascetic, mystical philosophy.¹⁹

Mr. Glicksberg is inclined to accept the idea that Huxley went through a

18 John Atkins, Aldous Huxley, London, John Calder (Publishers) Limited, 1956, p. 16.

19 Charles I. Glicksberg, "Aldous Huxley: Art and Mysticism", Prairie Schooner, vol. 27 (1953), p. 346.

conversion period in the thirties, but he does attempt to see some overall unity in Huxley's development as a creative artist, suggesting that Huxley's best novels, the early ones, were the product of his intensive search for religious unity. According to Mr. Glicksberg, Huxley's early fiction and essays, as well as everything he has written since 1936, furnish a faithful documentary of his intense inner struggle to achieve spiritual progress. Huxley has all his life been engaged in a search for truth.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to establish that Huxley's interest in mysticism is the result of a gradual and consistent development completely compatible with his psycho-physical constitution, his heredity and his environment. This thesis will furthermore suggest that there was no sudden conversion period, but that throughout Huxley's writing, he has made a determined effort to answer "the only question that really matters". Huxley himself voices the question:

The only question that really matters, the only question whose correct answer can exert a civilizing influence on the future specialist, is the question asked by Buddha and Jesus, by Lao-tsu and Socrates, by Job and Aeschylus, and Chaucer and Shakespeare and Dostoevsky, by every philosopher, every mystic, every great artist; Who am I and what, if anything, can I do about it? ²⁰

To say that Huxley has found a final answer to his question would be to misrepresent the situation, since "The process of becoming is a circle; the process of becoming more, of growth, is a spiral".²¹ Huxley continues to spiral upward in his search for ultimate truth. His interest in mysticism is not "some weak finality", it is part of a gradual growth towards wholeness.

20 Aldous Huxley, "Censorship and Spoken Literature", Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1952, p. 125.

21 Christmas Humphries, Buddhism, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1951, p. 23.

Huxley is still living and writing in California and his close affiliation with the Vedanta Association of California seems to indicate a continuing search for truth.

As well as attempting to trace the gradual growth of Huxley's interest in mysticism, this thesis will attempt also to answer the critics who charge that Huxley's mystical doctrine is a complete withdrawal from life and a negative thing. An attempt will be made to evaluate Huxley's views of mysticism by seeing them in the light of accepted authorities on mysticism. The thesis, however, does not pretend to claim for Huxley a position, even as a lesser apostle, in the company of the great saints and mystics of history. Evelyn Underhill says that,

Mysticism is the art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment.²²

The evidence, then, seems to indicate that if Huxley is a mystic, he could be that individual who would aim at and believe in such attainment. Essentially, the thesis endeavours to show that Huxley's mystical inclinations have been a consistent growth, a spiralling upward in a continuing search for that ultimate "union with Reality". By tracing Huxley's progress along the "mystic way", however, an attempt will be made to illustrate what one might call a "mystic norm" and the extent to which Huxley deviates from this norm.

It follows that in dealing with such a prolific writer as Huxley certain limitations have to be placed arbitrarily on the volumes which will be discussed. No reference will be made to Huxley's poetry. As Mr. Webster

²² Evelyn Underhill, Practical Mysticism, London, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1914, p. 3.

shows in a capable article, it can be seen as a microcosm of the macrocosm.²³ Certain poems forecast an interest in mysticism, while others can be seen as evidence that Huxley at least experienced Illumination in his search for the divine Ground.

This thesis is directly and chiefly concerned with the ways in which Huxley's interest in mysticism and his knowledge about it have shown themselves in his writing. The limits of space have made it impossible to discuss in any detail the important question of what artistic success Huxley has achieved in dealing with such material. The concern here is to see Huxley's interest in mysticism as a major and consistent development, and to evaluate this interest. Again, no attempt will be made to trace this development through a chronological study of all his publications. That has already been done in detail by Mr. Atkins and Mr. Dykstra and more superficially in a plethora of periodical articles. Rather, Chapter I will deal with biographic details which tend to establish Huxley's psycho-physical type within a framework of classifications that he accepts. Chapter II will concern itself with a discussion of mysticism in general, and then with Huxley's interest in mysticism, in an attempt to show its most important characteristics. Chapter III will attempt, however, to trace through his fiction Huxley's developing interest in mysticism. The growth will be measured by the framework of Miss Underhill's Five-fold Mystic Way in order to see the extent to which Huxley deviates from the mystic norm. Chapter IV will discuss Huxley's latest publications in an effort to show his interest in mysticism has influenced his present tendencies toward both moralism and empiricism.

23 H.C. Webster, "Aldous Huxley: Notes on a Moral Evolution", South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. 45 (1946), pp. 372-383.

CHAPTER ONE

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point, writes in his notebook, "But then I never pretended to be a congenital novelist". Alexander Henderson accepts Quarles as a partial portrait of Huxley himself and suggests that Huxley, too, is not a congenital novelist, but rather a congenital essayist who uses a prose style most easily adapted to reflection and rumination.¹ If it can be said that Huxley is a congenital essayist, much of the "reflection and rumination" in Huxley's prose seems to indicate that he could be considered also as a congenital mystic, or at least, as a person with an inherent interest in mysticism.

While much of Huxley's writing can be seen as simply the natural activity of a lively and erudite mind engaged in the entertainment of others, it becomes apparent, upon closer inspection, that Huxley's primary purpose in writing is to clarify his own views; the secondary purpose is to assume or edify others who encounter problems similar to his own. In all of the early collections of essays, On the Margin, Along the Road, Jesting Pilate, Proper Studies, and Do What You Will, it seems fairly obvious that Huxley is consciously casting about for what will be his main subject. He constantly challenges the old accepted values, the orthodox attitudes to life and religion. "Only those who are congenitally very mystical", says Huxley, "ever think of challenging the familiar matter-of-fact

¹ Alexander Henderson, Aldous Huxley, New York and London, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936, p. 68.

views about nature".² In challenging such views, Huxley is in the process of discovering what his true subject will be. Do What You Will, published in 1929, makes it clear that Huxley's subject is "man's spiritual nature" -- the subject of a man mystically inclined. Everything in his nature, his heredity, his environment, his thoughts and actions, contributes to making the things of the spirit Huxley's major concern.

In Proper Studies, Huxley stresses the idea that a writer cannot write with equal fluency on every subject and that not only his choice of subject and material but also his choice of the method of treatment is bound to be coloured, prejudiced and distorted by the writer's own nature. "We have", he writes, "our inborn idiosyncrasies, our acquired sentiments, prejudices, scales of value; it is impossible for any man to transcend himself".³ Such factors as class and money help to fix, not the nature of the individual's talent and intelligence, but the way in which such innate endowments will be used, and the ends the individual will set for himself.

This theme of the limitations imposed by nature on the amount of change which man can effect in himself is picked up again in Ends and Means.

Huxley tells us that,

...what we think determines what we are and do, and conversely, what we are and do determines what we think. False ideas result in wrong action; and the man who makes a habit of wrong action thereby limits his field of consciousness and makes it impossible to think certain thoughts.⁴

² Aldous Huxley, Proper Studies, London, Chatto and Windus, 1929 (First ed. 1927), p. 85.

³ Ibid., p. xvii.

⁴ Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, London, Chatto and Windus, 1937, p. 329.

In order to avoid false ideals and wrong action, man must constantly use what Huxley calls "intellectual caution" in his responses both to himself and to the outer world. An individual's first responsibility is to become as discriminating as possible within the limitations of his type of personality.

In Proper Studies (1927), Huxley believed it was impossible for man to transcend himself. By 1936, however, when he wrote Ends and Means, Huxley, although apparently still cleaving to the theory that man is limited by both his heredity and his environment, begins to modify his opinion that man could not transcend himself. He writes,

What we perceive and understand depends upon what we are; and what we are depends partly on circumstances, partly and more profoundly, on the nature of the efforts we have made to realize our ideal and the nature of the ideal we have tried to realize.⁵

Considering mysticism as a goal, Huxley admits that the individual not congenitally mystical will have great difficulty in attaining a full mystical life. In fact, the non-mystic cannot understand the mystic's intuitions or experiences, but by being intellectually cautious, he will avoid being trapped by something less than true mysticism. If a considerable effort is made, he can train himself at least to appreciate the philosophy of mysticism if not to experience the mystic state itself. By training in "awareness" and "meditation", the non-mystic can come to understand the mystic's experience precisely as a non-musically inclined person can learn to understand music. The depth of understanding, like the extent of a person's knowledge,

⁵ Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, London, Chatto and Windus, 1937, p. 288.

whether it be knowledge of mysticism, music or mathematics, is strictly proportionate to his innate nature. A man is limited by hereditary and environmental factors not only in what he knows and in his choice of an ideal, but also in the extent to which he can realize the ideal. As Bruno explains to Sebastian,

Knowledge is proportionate to being.... You know in virtue of what you are; and what you are depends on three factors: what you've inherited, what your surroundings have done to you, and what you've chosen to do with your surroundings and your inheritance.⁶

Huxley's concern with the problem of heredity and environment points to the fact that, essentially, Huxley is trying to answer the question, "Who am I and what, if anything, can I do about it?" In the essays in Proper Studies (1927), he suggests that even if man does answer the first half of the question "Who am I?", he can do very little about it. At that time, Huxley thought it impossible for man to transcend himself. Ten years later, in the essays in Ends and Means, he modifies his opinion and admits that man can transcend himself within certain limits. In the chapter, "Religion and Temperament", in The Perennial Philosophy (1945), Huxley summarizes what seems to be the culmination of his thinking on the whole problem of "being". According to him congenitally, by psycho-physical constitution, we are each of us born into a particular position on the horizontal plane. Movement towards the extremities of self-transcendence -- that is, towards either the mystic state or towards the state of sub-humanity -- is limited by one's "psycho-physical make-up".

It is impossible for one kind of physical constitution to transform itself into another kind; and the particular temperament associated with a given physical constitution can be modified only within narrow

⁶ Aldous Huxley, Time Must Have A Stop, New York and London, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944, p. 251.

limits. With the best will in the world and the best social environment, all that anyone can hope to do is to make the best of his congenital psycho-physical make-up; to change the fundamental patterns of constitution and temperament is beyond his power.⁷

Huxley's "congenital theory" can be illustrated by examining Huxley's own career. His heredity, environment, and what he has thought and done provide ample evidence for the suggestion that Huxley, while striving to learn completely to transcend his own ego, while trying to move to an extreme of spirituality, has only been realizing an ideal consistent with his psycho-physical make-up; he has never changed the basic patterns of his temperament or constitution. He has from birth had the potentiality, the in-bred capacity to make spiritual interests dominant throughout his life.

Aldous Huxley was born July 26, 1894. His relatives and ancestors constitute a most distinguished family of intellectuals. His father was Dr. Leonard Huxley, teacher, editor, and man of letters. His eldest brother is the eminent biologist, Sir Julian Huxley. His grandfather was Thomas Henry Huxley, scientist and famous popularizer of Darwin's evolutionary theory. His mother, Julia Arnold, had a no less distinguished ancestry than her husband. Through her, Huxley was the grand-nephew of the poet and writer, Matthew Arnold, and the great grandson of the formidable moralist, headmaster of Rugby, Dr. Thomas Arnold. He was also, on the Arnold side of the family, a nephew of the novelist Mrs. Humphrey Ward, who greatly influenced him in the field of art. Huxley's background seems to account for two main strains in his development - first an interest in science and a tendency to test any

⁷ Aldous Huxley, Perennial Philosophy, New York and London, Harper and Brothers, 1945, p. 117.

theory empirically; second, a reflective and moralistic habit of mind. His home life doubtless gave an early impetus to his search for truth, but where was he to look for Truth -- in science, in religion, or in art?

A total lack of details and anecdotes concerning Huxley's childhood, youth and intimate personal life, testifies to the man's natural reticence and shyness. Much of Huxley's personality and character can be inferred from the somewhat autobiographical, main characters in his fiction. As the fiction will be discussed in a later chapter, I shall refrain from deducing any biography from it now, and shall discuss only those biographical details definitely recorded. In the essay on Biran, Huxley tells of his excruciating shyness as a child. He describes the horrible embarrassment Biran experienced while meeting Louis XVIII and recalls what he himself suffered as a boy of five or six when Edward VII unveiled a statue of his grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley.⁸

A tendency to shyness and introversion was heightened considerably when, at the age of sixteen, Huxley became almost totally blind from an attack of keratitis punctata. This ended abruptly his studies at Eton and his plans for a career in medicine. During a period of his life in which he might have participated in typical English games and sociability, he was of necessity restricted to a completely reflective life. The blindness which isolated him and threw him on his inner resources lasted nearly three years. In the first eighteen months he learned braille, but then his sight improved. He began using a magnifying glass and finally progressed to thick-lensed spectacles. Unable to see well enough to become a doctor,

8. Aldous Huxley, Themes and Variations, London, Chatto and Windus, 1954 (first ed. 1950), p. 23.

Huxley turned to English studies at Oxford. There the young Huxley cut rather a lonely figure at a university whose male population was depleted by the war. In 1915 at the age of twenty-one, Huxley took first class honours in English literature at Balliol College, Oxford. During the war he tried a little teaching and cut down trees as part of civilian war work. In 1919, he married Maria Nys, a Belgian refugee. That same year he went to work on the staff of The Athenaeum, edited by J. Middleton-Murry, whom he later lampooned as a religious hypocrite and sexual pervert in Point Counter Point.

The war had completely shattered the illusions of those who had been brought up to believe in the old Nineteenth Century ideals. A deeply sensitive young man, Huxley determined to clean out the sludge of hypocrisy that he found about him and began to attack viciously those traditions of his environment that he found hypocritical or inadequate. He decried the Victorian morality of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the scientific materialism of Thomas Huxley, and the interest in the "higher criticism" and belief in patriotism of Mrs. Ward. Disillusioned by the discrepancy between life as represented and life as lived, he could find no code, no pattern, no truth on which to fix, and hence he adopted a stubborn sceptical relativism proclaiming that "no phenomenon is truer or better than another". With such early publications as Crome Yellow (1921), and Antic Hay (1923), he became labelled as the spokesman of a "lost generation", and earned such epithets as "incorrigibly sceptical", "elegantly irreverent", "amusingly clever".

All Huxley's disparagement of Victorian society indicated one thing -- that he was desperately in search of something that would give life meaning.

Like Guy in his story "Happily Ever After" who sees himself as "intellectually a Voltairian", and "emotionally a Bunyanite",⁹ Huxley never succeeded in suppressing his religious emotions. The salvationist in him craved spiritual food; the intellect sought scientific proof. He was struggling to heal the rift in his soul, to effect in himself a compromise between the moralist and the scientist, the spirit and the intellect.

By 1924, at the age of thirty, Huxley had a well-established literary reputation. He had produced six volumes of note: two books of poetry, two collections of short stories, and two novels. That year he moved to Italy, preferring, as he said, "sunlight to literary company", but the literary company was there as well. Huxley had met D.H. Lawrence first in 1915; he was immediately drawn to Lawrence's dominating personality and attracted by Lawrence's knowledge in some of the new religious cults. Huxley's interest in spiritualism and occultism had been made apparent in Crome Yellow by his taking the trouble to satirize Annie Besant as Mrs. Wimbush who bet on the horses according to their horoscopes, by his laughing at Barbecue-Smith and his Pipe-Lines to the Infinite. Huxley's interest in spiritualism was stimulated by Lawrence's occult dabblings; Lawrence was already acquainted with Madame Blavatsky, Mrs. Besant, and James M. Pryse, a famous Los Angeles yogi, and was generally informed about the doctrines of theosophy.¹⁰ Lawrence was not a devotee of any of the new religions. His concern, however, with the things of the spirit and his hope of escaping from the bondage of cities and conventions in order to live simply fascinated

⁹ Aldous Huxley, "Happily Ever After", Limbo, London, Chatto and Windus, 1928, (First ed. 1920), p. 172.

¹⁰ William York Tindall, "The Trouble with Aldous Huxley", American Scholar, vol. II (Autumn 1942), pp. 452-464.

Huxley. He allowed Lawrence to persuade him to a scheme that Huxley's intellectual caution warned him would never work. Reporting the incident later, Huxley writes,

Before tea was over he asked me if I would join the colony, and though I was an intellectually cautious young man, not at all inclined to enthusiasms, though Lawrence had startled and embarrassed me with sincerities of a kind to which my upbringing had not accustomed me, I answered yes.¹¹

Lawrence had plans for setting up in Florida a Utopian society of enlightened intellectuals who could there escape cynicism and civilization by living in a "state of primitive transcendentalism". But the time was not yet ripe for Huxley to come completely under Lawrence's influence. He had first to go "round about" in his own search. The year 1925 saw the Huxleys beginning a world cruise which took them to India and resulted in their spending a greater part of their travelling time in that country.

Jesting Pilate, on the surface a collection of travel essays, was the result of the trip. Huxley had been anxious to investigate the religions of India; hence, the most frequently recurring and, in fact, the unifying theme in the essays is his interest in and comparison of the religious beliefs and customs he encountered. Huxley was appalled at the superstition and the ridiculousness; not to mention the hypocrisy, of the outward ramifications of most religions. As he moved southward from Italy at the outset of his journey, he rather sarcastically compared the Northerners' fastidiousness in religious ceremony with the Southerners' ability to overlook certain discordant notes in their ritual.

¹¹ Aldous Huxley, "Introduction" to The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, New York, The Viking Press, 1936, p. xxix.

In church, the priest may gabble, as though he were trying to break a world's record, the acolytes may pick their noses, the choir-boys sing out of tune, the vergers spit; we Northerners are revolted, but the wisely indulgent Southerner passes over these trivial details, and enjoys the fine general effect of the ecclesiastical ballet in spite of its little blemishes.¹²

Most of the religions have a propensity for overlooking the "blemishes". People were fundamentally the same whether they were Pygmies or Europeans and could accept anything under the guise of religion. Huxley discovered a group of Javanese who called themselves Moslems, though at heart they were animists, and though they also worshipped the reproductive principle in nature. An old cylindrical cannon served as the symbol. In the natives' minds "an immemorial phallism (had) crystallised round the old gun, transforming it from a mere brass tube into a potent deity".¹³ The Indians with their sacred cows and absurd rituals were no better.

Huxley's intellect revolted against all he saw. He speaks of the travellers' desire to leave the "Beaten Track" in the hope of finding the "phantom which perpetually eludes them", of discovering "some mode of life that is somehow fundamentally different from any mode with which they are familiar", and of their constant disappointment in finding that life is, at bottom, the same wherever they go. In spite of his disappointment, Huxley admits that "I went on longing to get behind that wall of green; I went on believing, in the teeth of my own denials, that there was something miraculous and extraordinary in the other side".¹⁴

12 Aldous Huxley, Jesting Pilate, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948, (First ed. 1926), p. 18.

13 Ibid., p. 182.

14 Ibid., p. 179.

Although here Huxley was speaking of his experiences and feelings on the physical journey, his comments seem applicable to his spiritual journey. He went to India in search of a religion in which he could believe; his intellect rejected the superstition, the sham spirituality and hypocrisy which he recognized in both civilized and uncivilized countries; yet, in spite of the disappointment he went on believing that there might be "something miraculous...in the other side". In spite of his failure to find something different, some religion in which he could believe, Huxley begins to retract some of his early statements concerning the concept of God. The idea of an anthropomorphic deity is ridiculous to Huxley, but he now believes that something exists which goes beyond the idea of a personal god. Huxley sees the danger of thinking of God as a person. Because man makes God in the likeness of man, God is given the limitations of man. Science, and, in particular, the theory of evolution, has enabled man to advance beyond a belief in an anthropomorphic god. In time, Huxley thinks, science may help us to know about Reality what Gautama knew 2500 years ago, but he is forced to admit frankly that when one is in a country like India, with its religion, its spirituality, and its dirt, Ford may appear to be a greater man than Buddha. "One is all for religion until one visits a really religious country. There one is all for drains, machinery and the minimum wage." ¹⁵ Huxley thinks about the Quakers and their religion of the "Simple Life". He sees it as the ideal, but recognizes that such a religion is "the luxury of the refined few"; it could come into being only because of the advantages of a high civilisation; it accepts the mechanical achievements of Ford without destroying Buddha. Huxley's interest in Quakerism is renewed ten

¹⁵ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 214.

years later when he associates with Gerald Heard.

In the meantime, Huxley can only accept the diversity which exists in men's religions, moral codes and governments, and yet he persists in the paradoxical certainty that a oneness underlies the diversity. A common thread seems to him to run through all the values of mankind. "Goodness, beauty, wisdom and knowledge, with the human possessors of these qualities, the human creators of things and thoughts endowed with them, have always and everywhere been honoured."¹⁶ This awareness of the existence of a set of values which is accepted in some form by all men forecasts the belief expressed in The Perennial Philosophy, but Huxley has a long way to go before he can effect a conciliation between the demands of his spirit and those of his intellect.

For the next ten years the intellect dominated. Huxley had returned from his world cruise still unable to answer satisfactorily the question, "Who am I and what, if anything, can I do about it?" He had found no spiritual home; nowhere had he found any real meaning in life. Back in Europe in 1926 he renewed his acquaintance with D.H. Lawrence, and made an effort to accept Lawrence's "Doctrine of Cosmic Pointlessness":

There is no point. Life and Love are life and love, a bunch of violets is a bunch of violets, and to drag in the idea of a point is to ruin everything. Live and let live, love and let love, flower and fade, and follow the natural curve, which flows on, pointless.¹⁷

¹⁶ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 290.

¹⁷ Aldous Huxley (ed.), The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, by D.H. Lawrence, New York, The Viking Press, 1936, p. xviii.

Huxley attempted to follow Mr. Lawrence's advice, to stop meddling with religion and eternity, to occupy himself fully in the present. In occupying himself fully in the present, Huxley was free to explore the way of life recommended by Mr. Lawrence, what Huxley himself termed the life of "balanced excesses" or integral living.

Huxley concerned himself more and more with the physical side of man's being. He had hinted in Jesting Pilate that morality and religion were based on little more than the business of health. Lechery, for example, had not been considered a deadly sin until syphilis became rampant. Now that modern science has a cure for the disease a much more lenient attitude is taken towards the sin.¹⁸ In Proper Studies Huxley elaborates the theory that man is the victim of his physical type. It is possible to place most people in one of two main classes -- the extroverts or the introverts, the Marthas or the Marys, those interested in action or those interested in contemplation, the visualizers or the non-visualizers. An individual from either group is given the raw material that is used in building up a personality. A man is not entirely his own artist or builder, but his personality is a product of his own and other, deliberate, human effort. Nature gives man a start and conscious man takes over, but hunger, sex, seasonal changes and bodily illnesses affect man physically and mentally; he is not, therefore, in complete control of his development. "(The) fluctuations in the body's activity...", says Huxley, "...have a direct effect on the accompanying mind..."¹⁹

Huxley's study of natural science led him to the very bitter conclusion

18 Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 181 ff.

19 Huxley, Proper Studies, p. 237.

that our philosophy of life, our moods and our aspirations are entirely determined by the state of our ductless glands and viscera. Huxley describes Pascal's worship of Death as a "neuralgia-metaphysic"; Proust's invalidism produced an "asthma-philosophy."²⁰ In an essay on El Greco in Music At Night, Huxley denies the suggestion that El Greco's genius is the result of poor vision, but he does not deny that El Greco's defective eyesight may have enabled the artist to express a strange feeling about a mysterious philosophy. Similarly, many men of genius are affected by their illnesses, physical or mental. El Greco suffered from defective vision; Dostoevsky, epilepsy; Keats, tuberculosis.²¹ Huxley himself shows so much concern with "bowels" not only in the El Greco essay but also in his fiction and again in Grey Eminence and The Devils of Loudun, that one might conclude that Huxley's own development might have been affected by constipation. Be that as it may, Huxley could not long accept a view of life which explained everything in terms of psychology and physiology. At the basis of all man's activity, the processes of nature, and the voluntary and involuntary manifestations of will, of purpose, of destiny in the world and universe, Huxley saw a certain mystery.

Lawrence had advised leaving the mystery or riddle alone; he advised accepting each impulse from the vernal wood. His desire to set up a Utopian society in Florida seems to indicate a condemnation of the excessive intellectuality and the total reliance on scientific truth so apparent in the civilized world. Lawrence recommended what Huxley interpreted as "integral living". He accepted the activities of the intellect, the spirit, and the blood, but he did not want them isolated. Excessive cerebration was meaningless, but intellectual activity which was rooted in man's organic being enriched life.

²⁰ Aldous Huxley, "Pascal," Do What You Will, London, Chatto and Windus, 1929, p. 261.

²¹ Aldous Huxley, "El Greco," Music At Night, London, Chatto and Windus, 1949, (First ed. 1931), p. 61.

Similarly, he did not deny scientific truth, but he also recognized that a truth existed which could be known only intuitively and felt only in the "solar plexus". On the other hand, pure spirituality he disliked and dis-trusted as much as abstract knowledge.

Lawrence's influence on Huxley was very considerable. He gave Huxley the courage to believe in his spiritual self and frequently reminded him that he indulged the intellectual side of himself excessively. Accepting Lawrence's view of "integral living", Huxley attempted to work out what he called a "life-worshipper's creed". He elaborates this creed in Point Counter Point and again in an essay on Pascal in Do What You Will.

According to Huxley, the life worshipper's fundamental assumption is that life on this planet is valuable in itself. He does not bother himself about higher or lower realities. His next assumption is that the end of life is more life. The life worshipper embraces all diversities in life; he does not moderate his exuberances; he does not aim at homogeneous living, but rather at achieving a vital equilibrium of "balanced excesses" of the different sides of his nature. As Huxley summarizes:

The aim of the life-worshipper is to combine the advantages of balanced moderation and excess. The moderate Aristotelian partially realizes all his potentialities; the man of excess fully realizes part of his potentialities; the life-worshipper aims at fully realizing all -- at living, fully and excessively living, with every one of his colony of souls. He aspires to balance excess of self-consciousness and intelligence by an excess of intuition, of instinctive and visceral living; to remedy the ill effects of too much contemplation by those of too much sociability, too much enjoyment by too much asceticism... In a word, he will accept each of his selves, as it appears in his consciousness, as his momentarily true self. 22

22 Aldous Huxley, "Pascal", Do What You Will, Chatto and Windus, 1949, (First ed. 1929), p. 282.

Huxley names Burns, Blake, Rubens, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Chaucer, Rabelais and Montaigne as models of life-worshippers. He claims that the life-worshipper was the representative man during the Renaissance. Apparently certain epochs have been more conducive to the life of "balanced excesses" than others.

The theory of "life-worshipping" or Huxley's theory of integral living appears reasonably sane, and Huxley does seem to have attempted to become a life-worshipper. Certainly he has at times been excessively intelligent, excessively religious, but the evidence does not seem to support a suggestion that he has ever been excessively emotional. He admits that he would willingly "bovaryze" (a term he uses to mean alternate between the various aspects of his personality) and become a real life-worshipper, but he seems to have little success. If Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point is accepted as, at least, a partial portrait of Huxley, then, Huxley seems to be aware of his own inability to become a life-worshipper. Quarles, concerned mainly with his excessive intellectuality, writes in his notebook,

Shall I ever have the strength of mind to break myself of these indolent habits of intellectualism and devote my energies to the more serious and difficult task of living integrally? And even if I did try to break these habits, shouldn't I find that heredity was at the bottom of them and that I was congenitally incapable of living wholly and harmoniously? 23

Quarles's fear that he was "congenitally incapable of living wholly and harmoniously", suggests that Huxley fears a similar congenital incapacity in himself.

23 Aldous Huxley, Point Counter Point, New York, Random House, The Modern Library Edition, (first ed. 1928), p. 381.

His failure at integral living could be explained by the fact that Huxley is not inherently the life-worshipping type, or by the fact that the temper of the 20th century does not lend itself to life-worshipping. Huxley's belief that certain epochs more than others tend to produce life-worshippers indicates that environment can influence or inhibit their development. On the other hand, Huxley's discussion of Tolstoy seems to indicate the necessity of having a certain inbred capacity in order to become a life-worshipper. Huxley points out that Tolstoy was a life-worshipper only until such time as "he deliberately perverted himself to a death-worshipping consistency". The question arises, did Tolstoy deliberately pervert himself, or was he merely victim of the strongest member of his "colony of souls"? If not congenitally inclined to be a life-worshipper, a man can only become one within limits. He cannot completely force the diversities of his personality into becoming what he is not by nature and innate being. Thus Huxley, like Tolstoy, failed to change himself into a life-worshipper. Rather Huxley's tendency to contemplation seems to have dominated his colony of souls and he has become more of a Boehme than a Chaucer.

Point Counter Point, the novel in which Huxley championed the idea of "life-worship", gives evidence of Huxley's failure to live according to his own creed. Lawrence points up this failure in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell in 1929. Commenting on Point Counter Point, Lawrence wrote, "I feel that only half a man writes the books -- a sort of precarious adolescent. There is surely much more of a man in the real Aldous."²⁴ Lawrence was

²⁴ Lawrence, The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, p. 791.

right: Point Counter Point was written by half a man -- the intellectual half. Huxley had tried to believe in the life-worshipper's creed, and also Lawrence's religion of primitivism, but his belief was an intellectual acceptance. As Huxley admitted in Jesting Pilate, "there is all the difference in the world between believing academically, with the intellect, and believing personally, intimately, with the whole living self".²⁵

Huxley's acceptance of the life-worshipper's creed was never more than academic because his psycho-physical constitution was such that he could not live it personally and intimately. His latent inclination to mysticism was beginning to dominate his life; however, because Huxley had academically recognized the necessity of balanced living, there was slight possibility of his becoming one-sidedly fanatical, or of allowing one of his "souls" to take possession of his "colony of souls". Huxley was inclined by nature most to a contemplative life, but having already academically accepted life-worship, his intellectual caution prevented him from excessively indulging the most dominant soul in his colony; so that when, in his mature life, he fully accepted mysticism it was as a balanced and reasonable individual.

Huxley gained from Lawrence the conviction that a religion, some religion, was necessary for man to live. Both men were groping toward some idea of wholeness in all the phases of man's living. Regrettably, Lawrence was to die in the 1930's, still a young man. Huxley had to continue his search for truth alone, but Lawrence had helped Huxley over the period of negative scepticism; he had prepared the way for Gerald Heard.

²⁵ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 289.

Even before meeting Heard, Huxley was concerning himself with social reform. In essays in Proper Studies and Do What You Will he expresses the opinion that faith is necessary if there is to be a possibility of improving the material and psychological conditions in which men exist and of providing the chance for every individual to live a good life. Man may be limited by heredity and environment, but it is the duty of the state to provide an opportunity for man to realize his potential as nearly as possible, and the duty of the individual to make an effort to achieve this end. Huxley's interest in morality was beginning to show; Heard merely focussed it in a particular direction.

With a growing sense of moral obligation to his fellow man, Huxley felt increasingly concerned at the imminence of another catastrophic war. On October 16, 1934, he read a letter in the London Times in which Canon Dick Sheppard renounced war and asked any who agreed with him to send him a post card. That Huxley sent a post card is not in the least surprising. As a result of Sheppard's letter, a meeting was held in Albert Hall, London, in June, 1935, at which The Peace Pledge Union for the Renunciation of War was formed. Associated with the movement were many such distinguished intellectuals as Sheppard, Bertrand Russell, Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley. Huxley gave unstintingly of his time and money. In 1936 he wrote the pamphlet, What Are You Going To Do About It? asserting the pacifist doctrine of active non-violence which he later developed more fully, in Ends and Means. In 1937, Huxley edited An Encyclopedia of Pacifism.

During this time he was associated closely with Heard's publications, The Ascent of Humanity (1929), The Social Substance of Religion (1931), and The Sources of Civilization (1935). Heard's religion, summarized briefly

from The Source of Civilization, is one of non-violence and non-attachment to the material world and to self. Violence and values can never be compatible. Life can evolve only by sensitiveness and awareness. Therefore, if man is to climb any higher on the human scale and to avoid falling into an abyss of sub-humanity, he must conceive a means of expanding his consciousness in such a way that the individual can transcend his own ego and become aware of his relationship to humanity as a whole. We are, in a quite literal sense, "members of one another". Man's continued existence depends on a recovery of that extra-individuality, "that something not ourselves that makes for righteousness". Our only hope is a psychological revolution in favour of a united consciousness. Our only hope of escape from material destruction and mental derangement is, in plain terms, a new religion, and the new active religion is Pacifism or active non-violence.

Heard's philosophy was not just theory. War was imminent. It became an empirical necessity to do something constructive. Huxley, the intellectual, the moralist, the empiricist, was impressed, and, as William York Tindall points out, Heard's wide experience as a member of the British Society for Psychical Research, his mastery of psychoanalysis, palaeontology, anthropology and physical science, was extremely appealing to Huxley whose interest in spiritualism and occultism had been made apparent by the satire of Mrs. Besant in Crome Yellow. Lawrence had given Huxley some reason to be less sceptical of occult practices, and Heard insisted that his experiences could be scientifically tested.

According to Tindall, Heard shows that man's psychic unity is destroyed by individuality and personality. Excessive awareness of individuality and personality causes conflicts within man and within his society. Reason is

an added curse as it negates intuition and the activity of man's animal sense. This psychic fissure between man, a rational being, and man, an intuitive animal, causes all his sorrows including loneliness and constipation. The division in man's psychic unity can never be remedied by political or economic adjustments. Only a religion that teaches that health and material well-being flow from Right Doctrine can solve man's, and hence the world's, ills. 26

Heard's influence on Huxley was very considerable. Not only did Huxley accept Heard's theory of non-violence and non-attachment, but he joined Heard in 1937 on a trip to the Quaker communities in Pennsylvania, a group in which Huxley had shown interest in Jesting Pilate. The Quakers, they considered, were a group whose religious practices and spiritual attitudes would be most likely to restore psychological harmony to man's whole life and economy. While in America, Huxley and Heard also visited Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where Dr. Rhine was investigating telepathy in the hope of putting extra sensory perception on a more scientific basis. As a result of their travels, Heard wrote The Third Morality, and Huxley wrote Ends and Means.

In Ends and Means, Huxley states that, "like so many of my contemporaries, I took it for granted that there was no meaning [to life]".²⁷ He cannot yet affirm what life does mean, but he is prepared to engage in a study and a way of life which may reveal the ultimate meaning of our existence. He sees the philosophy of non-attachment as the key to transcending one's own ego and the means of coming to know a Spiritual Reality.

26 William York Tindall, "The Trouble With Aldous Huxley", American Scholar, vol. II (Autumn 1942), p. 457.

27 Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 270.

He can accept a philosophy of non-attachment because it appeals to his intellect as well as to his emotions. The greatest argument for the validity of non-attachment is the universality of its acceptance by the great philosophies and the great religions. According to Huxley,

Non-attachment to self and to what are called 'the things of this world' has always been associated in the teachings of the philosophers and the founders of religions with attachment to an ultimate reality greater and more significant than the self. ²⁸

In 1939, Huxley seems ready and anxious to experience "an ultimate reality"; but intellectually, he must be cautious and not involve himself in some fanatical religion. As non-attachment has been preached for three thousand years by Buddha, Lao-Tsu, the Greek Stoics, Jesus and a multitude of philosophers and teachers in their wake, non-attachment becomes the best of starting-points for one who is in search of Spiritual Reality.

In the essays in Ends and Means, Huxley concerns himself with "Beliefs", "Religious Practices", "Ethics"; he begins to give free reign to his innate spiritual impulses, and he openly admits his interest in mysticism. In making such an admission, Huxley does not say that he will become a mystic. He realizes that certain constitutional types have difficulty in experiencing genuine mystical intuition and he may well be one of the types that has difficulty. Though he does not seem yet to have established in his own mind his psycho-physical classification, he admits that, "My own nature... is on the whole phlegmatic, and, in consequence, I have the greatest difficulty in entering into the experiences of those whose emotions are easily and violently aroused." ²⁹ Huxley also admits that although he admires Blake and

²⁸ Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 4.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 166.

Lawrence, he is bewildered by them. However, by displaying confidence and making an effort at understanding, he may come to know men who are of a type opposite to, or unlike, his own. Similarly, he hopes, the non-mystic may come to share the mystic's experience. Conceivably, by committing himself to an arduous training period, a non-mystic may achieve "a mystical union with the integrating principle of all being". By 1937, Huxley showed himself more than prepared to undertake the mystic journey; he had already begun to practice non-attachment.

Ross Parmenter who interviewed Huxley in 1937 reports that Huxley admitted being most seriously troubled about finding a working philosophy of life. He discussed an increasing interest in mysticism as a religion but felt sure that there was no possibility of his ever subscribing to an orthodox religion such as Roman Catholicism. He could not understand the adoption of Anglo-Catholicism by his friend T.S. Eliot. Political activity was unsatisfactory as Huxley felt himself to be totally unsuited to political life. Parmenter quotes Huxley as saying, "I have no power to organize things and am very bad on committees and am incapable of addressing mass meetings." Yet Huxley knew that he could not continue to live without some spiritual conviction. Parmenter says of Huxley, "I found him a kind, gentle, soft-spoken, thoughtful man -- entirely free from a sort of intellectual arrogance.... Also I had expected him to pontificate a bit, but he didn't".³⁰ Parmenter's description belies the critics who have pejoratively represented Huxley at this stage as a religious fanatic, a dogmatic writer of tracts. William York Tindall suggests that

30 Ross Parmenter, "Huxley at Forty-Three", Saturday Review of Literature, vol. 27 (March 19, 1938), pp. 10-11.

Huxley and Gerald Heard, having failed to convert the world to pacifism, sought asylum ironically in California, in a land noted for materialism -- the opposite theoretically to non-attachment.³¹ Wealth, as Huxley points out in Ends and Means, is a barrier to non-attachment because men tend "to identify themselves with what is less than self", but extreme poverty is equally a barrier. Sex mis-used can be as much a barrier as money. Any "such lust for ownership is as blinding and as separative as ordinary avarice".³²

Mr. Tindall seems to suggest that Huxley's decision to settle in California in 1939 contradicted his ideals. The facts behind the decision indicate no such contradiction. First Huxley had to live somewhere; the English climate had never suited either him or his wife, Maria. He had gone to Italy for sunlight in 1924, but an Italy overrun with "Fascist Brownshirts" held no appeal for Huxley. California, on the other hand, offered a suitable climate. Second, Huxley sought an intellectual climate in which he could pursue his study of mysticism. To deny that Gerald Heard's decision to settle in California influenced Huxley's decision would be absurd. But Mr. Tindall's suggestion that they settled in Hollywood in order to go "walking with Greta Garbo"³³ is the height of triviality and absurdity. "Every man is ludicrous," Gumbriel reminds us, "if you look at him from the outside, without taking into account what is going on in his heart and mind." Very much of what was going on in Huxley's heart and mind

31 William York Tindall, "The Trouble with Aldous Huxley", American Scholar, vol. II (Autumn 1942), p. 459.

32 Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 310.

33 Tindall, "The Trouble with Aldous Huxley", p. 459.

was a fervent desire to answer the question "Who am I?", in the hope of finding a personally satisfying religious philosophy. In California not only could he remain under the tutorship of Heard, but he could engage in new studies in oriental mysticism. The third reason for Huxley's settling in California was his hope that he might there be able to do something about his eyesight. It had been failing steadily and rapidly since 1937. In 1938, Huxley tells us in the Preface to The Art of Seeing, he had heard of the Bates "method of visual re-education and of a teacher Mrs. Margaret D. Corbett of Los Angeles, who was said to make use of this method with conspicuous success." 34 The method demands of the patient mind control and mental as well as physical discipline. That Huxley should settle where he could practice seriously a method not incompatible with his ideas on non-attachment and which might restore his vision seems the most logical thing in the world.

Once settled in California in 1939, Huxley made his major concern his personal, psychological freedom. To assist in obtaining such freedom, Huxley turned to a study of the philosophies of mysticism. He sought enlightenment in the oriental mysticisms from Swami Prabhavananda of the Ramakrishna Mission in Hollywood. Here he learned Hindu scriptures and associated himself with the Vedanta Society of Southern California. This society publishes Vedanta and the West, a periodical dealing exclusively with new translations of, and articles on, oriental religious thought. The publication is edited by Swami Prabhavananda, Brahmachari Prema Chaitanya, and Brahmacharini Usha. The editorial advisers are Gerald Heard, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood. This group has been vitally concerned

34 Aldous Huxley, The Art of Seeing, New York and London, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1942, p. vii.

with the dissemination of Oriental thought, not because they would have us all sit and contemplate our navels, but because they find value in it and possibly think that the very survival of civilization depends upon a better understanding of different cultures and religions.

In 1946, Huxley published The Perennial Philosophy. Essentially, the book contends that there is a Highest Common Factor which exists in all religions. Huxley had hinted at such a thing in Jesting Pilate in which he expressed the belief that men of all races and creeds hold a similar set of values. Written very large in The Perennial Philosophy is Huxley's old concern with the different types and classes of people and the need for man to determine his type if he is to have any success in his attempts to answer the question, "Who am I, and what, if anything, can I do about it?" In Proper Studies, Huxley had roughly grouped people into the introverts and extroverts, the Marthas and the Marys. By the time he was writing Ends and Means, his classification was on a more pretentious basis: people were either "viscerotonics" -- those who crave emotional experience -- or "somatotonics" -- those who crave muscular experience.³⁵ The inability of one type of person to understand or to share the experiences of the opposite type constitutes one of man's greatest problems. The solution lies, of course, in man's readiness to transcend his own ego, to recognize that, because men fall into different classifications of type, each type will have to seek a different method by which to achieve its union with the Divine Ground. Until the individual becomes regenerate in this respect, we cannot hope for a fully regenerate civilization.

³⁵ Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 236.

The Hindu, according to Huxley, has three ways leading to God: the way of works, the way of knowledge, the way of devotion. The first involves action without attachment: the second, knowledge of Self and of the absolute Ground of all being with which Self is identical; the third, liberation through intense devotion to a personal God or divine incarnation. Huxley takes the three basic psychological types which may be said to correspond to these three methods of finding God from the categories of the psychologist Sheldon. The Endomorph is the soft, rounded Pickwickian figure whose temperament is viscerotonic; he loves eating, comfort and luxury. The Mesomorph is the hard, big-boned, strong-muscled Hotspur-type, whose temperament is somatotonic; he loves muscular activity, seeks power, likes competition, is callous about people's feelings. The Ectomorph is the slender, stringy, weak, unemphatic, over-sensitive Hamlet-type, who suffers from his unprotected nervous system; his temperament is cerebrotonic; he is over-alert, sensitive, introverted, often given to excessive intellectuality and sensuality, but rarely to action. This type needs protection by society -- and, in fact, is one of those to whom the monasteries and universities serve as shelters.³⁶

Everything in Huxley's life points conclusively to the fact that Huxley falls into the third category -- the ectomorph-cerebrotonic. His method of seeking God is through the laborious accumulation of knowledge of Self and of the absolute Ground of all being with which it is identical. The introvert or ectomorph cannot act; he does not go through conversions or sudden changes as does the mesomorph. The extrovert or mesomorph, unaware of what happens in the lower levels of the mind, misinterprets a quick change of mind for

³⁶ Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 149.

revelation. 37

Huxley then, an ectomorph-cerebrotonic, is debarred from sudden conversions by his type, yet constantly seeks a philosophy of religion by which to live. "How (a man) ought to live and what he ought to believe is conditioned by his essential nature, constitution and temperament." Huxley's search, conditioned by his psycho-physical constitution, has led him through a series of beliefs or attempts to believe. He had tried hedonism, aestheticism, rationalism, indifference, life-worship, non-attachment. Huxley's search has taken him round about the hill on which Truth stands, but his efforts have consistently led to that belief which seems most in keeping with his temperament, a belief in mysticism.

Exactly what Huxley's brand of mysticism is, the extent to which he can be classified as a mystic, and how it compares with the other accepted philosophies of mysticism will be discussed in the next chapter. Huxley lives today as something of a mystic in Southern California. His first wife, Maria Nys, who bore him one son, died in 1955. In 1956 he married Laura Archera. Huxley has continued writing, his latest publication being Brave New World Re-Visited, 1958. In 1959 a new edition of his collected essays was published by Harper Brothers. Huxley's interest in mysticism seems to dominate most of his current activities. In 1959 he completed a year's assignment as "professor at large" at the University of California in Santa Barbara where among other things he lectured on the need to rise to new levels of intellectual capacity and personal efficiency and the spiritual aspects of such a rise. His lecture series also contained a study of the "Natural History of Visions".

37 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 155.

CHAPTER TWO

MYSTICISM

"The aim and purpose of human life is the unitive knowledge of God."¹ What the "unitive knowledge of God" is, only the mystic can tell us. This knowledge may come in momentary flashes of intuition or revelation, but, contrary to common opinion, such flashes are often preceded by a long, arduous process involving severe mental, emotional and physical discipline. The arduousness and severity of the mystic's pilgrimage towards the unitive knowledge of God, as well as an attempt to explain that knowledge, is recorded in Huxley's literary works. If, however, we are to test the validity of Huxley's interest in mysticism, we must have some knowledge of the subject as recorded by other reputable students of mysticism, or by mystics themselves. As it would be quite impossible to deal in any coherent fashion with the original works of such great mystics as St. Teresa, Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, Jacob Boehme, or the Oriental mystics, reliance on secondary sources and upon quotations contained in them is necessary. Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism is recognized as a classic study of the history and manifestation of mysticism in western civilization and, in particular, the Roman Catholic Church. An attempt will be made to summarize the phenomena of mysticism from her major book, Mysticism, and to use her definitions as criteria in

1 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 242.

order to establish a background against which Huxley's mysticism may be judged. References will also be made to works dealing with mysticism by Dean Inge, William James, Christmas Humphries and others who discuss Oriental philosophies to give support to Huxley's interpretation of mysticism or to show where opinions conflict.

Miss Underhill asserts that mysticism is the highest manifestation of religious experience:

Mysticism is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no other worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love. ²

Mysticism, as she describes it, is, fundamentally, an emotionally realized experience resulting from an aspiration of the soul towards its sources, a desire to bring harmony out of the chaos of life by achieving union with the "ultimate Reality". The central tenet of mysticism asserts that the soul of man and the Universe and God are in nature One: Unity (if man can find it) runs through all diversities and harmonizes them. The mystic aims at complete identification with the Absolute or Transcendental world. Identification involves self-transcendence. All men have a desire for self-transcendence; that is, a desire to escape the confines of their own egos. The most common manifestations of average individuals seeking to transcend themselves, or to escape themselves, are alcoholism, motion picture addiction, social activities, religious affiliations. Within this deep-seated urge

² Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism, New York, Meridian Books, Thirteenth ed. 1957, (First ed. 1910), p. 71.

for self-transcendence is a germ of capacity to become mystics, but few develop the heightened spiritual perception needed to be mystics in the fullest sense.

The powers which make contact with the Transcendental Order possible are dormant in ordinary men who only respond to the world of sense. In mystics no part of the self is dormant.³ The most common sense of identification experienced by the average individual is an identification with the sublime in nature. Poets, whose mystical potential is usually greater than that of an average man, very often tend to identify themselves with the infinitely frail and infinitely powerful element behind nature -- the divine essence in the Universe.

Tennyson, who was tormented by his inability to believe in any orthodox religion, seems in a moment's insight to have experienced something of the mystic's longing for union, and he expressed his desire to identify with nature in the following lines:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower -- but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

("Flower in the Crannied Wall")

Arnold, who also experienced a tremendous yearning for insight but no assurance of any absolute Reality, expresses his desire for identification with nature in terms very like that of the true mystic.

3 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 63.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
 To feel, amid the city's jar,
 That there abides a peace of thine,
 Man did not make, and cannot mar.

("Lines Written in Kensington Gardens," Stanza X.)

Arnold's awareness of a transcendental force of which nature is a manifestation is not unlike that of Wordsworth, who is generally accepted as a mystically-inclined poet if not as a true mystic. Wordsworth, in lines which Huxley is fond of quoting, speaks of,

A sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean, and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the minds of men.

("Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," Lines 95-99.)

If not expressing the unitive knowledge of God, Wordsworth at least gives voice to a moment of Illumination. Finally, an example from a poet usually considered to be a true mystic will show that considerable difficulty exists in determining what is poetic and what is mystic insight. Blake captures the mystic sense of union with the absolute Reality in the following lines:

To see the world in a grain of sand,
 And a heaven in a wild flower;
 To hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
 And eternity in an hour.

("Auguries of Innocence, " Lines 1-4.)

Because the sublime in nature is most easily recognized, manifestation of God or a divine power is the inspiration for the commonest and simplest expression of mystic wonder. Illumination coming from such experience with nature involves an expansion of consciousness, an exaltation of personality, and an increase of intuitional and transcendental capacities. Most poets like most individuals aim at, or are satisfied with, only the temporary identification. Their experience of the "ultimate Reality", then, is a much less complete, less permanent one than that of the true mystic. Mystical poets seek to impart only a vision of Reality, to communicate only

an emotionally experienced Union, whereas the true mystic seeks to go beyond the apprehension of Reality and to unite permanently with it. The poet, such as Tennyson or Arnold, or Wordsworth, who has a true poetic capacity experiences as part of his artistic insight an exhilarating sense of freedom which is akin to the heightened state of consciousness familiar to the mystic who has reached the stage of Illumination, but the end of the poet's vision is the poem; the end for the true mystic is the attainment of the final stage -- the Unitive Life, the Unitive Knowledge of God.

While the experience of identification with Nature, which involves a transcending of self, is the most common manifestation of mysticism known to the average individual, many substitutes are sought. The arts -- music, poetry, painting -- are all reputable means of self-transcendence. Other procedures or rituals engaged in, and often mistaken for mysticism, are occultism, spiritualism, visions, trances, and the awareness of apparitions. Most of these are cheap substitutes for the real mystic state. St. John of the Cross points out that the higher the mystic goes, the fewer manifestations are needed because the vision of God is ultimate. No intermediary is necessary for such Absolute vision. The true mystic's experience is the culminating point not of a single faculty but of man's whole nature. The mystic does not enter his quest to satisfy a high ambition, to seek a vision to know the happiness of a Beatific Vision, the ecstasy of union with the Absolute, or for any other such personal reward. The mystic's only motive is love and those who seek divine Union from any other motive are, in St. John's words, "Spiritual Gluttons".⁴ Even the mystic's prayer has nothing to do with seeking the union with the Absolute. According to Miss Underhill,

⁴ St. John of the Cross, quoted from Underhill, Mysticism, p. 92.

Mystical prayer, or 'orison'... has nothing to do with petition. It is not articulate; it has no forms. 'It is,' says 'The Mirror of Dr. Edmund,' 'naught else but yearning of the soul.' -- the expression of man's metaphysical thirst. In it, says Grou, 'the soul is united to God in its ground, the created intelligence to the Intelligence Increate, without the intervention of imagination or reason, or of anything but a very simple attention of the mind and an equally simple application of the will.' ⁵

The mystic feels that his prayer is but a free and mutual act of love, a supernatural intercourse between man's soul and the divine; but a rigid discipline of the mystic's rich subliminal mind is needed for his "orison".

As Miss Underhill sums it up, then,

Mysticism is the art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment. ⁶

She continues to point out that the results of such union or belief in it are clear:

Because he has surrendered himself to it, 'united' with it, the patriot knows his country, the artist knows the subject of his art, the lover his beloved, the saint his God, in a manner which is inconceivable as well as unattainable by the looker-on. ⁷

Miss Underhill shows that, contrary to a fairly common opinion, the mystic who has achieved union does not detach himself from life and its activities; he does not withdraw from society or negate life in any way. As a result of his union with the true Self, the mystic's life is enriched in all its phases. The non-mystic, the individual who has never died to self, cannot conceive the enrichment the mystic feels in his life anymore than he can imagine what the mystic state is.

5 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 306.

6 Evelyn Underhill, Practical Mysticism, London, J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd., 1914. p.3.

7 Ibid., p.4.

The inconceivability and the unattainability of the mystic state by those who are not mystics raises two questions: one, how can a non-mystic test the validity of something he experiences himself which might be an early stage of mystic experience, a moment of Awakening if not a moment of Illumination; two, how can a non-mystic recognize as the real thing the description of the mystical experience given by a mystic? The difficulty of discriminating between the poet's experience and the mystic's experience and expression of these experiences has already been discussed. The "looker-on" faces a real problem when he attempts to distinguish true mystics from poets who temporarily experience mystic states, and from others who are merely mystically inclined in a purely intellectual sense, and from charlatans. He faces a similar problem in himself when he attempts to identify a sense of awareness in himself in terms of an absolute Reality, as distinct from other phenomenal experiences that result from delirium, fasting, drugs or any number of false methods of inducing what might be mistaken for a mystic state. Miss Underhill and other students of mysticism suggest certain aids to help the non-mystic become discriminating. William James in his lectures on mysticism sets out "marks" whose presence in an experience, he says, may justify us in calling it mystical. The following is a brief summary of his "four marks" of the mystic state:

1. Ineffability. -- The mystic state defies expression...no adequate report of its contents can be given in words... It must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others.
2. Noetic quality. -- Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect...
3. Transiency. -- Mystical states cannot be sustained for long.... half an hour, or at the most an hour or two....

4. Passivity. -- Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations....which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power...⁸

Accepting James's four "marks" as criteria to help recognize the states of consciousness peculiar to mystics, the next necessity is to discover whether or not there is some standard method of attaining such states. What general pilgrimage or ordered movement does a mystic experience in establishing his conscious identification with the Absolute? Miss Underhill's answer is that the achievement of the mystic's form of enhanced life comes,

...neither from an intellectual realization of its delights, nor from the most acute emotional longings. Though these must be present, they are not enough. It is arrived at by an arduous psychological and spiritual process -- the so-called Mystic Way -- entailing the complete remaking of character and the liberation of a new, or rather latent, form of consciousness; which imposes on the self the condition which is sometimes called 'ecstasy', but is better named the Unitive State.⁹

The Mystic Way of which Miss Underhill speaks involves five definite stages through which the individual must pass in order to become a true mystic.¹⁰ The first stage is that of Awakening. The Awakening is "an intense form of the phenomenon of 'conversion', " but, as Miss Underhill says, the term conversion is not to be confused with the commonly-described religious conversion which involves the sudden and emotional acceptance of certain theological beliefs. Conversion in the sense of mystical awakening is an unselfing or a dying to the world of ego. The individual

8 William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, [A Study in Human Nature being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902], New York, Mentor Books, 1958, pp. 292-294.

9 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 81.

10 Ibid., p. 167.

becomes aware of a transcendental consciousness or of a larger world-consciousness pressing in on his individual consciousness. He begins to see the need of realigning his life in order to become possessed by the Spirit of God. The second stage is Purgation, a period of pain and effort during which the individual decreases his own sense of self in order to increase his sense of God. He becomes detached from, or non-attached to, the things of the senses -- the physical world. This period involves a tearing off of the old way of life; by obedience, poverty, and chastity, one becomes prepared for the presence of God. The third stage is called Illumination. This period of fulfillment follows Purgation. The mystic experiences the presence of the Absolute, the presence of God. The experience is only illusory or fleeting. During Illumination a mystic knows only moments of total bliss; he only glimpses ultimate Reality; he does not attain a permanent state of Union. The stage of Illumination is the one in which the mystic's and the poet's or artist's experiences most resemble each other. According to Miss Underhill, "Many mystics never go beyond it, and, on the other hand, many seers and artists not usually classed amongst them, have shared to some extent, the experiences of the illuminated state."¹¹ The true mystics, however, those with the greatest souls have two more stages through which to pass.

The fourth stage, which is called either the Purification of the Spirit, or the Dark Night of the Soul, is experienced when the individual becomes aware that the spiritual uplift, elevating joy, happiness or delight, known during the moments of Illumination have been only temporary. The mystic

¹¹ Underhill, Mysticism, p. 169.

feels despair at not being able to achieve lasting Union. A sense of his own unworthiness and sinfulness overwhelms him. The purifying process of purgation is carried to the very core of his self. The "I-hood", the will, must be totally eliminated. "The human instinct for personal happiness must be killed." The mystic doubts that he will ever know total Union. A sense of being abandoned by God overpowers him at this stage. The mystic feels a total privation, an overwhelming sense of the absence of God. The sense of being loved and caressed by a tender father is no more. Many mystics, Miss Underhill explains, give up at this stage and, rather than face the prospect of complete failure, revert to and become satisfied with the moments of inspiration granted during the Illumination stage. The mystic who survives the Dark Night of the Soul is rewarded by achieving total Union -- the fifth and final stage of the Mystic-Way.

Almost all personal emotion is ineffable in discursive language. It follows, then, that the extent of joy known to the mystic in this stage is, as William James pointed out, beyond the non-mystic's understanding. The mystic, in attempting to describe the Unitive Life, must of necessity, Miss Underhill claims, use words glossed with a psychological explanation which is incapable of encompassing it. She shows that the Unitive Life is the final establishment of that higher form of consciousness which has been struggling for supremacy during the whole mystic way. Miss Underhill can explain the Unitive Life only in esoteric terms which she defines by other esoteric terms. Essentially, the Unitive Life is the long-sought identification of the self with Transcendental Reality. The mystic is totally united with God. The self has become the Self. "I live, yet not I but God in me." Since Miss Underhill writes from the Christian and Roman

Catholic bias, she stresses the idea that the Divine Love, the Fire of Love, has done its work and the Unitive Life is the Spiritual Marriage of the mystic's soul with God. The mystic who apprehends Reality with this sense of the consummation of the communion of marriage with God is the intimate-personal type of mystic. For the second type, the transcendent-metaphysical type, the Absolute is impersonal and transcendent and the final attainment of union is described as deification, or the transmutation of the self in God.¹²

Huxley's interest, as we shall see later, inclines to the transcendent-metaphysical mysticism as described by Miss Underhill, but with certain definite exceptions. Miss Underhill seems to stress that the Unitive Life is the goal, the end. As she says of the Unitive Life, "the spirit of man having at last come to the full consciousness of reality, completes the circle of Being...." ¹³ Huxley's association with the California Vedanta Society indicates a preference for the idea that even the achievement of the Unitive Life is not the goal, the end, but merely part of a continuing growth. Man comes to "full consciousness" only to discover that an even fuller consciousness constantly awaits him.

René Guénon stresses the importance of "becoming" and shows that the basic difference between Eastern and Western Metaphysics centres in the use and understanding of this word "Being". Guénon claims that man, even in achieving a mystical state, has still not achieved his final goal or end. A further achievement ever lies ahead of man so that he is always in a

¹² Underhill, Mysticism, p. 415.

¹³ Ibid., p. 414.

state of "becoming", never in a state of "being".¹⁴ Guénon's suggestion that man is constantly in a state of becoming seems to express a view similar to that expressed by Christmas Humphries in his study of Buddhism. As Humphries explains,

The process of becoming is a circle; the process of becoming more, of growth, is a spiral, either up or down according as the growth is towards or away from wholeness. Buddhism begins with the Buddha's Enlightenment and ends with man's. And the final Goal? We know not, nor is it yet, or likely to be for aeons to come, our immediate concern. The faint of heart will ever seek some resting place, some weak finality; for the strong, the first and the last word is and ever more will be -- Walk On!¹⁵

The Unitive Life for the Buddhist is a continuing growth, never a final end, but the growth is no longer in the half light of partial knowledge but in the full light of the unitive knowledge of the absolute Ground of all Being. With this unitive knowledge the mystic's life in the world of everyday living is enhanced in such a way as to make the mystic more interested and active in daily affairs. Miss Underhill makes a similar point. She says that the Unitive Life means the completion of the circle of Being, but she goes on to say that the spirit of man now "returns to fertilize those levels of existence from which it sprang". Thus the mystic instead of being a "morbid and solitary" contemplative detached and withdrawn from life, becomes a "pioneer of humanity", "a sharply intuitive and painfully practical person".¹⁶ Mystics have a super-normal vitality as a result of the Union

¹⁴ René Guénon, Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta, translated by R.C. Nicholson, New York, The Noonday Press, 1958, p. 162.

¹⁵ Christmas Humphries, Buddhism, Penguin Books, 1951, p. 23.

¹⁶ Underhill, Mysticism, p. 444.

in which they participate. The Unitive Life is "an ordered life in every state". According to Miss Underhill, as a result of experiencing the Unitive Life, the mystic is more dedicated to God and to humanity. Very literally the mystic understands the paradox of unconditional self-giving! "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Turning now to a full discussion of Huxley's exposition of mysticism, we find that on the whole he agrees with the central tenet of mysticism, that an individual seeks to transcend himself and to surrender totally to the ultimate Reality. "Holy indifference", "non-attachment", "abandonment", "refusal to prefer", "the less of self, the more of Self", "Our kingdom must go before God's can come": these and similar phrases are typical of Huxley's exposition of mysticism. As they stand they seem somewhat paradoxical and contradictory, if not meaningless. However, in the light of the discussion of Miss Underhill's second and fourth stages of the Mystic Way -- Purgation, and The Dark Night of the Soul -- the general meaning of Huxley's phrases becomes clear. The first principle of mysticism involves self-transcendence. In order to transcend self, an individual must die to the conscious ego; hence, "the less of self, the more of Self". The self must die to the material or conscious world in order to identify with the Transcendental Order. To aid in negating self, the mystic must practise "holy indifference" to the sensual world or, in other terms, must practise "non-attachment" to the things of the senses -- the physical world. Our kingdom, the kingdom of the flesh and of sensuality, the ego-centred kingdom, must go before God's kingdom, the kingdom of the Perfect Way, the absolute Reality, can come. As Huxley says,

The heavenly kingdom can be made to come on earth; it cannot be made to come in our imagination or in our own discursive reasonings. And it cannot come even on earth, so long as we persist in living, not on the earth as it is actually given, but as it appears to an ego obsessed by the idea of separateness, by cravings and abhorrences, by compensatory phantasies and by ready-made propositions about the nature of things. Our kingdom must go before God's can come. ¹⁷

The doctrine of non-attachment presented in these lines is central in Huxley's thinking. He had accepted it as an essential starting point for his theory of pacifism and as the foundation of his ethical philosophy long before he applied it, as he does here, to the spiritual development of the mystic. On the whole, Huxley accepts the basic starting point of mysticism expressed by Miss Underhill and other students of mysticism: the mystic in seeking to surrender himself to the ultimate Reality must transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint.

Like Miss Underhill, Huxley recognizes that the mystic's experience is not easily verifiable. He explains that care must be taken to distinguish between the artist's experience and that of the mystic. Art expresses symbolically the superhuman, the spiritual, the pure metaphysical idea, but "Art is not the discovery of Reality...it is the organization of chaotic appearance into an orderly and human universe."¹⁸ If the artist is also a true mystic, then the artist's expression of his experience may provide the non-mystic with the best and most accurate account of the state that he is capable of receiving or of understanding. Huxley considers that Beethoven, in his later years, had achieved union with the ultimate Reality. The

¹⁷ Aldous Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1952, p. 286.

¹⁸ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 91.

Benedictus in Missa Solemnis is, he says, the beatific vision. A non-mystic cannot experience the vision from music, but he can be made aware of "a certain blessedness lying at the heart of things, a mysterious blessedness".¹⁹

Like William James, Huxley recognizes the ineffability of the mystic state. No "Spiritual Calculus" exists in which to discuss the "divine Ground". The problem is one of semantics. A mystic is forced to describe

...one order of experience in terms of a symbol-system whose relevance is to the facts of another and quite different order.... Direct Knowledge of the Ground cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by the annihilation of the self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the 'Thou' from the 'That'.²⁰

God is Truth, the primordial Reality, and he must be worshipped "in spirit and in Truth". Such a statement signifies the "apprehension of a Spiritual Fact". According to Huxley, a statement about truth asserts that the verbal symbols which compose the statement correspond to the facts to which the statement refers, but a knowledge of words about facts is not equivalent to a direct and immediate apprehension of the facts themselves. Huxley insists that a mystic cannot be understood through words alone. Such a fact, however, need not deter the mystic from attempting to record his experience, but the onus does fall on the non-mystic not to confuse the expression of the experience with the experience itself. Huxley quotes Father Surin's statement in his diary as a not-inadequate expression, as far as description in words is possible, of the experienced Fact of the mystic's peace:

19 Huxley, Music at Night, p. 44.

20 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 35.

A peace that is not merely a calm, like the lull of sea, or the tranquil flow of mighty rivers; but it enters into us, this divine peace and repose, like a flooding torrent; and the soul, after so many tempests, feels, as it were, an inundation of peace; and the relish of divine repose not only enters the soul, not only takes her captive, but comes upon her, like the onrush of a multitude of waters.²¹

But even this impressive description -- no matter how fully it is comprehended by the non-mystic -- cannot be thought of as the equivalent of the spiritual and emotional experience described. It is impossible for the non-mystic to comprehend what is essentially the immediate experience of the mystic.

In general, Huxley's theory of mysticism agrees with the description of the phenomena of mystic experience given by other mystics or students of mysticism. He tends, however, to make four major stresses which might be interpreted as deviations from Miss Underhill's norm. The first of the things he emphasizes is the need to get from what William James calls "Manuals of mysticism" a preliminary training that will fit him to achieve the mystic state. Although this emphasis is in accord with the ideas of both Miss Underhill and James, it leads Huxley carefully to investigate an area of mysticism with which neither of them is primarily concerned, namely, the rich and complex fields of Oriental mysticism. Second, Huxley stresses the fact that the "unitive knowledge of God" does not imply union with a rational, self-conscious, anthropomorphic Deity. He shows how Christian mysticism failed in the Seventeenth Century because of a "tendency [to substitute] Christ and the Virgin for the undifferentiated Godhead of the early

21 Father Surin, quoted from Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, p. 310.

mystics".²² Third, Huxley feels the need to relate mysticism to science. Mysticism has suffered, he thinks, from the erroneous conception that it was strictly a business of intuition, faith, emotion, and revelation. As Huxley says in "Uncle Spencer", "Now it is possible -- it is, indeed, almost necessary -- for a man of science to be also a mystic." Huxley believes that a vital relationship exists between mysticism and the new studies of psychology, psychiatry, and parapsychology. He suggests that modern science does support the contention that spirit and matter are one. The Baconian split between the things of the spirit and those that can be scientifically tested seems, in Huxley's view, no longer valid. He believes that science and mysticism need no longer be incompatible. Finally, Huxley stresses the universality of mysticism. All people experience the need for self-transcendence. True mysticism teaches the right means of self-transcendence, and that through right means right ends of social reform could be effected.

Huxley's emphasis on the first of these points, the need of training in mysticism, showed itself in his early interest in the conception of the Unitive Life as "an ordered life in every state". In Jesting Pilate he wrote that,

Mysticism, which is the systematic cultivation of mental quietness, the deliberate and conscious pursuit of the serenest kind of happiness, may be most satisfactorily regarded as a rule of health. Mystics attribute their happiness and their creative powers to a union with God.... Leading a virtuous and reasonable life, practising the arts of meditation and recollection, we shall unbury all our hidden talents, we shall attain in spite of circumstances to the happiness and serenity and integration, shall come, in a word, to be completely and perfectly ourselves.²³

²² Aldous Huxley, Grey Eminence, London, Chatto and Windus, 1956 (first ed. 1941), p. 95.

²³ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, pp. 191-192.

Mystical emotions, then, can have a definite conduct value; the man who feels them is enabled to live his life serenely and confidently in a manner unknown to other men. But how can other men share or experience the conduct value? A training plan is the answer. The Oriental mystics are far more advanced and organized in this respect than are the Christian mystics. The Oriental mystics accept, first of all, that men are divided into a variety of types, and that each type needs to follow a different route in order to achieve knowledge of the divine Ground. Mental discipline helps a man to become conscious of the identity between his inmost self and the immanent and transcendent spirit of the Universe. The Hindu denies the existence of gradations in reality, of higher or lower realities. Therefore, the mystic aspires not only to Union with the ultimate Reality, but in uniting becomes one with or a part of the Reality itself -- "Thou are THAT." The world of duality in which we live is falsely imagined. The physical world is not a reality divorced from the spiritual world. An absolute Reality pervades all. As Humphries explains, "Since the Reality pervades all, everything individual is the whole potentially, or, in religious, language, every individual is a potential Buddha.... "Thou art THAT"; and all other 'thou's' are equally THAT."²⁴

The only way for the aspiring mystic to realize the potential Buddha within him is through the Yoga practice best suited to his individual personality. Huxley explains the three possible methods of self-education. The first, the bhakti-marga, is the path of devotional faith in a personal God, the way of the emotional personality; this is the path followed by most

²⁴ Humphries, Buddhism, pp. 150-151.

Christians, or, to use Miss Underhill's phrase, this is the way of the "intimate-personal type" of mystic. The danger, Huxley explains, in thinking of God as a transcendent person rather than as an immanent and transcendent principle of integration lies in the tendency to deify images of saints used as intermediaries, or to deify national leaders. The acceptance of God as a transcendent person and commander-in-chief can lead to the persecution of those who fail to share the belief. Huxley's belief that the Christian mystics choosing the bhakti-marga way distorted mysticism so that they ceased to be true mystics will be presented later. The second method, the karma-marga is the path of duty or works, the way of the active personality. The third method, the inana-marga is the path of Knowledge, the way of the intellectual and contemplative personality. The type choosing this way of the inana-marga is called, by Miss Underhill, the "transcendent-metaphysical" mystic. He accepts God as an immortal and transcendent principle of integration. Huxley considers this way to be the way of the true mystics. ²⁵

Christmas Humphries' comments seem to support Huxley's contention that there is need for a training plan in mysticism and that the Buddhists offer the most advanced plan. Humphries states that,

...the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism, acknowledged by all schools, is the noblest course of spiritual training yet presented to man. It is far more than a code of morality. If the first five steps on the Way may be classed as ethics, the last three are concerned with Bhavana, the mind's development. ²⁶

Humphries devotes several chapters to a study of the Eight-fold Path. For

²⁵ Huxley, Ends and Means, pp. 234-246.

²⁶ Humphries, Buddhism, p. 22.

our purposes here, we have space for only the briefest summary of an involved system of training. The summary is taken from Huxley's enumeration of the separate "means to salvation". "These are simultaneously ethical, intellectual and spiritual" and collectively make up Buddha's Eightfold Path for complete deliverance:

....first, Right Belief in the...truth that the cause of pain and evil is craving for separative, ego-centred existence...; second, Right Will, the will to deliver oneself and others; third, Right Speech, directed by compassion and charity towards all sentient beings; fourth, Right Action, with the aim of creating and maintaining peace and goodwill; fifth, Right Means of Livelihood, or the choice only of such professions as are not harmful, in their exercise, to any human being or, if possible, any living creature; sixth, Right Effort towards Self-control; seventh, Right Attention or Recollectedness, to be practised in all the circumstances of life, so that we may never do evil by mere thoughtlessness, because 'we know not what we do'; and, eighth, Right Contemplation, the unitive knowledge of the Ground, to which recollectedness and the ethical self-naughting prescribed in the first six branches of the Path give access. 27

The Buddhists believe that a sound training plan such as the Eightfold Path is an indispensable "means to salvation"; they recognize, however, that care must be taken in the training of men's minds. Religious self-education through meditation can be mis-directed; witness the Japanese who used Zen-Buddhist mind-training in the service of militarism. The Buddhist doctrine never considers anger or violent emotion to be anything but wrong or disgraceful; hence, a Buddhist could never be trained for bloodshed or violence under the guise of "righteous indignation". To him, equanimity is the desired state; and he does not justify violent action, wars and atrocities, as acceptable means of righting wrongs, or of securing other desirable ends.

Huxley thinks the issue of "righteous indignation" coupled with the Christian tendency to choose the bhakti-marga, the path of devotional faith in a personal God, rather than the inana-marga, the path of knowledge, marks the parting of the ways between Christian and Oriental mystics. The Oriental philosophy Huxley seems most to identify himself with, the Vedanta Metaphysics, which is the philosophic foundation of Yoga, teach that Self is Brahman, but false knowledge and perception leads to opposition of self or one's ego to the Brahman or ultimate Reality. The paradox lies in the fact that only as one transcends self can one be absorbed into Brahman. This paradox is precisely the paradox in Christ's teaching that "except as a man shall lose his life for my sake, he shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Huxley points out, however, that Christians have historically disregarded this teaching of Christ. They have, instead of losing their lives for Christ, undertaken to save them for their own sakes, on the practical argument that self-preservation is the first law of nature. They have in this way justified themselves in feeling a "righteous indignation" toward their enemies. And, firm in their belief that a personal God, a Commander-in-Chief, is directing them, they seek to enrich their lives through conquering their enemies in war.

Huxley's dislike of wars and his refusal to accept a personal God lest He become a Commander-in-Chief accounts in a very considerable measure for Huxley's preference for Oriental mysticism. He first expresses his distaste for the Christian's ability to justify bloody wars in his Encyclopedia of Pacifism (1937). His brief historical account of Christianity attempts to show how and why Christian religions have failed and why Oriental religions are preferable. Huxley's own preference becomes even more definite in Grey Eminence (1941) when he traces the history of Christian mysticism in considerable detail.

Huxley points out in An Encyclopedia of Pacifism that, according to both Plato and Confucius, to die courageously is less noble than to live humanely, harmoniously, and intelligently. Europeans have preferred military heroism and martyrdom to rational idealism. Confucius was a rationalist. His teachings inculcated filial piety, good manners and an amiable epicureanism which appealed to the "endomorpho-viscerotonic" type (the Pickwick type). The whole of Confucianism was reinforced by the teachings of the mystic, Lao Tzu, an "ectomorpho-cerebrotonic" type (the Hamlet type). The spirituality of Taoism, like that of Buddhism, has strong ethical overtones; one should return good for evil, cultivate humility, refrain from assertiveness and self-importance. Huxley claims that both India and China have attempted to subordinate military, political, and financial power to spiritual authority, accepting the premise that man's final end is the "unitive knowledge of God" not material gain in a lower reality. As both India and China become Westernized, he sees a tendency to place an increasing emphasis on militarism rather than on scholarship and harmonious living. 28 Mohammedanism, Huxley says, has always been a religion of the "mesomorpho-somatotonic" type (the Hotspur type). Mohammedans, Huxley suggests, incline to holy wars, persecution, violent action.

According to Huxley, in the late Middle Ages, as the Christian Church became the "Church Militant", Christianity came to resemble Mohammedanism. Christ belongs to the "ectomorpho-cerebrotonic" type (the Hamlet type). He followed his dharma to its spiritual goal and taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within. Christ's teachings ignored ritual, legalism, hallowed days

28 Aldous Huxley, An Encyclopedia of Pacifism, London, Chatto and Windus, 1937, p. 16 ff.

and places. He emphasized restraint of action and desire. Like Oriental mystics, Huxley says, Christ was totally indifferent to material splendours; he was devoted to the idea of non-attachment, even in family relations. In Christ's acceptance of the cross there was no element of "righteous indignation"; it was the ultimate in non-resistance. Christ triumphed. The early Christians sought to emulate Christ's martyrdom not through feats of militarism but through acts of humility, subjection, passivity. They refused military service until the Fourth Century. Then, Christians, out of gratitude to Constantine for deliverance from crushing persecution, fought for him. Christ's teaching of pacifism, or active non-violence, was, according to Huxley, regrettably forgotten. The Cathari and Albigenses in the Thirteenth Century sought to reinstate Christ's teaching that men should love, not hate, one another. They were mercilessly persecuted as heretics for refusing to become soldiers of the Church. 29

In order to justify the "Church Militant", Christians had to stress the idea of a personal God. As Huxley points out, Christianity is the only great religion to stress belief in a personal God. Confucian, Hindu and Buddhist philosophies all disclaim the intuition of any ultimate personality substantial to the Universe. Belief in a personal God heightens the believer's energy and strengthens his will, but the end can be undesirable as well as desirable. The Deity thought of as a person compels the believer to project his own personal limitations on God, or to see himself capable of assuming supposedly God-like power. One can give free reign to the all-too-human tendencies of pride, anger, jealousy, or hatred, by thinking one is behaving

29 Huxley, An Encyclopedia of Pacifism, p. 21 ff.

like a God who is Himself a person subject to passion. 30

It becomes apparent, in Huxley's view, that the "intimate-personal" type of mystic who accepts God as transcendent only, as a personal Deity, is in great danger of distorting the idea of the personal God into that of his being like man himself who is subject to passions. Once this happens, Huxley says, the mystic can never achieve union with the absolute Reality because he has diverted all his emotional and spiritual energies into the worship of a false personal God. The bhakti-marga, the path by devotional faith, lends itself to corruption because the emotions are not checked by the intellect. In seeking the personal God by way of the bhakti-marga, the "intimate-personal type" encounters a second obstacle to true mysticism. Huxley feels that the stronger his conviction, and the greater his desire to gain union with a personal God, the more difficult it is to gain the mystical union of the soul with the integrating principle of all Being.

Miss Underhill calls the period when the personal God dies to the mystic, the Dark Night of the Soul. According to Huxley, not all mystics experience the Dark Night of the Soul, but only those Christian mystics who after having envisioned the Virgin, or Christ, or a personal Deity and then discover that God is not a person, suffer this period of blackness. Such Christians or non-Christians do not experience the death of a personal God. St. John of the Cross and, according to Huxley, all the pure mystics emphasized the necessity of purging their minds of any idea of having "relations with supernatural personalities". These Christian mystics began with a belief in "the

30 Aldous Huxley, The Olive Tree, London, Chatto and Windus, 1947 (first ed. 1936), pp. 197-198.

personality of the triune God and in the existence and ubiquitous presence of other divine persons, such as the Virgin and the saints". As they advance along the mystic way, the "awareness of a personality fades". As it fades, the mystic experiences intense anguish at losing contact with the personality. The period of anguish or loss is Miss Underhill's Dark Night of the Soul. Huxley describes the period similarly,

...the anguish of losing contact with personality...constitutes what St. John of the Cross calls the Night of the Senses, and it would seem that the same anguish is an element of that still more frightful desolation, the Night of the Spirit. St. John of the Cross considers that all true mystics must necessarily pass through this terrible night. 31

Huxley contends that true Catholic mystics disappeared proportionately as increased reliance on saints as intermediaries and on the use of images appeared in the practice of Catholicism. The substratum of real mysticism has to be impersonal. Dean Inge in his essay on the "Characteristics of Mysticism" lends support to Huxley's views by stressing the impersonality of the ultimate Reality. Similarly, Inge discredits the use of images, visions, or trances in the mystic's efforts to gain the Unitive Life. Dean Inge, unlike Miss Underhill, sees the mystic's journey as having only three stages: the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive Life. 32 He puts no special emphasis on the Dark Night of the Soul as a major stage of the mystic's journey. Miss Underhill, however, in her later book Practical Mysticism describes the mystic's journey also as merely three stages of contemplation. Huxley's own advance seems to be more in the nature of a gradual movement from one stage of contemplation to another. Each stage

31 Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 290 ff.

32 William Ralph Inge, Christian Mysticism, New York, Living Age Books, Meridian Books, 1956, pp. 3-36.

seems to affirm more strongly the belief in the possibility of attaining union with ultimate Reality. In Grey Eminence, 1941, he traces the growth of Christian mysticism and his concern with its failure due to stressing a personal deity seems to emphasize his own preference for the impersonal Being of Oriental mysticism.

In Grey Eminence (1941) Huxley shows how the Church interfered with the practice of true mysticism. No personal deity was connected with teachings of the early Christian mystics. One of the earliest and most influential accounts of mysticism is given by the Fifth Century Syrian monk referred to as pseudo-Dionysius, who passed himself off as Dionysius, the Areopagite, St. Paul's first Athenian convert. The mysticism of pseudo-Dionysius shows the heavy influence of Neoplatonic and Oriental mysticisms. The emphasis is on "the flight from the alone to the Alone", on a complete stripping away of self in order that the soul may enter into the Presence of the Absolute Godhead. In the Fourteenth Century, the unidentified author of The Cloud of Unknowing summarized the doctrines of Dionysius and anticipated in his writings what became the doctrines of St. John of the Cross.³³ Huxley shows the similarity between the mysticism of The Cloud of Unknowing and that of the Indians. They affirm "Thou art That", the Atman (self) is the same substance with the Brahman (Self). A Sufi mystic could say "I went from God to God until they cried from me in me, 'Oh, thou I'." ³⁴ In his summary of The Cloud of Unknowing, Huxley says that sin is the manifestation of evil; that the greater the sense of sin, the greater is man's

33 Huxley, Grey Eminence, pp. 59-60.

34 Ibid., p. 62.

ego, the greater his tendency to separateness. To be a mystic the feeling of self has to be destroyed; separate individuality must cease to exist:

When he has sorrowed for the sin of his separate individuality, the contemplative must take the unanalysed sense of his own being and annihilate it in a sense of the being of God. He must work until the blind stirring of love, the beating against the cloud of unknowing, the naked intent to be made one with God as he is in himself, have actually taken the place of his sense of self, so that when he knows and feels of his own being, he knows and feels as much at least of the being of God as he has been able to experience through the veils of the divine darkness. ³⁵

In line with Oriental and Neoplatonic mysticism, then, Christian mysticism up to the Seventeenth Century stressed the universal doctrine: "The more of creature, the less of God." According to Huxley, St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) was the last Christian mystic in the true tradition of the pseudo-Dionysius. In the Seventeenth Century, Pierre de Berulle and his followers stressed the image of Christ and the Virgin as intermediaries between God and man. Man was too sinful a creature to make contact or to unite with God. As a result of the emphasis on the personalities of Christ and the Virgin who would intercede between man and God, would-be mystics according to Huxley, were prevented from ever gaining the highest state of union or of enlightenment with the ultimate impersonal Reality. St. Pierre de Berulle and the Jesuits made mysticism dogmatic and orthodox; they destroyed its universality. Huxley thinks that the practice of true mysticism in the Catholic Church has steadily diminished since Father Benet and Pierre de Berulle.³⁶ In its place have developed pseudo-mysticisms involving belief in, and reliance on trances as being essential to mystical manifestations. The acceptance of superstitions, power complexes, and grotesquely distorted

³⁵ The Cloud of Unknowing, quoted from Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 77.

³⁶ Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 98.

views of the mystic, has become part of Catholic mysticism.

Grey Eminence, and The Devils of Loudun contain bold illustrations of the atrocities that can result from a mysticism that stops with a belief in a personal deity, that fails to check the emotions with the intellect. Dean Inge lends support to Huxley's view of mysticism in western countries. He speaks of the "debased supernaturalism which usurps the name of Mysticism in Roman Catholic countries". Dean Inge does not mince matters. He has no time for ridiculous fables passed off as spiritual truths; no more does he accept occultism or "psychical research" as phases of mysticism. He has little hope for mysticism within the Catholic Church because of the "irreconcilable antagonism between the Roman Church and science".³⁷

The suggestion Dean Inge makes, that scientific facts and mysticism are compatible, is similar to the third major stress in Huxley's exposition of mysticism. Huxley, in 1924, had indicated his belief in the compatibility of science and mysticism. He seems to be aware that mathematical minds can be closely related to mystical minds. Calamy tells us that Newton abandoned mathematics for mysticism when he was thirty years old.³⁸ Newton's physical theories, like those of the natural scientists Democritus, Epicurus, and Boyle, were later proved by scientists. Conceivably, Calamy thinks, Newton's mysticism will also be proved by scientists. Already the "split" between the higher and lower realities or between spirit and matter, begun in Plato's day and made so definite by Bacon's famous "render unto faith

37 Inge, Christian Mysticism, pp. xiv-xv.

38 Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, London, Penguin Books, 1951 (first ed. 1925), p. 312.

the things that are faith's," has been partially bridged by scientific experiments. Many of Huxley's essays show an interest in scientific experiments which support his gradual belief that there is only one energizing force in life. This force can manifest itself in matter, mind, or spirit. This concept develops into Huxley's idea of "wholeness" or "oneness" and helps him ultimately to negate any suggestions of opposites existing in life and to affirm a steadfast belief in an ultimate Reality.

In Jesting Pilate, Huxley discusses the experiments of Sir J.C. Bose which attempt to show "that everything including the 'inanimate' is alive". We have for too long, says Huxley, "made a habit of regarding matter as something dead".³⁹ If, as the Bose experiments attempt to prove, life does exist in matter, then the old opposition between animate and inanimate objects ceases to exist. Humphries points out that, according to Buddhist philosophy, the duality of the world in which we live is falsely imagined. Spirit and matter are one and the same and at the same time interchangeable. He explains that the world is a phenomenon subject to flux and change. The concept of continuous flux and change gives real support to the mystic's belief in a timeless world or eternity. Although Huxley's ideas may be faulty, in an essay in Beyond the Mexique Bay, he indicates a tendency to believe that men have spatialized time into circles of days, months, years to the extreme limit in order to make time bearable. The continuous flux of time is thus parcelled up. The mystic moving in concentric circles of time simply contracts them to a point. "The whole of his existence is reduced for him to the here, now." Time is spatialized to the extreme limit.⁴⁰

³⁹ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, pp. 155-156.

⁴⁰ Aldous Huxley, Beyond the Mexique Bay, London, Penguin Books in Association with Chatto and Windus, 1955 (first ed. 1934), p. 156.

The difficulty with this thesis, as Huxley himself points out, is that once out of his mystic trance and in spite of the reality of his sense of timelessness, the mystic discovers that the flux still goes on. Time and eternity would seem to be contradictory concepts.

In The Perennial Philosophy, however, Huxley denies any contradiction in the idea that man is at one time eternal and at another in time. Man is a body, a psyche, and a spirit. He must learn to live on the human plane as well as in harmony with the divine Ground. His body is always in time, while the spirit is always timeless; the psyche is the amphibious "I" -- at one time, eternal and at another, in time. As man is constituted, the "I" cannot always remain identified with the spirit; it must also identify with the body. Anyone who has never experienced the shift of the "I" from the body to the spirit and eternity has difficulty in overcoming the sense of contradiction in the terms time and eternity, but, as Huxley sums up,

...the eternal now is a consciousness; the divine Ground is a spirit; the being of Brahman is chit, or knowledge. That a temporal world should be known and, in being known, sustained and perpetually created by an eternal consciousness is an idea which contains nothing self-contradictory. ⁴¹

The empirical testing of the mystic's contentions is a most recent development. Huxley has engaged in experiments in the hope of learning more about the mystic state. As more will be said about these experiments in a later chapter, it is enough to say now that Huxley's brand of mysticism is not, to use Dean Inge's phrase, any "debased supernaturalism", or any

⁴¹ Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 187.

romantic version of yoga. It is a mysticism in the tradition of the world's great mysticisms, and is based on empirical facts. The need for a unity between the mystic and the scientist is well expressed by Bertrand Russell in his essay "Mysticism and Logic". He states at the outset,

Metaphysics, or the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought, has been developed, from the first, by the union and conflict of two very different human impulses, the one urging men towards mysticism, the other urging them towards science.⁴²

Hume, Bertrand Russell claims, is the classic example of the unchecked scientific impulse; whereas in Blake, the mystic impulse dominates. What is needed is a combination of both. Russell is very guarded in his acceptance of mysticism. He admits that "an element of wisdom [may] be learned from the mystical way of feeling, which does not seem to be attainable in any other manner". He insists, however, that one must apply "a sufficient restraint".⁴³ Huxley would be the first to agree; an intellectual caution in one's attitude towards mysticism is, in his view, a cardinal virtue. Dean Inge supports the idea that true mysticism must have an intellectual basis and points out that this is the difference between Miss Underhill's evaluation of mysticism and his own. She sees mysticism mainly as a movement of the heart.⁴⁴

Huxley's fourth major stress in his study of mysticism is the importance of universality. As this has already been touched on in the section dealing with his interest in Oriental mysticisms and in the section in which the

⁴² Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic, New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957 (first ed. 1912), p.1.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁴ Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. ix.

necessity of getting beyond the personal Deity is discussed, little more needs to be added here. In The Perennial Philosophy (1946) Huxley attempts to prove the universality of mysticism. He extracts the "Highest Common Factor" in all the great religious theologies, and attempts to show that the Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Neo-Platonist, and Christian mystics give, fundamentally, the same answer to the question: "What is the That to which the thou can discover itself to be akin?". They all assert, in effect, that "The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute...." All religions have much in common, according to Huxley, and in support he points to the similarity between the Hindu Trinity and the Christian Trinity. Goodness, wisdom, mercy, and love are attributes that come from the Trinities which are manifestations of the ineffable and attributeless Godhead. Most religions have their incarnations of God in certain individuals; the Christians have Christ, the Indians and others have Krishna. But for all the great religions God is immanent and transcendent, supra-personal as well as personal. ⁴⁵ Four basic doctrines lie at the core of the Perennial Philosophy. Huxley summarizes them in the introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita:

- First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness -- the world of things and animals and men and even gods -- is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be nonexistent.
- Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

⁴⁵ Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 21.

Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose; to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground. ⁴⁶

In singling out the Highest Common Factor, in narrowing mysticism down to the Perennial Philosophy, in concentrating on its universality, Huxley attempts to show that mysticism is no rare thing, though the attainment of it in its pure state is the rarest phenomenon man can experience. Jocelyn Brooke says, Huxley shows in The Perennial Philosophy, that his own mysticism has involved no intellectual surrender, no sudden "Act of Faith"; it is the result, rather of a prolonged and critical investigation of the available evidence, conducted with the caution and detachment of a scientist.⁴⁷ That few individuals should reach the mystic's final goal is not surprising when one considers the arduous effort needed to attain it. Yet, as Kenneth Burke points out in his Rhetoric of Motives, the goadings of the "divine" -- of "the great mystery" -- head the list in the hierarchy of motives.⁴⁸ Miss Underhill claims that the powers which make contact with the Transcendental order are dormant in ordinary men who respond only to the world of sense.⁴⁹ Huxley deviates from Miss Underhill's contention and agrees with Burke showing that the goadings of the "great

⁴⁶ Aldous Huxley, Introduction to Bhagavad-Gita, New York, Mentor Books, 1958, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Jocelyn Brooke, Aldous Huxley, Writers and their Work: No. 55, London, Longmans, Green, published for British Council, 1984, p. 27.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952, p. 333.

⁴⁹ Underhill, Mysticism, p. 63.

mystery" are awake in all men. When a man responds to the world of sense, his response may in fact be subconsciously dictated by his deep-seated urge to self-transcendence, by his desire to escape from the uncomfortable consciousness of his own ego.

In the "Epilogue" to The Devils of Loudun, Huxley lists what he calls the "Grace-Substitutes" employed by men and women to escape from the tormenting consciousness of being merely themselves. The most common substitutes are alcohol, narcotics and drugs, used to obliterate the conscious self. Man induces oblivion, trances, delusions and thus gets beyond the limits of the insulated ego, at least temporarily. The experience of such escape could be the means of making man aware of that "something far more deeply interfused", but the danger is that the alcohol or drug becomes the God. The second substitute is sexuality. Like alcohol, sex can be the manifestation of the "radical Otherness" immanent in every human being, but like alcohol it can make a man sub-human. The third substitute is crowd delirium. This can be more dangerous than debauchery as "herd-intoxication" can lead to mob-maniacs, lynchings, wars. Hitler capitalized on the "herd-instinct" in man. Identification with a group relieves the individual of responsibility and becomes a ready escape from self. The fourth substitute for self-transcendence is some ecstasy-producing rite of rhythmic sound. When coupled with the herd-intoxication frenzied activities, orgies and violence usually result. Finally, there is corporal penance -- self-whipping, or hair shirts. The identification of the self-tortured person with the physical, suffering body, relieves the individual from a sense of other guilts or frustrations. 50

Actual self-transcendence can move in three directions: horizontal, which is harmless; downward, which is harmful and can make men sub-human; and upward, which leads to the awareness of the divine Ground. With so many substitutes for true self-transcendence an intellectual caution is a pre-requisite for the mystic. In view of the difficulties involved, it is not surprising that the majority of individuals never complete the arduous journey along the mystic-way. Fortunately for the less persevering and less gifted, a number of pilgrims of every race, and across the ages, have experienced and recorded the mystic state. As Huxley, drawing his opinions from Al-Ghazzali, sums it up in The Perennial Philosophy,

...the mystics [are regarded] not only as the ultimate source of our knowledge of the soul and its capacities and defects, but as the salt which preserves human societies from decay.... It is they who, dying to themselves, become capable of perpetual inspiration and so are made instruments through which divine grace is mediated to those whose unregenerate nature is impervious to the delicate touches of the Spirit. ⁵¹

In summary Huxley's most outstanding beliefs regarding mysticism can be briefly stated as follows: that mysticism as well as being a movement of the heart should have a firm intellectual basis; that mysticism moves beyond a belief in a personal Deity; that mysticism is universal; that mysticism leads to "an ordered life in every state"; and that "The aim and purpose of the human life is [to gain] the unitive knowledge of God."

51 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 301.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF MYSTICISM IN THE FICTION

Deducing an author's biography or psychological development from his fictional writing is, at best, a very dubious process. However, in the light of the established facts of Huxley's biography and the overt statements about his interests, feelings, and beliefs concerning mysticism in his non-fiction, it is possible to see that the attitudes of characters in his fiction give evidence of his own attitudes and of his increasing belief in mysticism as a way of life. Though an author can never be totally identified with any of his characters, their actions and thoughts very often indicate the author's own interests and in many cases a particular stage or phase of the author's psychological development.

Alexander Henderson claims that,

Inevitably the characters of every novelist are only personifications of himself.... All a writer's knowledge and experience is, in reality, like that of anyone else, only knowledge and experience of himself.¹

If Mr. Henderson's contention is accepted, it should be reasonably safe to assert that the experiences of Huxley's characters reveal something of Huxley's own personal development. D.S. Savage states somewhat categorically that "Huxley's work as a whole has taken the form of a thinly disguised autobiographical sequence...."²

1 Alexander Henderson, Aldous Huxley, p. 55.

2 D.S. Savage, The Withered Branch, p. 129.

Charles Glicksberg suggests that a very great deal of Huxley's fiction was written for purposes of self-clarification and that one can, therefore, deduce Huxley's psychological development by carefully examining the characters in his fiction. He describes Huxley as a "subjective and confessional novelist" each of whose central characters is always a projection of himself. They are tormented intellectuals who are emotionally deficient, indecisive, incapable of feeling deeply, and without roots or powerful passions. Totally inhibited, they are at home only in the world of thought and ideas. The chief trouble of a Huxleyan here is that "...he cannot fall in love, throw off the accursed burden of self-consciousness, devote himself ardently to a cause, believe violently in an ideal."³ Huxley's novels always contain a character or two who could be classified as ectomorphic-cerebrotonic, or Hamlet-like, types. Denis, Gumbriel, Calamy, Philip Quarles, Walter Bidlake, Bernard Marx, Anthony Beavis, Pete Boone, Sebastian Barnack, John Rivers, are all, according to Mr. Glicksberg, young intellectuals desperately concerned with the spectacle of corruption in this world, the total lack of values, the perversion of instincts, the general dehumanization of life, and the tragic loss of faith.⁴ The concern about life, the desire to find a "working philosophy" that these central characters show is precisely the concern that Huxley expresses in the prose works discussed in the previous chapters. Many of Huxley's fictional characters are interested in mysticism as a way of life. They can be seen as representing particular stages in a mystic's development. Huxley's own developing interest in mysticism can be charted by identifying him with the characters in his novels. A comparison of Huxley's search for truth,

³ Charles I. Glicksberg, "Aldous Huxley: Art and Mysticism", Prairie Schooner, vol. 27 (1953), p. 346.

⁴ Ibid.

apparent in the fiction, with Miss Underhill's "five-fold mystic way" provides an opportunity to evaluate Huxley's mysticism. The comparison will attempt to illustrate the point that Huxley underwent no sudden conversion in the thirties. At the same time, the comparison should demonstrate the sincerity and intensity of Huxley's belief in mysticism as well as the extent to which his experience differs from the experiences of the great mystics of history referred to by Miss Underhill.

The first stage Miss Underhill calls the "Awakening of the Self to consciousness of Divine Reality." That Huxley was awakened to the needs of his soul, that he was concerned with the desires of his spirit, that he recognized that the "Self" was the essence in man which responded to and could identify with a divine essence in the Universe, is evident in Limbo, his first volume of short stories published in 1920.

Dick, in the "Farcical History of Richard Greenow", is a disturbed, young intellectual filled always "with a vague, but acute, discontent. He wanted something which his friends could not give him; but what, but what?"⁵ Dick has a temporary fit of being very religious in private. He prays with frenzy and tries to mortify "the flesh with fasting and watching. He even goes so far as to flagellate himself..... He would pass half the night stark naked, in absurd postures, trying to hurt himself."⁶ Dick sees himself as "a hermaphrodite, not in the gross obvious sense, of course, but spiritually."⁷ Dick recognizes that he has two independent

⁵ Aldous Huxley, "Farcical History of Richard Greenow", Limbo, London, Chatto and Windus, 1928 (first ed. 1920), p. 8.

⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷ Huxley, "Richard Greenow", Limbo, p. 37.

personalities which separately control him; in one, the intellectual masculine dominates; in the other, the sentimental feminine controls. As the young male intellectual, Dick says, "I have all the feelings of Bunyan without his religion. I regard the salvation of my soul as important." Dick "felt in himself the desire to search for truth and the ability -- who knows? -- to find it".⁸ Dick's experiences seem to suggest that Huxley is awake to the needs of his soul. He describes Dick's state of drunkenness as one of increased perceptiveness of the senses. Again, while the ending of the story is bitterly humorous, ironic and even tragic, the description of Dick's delirium in the asylum suggests at least the possibility that the author himself under quite different circumstances, may have had some comparable experience which might be seen as a vision or moment of awareness of an outside power.

Like Dick, Guy, in "Happily Ever After", recognized that "Intellectually, he was a Voltairian, emotionally a Bunyanite".⁹ Guy asked the same questions as Dick:

What is one to do?... What the devil is right? I had meant to spend my life writing and thinking, trying to create something beautiful or discover something true. But oughtn't one, after all, if one survives, to give up everything else and try to make this hideous den of a world a little more habitable?¹⁰

Both Dick and Guy experience the conflict between politics and philosophy. They are concerned with assuming their share of the responsibility for making civilization work. But how, they asked, did one engage in political reform or indulge the intellectual Voltairian without crushing out of

⁸ Huxley, "Richard Greenow", Limbo, p. 37.

⁹ Huxley, "Happily Ever After", Limbo, p. 172.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 157.

existence the emotional Bunyanite? Huxley, like his young male characters would seem to be awake to the needs of his soul. At the same time he seems to feel compelled to assume a certain responsibility for civilization, and the civilization bequeathed to the Twentieth Century by Thomas Henry Huxley's generation had little to recommend it; apparently, it no longer allowed an individual to indulge an innate religious capacity. Dick dies in an asylum, and Guy is killed in the war; neither achieves any spiritual fulfillment.

Huxley himself seems torn between the desire to attack the old values in despair and disgust and a desire to concern himself with something beyond the material world and physical life. Huxley's awareness of the something beyond the material world and physical life may not correspond exactly to the "Awakening" that Miss Underhill describes as stage one of the mystic-way, but the early fiction seems to show a more-than-average concern with man's spiritual needs. Miss Underhill, while describing "the Awakening of the transcendental consciousness" as an "abrupt" and "decisive event" does go on to say that,

Sometimes the emergence of the mystic consciousness is gradual, unmarked by any definite crisis. The self slides gently, almost imperceptibly, from the old universe to the new... In another type ...there is no conversion in the ordinary sense; but a gradual and increasing lucidity, of which the beginning has hardly been noticed by the self, intermittently accompanies the pain, misery of mind, and inward struggles characteristic of the entrance upon the Way of Purgation.¹¹

Huxley's awakening resembles that of the type which experiences no conversion but in which the gradual increase in the lucidity of the soul is accompanied by pain and "misery of mind".

¹¹ Underhill, Mysticism, pp. 176-177.

In the early fiction, Huxley seems caught on the horns of an excruciating dilemma. Like his youthful heroes, he seems aware of the fact that he had a Soul, but he did not know how to attend to its needs in a world in which any suggestion of "life to come", or eternity, or the mystery of something beyond, had disappeared with the publication of The Origin of the Species. Spode, in "The Tillotson Banquet", feels this dilemma and the complete futility of contemporary life and, at the same time, he seems gradually to feel an awareness of some mysterious qualities, some gracious visitants, that his mind can apprehend.

What was the use of his own youth and cleverness? He saw himself suddenly as a boy with a rattle scaring birds -- rattling his noisy cleverness, waving his arms in ceaseless and futile activity, never resting in his efforts to scare away the birds that were always trying to settle in his mind. And what birds! wide-winged and beautiful, all those serene thoughts and faiths and emotions that only visit minds that have humbled themselves to quiet. Those gracious visitants he was forever using all his energies to drive away.... But then, was it possible to alter one's life? Wasn't it a little absurd to risk a conversion? 12

Denis, in Crome Yellow, and Gumbriel, in Antic Hay, both seem to sense some mysterious power that would give meaning to their lives if they could only make contact with it, but like Spode, they felt it "a little absurd to risk a conversion". Denis is acutely aware of the inadequacy of his self-conscious intellect. He knows that if life is to be enjoyed, he must become a pagan, but his poignant consciousness of his soul, "a temuous, tremulous, pale membrane", makes him feel that the paganizing process is too laborious to be undertaken. At the end of the novel, unlike Spode, Denis, too confused even "[to rattle] his noisy cleverness" sends himself a telegram as an excuse to escape from the hedonistic society of Crome, though he

12 Aldous Huxley, Mortal Coils, London, Penguin Books, 1955 (first ed. 1922) p. 85.

realizes that in his society such escape is futile. Denis ends his gloomy reflections with a question and an answer: "...what on earth was he going to do in London when he got there? He climbed wearily up the stairs. It was time for him to lay himself in his coffin." 13

Similarly, Gumbril knows intuitively, as well as from his relationship with Emily, that there is something more to life than the superficial activities of his hedonist friends; yet, rather than risk their ridicule, rather than "risk a conversion", he, like Spode, persists in "rattling his noisy cleverness" to scare away the goadings of his spirit. Like Denis, Gumbril does not succeed, but, older and braver than Denis, he gives a last dinner for his intellectual and sophisticated friends and tells Myra Viveash on the eve of his departure, "I have a premonition... that one of these days I may become a saint. An unsuccessful flickering sort of saint, like a candle beginning to go out." 14

The mystic tendencies in Huxley are vaguely awakened, but he does not yet know what to do about it. Not until 1924 do we find Huxley growing up and preparing to "risk a conversion". In "Uncle Spencer" he asserts that there is more to life than a round of erotic activities, that we waste our time when we concern ourselves with only mundane experiences:

What an itch we have to know whether Mr. Smith makes love to his secretary, whether his wife consoles herself, whether a certain cabinet minister is really the satyr he is rumoured to be. And meanwhile the most incredible miracles are happening all round us: stones, when we lift them and let them go fall to the ground; the sun shines; bees visit the flowers; seeds grow into plants, a cell in nine months multiplies its weight a few thousands of

13 Huxley, Crome Yellow, p. 123.

14 Huxley, Antic Hay, p. 229.

thousands of times, and is a child; and men think, creating the world they live in. These things leave us almost perfectly indifferent. ¹⁵

This passage seems to indicate that Huxley himself is no longer "perfectly indifferent" to the "incredible miracles... happening all round us". He is gradually beginning to see his own role, a role that would allow him to develop his latent mystical tendencies and at the same time help his fellow men to become concerned with something more than whether "Mr. Smith makes love to his secretary". "Someday", Huxley writes, "it may be, the successful novelist will write about man's relation to God, to nature, to his own thoughts and the obscure reality on which they work, not about man's relation with woman". ¹⁶ Huxley's later novels were an attempt to do just that -- to show man's relation to God, but before he could show man's relation to God, Huxley had first to clarify his own. In "Uncle Spencer", he reconciles his scientific mind with his newly-awakened mystic intuitiveness. "Now it is possible -- it is, indeed, almost necessary -- for a man of science to be also a mystic." ¹⁷ Huxley seems prepared to "risk a conversion", to indulge his religious bent of mind openly but he is not prepared to give way to any excess of emotional feeling, nor to accept suddenly any particular religious creed. He says in "Uncle Spencer" that mysticism at one time could be only combined "with faulty knowledge and fantastic mental eccentricity", but he suggests that now a more rational mind can accept the truth of mysticism. Huxley, then, seems determined to sift and select from his "twenty tons of ratiocination" what is meaningful

¹⁵ Huxley, Little Mexican, p. 64.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

and helpful in a search for the mystic state. The period of sifting and selecting that Huxley appears to experience during the 1920's seems comparable to the second stage of the mystic-way -- the Purgative Stage.

The device of "noisy cleverness" which had kept Huxley from indulging his innate desire "to humble his mind to quiet" ironically became the instrument of purgation. By means of sophisticated wit and satire, he systematically begins cleaning out the sludge. In what might be called the stage of Purgation, he attacks many of society's established beliefs and its panaceas, such as science, orthodox religion, new religious cults, art, sex, and politics.

In "Uncle Spencer" Huxley had suggested the possibility of science supporting mysticism; yet, paradoxically, science became the object of a most bitter attack. The reason is obvious. The idea of scientific detachment was producing only a race of Shearwaters who seemed to have lost sight of any overall purpose in their investigations. Instead of trying to produce scientific evidence that life did have purpose and meaning, science devoted itself to absurd experiments, apparently for the sake of experiment. All that Huxley could find in science at the stage he had reached in 1923, was a cock "not knowing whether to crow or cluck" because it had had engrafted into it a hen's ovary. Such scientific experiments seemed only to imply that sex, character, personality and soul were nothing more than obscure chemistry. Shearwater, the physiologist, proves that his scientific detachment leads only to a fatal lack of integration between the conflicting claims of passion and reason, life and work. Shearwater pedals his bicycle in a hot box to determine the percentage of sweat produced, while his neglected wife, Rosie, gives a poor performance of Emma Bovary. Huxley could see the need for scientific experimentation, but he

could also see, with a frightening clarity, the futility of experiment that was not balanced.

As the would-be mystic and scientist found little in contemporary science to support his belief in mysticism, he found equally little in current religious practices. The old Nineteenth Century orthodox view of immortality was becoming a thing of the past. Old Tillotson says to Spode, "'Life to come', 'No, I don't believe in any of that stuff -- not since 1859. The Origin of Species changed my views.'"¹⁸ Conceivably, The Origin of Species, so publicized by Thomas Henry Huxley, had a considerable influence on the naturally scientific mind of the young Aldous. However, if an identification can be made between Huxley and Guy Lambourne, it seems that Huxley did not abandon the old ideas of God and eternity without a certain regret. Guy accepts his fate as he muses:

Born in another age, he would, he supposed, have been religious. He had got over religion early, like the measles -- at nine a Low Churchman, and at fourteen an Agnostic -- but he still retained the temperament of a religious man.¹⁹

Huxley, like Guy, seems to have found himself a religious man desiring a religion when religion is out of fashion.

While The Origin of Species had caused a great deal of scepticism, atheism and agnosticism among the Nineteenth Century intellectuals, a somewhat formal or tepid orthodoxy was still general. Huxley, however, seems to see only a pervasive hypocrisy in the practice of religion. Jacobsen in "Happily Ever After" goes to church merely to amuse himself

18 Huxley, Mortal Coils, p. 83.

19 Huxley, "Happily Ever After", Limbo, p. 172.

by contrasting the powers of the institution with the feeble-mindedness of the clergy.

Huxley's concern with religious hypocrisy is apparent in both Crome Yellow and Those Barren Leaves. He sees it as rampant within and without the church walls. In the person of Mr. Bodiham, the Rector at Crome, Huxley criticises the presumption and the mundane interests of the Church of England. Bodiham fancies himself as "the Man in the Iron Mask". He preaches with great passion on the nature of God, and "what a fearful thing it is to fall into His hands". God is "a white fire of righteousness, an angry fire...." All his official cant about the God of Wrath, the imminence of Armageddon, as Huxley shows, fails to impress the well-fed citizens of Crome. They go on with their sins. And Bodiham himself is equally casual; after musing over an old sermon concerned with God as a God of Wrath, he turns to his mail. It contains a pamphlet, larger than his own printed sermon and more elegant in appearance. "The House of Sheeny, Clerical Outfitters, Birmingham". The style catalogue for Anglican rectors had little red crosses in place of full stops, and advertised "Clerical frock-coats. From nine guineas. A dressy garment tailored by our own experienced ecclesiastical cutters." 20

Cardan, in Those Barren Leaves, is made to find a considerable disparity between the ideal and the actual in his experience with the Catholic Church. While in Rome, Mrs. Chelifier, always a devoted Protestant, found that one could not really ignore the portentousness of the place. God had in some unique way marked it out from other cities. The spiritual meaning could not be missed. Cardan does not agree, and points out that "a great many tourists and all the inhabitants contrive to do so with complete

success".²¹ He also experiences difficulty in feeling "the spirituality" within or without the Church when it falls to his lot to bury Miss Elver. Even the ritual leaves much to be desired. Cardan describes the funeral.

The bearers filed in, bringing with them from the fields a healthy smell of sweat. They were dressed for the occasion in garments that ought, no doubt, to have been surplices, but which were, in point of fact, rather dirty and crumpled white dust-coats... The priest reeled off his Latin formulas as though for a wager; the bearers, in ragged and timeless unison bawled back at him incomprehensible responses. During the long prayers they talked to one another about the vintage. The boy scratched first his head, then his posterior, finally picked his nose. The priest prayed so fast that all the words fused together and became one word. Mr. Cardan wondered why the Catholic Church did not authorize prayer wheels. A simple little electric motor doing six or eight revolutions a minute would get through a quite astonishing amount of pious work in a day and cost much less than a priest.²²

Huxley's representation of the church is most unsympathetic in Antic Hay. Gumbriel has to rule out orthodox religion, finding it impossible to reconcile his mother's horrid death by cancer with the goodness of God. Coleman, too, goes about shouting atrocious jokes about Christ and the Fathers of the Church as a sort of revenge for not being able to believe in God. Chelifier, in Those Barren Leaves, although somewhat subtler than Coleman, feels a similar resentment. He writes ironic verses about the Holy Ghost sliding down to Golders Green. Chelifier also resents the late Nineteenth Century tendency to substitute pantheism for the out-moded Christianity. Chelifier's father "considered a walk among the mountains as the equivalent of church-going", and quoted Wordsworth's Prelude as if it were divine revelation: "A sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused". Chelifier bitterly reflects that such phrases are "as meaningless as so many hiccoughs."²³ Chelifier repudiates Nineteenth Century

21 Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, London, Penguin Books, 1951 (First edition 1925), p. 255.

22 Ibid., p. 283.

23 Ibid., p. 108.

pantheism, but pantheism was not the only substitute for the outmoded orthodox beliefs. A rash of new cults such as spiritualism, theosophy, and astrology, broke out in the fashionable world of the 1920's.

In Crome Yellow, Mrs. Wimbush dabbles in New Thought, the occult, Christian Science and telepathy. "I have", she says, "the Infinite to keep in tune with.... And then there's the next world and all the spirits, and one's Aura, and Mrs. Eddy and saying you're not ill, and the Christian Mysteries and Mrs. Besant."²⁴ At this stage of his development, Huxley represents religion in such forms as being the ultimate in hypocrisy and charlatanism. Mr. Barbecue-Smith writes in his best-seller, Pipelines to the Infinite, that Inspiration is the answer to the problems of man. A simple matter of getting in touch with the Subconscious by hypnotizing oneself. Of himself Barbecue-Smith admits that he can at will have a trance which allows the "Niagara of the Infinite", the inspiration of his muse, to cascade "uplifting aphorisms to him from the divine Source". He reminds Denis of the advertisement of Nestle's milk -- "the two cats on the wall, under the moon, one black and thin, the other white, sleek, and fat. Before Inspiration and after".²⁵

Mr. Wenham in The World of Light, regards spiritualism as the highest form of contemporary religion because it is scientific. He also finds that it is remunerative. His book on spiritualism sold sixteen thousand copies at a guinea a piece. It was going into a fourth edition when Hugo turned up alive and exploded the medium's message from him on the other side.²⁶

²⁴ Huxley, Crome Yellow, p. 11.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁶ Aldous Huxley, The World of Light, London, Chatto and Windus, 1931, p. 55.

Huxley had little time for spiritualism, but his fiercest diatribes are reserved for sham or excessive spirituality. His first attack is on the Lapith Sisters in Crome Yellow. They thought the process of eating so degrading that they could only satisfy their quite normal appetites in a secret room of the paternal mansion. Huxley satirizes the Claxtons who also found that, "Eating was gross; high living was incompatible with high-thinking...."²⁷ The Claxtons lived very spiritually indeed -- even the cat was a vegetarian. They found, during an enforced stay in Switzerland, that it was really too healthy a climate in which to be spiritual. Back in England, Martha's lumbago, Herbert's chronic constipation, little Paul's adenoids, all helped to make them very spiritual again. Martha's example of spirituality to her family was in direct proportion to the number of chocolates she secretly ate during the day.

In purging himself of any forms of religious hypocrisy, Huxley mercilessly attacks the spiritual lovers. He makes Hubert, the medium in The World of Light, find very little difficulty in seducing Enid after the seance. Feeling like a tired child he goes to sleep on her breast -- the rest is "child's play". Similarly, Huxley pokes fun at the false spirituality of Chawdron's relationships with the Fairy. He describes them as being like "the loves of the angels -- so angelic that, when it was all over, one wouldn't be quite sure whether there had been any interruption in the mystical conversation or not."²⁸ And he accounts for the "Spiritual" qualities of the Fairy in very physical ways. She was a vegetarian and an ascetic who suffered from headaches and chronic

²⁷ Aldous Huxley, "The Claxtons", Brief Candles, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948 (first ed. 1930), p. 131.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

constipation as a result of lack of food. The spiritual look in her eyes was caused by uncorrected myopia. She was given to mystic and transcendental experiences. Chawdron found her pseudo-religious utterances balm to his Presbyterian conscience which was occasionally troubled by his "legal swindling".

Love that was excessively spiritual, sham spirituality, and spiritualism, along with the other fashionable religious cults, were no better than old orthodox religious practices. Huxley saw in a decaying Twentieth Century civilization only the ultimate in hypocrisy and pretense displayed in the practices of those who were supposedly religious. He, the young intellectual newly awakened to the needs of his soul and spirit, could find nowhere a satisfactory creed on which to fix. Mingling as he was in the early Twenties with an extremely sophisticated social set, it was natural that he should evaluate their substitutes for religion -- art and sex. As he had purged himself of science and religion, he had also to rid himself of the notion that art or sex alone could give life some overall meaning.

Huxley thinks that art as a substitute for religion is no better than orthodoxy or the popular cults. Scogan, in Crome Yellow, sums art up as "the last and silliest of the idols, the sweetest of the inebriants". None of the artists in the early fiction are sympathetically portrayed. Gombould in Crome Yellow uses his painting as a means of escaping from the other quests at Crome. Ultimately his art represents a withdrawal from life itself. Lypiatt, in Antic Hay fancies himself as a muscular Christian artist and proposes to make painting spiritually significant; but the world rejects his art. Lypiatt passionately desires to paint

life, yet his failure to do so points to a deadness in him. The sentimental Christian ideals which Lypiatt hopes to express have become ridiculous -- the tradition of the past to which he clings is shown as hollow and meaningless. Lypiatt is totally unrealistic about his art and his life; he deludes himself into a kind of trance and finds his only answer in suicide. Rodney in Two or Three Graces is presented as having moved with the times. Rodney paints green nudes in distorted settings and makes significant talk about "forms" to prove his freedom from the tradition of the past. He and his artistic friends represent the modern world. Proudly, a young guest bawls, "We are absolutely modern, we are. Anybody can have my wife so far as I'm concerned. I don't care. She's free. And I'm free. That's what I call modern." 29

Free love was as great a snare and a delusion as science, pseudo-religious poses or art. Huxley sees all around him only an "infinite of poses". People in a variety of occupations trying to give their empty lives meaning, and, finding that their choice still leaves them empty, continue to cling to an outmoded ideal or substitute a new sophisticated one. Shearwater chooses science; Bodiam, Anglicanism; the Claxtons and Chawdron, spirituality; Lypiatt and Rodney, art. Most of the female characters chose sex. Huxley's modern young women, Anne and Mary in Crome Yellow, Myra Viveash in Antic Hay, Mary Thriplow and Irene in Those Barren Leaves, all are devoted to the theories of Freud or Havelock Ellis, and all become increasingly incapable of love. Grace, in Two or Three Graces, is quickly converted to the modern view and learns to play the role of femme fatale.

29 Aldous Huxley, Two or Three Graces, London, Chatto and Windus, 1949, p. 79.

She adjusts to the demands of each new lover with a remarkable versatility. At the opposite end of the scale from the calculating sirens are the self-absorbed women who have been frightened by physical love -- Emily, Marjorie Carling, Beatrice, The Fairy. Huxley can attach no real value to the types of love represented by his characters. Love is either freely distorted into sexual licence, or confused with some sham spirituality. Nowhere does he seem able to find a mature, lasting human love relationship.

Huxley finds modern politics as disillusioning a spectacle as hedonism, religion, art or science. Falx is Huxley's representative of the political crusader devoted to a noble public cause but, as Cardan points out, his zeal for the welfare of the working classes is just another of the inebriants, another means of killing time.

Huxley, in search of values which would unify and exalt his being, had first to take a full look at the world as he knew it. Purgation, contrary to a general misconception regarding the mystic's progress, does not involve "withdrawing wilfully from the business of life", ³⁰ but, rather, a wilful involvement in the world at large. Huxley's Awakening and Purgation made him see all aspects of modern life with a frightening clarity; yet out of the two early periods of his search for meaning in life came some moments of assurance of the existence of the ultimate Reality which he sought.

Spotted through all the fiction, poetry and essays written by Huxley prior to 1936, when with Eyeless in Gaza, mysticism became more obviously

30 Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 11.

the working philosophy he sought, are incidents and experiences which indicate that in spite of the despair and the sense of futility which so characterized the early stages of his search, Huxley did show an awareness of a number of moments which resemble Illumination -- stage three of the normal mystic's journey.

He reveals his insights through the attitude he gives to some of his characters. Denis, who could find no way out of all his intellectual dilemma, was able to affirm, in moments of quietness, the existence of goodness, and to transcend, at least momentarily, the outer world. Riding his bicycle to Crome he experiences what might be considered a moment of Illumination.

The world, he found, was good. The far-away blue hills, the harvests whitening on the slopes of the ridge along which his road led him, the treeless sky-lines that changed as he moved -- yes, they were all good. He was overcome by the beauty of those deeply embayed combs, scooped in the flanks of the ridge beneath him.... Becoming once more aware of the outer world, he found himself on the crest of the descent. ³¹

As the passage seems to indicate, Denis' moment of real self-transcendence is the result of his response to nature. Miss Underhill claims that "...to attain a radiant consciousness of the 'otherness' of natural things, is the simplest and commonest form of illumination". ³² That Denis' moment of "forgetting the outer world" should lack a fervent enthusiasm or emotional expression of the "otherness" that Miss Underhill mentions, is not surprising. As Huxley's period of Awakening was a very controlled and gradual experience lacking any demonstration of strong emotional

³¹ Huxley, Crome Yellow, p. 6.

³² Underhill, Mysticism, p. 234.

outbursts or the abrupt "conversions" that Miss Underhill describes, so his moments of Illumination are equally characterized by a gradualness and an emotional control. Such control, however, does not deny the depth of feeling involved. Huxley never actually describes his own personal feelings; he is always excessively reticent about his own spiritual experiences, but his very reticence may be an indication that his own feelings are too private to expose. The only glimpses we have of the young Huxley's movement on the Mystic-Way are through his fictional characters. As Denis' moment of Illumination comes from his response to nature, so Gumbriel's moment results from a response to a love relationship.

Gumbriel expresses his conviction of the existence of something beyond the outer world, of something mysterious. He is aware in the night of a "crystal quiet", "inexpressibly lovely". Even if for only a moment Gumbriel experiences eternity in his relationship with Emily.

For them there were no more minutes. But time passed, time passed flowing in a dark stream, stanchlessly as though from some profound mysterious wound in the world's side, bleeding, bleeding, for ever. One of the candles had burned down to the socket and the long, smoky flame wavered unsteadily. The flickering light troubled their eyes; the shadows twitched and stirred uneasily.... The eternity had been renewed, the enchantment prolonged. There was no need to think of anything now but the moment. The past was forgotten, the future abolished. There was only this secret room and the candlelight and the unreal, impossible happiness of being two. 33

The illumination that Huxley has Calamy experience is an advance on that of either Denis or Gumbriel. Like Gumbriel, Calamy sensed that the love experience could provide an "awareness", could at least "humble the mind to quiet". Calamy had been a mechanical amorist who came to realize

that unless made resplendent by some mystery or power the love experience would never be more than momentary; that, in fact, nothing in his life could have any real meaning unless first he penetrated "into the mental silence that lies beyond the body". As Huxley represents Calamy's determination to become a mystic the periods of Awakening, Purgation and Illumination all seem to fuse together. Calamy is convinced that he must consciously try to pierce the depths of a reality whose existence he senses.

Calamy lay on his back, quite still, looking up into the darkness. Up there, he was thinking, so close that it's only a question of reaching out a hand to draw back the curtaining darkness that conceals it, up there, just above me, floats the great secret, the beauty and the mystery. To look into the depths of that mystery, to fix the eyes of the spirit on that bright and enigmatic beauty, to pore over the secret until its symbols cease to be opaque and the light filters through from beyond -- there is nothing else in life, for me at any rate, that matters; there is no rest or possibility of satisfaction in doing anything else. ³⁴

The language of this passage is typical of the language used by mystics to describe the moment of Illumination. Such expressions as the mystery, the great secret, brightness, beauty, the light from beyond, are all typical of mystical writing, but Huxley at this stage of his psychological development does not allow his own expression of mysticism, even through a fictional character, to be too definite. Huxley's natural reticence in revealing his innermost thoughts doubtless kept him from elaborating Calamy's emotional experiences. Conceivably, Huxley may doubt the value of attempting to describe an experience considered to be indescribable. Through Scogan, the sceptic in Crome Yellow, Huxley had indicated the incommunicability of the mystic's experience. Scogan says:

³⁴ Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, p. 226.

I read the works of the mystics. They seemed to me nothing but the most deplorable claptrap -- as indeed they always must to anyone who does not feel the same emotion as the authors felt when they were writing. For it is the emotion that matters. The written work is simply an attempt to express emotion, which is in itself inexpressible, in terms of intellect and logic. The mystic objectifies a rich feeling in the pit of the stomach into a cosmology. For other mystics that cosmology is a symbol of the rich feeling. For the unreligious it is a symbol of nothing, and so appears merely grotesque.³⁵

Scogan's comments on the ineffable quality of the mystic's emotion seem a fair representation of Huxley's own feelings. However, while he does not risk a great expression of mysticism through the mouth of Calamy, he does show sufficient conviction to allow Calamy to go off "to wait" in quietness, emotionally and intellectually convinced that, "Salvation's not in the next world; it's in this '." When taunted by the sceptics, Cardan and Chelifier, who say that mystics are "soft-heads", and "sentimental imbeciles", Calamy replies,

On the contrary,... in point of historical fact they've generally been men of the highest intelligence. Buddha, Jesus, Lao-Tse, Boehme..... And what about Sir Isaac Newton, who practically abandoned mathematics for mysticism after he was thirty? Not that he was a particularly good mystic; he wasn't. But he tried to be and it can't be said that he was remarkable for the softness of his head. No, it's not fools who turn to mystics. It takes a certain amount of intelligence and imagination to realize the extraordinary queerness and mysteriousness of the world in which we live. ³⁶

Calamy's defence of mysticism shows that in 1925 Huxley was conversant, academically at least, with the great mystics of all ages. Calamy's first step towards the contemplative life may be taken as an indication that Huxley himself has experienced something akin to

³⁵ Huxley, Crome Yellow, p. 146.

³⁶ Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, p. 312.

•Illumination. That he is still far from entering the Unitive Way, the fifth and final stage on the mystic-way, can be deduced from an examination of the character Chelifer.

In many ways, Chelifer can be identified with Huxley as justifiably as Calamy. Like Calamy, Chelifer sees the sham and superficiality of the Epicurean or hedonist way of life. Chelifer, like Calamy and Gumbril, has his moment of Illumination in the love relationship. He expresses his feeling of awareness in a sonnet:

There is no future, there is no more past;
 No roots nor fruits, but momentary flowers.
 Lie still, only lie still and night will last
 Silent and dark, not for a space of hours,
 But everlastingly. Let me forget
 All but your perfume, every night but this,
 The shame, the fruitless weeping, the regret.
 Only lie still: this faint and quiet bliss
 Shall flower upon the brink of sleep and spread
 Till there is nothing else but you and I
 Clapsed in a timeless silence. But like one
 Who, doomed to die, at morning will be dead,
 I know, though night seem dateless, that the sky
 Must brighten soon before to-morrow's sun. 37

The vibrant verbal music in this sonnet suggests that Chelifer has felt some mysterious power. Chelifer, like Spode and Gumbril, knew that "he ought to do something different", but asked himself, "wasn't it a little absurd to risk a conversion?" He is not so brittle as he seems, but he is afraid of making a fool of himself, of becoming a "soft-head". Huxley, like Chelifer, seems to be so far gone in his own intellectuality that he dare not trust the promptings of his heart. Instead of pursuing directly, in keeping with his personality and desire, the contemplative's

way of life, Huxley apparently left Calamy on the mountaintop and returned with Chelifer to the society he knew to be false. This return to society seems to mark another distinct stage in Huxley's development. If Huxley's development followed that of a traditional mystic, he should now enter the fourth stage -- the "Dark Night of the Soul".

It is at this stage, however, that Huxley's search for Reality begins to vary most from the traditional mystic's progress along the Mystic Way. According to Miss Underhill, the "Dark Night of the Soul" is stage four or the final purification stage of the five-fold Mystic Way. Stage four is mainly characterized by the mystic's sense of being abandoned. Having glimpsed the transcendental Reality in the period of Illumination, the mystic has now to suffer a period of no illumination. He knows only despair, frustration and futility in all his mystical activity. According to Miss Underhill, the mystic experiences a "...most intense period of that great swing-back into darkness which usually divides the 'first mystic life' or Illuminative Way, from the 'second mystic life', or Unitive Way,a period of utter blankness and stagnation, so far as mystical activity is concerned."³⁸ Miss Underhill deals mainly with the phenomena of mysticism as related to the Roman Catholic Church where the stress is on union with a personal God. Therefore, she attributes the great despair of the mystic in this fourth stage to his sense of rejection by his personal God, to his loss of a sense of companionship with the personal God. With the "intimate-personal" type of mystic, the personal God is regained in the final stage -- the Unitive Life. For the transcendent-metaphysical type of mystic, the type Huxley most nearly represents, there is no sense of loss of a personal God. Rather Miss Underhill

38 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 381.

attributes the great despair of the "Dark Night of the Soul" in this type of mystic to his need to negate himself, his will to happiness and all his personal satisfaction derived from his earlier mystical experiences.

Dean Inge, who deals with mysticism as it developed through the Anglican Church, does not consider it inevitable that a developing mystic should pass through the period of the "Dark Night of the Soul". Inge includes this stage as part of Awakening and Purgation and sees only three major stages in the mystic's journey -- Purgation, Illumination and the Unitive Way.

Conceivably, Huxley's growth could better be traced through the stages set out by Dean Inge. Certainly, in Huxley's case, his period of bitterness was not characterized by a sense of loss of a personal God. Huxley, very early in life, seems to have given up the idea of a personal or anthropomorphic God. At this fourth stage, the significant difference in Huxley's development from that described by Miss Underhill seems to be not so much a continuation of purification, but a stage of almost total abandonment of mystical activities. Having left Calamy on the mountain top in Those Barren Leaves (1925), Huxley seems to have denied his own interest in mysticism until in Eyeless in Gaza (1936), he again, through the characterization of Anthony Beavis, shows his intention of seeking ultimate Reality through a theory of non-violence, the basis of mysticism. This total abandonment of mystical activities Miss Underhill does take into account in her fourth stage -- the "Dark Night of the Soul". She says that the mystic has to suffer a period of no illumination, and knows only despair, frustration and futility in all his mystical activities, but the mystic's despair is over his own personal inability to achieve lasting union with

the Absolute. 39

Huxley's development at the time of writing Point Counter Point (1928), then, deviates markedly from that of the normal mystic. The sense of despair apparent in the novel is not Huxley's personal despair over his failure to unite permanently with the Absolute, but rather it is despair over his fellow man's inability to live rationally and wholly in society. The second major deviation seems to be that Huxley, instead of continuing the process of purification, seems almost to abandon all his mystical activities and interests. He affirms instead his faith in the "integral living" idea, the life-worshipper's creed. In spite of the apparent abandonment of mysticism for "integral living" in Point Counter Point, however, the life-worshipper's creed does retain something of the self-transcendence of mysticism in the sense of transcending the ordinary "lop-sided" self. The "integral living" idea also emphasizes the importance of spirit and the existence of the various "not-selves" with which we are associated. The examination of the novel which follows, then, is done with the deliberate intention of pointing up not only the negative elements of despair over society in the novel, but also the seeds of ideas which later flowered into an open discussion of the elements of mysticism.

A.C. Ward claims that Huxley's Point Counter Point makes Bunyan's City of Destruction look like a health resort.⁴⁰ John Atkins considers Point Counter Point as Huxley's "descent into Hell" and compares it to

39 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 381.

40 A.C. Ward, The Nineteen-Twenties, London, Methuen and Company Ltd., 1930, p. 116.

Van Gogh's landscapes, Gericault's paintings, Browning's Childe Roland.⁴¹ According to Atkins, D.H. Lawrence claimed that had Huxley continued concentrating on stupidity and evil in life as he did in Point Counter Point, he would have had a mental breakdown and ended in a lunatic asylum. Lawrence believed that Huxley carried "too great a load of cerebration for any one man to bear", and that unless Huxley balanced his living, he could like Edgar Allan Poe be driven mad not by drink but by an over-active analytical capacity.⁴² Certainly Lawrence's comments on Point Counter Point reveal his estimate of the blackness of Huxley's view of ordinary life in 1927 when he was writing this novel. In a letter to Huxley, Lawrence wrote:

I have read Point Counter Point with a heart sinking through my boot-soles and a rising admiration. I do think you've shown the truth, perhaps the last truth, about you and your generation, with really fine courage. It seems to me it would take ten times the courage to write P. Counter P. that it took to write Lady C.: and if the public knew what it was reading, it would throw a hundred stones at you, to one at me. I do think that art has to reveal the palpitating moment or the state of man as it is. And I do think you do that, terribly. But what a moment! and what a state! if you can only palpitate to murder, suicide, and rape, in their various degrees -- and you state plainly that it is so -- caro, however are we going to live through the days? Preparing still another murder, suicide, and rape? But it becomes of a phantasmal boredom and produces ultimately inertia, inertia, inertia and final atrophy of the feelings.... If I don't find some solid spot to climb out of, in the bog, I'm done. I can't stand murder, suicide, rape -- especially rape: and especially being raped.... All I want to do to your Lucy is smack her across the mouth, your Rampion is the most boring character in the book -- a gas-bag. Your attempt at intellectual sympathy!⁴³

Lawrence, in pointing out that Huxley, at this stage of his development,

⁴¹ Atkins, Aldous Huxley, p. 88.

⁴² Ibid., p. 142.

⁴³ Lawrence, The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, pp. 765-766.

could thrill only to murder, suicide and rape, emphasizes the very blackness of Huxley's view in 1928. Lawrence in another letter also pointed out, however, that only half a man wrote Point Counter Point: that "there is surely much more of a man in the real Aldous".⁴⁴ The real Aldous does not seem to emerge until Huxley reaches a stage, as he apparently does in 1936, of being able to affirm openly a belief in mysticism. In the meantime, he sees contemporary society substituting murder, suicide and rape for a state of grace.

Kenneth Burke points out that one of man's basic motivations is that of self-transcendence, the need to rise above his ego, (i.e., to rise above a self-regarding state), or to escape from it.⁴⁵ As pointed out in Chapter II, in The Devils of Loudun (1952), Huxley emphasizes this basic desire of man to rise above his ego and in some way to try to improve himself. He sums up, in an orderly manner, the nature of the five most common "grace-substitutes" used by man in place of a genuine means of transcending himself. Briefly, they are: drugs, sexuality, herd-intoxication, religion, and self-torture. Most of the characters in Point Counter Point are to a greater or lesser degree engaged in some variation of one of these "grace-substitutes" in a determined effort to escape themselves. All of the choices made, led and could lead only to, what Huxley later calls, "downward self-transcendence", to debauchery, to futility, to meaninglessness, to "murder, suicide and rape".

Lord Tantamount drugs himself with his scientific experiments. He

⁴⁴ Lawrence, The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, p. 791.

⁴⁵ Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 333.

represents the survival of Victorian biology -- the scientific hope of the Nineteenth Century. Lord Edward, although he is inspired by the idea that nature or the universe is one great harmony, limits his activities to the narrow confines of experimental biology. He allows his pre-occupation with his experiments to prevent his developing the other sides of his nature. Because he finds it difficult to associate freely with other members of society, he uses his experiments as an excuse for withdrawal.

"What a relief!" said Lord Edward, as he opened the door of his laboratory. Voluptuously, he sniffed the faint smell of the absolute alcohol in which the specimens were pickled. "These parties! One's thankful to get back to science. Still the music was really...." ⁴⁶

Lord Edward is not in any sense a despicable figure. In spite of his apparent withdrawal, he is through Beethoven's music aware of a harmony of life.

Illidge, Lord Edward's assistant, although able to see the flaw in his employer's withdrawal, failed to recognize a similar flaw in himself. Embittered and class-conscious, Illidge allowed his jealousy to act like a poisonous drug. He is forced to deride his own idol, "pure science", in order to indulge his hatred of capitalist philosophy and bourgeois religion.

"Asymmetrical tadpoles!" he repeated. "Asymmetrical tadpoles! What a refinement! Almost as good as playing Bach on the flute or having a palate for wine." He thought of his brother Tom, who had weak lungs and worked a broaching machine in a motor

factory at Manchester. He remembered washing days and the pink crinkled skin of his mother's water-sodden hands. ⁴⁷

Illidge has turned to communism, but his hatred of established society has so drugged and warped his mind that he cannot be constructive. His belief in scientific detachment and impersonal action traps him. He talks admiringly of political murder committed in a totally detached spirit, but when Spandrell provides the opportunity actually to kill a political opponent, Illidge is caught. His "downward self-transcendence" is complete with Webley's murder.

Webley's "grace-substitute" is a desire for power closely associated with "herd-intoxication". Webley manipulates the mob instinct in the masses to inflate his own ego. Webley, a Fascist, is at the opposite end of the political scale from Illidge. Webley derives great satisfaction from dressing himself in his green British Freeman's uniform complete with sword and in making speeches inciting his "fellow outlaws" to violence. Riding his horse into innocent by-standers is a manifestation of his ego-tistic arrogance. As well as being a Fascist leader with a power complex, Webley is also a man in love. His uncontrolled passion for Elinor ironically contributes to his own death.

Sexuality, in many cases coupled with some other "grace-substitute", is the most common cause of "downward self-transcendence". Elinor finds her relationship with Quarles too abstract, too intellectual. He loves

⁴⁷ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 72.

her but, as she says, "it was by wireless...and across an Atlantic that he communicated with her." ⁴⁸ Elinor, to counteract the emptiness she feels because of Philip's inability to give her a warm burning love, forces herself to take a lover against her own better judgment. Lucy Tantamount, however, is the real Twentieth Century libertine of love. Lucy experiments with love as her father experiments with tadpoles. She succeeds only in becoming so sophisticated that she is incapable of love on a normal human basis. She drives both herself and Walter Bidlake to a level of sub-humanity in their sexual relationships when only a rape situation provides her with a sense of escape or release from the boredom of her own ego. The opposite of Lucy is Beatrice who is incapable of any mature sexual feelings. She had never recovered from the psychological affect of her uncle's sexual advances made to her when she was a little girl. Burlap, however, himself sexually perverted to the state of an incestuous child, plays on her maternal instincts and by introducing a strain of pseudo-spirituality into their relationship manages not only to get her into bed with him but to indulge his own sexual infantilism as well.

That night he and Beatrice pretended to be two little children and had their bath together. Two little children sitting at opposite ends of the big old-fashioned bath. And what a romp they had! The bathroom was drenched with their splashings. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁹

Burlap's "grace-substitute" is more than just sexuality; he couples it with a perverted spirituality. A shrewd businessman, he salves his

⁴⁸ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 90.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 514.

conscience for money made on the stock market or through slick deals, by writing a biography of St. Francis. Although morally guilty of the death of Miss Corbett, he sloughs off her suicide with a hypocritical "but that was something he could not foresee".

Marjorie Carling is dominated by sentimentality, sex and religion. She justifies her running off with Walter Bidlake on the grounds that Carling is a drunkard. When Walter leaves her in an advanced state of pregnancy for the more tantalizing siren, Lucy, Marjorie is forced to seek consolation in religion; she turns her situation into a quiet Christian martyrdom. Carling, whose Roman Catholic vows have been outraged by the broken marriage, seeks escape on his part by, as Spandrell puts it, "staggering from the bar to the altar rails. And from the confessional to the bawdy house".⁵⁰

Like Marjorie, Mrs. Quarles Sr., accepts Old Quarles' philandering with a somewhat sickening excess of Christian charity. Old John Bidlake's illness forces him in his later life, to be a little more discreet than Quarles Senior. Bidlake, confined to his back garden, allows his lecherous desires vicarious satisfaction in seeing the landscape as "...all curves and bulges and round recessions, like a body...cherubic backsides...glaucous belly...enormous navel...multitudinous breasts of a green Diana...anatomy in leaves and vapour and swelling earth."⁵¹ Bidlake's lustful outlet is less expensive than Quarles', who has the tiresome business of paying off

⁵⁰ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 265.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 494.

the irate secretary whom he was so careless as to make pregnant.

Sexuality and spirituality are the most common surrogates of grace, and provide a means for only "downward self-transcendence". Self-torture is a more subtle substitute for true self-transcendence. Spandrell, modelled on Baudelaire, never allows himself to outgrow the shock he received as an adolescent when his mother remarried. Spandrell is the victim of a romantic illusion about both life and love, and rather than give up the illusion, he sinks downward until he is finally capable of pitiless murder. Spandrell's drift to aggressively evil conduct ironically results from a frustrated desire to do something good. Balked of pursuing good through good, he pursues it through evil. Like Coleman, Spandrell goes about "howling the black mass". He postulates God, original sin, denial of flesh, instincts, love and honour, in order to damn himself. His monstrous murder of Webley is a desperate attempt to discover God by offending Him. The murder of Webley comes off as something of an atrocious, sadistic joke. Spandrell is the ultimate example of "downward self-transcendence". Paradoxically, the very blackness of his act allows him to become strangely aware of the existence of God. Spandrell is a clear illustration of the type of being who "makes use of the descending road as a way to spiritual self-transcendence". Huxley makes clear in The Devils of Loudun that,

...when the shell of the ego has been cracked and there begins to be a consciousness of the subliminal and physiological othernesses underlying personality, it sometimes happens that we catch a glimpse, fleeting but apocalyptic, of that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all being. So long as we are confined within our insulated selfhood, we remain unaware of the various not-selves with

which we are associated -- the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit. Any escape, even by a descending road, out of insulated selfhood makes possible at least a momentary awareness of the not-self on every level, including the highest. ⁵²

The passage seems to be a mature statement of what Huxley was groping his way towards with the creation of the two characters, Spandrell and Rampion. Spandrell has a sense of an absolute God early in the novel, but with the murder of Webley he returns to play the Beethoven Quartet in A-Minor, and seems clearly to have caught "a glimpse, fleeting but apocalyptic, of that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all being". Spandrell apparently had become aware of "the various 'not-selves' with which we are associated". His awareness came too late, however, for him to engage in any active self-transformation which could lead to "upward self-transcendence". He seems to be left no choice but to commit suicide.

Huxley's psychological development at the time of writing Point Counter Point seems to correspond to that of both Spandrell and Rampion. As Lawrence pointed out, Huxley, at least as a writer, in this period of his life, could only "palpitate to murder, suicide and rape". Like Spandrell, however, Huxley does seem to become gradually aware of "that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all our being". Unlike Spandrell, Huxley goes on living and, ironically, the book which most depicts Huxley's despair for society also expresses his hope for it through the "integral living" theme. And, contained in the theme are seeds of ideas which flower into an open

⁵² Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, pp. 323-324.

conviction that mysticism is a satisfactory way of life.

From Huxley's representation of the character of Spandrell, it may be inferred that Huxley had some sense, intuitively and emotionally, of the "Otherness", the "Ground of all being". But Huxley at this stage of his development was essentially the controlled man of intellect. If he resembles one of his characters in Point Counter Point more than another that one is doubtless Quarles -- the detached observer in life. This very detachment is one of the qualities which distinguishes Huxley from the true mystics in the fourth stage -- the "Dark Night of the Soul". Miss Underhill describes such mystics as already very far advanced in mysticism and as individuals who have attained this stage only by great and strenuous seeking after God. Huxley's intellectual detachment seems to indicate a distinct difference between Huxley's experiences and those of the mystics described by Miss Underhill. Huxley's emotional control seems to set him apart from the normal mystic. Yet Huxley's detachment is not impregnable. Emotionally Huxley may lack the conviction necessary to make any very definite statement of the concept of "Otherness", but he does through the character of Rampion, become involved with the concept of a wholeness in living which ultimately leads to a firm belief in mysticism.

Rampion is the most complete example of a character who is not engaged in "downward self-transcendence", who is not guilty of employing "grace-substitutes" as a means of escaping the tormenting consciousness of being merely himself. Rampion is consciously trying to be "himself" in the fullest sense. He seems to have pierced through his own "insulated self-hood" and to know that to pursue one phase of life to the exclusion of others is to pervert oneself "away from the central norm". He knew that

Burlap was a "pure little Jesus pervert"; Quarles an "intellectual-aesthetic pervert"; Spandrell a "morality-philosophy pervert".⁵³

When a person is perverted or lop-sided or, as Rampion says, a barbarian of the soul, or of the intellect, or of the flesh, he actually insulates the selfhood to such a degree that the ego never experiences any "consciousness of the subliminal and physiological othernesses underlying personality". Without this sense of the "othernesses" there can be no real harmony in life. Rampion's philosophy is one of "wholeness" attained through "balance". He names Blake as the last civilized man and goes on to say that,

Civilization is harmony and completeness. Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body -- Blake managed to include and harmonize everything. Barbarism is being lop-sided. You can be a barbarian of the intellect as well as of the body. A barbarian of the soul and the feelings as well as of sensuality. Christianity made us barbarians of the soul and now science is making us barbarians of the intellect.⁵⁴

In seeing the need to harmonize "reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body", Rampion seems to be groping towards the idea of the

...not-selves with which we are associated -- the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit.

Rampion gropes towards the idea of the "not-selves" but falls short of the mark because he thinks that the harmony comes from without; he does not move to a complete acceptance of the fact that the "balance" comes from "the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence"; he doesn't really go beyond the organic not-self and the subconscious not-self. Rampion seems to be the victim of the age-old

⁵³ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 481.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

concept that man consists of opposites. In his terms, the "sub-conscious not-self" becomes the "mind and consciousness and spirit". Opposing the "sub-conscious not-self" is the "organic not-self" or, in Rampion's terms, "all that's unconscious and earthy and mysterious". Man's function as Rampion sees it is to balance himself between these two apparent opposites. As he says,

A man's a creature on a tight rope, walking delicately, equilibrated, with mind and consciousness and spirit at one end of his balancing pole and body and instinct and all that's unconscious and earthy and mysterious at the other. Balanced. Which is damnably difficult. And the only absolute he can ever really know is the absolute of perfect balance. The absoluteness of perfect relativity. Which is a paradox and nonsense intellectually.⁵⁵

The absoluteness that Rampion is talking about is not such a paradox or intellectual nonsense as he thinks. Had he gone one step beyond recognizing the "not-selves" to recognizing the "psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence" he would have resolved the paradox. But Rampion could not go beyond his creator's stage of development. Huxley himself at this stage of his career could only intellectually accept the need for a "wholeness" in life. Naturally he could not in 1928 write the novel from a viewpoint that it took until 1952, with the writing of The Devils of Loudun, to clarify.

In "After the Fireworks", written two years after Point Counter Point, however, Huxley seems to have resolved the problem that plagued Rampion, the problem of opposites in life. Huxley comes gradually to recognize that life contains no opposites, an idea that Rampion had groped towards when he spoke of the "sane, harmonious, Greek man" whom he admired because

⁵⁵ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 478.

he thought the Greek knew how to strike the balance, or reconcile the intrinsically hostile forces.⁵⁶ The character of Miles Fanning seems to represent an advance in Huxley's thinking because Fanning no longer recognizes the existence of "hostile forces". There is only the one supreme force. Miles Fanning, in "After the Fireworks", recognizes that Homer's characters are whole. They have the completeness that Rampion so desired. Homer, Fanning points out, lived before the "great split" which broke life "...into spirit and matter, heroics and diabolics, virtue and sin and all the other accursed antitheses". Fanning believed that "Plato was the arch-seducer. It was he who first sent us whoring after spirituality and heroics, whoring after the complementary demons of disgust and sin".⁵⁷ Fanning learns from the Etruscan sculpture unearthed in 1916 "like a new apocalypse from the Sixteenth Century B.C." What Fanning learns he cannot yet integrate, "you can't write a thing before it is ripe"; but Fanning who has tried opium to obtain a private world, to discover what may be the real "self", who has believed in Apollo, Bacchus, Buddha, Venus, the Devil, and the Categorical Imperative, begins to recognize the sanity expressed in the "archaic Greek sculpture". Fanning finds himself admiring the God who, as he says,

..doesn't admit the separate existence of either heroics or diabolics but somehow includes them in his own nature and turns them into something else -- like two gases combining to make a liquid.... it's equally obvious that he knows all about both, that he includes them, that he combines them into a third essence.⁵⁸

Fanning's admiration for the Etruscan God's ability to combine the opposites into a "third essence" seems to suggest his own desire for a similar ability.

⁵⁶ Huxley, Point Counter Point, p. 141.

⁵⁷ Aldous Huxley, Brief Candles, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948, pp. 240 ff.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 240-241.

If Huxley can be identified with his character Miles Fanning, then, Huxley too seems to be desirous of fusing the diversities of life into a total whole. He seems to have recognized the fact that the integration of spirit and matter in one individual whole can only be achieved by negating the concept that life consists of opposites, by negating the concept of a split between spirit and matter. With the creation of the character Fanning, Huxley was still not ready to create the character who would consciously attempt to combine the opposites of life into the "third essence", but he was not far from creating a character, Anthony Beavis, who, through his study of mysticism, does attempt such a combination.

The novel, Eyeless in Gaza (1936), makes apparent Huxley's belief in mysticism as a religion that could lead to man's final awareness of an ultimate Reality. The novel seems to mark a further stage in Huxley's development. If one were to maintain that Huxley's search for some ultimate meaning in life ran parallel to Miss Underhill's description of the mystic's progress along the Mystic-Way, Eyeless in Gaza should mark Huxley's entry into the fifth and final stage of the mystic journey. However, as in the comparison of the previous stages along the Mystic-Way, Huxley's progress has deviated widely from the orthodox pattern set out by Miss Underhill, so in the fifth and final stage Huxley's deviation becomes even more pronounced.

In the "Dark Night of the Soul" period, Huxley's development differed in that he did not suffer the loss of a personal God, and that while Point Counter Point gives evidence of a considerable quality of despair, it is not that intense personal experience that Miss Underhill describes, but Huxley's despair seems to be that of a humanist for the fate of the world rather than that of a mystic for his own fate. On the whole the period from 1925 to 1936, except in terms of purification and sub-conscious groping,

seems to be a period of abandonment of mystical activity on Huxley's part; rather he affirms the life-worshipper's creed. Such an affirmation, while doubtless part of Huxley's continued search for Reality, does not seem to be part of the traditional experience of the "Dark Night of the Soul".

Similarly Huxley's experiences in the fifth stage -- the "Unitive Life" do not approximate Miss Underhill's description sufficiently to warrant the claim that Huxley, at least as yet, has personally attained the final union with Reality. If the title mystic can be claimed for Huxley it is only in the sense of the individual who "aims at and believes in such attainment". Huxley's publications from 1936 on give ample evidence of his belief in mysticism, but nowhere does Huxley indulge in an emotional outpouring which could be seen as the equivalent of the mystic's expression of an experienced union. The total lack of enthusiastic outbursts of ecstasy and exaltation in Huxley's accounts of mysticism seems to indicate that he has not experienced anything more than just the moment of Illumination. At the same time, Huxley's continued search for an experience that might approximate the "Unitive Life" achieved by the true mystic and his increased affirmation of mysticism as a philosophy which can give some lasting meaning to life, indicates that Huxley does move beyond Miss Underhill's third stage -- Illumination. Huxley's development seems best described as a prolonged growth of a deeply-rooted intellectual, spiritual and emotional belief that an ultimate Reality does exist. His gradually reached conviction of the existence of such an ultimate Reality stems from an intense intellectual awareness that life as lived in the Twentieth Century is meaningless.

As Chapter II attempted to show, Huxley tends to accept elements of Oriental mysticism because of his beliefs in pacifism and an impersonal God. So in his growth as a mystic Huxley seems to represent the Vedanta belief that there is never any final stage of "Being" for man, but rather a state of "Becoming". Huxley's search to find meaning in life does not seem to have stopped with any weak finality. Each publication from 1936 on seems to indicate some increased understanding of mysticism in general and a more heightened awareness of the "divine Ground of all our Being" by Huxley.

Huxley makes Philip Quarles a spectator in life. By the time he creates the character of Anthony Beavis in Eyeless in Gaza, Huxley seems to have recognized that it is not enough to remain uncommitted to life, free, totally detached. In Anthony Beavis, he creates a character who in his early years also cultivates the role of detached observer. Anthony comes to realize, however, that his imagined liberty has been bondage, his philosophical detachment mere escape and his moral indifference self-deception. Anthony embraces unity in diversity and determines to re-educate himself in the "right use of self". At the end of the novel, he is motivated by a combination of heart and intellect; he is prepared to risk his life in the Pacifist cause of active non-violence. Anthony's conviction is intellectual; and, intellectually, he knows that he has also to involve his heart and his emotions. Huxley had stated in Jesting Pilate that "...there is all the difference between believing academically, with the intellect, and believing personally, intimately, and with the whole living self".⁵⁹ Huxley represents Anthony as struggling desperately

⁵⁹ Huxley, Jesting Pilate, p. 289.

to believe with the "whole living self", but knowing that "even for the best of us, the consummation is still immeasurably remote". 60

Eyeless in Gaza, while it cannot, in the strict sense of Miss Underhill's criteria, be said to represent Huxley's entry into the "Unitive Life", does mark an advance on any previous expression of Huxley's belief in mysticism. Certainly the novel refutes the claim of the critics that it marks the beginning of Huxley's belief in mysticism, that Huxley must have undergone some sudden conversion during the thirties in order to write Eyeless in Gaza. Seeing the novel against the background of the early fiction, it becomes apparent that Eyeless in Gaza is the culmination of a foregoing intensive search for meaning in life; and that the author, like his character Anthony, is prepared to re-educate himself in the "right use of self" in the hope of sometime attaining an ultimate consummation with the Absolute. Anthony's situation at the end of the novel may not be significantly different from Calamy's in Those Barren Leaves (1925), but the more open expression of a belief in mysticism in Eyeless in Gaza seems to be some justification for the contention that Huxley is moving now in the full light of an intellectual conviction even if the emotional conviction, the experience of union itself is still lacking.

The novel, After Many a Summer (1939), written three years later, seems to contain some evidence that Huxley, again like his character Anthony Beavis, still found "the consummation" of the mystic state "immeasurably remote" and perhaps even doubted that he would ever know the mystic state in its fullest sense. If an identification of Huxley with both Propter and Pete can be made, then, Propter makes it appear that Huxley believes in mysticism

60 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, London, Penguin Books, 1955, p. 381.

as a way of life "academically, with the intellect". But Pete Boone's character suggests that his creator too is having difficulty in "believing personally, intimately, with the whole living self".

Huxley presents Propter as a practising mystic. Propter's discourse fills some eighty pages of the novel and through all this talk with Pete, or through Pete's thoughts as he reflects on what Propter has said, Huxley expounds a fairly clear interpretation of mysticism. In brief, Propter's thesis, as George Catlin sums it up in a review of the novel, postulates that:

There is a structure of the nature of things, spiritual as also physical, superbly independent of our lusts and wishes, as unconcerned as Spinoza's God about how we feel about It. But in the comprehension of It lies all our peace...the secret of that serene disinterestendess -- that sole pure well -- una sola sanata -- from which flows not murders, dictators and wrath, but equity and social justice.⁶¹

Propter's thesis seems particularly sane and reasonable, and his life is witness to the value of his beliefs. He lives unpretentiously and quietly. While he acts as something of a conscience for Stoyte and attempts to alleviate some of the suffering of the Kansas transients whom Stoyte exploits mercilessly, Propter's main purpose in the novel is to contemplate the divine Ground of all being. He is aware that on the "strictly human basis of time and craving, nothing can be achieved or expected but evil". Time is essentially evil and the only true good is the quest for eternity. Nothing can be accomplished on the level of time and craving because of the spiritual element in the nature of things, the element that in fact makes spirit and matter one, which is superbly independent of all our lusts and wishes or how we feel about "It".

⁶¹ George Catlin, "Time and Aldous Huxley", The Saturday Review, vol. 21 (January 27, 1940), p.5.

In our comprehension of the spiritual element, however, lies our only hope for peace. Consummation with the divine Ground will provide a well-spring or source of strength from which flows good, not evil. Man's first duty then is to transcend time and craving or evil, and seek good, eternity, the divine Ground.

From Huxley's sympathetic portrayal of the character of Propter, it would appear that Huxley himself accepts, at least academically, the principles of mysticism which Propter expounds, but Huxley's doubts that it can ever work in modern society or that he himself can ever believe in it, "intimately and personally with his whole living self" are apparent from his handling of the character, Pete Boone. Pete reminds us of Denis and Gumbril and Guy and Spode and Anthony Beavis and all the other troubled young idealists of Huxley's fiction. Pete is in search of the ultimate Truth. He has already taken positive action. Pete served in the democratic cause in Spain, but Propter tells him that violence is a part of human activity that exists only on the swarm level. The individual is not condemned to this swarm level, and if he is to free himself from it and find his "soul", he must voluntarily renounce the frenzy of human activities. "God is completely present only in the complete absence of what we call our humanity. No iron necessity condemns the individual to the futile torment of being merely human". Pete is convinced, but as he returns to the castle in an almost mystical trance, he sees Virginia and immediately falls victim to all his old physical desires and passions. Pete had gone to the top of the castle in the hope of gaining at least a moment of Illumination. All too human, Pete completely forgets Propter's teachings under the pressure of Virginia's nakedness. Stoyte's mistaking

Pete for Obispo and shooting him suggests one of the greatest ironies in the book. Apart from the dramatic necessities of the novel, two conclusions seem relevant. First, Huxley appears aware that the chances of an ordinary individual's becoming a mystic in the fullest sense are practically nil, and in his own case, if one should identify Pete with Huxley, he too has little hope of experiencing the final mystic state, emotionally, intimately, and personally. He seems condemned to believe only intellectually. Second, however, Huxley may be making a comment on society in general. Pete is as much a victim of circumstances as he is of his own passions. Huxley does present Pete as a sincere individual anxious to transcend the prison of his own ego. Pete's death would seem to indicate that the world in general is still not ready to receive its saints. The Petes cannot live in a materialistic society even if prepared to accept the mystic way.

Huxley's old habit of scepticism seems to prevent him from being able to accept mysticism in more than an academic fashion. Not until Time Must Have A Stop (1944), is there any hint that he may have experienced, emotionally as well as intellectually, anything more than the mystic state or trance characteristic of stages one and three of the mystic way, that he is beyond just "believing academically, with the intellect", and is finally "believing personally, intimately, with the whole living self".

Time Must Have A Stop could be considered Huxley's attempt to communicate the experience of the mystic state. We are reminded of William James' "marks" by which the mystic state can be known. The first, paradoxically, is its essential "ineffability" -- "no adequate report of (the mystic state) can be given in words". Essentially it is an incommunicable experience.

Yet for all of this, mystics and artists as well, all through the ages, have attempted to communicate the experience in words. Huxley is no exception. Chapters XIII, XV and XXV of Time Must Have A Stop, with their accounts of Eustace's experiences after death, compare adequately with the numerous excerpts from true mystics' accounts of the mystic state that James includes in his lectures on mysticism. One of the few tests of the mystic's experience, James points out, is the extent to which an account of such experience compares to accounts given by other reputable mystics. Certain expressions such as "a mighty fascination", "indescribable awe", "oneness with this Infinite Power and the Spirit of Infinite Peace", "limitless as the blue firmament", "super-lucent, super-splendent", "grasped and held by a superior power", ⁶² constantly recur and seem part of the mystic's language.

Huxley's account of Eustace's stages of transition from one plane of existence to another has all the brightness and light and radiance attributed to eternity; the account contains language similar to that used by other mystics to describe the mystic state. Huxley's description of the humility of the Absolute in offering "Grace" to Eustace gives a reasonable impression of an actual exalted experience:

...here was the light again, here was that crystal of luminous silence -- still and shining.... Not at all formidable... but softly, tenderly blue.... A blue caressing silence, ubiquitously present... but present without urgency; beautiful, not with that austere, unbearable intensity, but imploringly, as though it were humbly begging to be taken notice of. ⁶³

The description of Eustace's experience isolated from the novel as

62 James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 294-323.

63 Aldous Huxley, Time Must Have A Stop, New York and London, Harper Brothers Publishers, 1944, p. 231.

a whole is a not inadequate statement of the mystic's union with the Absolute. A number of considerations, however, deny the probability that the author had personally experienced any similar union. In the first place artists as well as mystics have tried to communicate the incommunicable state, and the creative artist in Huxley may be responsible for much, or even most, of the account of Eustace's experience. Further, Eustace appears both to be a mystic and not to be a mystic -- to have the mystical experience and to be incapable of it.

Eustace is offered "Grace", but he refuses to accept it. His refusal would seem to indicate that man must prepare in this life in order to merge with the Divine after death; Eustace, having made no preparation, has to be born back into humanity. The futility of his situation becomes apparent; as eternity cannot be denied, Eustace must continue through a series of physical existences until such time as he has made proper preparation for the acceptance of the glory of death. The Oriental ideas of re-incarnation seem to influence Huxley's portrayal of Eustace's death.

Time Must Have A Stop, while it may not mark Huxley's union with Reality, at least marks the end of Huxley's scepticism. Bruno, who is the teacher, the practicing mystic, is perfectly believable and seems genuinely to have the necessary qualities of humility, love and compassion. Bruno does not compromise his faith in any way; he lives it wholly. Bruno sacrifices his own life in order that Sebastian might know from example as well as precept that the way of the mystic is sincere and honest. Bruno does not teach by precept alone. The love and compassion, the consummation Anthony Beavis so ardently desired, Sebastian comes to know, but Sebastian's

conversion is not spontaneous nor easy. Even with Bruno's example of exalted saintliness, Sebastian finds that the way to salvation is an arduous one. He must escape from the circle of time, from the ephemeral, appetitive life which is the plane of all evil. Huxley knows, as he shows through the character of Sebastian, that those who are not raised in a religious faith have even greater difficulty in finding salvation than those congenitally religious.

For those of us who are not congenitally the members of an organized church, who have found that humanism and blue-domeism are not enough, who are not content to remain in the darkness of spiritual ignorance, the squalor of vice or that other squalor of mere respectability, the minimum working-hypothesis would seem to be about as follows:

That there is a Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation.

That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.

That it is possible for human beings to love, know and from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.

That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.

That there is a Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.

That the more there is of I, me, mine, the less there is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a Way of humility and compassion, the Dharma a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness....⁶⁴

Sebastian puts the hypothesis to the test. His doubts and stumblings along the mystic-way he records in his notebook. But "the tree shall be known by its fruits": at the end of the novel we see Sebastian treating his old father, John Barnack, with a love and compassion, a depth of sincerity in human relations hitherto unexpressed in a Huxley novel.

Huxley may not yet have achieved the "Unitive Life", but his belief in

⁶⁴ Huxley, Time Must Have A Stop, p. 294.

the possibility of such achievement seems apparent. In Ape and Essence and The Genius and the Goddess, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, we see that Huxley has evolved a whole new conception of love. His belief in mysticism has enriched his life in every phase. Through his belief in the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, Huxley has "harmonized all the diversities"; he has found that the life can have meaning. The balance or wholeness that Huxley sought with the creation of Rampion he seems finally to have achieved. Huxley is totally aware of the various not-selves with which we are associated -- "...the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit". Huxley can, in the light of such awareness, harmonize the reason, feeling, instinct and life of the body as Rampion wished to do. Huxley can now live contemplatively without danger of being lop-sided or a barbarian of the soul. After all, as Anthony Beavis phrased it, "To live contemplatively is not to live in some deliciously voluptuous or flattering Poona; it is to live in London, but to live there in a non-cockney style." ⁶⁵ Huxley with Time Must Have A Stop (1944), has reached no "final goal"; his search for ultimate Reality is not over. However, in continuing the search Huxley does so in the firmest conviction that a consummation with the divine Ground of all our Being can be experienced.

Huxley's journey along the Mystic-Way only approximates the stages described by Miss Underhill. The evidence of his belief in mysticism contained in his fiction does not seem strong enough to claim that Huxley ever emotionally

⁶⁵ Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, p. 312.

experienced the fullest union with Reality, or in actual fact ever got beyond stage three -- Illumination. Huxley admits in The Doors of Perception (1956), that he had never known contemplation at its height until he took mescaline.

For until this morning I had known contemplation only in its humbler, its more ordinary forms -- as discursive thinking; as a rapt absorption in poetry or painting or music; as a patient waiting upon those inspirations without which even the prosiest writer cannot hope to accomplish anything; as occasional glimpses, in nature, of Wordsworth's 'something far more deeply interfused'; as systematic silence leading, sometimes, to hints of an 'obscure knowledge'." But now I knew contemplation at its height. At its height, but not yet in its fullness. ⁶⁶

Even the mescaline experience Huxley qualifies. The qualification seems to point up Huxley's major characteristics -- a tendency to understatement, and to a natural shyness or reticence when discussing his own emotional experiences. These characteristics distinguish Huxley from the mystics Miss Underhill describes who are more given to extravagant outpourings of emotional ecstasies. Because of a total lack of any personal statement from Huxley that he has experienced the "Unitive Life", he can only be classified as that type of mystic who aims at and believes in the attainment of union with Reality. Even in his belief in mysticism Huxley seems further to deviate from the type of mystic described by Miss Underhill because his belief is so obviously an intellectual one. As a result of his intellectual belief, however, Huxley seems to fulfil one of Miss Underhill's requirements for the mystic who has achieved the unitive life -- that he become "the agent of a fresh outbirth of spiritual vitality into

⁶⁶ Huxley, The Doors of Perception, p. 31.

the world".⁶⁷ The latest phase of Huxley's development seems to be characterized by his association with the Vedanta Society of California and by his determined effort to explain the phenomena of mysticism, and to teach mysticism as a way of life.

⁶⁷ Underhill, Mysticism, p. 431.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LATEST PHASE

With Time Must Have A Stop, 1944, Huxley clearly had accepted mysticism as a way of life. To a certain extent, The Perennial Philosophy, 1945, is an elaboration of Sebastian's "minimum working hypothesis", but more precisely, as Huxley says in the introduction,

This book....is an anthology of the Perennial Philosophy...[which] is primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit.¹

Huxley himself seems to have tried to fulfil the conditions necessary to apprehend the divine Reality; whether he has apprehended it in the fullest sense seems doubtful; nevertheless, like William Blake, who, as Miss Underhill points out, "...conceived that it was his vocation to bring this mystical illumination, this heightened vision of reality, within the range of ordinary men: to 'cleanse the doors of perception' of the race",² Huxley too feels it incumbent upon him to present his belief that mysticism is central to the art of living. According to Miss Underhill, once the mystic achieves

1 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. viii.

2 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 235.

the "Unitive Life" his spirit is then ready to return "to fertilize those levels of existence from which it sprang".³ Huxley may not have achieved the "Unitive Life" but his spirit is none the less ready "to fertilize those levels of existence from which it sprang". As has been pointed out before, the background from which Huxley sprang had two dominant influences -- a concern for developing the moral consciousness, and a concern for establishing a scientific basis for one's metaphysical beliefs. Huxley has since 1945 devoted his life to the "fertilization" of these two levels of existence. In most of Huxley's writing in this latest phase of development these two main focuses can be detected, mysticism and morality, and mysticism and science; he seems anxious to present to his fellow man the conditions necessary to apprehend divine Reality.

As a moralist, Huxley is concerned to show man how, as Professor King says, "men are to live with love and compassion in time and still be devoted to timeless good".⁴ Huxley is anxious to make men morally responsible for their acts and to make them realize that right ends can never justify wrong acts. As an empiricist, Huxley is anxious to show that mysticism is based on empirical facts and that it is no longer totally antithetical even to science. Huxley is concerned with bringing morals, science and mysticism into balance in the hope of perfecting "the art of living" in contemporary civilization. In Texts and Pretexts, Huxley shows that many people must have a religion or philosophy by which to live. They will rationalize almost any theology not because they believe in its doctrines and its rules but,

3 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 444.

4 Carlyle A. King, "Aldous Huxley's Way to God", Queen's Quarterly, vol. 61 (Spring 1954), p. 98.

...because they have discovered experimentally that to live in a certain ritual rhythm under certain ethical restraints, and as if certain metaphysical doctrines were true, is to live nobly, with style. Every art has its conventions which every artist must accept. The greatest, the most important of the arts is living.⁵

Huxley's major concern, like that of Matthew Arnold, was to discover the art of living, and to delineate those modes of thought and of feeling which would enable one to engage in this "art". In Ends and Means, Huxley discovered that science alone was unsatisfactory. Some aesthetic or religious experiences are necessary if man is to find meaning in the world. Works of art, of music, or of literature can throw light on the "something far more deeply interfused", "the peace of God that passeth all understanding"; but moments of illumination are insufficient. Meditation is needed to establish a communion between the soul and the integrating principle of the universe. As Huxley sums it up,

Meditation...is the technique of mysticism. Properly practised, with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called "transcendental consciousness" -- the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it.⁶

As the passage implies, meditation, which is the technique of mysticism, can be engaged in only if man is in a proper moral as well as mental and physical state. Huxley, then, like Thomas Arnold before him, begins to stress the importance of the moral element in the art of living. Huxley accepts the spiritual explanation of the foundation of morality whereas

⁵ Aldous Huxley, Texts and Pretexts, London, Chatto and Windus, 1949 (first ed. 1932), p. 309.

⁶ Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 286.

Thomas Arnold propounded an unquestioning acceptance of dogmatic ethical morality. Both, however, are basically concerned that man should develop his power of distinguishing between right and wrong. Huxley goes beyond the strictly ethical interpretation of morality to see that unless leavened with the spiritual, a moral code can have no real meaning. In spite of the apparent differences in the great-grandfather's and great-grandson's view of morality, the progression is consistent. The grand-uncle, Matthew Arnold, provides the transition.

Matthew Arnold, who experienced the decay of traditional religious beliefs and values induced by the theory of evolution, broke with his father's dogmatic religious doctrines. Like his great-nephew, Arnold was by nature inclined to be a contemplative, but he lived in an era not congenial to the acceptance of mysticism. Intensely aware of a great spiritual need within himself, Arnold sought some faith or theory by which he could direct his life. Science, which had destroyed the anthropomorphic God, did not accept the mystics' idea of an Absolute Reality, a divine Ground. The only thing Arnold could accept as valid was the experience of "yearning", itself, the pain of "distracted" living, in place of, to use Huxley's term, "one-pointedness". "One-pointedness", according to Huxley, is of two kinds: the one-pointedness of exclusion or that of inclusion. Man seeks first the one-pointedness of exclusion, which is simply one-pointed contemplation of God, excluding all other activities; and, having achieved union with the divine Reality, man then turns back to the one-pointedness of inclusion in which he harmonizes all the diversities of living. Arnold never knew the one-pointedness of exclusion

7 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 299.

and hence failed in the one-pointedness of inclusion. According to John Atkins, a basic difference exists between Matthew Arnold and Huxley:

Arnold sought no practical remedy to the world's misery and even denied, as a matter of theory, the possibility of such a remedy existing; Huxley, on the other hand, believes in the cultivation of the mystical approach to God. For people who do not believe in its existence such a remedy cannot exist. Arnold fell short of it. Modern critics reject it.⁸

Huxley is himself aware that his own "cultivation of the mystical approach to God" as a "practical remedy to the world's misery", while representing an increased awareness on his part, yet implies no criticism of his great-uncle's insight. Rather, Huxley realizes that Arnold was a victim of the mental climate of the times.

In Grey Eminence, Huxley explains Arnold's failure to believe that

...the good cannot be achieved without one-pointedness. That Arnold should have failed to draw the unavoidable conclusion from the premises of his own thoughts and feelings seems puzzling only when we consider him apart from his environment. The mental climate in which he lived was utterly unpropitious to the flowering of genuine mysticism. The Nineteenth Century could tolerate only false, ersatz mysticism -- the nature mysticism of Wordsworth; the sublimated sexual mysticism of Whitman; the nationality mysticisms of all the patriotic poets and philosophers of every race and culture, from Fichte at the beginning of the period to Kipling and Barres at the end. Once more, Arnold's sad lucidity did not permit him to embrace any of these manifestly unsatisfactory substitutes for the genuine article.⁹

Dean Inge supports Huxley's contention that "...the mental climate of the Nineteenth Century was utterly unpropitious to the flowering of genuine mysticism". Dean Inge claims that "the word mysticism had been almost

8 Atkins, Aldous Huxley, p. 51.

9 Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 73.

always used in a slightly contemptuous sense in the Nineteenth Century".¹⁰ Now however, new studies in psychology and parapsychology begin to give some support to the religious experience. An unquestioning acceptance of mysticism even in the Twentieth Century, however, is not advocated by Huxley. In his opinion the intellectual caution he applied in his search for truth needs to be applied by all men.

The sincerity of Huxley's interest in mysticism is often in question. How, it is asked, does he reconcile material well-being and, in particular his material well-being with mysticism? Huxley deals with this question in The Perennial Philosophy:

...it is possible for men and women to achieve that "perfection", which is deliverance into the unitive knowledge of God, without abandoning the married state and without selling all they have and giving the price to the poor. Effective poverty (possessing no money) is by no means always affective poverty (being indifferent to money). One man may be poor, but desperately concerned with what money can buy, full of cravings, envy and bitter self-pity. Another may have money, but no attachment to money or the things, powers and privileges that money can buy. "Evangelical poverty" is a combination of effective with affective poverty; but a genuine poverty of spirit is possible even in those who are not effectively poor...the problems of right livelihood, in so far as they lie outside the jurisdiction of the common moral code, are steadily personal...Jesus...merely utters a general warning against covetousness.¹¹

Huxley seems relatively satisfied that material well-being is not incompatible with mysticism; in so far as his own material well-being is concerned, he, in a conversation with Atkins, is reported to have said:

I do not feel impelled -- nor am I financially able -- to give up writing; nor do I think that writing is in any way incompatible with understanding. "Knowledge", says Lao-Tsu, "is adding to

10 Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. v.

11 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 119-120.

your stock day by day; the practice of the Tao (the Mystic Way) is subtracting". The secret of life is to do both -- add and subtract -- to the limit.¹²

In studying the problem "How to live", Huxley, throughout Grey Eminence, shows that a power complex is a far greater hindrance to the attainment of the mystic state than is material wealth. Human egotism can corrupt anything -- spiritual no less than political power. Father Joseph made the mistake of thinking that power politics could be used to force humanity into the synonymous kingdoms of God and France. He succumbed to "the noblest of all temptations: patriotic duty and self-sacrifice".¹³ But a man cannot serve two masters. Father Joseph deluded himself that he served only one on the grounds that the mass slaughter which he condoned as a politician was done "not of my will but Thine, Oh Lord".

Father Joseph thought he acted in a state of "holy indifference". Huxley points out that Krishna, in the Bhagavad-Gita, explains to Arjuna that killing his enemies is not wrong provided he maintains a spirit of "non-attachment". The same theory of "holy indifference" was applied by Illumines of Picardy to justify sexual promiscuity. Father Joseph and his holy men were shocked. As Huxley shows, it is not wrong to have a God of Battles, but a desperate outcry is heard if one sets up a God of Brothels!¹⁴ Krishna's theory is wrong, Huxley claims, because non-attachment can be practised only in regard to actions themselves

12 Aldous Huxley, quoted in John Atkins, Aldous Huxley, pp. 68.

13 Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 221.

14 Ibid., p. 222.

intrinsically good or ethically neutral. Wrong means invariably destroy right ends. Bad actions damage the doer permanently because they enhance his separate, personal ego. The brute psychological fact remains that "any act which enhances the separate, personal ego, automatically diminishes the actor's chance of establishing contact with reality. As John Tauler puts it, 'the more of the creature, the less of God'."¹⁵ Grey Eminence serves as a great warning to the socially-minded, to the "do-gooders", the salvationists of the world. Those who undertake action without being far advanced along the way of perfection inevitably do harm. The great moral lesson Huxley presents in the history of Father Joseph is very similar to Christ's warning about the dangers of removing the mote from one's brother's eye before taking the beam out of one's own.

At the same time, Grey Eminence must be seen as primarily a study of the misuses of the Jesuit-Spiritual Exercises as a means to gain the Mystic Way. Father Joseph distorted the Mystic Way to achieve secular power rather than to achieve union with Reality. He becomes a powerful example of what misapplication of the mystic discipline can produce. Father Joseph totally lost sight of the moral and ethical implications of his acts, so lop-sided and mis-directed had his religious practices grown. Huxley shows that Father Joseph tried desperately to become a true mystic, but that he allowed too many images, trances and psychic phenomena to get in his way. He never really united with the imageless, eternal godhead and he ended not with true mysticism but with the same image of the cross which had inspired him to seek the Mystic Way. Conversely, Huxley shows that

¹⁵ Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 223.

many people who are not devotees of mysticism to begin with, can, through signs, occultism, nature, or the arts, become interested in the knowledge of the divine Ground and go on to achieve the mystic state.¹⁶ Those like Father Joseph who consciously struggle toward perfection but never achieve it, show us only sorrow. Father Joseph, in mistaking an image for the timeless reality of the divine Ground, turned his life and all his efforts to further the "Kingdom of God" into a most "pointless and diabolic foolery". The man who desired to establish God's "peace on earth" was responsible for war, and the suffering and death of hundreds of innocent people. Father Joseph's life became a "tale told by an idiot".

In Time Must Have A Stop, Huxley stresses that life in general is a "tale told by an idiot" unless man primarily concerns himself with the fact of eternity. Huxley has Sebastian write in his note-book that,

...it is only by deliberately paying our attention and our primary allegiance to eternity that we can prevent time from turning our lives into a pointless or diabolic foolery. The divine Ground is a timeless reality. Seek it first, and all the rest -- everything from an adequate interpretation of life to a release from compulsory self-destruction -- will be added. Or, transposing the theme out of the evangelical into a Shakespearean key, you can say: "Cease being ignorant of what you are most assured, your glassy essence, and you will cease to be an angry ape, playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make angels weep."¹⁷

The quotation, based on lines from the second act of Measure for Measure, is a favorite one with Huxley. In Grey Eminence, Huxley portrays Father Joseph in the pursuit of his "glassy essence" but because Father Joseph was mistaken in his idea of the eternal godhead from which his essence sprang,

¹⁶ Huxley, Grey Eminence, p. 261.

¹⁷ Huxley, Time Must Have A Stop, p. 298.

he was to spend his life in the performance of nothing but "fantastic tricks".

Huxley quotes the Buddha as saying, "I show you sorrow and the ending of sorrow". Many great writers, artists, and composers have, in their life, unconsciously stumbled upon the transcendental reality and, therefore, through their art have shown us both "sorrow, and the ending of sorrow". Huxley cites Beethoven in his A-minor quartet, and Shakespeare in his The Tempest, as cases in point.¹⁸ But, though art can be one expression of the mystic experience, it cannot be the experience itself. Huxley is constantly warning us not to mistake the Fact for the experience. Many poets, he says, have had ideas helpful to man, but rarely have these ideas been sufficiently complete to guarantee man's peace. Wordsworth and Dante both need to be supplemented, and the necessary supplement, according to Huxley, is the philosophy and discipline of mysticism.

In Crome Yellow, Huxley has one of his characters dispose of art as "the last and silliest of the idols, the sweetest of the inebriants". In "Those Barren Leaves", he registers his suspicion of poetry and pantheism by finding Wordsworth's "something far more deeply interfused" as being as "meaningless as so many hiccoughs". From 1944 on, Huxley's attitude to many of the "inebriants" of life which he discarded while in the purgative stage mellows considerably. He comes to consider what he had formerly classed as "inebriants" as possible manifestations of Reality, but he

¹⁸ Aldous Huxley, "Variations on Goya", Themes and Variations, London, Chatto and Windus, 1954, p. 211.

constantly warns against accepting the manifestation for Reality itself.

In Themes and Variations and, in particular, in the essay "Variations on a Philosopher", in which Huxley discusses the Nineteenth Century French philosopher Maine de Biran's failure to become a true mystic, we see the mystic, moralist and empiricist in Huxley come to terms with each other. The moralist recommends mysticism as an answer to the problem "How to live"; the empiricist attempts to show that the moralist is not recommending some absurd theoretical religion but a way of life based on empirical facts.

Nature, Huxley asserts, is a valid manifestation of the divine mystery with which the mystic desires to unite, and this is a fact, he goes on, that can be tested empirically. "'Nature mysticism'", says Huxley, "is primordial and permanent, as unconditionally 'built-in' and non-historical as any other unchanging datum of our psychophysical experience". Regrettably, modern life compels us to close our "doors of perception". Modern man has so corrupted and defiled nature that, unlike Wordsworth or Biran, he actually does not even see "the divine mystery that manifests itself in Nature".¹⁹ But even seeing the divine mystery in a single, timeless moment of conscious experience is only Illumination, not the Unitive Way. Biran, in spite of Illumination, failed as a mystic because he refused to apply any tests to his mysticism. He did accept "...the reality of the principal phenomena of the mesmeric trance -- healing, clairvoyance, and thought transference --"; yet, though "animal magnetism" was a respectable science in his day, and though attempts to explain the phenomena of trance, hypnotic

19 Huxley, "Variations on a Philosopher", Themes and Variations, p. 76.

healing and extra-sensory perception were well advanced, Biran refused to submit to any mesmeric experiments on his own person. He thereby shut himself off from even this exploration of the mystic state, and, according to Huxley, not only condemned himself to being the victim of a psycho-somatic illness but also failed as a mystic.

Much the same excuse that is made for Matthew Arnold could be made for Biran's failure to become a true mystic. The mental climate of the Nineteenth Century was not conducive to experiments in the new, specialized fields of psychiatry, psychology, or parapsychology. In the Twentieth Century, Huxley willingly participated in physical and psychological experiments as a means of attaining the mystic state; and this acceptance could partially be accounted for by his own experience with the Bates method of visual re-education which recognized the psycho-somatic, as well as the physical reasons for his eye disease. Having improved his physical vision, Huxley seems to believe that one should also be able to improve one's mental or spiritual vision.

In laying the blame for Biran's failure upon the French mystic's reluctance to cleanse his doors of perception by means of investigating mesmerism and psycho-kinesis, Huxley seems to admit his own personal willingness to test empirically the contentions of such men as Dr. Broad and Professor Price.²⁰ Huxley, as early as 1937, had shown interest in new experiments in telepathy by visiting Dr. Rhine in North Carolina. However, Huxley is never caught up in any sudden excess of enthusiasm for a new

20 Huxley, "Variations on a Philosopher", Themes and Variations, p. 130 ff.

theory. He applies always his intellectual caution and scientific habit of mind to the new studies of parapsychology and psychology. Huxley seems to accept the new studies as valuable adjuncts to the study of mysticism and, hence, as being vital to man's whole problem of "how to live". In the purgative stage, he had been extremely sceptical of pure science, but at this time he appears to endorse any science devoted to experiments which might ultimately enable man to live a fuller, richer life.

Just as the early Huxley had doubted the value of scientific experimentation, so too did he question the value of art and nature. Huxley begins to see that they can both be more than mere sources of pleasure, that they can be used to redeem the squalid chaos of life, that the aesthetic experience can be an analogue of the mystical experience.^m Moreover, now he seems also to realize that drugs, scientific experiments, occultism, ritual, symbol and sacrament, are all valuable adjuncts to the attainment of the mystic state. People of different psycho-physical constitutions will respond to different stimuli:

...so long as the human aggregate persists, one cause [for the mystic state] can never be exclusive of the others; the beatitude which follows self-abandonment, and even the act of self-abandonment itself, must be related to and conditioned by, certain dispositions of the organs; and in most "super-natural states" there is bound to be a physical element -- which means that there must be appropriate psycho-physical methods for creating the conditions most favorable to such states.²¹

While Huxley opens his mind to the plausibility of a variety of roads leading to mysticism, he continues to warn, as he did in Grey Eminence, against mistaking the means of achieving the mystical state for the accomplishment of it. He thinks that the fewer the crutches or symbols used to

21 Huxley, "Variations on a Philosopher", Themes and Variations, p. 137.

move toward the mystic state, the better. In The Perennial Philosophy, he reminds us that "...the consequences of worshipping God as anything but Spirit and in any way except in spirit and in truth are necessarily undesirable...(as) they lead only to partial salvation and delay the soul's ultimate reunion with the eternal Ground".²²

In The Devils of Loudun, Huxley the moralist warns us again of the dangers of mysticism and shows how easily one can fall into a pseudo, or false, mysticism. Huxley contrasts the careers of Pierre Grandier and Father Surin, both men trained in Jesuit Holy Orders. Grandier is the average sensual man, arrogant, ruthless, lascivious, quarrelsome, but he manages to transcend himself under the fierce tortures and horrible agonies of an atrocious execution because he has always had a basic belief. Father Surin, like Father Joseph, lacks the balance of a natural life; he had spent his years in a pathological struggle to achieve Christian perfection -- so pathological a struggle that it ended in his becoming a demoniac. As Biran apparently cut himself off from true mysticism by refusing to acquire direct empirical knowledge, Surin denies himself the donum of grace by hating nature and opposing God to nature. Surin is addicted to word-theology and he conceives of union with the Son of God as a systematic denial of the essential divinity of nature. Surin was trapped by a too-narrow religion. Huxley makes clear that man must embrace all of God's manifestations -- art and nature as well as what goes on in the laboratory, the church, the parliament and council chamber.

22 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 268.

According to Huxley,

The fundamental human problem is ecological: men must learn how to live with the cosmos on all its levels, from the material to the spiritual. As a race, we have to discover how a huge and rapidly increasing population can go on existing satisfactorily on a planet of limited size and possessed of resources, many of which are wasting assets that can never be renewed. As individuals, we have to find out how to establish a satisfactory relationship with that infinite Mind, from which we habitually imagine ourselves to be isolated. By concentrating on the datum and the Donum we shall develop, as a kind of by-product, satisfactory methods of getting on with one another. Seek ye first the Kingdom, and all the rest shall be added. 23

Huxley as a moralist, an empiricist and a mystic, is prepared to make what contribution he can toward teaching man "how to live". As he sees it, the place to begin is in working out a satisfactory relationship with the infinite Mind -- all the rest, morals, ethics, material well-being, shall be added. Huxley, although he does not advocate the achieving of visions through drugs, submits to and records the personal experiments with them in order to test the validity and accessibility of the mystic's trance.

Blake's contention was that "...if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite". 24 Since many aspects of man have been subjected to scientific investigation and since man has been measured in terms of genetics, psychology, physiology, economics, medicine, and, since the results of such scientific investigation help us to order our lives more intelligently, it seems completely reasonable

23 Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, p. 302.

24 William Blake, quoted by Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception, London, Chatto and Windus, 1956, title page..

that the spiritual aspect of man should also be subject to similar scientific investigation. In The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, Huxley records his experiments with mescaline. He admits that, while he willingly participated in the experiment with Dr. Osmond for scientific reasons, he also hoped that he would experience some profound change in consciousness which might be the equivalent of the mystic's experience with the Absolute. His desire to experience this changed consciousness indicates that he had not previously known any thing more intense than moments of Illumination -- a fact he admits later in The Doors of Perception. The evidence in his account of the mescaline experiment would seem to indicate that Huxley's heightened perceptiveness and awareness while under the influence of this drug was very similar to the true mystic's trance. At any rate, his account of his state does contain all the familiar phrases and ideas which William James set out as characteristics of the mystic state. Huxley thus attempts to communicate what he has already asserted is an incommunicable experience. His report, written up after the experiment, resembles closely the statements made by accepted mystics who have been quoted in an earlier chapter.

Take, for example, this account of one of Huxley's experiments with mescaline. He has been looking at a bouquet of flowers and writes of the experience,

...that what rose and iris and carnation so intensely signified was nothing more, and nothing less, than what they were -- a transience

that was not yet eternal life, a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being, a bundle of minute, unique particulars in which, by some unspeakable and yet self-evident paradox, was to be seen the divine source of all existence... The Beatific Vision, Sat Chit Ananda, Being-Awareness-Bliss -- for the first time I understood, not on the verbal level, not by inchoate hints or at a distance, but precisely and completely what these prodigious syllables referred to. And then I remembered a passage I had read in one of Suzuki's essays. 'What is the Dharma-Body of the Buddha?' [a Zen novice asks.] (The Dharma-Body of the Buddha is another way of saying Mind, Suchness, the Void, the Godhead.)....'The hedge at the bottom of the garden [the Master replies.]' ...I was looking at the flowers -- back in a world where everything shone with the Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance....²⁵

As the experiment continued, Huxley gazed transfixedly at the bamboo legs of a chair and realized that they too had the same infinite significance as the flowers and, as he reports the experience, he realizes he was not merely himself but was the chair legs as well or, in his words, he was his "Not-self in the Not-self which was the chair". From Huxley's account of this experiment, it would appear that he may have achieved union with the Absolute, but he makes no such specific claim for himself. Further, Huxley distinguishes between the visionary experience and the mystical experience. The experience described under mescaline could be merely the "heaven of blissful visionary experience, not that experience, beyond time, of union with the divine Ground." ²⁶

That an ordinary person taking mescaline would experience union with the divine Ground of all our being is extremely unlikely. It is probable that Huxley was able to describe the effects of the drug as he did because

25 Huxley, The Doors of Perception, pp. 12-15.

26 Huxley, Heaven and Hell, London, Chatto and Windus, 1956, p. 53.

of his psycho-physical constitution, and his life-time preparation for the experience of the mystic. Like Ophelia, Huxley could legitimately exclaim, "To have seen what I have seen". But he freely admits that the use of mescaline is no guarantee that a person will experience the Absolute. He admits that while under mescaline he knew contemplation "at its height", he still did not know it "at its fullest". The fullest experience conceivably is that which cannot be induced by artificial means. The danger of using mescaline to induce the mystic state is that one may become a quietist. Mescaline, says Huxley,

...gives access to contemplation -- but to a contemplation that is incompatible with action and even with the will to action, to the very thought of action.... Over against the quietist stands the active-contemplative, the saint, the man who, in Eckhart's phrase, is ready to come down from the seventh heaven in order to bring a cup of water to his sick brother.²⁷

Huxley's participation in the mescaline experiment and his continuous efforts to explain the phenomenon of mysticism and to present it as a valid answer to the question "How to live?" seem to confirm the fact that Huxley belongs with Miss Underhill's practical mystics whose contemplation is compatible with action.

In Heaven and Hell, written two years after his experiments with mescaline, Huxley again discusses the effects of this drug and illustrates the ways in which a visit to the antipodes of the mind could be, as the title suggests, a trip to either Heaven or Hell. He does not claim that mescaline is, as Amis phrased it, "a cheap day-return ticket to the Absolute".²⁸

27 Huxley, The Doors of Perception, p. 32.

28 Kingsley Amis, "Dreams of a Spirit Seer", Spectator, vol. 196 (March 16, 1956), p. 339.

The taker of mescaline, Huxley suggests, unless in a conditioned frame of mind similar to his own, may end up in Hell. Diseased livers, fear, anger, an inappropriate psycho-physical make-up, lack of faith, are all factors which are likely to work against the success of the experiment. Mescaline, when the experience is blissful, induces an abdication of the will, a loss of interest in ordinary life, a descent into quietism. The quietist's negative virtues are immense; the only positive one is that of preaching quietism to others. However, negative emotions, at the onset of the experiment, can turn the visionary experiences into appalling experiences with no ethical value.

It is ironic that Mr. Sutherland, in an article written to disparage Huxley's mescaline experiments, actually lends support to Huxley's contention that the results of the use of the drug can be either heaven or hell depending on the factors previously described. Mr. Sutherland writes:

The nearest I came to the mystical revelations experienced by the more fortunate, though so often and so regrettably fading "in the light of common day", was when I had a phantasy in which I saw and heard and felt the cosmic rhythm moving and sounding and pulsating, the visual images being of light and colour whose rhythm was contained within a circular form and the whole suggesting to me that "this is the principle in the universe, this is what makes everything tick!" I have no doubt that the basis of the phantasy was sexual. Also I might add, I was at the time taken up with the ideal of rhythm being expressed in every type of form and activity, with the idea of the dance of life.²⁹

Mr. Sutherland's experience was the result of using marijuana and his account shows that one's response to the use of drugs depends on one's individual personality, one's intellectual and emotional make-up, and what is in the experimenter's mind. Mr. Sutherland, as he states, was concerned with the dance of life at the time; his interpretation of his experience involves

29 A. Sutherland, "Aldous Huxley's Mind at Large", Twentieth Century, vol. 155 (May 1954), p. 448.

rhythms. He inclines to slough off the experience as a sexual phantasy rather than to admit having had any access to an aspect of reality, but Sutherland does not negate the validity of Huxley's experience by this account; as Sutherland says, "Huxley had spent the past forty years moving towards the mystical experience; he was already semi in tune with the 'Mind at Large'." ³⁰ Mescaline may have helped Huxley to attain a mystical experience, but Sutherland doubts that it would aid those not prepared as Huxley was.

Dr. Osmond, who called Sutherland to task for his rather flippant comments about Huxley's mescaline experiments, is himself engaged in drug research at Weyburn, Saskatchewan and was with Huxley at the time of the experiment. He claims that if science is the rational correlation of experience, its job, as Huxley suggests, is to find for common man the method of cleansing the doors of perception. Dr. Osmond points out that as modern vitamin diets make spontaneous experiences of the transcendental less frequent than they used to be, man is justified in seeking some other method of inducing the mystical state, of cleansing the doors of perception. But investigation of this subject has not yet advanced very far:

The neurologists have got no further than Mr. Sutherland's phantasy; many philosophers are too busy with semantic conundrums; many theologians avoid commenting on things which orthodox science is unsure about; only a few philosophically-minded parapsychologists, ... have begun to tackle this enormous problem. ³¹

Huxley, Dr. Osmond claims, points the way for future scientific, philosophic and religious experimentation and thought. "Huxley does not

³⁰ A. Sutherland, "Aldous Huxley's Mind at Large", Twentieth Century, p. 449.

³¹ H. Osmond, "Peeping Tom and Doubting Thomas", Twentieth Century, vol. 155 (June 1954), p. 524.

advocate frequent mescaline jags, he simply hopes that one day science and society will combine to make these lonely, awesome, terrible...jolly and queer experiences available to those who might benefit from them." 32

As Robertson Davies points out in his essay, "Spiritual Travel", while Huxley's experiments with mescaline are the subject of much jeering comment³³ any person who has taken the trouble to look closely at Huxley's works can see that his experiments with drugs were not undertaken lightly.

Huxley is aware that the aspiring mystic must seek the help of specialists in pharmacology, biochemistry, physiology, psychology, psychiatry, parapsychology. A variety of roads lead to God. Huxley sums up his position in Heaven and Hell.

My own guess is that there is a posthumous heaven of blissful visionary experience; there is also a hell of the same kind of appalling visionary experience as is suffered here by schizophrenics and some of those who take mescaline; and there is also an experience, beyond time, of union with the divine Ground. ³⁴

Huxley thus distinguishes between the visionary experience and the mystical. Visionary experience is within the realm of opposites -- it can be heaven or hell -- but the mystical experience is beyond opposites. Heaven is like a vantage point, a moment of Illumination from which one surveys the divine Ground. Death, as he attempted to demonstrate in Time Must Have A Stop, does not guarantee union with the divine Ground any more than it implies hell.

32 H. Osmond, "Peeping Tom and Doubting Thomas", Twentieth Century. p. 524.

33 Robertson Davies, "Spiritual Travel", Saturday Night, vol. 70 (May 12, 1956), p. 19.

34 Aldous Huxley, Heaven and Hell, p. 53.

The tendency people have to seek at least the visionary if not the mystical experience only proves Huxley's point that the desire for self-transcendence is one of man's greatest drives. Huxley lists in Heaven and Hell the most common artificial methods for gaining self-transcendence. Chemicals, such as mescaline or lysergic acid, are most commonly used; hypnosis is a second method; illness, fatigue, fasting or periods of confinement in darkness and silence will produce trance-like states; a fourth method involves inhaling a weak concentration of carbon dioxide in oxygen; finally, he mentions the stroboscopic lamp. The use of any artificial means of inducing a state of self-transcendence can be dangerous, and Huxley particularly warns against the use of drugs:

They may incite its recipient to an effort of self-transcendence and upward self-transcendence. But the fact that such a thing sometimes happens can never justify the employment of chemical methods of self-transcendence. This is a descending road and most of those who take it will come to a state of degradation, where periods of sub-human ecstasy alternate with periods of conscious self-hood so wretched that any escape, even if it be into the slow suicide of drug addiction, will seem preferable to being a person. 35

In warning against drug addiction, Huxley is aware that the great mass of humanity is on a plane that seeks to escape from the horrors of insulated self-hood neither through the "downward self-transcendence" of the drug addict, nor the upward movement of the mystic. Rather, they seek "horizontal self-transcendence" by identifying themselves "with some cause wider than their own immediate interests, but not degradingly lower and, if higher, only within the range of current social value"; hence, they

35 Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, p. 324.

identify themselves with such things as hobbies, marital love, business, politics, science, art, or scholarship. As Huxley puts it,

Without horizontal self-transcendence there would be no art, no science, no law, no philosophy, indeed no civilization. And there would also be no war, no odium theologicum or ideologicum, no systematic intolerance, no persecution. These great goods and these enormous evils are the fruits of man's capacity for total and continuous self-identification with an idea, a feeling, a cause. ³⁶

The great problem that arises, as Huxley sees it, is how to have good without evil? As long as man's self-transcendence remains on a merely horizontal plane, we will only have patriotism, politics, the given religions, churches, art, and science; none of which are totally satisfying. We must, Huxley contends, devote ourselves to the highest of human causes -- "upward self-transcendence into the universal life of the Spirit."³⁷

In Ape and Essence and The Genius and the Goddess, Huxley shows very clearly that real human love is one of the easiest and safest forms of self-transcendence. Without love, and without an awareness of our "glassy essence", life is meaningless. In 1932, when Huxley wrote Brave New World, he accepted mysticism only academically without believing "intimately, personally with the whole living self". Lacking a really overwhelming conviction or belief in mysticism, Huxley, at that stage of development, could show us only the sorrow, not "the ending of sorrow". The Savage was allowed only one alternative: savagery and suicide or the sterility of modern civilization. In the 1950 edition of Brave New

36 Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, p. 327.

37 Ibid.

World, Huxley wrote in the "Foreword" that ~~if~~ he were writing the book now he would offer the Savage a third choice:

Between the utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity -- a possibility already actualized, to some extent, in a community of exiles and refugees from The Brave New World, living within the borders of the Reservation. In this community economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinian and co-operative. Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not (as at present and still more so in the Brave New World) as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them. Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immortal Godhead or Brahman. And the prevailing philosophy of life would be a kind of higher Utilitarianism, in which the greatest happiness principle would be secondary to the Final End principle -- the first question to be asked and answered in every contingency of life being: "How will this thought or action contribute to, or interfere with, the achievement, by me and the greatest possible number of other individuals, of man's Final End?" 38

This third choice which Huxley would have offered the Savage, seems to be a possibility that is offered to Alfred and Loola in Ape and Essence. Man, continuing to act like an "angry ape", succeeds in destroying civilization with the atom bomb. What remains is a society of demented, deranged and deformed characters, totally ignorant of their "glassy essence". Through the experience of real love, Loola and Alfred become aware that their essence consists of Love, Joy, Peace -- these are the fruits of their spirits, their essence, and the essence of the Order of Things. Their escape to the colony of refugees and exiles seems to affirm Huxley's belief that man, through the redeeming power of love, might yet form a society which may allow for the achievement of man's Final End.

In The Genius and the Goddess, Huxley again affirms the power of love and its efficacy as a means of attaining the mystic union -- the supreme

38 Aldous Huxley, Foreword to Brave New World, New York, Harper and Brothers' Modern Classics, 1950, p. 4.

salvation. As in Ape and Essence, he makes us simultaneously aware of man's capacity for "downward self-transcendence" leading to self-degradation, and of man's capacity for "upward self-transcendence" to "the universal life of the Spirit". Maartens chooses the downward path. He is the intellectual who allows his intellectual power to insulate and exalt his ego to the point of totally destroying his soul. Huxley describes Maartens as "foetus, genius, half-wit and hungry lover." ³⁹ Maartens is unaware of his glassy essence; he is "empty of God" and, consequently, in destroying both himself and Katy, makes life a "tale told by an idiot". Katy herself has an excess of animal grace -- Huxley describes her as a "super-human animal". ⁴⁰ But she lacks spiritual grace. Like the young Sebastian, she had not learned to draw up "the genealogy of an offense" with all its "ramifying antecedents and accompaniments and consequences". The moral law would seem to be implacable: Katy and her daughter must die in a motor accident. But Katy's capacity for love has done its work. John Rivers who tells the story says that her love was a source of inspiration and food. Rivers is awakened, if not to the power of the mystic, then, at least, to the mystery of that Otherness, which is the ground of all being. As Rivers describes it,

The Unknown Quantity..... At one end of the spectrum it's pure spirit; it's the Clear Light of the Void; and at the other end it's instinct, it's health, it's the perfect functioning of an organism that's infallible so long as we don't interfere with it; and somewhere between the two extremes is what St. Paul called "Christ" -- the divine made human. Spiritual grace, animal grace, human grace -- three aspects of the same underlying mystery; ideally, all of us should be open to all of them. ⁴¹

³⁹ Aldous Huxley, The Genius and the Goddess, London, Chatto and Windus, 1955, p. 41.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 99.

Like John Rivers, Huxley recognizes the three aspects of the underlying mystery. His whole life has been a consistent effort to harmonize the animal grace, the human grace, and the spiritual grace which are all parts of every man's make-up. Huxley's task has not been an easy one for, as Miss Brooke points out, Huxley is a strangely paradoxical figure: "... an intellectual who profoundly distrusts the intellect, a sensualist with an innate loathing for the body, a naturally religious man who remains an impenitent rationalist".⁴² Huxley's unrelenting search for truth served as a focus which finally brought all aspects of his being into harmony. As a confirmed believer in mysticism, Huxley brought his ectomorphy-cerebrotonic (or Hamlet-like) tendencies into balance with the conditions of his environment. The scientist in him was reconciled with the moralist; the religious tendency was reconciled with the sensualist and intellectual element. Huxley seems finally to have attained "a more ordered life in every state".

Huxley's latest books give evidence of his overwhelming belief in mysticism but contain no evidence to show that Huxley ever attained the final stage on the mystic way -- the Unitive Life. Huxley does not, apparently, walk in and out of spiritual trances at will. His belief seems characterized by intellectual acceptance rather than emotional experience. The type of mysticism Huxley subscribes to seems to be an extremely practical mysticism implying moral, ethical, and social results. As Anthony Beavis phrased it, "To live contemplatively is not to live in

⁴² Jocelyn Brooke, Aldous Huxley, Writers and Their Work: No. 55, London Longmans, Green, for the British Council, 1954, p. 28.

some deliciously voluptuous or flattering Poona; it is to live in London, but to live there in a non-cockney style".⁴³ Miss Underhill in her book, Practical Mysticism, lends support to the contention that, for the average individual, becoming a mystic does not mean going off into a world of spiritualism totally removed from the practicalities of everyday living. As she phrases it, "Perpetual absorption in the Transcendent is a human impossibility, and the effort to achieve it is both unsocial and silly."⁴⁴ She goes on to point out that different individuals experience "absorption in the Transcendent" to a "greater or lesser degree", but regardless of the degree of intensity of the emotional experience, the man who is firmly convinced of the value of attaining union with Reality can achieve a heightened awareness and perceptiveness which shows in his daily living. As she sums the matter up:

You will hardly deny that this is a practical gain; that this widening and deepening of the range over which your powers of perception work makes you more of a man than you were before, and thus adds to rather than subtracts from your total practical efficiency. It is indeed only when he reaches these levels, and feels within himself this creative freedom -- this full actualisation of himself -- on the one hand: on the other hand the sense of a world-order, a love and energy on which he depends and with whose interests he is now at one, that man becomes fully human, capable of living the real life of Eternity in the midst of the world of time.⁴⁵

In so far, then, as the practical aspects of mysticism are concerned, Huxley seems to be no very great exception. Not only does he appear to be the type of man who is "capable of living the real life of Eternity

⁴³ Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, p. 312.

⁴⁴ Underhill, Practical Mysticism, p. 121.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

in the midst of the world of time", but he has become the teacher anxious to direct his fellowman along a course similar to his own, a course which he believes will ultimately make man aware of his relationship to the divine Ground of all our Being.

Huxley's latest volumes of essays, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Brave New World Re-Visited, concern themselves with the problems of contemporary mankind. His criticism of society is constructive; his every effort is to show man how he can create the more desirable society which he described as the third choice that he should have given to the Savage. Huxley's contention that the Good is achievable only in the timeless realm of the Godhead does not prevent his seeking the means whereby the relative good, in time, may be achieved. Huxley has never turned his back on humanity. As a young man, he wrote in Little Mexican, "I was pretending that people didn't interest me -- only books, only ideas. What a fool one can make of oneself at that age!" ⁴⁶ Huxley's pretense did not last long. The very vehemence of his attack on society in his early novels is evidence of his concern. Huxley could not bear to see man wasting himself in the squalor of a material and sterile society. No more can the contemporary Huxley bear to see civilization drifting toward annihilation without suggesting some concrete methods by which he believes it can save itself.

Huxley sees all too clearly the danger of man's gaining control of Nature without first learning how to understand and to control himself. He sees man's development as being comprised of three stages. The first stage is the purely evolutionary one of physical change and development

⁴⁶ Aldous Huxley, "Uncle Spencer", Little Mexican, p. 163.

which culminates in the basic human organism as we know it. The second is the stage of scientifically-induced control over man's environment. Now, according to Huxley, to save ourselves from annihilation, it is imperative that man move to a third, new psychical stage which will lead to the emergence of a fully integrated human being, whose knowledge of himself and of his psychological situation in the world will balance his present physical knowledge. In Grey Eminence and The Perennial Philosophy, Huxley did not think that any large-scale reforms or mass movements, however well-intentioned, could help redress the imbalance that exists between man's knowledge of the physical world and his psychological knowledge of himself. The only hope, according to Huxley at that time, lay in individual regeneration. The mystic's method of contemplation and meditation was the only answer.

Now, Huxley seems to suggest that, as we are not all congenital mystics, it is most unlikely that the world can be saved by individual regeneration. Huxley does not deviate from his original contention that goodness of more-than-average quantity and quality can be realized only on a small scale, in terms of the world, by self-dedicated and specially-trained individuals. Individual regeneration is still important, but he does see large-scale legislation as a means of starting people in the right direction of a moral, rational and spiritual life. However, Huxley admits that any valid change must come from within, not from without. Koestler, in The Yogi and the Commissar, supports Huxley's contention. The real issue in humanity, Koestler says, lies between the two extremes. The Commissar insists on change from Without; the Yogi on change from Within. What is needed is a synthesis, a balance between the Saint and

the Revolutionary. Grey Eminence, says Koestler, is a masterly exposition of what happens when the Mystic acts as an inverted Commissar.⁴⁷

Huxley, in Brave New World Re-Visited, attempts to show how a synthesis between the Saint and the Revolutionary may be worked out. Concerned, as he is, with problems arising from world communism, the growing of totalitarianism in the democracies, the relentless thrust of over-population and subliminal persuasions. Advertising, particularly that aimed at youth, ought to be banned. Advertising is an organized effort to extend and intensify cravings which become obstacles to the uniting of the human soul with its divine Ground. Children should be protected until they reach an age when they can be taught to discern propaganda; however, in this matter, care must also be taken not to make children overly cynical.

In The Perennial Philosophy, Huxley made some suggestions regarding education. Students of English Literature, he noted, are forced to read Addison and Steele whom he considers trifling, but they never hear of William Law, whom he feels is a sage and a saint. Huxley complains that,

Our current neglect of William Law is yet another of the many indications that the Twentieth Century educators have ceased to be concerned with questions of ultimate truth or meaning and (apart from mere vocational training) are interested solely in the dissemination of a rootless and irrelevant culture, and the fostering of the solemn foolery of scholarship for scholarship's sake.⁴⁸

Huxley is also soberly aware of the great need to teach certain accepted values based on facts:

⁴⁷ Arthur Koestler, The Yogi and the Commissar, New York, Macmillan Company, 1946, p. 245.

⁴⁸ Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 177.

The value, first of all, of individual freedom, based upon the facts of human diversity and genetic uniqueness; the value of charity and compassion, based upon the old familiar fact, lately rediscovered by modern psychiatry -- the fact that, whatever their mental and physical diversity, love is as necessary to human beings as food and shelter; and finally the value of intelligence, without which love is impotent and freedom unattainable. ⁴⁹

Legislation and education can be used to reassert the value of the individual in an age of "accelerating over-population, of accelerating over-organization and ever more efficient means of mass communication". Once measures have been taken to preserve the integrity of the human personality, then it becomes the responsibility of the individual to seek his own Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman.

Huxley has never ceased to assume an active role in society as a writer with a strongly didactic tendency. As the moral reformer, Huxley does not teach by precept alone. His life and activities in California are witness to his personal belief that man must live fully aware of "...the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit". ⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Aldous Huxley, "Education for Freedom", Brave New World Re-Visited, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1958, p. 133.

⁵⁰ Huxley, The Devils of Loudun, p. 324.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

From the discussion in the foregoing chapters, it becomes apparent that Huxley's development has been consistent with his psycho-physical make-up. According to his own opinion, man develops in a manner consistent with his personality type. In Ends and Means he said, "...what we think determines what we are and do, and conversely, what we are and do determines what we think".¹ Huxley's thinking constantly involves the problems of self-knowledge and how to live -- "Who am I and what, if anything, can I do about it?" Most of the details of Huxley's heredity, environment and psycho-physical constitution indicate that his primary concern would be with the spirit of man.

Huxley, more fortunate than the contemplative-minded Matthew Arnold, lives in an era propitious to the flowering of mysticism. New studies such as psychology and parapsychology seem to be giving certain empirical support to mysticism, while new translations and studies in Oriental philosophies have contributed to making the practice of mysticism as a way of life less suspect. Norman Thomas points out that one of the most significant phenomena of our confused and troubled times is an awareness of, or search after, God by the intellectuals. T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden

1 Huxley, Ends and Means, p. 329.

turn to Anglicanism; Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene become Roman Catholic; Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood take up Oriental mysticisms. Other widely divergent views showing a basic search for truth are expressed by A. Toynbee, Pierre Lecomte du Notty, C.S. Lewis and Jack Kerouac. The return to religion, Mr. Thomas claims, is man's reaction to his failure to solve his problems by reason alone. Science with the atomic bomb reveals man's potential for complete self-destruction.² If man is to save himself, he must seek some value or meaning to life beyond that discovered by his rational self.

In turning to mysticism, Huxley is only realizing his innate potentialities as a contemplative. In The Perennial Philosophy, he reaffirms values that are universal, values "which experience has shown empirically to be valid". The Perennial Philosophy, as Huxley says "...is primarily concerned with the one divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds." ³ If life is to have meaning man must, according to Huxley, become aware of the divine Reality. Until such time as an individual has contemplated and made union with God, life on any plane of activity is meaningless. "Seek ye the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." In seeking the divine Reality, Huxley himself has shaken off the old Western habit of mind of recognizing a division between spirit and matter. The Western mind is still addicted to a concept of absolute good and absolute evil, the beautiful and the ugly, God and the devil. Huxley uses his tremendous erudition to show that there is only one Reality. The duality which Bacon established, Huxley

² Norman Thomas, "Religion and Civilization", The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 180 (August 1947), pp. 33-36.

³ Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. viii.

negates. Because he accepts the idea of wholeness, Huxley has turned to Oriental mysticisms which make no distinction between higher and lower realities. The Western mystic, as William Barrett shows, still accepts the "split"; he still has the feeling that there is a consciousness of piercing the veil of the natural or sensuous world in order to experience direct union with the higher reality.⁴ Huxley believes that there is no such thing as a higher or lower reality. In The Doors of Perception, he attempts to show that Reality is, in Suzuki's words, "the hedge at the bottom of the garden", or that in the Sufi's phrase, "Thou art THAT", that the higher and lower worlds are one. In Indian thought, Brahmanic and Buddhist belief and other Oriental religions, there is no duality.

Huxley is not alone in his attempts to disprove the duality which has for so long plagued the Western Mind. Mr. Barrett shows that one of Huxley's first teachers, D.H. Lawrence, was certainly groping toward the goal Huxley finally reached.

D.H. Lawrence (preached) against the bloodless rationalism of his culture. Lawrence urged the necessity of something he called "mindlessness", of becoming "mindless", if the meddlesome and self-conscious intellect were not in the end to cut off Western man irreparably from nature and even the possibility of real sexual union. Oddly enough, this "mindlessness" of Lawrence is a groping intuition after the doctrine of "no-mind" which Zen Buddhism had elaborated a thousand years before... Unlike Lawrence, however, without falling into primitivism and the worship of the blood. In Lawrence's behalf it must be remembered that his culture gave him no help at all on these matters and he had to grope in the dark pretty much on his own.....⁵

⁴ William Barrett, "Zen for the West", in Zen Buddhism, ed. William Barrett, New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956, p. xvii.

⁵ Ibid., p. xiii.

If Mr. Barrett is correct in his comments on D.H. Lawrence, then, it would seem that Huxley has carried on from where Lawrence left off. Huxley, being a man of science as much as a man of literature, has attempted to produce empirical evidence to invalidate the idea of duality in Western civilization.

Huxley's interest in mysticism has been, and continues to be, a studied and consistent growth and development in harmony with both his temperament and his times. As Charles Rolo has pointed out, the literary critics have done Huxley a great injustice in representing him as a "sophisticated debunker" who, after plumbing "the depths of nihilism made a jet-propelled take-off into the mystical stratosphere".⁶ Critics, claims Rolo, have disparaged Huxley because of what they called his "unshakable sophistication"; they have called him an "amateur in garbage", "cynic in rag-time", "fastidious sensualist". The reviewers have been superficial. They have never seen beyond the "...wit and glitter of Huxley's adventures in negation to see that he was not garbage collecting or content to be a smasher of idols, but rather he was engaged in the pursuit of the Absolute in strange regions".⁷

Many critics complain that Huxley's creative power has diminished as his interest in mysticism has increased. If one thinks of Huxley only as a novelist, there may be some justification for the criticism. However, if one considers that an essayist is also a creative artist, the criticism

6 Charles Rolo, The World of Aldous Huxley, New York, Harper Brothers, 1947, p. xxiv.

7 Ibid., pp. i-xxiv.

does not seem quite fair. Certainly, Huxley's subject of mysticism lends itself more to essays than to novels. Huxley had, in "Uncle Spencer", (1924), written that, "Someday, it may be, the successful novelist will write about man's relation to God, to nature, to his own thoughts and the obscure reality on which they work...." Certainly Huxley has attempted in his latest novels to show man's relation to God, but the fact that he has written more essays than novels in his later years may indicate that he himself has realized that his subject does not lend itself to the novel form.

H.M. Champness sees Point Counter Point as the end of Huxley's really creative phase and he regrets the loss of the brilliant young intellect of the 'twenties. Mr. Champness does not represent Huxley as a "Hollywood swami" as so many of the critics derogatively describe him, but he does find that "Huxley's mysticism has a chilling effect on his creativeness".⁸

Peter Quennell thinks Huxley's trend to mysticism is detrimental to his creative talents. He describes Huxley as once a sceptic, now an implacable man of faith. Writing of Time Must Have A Stop, Mr. Quennell says that it is "a courageous and original book, but one that, considered as a work of art, I believe to be a failure".⁹

A.S. Collins claims that Huxley's later novels show "...a falling off in scope, in length, in sparkle, in the total effect of meaning and

8 H.M. Champness, "Aldous Huxley At Sixty", Spectator, vol. 193, (July 23, 1954), p. 109.

9 Peter Quennell, "Aldous Huxley", Living Writers, London, Sylvan Press, 1947, p. 136.

artistry. Huxley had narrowed his vision again".¹⁰

The foregoing critics seem to identify Huxley's creativeness only with his novels, but as Granville Hicks sums it up, "Huxley has become a more and more thoughtful novelist, and if we have lost something in the way of entertainment, what we have gained is more important".¹¹ Like Matthew Arnold, Huxley is more interested in what is said than in how it is said, but as John Atkins points out, Huxley has "the additional advantage of saying it well".¹² On the whole, the critics tend to object more to what Huxley says than how he says it. Ben Ray Redman claims that men of action resent Huxley's "Quietism" which they see as a Nirvana of no thought, no hope, no present, no past, no future. Huxley's final triumph of devoted contemplation, his utter resignation of self leads to the eternal present with God, to an uninterrupted union with the Godhead. According to Mr. Redman, to those who are uninitiated into mysticism, Huxley's "Quietism" seems cowardly. Critics accuse him of intellectual suicide, of running away from life, of supreme selfishness in his attempts to achieve selflessness in God. Huxley, Mr. Redman claims, appears to take the ultimate step of cynicism in denying the value of human action on any level of humanity.¹³ Mr. Redman does see some validity in Huxley's assertion that a man's action is worth nothing until he has first achieved sainthood. Norman Nicholson

10 A.S. Collins, English Literature of the Twentieth Century, London, University Tutorial Press Ltd., p. 241.

11 Granville Hicks, "Huxley Revisited", Saturday Review, November 15, 1958, p. 12.

12 Atkins, Aldous Huxley, p. 48.

13 Ben Ray Redman, "From Time To Eternity", Saturday Review of Literature, vol. 27 (September 2, 1944), p. 7.

claims that Huxley chooses the negative way not because it involves any sacrifice for him but merely from a selfish inclination to indulge his own temperament.¹⁴ Mr. Nicholson is right in suggesting that Huxley is indulging his own temperament in becoming a mystic. But it is not an indulgence in the pejorative sense.

Derek Savage also considers Huxley's interest in mysticism as a consistent development from "...futility...to a positive accentuation of futility accompanied by a positive doctrine of non-attachment and impersonality".¹⁵ Both Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Savage seem to have missed the fact that, in Huxley's terms, before a man can preserve the "one-pointedness of inclusion", he must first seek the "one-pointedness of exclusion".¹⁶ Huxley has not stopped with "exclusive one-pointedness"; he has used it merely as preparation for "wholeness". From a period of negativism he has moved to a socially positive position.

Huxley's interest in mysticism is an attempt to master the Here and Now, not to escape it, but a paradox is involved: he must first escape from the Here and Now before he can come back to master it. The last collection of Huxley's essays shows very clearly that as a moralist, empiricist and mystic, he is actively engaged in life and human affairs and that he is not negating life.

14 Norman Nicholson, "Aldous Huxley and the Mystics", Fortnightly, vol. 161 (February 1947), p. 134.

15 Savage, The Withered Branch, p. 153.

16 Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 299.

The most common misconception that the critics seem to share regarding Huxley's interest in mysticism is that the mystic state means the end of life and of human activities. In actual fact a great part of Huxley's argument is that a mystic engages in life with renewed vitality because he is in a state of peace and harmony with God or the divine Ground. His life is "more ordered in every state". He is better able to be active. Charles Glicksberg makes the error of assuming that entry into the mystic state means the end of physical life and of human activity for Huxley.

Mr. Glicksberg does, however, attempt to show that Huxley's pilgrimage has been a consistent development without any sudden conversions. He traces Huxley's progress through literature, art, science, eugenics, politics, pacifism, Marxism, revolution, war. Mr. Glicksberg shows that all of modern man's problems have been subjected to Huxley's celebrated scepticism. He says that Huxley moves from social faith to individual mysticism; that he shows himself courageous enough to cast off the modern fads of relativism in morals and philosophy and of a total reliance on scientific method. Mr. Glicksberg sees Huxley's motivation as the desire for self-understanding; Huxley struggles to achieve an ideal of completeness: "...the organic fusion of intelligence and instinct, mind and matter, individualism and social participation, reason and faith".¹⁷ Mr. Glicksberg asserts the authenticity and consistency of Huxley's intellectual pilgrimage. In a later article, however, he suggests that Huxley's interest in mysticism has interfered with his ability as a novelist, that it has, in fact, made action on any level of life unnecessary.

¹⁷ Charles I. Glicksberg, "The Intellectual Pilgrimage of Aldous Huxley", Dalhousie Review, vol. 19 (1939), p. 178.

For if life as we know it and live it has no intrinsic value, if the goal lies in eternity, if time is an illusion that must be cast off, there is no further need for bothering with the impedimenta of fiction, there is no point in either reading or writing novels.¹⁸

Mr. Glicksberg believes that if one reaches the spiritual Nirvana, "The rest is silence".

Mr. Glicksberg, Mr. Redman and other critics who think that Huxley reached his "spiritual Nirvana" with Time Must Have A Stop are probably right if by reaching his "spiritual Nirvana" they mean that Huxley had finally gained his high-point of the mystical experience in terms of academic, emotional, spiritual, intimate belief. To suggest, however, that "the rest is silence", that Huxley has stopped writing, seems to me to be ignoring the facts.

In the first place, the term "Nirvana" seems to be essentially a Buddhist term and Huxley is not a Buddhist any more than he is a Christian. Huxley embraces the Perennial Philosophy, the universal quality in all great religions, the Highest Common Factor. The particular advantage of mysticism, so far as Huxley is concerned, is that it is not tied to any specific religion, dogma or creed. The ultimate Reality that Huxley seeks is not to be found exclusively in any local divinity -- be it Buddha or the Christian God, nor in the doctrines proclaimed by any particular religion. What Huxley is concerned about is the impersonal spiritual reality which underlies all things in a manner parallel to that of the monistic identity of physical substance which

¹⁸ Charles I. Glicksberg, "Huxley, The Experimental Novelist", South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. 52 (1953), p. 110.

science has shown to underlie the diversity of the world. Huxley's interest in mysticism seems to be most characterized by a search for "wholeness", and "wholeness" does not seem compatible with negation. The "spiritual Nirvana" suggested by the critics seems to imply a complete end of positive activity of any kind in this physical life.

Contrary to the critics' notion, Huxley is not dead to this world. A mystic need not divest himself of activity in the physical world; on the contrary, he becomes more active knowing that death itself is only a greater awareness and a further step in the spiral of becoming.

A number of the authorities on mysticism support the contention that the mystic's life becomes more active and positive, not negative. Evelyn Underhill states that mystics have always been taunted with the suggestion that their way of life is a denial of the world. Mysticism does not wrap its initiates in a selfish and other-worldly calm; it does not isolate them from the pain and effort of common life. Rather, it gives them renewed vitality, "...administering to the human spirit not -- as some suppose -- a soothing draught, but the most powerful of stimulants".¹⁹ The only denial of life, Miss Underhill explains, is the denial of the narrow and artificial world of self: "...in exchange (the mystic) finds the secrets of that mighty universe which are shared with nature and God".²⁰ Miss Underhill shows that the intensely practical energies of Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale came from their deep spiritual consciousness. They acted under mystical compulsion. Dean Inge also contends that mystics

19 Underhill, Practical Mysticism, p. ix.

20 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 260.

are men of action.

As a matter of fact, all the great mystics have been energetic and influential, and their business capacity is specially noted in a curiously large number of cases.... Plotinus was often in request as a guardian and trustee; St. Bernard showed great gifts as an organiser; St. Teresa, as a founder of convents and administrator, gave evidence of extra-ordinary practical ability; even St. Juan of the Cross displayed the same qualities.....²¹

In the matter of mystics being energetic and influential, Huxley is no exception. Since 1944, with Time Must Have A Stop, "the rest" has not been "silence". Huxley has continued to publish at a rate equal to that of any other period of his life. When one considers the amount of work and study needed to produce an anthology like The Perennial Philosophy, the amount of translating and historical background needed for The Devils of Loudun, the amount of research in science and sociology needed for Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Brave New World Re-Visited, Huxley's achievement becomes phenomenal. In addition to his prolific output of book-length publications -- which includes two novels as well as reports of scientific experiments with mescaline and the collection of several volumes of his own essays dealing with contemporary man's problems -- Huxley is also an active member of the editorial board of the bi-monthly magazine, Vedanta and the West and frequently writes articles for it. Further, Huxley has written a number of introductions and forewords for publications on Oriental thought and for new translations of Hindu literature. In the light of such activity, a charge of negation of and withdrawal from life seems ridiculous. Huxley, as Mr. Rolo says, "...belongs to a species that is almost extinct: the giant professional who remains

21 Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. xvii.

steadily productive, whose chief concern is the life of the intellect and of the spirit".²² In his introduction to his book The World of Aldous Huxley, Mr. Rolo makes what seems to me a very accurate summary of Huxley's life and works.

Sceptic, esthete, satirist, stylistic virtuoso, encyclopedia of scientific fact, columnist of the family gossip known as Culture, amateur of the fantastic and expert in human folly -- Huxley has been all of these things. But his energizing impulse has always been, as it is now, preoccupation with the spirit of man... The two Huxley brothers stand -- as did their eminent ancestors -- at two extreme destinations which the intellectual can reach in an age allergic to belief and uneasy in doubt. For Julian, "Freud in combination with Darwin suffices." For Aldous, without divine Reality, life is "a tale told by an idiot". The tale his books tell is a Twentieth-Century Pilgrim's Progress, in which Darwin, Freud and their colleagues patrol the frontier between the realm of ape-men and the free state of God-men. He describes in richly comic arabesques, the antics of a generation which thought itself to be the ape's offspring, a monkey on a string agitated by animal instinct. He echoes our frustrations, articulates our dilemmas, chronicles our struggles with the Janus-headed monster that has Time on one face and Ego on the other. He has come close to writing a biography of the ideas of modern man.²³

As Mr. Rolo suggests, Huxley's search for truth has involved him completely with contemporary society. Perhaps, as Professor King points out,²⁴ no lines describe Huxley more appropriately than the following from John Donne:

On a huge hill
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must and about must go;
And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so.
(Satire III, Lines 79-82.)

22 Charles Rolo, Introduction to Brave New World by Aldous Huxley, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1946, p. ix.

23 Rolo, The World of Aldous Huxley, p. xxv.

24 King, Queen's Quarterly, p. 80.

Huxley has gone round about but his movement has always been a spiral taking him toward "wholeness". He has not negated life, nor run away from a relative and imperfect world. Rather he has sought some way of adding to life by attempting to discover what it means. To suggest that Huxley has found a final answer by achieving the Unitive Life of the mystic would be to misrepresent the case. His search for truth has been consistent, leading always in the direction of such an achievement. Because of his tendency to accept the Vedanta metaphysics, however, it would seem that if Huxley ever does achieve the Unitive Life described by Miss Underhill, he will even then not have completed his search but merely have moved through another stage of "Becoming". In the meantime, out of his search, Huxley continues "to fertilize those levels of existence from which [he] sprang".²⁵

V.S. Pritchett, in what seems a most penetrating article written in conjunction with Harper and Brothers' publication in August, 1959, of a new volume of Huxley's Collected Essays, says that

...if the electronic brain could develop the temperament of the artist, it would become Aldous Huxley. He is the only important novelist and man of letters to have appropriated science and the scientific attitude to literature and the arts and to have embedded them in the fertile soil of traditional Western culture.

Mr. Pritchett goes on to point out that

...in his early work, [Huxley sought] to open our culture to scientific question; and, in his later work, to put to science questions of civilization. He is an educator and, like all good educators, cultivates mannerisms and asks shock questions just above our heads.²⁶

25 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 444.

26 V.S. Pritchett, "Quizmaster Extraordinary", New York Times Book Review, August 23, 1959, p. 5.

From Mr. Pritchett's comments, and from a consideration of everything Huxley has written, it seems to me that Huxley's role in society has been considerably more positive than negative. Huxley by nature has never been a joiner nor a man of action in the sense of leading crusades, or of championing causes. Huxley's line of thought, in keeping with his psycho-physical constitution, has led consistently in the direction of a contemplative life. Out of his own search for mystical union with the divine Ground of all Being, he has been able to put to his fellow-man the questions which should serve to shock us out of our complacent acceptance of out-moded values and our naive belief in a civilization which may, in fact, be teetering on the brink of self-destruction.

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