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The Intellectual Tourist:  
A Study of  
Aldous Huxley's Spirituality

Raymond E. Legg, Jr.

A dissertation presented to the  
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Arts

May 1996

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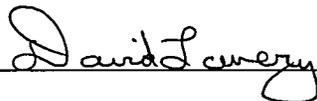
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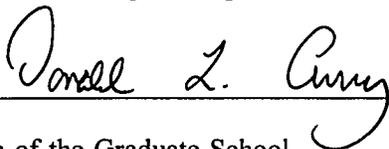
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## Abstract

### The Intellectual Tourist: A Study of Aldous Huxley's Spirituality

Raymond E. Legg, Jr

This dissertation defines the nature and development of Aldous Huxley's spirituality. It concludes that his spirituality is best defined under the heading of universal utilitarianism rather than mysticism as some critics suggest. The study focuses on three of Huxley's works and shows how they reflect his spiritual odyssey. The dissertation shows that this odyssey was facilitated by Huxley's heritage, his intellectual development, and his rejection of spiritual convention. The dissertation also shows that the discontinuity which is characteristic of his writing is not only a vital clue to interpretation of his work, but also the key to understanding the intricate nature of his spiritual life.

Chapter I establishes the significance of family, death, disease, and intellectual predisposition on shaping Huxley's spirituality. Chapter II defines the nature of that spirituality in terms of the similarity it exhibits with the spiritual perspectives developed during the Enlightenment.

Using Huxley's adaptation of eighteenth-century spirituality as the pattern, Chapters III, IV, and V show how three of his early works reflect that pattern and his attempts at redefining it in a modern context. Covering the novels Point Counter Point (1928) and Brave New World (1932), and his first play, The World Of Light (1931), these chapters show how Huxley struggled to articulate a new approach to spirituality predicated upon intellect and synthesis rather than faith. These chapters conclude that Huxley was never able to achieve the kind of synthesis he sought. They conclude that the key element to spiritual contentment,

Raymond E. Legg, Jr.

faith, was always just beyond Huxley's grasp. The inability to believe reduced him to being an intellectual tourist in the spirit realm rather than a mystic. It reduced him to satisfying himself with something less than what he sought because he died never having achieved his goal of a Brave New Spirituality.

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Plate 1  
from Jacqueline Bridgeman: Huxley and God

“My philosophical refinements, & metaphysical Theories  
lay by me in the hour of anguish, as toys by the bedside of a Child deadly-sick.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
*from A Letter to Benjamin Flower, 11 December 1796*

## Introduction

On November 22, 1963 death took three great men: one, a humanist, by an assassin's bullet; one, an agnostic (or pantheist), under the influence of LSD; and one, a theist, quietly at The Kilns. The world would never be the same.

The death of John F. Kennedy left the world in shock, and nearly everyone alive at the time of his assassination can recall where they were when they heard the news of the death of the President. This young man with so much to offer his country and the world, loved by so many, would never be given the opportunity to bring his potential to fruition. November 22, 1963 was a dark day in the political world.

But it was a dark day in the world of literature as well. So great was the shock over Kennedy's death and so extensive was its news coverage that it overshadowed what was equally devastating to millions of people, but in a different way: these people had lost heroes of a different sort. With the deaths of Clive Staples Lewis and Aldous Leonard Huxley came the end of two vastly different but equally rich literary traditions. With the deaths of these two literary giants also came invitation to compare and to contrast, to parallel and to question. How could the lives of two individuals, which so closely paralleled one another, begun just four years apart and ended at virtually the same time, have developed so differently? What could have turned their heads and taken C.S. Lewis down a path so dissimilar to that chosen by Aldous Huxley?

This dissertation shows that the answers to those and other questions can be found in Aldous Huxley's universal utilitarian spirituality. This spirituality is reflected

in his play The World of Light: A Comedy in Three Acts and developed in two of his major novels. The present study focuses on his development of a type of universal spirituality chronicled in the play and on the development of that spirituality reflected in Point Counter Point and Brave New World. It shows that this development was facilitated by the modernism which provided a perfect environment for the development of Huxley's spirituality. It also shows that, among other things, the discontinuity and fragmentation characteristic of much of the literature of the day is not only present in Huxley's own work, but they permeate and define Huxley's spirituality as well.

The approach taken in the pages that follow is predicated upon two assumptions. The first, contrary to a number of Huxley scholars, is that Huxley was not a mystic. His interest in spiritual things was just that--interest--making him less than the mystic many perceive him to be. The second assumption is that Huxley could not have been a mystic because neither his intellect nor his will would have allowed it. Primarily through his characters, Huxley reveals an interest in metaphysics, and through their lack of ability to commit to anything for any length of time (discontinuity), he reflects his own inability to be anything more than an observer in the realm of spirituality.

The dissertation begins by establishing the context for Huxley's writing and the interest in spirituality in England. Along with the intellectual heritage bequeathed him by family and countrymen, the nature of the times in which Huxley developed as a writer made it easy for him to find himself intrigued by, and eventually drawn to fulfilling a need for a spiritual dimension in his life. As a result of a combination of a several factors, Huxley had settled into his search for spiritual satisfaction by 1931,

and he not only reflects that choice in Point Counter Point but also confirms it in The World of Light and Brave New World.

This thesis will be proven three ways. The first is by establishing its orientation as a humanistically practical kind of spirituality, which Huxley begins to develop in Point Counter Point. Second, that practicality is further explored in Huxley's attempt to wed the physical dimension of his spirituality with a necessary metaphysical component. This is done by chronicling Huxley's spiritual quest through the dialogue of Hugo Wenham in the play and by using that dialogue to fix Huxley's early views on spirituality. Third, the spiritual perspective, first articulated in Point Counter Point and The World of Light, is defined in Brave New World. The dissertation ends with the conclusion that Aldous Leonard Huxley had made spiritual choices by 1928 that set the tone for the rest of his life. It will also show that Brave New World reflects a man in the throes of a crisis of faith which he was never able to resolve because of the problems raised by those choices.

## Chapter I

### The Son of His Fathers

Aldous Leonard Huxley lived a life that seems to have been scripted much like those of Shakespeare's Macbeth or Hamlet. Like them, Huxley's life often seemed driven by the forces of family, ambition, temperament, and the supernatural, all of which were beyond his control. He shared a sense of inner turmoil like that of Macbeth, and developed a Hamlet-like melancholy which is evidenced in many of his novels. Like Hamlet,

more than anyone seems to have suspected, Huxley projected, addressed, and debated with himself . . . . [and] . . . he was inwardly split for most of his life even more than Keats or Byron or Coleridge. (Holmes 4, 8)

Also, the same influences which everyone faces, to one degree or another, contributed to his development and worked to define not only his personality but also his writing. Four of the primary influences--family, death, physical disability, and marriage--worked significantly in the development of the elusive, mysterious personality that was to become one of the twentieth century's most influential writers.

The first significant stage in Huxley's development took place under the influence of the illustrious family into which he was born and through which his character was formed. From both sides of his family, Aldous inherited the outlook and personality that would make him the complex man he was. Aldous was born July 26, 1894 at Laleham, Goldalming, Surry. The youngest of three boys, he was raised in the shadow of such an accomplished heritage. His father Leonard was the son of

Thomas Henry Huxley who had a broad range of interests and a reputation as a speaker among the Victorian population because of his ability to explain complex scientific theories in ways that common people could understand. He is best known as the champion of Darwinism, and he became an outspoken critic of traditional religion. He is also remembered for having coined the term *agnostic* which he used to describe one for whom knowledge of God's existence had not been sufficiently proven--a view which plays a formidable role in Aldous's spiritual development in years to come. The strength of Thomas's convictions is evident in an essay written for an anniversary of Darwin's birth. He wrote,

Unreason in every form is the enemy of scientific method, and the victory of science which we associate with the name of Darwin means the gradual banishment of unnumbered bogeys and fanciful superstitions, offspring of strong sensibilities and false reasoning. With these, also, go many fancies and myths and fairy tales, which survived to form a beautiful if misty background to everyday thought. Is it then true, as the lovers of the day before yesterday deplore, that the march of evolutionary science has robbed the world of its illusions, its beauty, its aspirations, and given in their stead naked fact, mechanical order, pedestrian reason? It is true, rather, each new ideal, each new generalization, pushes out the old, ruthlessly tearing the fabric of imagery and allegory which drapes it around. Man cannot live without some ideal, any more than he can live without some sense of beauty: but it is with the ideal as with beauty, for beauty does not rest in untruth, nor is the loveliness of a landscape less appreciated by reason

of a knowledge of perspective. The knowledge which destroys false beauties enthrones new ones, while it brings certain desirable and ideal conditions nearer present realization. (qtd. in Birnbaum, 1971, 13-14)

What Thomas is saying is that because of Darwinism, there would no longer be a need for religious or supernatural affections. For him, there was within Darwinism not only sufficient explanation for the origins of human life and the universe, but also sufficient ground for meaning within the human experience. Faith, as he saw it, was unreason and therefore not necessary. From Thomas Henry Huxley, Aldous inherited one side of his critical nature which allowed him to accept little at face value. It was from his grandfather also that he learned to question and maintain a healthy skepticism for anything that smacked of religious faith. This skepticism is also the vital element in Huxley's make-up that prevents him from dedicating himself to any spiritual/religious system predicated upon faith. Faith requires that adherents accept certain verities that are neither rational nor explainable, an acceptance that would prove to be an impossible leap for T.H. Huxley's grandson to make.

Huxley's father Leonard was also a significant force in his early development. He "was a most able--possibly underrated--literary" man and an author (Bedford 124). A book he worked on for some time, a "biography of his father, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley . . . , was published in 1900 in London and New York with considerable success" (Bedford 4). Bedford reminds the reader that,

Originally, [Leonard Huxley] had planned to read for the Bar, but when the assistant mastership was offered to him in 1885 he accepted it in order to marry. He now joined the publishing firm of Smith, Elder as reader and literary advisor, and at the same time became assistant editor

of The Cornhill. (4)

John Murray, who worked with Leonard on The Cornhill, wrote that Leonard's literary scholarship [was so firm] that he could afford to be gentle and humble in dealing with authors of every age or degree of experience or conceit. The gentleness caused me [Murray] continual problems because I often did not know if the author's contribution had to be sent to the printer for proofing or returned as a rejection. So gentle and firmly helpful was he that many years later a contributor . . . told me that he preferred a letter of rejection from Leonard Huxley to one of acceptance from any other editor. It was L.H.'s humility and the self-effacing quality of his editorial handling of, for example, the work of Elizabeth and Robert Browning, Jane Welsh Carlyle and Captain Scott of the Antarctic that denied him the public recognition that was his due. (Bedford 124-25)

Aldous Huxley often consulted with his father on literary matters. In a letter to his father dated 30 July, 1922, Huxley writes,

I find the journalistic life more and more difficult to combine with intelligent writing. It is difficult to know how to arrange one's existence so as to be able to make money and, at the same time, do the necessary quiet thinking which one must do in order to write. I have been able to do practically none of my own stuff for the last six months. It's all very tiresome. (qtd. in Alprin 62)

It is fair to say that when it came to dealing with matters of faith and reason, Leonard followed the example of *his* father. He once acknowledged the significance

of that influence by saying

As to the question whether the children should be brought up in entire disregard to the beliefs rejected by himself [Thomas Henry Huxley] but still current among the mass of his fellow countrymen, the elder Huxley was of the opinion that they ought to know the mythology of their time and country otherwise one would at best tend to make young prigs out of them. (qtd. in Bedford 9)

Evident in much of Huxley's early work is the fact that he is often caught in a struggle between a desire to find and commit to a system of values, and an innate rejection of most of those systems. In his earlier work, Huxley presents religion as being generally passé (which he inherited from the Arnolds), and there is in much of it a mood of wanting to alter religion so it conforms to public consensus rather than dogma and to force it to capitulate, in points of conflict, to personal opinion. Such sentiment is directly attributable to Huxley's heritage and is evidenced in a 1960 interview with Hans Beerman in which Huxley vehemently attacked Christian orthodoxy:

any social, cultural or political regimentation, particularly any early indoctrination in some brand of orthodoxy which is not based on verifiable truth, I consider an impingement on or obstacle to human freedom. Anything that severely inhibits the genetic uniqueness of the individual inevitably produces repressions that may, if severe enough, result in neuroses with progressive damage to the individual, ultimately hurting the nation and possibly the world. (Beerman 224-25)

Huxley came by this sentiment naturally under the influence of the views and opinions

of his rationalistic family.

Such a sentiment is also the locus of a criticism that arises as Huxley's reputation develops. Many of Huxley's readers have found fault over the years with what may be called his "consistent inconsistency." By that I mean that because he did not develop a consistent metaphysical viewpoint during his early years, he was unable, as an adult, to find one position that he could at once feel comfortable with and articulate effectively. He would, rather, piece together a religious world-view consisting of components of several differing perspectives, all the while ignoring inherent problems that might arise out of such a mixture. As Molloy notes, "Huxley [eventually comes to unite] mystical experiences from Christianity, Taoism, Vedanta, English nature-poetry, Zen, and Tantra, and assumes that they are basically the same experience" (214). Molloy goes on to point out that Huxley's approach in this regard has been severely criticized in recent years. He writes

Stephen Kate, for example, in Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis (1978) argues that Huxley's approach was motivated by an ill-conceived ecumenism which, by attributing differences to superficial cultural coloration, overlooked important differences that are essential to the experiences themselves. . . . [Huxley seems to have become] confirmed in the belief that different labels were accidentally different words referring to the same experience, that all mystical experiences . . . were identical. (Molloy 214-15)

This mistake in Huxley's search for values in religious thought shows both a tendency toward a desire for belief that is willing to overlook, and worse yet, ignore, implicit conflicts at the expense of consistency. He would later admit that what keeps most

people from becoming very religious in the first place is their complete inability to break from the physical restraints placed on them either by heritage, tradition, comfort, or simply herd mentality. In trying to personally counter this mind-set by articulating his personal philosophy, he is, in the end, guilty of virtually the same thing: of taking what is most attractive from several sources and combining those elements into an acceptable format with little or no respect to consequence. For example, note the following expression of this inclusive perspective from Antic Hay:

What are art and science, what are religion and philosophy but so many expressions in human terms of the same reality. . . . Newton, Boehem, and Michelangelo--what are they doing but expressing, in different ways, different aspects, the same thing. (64)

It is interesting to note the number of times that the characters in Huxley's early work exhibit a similar ease of distraction and a dislike for detail. The way he allows his characters to deal with detail is to avoid it much like Hugo does in The World of Light (1931), Huxley's first attempt at drama. In many of his novels any discussion about religion or personal philosophy is often accompanied or even derailed by mention of food or eating or some other mundane, routine activity. In Crome Yellow, Denis Stone says,

I am amazed how ignorant I am of other people's mentality in general and, above all and in particular, of their opinions about myself. Our minds are sealed books only occasionally opened to the outside world. . . . One has to have had first-hand experience. . . . This every morning, for example . . . he began, but his confidences were cut short. The deep voice of the gong [sounded]. It was lunch time. (264-65)

At one point Huxley wrote, "Philosophy [and we might add, religion]. . . always seems to break down in the face of temptations and physical appetites" (Those Barren Leaves 78). Huxley spent most of his life trying 1) to escape the tension that he felt from the pull of the spiritual world on the one hand and from the material world on the other, and 2) to reconcile those worlds to each other. As we will see, his personal metaphysical philosophy will be a deliberate attempt on his part to combine views that allow him to live in both worlds simultaneously without committing himself to either. For Huxley the search is the goal--not the goal itself.

Lest we think that the Huxleys were the only force behind Aldous' development, it should be pointed out that his mother, Julia (Arnold) and her family were also significant forces in the lives of her children. Julia was a caring and devoted mother who dedicated herself to their proper upbringing, and *her* heritage served her well especially as she carried on the daily business of her school at Prior's Field. Of Julia, Milton Birnbaum writes that she "must have been a remarkably gentle and spiritual creature. Besides founding a successful girl's school, she seemed to influence her children, especially Aldous, far more than their father" (Birnbaum, 1971, 7).

Aldous dearly loved his mother and enjoyed a wonderful relationship with her until her death in November, 1908. Her passing had a tremendous impact on the family though the tragedy was not unexpected: Julia had been diagnosed with cancer earlier that same year. Bedford writes that

possibly because of the extra care which had been given him [Aldous] as a child, possibly because his predilections ran back through his mother to the self-questioning Arnolds more naturally than through [his

grandfather]; possibly because his father tended to dehumanize scholarship and to arouse in his son a faint distaste--for whatever reasons, it was Julia Arnold who had occupied the centre of his world. Her death had not only cut down more deeply than it had cut into her other sons; it had also heightened Aldous's sensitivity, increased his awareness, added to the differences which already tended to set him apart from his companions. (Birnbaum, 1971, 14)

Her influence went very deep; so did her loss; both are keys to his character and development. As a direct result of his 'mother's death, "there remained with him, latent at ordinary times but always ready to come to the surface, a haunting sense of the vanity, the transience, the hopeless precariousness of all merely human happiness" (Bedford 26).

Julia's death was not the only one that would significantly affect Aldous in his formative years. In 1914 news of his beloved brother Trevenen's suicide reached him, and Aldous was crushed; not only was he left with the lingering depression of the loss of his mother, but the added burden of the death of Trevenen caused in him a deeper sense of emptiness and despair than he had ever experienced before. That cynicism, with the latent melancholy developing in his life, combined to form the basis of Aldous' personality. He would later say, through Francis Chelifer, "You've no idea how deeply all suffering affects me . . . [but] I'm afraid . . . [that] I'm singularly stoical about other people's suffering" (Those Barren Leaves 203).

Three years after the death of Julia, Leonard announced his intent to marry Rosalind Bruce, a woman twenty-three years his junior. The announcement of the wedding came as a surprise to the Huxley children who, because of her youth, thought

of her more as a peer than a step-mother (Bedford 125). Bedford continues,

on visits to the [Huxley] home in Hampstead on pleasure, or on Cornhill  
[magazine] business, Julian and his step-mother were also present, the  
illusion of a single generation was complete. (125)

Ironically, Huxley looked upon Rosalind much like his family would look upon Maria Nys whom he married in 1919.

The significance of these early years lies in Huxley's development of a characteristic sense of detachment and introspection prevalent in most of his work, and these combine to form the key ingredients of his spiritual perspective. This introspection is typical of that evidenced in the work of Huxley's uncle, Matthew Arnold. It is a sense that he and his characters are always disillusioned observers of life but never really participants in it. Because of the impact of his heritage, the deaths of his mother and brother, the changes his father's wedding brought about in his family, a developing sense of melancholic despair, and the failure of his eyesight, it becomes apparent that the character of the Aldous Huxley of later years was taking shape. These influences all worked together to instill in Aldous an intense passion for something to believe in, and as the years passed that passion found a forum in his writing. It is not difficult to see the importance of his heritage in the developing temperament that would mold him into a literary force of significant magnitude.

Huxley had not always intended to be a writer. Though he enjoyed literature and history, he initially studied medicine and science. He was enrolled in preparatory school at Hillside in 1903 where he studied until transferring to Eton in 1908. In 1911, however, the third stage in his development began: he contracted a disease of the eyes known as *keratitis punctata*, an inflammation of the cornea. He would suffer

with the disease for over a year, describing it as

a violent attack . . . which left me (after eighteen months of near blindness, during which I had to depend on Braille for reading and a guide for walking) with one eye just capable of light perception, and the other with enough vision to permit my detecting the two-hundred foot letter on the Snellen chart at ten feet. (qtd. in Bedford 32)

What surprised family members, for some reason, was that it was Aldous who contracted the disease. Once they accepted that fact, they were even more greatly surprised by the way he handled the setback. Aldous' cousin Gervas commented, "We were appalled. The shock of it. *I* was shattered, but not Aldous. He faced it with fantastic courage; and a complete absence of self-pity" (qtd. in Bedford 32).

Never the one to accept defeat, Aldous learned to read Braille, and to type on a portable typewriter. During that period he even produced a novel of "about 80,000 words which, he said, 'I never subsequently read. It disappeared. I rather regret that it *has* disappeared--I would be interested to know what it was like now'" (qtd. in Bedford 35).

The importance of the onset of eye problems must not be understated. Though Huxley would eventually be cured of the disease through a series of treatments, not only would his eyesight never be completely the same, but also his plans for a career were altered. Having planned to enter medicine, he was now forced to give consideration to other endeavors. Had it not been for *keratitis punctata* the world would probably not have had one of its most influential writers. Shaped by his heritage, by the deaths of his mother in 1908 and his brother in 1914, and now by his weak physical sight, Huxley would be forced to embark on a very different journey

than the one he had started.

Following the onset of his eye problems and their subsequent cure and his marriage to Maria Nys in 1919, a great deal occurred which would also affect Huxley's intellectual development. Having left school because of his sight, he traveled extensively and developed a flare for life on the continent where he would eventually settle.

After he regained his sight he re-enrolled at Oxford and excelled in his studies. Among a host of awards for academic merit, he was awarded a first in English and was graduated in 1915. Upon receiving his degree he wrote to his brother Julian,

crowned with the artificial roses of academic distinction, I stagger, magnificently drunk with youthful conceit, into the symposium, not of philosophers, but of apes and wolves and swine . . . . No more of the sheltered, the academic life . . . the life, which, I believe, when led by men of high and independent spirits, is the fullest and the best of lives, though one of the most bedraggled and wretched as led by the ordinary crew of bovine intellectuals. I should like to go on for ever learning. I lust for knowledge, as well theoretical as empirical. Comparing small things to great, I think I am rather like the incomparable Donne. (qtd. in Bedford 64)

And stagger he did into the world with little awareness of what he was to do with his life. He was truly detached at this point, and detachment would manifest itself in every area of his life. It would play a crucial part in the next few years, becoming the foundation for both his literary career and his metaphysical world-view. As Clyde Enroth states it,

incapable, by virtue of his temperament, his family's tradition of skepticism, his scientific education, of responding to the apparent destruction of human purpose at the hands of science and totalitarianism by resigning himself to meaninglessness or by turning to orthodox religion or economic or political dogma, Huxley, an honest and brilliant twentieth-century man, . . . set [about recording] in his novels a long and complete record of his journey in search of wholeness and meaning. (308)

The fourth influence on that search for wholeness and meaning began shortly after he left school. He was offered a temporary teaching position at Repton, which he took because it afforded him the opportunity to earn a living and at the same time to concentrate on his writing. About his teaching he wrote his father,

the job--teaching Latin, History and English to the lower forms--is quite interesting. The boys know nil and so whatever I manage to teach them is pure gain. (qtd. in Bedford 65)

He did not have the same sentiments for the masters, calling them "a set of Calibans" (qtd. in Bedford 65).<sup>1</sup>

During his time at Repton (and in the post as schoolmaster at Eton which he took in 1917) Huxley did begin to write seriously and even managed to get some of his work into print. Although he had done a little writing before, Huxley began to concentrate at Repton on developing his poetry. A magazine entitled "The Nation" published three of Aldous' poems, but by mistake [did so] over the signature of Leonard Huxley, [whom] Aldous said later had received a letter from A.C. Benson congratulating him on the extreme beauty of his verse" (Bedford 66). It should be

noted that Huxley's poetry was not always so well received. Once people began to realize that the younger Huxleys, especially Aldous, were attempting to enter the literary field they applied a different, more stringent, criticism to their work (Bedford 65). In September, 1916, all of the poetry Aldous had written to that point was gathered into a collection entitled The Burning Wheel and was published as part of Basil H. Blackwell's Oxford Adventurers All Series, A Series of Young Poets Unknown to Fame. Parts of The Burning Wheel had appeared earlier in other publications (Watt 7-8). Without the career change brought on by his blindness, all this and more may not have occurred, and Aldous Huxley would not have become the figure he did.

The latent despair and inner tension developing Huxley's temperament during this time evidence themselves in a poem written in 1916:

**Wearied** of its own turning,  
**Distressed** with its own busy restlessness,  
**Yearning** to draw the circumferent pain--  
 The rim that is **dizzy** with speed--  
 To the **motionless centre**, there to rest,  
 The wheel must **strain through agony**  
 On **agony contracting**, returning  
 Into the core of steel. (qtd. in Watt 7-8, emphasis added)

While Huxley appears to be doing well and taking his place in the world, his poetry reveals that the Hamlet-like melancholy which characterizes the rest of his life is beginning to take shape. As his work developed, Huxley would progressively reveal more of his deepening personal melancholy that he could not seem to resolve.

In spite of his darkening view of life and human endeavor, there were bright spots in Huxley's early years. While the world celebrated the end of the war in 1919, Huxley left his post at Eton and departed for Belgium to join Maria Nys, whom he had met some two years earlier through a mutual friend. On July 10, 1919, the Huxleys reluctantly witnessed the marriage of Aldous and Maria. She was not the sort of wife they expected him to take because Maria was not upper-class British. Bedford writes,

How un-English [Maria] must have appeared to [their] world. And how well she knew that [her marriage to Aldous] precisely was original sin. [His family was] very much aware that both the Huxley brothers-- Leonard's boys--had married foreigners, and it took the best part of half a century to live it down. (105)

Maria would never fully win the approval of the larger Huxley family.

But not all of his new life was to his liking. Having assumed a journalistic position with the Athenaeum, Aldous found himself weighed down by increased pressures at work as well as demands placed upon him by responsibilities to his family. To compound matters, in 1923 he signed a deal with Chatto & Windus publishers in London which would provide steady income for Huxley and his family, but which would also impose added pressures in the form of publication deadlines. Because of these pressures, he began to take on characteristics like those described by the verbs used in "The Burning Wheel," and whatever unity there had been in his life was slowing being drained away. This is suggested in nearly all the pictures taken of Huxley, where, ever present on his face, in place of a smile, is a look more of resignation than pleasure. Taking care of his own family and trying to keep the

extended family from coming between himself and Maria, Huxley felt as if his life was slipping away.

It was during this time that Huxley's life took another turn, following Maria's discovery of an affair between Aldous and Nancy Cunard. Maria packed her belongings and with Matthew moved to Italy, telling Aldous that he was free to join them or not. Aldous joined them later, and as they began to put their lives back together, he fell madly in love again, this time with Italy. His love is revealed in Those Barren Leaves and other later novels. The change did him good, and everything worked to lift both his spirits and his health, as well as his creativity. Ironically, along with the improvement of his physical health, came introspection and disillusionment with his feeling that life still lacked a sense of basic values. Huxley became much like Denis Stone in Crome Yellow whom he describes as detached, alone and apart, someone who "lacked his complementary opposite. They were all coupled but he; all but he" (300). What Huxley implies here is that, though he has a wife and family and a growing career, he lacks something which he is as yet unable to define. At least in his fiction, there appears a separation which is characteristic of the real-life Huxley.

By 1928, not much had changed in Huxley's fiction or his outlook on life. Through Philip Quarrels Huxley says, "luckily people don't leave much trace on me. They make an impression easily, like a ship on water. But the water closes up again" (Point Counter Point 75). This feeling of indifferent detachment from life was one that many of Huxley's contemporaries felt at that time. Theirs was a time when people felt like they were

being tamed on the outside and not on the inside, left to be wild on the

inside . . . wild inside; raging, writhing--yes, "writhing" was the word, writhing with desire. But outwardly . . . hopelessly tame; outwardly-- baa, baa, baa. (Crome Yellow 93)

Readers will see the same sentiment in Antic Hay which Huxley demonstrates through the herd mentality of the general public. His work became his forum for expression and his personal search for meaning gave voice to the feelings of a whole generation. In him they found someone who was "able to articulate the intellectual and moral conflicts [waged] in the collective soul of the twentieth century" (Birnbaum, 1971, 4).

As Huxley's personal world-view was developing, his inner struggles found expression externally as well. During this time he was beginning to be more expressive about how he was feeling personally, and because of the strength of his socio-political convictions, he became an outspoken critic of social policy. Eventually, he would come under some of the same retribution leveled against Bertrand Russell and other of his new friends, seeing several of his books banned from libraries. His speaking out for pacifism and against nationalism in the 1930's was so intense that it led him into personal exile from his home country.

During this period, Huxley worked at a feverish pace. Between 1923 and 1931 he published Antic Hay (1923), The Little Mexican (1924), Those Barren Leaves (1925), Two or Three Graces (1926), Point Counter Point (1928), Brief Candles (1930), and The World of Light: A Comedy in Three Acts (1931). Besides these there were numerous articles and essays that served to demonstrate not only Huxley's talent, but also his growing popularity. Each successive novel was more popular than the one before, with Aldous Leonard Huxley developing a significant following. But Huxley viewed his popularity with skepticism because, in his words,

they always seem to misunderstand what one writes . . . . They like my books because they're smart and unexpected and rather paradoxical and cynical and elegantly brutal. They don't see how serious it all is.

(Those Barren Leaves 54)

Because of Huxley's introspection, we are not surprised to find his characters exhibiting tendencies to stand off and observe, but never seeming to develop the capacity to enjoy life; living, true living, is always just beyond their grasp. Even when they observe happiness in the lives of other people, it is portrayed as brutish or base. Some of Huxley's characters seem to be at home when they are in charge of the situation, but they are few and far between. When such characters occur, the nature of their attachment is distorted. In Antic Hay, for example, Theodore has to adopt a persona in order to be comfortable with others: Mrs. Vivesh orders Theodore to accompany her to lunch, and Theodore, in the persona of the Complete Man, obeys. In that capacity, he is also able to do things that he never would as the Melancholy Man. Like Huxley, in the same novel, Emily, Theodore's one hope for true happiness, ironically prefers Gumbriel to Theodore because she can exercise an element of control over him. Thus Theodore as the Complete Man is not really complete because he can still be manipulated. This Complete Man does see himself as being complete and above everyone else, for no one knows his secrets (he is detached). Not having the capacity to be connected himself, there is, in his work, a cynicism which Huxley intentionally puts into his characters. The lack of connection is also a dominant theme in much of the work of Huxley's friend, D.H. Lawrence. In Lawrence's Lady Chatterly's Lover, for example, nearly every character is "unattached" in the Huxleyan sense and is miserable for it. Huxley, as well as many of his contemporaries, believed

that "adventures and romance only take on their adventurous and romantic qualities at second-hand. Live them, and they are just a slice of life like the rest" (Crome Yellow 308). And characters such as Mr. Chelifor in Those Barren Leaves suffer a similar fate: being apart from the setting instead of a part of it.

As time progressed, Huxley recorded a sense of frustration in his characters as well. Huxley would express his frustration with people saying that people everywhere want freedom, but when they get it they don't know what to do with it. His frustration is demonstrated in Mrs. Vivesh who looked around herself and realized she had her freedom but did not know what to do with herself. Huxley writes,

Yesterday, when she declined all those pressing invitations, the prospect [of being free] seemed delightful. Liberty, no complications, no contacts; a pre-Adamite empty world to do what she liked in. But today, when it came to the point, she hated her liberty. . . . The prospect of immeasurable boredom opened before her. (Antic Hay 199)

What Huxley is admitting is that people need something to commit themselves to; they simply cannot chuck everything for complete freedom: they need an intellectual anchor to keep them from moving too far adrift. While the public was generally dissatisfied with the way things were, few people realized that they were reaping the benefit of having what they wanted. Having thrown off the restraints of their Victorian predecessors and demanding their freedom, few of them knew what to do with the freedom now that they had it. The strong anti-Victorian sentiment that runs through much of Huxley's fiction is evidenced by Mr. Cardan's monologue in Those Barren Leaves:

I persist that you made a mistake in so timing your entry into the world

that the period of your youth coincided with the war and your early maturity with this horribly insincere and unprosperous peace. How incomparably better I managed my existence! I made my entry in the late fifties--almost a twin to The Origin of Species. . . . I was brought up in the simple faith of nineteenth-century materialism: a faith untroubled by doubts and as yet unsophisticated by that disquieting scientific modernism which is now turning the staunchest mathematical physicists into mystics. We were all wonderfully optimistic then; believed in progress and the ultimate explicability of everything in terms of physics and chemistry, believed in Mr. Gladstone and our own moral and intellectual superiority over every other age. (43)

Huxley casts a satiric slant on all Mr. Cardan just said: however, at the end of the soliloquy, Miss Thriplow says, "It sounds quite *idyl-ic*" (44, emphasis added). Huxley was aware that, while the populace did not want to be limited by the restraints of their past, they were nonetheless casting those restraints aside, simply setting themselves up to be brought under other forms of restraint because a world without restraint cannot function.

The question everyone avoided involved which set of values to adopt. The public was not going to make choices for itself because it was easier to accept the *status quo*, however distasteful or unsettling, and be content knowing what people were fed instead of feeding themselves; content with knowing *about* a thing but never coming to appreciate the thing itself. In Crome Yellow Mr. Scogan says,

Sanity--that's what's wrong with me . . . . In a sane world I should be a great man; as things are in this establishment, I am nothing at all; to all

intents and purposes I don't exist. I am *Vox et præterea nihil*. . . . Men such as I am . . . have never achieved anything. We're too sane; we're merely reasonable. We lack the human touch, the compelling enthusiastic mania. People are quite ready to listen to the philosophers for a little amusement, just as they would listen to a fiddler or a monte blanc. But as to acting on the advice of men of reason--never.

Wherever the choice has had to be made between the man of reason and the madman, the world has unhesitatingly followed the madman. For the madman appeals to what is fundamental, to passion and its instincts; the philosophers to what is superficial--reason. (236-37)

Huxley's contemporaries were content with partial, second-hand data that reduces knowledge and experience to meaningless fact and madness takes precedence over reason. For Huxley, such an attitude was unacceptable.

Huxley uses his novels to urge people to move out of the confines of their neat categories of technique and live so as to discover essential life. For him there were too many people content to follow formulae blindly and too few who were bold enough to construct their own. The tendency to be led was natural for most people; and it was easy because there is "always no shortage of purveyors of that kind of messages of mindlessness" (Those Barren Leaves 159). In reaction to that mindlessness Huxley developed an interesting philosophy of true communication which he articulates in The World of Light and other of his early works. He believed that true communication was innate, and that human beings had the ability to know, to communicate like the birds, but that they choose not to do it because it takes too much effort. In Crome Yellow, Gumbriel, Sr. says that it is

for the simple reason . . . that half our existence is spent in dealing with things that have no mind--things with which it is impossible to hold (true) communication. . . . If we knew a good method of educating and drawing out the latent faculty, most of us could make ourselves moderately efficient telepaths; just as most of us can make ourselves into [anything else]. (316)

In Those Barren Leaves, Huxley expresses the fullness of his frustration with people. He says,

It was then (upon kissing Barbara Waters) that I learned to live only in the moment--to ignore causes, motives, antecedents, to refuse responsibility for what should follow. It was then that I learned . . . never to look forward for comfort or justification, but to live now and here in the heart of human reality, in the very centre of the hot dark hive. (Those Barren Leaves 152)

And he continues,

it is the truth that men are cruel and stupid and that they suffer themselves to be driven even to destruction by shepherds as stupid as themselves. It was then that I thought of my passion for universal justice. (Those Barren Leaves 159)

Add to this the whole section in "Conclusions" in Those Barren Leaves and a picture of the nature of Huxley's struggle with his sense of his own detachment begins to present itself. As Those Barren Leaves ends, all the main characters, like Huxley himself, are becoming very contemplative and searching for meaning below the levels of noise everyone imposes upon themselves. That contemplation is on the essence of

truth, and Huxley uses his characters to attempt to establish his interpretation of what truth is. It is in these early novels that Huxley provides an increasingly better, fuller, more intimate description, and reflection of his own pilgrimage as a process that he himself is going through personally. Huxley even tells the reader through Mr. Calamy (Huxley?) that he is different from the way he was previously. He has made some changes.

What began as latent detachment in his poetry, came to fruition in his novels. In Crome Yellow, for example, Huxley uses Denis Stone to mirror the shallowness that troubles him. When Denis lets down his guard and reveals to Mary Waters his innermost thoughts, he is uncomfortable and feels sorry that Mary has had to listen to him. He then withdraws, detaching himself from her. While it is true that Denis does become a man of action, his action is contrived, allowing him to remove himself from an uncomfortable situation: while he is not happy being alone and searching, at the same time he is not happy around those who reflect that for which he searches. In the end, even his search for meaning has lost its meaning and he returns to the old Denis. Huxley writes,

it was time for him to lay himself in his coffin. The car was at the door--the hearse. The whole party had assembled to see him go. Good-bye, good-bye. . . . "It stinks, and I am ready to depart," he said quoting Landor with an exquisite aptness. He looked quickly round from face to face. Nobody had noticed. He climbed into the hearse." Thought and action are left in ridicule, for in the end no one notices. In the end one is still alone in the world. (Crome Yellow 324-25) .

Because *he* felt alone in the world, Huxley removed himself from surface relationships

and turned inward to find satisfaction for the longing of his soul.

Thus it becomes clear that Aldous Huxley was a man who had been shaped under the influence of forces outside himself. Such forces left him disappointed, disillusioned, and desperately searching for some sense of meaning and order. As Birnbaum assesses Huxley's temperament, "the sardonic wit and cynicism that so frequently appear in his writings could well have been [just] a shield by which he fended off the hurts he felt in his own life and in the lives of those about him" (1971, 19). But what is clear is that his search is taking him into the realm of the spiritual which he addresses in Point Counter Point; and chapter two reveals both the background and the aftermath of the direction in which that search leads him.

## Chapter II

### In the Footsteps of the *Philosophes*

The question facing Aldous Huxley during the late 1920's was where to turn in his search for meaning and unity in his spiritually fragmented British society. He had no eccentric history like James Joyce--Jesuit trained, Irish ex-singer--or like D.H. Lawrence, brilliant consumptive, son of a working-class family in a midland industrial town: he came from a well known English intellectual family. (Graves and Hodge 197)

Graves and Hodge go on to say,

what he had in common with these other two was that he had read too much and wished to make some sort of synthesis of his reading, but could not face the task: when he finally made his testament in 1938 in Ends and Means the reading was still undigested. (197)

What is important here is the key word *synthesis*. The spirituality that Huxley embraces is in fact a synthesis of a number of perspectives in which he hopes to strike somewhere near the heart of truth as he sees it. Evidence of this synthesis is found in The Perennial Philosophy (1944). In the introduction to the book, he tells the reader that he has compiled an anthology of thoughts on spirituality, and in the true spirit of an editor he refrains from using personal pronouns in his commentary. While this may suggest the transpersonal nature of spirituality characteristic of eastern religion, Huxley freely mixes that characteristic in the context of western Protestantism which is intimately personal. Huxley's apparent confusion regarding the essential nature of

spirituality would seem to indicate that his struggle to digest his reading and articulate his views was incomplete as late as 1945.

As we have seen, distancing himself from his heritage would prove to be an impossible task for Huxley for a number of reasons. And for the same reasons, when he turned inward for meaning and unity, what developed was a personal form of spirituality that has its roots in the post-Enlightenment western mysticism that is a direct by-product of the effect of eighteenth-century thought on western Europe. This chapter shows the significance of those phenomena in the life and literature of Aldous Huxley. An understanding of the impact of the Enlightenment on Huxley's thinking and writing is not only necessary for understanding his work, but also for explanation of the philosophical and religious inconsistencies that are characteristic of it as well.

E.M.W. Tillyard once wrote that "the greatness of the Elizabethan age was that it contained so much of the new without bursting the nobility of the old order" (8).

While that may have been *generally* the case for Elizabethans, as regards the Enlightenment, respect for the past was not the order of the day. The eighteenth century was a period of subversive activity on nearly every front, and while it

was a family of *philosophes* it was something more as well: it was a cultural climate, a world in which the *philosophes* acted, from which they noisily rebelled and quietly drew many of their ideas, and on which they attempted to impose their program. (Gay, *Rise* x)

Most of that program was generated by increased knowledge and new discoveries in the field of natural science, and, as the eighteenth century progressed so increased the turmoil over those discoveries. As men like Sir Isaac Newton and his colleagues began to explain things previously held to be hidden in the mind of God,

western Europeans felt their universe being shaken to its very foundation.

Prior to the Enlightenment, scientific inquiry had evolved slowly, beginning with the Greeks. Knowledge gained from that inquiry was only slightly expanded by the Romans. After the fall of Rome, “the rise of Christendom . . . was no boon to the prospering of science, and save for the bootleggings of an errant skeptic, the pondering of nature’s secrets . . . fell into the hands of alchemists, astrologers, magicians and similar experts in delusion” (Meyer 2). It was against this predominately Christian world that the *philosophes* rebelled and with which they would ultimately have the greatest amount of disagreement. According to Brinton, the primary figures of the Enlightenment, men like

Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet, [et al.]. . . are called *philosophes* not philosophers. The distinction is by no means wholly unjustified, for these [men were writers and] not systematic philosophers (2: 519).

It will become evident later how significant this difference is. It would not be unreasonable to classify Huxley as a *philosophe* because of some of the problems he has articulating a systematic philosophy.

That the world was changed by the *philosophes* is an understatement, and the speed with which those changes occurred sent western Europe reeling intellectually. As Peter Gay points out,

by 1714 the first creative surge of English science was spent. Boyle had left the earth, and Cavendish was not yet on it . . . . [And however minor their achievements may have seemed, they] were nevertheless not without significance. (Science ix)

With the intellectual freedoms gained by the *philosophes* came drastic changes

in every area of life, accompanied by an aura of excitement and anxious expectation for the future. It was an

age . . . of optimism, characterized by confidence in reason and natural law, by cosmopolitanism and belief in universal progress, by a faith that humanity was at last visibly freeing itself from the superstitions, prejudices, and blind cruelty of the past. (Gay, Science 275)

Men were beginning to feel the power of scientific inquiry applying their discoveries to every area of society. Governmental systems were questioned, economic principles were under scrutiny, and the debates that arose during these days set in motion the forces of change like at no other time in history.

The world was changed by the Enlightenment, and the aspects of eighteenth-century life that were most affected by its developing scientific mind-set were the areas of science and religion. For the *philosophes*, science held mystery, intrigue, and intellectual stimulation. For them religious convictions were no longer the absolute authority on matters of the world and the universe because Newton had explained that universe in concrete scientific and mathematical terms. They would no longer need to be dependent upon God--they had Copernicus, Bacon, Locke, and, above all, Newton, and while few understood him, he seemed to understand their world. Like the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries known to Huxley, scientists were continually confronting society with new discoveries that may or may not have had direct impact on the general public but which would dramatically affect future generations.

The transition from religion to science that took place in the eighteenth century was an attempt on the part of the *philosophes* to reinterpret their world in the light of scientific discoveries. Like Huxley's analogous movement from orthodoxy to Deism

at this time, a number of forces had to come together to guarantee acceptance of ensuing changes. Nor were those changes completely of his own making. Together, Aldous Huxley and the *philosophes* were both heirs of a rich legacy left by the free spirits that raised up out of the intellectual struggles that preceded them, and both were greatly indebted to their forbearers.

The Enlightenment did not arise abruptly, nor did the *philosophes* awaken one morning with command of their new knowledge fully articulated. The Enlightenment was rather

a logical culmination or coming together of diverse intellectual currents set in motion by the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the rise of scientific inquiry. . . . [It] can be said that the new era of the eighteenth century was a blossoming of attitudes which had already been widespread. (Lucas 325)

With that long history to build upon and the specific groundwork for the dissent of the Enlightenment laid prior to the Reformation, the foundation of the *philosophes'* thinking was strong, thus bolstering their positions. The Enlightenment was heavily indebted to the Reformation for some of its more critical facets such as questioning Church authority. While "the Age of the Enlightenment raised few monuments to forgotten precursors, [it] stood nonetheless in their debt" (Bainton 140).

Most cultural historians see the Enlightenment as the culmination of a number of forces coming together simultaneously. In How Shall We Then Live? (1976), Francis Schaeffer, a Christian theologian and philosopher, delineated what happened during the Enlightenment as a movement of thought which began to appear in the mid-seventeenth century and reached its clear-cut form in the eighteenth century (5: 162ff).

In general, it was an intellectual movement which emphasized the sufficiency of human reason and skepticism concerning the validity of the traditional authority of the past. It was this repudiation of traditional authority that caused the greatest amount of upheaval in the Enlightenment. Twentieth-century western culture still struggles with the problems left in the wake of abandonment of traditional constructs of orthodoxy and science. Such rejection of authority leaves individuals to fend for themselves intellectually, and while the *philosophes* agreed with that conclusion, at the same time they realized that a system having an authoritative base of personal experience or conscience must result in chaos. Reconciliation of the relationship between the external, physical world, and the inner, spiritual world, is at the heart of Huxley's attempt to reestablish unity within himself and his detached world.

Prior to the Enlightenment, western Europe was held together loosely by traditional Christian orthodoxy. The Church was the guardian of truth and its concern rested primarily with the individual. In *the Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1970), Schaeffer wrote that as an institution, the Church found fault with any form of

humanism [because] it talks much of Man with a capital M, but hardly anything of the individual man. Ultimately, according to the church, the Enlightenment produced a humanism that . . . ended in ugliness. (4: 63)

It is not surprising then to find, in the wake of the intellectual rebellion of the eighteenth century against *traditional* Christian teaching, a society looking for a philosophy that would fill the void left by retreating Christianity.

The Enlightenment filled that void with a new orthodoxy, one that was more suited for the emerging progressive, industrial, urban, enlightened mind. According to

the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,

the *Aufklärung* [Enlightenment] combines opposition to all supernatural religion and belief in the all-sufficiency of human reason with an ardent desire to promote the happiness of men in life. . . . Most of its representatives preserved the belief in God, freedom and immortality as consistent with reason, but rejected Christian dogma and were hostile to Catholicism as well as Protestant orthodoxy, which they regarded as powers of spiritual darkness depriving humanity of its rational faculties. . . . Their fundamental belief in the goodness of human nature, which blinded them to the fact of sin, produced an easy optimism and absolute faith [in] human society once the principles of enlightened reason had been recognized. The spirit of the *Aufklärung* penetrated deeply into German Protestantism [in the nineteenth century] where it disintegrated faith in the authority of the Bible and encouraged Biblical criticism on the one hand, and emotional Pietism on the other. (105)

As we will see, this spirit of the *Aufklärung* continued, expanded through the nineteenth century, and became the foundation for development of Aldous Huxley's unique brand of spirituality.

As knowledge increased and scientific explanations for the workings of the universe by Sir Isaac Newton and his colleagues made its way into secular thinking, the English Protestant church for the most part retreated within itself. Instead of engaging its critics and allowing the Bible to speak to their criticism, the church chose to drive out any who would challenge its authority. Newton and other members of the Royal Society of London initially never meant to displace the teaching of the Church,

and most even kept a form of personal orthodoxy, remaining somewhat loyal to the basic institution of Protestant Christianity. According to Schaeffer, while the *philosophes* publicly

repudiated the skeptical doctrines of Hobbes [et al., in the process they] familiarized the minds of their contemporaries with the idea of law in the universe and with scientific methods of enquiry to discover truth rather than needing to depend upon the Church for knowledge. (5: 161)

With traditional Christianity no longer needed as the source of social mores, society found itself becoming more and more secularized. It had the freedom to determine its own fate with no fear of reprisal. This, in turn, brought about a distinct anti-clerical sentiment that continued at least through the first two decades of the twentieth century in western Europe. As people became more enlightened, man gained more freedom, and society became progressively more secularized, further removed from its pre-Enlightenment moral and spiritual moorings. In The Gravedigger File (1983), Christian writer Os Guinness says that the secularization of society was the result of the

process through which, starting from the center and moving outward, successive sectors of society and culture [are] freed from the decisive influence of religious ideas and institutions. In other words, secularization is the process by which [religious ideas are made] less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal. [But] secularization is not the same thing as *secularism*. Secularism is a philosophy and has all the strength and weaknesses of one, not the least that to subscribe to it usually demands effort of the will or mind.

Secularization, by contrast, is not a philosophy; it's a process [which] rubs off on people. (51)

In addition, for the *philosophes*, according to Schaeffer (Escape from Reason, 1968), that secularization was welcomed because they saw it as allowing enlightened man to have his freedom for the first time since the advent of the church, and by the time Kant and Rousseau were articulating their views, that sense of autonomy reached its full development (1: 227). It was this autonomy that dealt a major blow to Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, in the years during and following the Enlightenment.

With the onset of naturalistic concepts of reality, Christianity found itself being gradually replaced by natural religion, a religion that holds itself to be universally accessible by human reason and growing out of the deism of the *philosophes*.<sup>2</sup> Adherents to natural religion believed that nothing was over and above observable nature, and while naturalism did not totally reject the tenets of Christianity, it did distinguish itself by what it worshiped and what it defined as dogma. As Schaeffer says in The God Who is There (1968), in natural religion traditional concepts like literal heaven or hell were done away with because they were considered irrational and the focus of attention was shifted from God to logical explanation of natural phenomena because of the monolithic structure of naturalism (1: 141).

Natural religion came into being as a culmination of events originating through people such as Leonardo da Vinci. During the Renaissance, it was da Vinci who began to articulate

an answer to life which was in complete contrast to what the Reformers were giving. The Reformers gave rise to a definite culture, particularly

in Northern Europe, and the humanistic elements of the Renaissance ultimately gave rise to the [religion] of modern man. Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile said that . . . da Vinci understood that if man starts with himself alone and logically and rationally moves through mathematics, he never comes to a universal, only to particulars and mechanics. (Schaeffer 1: 61-62)

The problem that arises in da Vinci's humanism is the very one with which Huxley intensely struggles: namely, how can man in his limited capacity create a unity that will account for all universal particulars? Schaeffer says that through

the Renaissance . . . nature [grew] . . . more and more autonomous. It was set free from God as the humanistic philosophers began to operate ever more freely. By the time the Renaissance reached its climax, nature had eaten up grace. (1: 212)

The reason such changes in basic philosophy could come about is because of man's growing awareness of his condition and his growing sense of the powers of his intellect. In the progression of history prior to the Enlightenment, science began opening a door through which man passed, giving him the ability to broaden his understanding of his place in the universe. The resultant changes created an atmosphere in which eighteenth-century thought would be progressively more accepting of new ideas in every field and rejecting of anything that resembled the thought of the past. Theologically, both Catholics and Protestants view Enlightened man being taken from living orthodoxy to dead orthodoxy and, ultimately, to heterodoxy. They feared the consequences of the intellect of man freeing itself from the strictures of canon law (Schaeffer 1: 118-19). Whatever else can be said of

Huxley's religion, it must be agreed that it was a form of heterodoxy freed, though not entirely, from the strictures of Christianity.

Historically during such times of transition, orthodoxy capitulates, and some form of new theology emerges which allows for greater participation by the people. This transition to some form of existential theology usually involves three major steps.

The first step is the movement from a belief in the uniformity of natural causes in a system open to reordering by God and man to the concept of the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system (Schaeffer 4: 120-121). This step allows rationalism to develop between the Renaissance and Reformation and the time of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. Under the banner of rationalism man essentially becomes the center of the universe with no need for God or revealed religion predicated on the existence of deity. Under rationalism

Knowledge [became] equivalent to empirical knowledge represented by the natural sciences. Hence . . . natural science [replaced] religion, theology, and even speculative philosophy. Empiricism . . . rejected any revealed supersensory truth [and ultimately] discredited . . . reason and logic as the sources of truth until their deductions are corroborated by the testimony of the sense organs. (Sorokin 87)

The effect of this redefinition of knowledge and experience is evident in Huxley's thought as early as 1925. In Those Barren Leaves, he writes, "the only book that matters is the one one's writing at the moment. And by the time it is published and other people have begun to read it, that too is irrelevant" (15).

In the anti-clerical atmosphere of the eighteenth century it is not difficult to see how easily any belief system, especially one that claimed to be logical, and totally

accessible to the intellect, could come to be readily accepted by intellectuals. Natural man could now separate himself from his theological past and take a critical look at orthodoxy, rejecting anything that did not acknowledge the new position he held in the universe. The result was numerous changes in both the areas of science and religion, giving rise to such movements as German *Heilsgeschichte* and the existential Christianity of Søren Kierkegaard. Once intellectual dissociation with Christianity was affected and man was given authority over his own destiny, the intellectual and the theologian were free to believe and espouse any doctrine that they deemed acceptable for society.

Enlightened man discovered, however, that science was incapable of providing all the answers he sought in every aspect of his existence. While it could explain his universe, scientific thought made no provision for dealing with his inner self. When the *philosophes* dissociated themselves from Christianity and revealed religion, they did so without realizing that they would eventually need to replace it with something that would make up for the deficiency in their new philosophy. Herbert Marcuse says that the "*philosophes* had to break the union of value judgement and analysis, [and] it became increasingly clear that . . . philosophic values [alone could] not guide the organization of society nor the transformation of nature" (15). It is this awareness that brought about the second phase in the redefining of the role of religion during and after the Enlightenment.

The second step toward redefinition of eighteenth-century spirituality came primarily through the developments of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel whose philosophies concluded that on a rational basis they could not find a unified answer to knowledge and to life (Marcuse 15). Marcuse goes on to say that during the Enlightenment

societal conditions existed which provoked and permitted real dissociation from the established state of affairs; a private as well as political dimension was present in which dissociation could develop into effective opposition . . . . [The] gradual closing of this dimension by the society . . . bars a whole type of oppositional operations and behaviour; consequently the concepts pertaining to them are rendered illusory or meaningless. (15)

It is the resolution of this dissociation, or detachment, that is the bedrock of Aldous Huxley's spiritual pursuit. Having been made his own moral authority, neither natural man nor Huxley has sufficient experience or knowledge to know how to arrive at meaning or in what to put faith.

In the years toward the end of the eighteenth century it was Hegel who built upon the work of Rousseau and Kant and who opened the door which would ultimately bring about an end to the optimism that had been characteristic of the era to that point.

The transition that took place in the second step away from Christian orthodoxy moved the focus of attention from God to man. From the time of Aquinas, the universe had been split into two plains of existence. On the upper plain, above the natural order, were God the Creator and Grace, the locus where traditional orthodoxy found unity and meaning. On the lower plain was the created order (nature + man), and its defining characteristic was diversity.

During and immediately following the Renaissance a refinement was made in the separation of the levels which began the process that would allow for the complete displacement of orthodoxy. After the Renaissance, the distinctions between the upper

and lower plains were simplified with the upper plain remaining the level of Grace, but being broadened to make Grace equal with Universals. Correspondingly, the lower level was redesignated Nature and Particulars. The terminology of previous constructs was replaced with generic language making the position of the *philosophes* more universal in scope and nature.

Making these new distinctions raised a dilemma with which da Vinci and others were forced to grapple: namely, "[the] problem that arises when you set particulars free" (Schaeffer 1: 63). The problem is that all one is left with is random particulars having no order or unity. As a man who realized the need for unity, da Vinci and his contemporaries had resolved the problem through semantics calling the upper level "SOUL - UNITY" and occupying the lower level with "MATHEMATICS - PARTICULARS - MECHANICS" (Schaeffer 1: 63). Such a refinement would provide the missing unity to the physical universe.

But in accepting this division, the *philosophes* encountered further problems. Foremost among them was that it relegated to man no better role than that of machine in a closed system operating under the guise of progress. While men like Rousseau and Kant held to naturalism's views, especially concerning progress, those views "led men into a position they could not tolerate--the position of being shut up finally into the mere stuff of machinery" (Schaeffer 1: 63).

The third step away from orthodoxy followed Hegel primarily through Kierkegaard, and it is the one that is most influential in the formation of Huxley's spirituality. As we will see, what many see as mysticism in the writings of Aldous Huxley is not true mysticism but rather post-Enlightenment, existential universal utilitarianism. This step away from orthodoxy occurred as the result of the failure of

rationalism to the extent that, if rationality was to be maintained, there appeared to be only two alternatives. According to Schaeffer,

The first was to become nihilistic [and the second] was to conclude that rationalism was wrong--that man being finite--cannot gather enough universals. . . . In other words, it would have been reasonable to accept the possibility . . . of revelation. But to do this they would have to give up their presupposition of rationalism. (4: 122)

Rather than taking one or the other options above, the humanists developed a third option and

did what previously would have been unthinkable to educated men: they split the field of knowledge. They held on to their rationalism by letting go of the concept of a unified field of knowledge . . . , [and] they now accepted on the basis of reason that man will always come to pessimism---man is a machine and meaningless. This [shift] led to the concept of *nonreason* [which was] an attempt [to] find meaning and significance outside the framework of rationality. For them everything which makes human life as human life worth living falls into the area of Nonreason. (Schaeffer 4: 122)

It is obvious that Huxley would approve of such a change, for he says that while "man in his totality comprises the measurable as well as the immeasurable aspects of his being, . . . no account of him can be complete which does not comprehend the relationship between the measurable and immeasurable" (Proper Studies 8).

The levels of existence that were first defined roughly as GRACE - NATURE, then FREEDOM - NATURE, now become FAITH - RATIONALITY, each being a

progressive step away from Christian orthodoxy (Schaeffer 4: 122-23). This had to take place because

the very mannishness of man refuses to live on the Logic of the position to which his humanism and rationalism have brought him. To say that (man is) only a machine is one thing; but to live consistently as if this were true is quite another. (Schaeffer 1: 67-68)

In the first preface to his Critique of Pure Reason (1781), Immanuel Kant confirmed the *philosophes'* underestimation of the strength of the spiritual dimension of man by saying:

at present, after everything has been tried, so they say, and tried in vain, there reign in philosophy weariness and indifferentism, the mother of chaos and night in all sciences but, at the same time, the spring, or at least, the prelude of their near reform and of a new light, after an ill-applied study has rendered them dark, confused, and useless. (qtd. in Kaufmann 421)

Enlightened man had discovered a weakness in his intellectual and spiritual freedom. He realized that knowledge and progress were insufficient for securing truth and meaning. This awareness created an environment which was ripe for the growth of mysticism. But what kind of mystic did he become? And how was that mysticism passed to successive generations?

Though no definition of mysticism is ever complete, the characteristics articulated by William James are as good a place to start as any. According to William James, mysticism can be identified by (1) its ineffability, (2) its noetic quality, (3) its transiency, and (4) the passivity of its experience (Varieties 371-72).<sup>3</sup>

The problem with James's definition, however, is that because it reveals "a tendency to seek communication with ultimate reality . . . by immediate intuition, insight or illumination; [it can also become] a vague speculation without foundation" (Schaeffer 1: 241). What James's mysticism ends in is little more than existential spirituality. However it is defined, the term *mysticism* generally refers to first-hand experience of the soul's possible union with ultimate reality.<sup>4</sup> But as Yúdice points out,

the mystic's experience is not totally determined by a God from the outside. Self-mastery through prayer and meditation is the pre-condition for fashioning a space without which the divinity could have no presentation. (28)

It should be noted that with this definition it is difficult to determine exactly where Huxley fits with regard to mysticism because of the inherent confusion within his position. While by some definitions many would put him squarely in the mystic's camp, by others, mine included, he is more of a spiritualist, or spiritist. There is more to being a mystic than simply using the terminology; mysticism is something you do, not a name you wear.

While the *philosophes* attempted to discover ultimate reality under the guise of mysticism as James defined it, and recognized that such attempts could be realized, their method for inquiry placed them squarely within the latter definition above. The mysticism they developed became little more than speculations on the great unknown. Ultimate reality became at once that which no one could know for sure and which everyone was free to define according to personal preference. However, the goal of the true mystic and the nothingness of eighteenth-century mystical systems are not the same. The problem is that *nothing* cannot be the pursuit of the mystic because the

pursuit would be in vain. *Nothing* is the absence of *absolutely* everything. It is *nothing* nothing. Schaeffer's description of nothing nothing, in He Is There and He Is Not Silent (1972), goes like this:

Suppose we had a very black blackboard which had never been used. On this blackboard we drew a circle, and inside the circle was everything that was--and there was nothing within the circle. Then we erase the circle. This is *nothing* nothing. (Schaeffer 1: 282)

He says that the existence of anything else would be something (or *something* something). When the *philosophes* realized that they had failed to account for the part of man that is prone to such metaphysical enquiry, they allowed room in their construct for such thought but kept such thought abstract. Ultimate reality was just that--and any speculation as to its nature was simply speculation. While they sought communication with that Ultimate reality (and the *philosophes* tried desperately) little was known about it or how to gain access to it. David Hume best described the plight of the *philosophes* in An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748) when he wrote,

though our thought seems to possess . . . unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience.

(qtd. in Kaufmann 326)

Because of their inquiry, tension between the *philosophes* and Christianity arose over not only the "how" of their communication with ultimate reality but also "who."

During the eighteenth century, the *philosophes* defined faith as irrational because they found themselves in the position of no longer needing the church. We find in Huxley a reflection of the ultimate end of man's becoming the master of his own fate when he writes, "the Indians calculate that there are eighty-four thousand different types of human beings, each with his own way of getting through life. They probably underestimate" (Those Barren Leaves 76). For Christians--like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and men like him--these concepts were unthinkable for, to them, faith in God was as reasonable and rational as feeding yourself when hungry or breathing air to stay alive. What was irrational to them was the very thought of dividing knowledge into categories of "upper" and "lower" levels. Rufus Jones writes that

much of . . . the philosophy of life ends in thinness and sterility because its creators and interpreters have been misled into the belief . . . that all issues of life can be handled by the same methods and the same categories that have worked with astonishing success in physical, chemical, and biological laboratories. [The problem, however,] is that the scientific route invariably and necessarily leads only to objects that occupy space or that are capable of being mathematically determined.

(9-10)

The Church found a fundamental flaw in the thinking of Hegel and those that followed him because what it had considered *faith* throughout its history, the *philosophes* renamed *Nonrational*. In opposition, Hegel

argued that attempts had been made for thousands of years to find an answer on the basis of antithesis and they had not come to anything. Philosophic humanistic thought had tried to hang on to rationalism,

rationality and a unified field, and it had not succeeded. In so doing  
Hegel changed the world. (Kaufmann 326)

What he concluded was that optimism and its resultant faith were different in essence from rational thought, and that optimism must be nonrational. But, at the same time he recognized that all rationality led to pessimism and that put man in the very state that he could not occupy. Hegel set in motion theories that would form the basis of Huxley's spiritualism when he "contended that mind is real and matter illusory; that the universe is founded on 'spirit'; and that life is man's eternal, upward struggle toward the perfect and changeless Universal Mind of God" (Schaeffer 1: 233).

Hegel eliminated the need for a line separating the levels of existence and allowed for a form of mystic appeal to reality however one defined it. Because of the change of opinion regarding access to reality, virtually every aspect of Christian teaching had to be redefined because people, either consciously or subconsciously, began to accept Hegel's philosophy of synthesis. He said, "let us no longer think in terms of antithesis. Let us think in terms of thesis--antithesis, with the answer always being synthesis" (qtd. in Schaeffer 1: 233). And that was the message the enlightened man was waiting to hear. In making such a shift in thinking, Hegel made all of existence relative and opened the door for man to become the ultimate authority, especially on matters of faith and reason. As thesis and antithesis work to form a new thesis, the result forms a new antithesis, and so on. As theses are redefined, man finds himself further from any need for deity and closer to making himself the center, root, and ground of whatever he defines as truth. He becomes his own authority and in the end is forced to do what the Church did earlier--capitulate in the face of confrontation. When there is no firm basis upon which to ground truth, or when there is no ground

upon which to establish it, whatever is popular or palatable becomes the measure of truth.

In order to compensate for the spiritual dimension of man that had been ignored by naturalism, the religious perspective developed by Hegel's disciples was a kind of spiritualism: an "upper story mysticism with nobody there; . . . it is a mysticism with no categories; so it does not matter upstairs whether you use religious or nonreligious terms, art-systems, or [even] pornography" (Schaeffer 1: 257). The unfortunate side effect of the position was that it encouraged the most bizarre opinions. In this construct, even De Sade could practice his grossest sexual perversions because without categories or standards of morality occupying a position of authority, whatever is, is right. For the Marquis, what is, is sensual pleasure. This slight hitch in the program may have been one of the driving forces behind the development of the mysticism that arose during the early nineteenth century. Because there were no categories in the upper level of existence, man was free to believe or not to believe whatever he chose. Whatever is, is right even if it is offensive to others because there are no longer any categories in the upper level.

As this new mysticism developed, a final problem arose with respect to dealing with individuals or concepts which would be offensive to one's personal metaphysics. The way the new mystics dealt with the problem was to assign such difficulties as savior myths or offensive dogma or practices to the upper, nonrational story, and designate them "nondefined" symbols. Within this construct one could ascribe or not ascribe to them whatever connotative meaning they desired and not be offensive to the system (Schaeffer 1: 258). Such a step seems to have been inevitable, for the new mysticism did not call for a leap of faith to *someone*; it called only for a leap to

*something, anything.*

Though the humanists of the Enlightenment thought they were going to find all the answers, as time has passed their optimism proved to be wrong. All they actually succeeded in doing was raising more questions, contributing to the uncertainty of the post-Enlightenment era, and creating the religious confusion encountered by Aldous Huxley as he began his search into the realm of the spirit.

That Huxley is indebted to the Enlightenment for his personal philosophy as well as for material for his work is clear. From the way he applies Leibniz to the way he uses Swift and others, Huxley stands in the debt of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century for nearly every aspect of his life. It is also apparent that post-Enlightenment spirituality is present in the thinking of Aldous Huxley, and the goal of the next few pages is to flesh that spirituality out, preparing the way for understanding his early works including The World of Light.

At the heart of Aldous Huxley's spiritual pilgrimage is his desire to be the man who would rise to Leibniz's challenge. The goal was to get answers to some of life's most difficult questions, and he dedicated his life to discovering those answers. What Huxley sought was resolution of the dilemmas presented any modern man who asks

what sort of world is this, in which men aspire to do good and yet so frequently achieve evil? What is the sense and point of the whole affair? What is man's place in it and how are his ideals, his systems of values, related to the universe at large? (Ends and Means 7)

Tracing his search through his early work and comparing the results with Proper Studies, Ends and Means, and The Perennial Philosophy will reveal that the spiritualism which Huxley embraces is not true mysticism, but is rather, a form of

spirituality which grew directly out of eighteenth-century mysticism.

The impact of the eighteenth century on Huxley is most obvious in the various ways the Enlightenment surfaces throughout his work. Beginning with Swift, Huxley refers to eighteenth-century figures numerous times both directly and indirectly in his novels: directly as in his *mention* of Swift in Crome Yellow (8-9) and, indirectly, as in the similarity the novel shares with Swift's The Excremental Vision. In the following discussion of "privies" from Crome Yellow. Huxley writes,

"It does one's heart good," exclaimed Mr. Scogan at last, "to hear of these fantastic English aristocrats. To have a theory about privies and to build an immense and splendid house in order to put it into practice--it's magnificent, beautiful." (101-02)

This connection to Swift may also shed light on why Huxley appears to some observers to be a misanthrope.

However, Huxley is critical of Swift because of the latter's acceptance of a world that Huxley thought to be ugly and deterministic. He wrote that

Swift's greatness lies in the intensity, the almost insane violence of that "hatred of the bowels" which is the essence of his misanthropy and which underlies the whole of his work. As a doctrine, a philosophy of life, misanthropy is profoundly silly. Like Shelley's apocalyptic philanthropy, it is a protest against reality, childish (for it is only the child who refuses to accept the order of things), like all such protests, from the fairy story to the socialist's Utopia. (Julian Huxley 99)

Huxley's debt to Swift can also be seen in his use of the Swiftian terminology as in his reference to the "Yahoo" in Antic Hay. Huxley writes "Between the broad double-

doors through which the horses passed to their fodder and repose were little narrow human doors--for the Yahoos, Lypiatt used to say. . . ." (Antic Hay 88). Even the name Lypiatt brings to mind the name of Lilliput in Swift's Gulliver's Travels, which Huxley refers to by name in Those Barren Leaves. "There is more to reading," Huxley says, "than covering the words with your eyes," and by means of his references to Swift and the eighteenth century, Huxley is giving us a clue that will help us understand the nature of his work as well as to furnish clues regarding his personal quest for meaning and unity. The criticism noted, it remains clear that Huxley is indebted to the Enlightenment for at least some of his material. As Cooney says of Huxley,

like his brother satirists of the eighteenth century, he is notable more for valor in the war of ideas than for his ability to depict human personality. After all, Voltaire too was a destructive critic, a humorist, and even something of a science-fiction writer. (11)

But the greatest impact of the Enlightenment on Huxley is revealed by examination of the spirituality reflected in his work. In the quintessential statement of his personal metaphysic, The Perennial Philosophy (1945), Huxley admits his indebtedness to the Enlightenment as early as the title to the work. At the same time Huxley reveals the key to understanding his views on the spiritual nature of man as he perceives it.

Investigation of that spirituality must begin with The Perennial Philosophy, for it is there that we are given the clue needed to unravel the thinking of this very complex man through its connection to a previous work. The Perennial Philosophy takes its title from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and it is the earliest full testament of

Huxley's spiritual interests. Reading a letter to Redmond, written by Leibniz from Vienna on August 26, 1714, one is left with the impression that it could have been written by Huxley because of the way it encapsulates the nature of his spiritualism.

The letter says, in part,

If I had the leisure, I should compare my doctrines with those of the ancients and of other apt men. The truth is more widespread than one thinks, but it is often covered with make-up and wrapped up, and even weakened, mutilated, and corrupted by additions that spoil it and render it less useful. If one found these of truth in the ancients or, to speak more generally, in one's predecessors, one would extract gold from mud, the diamond from its mine, and light from darkness; and this would be in effect, *perennis quaedam Philosophia*. (qtd. in Kaufmann 273-74)

As if to complete the parallel to Huxley, Leibniz's letter continues:

One might also say that one would find some progress in knowledge. The Orientals had beautiful and great ideas of the Deity; the Greeks added reason and a form of science. The fathers of the Church rejected what was bad in the philosophy of the Greeks. But the scholastics tried to avail themselves of what was passable in pagan philosophy in a way that would be useful to Christianity. I have often said, *aurum latere in stercore illo scholastico barbariei* [that gold is hidden in the scholastic dung of barbarism]; and I wish that one could find some able men versed in this Hibernian and Spanish philosophy, who would have the inclination and the competence to extract from it what is good. I am

sure that he would be rewarded for his pains with some beautiful and important truths. (qtd. in Kaufmann 274)

Huxley echoes those exact sentiments in the introduction to *his Perennial Philosophy* where he says that he has attempted to do what Leibniz urged. The passion for things that are significant to Leibniz are also dear to Huxley, and as if to fulfill Leibniz's mandate, Huxley offers his commentary in an attempt to provide readers with a vehicle for extraction of the knowledge to which Leibniz alluded. It is his stated purpose to gather, from a broad cross-section of religious writings, those chosen

mainly for their significance--because they effectively illustrated some particular point in the general system of the Perennial Philosophy--but also for their intrinsic beauty and memorableness. (Perennial Philosophy vii)

It is this kind of thinking that drives him to know truth in the same way that the *philosophes* were driven; the kind that forces him to shrug off anything that would clutter his mind or hinder him. It is that kind of thinking that also helps to define the nature of his spiritualism; earlier he had written of his resolution to take up his religious quest by saying, "I look about me . . . and I find myself alone. I strive on by myself. By myself . . . I have set myself [to put things right]" (Antic Hay 56-57).

Having the advantage of hind-sight, Huxley was not ready to accept totally all of the philosophy handed down from the eighteenth century. He severely chastened the *philosophes* for even considering some of their opinions, especially the notion of progress. In an interview with Max Beerman Huxley stated, rather emphatically, that he found the idea of progress to be "revolting." He went on to say that the

eighteenth-century *philosophes* and physiocrats cooked up this

obnoxious idea of automatic progress, apparently a result or concomitant feature of the invention of the steam engine. By some *leger-de-main* the concept of automatic improvement relative to engineering was enlarged to include human personality. Realism! Human history cries out in agony that the human situation is not improving, but that we have finally painted ourselves into a corner. (Beerman 224-25)

Even before the interview, Huxley makes it clear that the idea of progress held during the Enlightenment was distasteful to him. A definite theme of anti-progress runs through much of Huxley's fiction, making works like Brave New World at least anti-progressive in tone if the utopianism in his novels is to be viewed satirically.

The result of the dialogue between *philosophes* and theologians was to create an atmosphere of religious confusion. While theologians mounted vigorous campaigns against any suggestion of amalgamation of science and religion, there arose a large segment of the population that did not find such a combination of viewpoints offensive. As mentioned earlier, it has been the pattern of orthodoxy to capitulate under pressure; as the nineteenth century progressed it found the proponents of science gaining the upper hand in the debate with Protestant and Catholic churches.

Huxley's connection to eighteenth-century metaphysics is familial as well as philosophical. As the theories of Darwinism spread under the influence of his grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, the lines between believer and agnostic were drawn. Through the influence of the elder Huxley, as well as that of Matthew Arnold, it is apparent that the foundation of Aldous Huxley's personal struggle for values was being laid in his formative years.

For Huxley the whole attempt of the *philosophes* to find meaning in science

was absurd. For him, the problem went far deeper and was much more complex. The inherent flaw, according to Huxley, was that they tried to separate the physical world from the spiritual; and following post-Enlightenment refinements of eighteenth-century thinking, Huxley set out to construct a spirituality that would reunite them. For Huxley, connection of the two worlds was not only possible, but would be the pursuit of the majority of his life. While he sought to avoid the mistakes of his eighteenth-century predecessors, he nonetheless followed in their way. He wrote that

Nature, or anything that reminds me of Nature, disturbs me: it is too large, too complicated, above all too utterly pointless and incomprehensible. I am at home with the works of man; if I choose to set my mind to it, I can understand anything that any man has made or thought. That is why I always travel by Tube, never by bus if I can possibly help it. For, traveling by bus, one can't avoid seeing, even in London, a few stray works of God . . . . Travel by Tube and you see nothing but the works of man. (Crome Yellow 251-52)

It is here that Huxley is mistakenly classified a mystic under the umbrella of eastern mysticism. Aldous Huxley cannot be a mystic for at least two reasons. First, there is more to being a mystic than asserting that man must think mystically; mysticism is something one does, not talks about. Second, one does not become a mystic simply by using mystic terminology. Many feel because Huxley uses the terminology of mysticism and at times even appeals to Vedantist language to articulate his thoughts that he is clearly the premier twentieth-century mystic thinker. It should be pointed out, however, that he also uses language of every other major religious system in the world, especially Christianity, making him more spiritualistic than

mystical.<sup>5</sup> That is also the reason that should the name spiritualist be offensive, he might be more appropriately called a mystic-spiritualist than a mystic.

Because of his western European heritage, Huxley was given to synthesizing viewpoints to extract the best of all possible worlds from the morass of religious ideas. While Chakoo mistakenly believes Huxley to be a mystic in the Hindu sense, he correctly notes the heart of the problem in such categorization, saying that "though Hindu philosophy and Buddhism inspired Huxley much, he did not neglect European ways of thinking . . . [and] did not divorce philosophy from religion as Westerners are prone to do" (Chakoo 292). While many eastern mystics agree on the principle of the existence of ultimate reality, they do not necessarily agree on how one approaches that reality. This detail could easily be overlooked by a man like Huxley because he sees the practice of religion as a distraction and unimportant until and unless it interferes with spiritual growth.

The result of Huxley's pursuit was the formation of a world-view that contained portions from virtually every spiritual sector, but which had little to say about practice or ritual. One is never sure of exactly how to go about gaining the enlightenment Huxley sought.

The only thing that can be said for sure regarding Huxley's spirituality is that it was a combination of eighteenth-century western European spiritual concepts and a generic brand of mystic language and terminology which combines elements from any form of mysticism, Eastern or Christian, that he deems appropriate. It was not until after 1940 that Huxley began to rely more heavily on Eastern mystical language to articulate his beliefs, and while he used the language of the East, the essence of his faith was always his spiritualism. Prior to the publication of The Perennial

Philosophy, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, he was left to struggle with the task of defining in words what he was feeling inside. But it was not until the publication of Point Counter Point and The World of Light that his spiritualism found its expression.

This mixing of thought is seen, for example, in the separation of the spheres of existence which is characteristic of the eighteenth century and which appears in Huxley in the form of his maintaining that there are three levels of intelligence: animal, human, and eternal. "And since a human cannot regress to the animal level, the only solution is to annihilate time and craving. . ." (Cooney 10) and attempt to move onto the eternal level.

It is here that the confusion over Huxley's mysticism becomes clear. He uses the terminology of Eastern mysticism to assert that what he says in the context of mysticism, and what the Hindu or Buddhist or Christian mystic says, are one and the same thing. Nothing could be further from correct. When Shook says that "mysticism . . . solved [Huxley's] problem of an ethical standard of behaviour," she is right, but his is the mysticism of the eighteenth-century type and not Eastern or Christian mysticism (89). Shook does correctly point out, however, that Hegelian philosophy left its mark on Huxley because he did come to believe "that the religious mystical doctrine and the scientific conception of the world were complementary, in effect, synthesizing the two" (98). By saying that "we must think mystically," not that we must all be mystics, Huxley is articulating a form of redefined eighteenth-century mystic spirituality.

Huxley uses the characters in his early work both to question and wonder at the writings of traditional mystics, finding them at once "nothing but the most deplorable

claptrap--as indeed they must to anyone who does not feel the same emotion as the authors felt when they were written" and containing the meaning that he seeks (Crome Yellow 274). The same character, and we must suspect Huxley, feels that all religious speculation is digression because it has its attention focused on the practice of religion and not the essence. For him, what is important is the aesthetic or the sentimental experience of religion, a desideratum created by eighteenth-century thought. How one decorates religion is purely a matter of opinion or taste.

And thus we return to where we left off--with the impact of outside forces, in this case the Enlightenment, on the thinking of Aldous Huxley, and by doing so have established the framework for analysis of Huxley's personal philosophy and spirituality. And we have seen that while he was indebted to the eighteenth century for the basis of his metaphysics, he, like all the anti-Victorian rebels of his day, searches unity and meaning on ground level. And we have seen that his metaphysics was not mysticism, but rather eighteenth-century spirituality, making Huxley a spiritist at best. As we will see, the religious attitudes which Aldous Huxley formed on the basis of the thinking of the *philosophes* are a distinct part of his personal philosophy, and those attitudes are reflected in the spirituality of Point Counter Point, The World of Light, and Brave New World.

### Chapter III

#### The Intellectual Tourist

No study of Huxley's spirituality could be complete without consideration of his 1928 novel, Point Counter Point, and significant factors that contributed to its completion.<sup>6</sup> Chief among those factors is P. Longeville's The Hermit published in 1727. What the work brings to the study of Huxley's first major novel is not only corroboration of asserting a necessary link between Huxley and eighteenth-century thought, but also authentication of his indebtedness to that period through the parallels it establishes between Huxley and the hermit himself. Close scrutiny of the poem, "On the Hermit's Solitude" contained in the preface of The Hermit, will facilitate appreciation of those parallels.

The Hermit is a fictional account of the discovery of an Englishman shipwrecked and washed ashore on a deserted island off the coast of Mexico. Typical of eighteenth-century fiction, "On the Hermit's Solitude" summarizes the hermit's experiences on the island while also providing pivotal clues as to the nature of Huxley's spiritual pursuits.

The Hermit also provides Huxley with a number of tools necessary for the creation of Point Counter Point. The first is the provision of a thinker, an observer placed in a serene setting which is juxtaposed against the dehumanizing atmosphere of contemporary British society. It is a setting in which, as Longeville puts it, "We live too soon, and learn to love too late,/ In busy Worlds and trading-Peopled towns,/ More fast we sin, than Sin itself abounds" (12-14). For the hermit, solitude provides the

chance to be “Free from Disquiet” (16), and he looks at being alone as an opportunity to interact with “Thoughts more sublime, a Heaven more serene,/ Nought e’er to vex him that may cause the Spleen” (17-18). Being alone with his thoughts allows the hermit to come to terms with his world and live contentedly in it, unlike Huxley who as we have seen, wants to share the hermit’s experiences, but deep inside holds out little hope of ever realizing these desires. When Huxley engages in contemplative activity, he comes away with more questions and distrust than answers. The theme of serenity and calm is one Huxley finds attractive and may be what first drew him to the story of The Hermit.

The Hermit also provides a description of a world much like the one he alludes to in the island passages of chapter seventeen of Brave New World and which is the opposite of the one he creates in Point Counter Point. Longeville describes it as a world where there is

. . . not *Ambition* with her gaudy Train,  
 Nor *Envy* trampling down the Poor and Mean,  
 Not *Avarice* nor haughty *Pride* invade,  
 Nor can *Remorses* his slumb’ring Nights upbraid;  
 In peace he rests, unenvy’d or unknown,  
 And pities Monarchs on their toilsome Throne.  
 No King that Reigns, but must as Mortals die,  
 And where they Rule, no subject should ask why?  
 Heaven grants them License, and when God gives  
 Laws,  
 Where there’s bold men that dares dispute the

Cause.<sup>7</sup>

Would the Great men from one so mean be told,

They serve a Crown for Interest and for Gold. (21-32)

Longeville's island is a place where a man can separate himself from societal constraints and position himself to receive laws from God personally. These lines reveal what Huxley desires for himself.

Third, and most important, beyond providing Huxley with a solid literary foundation for Point Counter Point, The Hermit also furnishes him a perfect model from which to pattern his protagonist, Philip Quarrels. It is also through the main character in The Hermit that Huxley reveals fully his dependence on Longeville's work and his connection with the eighteenth century. And how do we know that? How do we know that as of 1928 Huxley's world-view is in concert with that of The Hermit and that it is rooted in the eighteenth century? Huxley tells us himself, for the hermit's name is Philip *Quarll*, a man who took what fate had given him and made the best life he could out of it. That is what Huxley intends to do as he continues defining his developing spirituality in Point Counter Point. Though Huxley feels alone, unlike the hermit, he is not content with that loneliness at the writing of Point Counter Point. While Longeville can say, "Tis with Content *Quarll* lives, he's truly blessed,/ Has nought to dread, nor is with nought distressed" (33-34), the same cannot be said of Huxley.

But what can be said of both Huxley and Philip Quarrels is that they, like The Hermit want deliverance. They want to "happy rise from Cares and worldly Toys,/ To more substantial and eternal Joys" (49-50). And like him, they consider themselves "to be born all Prec'dent to out-do" (52) because Huxley cannot find confidence in

any one religious or socio-political system, and he has no recourse but to formulate one of his own, much like that developed by The Hermit.

A final connection between Point Counter Point and The Hermit is the effective way both give voice to Huxley's inner struggles. In *Quarll* Huxley finds a character that represents what he feels. In him there is kinship because

Thro' every Stage of Life see *Philip* tost,  
 And on a Desert Shore by Tempest cast,  
 Where he's most happy, when imagin'd lost.  
 So true it is the Gods our Good design,  
 As labouring Slaves dig Diamonds from a Mine:  
 From rugged Rocks and Sailor gains a Prize,  
 And Shipwreck's oft, from Death, to Life arise;  
 So may we at the Last dread Trumpet's sound,  
 By true Repentance here on Earth, be found  
 Acceptable in Heaven, where joys abound. (57-66)

In the novel, we see Philip Quarells in much the same light. He is a man coming to terms with living in a world he does not necessarily like, and one of his strongest points is his contemplation of spiritual matters (or his repudiation of them). But here too is a significant point of departure between The Hermit and Huxley in that he is not as free to voice confidence in the hope of the resurrection and eternal life with the same aplomb as *Quarll*. While life on the island and the solitude it offers appear attractive for Huxley, strong commitment to a single spiritual perspective does not.

It must not go unnoticed that Huxley found mining The Hermit productive for novels yet to come. As mentioned above, it is possible that he found in the utopian

nature of the island an appealing idea for Brave New World. And, though he ridiculed utopia in Brave New World, his case was against what men had done to the concept of paradise rather than paradise itself. In all likelihood Huxley gathered from the poem material for Ape and Essence and other works. And there is the island itself. So significance was the impact of Longeville's work, that Huxley returned to it for material for his last major work, Island.

The fact that Huxley drew on The Hermit for production of Point Counter Point is inescapable. Not only does the name of the protagonist match in both stories, but many of the issues raised in the former are unquestionably dealt with in the latter. As concerns Point Counter Point, the most significant among those views, the one that plays the greatest role in Huxley's developing world-view, is his attraction to the universalism of the eighteenth century reflected in lines midway through the poem. There Huxley finds the manifesto for the rest of his spiritual journey: "This honest HERMIT, at a transient View,/ Seems to be born all Prec'dent to out do" (51-52). There he finds also his motivation for writing Point Counter Point. This seems especially plausible considering the end of Longeville's work. There the narrator states that he would be remiss if he were to omit reference to *Quarll's* faithful companion--a monkey named *Beausidelle*.

Point Counter Point is Huxley's first major novel, and it is the first in which he creates a novel of ideas articulating both his religious and his social views. Point Counter Point is also important because it was written during a significant period in his life. During the late 1920s, Huxley began to get more serious in his quest (Birnbaum's term) for spiritual fulfillment, and it was during this period,

partially under the influence of D.H. Lawrence, near whom Huxley

lived in Italy, [that he] began an exploration of mysticism, "trying to attain an *operational philosophy based on something transcendent*."

("After" 94, emphasis added)

What emerges from the novel is a description of his search to develop a philosophy, not a religion; a practical, operational philosophy with a transcendent aspect but which is itself non-transcendent because of what that would demand of him as an adherent. The motivation behind Huxley's search is his desire to be spiritual, but to do so without committing to any particular form of spirituality. He is content to define a personal brand of spirituality because he is able to control it and he can insure that it require nothing of him beyond intellectual assent. The problem, however, is that he found living with that inconsistency to be impossible. Deep within him always lay a desire for something more.

In Point Counter Point, Huxley accomplishes at least two things. First, using counterpoint technique, he is able to reflect society as he sees it--fragmented and juxtaposed against itself. In order to get the reader to see this theme, Huxley contrives a unique structure for the book. He works

within [the] area of experimentation with form and its close integration with the central theme of the novel. By placing within the story a writer who is jotting down notes for an essentially new type of novel the author openly acknowledges his intention . . . [that the] novel being planned by Philip Quarles is actually the outer novel, Point Counter Point, in which he is a participant. (Roston 378)

What this means is that Huxley wants his readers to see that Quarles is really himself-- a man writing a novel about a novel about what he sees occurring within society. In

addition, he wants them to see that they are all characters in the "larger novel," life, in which they all have roles. In addition, he uses the novel as a mirror to show society what he sees its existence to be like. The way Roston explains it,

such an approach, will enable him [both Huxley and Quarles] to explore the most perplexing element introduced by scientific thought--that, as the title of the novel suggests, no settled condition or controlling view seemed possible any longer. (380)

It is possible that contained herein also is Huxley's desire to reveal the motivation behind his attempt to develop further spiritually. That would explain why and how he was able to arrive at what we have seen as a rather unique religious perspective, itself a compilation, a whole with no central focus.

Second, Huxley uses the novel to record the nature of his spiritual quest. Using the characters in the novel, Huxley is able to record not only the search but also its explanation and justification. Ironically, it is the explanation of his spirituality that contributes to the confusion in defining it. He repeatedly admits to the reader a kind of dualism. At best, he is only an intellectual tourist in pursuit of spiritual awareness rather than devotion. The novel also contains more evidence of the root of the problem that will prevent him from ever satisfying the hunger of his soul: that he is more interested in finding out *about* religion than he is committing *to* any given form of religion. It is Huxley at his best,

oscillating . . . between a pagan belief in life in the body, and a . . . Manachean mistrust of carnal existence [which he states] in the contrast between the over-cerebral writer Quarrels and the Lawrentian figure of Rampion. In fact, the essence of Huxley's view of life lay in

discontinuity. (Bergozi 66)

But we must not fault Huxley for falling victim to these tendencies. Common amongst the general populace were similar feelings about nearly every aspect of daily existence. Individualism ruled the day, often in spite of intellectual, emotional, or spiritual conflict that challenged it. The net result for Huxley (and for the rest of society) was being left with a contrived religion that had the capacity to satisfy the desire of the intellect but not the spirit.

That explains at least two phenomena that accompanied Huxley's appeal and growth in popularity. The first is the reason for his public appeal. As his readers became acquainted with Point Counter Point, they came to recognize more of themselves in characters Huxley had created. He *was* a spokesman for his generation. He had the ability to express the frustration and agitation of his day and the public responded to him. What they responded to in Point Counter Point was Huxley's use of personal experience which they could easily recognize as being similar to their own. Second, with the publication of the novel, the public found a champion (although Huxley might not care for the choice of words, or the role) whom they were willing to follow in their search for a faith which would fill the void left in the wake of public re-evaluation of established Judeo-Christian religion. Though it arose out of the modernist milieu, Point Counter Point provided a voice for a spiritually deprived public, one which Huxley saw "as being sterile, corrupt, and totally unable to supply the individual with any basis for happiness" (McMichael 73). And though Huxley could offer no real solutions for the masses, he was trying to give expression to the questions they were asking.

The novel reveals Huxley's spiritual search in a manner that will characterize

not only Point Counter Point but also the rest of his novels as well. What we see is that there is a sense of constant tension between contentment and non-contentment in the lives of his characters, the nature of which we have previously surveyed.

Approaching the novel negatively, critics like Prichette miss the significance of these characters acting as they do within the context of the story. He says that

the characters [are] simply the faces on a pack of cards, good for a rubber or two of talk and scandal, but too flat and crude when asked to be human beings. They [are] too brittle to stand up to the preposterous things [Huxley] offered them. (834)

What Prichette fails to see is that these are exactly the traits Huxley wants his characters to have. He wants to show all their flaws because they represent what he sees around him in society. What the critic misses is that in Point Counter Point Huxley's characters

reflect the nature of the society in which they live, being largely ego-centered, one-sided caricatures of human beings living in despair and spiritual disillusionment. (McMichael 73)

Roston goes further to say that it is these much maligned characters and their interdependence that makes the novel work. He says,

to regard Point Counter Point as an æsthetic failure, as so many have, on the grounds that the "the pattern promised by the title is never achieved," or even to argue that the dominant device is plot repetition with minor variations is, I think, to miss the extraordinary subtle relationship between the characters, which counter-point each other as in a fugue, each producing its own variation on the central tragic theme.

(386)

The characters in Point Counter Point are representative elements in a society struggling without moorings. It is the same society we find at the beginning of The World of Light written three years after Point Counter Point. It, too, begins with tension between a man and a woman, Hugo and Enid, who face the same tension as Walter Bidlake and Marjorie Carlings who have been living together since she left her husband. In that context, it is not surprising to find Huxley using the theme of detachment begun in his earlier works continued in Point Counter Point. In fact, Trilling says, "there is not a character who speaks on the author's behalf . . . who fails to share [Huxley's] affliction of non-feeling" (1). We see it first in Walter, through whom Huxley expresses both the tension of the day and the frustration he personally feels. Of him Huxley writes, "Walter was filled with an emotion that was at once remorse and rejection; anger, pity, and shame" (5). His inability to understand Marjorie's needs for compassion and commitment form the source of his and Huxley's frustration. Huxley continues,

But can't you understand, that is what he would have liked to say, what he would have said if he had had the courage, can't you understand that it isn't the same as it was, that it can't be the same? And perhaps, if the truth be told, it never was what you believed it was--our love, I mean--it never was what I tried to pretend it was. Let's be friends, let's be companions. I like you, I am very fond of you. But for goodness' sake don't envelop me in love, like this; don't force love on me. If you knew how dreadful love seems to somebody who doesn't love, with a volition, what an outrage. . . . (5)

Walter puts forth Huxley's reticence to commit perfectly. Walter's take on Marjorie's problem was that "she had too much time to think" (24). It is ironic that the same can be said of Huxley as he tries to define himself spiritually. That is his problem precisely--he thinks too much. Here, too, is one in the series of arguments against his being a mystic. What Huxley does is think about, not meditate in or focus upon, a religious framework. While he will take up different religious practices in the future, he never does so with the intent to stay at them long. Even his closest friends recognized this trait in him. About his being the pattern for Mark Rampion in Point Counter Point, D.H. Lawrence said, "I refuse to be Rampioned. Aldous' admiration for me is only skin deep" (qtd. in Feinstein 229).

The characters in Point Counter Point also reflect Huxley himself. While it is agreed that Philip Quarles is at once a critical self-portrait of Huxley and the main spokesman for him in the novel, he uses all the characters to carry his message of spiritual pilgrimage to the informed reader. He uses Elinor Quarles as a balancing mechanism, a counterpoint with Philip, to describe his struggles against "the complex view of the battling forces of life [represented in the other characters] which will go on eternally" (Legates 367). Her husband cannot do this because, like Huxley, his intellect prevents him from thinking emotionally. Elinor also provides Philip with a counterpoint through which more of the dialogue taking place within Huxley about spiritual matters is revealed.

Likewise John Bidlake articulates Huxley's feelings and opinions. Of special interest to this study is not what Huxley says through Bidlake, but what he does not say. In the context of love and commitment Bidlake says,

"don't expect me to talk about the stars and madonna lilies and the

cosmos . . . . They are not my line. I don't believe in them. I believe in . . . ." And his language became what a mysterious convention has decreed to be unprintable. (23)

Here Huxley has to stop short of expressing what he believes in because he is himself not sure. While we are not surprised to see Huxley stopping as he does, we are disappointed that he does not take this opportunity to make an attempt to define what he believes in. In his defense, this may be Huxley's way of preventing the reader from misinterpreting his as yet unformed belief system. For him, it is better to say nothing than to say something, wrongly. That is because "it is better to be totally different from [everyone else]--a visitor from another intellectual planet--than a fourth-rate and snobbish imitator" (35).

Primarily, it is through Philip Quarles and Mark Rampion that we find Huxley most thoroughly revealed. Characteristic of the relationship Huxley had with his friends, Rampion is often a sounding board for the spiritual ideas with which Huxley is attempting to come to terms. Like Huxley, Philip has a void in his life that he cannot--or will not--fill, nor will he allow anyone else to fill it. It was his disposition not to enter into personal conversations because

these discussions of personal relations always made him uncomfortable. They threatened his solitude--that solitude which, with part of his mind, he deplored (for he felt himself cut off from much he would like to have experienced), but in which alone, nevertheless, his spirit could live in comfort, in which alone he felt himself free. (78-79)

Huxley is telling us that his choosing to stay aloof (and that is not meant to be taken in any negative sense) from being personally involved in spiritual matters is a

conscious decision. To engage others on this level would mean interacting with them in a way that would open himself to the possibility of having to change, or conform to a standard not of his making. What is sad is that, at the same time, he recognizes that there may be aspects of spirituality that he is missing. Rather than give himself the opportunity to know what he is missing, however, he opts to avoid any confrontation which would make him choose. Huxley elaborates saying that he, like Philip, feels more comfortable alone. He writes,

in the ordinary daily world of human contacts he [Philip] was curiously like a foreigner, uneasily not at home among his fellows, finding it difficult or impossible to enter into communication with any but those who could speak his native intellectual language of ideas. Emotionally he was a foreigner. (79)

Huxley is telling his readers that he is alone and that he realizes the impossible situation this places him in spiritually; with the idea of contentment and conformity beyond his ability, he laments that he cannot bring himself to it. Like Philip, Huxley is a foreigner in the world without religion. As Hobsbaum describes it, theirs was a world left in the wake of World War I in which

both traditionalism and socialism concurred in detecting the empty moral space at the centre of triumphant economic--and political--capitalist liberalism, as it destroyed all bonds between individuals except those based on Adam Smith's "propensity to barter" and pursue their personal satisfactions and interests. (201)

Hobsbaum's observation explains why both Huxley and his contemporaries expend so much energy attempting to find a religion that is acceptable. What is important to

remember here also is the impact Huxley's heritage had on him in his early years.

The full ramification of the influence of his family is beginning to show itself in that he is the product of a critical environment which seeks knowledge with commitment.

Through Philip, also, Huxley admits what we have known all along--he is a Pyrrhist, an absolute skeptic who is trying to *feel* intellectually. Speaking of Elinor, Huxley writes,

There were occasions when, making great effort, he [Philip] did his best . . . to admit her into his own personal privacies. But whether it was that the habit of secrecy had made it impossible for him to give utterance to his inward feelings, or whether the very capacity to feel had actually been atrophied by consistent silence and repression . . . [he developed] a kind of Pyrrhonian indifference, tempered by consistent gentleness and kindness, as well as by the more violent intermittences of physical passion--this was the state of being which nature and second nature had made normal for him. (80)

We must not miss the significance of three things in this context. First, Philip and Elinor are *touring* India, the home of a religion upon which Huxley will visit further attention in coming years. He would find eastern religions attractive primarily for the universal nature of their respective world-views, but his commitment to any one of them could not last long. In Point Counter Point, however, Huxley is at least admitting, possibly for the first time, that he does not find all elements of established religious practice repugnant and that he does want to find spiritual satisfaction. What we find again is that his interest is only superficial. The remaining avenue open to him is the amalgamation of views from various sources, but even that leaves him

feeling less than complete because of the intellectual and emotional make-up resulting from his training and early development.

Second, in line with the previous discussion (chapter 2), as soon as Philip becomes engaged in spiritual considerations of a serious nature, Huxley allows him to be distracted and prevents him from getting far in his considerations. When a dog runs in front of the car in which they are riding, Elinor gets startled as the vehicle runs it over. While Elinor laments the occurrence, Philip callously says, "It was his fault . . . he wasn't looking" (83). To accentuate what he has just written, Huxley couches the comments in the realm of emotions, in order to provide a defense for himself against those who would fault his lack of commitment. Philip says, "That's what comes of running after females of one's species" (80). In other words, letting emotions and feelings guide behavior is dangerous.<sup>8</sup> How much better, Huxley feels, to let intellect rule. That way there is less danger of getting involved in the kinds of nonrational activity that can lead to the loss of individuality, or worse, life itself as in the case of the dog.

Third, and most important, is that Huxley tells us that the reason he will not allow himself to commit to religion in general is the basic skepticism that prevents him from committing to anything that cannot be accounted for rationally. He cannot just believe in anything without being able to explain it fully. That is why he has Philip refer to himself as a Pyrrhonist--it explains his reticence to capitulate to his instinctual desire to believe.<sup>9</sup> Pyrrhonists, the American Heritage Dictionary tells us, believe that "all perceptions are of doubtful validity, that the external circumstances of life are therefore unimportant to the wise man, and that he should consequently always preserve tranquility of mind." Along with the allusion to Hinduism suggested by the

context of Philip's travels and this definition, Huxley provides us with significant clues as to the direction of his spiritual thinking. They reveal that he is looking for tranquility of mind, but doing it with a degree of skepticism regarding whether or not it is worth finding, or if it can even be found at all. It is ironic that, while Pyrrhonists seek tranquility of mind, this is the one thing that is always just beyond Huxley's grasp. He admits as much when Elinor says of Philip, "He might be able to fall in love; he might forget to be intellectual and become a reformed character . . ." (82), but we are left to suspect not.

To confirm the last point we need only look at the character of Rampion beginning with the discussion of his mother. After asking Mary what she thought of the elder woman, Rampion breaks into a rather startling rebuke of her. He says,

she *is* admirable . . . . She's courageous and strong and enduring. But she's too resigned. . . . She has no right to be resigned . . . . No right. When you've had a life like hers you oughtn't to be resigned. You ought to be rebellious. It's this damned religion. Did I tell you she was religious? . . . . She's a barbarian of the soul . . . all soul and future. No present, no past, no body, no intellect. Only the soul and the future and in the meantime resignation. Could anything be more barbarous? She ought to rebel. (108-09)

Rampion admires his mother's holding to her views, but at the same time he is frustrated by the same spiritual contentment which makes that possible. He considers it barbarous for anyone to be so content in an area wherein he (and Huxley) experiences such turmoil.

The reason for the forceful way Huxley addresses this issue is the personal

nature of the discussion. It is as if Huxley realizes that his own turmoil could be eased by allowing himself to rest on a perspective with which he felt comfortable, while realizing at the same time that that is not really possible for him. There could be no more bewildering position for Huxley. It is apparent that he is intrigued with eastern religion but again, it seems, only superficially. Before Huxley can be fitted within the mystic's mould, he must first remove from himself this deep sense of unrest, a sense of inner turmoil that is antithetical to mysticism in any form. That will not be possible, for while he is aware of the desire of his soul and knows what is necessary to satisfy it, "he also knew that there was a gulf" (110). It is a gulf that separates Huxley from everyone--the mystic, the Christian, the agnostic, and even the atheist. It is a gulf that only commitment can bridge.

Part of the explanation for the condition of Huxley's distress can be found in Rampion's recounting of his early years. Thinking back, he recalls having been raised by

a virtuous and religious mother who had done her best to abolish, to make him deny the existence of all the instinctive and physical components of his being. Growing up, he had revolted against her teaching, but with the mind only, not in practice. The conception of life against which he had rebelled was a part of him; he was at war against himself . . . [and] it took him a long time to unlearn the puritanism of his childhood. There were moments when his love for his mother turned almost to hatred. She had no right to bring me up like that, . . . like a Japanese gardener deliberately stunting a tree. No right. (116)

While it is not our goal to do a psychological reading of this text, it is useful to note

that Huxley feels that those early years were, at least in part, responsible for the turmoil he experiences as an adult. And he admits the degree to which the turmoil rages--it is a war against himself.

But it is not only his mother that Huxley blames for contributing to his distress; there are others at fault as well. These would be his relatives on both sides of his family. Rampion names them suggesting that they have done their worst not only on him, but on the whole of society as well. He says,

I call it Jesus's disease on the analogy of Bright's disease. Or rather Jesus's and Newton's disease; for the scientists are as much responsible as the Christians. So are the big businessmen for that matter. It's Jesus's and Newton's and Henry Ford's disease. Between them, the three have pretty well killed us. Ripped the life out of our bodies and stuffed us with hatred. (120)

Again, allowing for a psychological reading of the text, Huxley is saying that there were several aspects that contributed to his development, each of which worked on him and others to create a society left to fend for itself in many areas--especially spiritually. He is feeling the impact of the Arnolds (Jesus), the Huxleys (Newton), and the confusion brought about by the industrial revolution (Ford) on his development.<sup>10</sup> In the same context Huxley introduces the reader to the concept of different levels of consciousness and other elements of eastern mysticism which he finds intriguing (120-22).

At the same time, Huxley uses Rampion to confirm again that he is not a mystic. Rampion says that he cannot think of anything that "will ever make [him] believe in God and Morals and all the rest of it" (138). What convinced him to reject

religion was the war (see Hobsbaum above). Rampion says it was the war that affected the way everyone looks at life. Illidge confirms Rampion's views, saying that God, like certain kinds of food, must be going out of style (138). But Huxley adds a detail that must not be missed. Also going out of style is the notion of the immortal soul. And it is this notion that occupies much of his thinking.

It is here, in the discussion of the immortal and the essentially spiritual, that Huxley reveals his views most completely, and nowhere is that revelation more complete than in the notebook entries of Philip Quarles. There, in explicit detail, Huxley puts aside satire and allows his readers to view openly the struggle and frustration he experiences in the construction of his spiritual opinions. In those notebook entries, Huxley uses Quarles as a vehicle for expression of his personal views; and through close scrutiny of those entries, it is possible to construct Huxley's spiritual world-view in detail.

The notebook entries are significant both for their location in the text and for their content. Coming as they do after the Quarles' trip to India, they must be read with an eye toward their relationship to eastern religion.

In the first entry, we find a component of Huxley's spirituality that will remain with him throughout his career. It is the universalism implicit in his theology which stems from his belief that no one religious system is sufficient to contain all that is of spiritual value. Huxley writes, "the whole story of the universe is implicit in any part of it [and] the meditative eye can look through any single object and see, as through a window, the entire cosmos" (253). What Huxley finds to be difficult, however, is the communication of the distant vistas through the everyday things around the individual. He writes further,

in all cases, the things seen at the end of the vista must be strange enough to make the familiar seem fantastically mysterious. Question: can this be achieved without pedantry, and without spinning out the work interminably? It needs a great deal of thinking about. (235)

Notice that here too, when Huxley is drawn to contemplation of a spiritual subject, he has to think *about* it rather than embrace it. Huxley uses Quarles' reflection of the kitchen of the Truby's house to exemplify the problem he is attempting to come to grips with in articulation of his concepts about universals. He says,

The place is good. How good, one must have circumnavigated the globe to discover. Why not stay? Take root? But roots are chains. I have a terror of losing my freedom. Free, without ties, unpossessed by any possessions, free to do as one will, to go at a moment's notice wherever the fancy may suggest--it is good. But so is this place. Might it not be better? To gain freedom one sacrifices something . . . . One sacrifices something--for a greater gain in knowledge, in understanding, in intensified living? I wonder. (254-55)

Once again, Huxley admits that there are universals that one can know, he also admits that a full understanding of them requires more commitment than he is willing to give. And as we have seen, commitment is the one thing Huxley will consistently avoid. He feels that commitment to any one position is too great a sacrifice.

While Huxley does not want to subscribe to any singular perspective, he both respects those like Lawrence who have committed to a position, and he recognizes that same need in his own life. The reason for his reticence would be the fear that he might miss something if he were to adopt a position, but by not doing so he is missing

so much of what he seeks. As with so many other areas of Huxley's spirituality, his acknowledgment that there are universals which can be known falls quite short of the commitment required of a mystic. The mystic would not only make that acknowledgment but would also commit to discovery of their essence.

The second entry in Philip Quarles' notebook comes as he reflects on an earlier visit to the Tantamount house. After contemplation on the activities of his peers, he begins to create a framework within which he can fashion his novel--the role of the narrator and other literary decisions. He concludes that the best thing to do is put a novelist into the novel because that will provide a useful mechanism for getting his ideas across. He decides that he will create a novel of ideas because that will be a useful mechanism for getting across the message of discovery that he is experiencing. He writes,

The character of each personage must be implied, as far as possible, in the ideas of which he is the mouthpiece. In so far as theories are rationalizations of sentiments, instincts, dispositions of the soul, this is feasible. (302)

At the same time, however, he realizes the problems inherent in this approach.

Quarles continues,

The chief defect of the novel of ideas is that you must write about people who have ideas to express --which excludes all but about .01 per cent. of the human race. Hence, the real, congenial novelists don't write such books. But then, I never contended to be a congenial novelist.

This is as close to blatant dedication to anything as Huxley may ever get. Here he

admits that though there may be limitations with a novel of ideas, he will continue to use the format because being a congenial novelist is secondary to spreading his personal ideas amongst the general populace. In the context of Point Counter Point, those ideas concern the nature of his spiritual quest.

In this same context, we also find Huxley recognizing the major problem in his approach. He writes,

the great defect of the novel of ideas is that it's a made-up affair.

Necessarily, for people who can reel off neatly formulated notions aren't quite real; they're slightly monstrous. Living with monsters becomes rather tiresome in the long run. (302)

What he recognizes is the limitations of what he is trying to do, and to a certain degree his fears have been realized. What he sees as a major defect in the novel of ideas is that the idea will be seen in a fictional context and dismissed without letting it stand on its own merits. The result will be twofold. First, the idea will not get fair treatment because it will be considered as only fiction. Nothing could be more harmful to the idea than its being dismissed without a serious hearing. Second, without extreme caution on the part of the author, the idea may not get treated seriously because of the weightiness of the characters communicating it. This is why Huxley is careful to break his message up into pieces, letting it come to the fore through Philip Quarles and other characters. The added benefit to this approach is that it magnifies the way in which Huxley has come to conclude the ideas contained in the novel; he has arrived at his conclusions through a number of sources, not just one. The end result of his spiritual quest is not the product of a single source but the accumulated bits and pieces from several.

But in creating a novel of ideas, Huxley may have contributed to the realization of his major fear as well. By constructing Point Counter Point as he did, he created at the same time a framework within which his ideas get lost in the quagmire of misinterpretations that have followed their inception. A combination of the passage of time and the complexity of his ideas has brought about a fragmentary approach to Huxley's spirituality that has caused it to be wrongly categorized as mystic in nature. While it has components that are mystic in orientation, Huxley's spirituality is too broad, too general, and too non-specific to be mystic.

The third entry from the Quarles notebook is the most extensive to this point and the most thorough. It is also a natural outgrowth of the discussion engendered by the previous entries. What Huxley has shown us to this point is first, that he is frustrated by his inability to conform to a single perspective, and that his problem is endemic of contemporary society. Second, he tells us that while he is frustrated by his lack of dedication, he is not willing to allow that frustration to thwart his spiritual pursuits. The discussion contained here reflects the very personal nature of the process Huxley is going through as he attempts to articulate his spiritual views. In this entry, Quarles focuses on the relative merit of Rampion's positions especially regarding spiritual matters. As he reflects on a meeting he has had with his friend, Quarles notes that Rampion was down on the world, not giving it much of a chance for survival unless it was willing to change. Recalling Rampion's words on the condition of modern man, Quarles writes,

But it's humiliating, horribly humiliating that human beings should have made such a devilish mess of things. Life could have been so beautiful, if they'd cared to make it so. Yes, and it was beautiful once, I believe.

Now it's just insanity; it's just death violently galvanized, twitching about and making a hellish hullabaloo to persuade itself that it really isn't death, but the most exuberant sort of life. (322)

As Huxley sees it, the answer to his quest has to rest outside the realm and influence of daily human experience. All that experience has to offer is further confusion and the dissolving of what little remnant of spiritual truth might be found by those who seek it. For Huxley, the more time allowed to pass without someone trying to come to grips with the spiritual morass of contemporary society, the greater the potential for further mutilation of whatever spirituality remains. He sees that as worse than death; it is the acceptance of the illusion of truth rather than truth itself.

After determining that his novelist will be a zoölogist writing a novel in his spare time, Quarles continues,

One of the hardest things to remember is that man's merit in one sphere is no guarantee of his merit in another. Newton's mathematics don't prove his theology. Faraday was right about electricity, but not about Sandemanism. Plato wrote marvelously well and that's why people still go on believing in his pernicious philosophy. Tolstoy was an excellent novelist; but that's no reason for regarding his ideas about morality as anything but detestable, or for his feeling anything but contempt for his aesthetics, his sociology, and his religion. In the case of the scientists and philosophers, the ineptitude outside their own line of business isn't surprising. Indeed, it's almost inevitable. For it's obvious that excessive development of the purely mental functions leads to atrophy of all the rest. (323)

Quarles points out two problems with which Huxley constantly finds himself confronted. One of the things Huxley struggles with is how to become spiritual without falling victim to the temptation to become like those whom he has so often criticized. He has seen them become so interested in aesthetics and ideals that they forget how to live practically. In Huxley's thinking, that is a far greater tragedy than not being spiritually articulate. In holding this perspective, Huxley has created a difficult position for himself. The difficulty is twofold: how can he, neither a theologian or a philosopher, be convincing when he speaks of spiritual or philosophical matters, and how can he avoid getting so involved in these discussions that he loses sight of his task as a writer? For Huxley, at issue in both areas is credibility. If he is to be credible, he must approach his task with the dedication like that of Rampion to his spirituality.

What Huxley decides is that his first duty is to spirituality and the discussion of his quest, so he allows Quarles to return to the subject of Rampion's dedication to his principles. The tone of the text is somewhat respectful because of Rampion's dedication to his position. While that is true, Quarles still questions Rampion's views even though he respects them. He writes,

Rampion, it seems to me, takes into account all the facts (whereas other people hide from them, or try to pretend that the ones they find unpleasant don't or shouldn't exist), and then proceeds to make his way of living fit the facts, and doesn't try to compel the fact to fit in with a preconceived idea of the right way of living (like these imbecile Christians and intellectuals and moralists and efficient businessmen).

(324)

What he admires in Rampion is what is missing in himself-- commitment. But, as Huxley is quick to point out, the commitment that he has in mind is to something stronger yet less restricting than what he sees around him. Note the strength of the statement wherein he calls Christians imbeciles. In Huxley's thinking, they are imbecilic because their views are "limited" according to his scheme. Remember, his perspective has to be more universal than any other because of the way in which he is trying to fabricate it. His perspective is more unique than the others.

Here too, Huxley admits a major factor in the criteria he uses to construct his spiritual views as well as a major flaw in the process. Quarles says,

The second thing which gives me confidence in his judgment is that so many of his [Rampion's] opinions agree with mine, which, apart from all questions of vanity, is a good sign, because we start from such distant points, from opposite poles . . . . (324)

While he consistently condemns society for its lack of originality, he admits the equal tendency in his own experience as he attempts to find himself spiritually. What he seeks are sources of input which fit his preconceived ideas. That is the very problem he has challenged his contemporaries to face not only in Point Counter Point but in other works also.

At the same time, Huxley returns to the admission that we have seen him make consistently throughout this discussion. He has Quarles admit that

The chief difference between us [Rampion and Quarles], alas, is that his opinions are lived and mine, in the main, only thought. Like him, I mistrust intellectualism, but intellectually, I disbelieve in the adequacy of any scientific, philosophical, and abstract-moral grounds. The

problem for me is to transform a *detached intellectual skepticism* into a way of harmoniously all-round living. (324, emphasis added)

How ironic that one with such an incredible talent for representing himself so thoroughly had no ability to resolve the problems that he pinpointed so effectively. It is ironic that one who distrusts intellectualism has to resort to it as justification for his views. He has no other option that he is free to exercise because of his preconceived ideas.

After a brief hiatus on the relative merit of one of Burlap's opinions, Quarles returns again to the subject of Rampion, this time continuing discussion of his ability to live consistently with his convictions. He writes,

Being with Rampion rather depresses me; for he makes me see what a great gulf separates the knowledge of the obvious from the actual living of it. And oh, the difficulties of crossing that gulf! I perceive now that the real charm of the intellectual life--the life devoted to erudition, to scientific research, to philosophy, to aesthetics, to criticism--is its easiness. It's the substitution of simple intellectual schemata for the complexities of reality; of still and formal death for the bewildering moments of life. (325)

What he is saying is that he has spent his life in pursuit of a lifestyle that is conducive to his intellectual and spiritual satisfaction, but he has been unable to find it. He admires it in people like Rampion, but he is frustrated by them because he cannot live with the same degree of conviction that he sees in them. Their secret is living by faith in the veracity of their convictions, and he cannot do that. Continuing, he writes,

Until recently, . . . I too took learning and philosophy and science--all

the activities that are . . . lumped under the title of "The Search for Truth"--very seriously. I regarded The Search for Truth as the highest of human tasks and the Searchers as the noblest of men. But in the last year or so I have begun to see that this famous Search for Truth is just an amusement, a distraction, like any other, a rather refined and elaborate substitute for genuine living . . . I also perceived that the pursuit of truth is just a polite name for the intellectual's favorite pastime of substituting simple and therefore false abstractions for the living complexities of living. (326)

Then he goes on to ask,

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 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. (326)

Unfortunately for Huxley, the answer is no to the first part of his question and yes to the second part. As we will see, he never comes to a place of satisfaction with his spirituality, and as we have seen at the heart of much of his struggle is the way in which family and heritage have conspired against him to make him the spiritist he became.

The next entry we are privy to is brought about as Quarles contemplates Elinor's reaction to a speech delivered by Everhard Webley. The speech, delivered before a gathering of the British Freedmen in Hyde Park, had a stirring effect on everyone. For the crowd, hearing Everhard was like hearing the voice of Jehovah; in

Elinor, the speech raised her passion as she looked on, but for Quarles, in typical Huxleyan fashion, the speech was something to be analyzed. Looking at Everhard's picture in the paper, Quarles cannot help but dissect the image and the event. It is *his* way of controlling the situation. Commenting on the implications of a single snapshot of the event, Quarles writes,

was the camera's vision the true one and mine the false? For, after all, the impressive continuity must have been made up of such appalling instants as the camera recorded. Can the whole be something quite different than its parts? In the physical world, yes. Taken as a whole, the body and the brain are radically different from their component electrons. But what about the moral world? Can a collection of low values make up a single high value? Everhard's photo poses a genuine problem. Millions of monstrous instants making up a splendid half hour. (345)

This entry reveals the next step Huxley was committed to taking in the formation of his personal spiritualism. As he pondered the world around him and began asking questions of it, he became increasingly more aware of the diversity of opinions on the issue of spirituality. Analyst that he was, he found himself able to approach the subject of multiplicity less passionately than others. Because of this ability, he was also able to distance himself from Everhard's followers which allowed him to make an informed judgment on what was really going on at the gathering. His conclusion was that it is possible to create a high value out of components of lesser stature or merit. For Huxley, this is a crucial element in the formation of his personal spiritual views. What he has hinted at all along regarding the formation of his spiritual views is

defined precisely here as being what he calls "divide and rule" (346). By dismantling the scene at Everhard's speech, Quarles was able not only to figure out the dynamics surrounding it, but also to gain command of it through definitive analysis. "Divide and conquer. I conquered" (347).

To keep us from thinking that he has finally found satisfaction in his intellect, Huxley adds a postscript to this entry. There he admits that only part of him conquered. Analysis of something like Everhard's speech was easy

but in other circumstances? Rampion's probably right. But having made a habit of dividing and conquering in the name of the intellect, it's hard to stop . . . . It's easy to believe one ought to change one's mode of living. The difficulty is to act on the belief. (347)

Again Huxley is confronted with his dilemma, and again he fails to resolve it. After a discussion of the drawbacks of living by pure intellect, Quarles concludes that while the intellectual thinks he is freeing himself from impulse and emotionalism, he is in reality

cramping his intellect by the very process he thought would emancipate it. His reason's free, but only to deal with a small fraction of the experience. He realizes his psychological defects, and desires, *in theory*, do change. But it's difficult to break life-long habits; and perhaps the habits are only the expression of inborn indifference and coldness which might be almost impossible to overcome. (348, emphasis added)

Once again, standing on the precipice of commitment, Huxley retreats to his sanctuary of inaction and justification. To justify his decision, Huxley says, "And for *him* at any rate, the merely intellectual life is easier" (348). What an unusual thing for a man like

Huxley to say. Worse yet, what an unusual stance for a man of Huxley's ability to take, knowing the answers yet doing nothing to embrace them. How clear the condition of the society of the late 1920s becomes.

The final entry from Quarles' notebook indicates that Huxley knew the precarious nature of his position regarding his developing world-view. Viewing the debilitating effects of a stomach tumor on John Bidlake, he notes,

Deplorable . . . to see an Olympian reduced by a little tumor in his stomach to a state of sub-humanness. But perhaps [he added a few days later] he was always sub-human, even when he seemed most Olympian; perhaps being Olympian was just a symptom of sub-humanity. (356)

Herein is the final aspect of his yet incomplete view of life, the reason for the urgency in his tone and the inability to give up the chase for answers. Time would not allow it. At any moment one could be reduced to a state of sub-humanness, and then all chance for answers would be gone. But, he concludes, maybe that is part of living.

That is effectively the note upon which the novel ends. While there is extensive discussion on the right and wrong of certain spiritual perspectives, Huxley concludes, at least during this phase of his life, that, important as they may be, considerations which require total spiritual commitment will have to wait until another day. Telling people to follow Jesus, he believes, will help them become more human. Telling them anything else will also make them less human. For Huxley, at this point in his life, neither option is attractive. For him, the point and counter point have made him consider his spiritual position, but they have fallen short of convincing him to adopt any as his own. His task is to continue his search for parts of the whole out of which he can create a new whole.

## Chapter IV

### A World of Lights

For confirmation of the spiritual pilgrimage introduced in Point Counter Point, we need only look to Huxley's 1931 play, The World of Light: A Comedy in Three Acts,<sup>11</sup> the title of which is taken from Henry Vaughn's "They Are All Gone into the World of Light" (1650). Capitalizing on contemporary fascination with spiritualism, Huxley uses the dialogue of his characters as a *medium* for reflection of his views on metaphysics. The play, one of only three written by Huxley, was produced at the height of the first phase of his development as a writer, and it focuses on the restoration of a broken relationship between a father and a son.

It is important to note at the outset the significance of Huxley's choice of Vaughn's poem for the title of his play. First, Vaughn provides Huxley with a useful platform for articulating his views. Vaughn's writing (his poetry in particular) was very similar to Huxley's, and while criticized by some for its style, it was nonetheless

a unique blend of Christian devotional and neoplatonic ideas and images; [but] go deeper and there is more, a power--perhaps not wholly conscious--to form images, each carrying a strong charge of devotional meaning, into constellations, which occur nowhere else, so that even the biblical allusions are strongly colored by the strange and strong imagination which binds them together. (Keromde et al. 1190)

It was that deep-seated, intensely spiritual binding and blending that attracted Huxley.

As he sought to give voice to his ever-changing world-view, he found in Vaughn a

welcomed, suitable pattern to follow--at least temporarily.

Of interest also is the poem itself which reflects much of the inner struggle Huxley endures. The narrator of the poem is an isolated figure standing far off who longs to have his spiritual sensitivity rekindled by God. He is envious of all who have reached spiritual satisfaction and laments that they have been admitted into the world of light, leaving him cold and alone in this present, dark world. The poem ends with a demand that God either remove the narrator *from* this world or transport him *to* a place where he can see truly. Vaughn writes,

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill

My perspective still as they pass:

Or else remove me hence unto the hill

Where I shall need no glass. (qtd. in Kermode et al. 1197)

Huxley chose this poem because it most specifically reflected his own spiritual perspective. In many ways, Huxley is like Vaughn's narrator in that he, too, approaches the subject of spiritual awareness in a business-like manner, making demands rather than prayers. Huxley and Vaughn both want to *know* rather than *believe*, and this is the central obstacle that Huxley will never be able to hurdle. The major difference between Huxley and Vaughn, and it is an important one, is that the lament of the latter is separation from God; for the former, the lament is separation from everything.

After Maria departed for Italy with Matthew, Huxley became depressed and fell into ill health. To escape the pressures of living in London (the rigors of writing, living with a new-born, his health, and his failing marriage), he moved to Italy to join his wife and son in 1924. His hope was that the change in climate and location would

restore his energy and refresh his writing. Not long after a previous visit when he had felt inspired to finish work on Crome Yellow, and shortly after he arrived in Italy this second time, Huxley began work on Those Barren Leaves (1925). After the visit in 1922, he "left Rome renewed, with an intense desire to live life, squeezing every drop of life out of his existence; a feeling which returned upon his move to join Maria and Matthew, and which encouraged him to try his hand as a playwright" (Shook 114).

First produced by Leon M. Lion at the Royal Theatre, London, The World of Light opened on March 30, 1931 to mixed reviews and, for whatever reasons, never generated interest among either Huxley's fans or his critics. This lack of interest could be attributed to the reviews which panned the play for its lack of originality.

The action takes place over a period of seventeen months and chronicles events in the lives of the Wenham family and several of their acquaintances. The plot centers around the family's attempts to contact Hugo, their son (and would-be fiancé of long-time family friend Enid Deckle), whom they believe to have been killed in a plane crash off the coast of Haiti. To help them deal with their loss, the Wenham family turns to spiritualism in an attempt to contact the spirit of their departed son, lover, and friend.<sup>12</sup>

Events in the play transpire quickly. Act I begins with Hugo's step-mother attempting to convince her husband to get Hugo to "do the right thing" and marry Enid, who has been patiently awaiting his proposal of marriage for some time. Hugo does not give in to the pressure of his family's urging, but succumbs instead (under the influence of several drinks) to an invitation of his friend Bill Hamblin to chuck it all and flee to Guiana with him in his new aeroplane. The family later discovers that there has been a plane crash in which both Hugo and Bill are feared lost.

Act II introduces the séances which the family has undertaken in an attempt to contact the spirit of Hugo. The medium, Mr. Hubert Capes, subsequently falls in love with, and ultimately seduces, Enid during the course of their time together, and he succeeds in converting her to acceptance of spiritualism, the validity of which she has questioned from the outset of the play. Mr. Capes is able to make regular contact with the spirit of Hugo, and as a result of these contacts, Mr. Wenham writes a very successful book recording details of the encounters.

A problem arises, however, when, at the end of Act II Hugo appears during a séance, in the flesh, with his now blinded friend, Bill Hamblin.<sup>13</sup> In Act III there is understandably a great deal of anxiety over Hugo's reappearance, the greatest of which concerns Mr. Wenham's fear of the impact that Hugo's return might have on the "Cause" (spiritualism). Enid is worried because she has been unfaithful to Hugo, betraying him with Hubert Capes, the medium, and Hugo is worried because he has caused such distress for the ones he loves. He realizes that the best thing he can do is flee, and at the end of the play Hugo once again leaves unexpectedly for parts unknown.

The significance of the play is found in the way that it uses the dialogue to express fully the metaphysical views Huxley began to articulate in his previous work. Evident in Huxley's use of the language of spiritualism are both the foundation of his personal views and the source of confusion over his spiritual perspective.<sup>14</sup> To do so Huxley uses the characters as his voice much the same way he does with Philip Quarrels in Point Counter Point and Anthony Bevis in Eyeless in Gaza. He also uses the supporting cast of the play to deepen the discussion, and he draws heavily on his own background and personal experiences which he incorporates into the dialogue,

giving it an even more convincing air of authenticity.

Act I opens with the introduction of Mr. John Wenham and his second wife Alice, Hugo's step-mother. Because of her caring nature, it is of great concern to Alice that Hugo is not paying sufficient attention to his long-time friend Enid, and at Alice's urging John agrees to take up the matter of matrimony with his son as soon as Hugo arrives. As Hugo joins the parents in the drawing-room, Alice excuses herself to the nursery to tuck in the younger children.<sup>15</sup> It is obvious that John does not want to have the conversation with Hugo because he claims that he does not have the necessary abilities to do well; besides, he does not consider himself good at affairs of the heart. The relationship between John and Hugo bears striking similarity to that which Huxley had with his father. The similarity between Hugo's step-mother and Huxley's is also worth noting. Like Huxley's own step-mother, Rosalind Bruce, Alice is much younger than her husband and does not feel herself in a position to be discussing such personal matters with her step-son. Notice too the resemblance of **HUgo** to **HUxley**, both melancholic personalities dissatisfied with the shallowness of life.

After exchanging pleasantries with Hugo, John gets serious, and he is surprised at Hugo's receptivity: they have never been what one would call close. To move the conversation toward the matter at hand, Enid and marriage, John reveals a concern for his son's apparent lack of motivation and goals in his life. He tells Hugo that the security missing in his life would be eliminated if only he were to marry and settle down. Marriage, John says, has the ability to give purpose and meaning to life. It, along with spiritualism, settles even the most restless soul. It represents both something to believe in and someone to share those beliefs with. Hugo wishes such a thing could

happen but is skeptical. Their conversation proceeds as follows:

Mr. Wenham. . . . But one settles down; one gets used to the harness; one comes to realize that the daily and the common are . . . sacred.

Hugo. Sacred? I'd like to be able to feel that.

Mr. Wenham. Not only the sacred, of course. There's the other--the sublimer aspect of sacredness. I wish I could persuade you to take more interest in spiritualism, dear boy.

Hugo. But I do. I read all the documents.

Mr. Wenham. Yes, but in what sort of spirit? Not as they ought to be read. You're detached. (5)

In addressing Hugo so, John has moved out of a discussion he feels unqualified to direct and on to a subject that means a great deal to him: that of spiritualism. It is here that we see the emergence of one of the central issues in Huxley's developing spirituality: Hugo does not feel that making the usual into something sacred should be the goal of any spiritual pursuit and neither does Huxley. It is his conviction that spiritual pursuits should lead the seeker beyond the normal. Neither Hugo nor Huxley desires to merely hang a faith on everyday life. Both want life to be transformed somehow, but practically the transformation is worked out by developing the capacity to "think mystically," not by making life sacred.

As their conversation proceeds, the melancholy Hugo finds himself unable either to appreciate or appropriate his father's zeal. Hugo's wish is that his common and daily experiences were more sublime without having to get spiritual in any traditional sense. His skepticism keeps him from considering spiritualism on even a

surface level. Hugo wants "feeling" to be the reward of his faith, and at this point he considers spiritualism to be purely external. Hugo's desire is for a way to make life sacred in the here and now without having to call on the next world. It is ". . . the infinite in terms of the bounded and the relative . . ." that Hugo seeks (The World of Light 5). He seeks a faith that is at once manageable, personal, and practical for this world.

The difficulty is that, like Huxley, Hugo has never investigated spirituality with any degree of sensitivity. He wants fact first, and then he will decide whether or not to commit to a principle; he wants an intellectually substantiated faith. As we will see later that is just what Huxley gives him. John tries to convince Hugo that much of his doubt would cease if he would only commit to accepting spiritualism as a legitimate faith. He says, "All one was saying is that if you take the a risk and give the new revelation a chance . . . well, it does manifest itself, in spite of the old habit. Always" (The World of Light 7). But Hugo is not willing to take the risk. What is interesting is to see the way Huxley has the characters, especially John, use the formal, impersonal pronoun "one" in nearly every context. The only exception is in those dealing with the subject of John's faith: there he is much more personal, using the standard "I."

What both Hugo and Huxley are struggling with is that one cannot arrive at the faith of the type John has by means of the intellect alone. That was the very mistake committed by the *philosophes*, and, as we have seen, it was the heritage of Huxley himself. As Brander says, Huxley

could not escape from his heredity, on the one side the Huxleys, on the other side the Arnolds, two of the great intellectual families of the

nineteenth century, when the responsible use of knowledge seemed to be replacing religion in control of human societies. (12)

One has to commit to the principle of belief, and then the verification of that in which faith is exercised will come. Huxley would later relate that he personally believed that there were four kinds of faith: three practical and the fourth, like that held by John, which he called religious faith. This last type Huxley believed to be dangerous and not absolutely necessary, saying that he "personally [did not] think [such belief was] necessarily true of . . . immediate experience at all" (qtd. in Bridgeman 158). Hugo did not have the capacity to commit to the faith of his father because Huxley did not. As a diversion, Hugo invited his friend Bill Hamblin to be his guest for the evening at the Wenhams. Hugo sees Bill as a distraction, and his presence allows Hugo to avoid thinking about serious matters. Such a sentiment is not surprising because that same tendency toward distraction is characteristic of much of Huxley's work. Hugo needs Bill either as an escape mechanism, or as a relief valve to help him deal with the pressures of daily living. He also needs these diversions because by them he can make life more exciting.

While Hugo does not know how he feels about some things, he is not averse to looking for answers: in many ways Hugo reflects Huxley's yearning for the perennial philosophy. Hugo is after the kind of knowledge John has even though he admits that it is difficult to accept. John's perspective is that the knowledge Hugo seeks could be gained if he would only act on the assumption that spiritualism is valid, something never proven to be untrue. In John's mind, if Hugo were to make this simple commitment, he would come to revelation of the truth. This would be hard for someone like Hugo because he wants assurance and revelation first (The World of

Light 6-7).

At this point in the play Huxley has fixed the importance of these central characters. In them he has given the reader the key to interpreting the nature of his spiritual quest. Through Enid we see the faithful and ever-present traditionalism that Huxley feels confining (orthodoxy). In John, we see the rejection of tradition and commitment to the *status quo*, in this case, spiritualism (neo-orthodoxy). Bill Hamblin he makes to be the lure of distraction and the avoidance of commitment to tradition; he is the seeker, the daring realist who seeks meaning where it can be found (heterodoxy). Finally, Huxley uses Hugo as his own voice: the representative of all professional metaphysicians whose mission it is to investigate and experience the perennial philosophy.

What is clear in the play is that Huxley is attempting to articulate his feelings regarding his spirituality. He senses that he owes it to both traditional orthodoxy and popular neo-orthodoxy to explain what he sees as their short-comings, and he does so through the characters of John and Enid. Bill he uses to express his desire to escape the other two, and in Hugo, we see his final decision.

Hugo finds himself in an uncomfortable position with regard to both John (neo-orthodoxy) and Enid (orthodoxy). It is his sense that they are both trying to pressure him into committing to something that he is not convinced he should commit to. He feels that he does owe them some attention for their years of support and friendship, but he finds it impossible to commit to them because it would mean attaching to something which Hugo will repeatedly show himself incapable of doing.

Both John and Enid demonstrate an awareness of Hugo's struggle which Enid sees manifested in his inability to do the simplest, everyday things such as decide in

which restaurant to have dinner. Enid asks John,

Enid Do you think Hugo can ever make up his mind? What were you telling him to make up his mind about?

John Oh nothing, my dear, nothing.

Enid Those are the decisions he finds hardest to make. The ones about nothing. How I've suffered from his not knowing what restaurant he wants to go to for lunch, and when he does get somewhere, not being able to decide between the roast chicken and the veal cutlet. Terrible! Isn't it Hugo? (The World of Light 9)

Hugo's response is a gloomy "I suppose so" (The World of Light 9). Enid is telling John, in an indirect way, that he should not expect Hugo to commit to spiritualism if he cannot do something as simple as choose a restaurant in which to have a meal. She also knows the significance Bill Hamblin has in Hugo's life: she knows that he is a tonic for Hugo, something he enjoys to help him feel better. When John leaves Hugo and Enid alone, the tension Hugo feels surfaces quickly and he becomes very defensive.

One of the reasons that Hugo is reluctant to consider committing to Enid is that he feels life with her will be an extension of the life he is leading at present; he fears that it will be a life with no meaning, a life "rather like death" (10). Huxley expresses this sentiment personally as Hugo says, "I wish I were a theolater" (The World of Light 10).<sup>16</sup> What Huxley is saying is that he too wishes he could find something in which to believe.

The source of his struggle is that he is trying to articulate his belief in the faith of the enlightened man; he is trying get himself into a posture through which he can

find access to religion and faith intellectually and non-rationally. Orthodoxy has proven itself incapable of satisfying him because it is based solely on faith. That has proven itself dead to him and incapable of stirring emotion within him; so he has to seek something more because only a "live man can find a live god" (The World of Light 11).

Huxley also rejects neo-orthodoxy, the reinterpretation of orthodoxy into a religion of popular culture. While its intentions are noble, its conclusions are often misdirected or misinterpreted because it uses orthodoxy as its basis. The rejection is not outright, however. Hugo does give it a chance, but as John says, he did not do it with the right perspective.

It should be noted that nowhere is Huxley saying that either orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy are wrong in and of themselves. What he finds fault with is their shared tendencies to transform the usual and ordinary into the *sacred* usual and ordinary. For him, that alone is not enough.

The one person Hugo envies is his friend Bill Hamblin because Bill has no such struggle; he is not tied down to any one thing. Bill is not only detached, but he feels no need to attach to anything nor is there anyone trying to pressure him to do so. Important here is that Hugo does see in Bill something that he is open to the possibility of commitment to, and Huxley uses Bill to express what that something is. The universe both Hugo and Huxley seek is the one Bill has, a universe "well draped with transcendental mysteries. Layers and layers of mystery, like petticoats. White mystery, black mystery. . . . like the layers of the tropical rain forest" (The World of Light 15). If one is to attach to something maybe it could be something like that.

It is here as well that Huxley tells us the nature of the faith he seeks: what he

wants is a faith that is more than "supernormal" (16). Again, using Bill, Huxley reveals that his frustration is with those who look at religion from the surface only. He shows that such a vantage point reveals a faith that is the highest only because it is the most understood (scientific). The failure of this kind of faith is the same as experienced by *philosophes* of the eighteenth century: faith cannot be relegated purely to the realm of the scientific.

The problem Huxley sees with neo-orthodoxy is that it tends to be more concerned with communication with the departed at the expense of those who are alive and well, as does orthodoxy: both are too concerned with the particulars of the upper story. He sees no use in having conversations with the dead if one is to ignore the living. What good is a religion like that? During a conversation between John and Bill, in the absence of Hugo, Huxley articulates his seeing no possible use for a religion that ignores practicality in the name of spirituality. That was also the problem during the enlightenment. As we have seen, one of the main shortcomings of the natural religion of the eighteenth century was that it dehumanized human beings, leaving them to fill no better role than that of machine.

To John, Bill says,

Yes, but the dear ones are dead--or if you object to *that* word, let's say that they are somewhere else, not here. Whereas the farm labourers and the social beauties and all the rest *are* here. Isn't it our business to make the best of this world while we're in it? Not the second-best--or more probably the millionth-best--of some other world. No, I say, I'm all for the dead burying their dead. (The World of Light 20-21)

Into this conversation comes poor melancholic Hugo who cannot choose for either

side.

John leaves Hugo and Bill to talk, and their conversation turns to the role of religion in the life of the practitioner. For Bill, the lure of neo-orthodoxy is that it serves to give meaning to an otherwise dull life. Since John is an accountant, he needs the sort of diversion that spiritualism brings. Bill asserts that for him true meaning is in the practical world.

Because even if [spiritualism] is true, which I'm quite prepared to believe, well what of it? It's the same with most facts of science. This chair--it's really a swarm of electrons whizzing about in a vacuum. But, what of it? For all practical purposes of life it's got to be a solid chair. And so with souls. Souls may really be detachable like . . . like chintz covers . . . they may go on existing after we're dead. All right. But again, what of it? So let the dead bury their dead, and the electrons bury their electrons. I'm alive, and this thing I've got my bottom on is a chair. (The World of Light 23)

Bill is alive and it is only the living that he will concern himself with. Hugo quickly points out that the professional metaphysician will disagree (The World of Light 23).

Here too is another dilemma in Huxley's spiritual position: how can someone who does not have the capacity to attach to anything call himself a professional metaphysician? The answer is in the nature of the spiritualism that Huxley is developing. That kind of spiritualism allows one to be at once in the physical world and the spiritual world; the kind of spiritualism that enables one to be in the world and not of it; that kind of spiritualism in which communication on different levels is not only theoretically possible, but also readily accepted and found in every type of

religious experience. It is the spiritualism of the intellectual tourist.

Huxley uses Bill to say that the reason religious myths (like spiritualism) are perpetuated is because old people are interested in communication with the dead: death is a part of their lives. "It's what comes from having been brought up before the discovery of the unconscious--when man was still a rational animal. There are so many dead in an old man's universe, that he can't help thinking about them" (The World of Light 24). What Huxley is saying is that religion, orthodox or neo-orthodox, may have its place with the older generation, but not with him.

Another of Hugo's problems is that he seems to be contented with the security of his job, but not with life in general. Bill calls it "deliberately choosing dreariness" (The World of Light 24). He also says that Hugo has allowed himself to be made into a coward by the system that he finds himself in. This may be the reason Hugo flees with such abandon at the end of the play.

Toward the middle of I.2, Huxley's spirituality begins to reveal itself fully. His is a position which he calls "playing for safety" (The World of Light 26). His is a position that will allow him the freedom to do whatever is necessary to get at the heart of the matter. It is this attitude that the common people have had all along. It is what gives their lives direction. And they have generally been able to find that direction apart from outside help or guidance. Hugo has already shown that he is not interested in Enid, nor is he interested in spiritualism, which he calls "sentimentalizing with the dead" (The World of Light 27). Nor is he completely sold on Bill's heterodoxy.

Huxley also uses Bill to articulate more fully the heterodoxy that grows out of the eighteenth-century displacement of orthodoxy. He sees it is a faith wherein you "Just shut your eyes and jump. It's nothing. And afterwards what happens, happens"

(The World of Light 28). This is the exact position of post-Enlightenment, nineteenth-century thought regarding faith for both neo-spiritualists and existentialists.

How then is Hugo to find that faith which will reveal to him the truth? We begin to find out in a very revealing discussion he has with Bill regarding truth. In it Hugo divides truth into two categories: official and unofficial and says that there are corresponding categories within the mind. To explain, Hugo couches his comments in context with the evening's discussion about Enid. Hugo had suspected that she was in love with him, but he chose not to act on his supposition because he did not "officially" know his suppositions to be true. He likens the situation to that during WW I. The communiqués sent out by the military were received by the public as official truth, but they were then reinterpreted by the mind of the public unofficially to get at the real truth. The problem with both traditional orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy is that they limit the practitioner to official truth and do not allow him to reinterpret truth as he sees it. For Huxley truth is discovered practically, not passed on mechanically. The mind knows better, or at least differently. It has the power to both receive and interpret the communiqués and then to believe them or reject them. Recognition of the differences between official and unofficial truth allows one the freedom to act in ways that he could not normally act. Practically, Hugo knows that Enid loves him, and for that very reason he cannot love her back. Also, because he did not acknowledge that he officially knew of her love he was free to encourage her to love him more. After all, he could always plead ignorance.

It is at this point that two significant things happen: 1) Hugo resigns himself to his fate with Enid, and 2) Bill rescues him from it. Hugo feels that he is trapped, and that his fears about acknowledging Enid's love are being realized. Bill cannot let

him fall into such a trap, so he convinces Hugo to accompany him on his trip to South America. This can only happen after Hugo is drunk. When his inhibitions are gone he can do things that are out of character for him. It is interesting that Hugo says that he will not let himself be bullied by Enid, but he turns around and allows that very thing to happen with Bill. Of course Bill had the help of the "Dutch courage." Act I ends with Hugo leaving a note saying that he "has decided to accompany Bill Hamblin" (The World of Light 33). This act also puts before us the basis of Huxley's spiritualism. What we know at this point about it is threefold: we know 1) that it is a reaction against both traditional orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy, 2) that it is based in the mind's ability to discover and analyze non-rational truth on its own, and 3) that it is a substitute for the concept of religion as the term is generally used by western man. Hugo has abandoned himself to heterodoxy, and the focus of attention falls upon the family and friends who are seeking to cope with life without Hugo.

Act II opens two months later, and we find that a medium, Mr. Hubert Capes, has been engaged by John to contact the spirit of the departed Hugo. During Hugo's absence, Hubert has been receiving messages from the departed, but Alice refuses to believe them. She is dependent on official communication, and she will not let herself believe anything else. Alice is not persuaded by the medium; she thinks he is too charming.

John Wenham, however, is totally convinced. He believes Hubert to be completely sincere and exceptionally gifted. In the absence of official truth, Alice refuses to accept that Hugo is no longer living, and she shuns the unofficial truth that Hubert claims to be receiving. However, John's point is that in the absence of official communication regarding Hugo to the contrary, one needs to accept the

communication that is available. The message given to the medium is that the light amphibian was forced down and he had told them exactly where. This interaction on the nature of communication between the Wenhams contrasts them in much the same way Hugo and Bill were contrasted against each other in the previous act (Alice = Bill, John = Hugo). John is satisfied that the communication he has received is legitimate because it is not official. Alice rejects it on exactly the same grounds.

Enid's reaction to the whole affair is totally different from that of the others. She hysterically refuses to accept Hugo's death, and she demonstrates her disbelief that he is dead by refusing to wear mourning clothes. John tells her that she must believe because it is the truth that they have at the moment--truth that is being provided by Hubert from the realm of the dead. For now, Enid is not persuaded, and she continues to protest mourning until she receives official truth that Hugo is dead. But official proof cannot always be trusted because it may not always be correct. Enid's problem is that she cannot believe that one can communicate with someone who is dead. She accuses them all of killing Hugo before he is officially dead by trying to contact him, by refusing to believe that he is alive. She sees them as so committed to their beliefs that they are willing to believe something that may not be true. Again, ironically, she is in the same position. But she is not alone; at this point Alice is not convinced either.

In her heart of hearts, Enid confirms Hubert's assessment of official truth: while she refuses to believe that he is dead until she gets official notification, she already believes that he is gone. She has known all along that Hugo never really cared for her, but she never allowed herself to dwell on that fact--probably in the hope that things might change in her favor. Ironically, orthodoxy may capitulate in times of

confrontation, but it never gives up hope. Enid will later accept the news as she also comes to accept spiritualism.

For whatever reason, Enid's curiosity gets the best of her, and she expresses a desire to know what the medium has relayed from Hugo. For some reason also, she even speculates on the possibility that the medium is telling the truth. She says, "What bothers me is this. Do you think people would still be themselves if they were reduced to being just spirits? A person without his body--would it be the same person? I wonder" (The World of Light 40). As hard as Enid tries to avoid the subject, she finds herself being drawn to consider the possibility of communication with the departed in much the same way Hugo had done with Bill earlier. Alice, however, is not yet ready to be as accommodating as Enid, and she rejects the possibility of the medium's being found truthful even if that happens. She has made up her mind that the medium is a fake, and nothing is going to change her mind.

When the official communication does come, all that it states is that Hugo is presumed lost. The official communiqué confirms the first of the messages received by Mr. Capes. Upon hearing the news, Enid becomes furious with John because she perceives him and the others to be happy at the news of Hugo's apparent death. In reality, John is simply pleased that the communications have not been proven false. Though this is no proof of truthfulness, it does not invalidate the communiqués for him. The medium got the right message from the spirit of Hugo, and John is satisfied that Hugo's spirit is still with them. While others are content believing their error, Enid knows this is the heart of the problem. She is not content with the spirit of Hugo; she wants him.

Nearly a year passes and in II.2 we find that Enid has grown to accept

spiritualism. She has reconciled herself to Hugo's being gone, and she has allowed herself to be seduced by Hubert Capes, the medium to whom she refers as "our" friend. One wonders if "our" did not refer to Enid and Hugo originally, but of late has come to mean "believers in the Cause." In just ten short months Enid has become a very ardent supporter of the "Cause," and she has replaced Hugo with Hubert as the object of her affection. What convinced Enid were the communications that Hubert received from the departed Hugo. After all, there was the testimony of the concertina playing Figaro, Hugo's favorite musical piece.<sup>17</sup> Enid has become so involved that she is able to act as intermediary explaining things even to John.

Midway through Act II we have the fourth component of Huxley's spiritualism to add to the list of characteristics. We have been told thus far that Huxley's spiritualism is 1) a reaction against both traditional orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy, 2) an assertion of the mind's ability to discover and analyze non-rational truth on its own, and 3) a substitute for the concept of religion as the term is generally used by western man. To those Huxley now adds that the spiritual world is not only real, but also accessible by man from the physical world through human mediaries. The truth, Huxley says, has been received and dispensed properly through Hubert: Hubert helped the truth become manifest to those in attendance at the séances. That truth revolved around some interesting statements about Hugo's being gone far away, but not being **there**. It is as if Hubert realizes that Hugo is not where they suppose him to be (which proves to be true as Hugo confirms later). Enid reinforces Hubert's power with the truth saying that he saved her from killing herself by revealing the truth to her, a fact which he denies, saying that it is the truth that saved her. She agrees but adds that it was he who showed her the truth (The World of Light 47). The truth he

showed her was that Hugo was not really dead and that he was still interested in her welfare. A part of what Enid believed was true. If Hubert had anything to do with her salvation, it was only because he was faithful with the truth and revealing it from its source, in this case Hugo. Huxley is not only saying that the truth is accessible, but also that it has the power to transform the lives of those who would accept it. Truth saved Enid--truth from the spiritual world.

Huxley confirms the power of this truth through his use of language in the dialogue between Hubert and Enid (46 ff). There Enid tells Hubert that because of his faithfulness to the truth, the communications from the spirit world taught her more than all the books, creeds, and churches ever could. She had been mistaken (under the tutelage of the former?) and only thought she believed. Now she has seen, and she truly believes. Her views (and Huxley's) are now a thorough mixture of orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy, becoming a form of heterodoxy directly descended from the mysticism of the eighteenth century. It is this direct interaction with the spiritual world through gifted people that illuminates what was left unexplained by previous systems of belief. The purpose of the new faith is to explain what was previously hidden with or by its predecessors. The truth that Hubert communicated (especially regarding Enid) is confirmed later by Hugo himself. There is significance in the fact that these revelations were given to Enid and not to John. This may be attributed to the fact that, in the scheme as we have developed it, orthodoxy has an inherent receptivity to revelation whereas neo-orthodoxy does not. The net result is that Enid has now found happiness. That is in fact what Hubert says the goal of spiritualism is--happiness.

So as not to burden the audience too much at one time, Huxley moves ahead

fifteen months in 2.3 and introduces us to Mr. Gray for whom Enid has nothing but dislike. She has become very edgy with everyone, and it is as if she knows something is going to happen.

Enid is treated by Hubert exactly opposite from the way she was treated by Hugo. Hubert was able to bring her out of her depression, but now she does not trust him. All Hubert did was to be nice to her and fall in love with her, which may be at the heart of the problem. Enid has a touch of guilt because she has betrayed Hugo, and now she is disappointed in herself.

Regardless of her feelings, Enid does want more contact with Hubert, but she rebels against it because of the potential for disappointment of the same type that she experienced with Hugo. Enid's frustration gets so intense that she seems to be losing her grip at times.

In scene 3, Mr. Gray is introduced as a representative of the company that published John's book recounting the details of the séances. Mr. Gray confirms that he is interested in spiritualism, but we are left to wonder whether his interest is in the "Cause" or the money that it brings into the company coffers. Huxley may be saying that there will always be those interested in the new and novel as long as it stays new and novel. As his name suggests, Mr. Gray will not be one of the "Cause's" greatest supporters. It is his opinion that many will freely discuss spiritualism (spiritual things in general) if they find it profitable (and hence popular). Many find things appealing as long as they are popular. The reason the book is doing so well is because spiritualism is in vogue. Notice that it is a non-fiction subject (The World of Light 55) almost as good as theology in sales. It is seen as much sounder than politics (a very eighteenth-century concept). With his book, John has hit a nerve with the public,

and they will continue to support him as long as the subject is popular. Besides the popularity of spiritualism during this time, what makes the book itself popular is that it tells the truth about the other world.

John is rather modest about the service he has performed. It is his opinion that all he did was to gather the evidence and present it to the public. That is exactly what Huxley did with the work that followed The World of Light and which contributed to his being viewed as a mystic in the eyes of his public. Their failure to understand his perspective as a professional metaphysician led to misinterpretation of all he had to say about his religious perspective. Man, Huxley says, is the true test of spirituality, and, if John believes in what he writes, others will believe as well.

As the discussion continues, Alice is still not completely convinced that spiritualism is legitimate. She is too locked into the stuff of daily living to be absorbed in the realm of the spiritual. An accountant can afford to get involved in such things as spiritualism, but a wife and mother has other things to contend for her attention.

Huxley's link with the eighteenth century again shows itself through the person of Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), a disciple of F. D. Maurice, both of whom were acquainted with Thomas Henry Huxley, champion of Darwinism. In a discussion between John and Mr. Gray regarding the glory of Hubert's manifestations and Enid's grief, Huxley inserts a quote from Kingsley's Water Babies (1863). Just as in his choice of Figaro previously, Huxley's selection of Kingsley is not accidental, especially considering his views on marriage, an institution which Kingsley felt brought together the two realms of heaven and earth. That is the exact point Huxley is after. To convince us further, Huxley has a Latin phrase repeated by Mr. Gray, "great

is truth and prevailing" which is from Thomas Brooks' The Crown and the Glory of Christianity (1662). Kingsley, like Huxley, also wrote from a socio-religious perspective during a spiritually turbulent time. In Yeast: A Problem (1851), the hero is Lancelot Smith (a regal common man?) who is delivered from the religious confusion of the day not by preaching, but by love (an intangible entity) shown him by two sisters. In Alton Locke (1680) the hero Alton is delivered from the religious confusion of his day through a dream.

Mr. Gray is still a bit skeptical, which is understandable because it is his first experience with a séance. Those who have had limited experience in matters of religion are ignorant of the procedure and do not really know what to expect.

Huxley uses Hubert to explain to Mr. Gray the nature of the fourth characteristic of his developing spiritualism reflected in the communiqués given to him by Hubert. He says that his ability to see and receive communication of the type under consideration comes from his ability to exist between two worlds and to remove himself from the constraints of this world in a way that allows him to appreciate the beauty of the other. Hubert is at home in either world because they are not that different from each other. He says,

If you lived as I do, on the borderland, so to speak, between two worlds, you wouldn't find the other side any more extraordinary than this. Less, really. Because the other side is a normal moral world, and this isn't. What happens there is what ought to happen so it seems more normal really than this world, where things that ought to happen so seldom do happen. (The World of Light 63)

John confirms Hubert's comment by telling Mr. Gray that he

mustn't imagine that the spirit world is . . . well, fantastic or irregular. It has spiritual laws, like the material world. Little by little we are beginning to formulate them. (The World of Light 67)

This is as far as Huxley can ever go as a professional metaphysician. He is an existential mystic-spiritualist and little more. That which he seeks is by nature unknowable intellectually. Saying here that he is only beginning to understand the world of the spirits establishes a base from which to judge that his struggle with that unknowable has not been resolved at the end of his life. In "Shakespeare and Religion," finished just hours before his death, Huxley still could only say that "(we are well on our way to an **existential** religion of mysticism. How many kinds of religion!" (Bridgeman 280, emphasis added).

That was just the message Huxley's world was waiting to hear. In this simple statement, Aldous Huxley claimed that not only was the "World of Light" a reality, but also that it was accessible. All one needs is the ability to understand the nature of that world and the desire to develop that understanding. Orthodoxy had failed to appreciate the reality of the world of the spirits (other than to call it evil and choose to ignore it), neo-orthodoxy had lost its perspective on the issue for the sake of popularity, and heterodoxy would prove inadequate because of its limited sight.

During the séance, music begins and lulls Hubert into his trance. His breathing pattern changes and he is taken over by his control, Dr. Ledoux, a rather eccentric Frenchman. During the séance, because of Mr. Gray's presence, Dr. Ledoux has to be convinced that Gray is worthy of being allowed to join in the gathering. It takes faith to believe the communiqués, and what Dr. Ledoux reveals this time is that Hugo will be coming soon. He summons Gray, calling him "black," and reveals the

answer to a question that only he knows in an attempt to convert him to the "Cause." Gray seems to have been convinced, and his enthusiasm is rewarded by Dr. Ledoux's sarcasm. In Huxley's cosmology there will always be the doubters who need proof before they believe. They are also the first to abandon the faith at any sign of difficulty, which is true of Mr. Gray as we will soon see.

Things have gone so well that John is especially excited. He has received another communiqué from Hugo, and he instructs the doctor to tell Hugo that they are glad he is happy. Here we see a change in the nature of the relationship between John and his son. Prior to this point there has been no real relationship, but Hugo's disappearance has brought the two of them together. What John feels could not be accomplished while Hugo was around is becoming established now that Hugo has departed.

In his enthusiasm, Huxley has John give us another hint regarding the connection with the movement of events that brought about the development of his spiritualism. John cites a poem by Henry Vaughn (1662-1695) entitled "The World." John not only loves the poetry of Vaughn, but he also reflects the same similarities between Vaughn and Huxley: "[one] is that of a desolating sense of separation from God . . . ; the other, joy in the Presence that animates and illumines all creation, itself visible proof of his power and love" (Willy 2: 186).

As the séance continues, the concertina in the room again begins to play Figaro and there develops a sense that something is going to happen. In a bizarre twist of events, Act II ends with the music acting as a herald for Hugo himself who shows up in the midst of the activities. To everyone's shock and amazement, there is Hugo as big as life in the flesh--not dead but alive. When Hugo realizes that he has

disrupted a séance, he is most apologetic to his father, and he expresses his surprise at finding Enid present. The séance, which Huxley uses as a forum to bring together all possible metaphysical perspectives, now becomes the focal point for revelation of the truth after which they all seek.

The sudden appearance of Hugo reveals three things: that it took everyone completely by surprise, that everything Dr. Ledoux said would happen did just as he said it would, and that a number of questions were going to need to be answered regarding Hugo's disappearance.

Act III opens the morning after Hugo's return and finds everyone searching for answers that revolve around one question--why? Hugo is not sure why they let people go on believing they were dead, but Bill Hamblin, who has returned as well, now blinded, says that it was all a practical joke. Bill is not the same person he was when they took off; now he is cynical and depressed with nothing good to say about anything. Heterodoxy too has failed to bring fulfillment. He has even taken to using the impersonal pronoun "one" which reflects the personal changes that he has undergone.

John is troubled that the book he has written about the whole affair is now a lie, and he tries to determine what he should do to fix things. His answer is to publish a second work which reveals these new events and communicates the truth.

Hugo defends what he has done, saying, "One's simply got to be cruel sometimes. There's a kind of ultimate selfishness that's sacred and imperative; I simply had to escape--go right away, be somebody else. It seemed a heaven-sent opportunity" (The World of Light 72). He goes on to say that he never meant to cause trouble, only that he felt he must get away, and that was not an easy thing to do.

Huxley is telling his readers that if they want to find the truth they must get away from their cloisters and free themselves to be receptive to the truth as it comes.

During this act, Huxley presents his frustration with public perceptions about religion. Every character has his or her presuppositions validated, and in the face of Hugo's full explanation of the truth of what transpired, each retreats to the safety of his or her own faith: those who were skeptical in the beginning have their skepticism vindicated, and they return to it. Alice goes back to running the household, saying that she has work to do and no time for ghosts and the like. Mr. Gray concurs saying, "How I agree with you Mrs. Wenham! Religion is a wonderful thing in its proper place. But it should never be allowed to invade the sanctities of private life. Never. That's *my* opinion" (The World of Light 76). Enid is frustrated and is faced with extreme guilt for having abandoned herself to Hubert in Hugo's absence. John is concerned with the truth of having his faith shaken to its foundation, and Mr. Gray is willing to let the story die in an attempt to cut his losses.

When Hubert reappears, he is immediately accosted by Mr. Gray who calls him a swindler. Mr. Gray is the type who attacks the faithful when things go wrong or don't work out as he had hoped. John defends Hubert, saying that they did not know: deep down he still wants to believe even in the face of these developments. Had John suspected that Hubert was a fraud, Huxley may have had him take a similar course of action as Harry Houdini, who spent his final years exposing frauds in the practice of spiritualism.

At this point Hugo steps in and wants to address the issue to clear the air. Hugo knows that there has been no fraud perpetuated on anyone. It is here that Huxley articulates his views on true communication that are essential to his mystic-

spirituality. The fact that Hugo was alive is beside the point; what is important is that Hubert was receiving messages about him which were true and valid. Hubert's only fault was that he identified the messages as coming from the world of the dead. What is important is that the facts, the official truths, were faithfully communicated.

Spiritualism is only the vehicle by which they came. Hugo defends Hubert as being perfectly genuine in his beliefs and rightly so. He even admits the legitimacy of Hubert's powers to receive such communication. At the heart of the dialogue is Huxley's conviction that religious schemes, be they spiritualist, protestant, Catholic, pagan, or whatever, are not important. What is important is that the esoteric nature of the message come through: message permeates the universe, and we must think mystically about it in order to make sense of this world. Hugo points out that the important thing here is the gift that Hubert possesses, not the medium of its expression. Hubert, Hugo says, "is what's called a psychic subject--a man with certain special gifts. However, as he's always worked with spiritualists, he tends to attribute everything he does to ghosts" (The World of Light 83). He goes on to say that what Hubert attributed to the work of the spirits was really done by Hubert himself through his special abilities as he received messages from Hugo. What happened, happened through the gifted Mr. Capes, "not the ordinary, walking Mr. Capes. Mr. Capes' unconscious mind influenced by [Hugo's] mind . . ." (The World of Light 83). And Hugo is completely convinced of the veracity of Hubert's gift. He says that he felt as if someone were watching him from afar (The World of Light 84). The reason everyone thought Hugo to be dead was the emotion articulated by Enid at the beginning. She would not mourn because she did not believe Hugo to be dead, only departed. As it turns out she was right, and it also confirms Hubert's suspicions that

she is also gifted. It is here as well that we get Huxley's assertion of his conversion to the "Cause" of professional metaphysics as he defines it.

Alice is not convinced by Hugo. She reprimands him for talking about such things and tells him of John's desire to write the "truth" about what happened, potentially ruining them all. Hubert cannot believe such action would surely ruin his reputation. Hugo again steps to Hubert's defense, saying that everything that happened was legitimate. Hubert agrees. John's concern is that the interpretation was wrong and because of that he had believed a lie. Hugo tells him to forget about the world of light, alluding again to Vaughn and Kingsley. Hugo asserts that the concern for the Cause is misdirected. The Cause will survive.

Enid chastens both Hugo and Hubert and falls into a very deep depression. The only one able to keep her from making good on her earlier threats of suicide is Bill. Together they find consolation.

Huxley reveals the problem at the heart of the matter. As John experiences a crisis of confidence, he looks at Bill and sees his problem. Bill is the visible reminder of their spiritual blindness. John wishes that he were blind so that he could see, truly. He feels a very deep sense of guilt for leading the readers of his best seller astray, and he wants someone to tell him what to do to make it better. When he is chastened by Hugo, John turns the chastening back on him.

Hugo feels that he has spoilt the theory and that John would rather have the theory than himself (which John denies, of course). The nature of their relationship is revealed when Hugo claims that John has always seen him as a ghost. Alive he was a ghost, and gone he was more of a ghost. While they were together they never communicated. They did not become close until they were separated. Hugo says the

feelings are the results of Capes making the ghost more real. John admits that he has always had feelings for Hugo but that he was never good at speaking them. He wants to pick up from where they were when he thought Hugo was dead because he feels that they could put together a kind of relationship if given the chance. In his desire to know the truth, John wants to have it the old way, not the new. To do so is not to have the truth at all.

Hugo knows that John's request can never be realized, and he feels the walls closing in again. Just as he did in the beginning, he now feels the compulsion (in true Huxleyan fashion) to detach again. Fitted with skepticism, he contacts Mr. Gray for some money and slips out unawares, leaving the family to repeat the process: to go on without him or to join him in his search for the truth.

And so The World of Light comes to an end. And so does the definition of Aldous Huxley's true spiritual perspective. Through the text of the play we have accomplished what we set out to do, namely to show that

- 1) Huxley was not a mystic as has been believed, 2) that he was a professional metaphysician, an intellectual tourist in the world of metaphysics whose search for knowledge about universal truth finds its origin in the enlightenment, and finally 3) that the end result of his search led him back to where he started, to "thinking mystically." And what is gained by such thought, Huxley was never sure. As the pages that follow will show, Huxley was still never able to answer the questions raised by this point in his life. By 1931, Huxley was still no more than an intellectual tourist in the realm of spiritual inquiry.

## Chapter V

### Brave New Spirituality

By 1932, Huxley's writing demonstrates how fully absorbed he was in the turmoil of formulating major spiritual positions, and how uneasy he was at vocalizing them. Those ideas, rooted in eighteenth-century mysticism, heterodoxical in nature, and humanistically practical were still in need of an effective, descriptive schema which would allow their airing. That schema, typified in the island prisons as well as a continuing account of his developing faith, is contained in his most influential novel, Brave New World (1932), and corroborated in his last publication entitled "Shakespeare and Religion," finished just before his death.<sup>18</sup> Contained in these two works is a depiction of Huxley's religious beliefs in his own words. By viewing Brave New World from the vantage point of "Shakespeare and Religion," it is possible to conclude that the spiritual views Huxley articulated in the novel were intact at the end of his life and that implementation of those views would require establishing a Brave New approach to spirituality--maybe even a Brave New Society. By moving forward in time and using Huxley's comments on Shakespeare, it is also possible to gain new insight into the significance of Brave New World. Though he falls short of recommending a utopia of any kind in the novel, he recognizes that that may be the only environment in which he would be free to formulate his world-view.

In many ways, Huxley was forced to write Brave New World. First, because of trends in contemporary society (both sociological and theological), the effects of progress and modernization on individuality, and his own spiritual self-examination,

the only conclusion which would allow him to reconcile his spiritual dilemma and the reality of daily life was the creation of something totally new--a new world devoid of the problems plaguing the present one. The old order, wherein there was little or no real synthesis, would never do.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen, this desire is not new to Brave New World. The characters in Huxley's novels consistently show a propensity to remove themselves from their immediate contexts for the security of something--anything--new. In this regard, Jerry Carlson writes that

Brave New World is a rare kind of novel: one more memorable and successful for its overall portrayal of a society than for its delineation of plot or psychologically individualized characters. In this world the method of "Bokanovsky budding" allows the creation of ninety-six persons from one sperm and ovum. Different classes exist . . . but their relations to each other and to society are stabilized by the painless technique of "sleep teaching" that demonstrates to each individual the manifest rightness of his or her place in the world. (59)

Carlson also says that "it is no accident that Huxley begins [the story of that world] by describing an institution rather than by focusing on the actions or attributes of a protagonist" (59). This is primarily because his description of society in Brave New World was reflective of contemporary British society as he viewed it and as he envisioned it potentially should it remain on its destructive course--one which Graves and Hodge characterize as the long weekend, inhabited by what Angela Lambert calls unquiet souls. What is more, George Woodcock says that Brave New World and other of Huxley's later works depict issues latent as early as

the 1920s: the cult of perpetual youth; the problems of increased leisure that technological developments would offer; the psychological perils of Fordism (the subjection of workers to mechanical process); the possible development of eugenics as a means of shaping the man of the future; the implications of the attempt to make man primarily a consumer; and the perils to freedom of a dogmatic egalitarianism. (135)

What Huxley saw in society he disliked and, because he saw nothing better with which to replace it, felt no recourse but to create a new one. And, according to Ashley Montagu, while

[t]he people who govern the Brave New World may not [seem] sane (in what may be called the absolute sense of that word) . . . they are not madmen, and their aim is not anarchy but social stability. (Montagu xxvii)

He continues,

[t]here is, of course, no reason why the new totalitarianisms should resemble the old. . . . [they are] demonstrably inefficient--and in an age of advanced technology, inefficiency is the sin against the Holy Ghost. (xxix)

Unlike the Brave New World of the novel, the Brave New Spirituality Huxley envisions as a proper place in which to develop his spiritual views, would have to avoid becoming merely one which "repairs the defects in human personality, simplifies morality, solves problems through technology, and elevates entertainment above all other values" (Yancy 96). It would be like the island paradise in Longeville's The Hermit.

Second, Huxley had to write the novel because of the shift in perspectives he was experiencing personally. Marovitz writes,

as Huxley became increasingly aware of man's possibilities for self-improvement and psychic fulfillment, his emphasis shifted from "amphibian" man (mind/body) to "triphonian" man (spirit/mind/body), and the tone with which he treated humanity in his novels was modified considerably from that light ironic comedy to satire of a more serious, at times grim, nature. (33)

This shift in focus is the result of Huxley's growing awareness of the need to allow for the spiritual dimension which he perceived to be lacking in the mechanistic, impersonal environment of the 1920s. His satiric attack on that environment in Brave New World reflects both his concerns for contemporary society and his suggestions of viable options for reversal of those trends. At the same time, his observations allow for delineation of the spiritual dimension of life through which he was working. It seems likely that the spiritual self-examination Aldous Huxley underwent writing Point Counter Point, The World of Light, and Brave New World resulted in a reassessment of the human condition and formulation of a metaphysical "world-picture" ("Shakespeare" 80) reminiscent of post-Enlightenment, humanistic spirituality. In Aldous Huxley we have a contemporary example of the search for spiritual identity which parallels that undertaken by the *philosophes* during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

As one might expect, Brave New World begins with a cold, sterile, matter-of-fact, instructive description of a world that is impersonal and mechanistic. We are introduced to the controller, Mustapha Mond, through whom Huxley reflects some

major ideas toward the end of the novel. We hear of the virtues of the Bokanovsky Process--egg budding, making 96 humans--whose goal is "standard men and women; in uniform batches" (Brave New World 7); of Podsnap's technique which speeds up the process of ripening the eggs, and of the mechanical production of children in an impersonal society which predestinates its members genetically and psychologically (Brave New World 13).

As the novel progresses, Huxley orchestrates several contrasts which provide a context for representing his sociological, philosophical, theological, and economical views. These contrasts provide the foundation for formulating the principles undergirding Huxley's utilitarian metaphysics.

The first of these principles is *The Sterility of Science* introduced initially in the contrast between the cold, impersonal world of the science and the bright warmth of nature. A similar contrast is introduced between the imposed utopian atmosphere of social conformity in the Brave New World and the relative spiritual freedom of the Savage Reservation. What Huxley does in these contrasts is reflect the concerns at the heart of his spiritual odyssey--the incessant nagging of a passionate conscience that will not let him be comfortable in a world that is sterile and cold, and an inherent oppositional refusal to abandon himself volitionally to the precepts and dictates of one governed by emotion and commitment rather than intellect (James, "Will" 4). This contrast is significant because, from this point on, the rest of the novel has at its nucleus a discussion of some aspect of the positive and negative intricacies surrounding the issue of commitment.

To continue the motif of "newness" that is necessary in Brave New World, Huxley also uses the early chapters to introduce *The Principle of Isolation* which will

carry the narrative and form the basis of his spiritual manifesto.<sup>20</sup> It is best represented in the metaphor of the island to which he is drawn in Longeville's The Hermit and Shakespeare's The Tempest, and which remains at the heart of the rest of his writing. The island represents the isolation that he feels necessary for coming to terms with his spirituality. The island represents his need for a new world wherein he is free to be unique and free to realize his potential as a spiritual being. He needs a world without the traditions, *taboos*, or history of contemporary society to fall victim to; he needs a world that is "uncivilized" in the Brave New World sense akin to the one found on The Savage Reservation. Again using Mustapha Mond, this time in conversation with the Savage, Huxley expresses this principle saying, "So you don't much like civilization, Mr. Savage." John's response is a resounding "No" (Brave New World 200) because civilization under the control of Mond is cold, impersonal, sterile, and restrictive with no real liberty for the individual. Later, discussing Bernard's begging not to be sent to an island, Mond says,

if he had the smallest sense, he'd understand that his punishment is really a reward. He's being sent to an island. That's to say, he's being sent to a place where he'll meet the most interesting [people] to be found anywhere in the world. All the people who, for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life. All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own. Everyone, in a word, who's anyone. (Brave New World 208)

The first of a series of assertions which leads to this principle is Huxley's desire for the citizenry of the Brave New World to reorient its thinking toward a

totally new perspective which empowers them to avoid the pitfalls of previous generations. This perspective allows Huxley to manage the first of a number of quandaries he faces structuring his new world--what steps are necessary to enable the Brave New Society to start over and yet keep it from committing the mistakes of the past. Accordingly, Huxley's spiritual life must be ordered in the same fashion. In order to do that, it is necessary for Huxley to remove from public view those things which are potentially divisive--things which the Controller, Mustapha Mond, locks away because he considers that they are dangerous--books mostly: the Bible, books of poetry, and works of philosophy and religion--because they encourage independent thinking (Brave New World 32). This is Huxley's way of moving out of the age of faith (an age dependent upon ecclesiastical interpretation of history and the teachings of established religion) into the age of Voltaire and the *philosophes* (an age of spontaneous inquiry). What Huxley abominates is the removal of books into the hands of a select few who keep the secrets the books contain and what he seeks is the ability to read and interpret them for himself. According to Carlson, Huxley must take this radical step because one of the goals of Brave New World is to

explore the inverse, though no less dangerous, problem of how modern mass society could destroy the values of individualism by accepting a false belief in perfection by standardization. . . . [and] the novel's main characters demonstrate the dangers of challenging or even merely deviating from the norms of perfection prescribed by the society. (59)

In this connection, another of the important assertions introduced early in the novel is that history is bunk (Brave New World 31). Though Huxley criticizes the capacity of society to condition its members to have an "instinctive" dislike of books

and nature, implicit in his criticism is the understanding that he must necessarily do the same thing in his formulation of his "world-picture." According to the director, if he is able to keep babies from books, they will be safe (Brave New World 20).

Similarly, if Huxley is to achieve the kind of spiritual synthesis he is working toward, he must first reorder his thinking apart from outside influences. The difference is, however, that unlike the citizens of the Brave New World, he must condition himself to be receptive to new truth as he discovers it. To do that requires having a spiritual *tabula rasa*. What Huxley is doing is using the Brave New World as a negative example of the world he wishes he could create. What Huxley finds repugnant is that contemporary society has allowed itself to become The Brave New World--conditioned to love activity that is consumptive rather than contemplative. Huxley is saying that he must avoid making the mistakes of his predecessors in his quest for *Aufklärung*, that "moral education . . . ought never, in any circumstances, to be *rational*" (Brave New World 24, emphasis added). In Huxley's Brave New Spirituality, the objectives would be simple: reorient, reeducate, and reorder thinking, through the aid of drugs if necessary (*soma*), in order to allow people to "take a holiday from reality whenever [they] like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology" (Brave New World 52).<sup>21</sup> What is important to note here is the way Huxley phrases this statement. Taking *soma* not only allows the user to "come down" with no ill effects physiologically, but theologically as well--with nothing more than a system of nondefined symbols (see chapter two). Once the symbols are codified, however, they become dangerous and divisive. While this may appear as a contradiction to Huxley's position on the use of drugs in the early 1960s, no contradiction exists. His advocacy of drug use develops over time in much the same way as his spirituality,

and the attitude he develops is that drugs are not to be used as an escape, as he says in Brave New World, but that they are essentially a vehicle to be used to enhance the spiritual experience of the user. This seems most plausible because everything envisioned for the Brave New Spirituality is expressly geared toward eradication of traditions *and* taboos, one of which would be overcoming taboos against the ritual use of drugs in spiritual activity in western societies. In the 1960s Huxley theorized, because he believed that pharmaceuticals could be used without repercussions when the user returns to normal activity after the effects of the drug wear off, that they could have significant bearing on spiritual perceptions of the user. His opinions were not shared widely because of the relative few who view altering the body chemically as a legitimate means of obtaining spiritual awareness.<sup>22</sup>

Huxley's next assertion is that society has to reject not only its history, but also its major institutions if it is to succeed. In this context, he introduces a radical attack on the family and other means of interpersonal interaction which have contributed to societal conditions as Huxley perceives them. At one point, Mustapha Mond says, "Just try to realize it. . . . Try to realize what it was like to have a viviparous mother. . . . Try to imagine what 'living with one's family' meant" (Brave New World 32), which of course the boys cannot. Institutions like the family and commitment on the level of mother to child are not only missing in contemporary society, but they are also constant reminders of his own inability to appropriate the better aspects of the institutions for himself. It should be remembered that the spiritual vacuum created in his youth and early adulthood is the direct result of the impact of family on his formative years. It should also be remembered that what Huxley advocates is reorientation and reeducation of individuals about the role of family, not

its dissolution.

In addition to new consideration of the roles of home and family, Huxley would need a reassessment of religion; and though he held a degree of respect for the Catholic faith, he rejected most of Christianity and especially criticized it because it requires what the novel outwardly denies--i.e. a commitment by faith. A similar mood of spiritual reevaluation took place prior to and during the eighteenth century. In both cases, the resulting faith is the same--a religious syncretism that makes spirituality difficult to define. Ironically, Huxley relies on Christianity's essential elements for the more significant images he creates in the novel. The image of the crucifixion of Jesus, for example, is used to express his wonder at what it would be like to die for something. In the same way, he also uses syncretistic ceremonial rites to suggest the spiritual gains from self-sacrifice and flagellation. It is ironic that a man who has the insight to perceive such necessary elements in the quest for finding spiritual satisfaction has so little will to appropriate them personally. Huxley also uses one of Christendom's most popular writers, John Henry Cardinal Newman, for expression of his own views in the concluding chapters of Brave New World. What draws him to Newman is of the nature of Newman's discussion of the relationship between faith and reason. This discussion provides us with a useful perspective from which to view Huxley's struggles with the same issues.

In place of the Christian traditions Huxley rejects, the reader is introduced to elements of the universal utilitarian perspective he finds attractive. According to Huxley, the tenets of Christian faith are "unquestionable realities . . . . So was Abraham's bosom, or was it Arthur's bosom? After all, what difference did it make? A bosom is a bosom, and both names began with A" ("Shakespeare" 77). What is

ironic here is Huxley's proximity to the solution of his problem with commitment. He says, "Religion is not merely a complex of behaviour-patterns and organizations. It is also a set of beliefs" ("Shakespeare" 78). With this knowledge in hand, it is not hard to see why commitment was so arduous for him.

These are also the reasons for the next principle, *The Principle of Newness*. Huxley cannot allow himself to accept the tenets of spirituality *hypnopaedically* dispensed by organized religions. His view of the universe is larger than that. Through Mond Huxley says, "Each one of us, . . . goes through life inside a bottle. But if we happen to be Alphas [Huxley], our bottles are, relatively speaking, enormous. We should suffer acutely if we were confined in a narrow space" (204). This statement reveals the essential elements of Huxley's perspective necessary for understanding why he cannot commit himself to any particular religious system. For him, that would be like confinement in the narrow space of faith and commitment. His view of spirituality is much broader than what he sees delineated by organized religions. What he fails to see, however, is that his view is too broad. It is not possible to harmonize all religions into a single melody. Though they share common elements, they are very different in application. Huxley seems to want to ignore this fact and he continues to seek reconciliation of things which will not be reconciled. His bottle is *too* big.

In chapters four and five, Huxley introduces the reader to the principle of newness through the characters in the story, a new kind of people through whom we get a fuller picture of the extent of his universal utilitarianism. We are introduced to Bernard Marx and Lenina Crowne, people who, like so many others, are members of the Brave New Spirituality, but whom Huxley crafts carefully ensuring that they retain

most of the frailties which plague the very typical human.<sup>23</sup> There, too, we are introduced to Helmholtz Watson, who is distinguished for his physical, emotional, and intellectual characteristics (Brave New World 63) and is the first to speak directly for Huxley in the novel. Through him, we hear echoes of Huxley musing over his spirituality and revealing the issues most pressing in his thinking. In a conversation with Bernard Marx, we hear Helmholtz asking,

"Did you ever feel . . . as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using--you know, like all the water that goes down the falls instead of through the turbines?" [Marx responds,] "You mean all the emotions one might be feeling if things were different?" [Helmholtz] "Not quite. I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it--only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of the power. If there were some different way of writing, . . . . Or else something else to write about. . . ." He was silent; then, "You see . . . I'm pretty good at inventing phrases--you know, the sort of words that suddenly make you jump, almost as though you'd sat on a pin, they seem so new and exciting even though they're about something hypnopaedically obvious. It's not enough for the phrases to be good; what you make with them ought to be good. (Brave New World 65-66)

He concludes, "I feel I could do something more important. Yes, and more intense, more violent" (Brave New World 66). What Huxley wants is to be this kind of person in contemporary society. He wishes to be one who refuses to accept the *status*

*quo*, becoming instead the agent of any changes necessary. Again ironically, he (Huxley) is at once driven by primitive emotion and turned off by it--he sees Bernard's showing emotion as a weakness (67), and when Helmholtz later gets in trouble for writing poetry and teaching it to his classes, his crime is the indulgence in and public revelation of feeling. Having seen Huxley's use of the names of characters in the narrative to give the readers clues along the way, it is interesting to speculate on the choice of the name "Helmholtz" for this particular character. It would appear that there are several possibilities in the name which are of significance for this study, especially if Helmholtz, Mond and the Savage are vehicles for Huxley's personal views as are Philip Quarrels in Point Counter Point and others. In light of the connection between Brave New World and Shakespeare's play The Tempest, it seems not unreasonable to see the character's name functioning primarily as a guide, *steering* the reader through the tempestuous storm of Huxley's spiritual struggle as he articulates it in the narrative. Though he did not start the novel with that intention, as it developed, he found himself being drawn further into the seriousness of what he was doing. From letters written during the production of Brave New World Montagu concludes that in spite of the fact that Huxley started it as a comic novel, as it progressed, he realized that it was only comic

in the sense that every satire must be comic as it sets out the follies and foibles of mankind. The challenge is to convince the fool of the follies of which he is capable by showing him the world of the future in which his grandchildren may be forced to live. Like Erasmus in The Praise of Folly, Huxley started out with light intention; but as he progressed the sense of what he was really depicting overcame his lightness, and comic

became serious. (xv)

The early chapters of the novel also provide the reader with a significant new metaphor for understanding the story--the helicopter. In it, Huxley provides a most useful picture of what is happening within himself as he defines his spirituality; in it we have an image of Huxley hovering over the spiritual landscape looking for a place to land. The irony is that one who sought a landing place never found one acceptable to him. What he does instead is approach all his spiritual opportunities in a Jamesian manner that allows him to accept certain truths "passionally" but reject them "volitionally" (James "Will" 4).<sup>24</sup> All he was convinced of was that "there [must be], no doubt, some kind of moral order" ("Shakespeare" 81). This intellectual habit of Huxley's--that of trying on and then abandoning a number of perspectives--is what causes the greatest confusion in defining his spirituality, and it is a practice from which he was never able to free himself.

To appreciate the significance of this trend fully, we need only look at Huxley's dependence upon certain motifs found in The Tempest which he uses to convey this newness in Brave New World and to bring together all the elements necessary for further identifying the important elements of Huxley's spiritual views.

In Huxley's commentary on The Tempest, contained in his article entitled "Shakespeare and Religion" (75ff), written just before he died, we find a profound admiration for Shakespeare that was rooted in the affinity Huxley felt toward him, and another reason why we must understand John Savage as speaking for Huxley along with Helmholtz. Through his discussion of The Tempest, we also see Huxley's respect for the character of Miranda and her usefulness as a vehicle reflecting his spiritual views. In her, we have another metaphor which carries the bulk of many of Huxley's

narratives; a metaphor that also communicates much about Huxley and his spiritual odyssey and expresses his conviction that "If one's different, one's bound to be lonely" (Brave New World 127). Close scrutiny of the way the play and the novel interact and align themselves in *Miranda* will reveal significant information regarding Huxley's spirituality.

Carol Thomas Neely points out that feminist criticism of Shakespeare's drama has developed primarily along two lines. She writes that feminist critics either concern themselves

with analyzing the strength, influence, and complexity of women in the plays, compensating for their past neglect, misreading, and stereotyping . . . , [or they stress] the constrictions placed on the female characters by the patriarchal structures within the plays and by the male-authored text in which they exist. (3)

While her observations are true, they do not go quite far enough. Neely's view does not account for the possibility that at the end of his career, Shakespeare was attempting to break free of the dictates of traditional dramatic character roles in his plays in order to give them more depth. By not recognizing this, Neely and others miss the significant importance of *Miranda* in The Tempest, and they fail to see the ways she functions as a significant illustration for what Huxley is doing in Brave New World. In the context of the present discussion, it is especially through the father-daughter relationship between Prospero and *Miranda* that we can come to a greater understanding of Brave New World because of the interdependence of the two works. That scrutiny will disclose that in *Miranda*, Shakespeare reveals a "new woman," a woman with the power to be her own person and the potential to develop not only as a

wife and mother, but also as an individual person. By removing Miranda from traditional Elizabethan society and placing her, along with her father, in the unique context of The Tempest, Shakespeare afforded himself an opportunity to take a giant step forward in redefining the roles played by women in Renaissance drama. He also provided Huxley the vehicle necessary for discussion of his developing spiritual perspectives in Brave New World in at least two ways.

The first way in which Huxley finds The Tempest significant is because it is a work rich in metaphors he finds useful for his purposes. Looking at Brave New World, we see Huxley's attempt to emulate the Shakespeare he admired, who

could write realistically in the style of a dispassionate and often amused observer of contemporary life; he could dramatize biographies and historical chronicles; he could invent fairy stories and fantasies; he could create (often out of the most unpromising raw material) huge tragic allegories of good and evil, in which almost superhuman figures live their lives and die their often sickening deaths. He could mingle sublimity with pathos, bitterness with joy and peace and love, intellectual subtlety with delirium and the cryptic utterances of uninspired wisdom. ("Shakespeare" 75)

Together, these comments demonstrate why Huxley admired The Tempest as an appealing medium for depiction of views. Combined with The Hermit, The Tempest provides him a perfect forum for elucidation of the spiritual dialogue he is conducting with himself. Their island settings allow him to fully retreat from any semblance of contemporary society as he considers his Brave New Spirituality, a context similar to the one in The Hermit which we have already seen as having been influential in Point

Counter Point. There, Huxley was drawn to the character; for Brave New World he is drawn to the setting. For him, The Tempest represents the final rest for which he seeks and which he understands is not yet within his reach. He writes, "But on the way to the serenity of The Tempest, what horrors must be faced, what miseries must be endured" ("Shakespeare" 81). Just as the island setting is a key element in the development of Miranda in The Tempest, so too it functions as a locus for contemplation of his own place in the world. Doing so allows him to be seen as one who, like Shakespeare's heroes,

has to fight his ethical battles in a world intrinsically hostile. And this intrinsically hostile universe is shot through with moral evil--evil on the animal level, on the human level, on the supernatural level.

("Shakespeare" 81)

For Huxley, Brave New World is the same kind of setting and John the Savage a true Shakespearean hero.

Huxley is attracted to Shakespeare's Miranda and her island setting because he sees similarity between them and what he envisions as necessary elements for his Brave New Spirituality. He sees a new, innocent citizen in Miranda, a person who was reared in an idyllic setting and who, by the end of The Tempest, has been freed to realize her potential. She alone is singularly incapable of making the mistakes of her predecessors. By play's end, we see not only a woman who has the power to determine her own future, but also one who is disposed to do so. Herein is an explanation of not only why Huxley is drawn to The Tempest and to Miranda, but also the extent to which his spiritual dilemma cannot be worked out within the constraints of contemporary society because of its mechanical, impersonal sterility. Huxley feels

himself to be in the midst of a spiritual tempest from which he seeks liberation. This issue--having the power to determine one's own destiny--is at the heart of a discussion of Romeo and Juliet in Brave New World. In the context of Romeo's first meeting with Juliet, Helmholtz says,

I know quite well that one needs ridiculous, mad situations like that; one can't write really well about anything else. Why was that old fellow such a marvelous propaganda technician? Because he had so many insane, excruciating things to get excited about. You've got to be hurt and upset; otherwise you can't think of the really good, penetrating, X-ray phrases . . . . [But] who's going to get excited about a boy having a girl or not having her? . . . . No . . . it won't do. We need some other kind of madness and violence. But what? What? Where can one find it? . . . I don't know . . . I don't know. (Brave New World 170)

In an attempt to help himself "know," Huxley recognizes the The Tempest's usefulness because

the storm that rages through King Lear is [here] shut up into an episode of seventy lines . . . [and] serves as a kind of back-cloth to the Enchanted Island . . . , as if Shakespeare packed his whole tragic vision of life into one brief scene before bestowing his new vision on us, as if he reminds us first of the old vision that we may better appreciate the new. (Wilson 13)

And in Shakespeare's tempest Huxley finds a metaphor useful for describing the spiritual tempest raging within him. This new vision of life is what Huxley realizes to

be necessary for himself and for his Brave New Society.

Significant also regarding The Tempest is that it contains no typical pressures that come to bear on Miranda's development--she has a selective history. Her character could not have been created in any other setting. Anywhere else she would not have enjoyed the same freedoms that she experiences on the island. In order for her to be truly "new," Shakespeare had to position her in a "new" setting. Society, as far as Miranda is concerned, consists only of her father and Caliban, son of the witch Sycorax.

In Miranda are the makings of a totally new female character, one with the power to be herself, not an adjunct to the males in her life. In her, Shakespeare exhibits a woman who is different, powerful in her own right, equipped to face her future and who, at the end of the play is ready to assume her position in the new world awaiting her. Upon seeing the men from the ship she says, "O brave new world, /That has such people in't!" (5.1.183-84). Prospero's response, hesitant and doubtful, affirming these conclusions regarding Miranda, is, "Tis new to thee" (5.1.184). And having said this, Prospero can only trust that the years they spent in isolation together will serve her well as she prepares to take up a new life.

In the closing chapters of Brave New World, we find evidence of the perspective developed in the preceding pages reflected in the novel. Therein we also find the delineation of at least three major principles which will assist in defining his spirituality. Those principles reveal that Aldous Huxley was not a mystic, but instead a thinker, a spiritual thinker and pragmatist who was trapped, like Mustapha Mond, between the world in which he lived and the one which he was powerless to know in any way but intellectually.

The final principle Huxley reveals in Brave New World is *The Principle of Unorthodox Synthesis*. Initiated in the production of The World of Light, this principle is fully fleshed out through the remarks of the Controller and in the life of Huxley himself. In this context we do not use *unorthodox* in a negative sense, but rather to convey its meaning of something "not orthodox." This perspective represents a magnificent synthesis of all the varied material he finds spiritually acceptable and the hope of coming upon whatever truth there is to be found. As we have seen, any spiritual schema Huxley might develop must be heterodox at best. As his own life attests, that is because, while God (according to his definition) may not change, "men do" (Brave New World 212), and the concept of God that he developed in Brave New World is not far removed from the syncretic description offered early in his writing career (Birnbaum, "Syncretism" 46). It should be remembered that in Antic Hay, Huxley characterizes God as "a physiologue, a pedagogue, and a priapagogue; for I leave out of account mere artists and journalists whose titles do not end with the magic syllable. And finally . . . plain Dog, which being interpreted kabalistically backwards signifies God. All at your service" (79). And, according to Huxley, spiritual concepts are always in need of revision because things change. As Birnbaum rightly notes,

Essentially . . . Huxley's religious quest was a paradoxically tortuous one. He began by mocking and rejecting Judeo-Christian tradition though accepting its occasional manifestations of mysticism, flirted temporarily with [the] Lawrentian doctrine of instinctive living and "blood consciousness," changed to contemplative investigation, turned to the East for further illumination, and died in the West trying to balance in an uneasy syncretism the Caliban of Western science with the Ariel

of Buddhist mysticism. One speculates whether it was a consummation devoutly to be wished. The religious syncretism turned out to be a synthetic product; the metaphysical quest ended with a pharmacological solution. ("Syncretism" 63)

Because of his rejection of commitment and faith, the basic ingredients necessary for satisfactory participation in religious systems, Aldous was unable to enjoy the fruits of his labors within any of the systems he investigated. Had he the will to commit himself to one of the belief systems he toyed with, he might have found the same satisfaction experienced by contemporaries like Christopher Isherwood, who found in Buddhism that for which Huxley desperately sought. Instead, Brave New World leaves the reader with a depressing picture of a man struggling within himself, attempting to find answers in the spiritual vacuum left by rejection of traditional Christianity (represented by the Bible), his revulsion toward dedicated faith (The Imitation of Christ), attraction to the psychology of religious life (James's Varieties of Religious Experience), and the mixture of faith and reason (Cardinal Newman). It is through Cardinal Newman that Huxley reveals the bulk of that struggle. Mond reads from Newman's work,

A man grows old; he feels in himself that radical sense of weakness, of listlessness, of discomfort, which accompanies the advance of age; and feeling thus, imagines himself merely sick, lulling his fears with the notion that this distressing condition is due to some particular cause, from which, as from an illness, he hopes to recover. Vain imaginings!

(213)

He concludes that the disease is old age but continues,

my own experience has given me the conviction that, quite apart from any such terrors or imaginings, the religious sentiment tends to develop as we grow older; to develop because as the passions grow calm, as the fancy and the sensibilities are less excited and less excitable, our reason becomes less troubled in its working, less obscured by the images, desires, and distractions in which it used to be absorbed. (213)

Contained in Newman's words are Huxley's own conclusions, conclusions to which he clings for the remainder of his life, but which he never fully adopts. The price, commitment, is too high. How ironic that Huxley became one who feels, like Newman,

that all that gave to the world of sensations its life and charm has begun to leak away from [him], now that phenomenal existence is no more bolstered up by impressions from within or from without, [who feels] the need to lean on something that abides, something that will never play [him] false--a reality, an absolute and everlasting truth. (Brave New World 213-14)

How impossible it is for one who finds commitment so difficult, that in spite of all he knows to be necessary for spiritual satisfaction, Mond settles for *soma*, "Christianity without tears" (Brave New World 218). In effect, that is what Huxley wants, faith without commitment.

As Brave New World draws to a close, the reader is given a picture of what Huxley may have envisioned waiting at the end of his spiritual quest, or what he saw as potentially happening to his contemporaries should they not realize what civilization was doing to them. Or maybe he intends both. Like Mond, Huxley stands on a

precipice, caught between having to function as if God is no longer necessary, something to be kept locked away, and having to feel the presence of spirit, what he knows to be the opposite of those views. Because of his inability to commit himself spiritually, it is likely that Huxley forced himself into perpetually seeking spiritual deliverance and satisfaction without ever finding either.

Weakened by cancer, and under the influence of LSD, Aldous Huxley died on November 22, 1963, with his second wife, Laura Archera Huxley, at his side, without ever fully achieving the spiritual synthesis he sought. His last words, written hours before his death, were, "We are well on the way to an existential religion of mysticism. How many religions!" (Huxley, "Shakespeare" 85). These words come, not from the pen of a mystic, but rather from an intellectual tourist who has visited nearly all religions and found none to be satisfying because they demanded from him what he could not give--himself.

### Notes

1. The significance of this reference to Caliban should be noted. It will not be the last time Huxley refers to The Tempest to help make a point.
2. Some see naturalism as being based in materialism which can be understood in three ways. (1) Philosophic materialism where man is the only energy and religion is no more than a psychological or sociological tool, (2) dialectical materialism and (3) practical materialism which is no more than the acquisition of things (see Schaeffer 3: 182).
3. Louis Dupré would add one more characteristic to James' list: integration. Dupré adds this quality because he says that the experience of the mystic overcomes previous or existing opposition to its integration of life and union with reality. Louis Dupré, "Mysticism." The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 10 (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 245ff.
4. See also Pelikan 525ff.
5. It is interesting to note the variety of opinions regarding the formation of Huxley's mysticism which range from Chakoo's assertion that he sought true inner enlightenment in Aldous Huxley and Eastern Religion to Diana Trilling's belief that Huxley became a mystic because of his disgust with sex in "The Faith of Aldous Huxley."
6. The text of Point Counter Point used in this dissertation is the 1928 edition published by Harper and Row in New York. All citations from the novel in the dissertation are from that edition.
7. *The Cause* is an expression that Huxley uses in The World of Light, Act III.1, to refer to Spiritualism.
8. Compare this with a similar incident with Rampion later. As he breaks into a passionate tirade on belief and living with the whole body, his discourse is broken off by a fit of coughing (107).
9. Ashley Montagu uses the same name to refer to Huxley in his introductory remarks to Brave New World (see Works Cited).
10. Huxley will address the impact of Ford later in Brave New World.
11. The text of The World of Light used in this dissertation is the 1931 edition published by Doubleday, Doran & Company, Garden City, NJ. All citations from the play in the dissertation are from that edition. For lists of performances, cast, and other reviews see The London Stage 31.117 (1931): 165.

12. The World of Light is the only play published in Britain between 1926 and 1944 which deals with the subject of spiritualism. Such a fact might be considered ironic given the interest in the subject among the general public. This also suggests the "originality" of a subject that Huxley's critics denied acknowledging.
13. Considering Huxley's bout with blindness, this may be autobiographical on his part. Bill Hamblin is also the only blind character in all of Huxley's work.
14. This play is not satirical as some critics have suggested, but seriously as he articulates his personal spirituality.
15. Huxley himself had a younger sibling. "The children" we discover later, are two boys, a fact which corresponds to Huxley's personal background.
16. Meaning "one who worships a deity," this term will reappear later in other of Huxley's works.
17. Huxley's choice of *Figaro* as Hugo's favorite is of no minor importance. The story is of eighteenth-century origin, and the protagonist is one, like Hugo and Huxley, who feels torn in several directions.
18. The text of Brave New World used in this dissertation is the 1974 edition with introduction by Ashley Montagu published by The Heritage Press, Norwalk, CT. All citations from the novel contained in the dissertation are from that edition.
19. This point is corroborated in Plate 1, the first of a series of illustrations by Mara McAfee, between pages six and seven in the 1974 edition of Brave New World. Scattered about the director are the boys busily recording his every word in their notebooks. On every page visible are the words "Begin at the beginning." McAfee has rightly interpreted Huxley's perspective of starting afresh in every aspect of the novel--especially as regards his world-view.
20. It is interesting to note how closely related Huxley's personal spiritual odyssey is to the one undertaken by the *philosophes* during the eighteenth century as they attempted to reconstruct the roles of God and man in a rational world.
21. *Soma* is an hallucinogenic drug that combines narcotic and hallucinogenic effects.
22. Huxley's point is that the people of Brave New World use *soma* for escape and control rather than enlightenment.
23. The time and scope of this project do not allow for more than making mention of the implications of the names Huxley uses in this novel such as *Marx* (Socialism), *Lenin* (Communism), *Crowne* (British aristocracy), *Hoover* (big business capitalism). Such use is his representation of sociological forces at work in contemporary society all controlled by *soma* (σῶμα - body) to give members a false sense of unity.

24. The same can be said for James. While he effectively defines mysticism (see chapter 2) he follows that definition with a vague statement about sense-oriented experience which renders the religious practitioner more of a functional existentialist than a mystic (see James, Varieties 373+). A bright idea and a mystical experience are not the same thing.

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