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ALDOUS HUXLEY

A STUDY

IN A

CHANGING PHILOSOPHY

---

by

Lee Q. Charette

Stockton

1940

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of English

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In partial fulfillment

of the

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

"Art," besides being art, "is also philosophy," Aldous Huxley says in Vulgarity in Literature. Throughout the years in which he has been writing, Huxley has never lost sight of this dictum. His philosophy has ever formed an integral part of all that he has produced, and especially has it been basic in his novels.

Because of the importance of philosophy to Huxley, the artist, I have aimed in this study at following the course of his changing philosophy. I have tried to present Huxley in his early years advocating a philosophy of meaninglessness and then, after becoming dissatisfied with such an interpretation of life, evolving a kind of pseudo-humanistic theory which he later discarded in favor of a mystical interpretation of the universe.

In addition to showing the "what" of Huxley's philosophy, I have attempted to search out its "whys" as well. I have held his theories up to the light of the sociological background of his times and to the light of his own personality. That is, I have decided that the philosophy to which he holds and has held is subject to the dictates of social change and to the dictates of his own nature.

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CHAPTER I

THE HUMAN VOMEDY

> . . .I had meant to write the phrase "the Human Comedy", but, by a happy slip, I put my finger on the letter that stands next to "C" on the universal key-board. When I found that I had written the "Human Vomedy." Was there ever a criticism of life more succinct and expressive? To the more sensitive and queasy among the gods the last few years must indeed have seemed a vomedy of the first order.[1]

Between the years 1920 and 1925 Aldous Huxley wrote three novels and hosts of essays in which he devoted himself exclusively to presenting the emetic qualities of that period. His first novel, Crome Yellow, strikes at the essentials of what all the writers of the period were saying and of what he himself continued to say for the next few years with variations on the details. Here the reader is made to realize just how nauseating the life toward which so many people, actually most people, aspire really is. Here the full impact of the futility of life dawns upon one when he is struck by the fact that his ultimate goals, the ends towards which he struggles with every effort of his will, are only chimaeras, almost totally valueless. The sophisticated life, the artistic life, the life of almost un-

[1] Aldous Huxley, On the Margin, 80.

limited leisure, the life in which all whims can be satisfied is only one that is conducive to boredom and dissatisfaction.

The device Huxley uses in Crome Yellow is an old one, one that was used by Thomas Love Peacock with not indifferent success and by Norman Douglas to advantage and by numbers of writers who viewed life ironically as Huxley does in this novel. Huxley gathers together a group of cultivated, leisured Englishmen, the elect of God and Mammon, so that they might disport themselves conversationally and sexually in the most vomic of fashions. But the vomedy of it all is only implicit in the actions and conversations of the characters involved. Huxley injects no comment on his characters into Crome Yellow. He lets them talk and act, and invariably they do so much to their own disadvantage, to their disadvantage, since they are satirical figures. Mary Bracegirdle, Mr. Scogan and Denis Stone are presented much more in the round, much more believably than Peacock's equally satirical Mr. Escot, the "deteriorationist", Mr. Foster, the "perfectibilian" and Mr. Jenkison, the "statu-quo-ite". Though the people in Headlong Hall were created for much the same purpose as Huxley's characters in Crome Yellow were, they are primarily embodied ideas and nothing more. In spite of the fact that Huxley emphasizes the ridiculous aspects of his characters' nature in this novel, his characters are on the whole quite believable, living and breathing people.

Here at Crome they congregate so that they might put behind them one more deadly week or so; here the boredom might

not be so excruciating, here the new excitement, the new diversion might by some faint chance be found at last. But of course it isn't. Of course it is just as dull as every other holiday has been and as every holiday in the future will most probably be. Here, one finds those who populate The Spur and Town and Country, those whom one admires most, those after whom one tries to fashion one's own pathetic little existence. The reader is privileged to examine a typical week in their lifes, a week of relaxation in which the duties of business have been forgotten so that they may do what they most delight in doing--nothing, as it turns out. There is a good deal of talk, some half-hearted flirting and a seduction. But that is all that happens, and that doesn't really matter.

There are several strings to this fiddle of Huxley's that plays but the two tunes, boredom and futility, futility and boredom. The first one, the one on which he plays the most frequently, is concerned with science and that field's accompanying evils. It has become an age of invention rather than of discover; it has become an age in which the acquiring of comfort and as many diversions with the expense of as little effort as possible is the goal. The futility of a science which can make people only comfortable, give them faster means of transportation and the ultimate in plumbing and still make no one the happier was pathetic to him.

The ramifications of science's uselessness in regard to the bettering of life were manifold. People were being

lulled into unthinking stupidity. The new gadgets had gradually removed all necessity for thinking, in fact, made the thinking processes atrophy. No longer desirous of using the brain or even able to use it, man was gradually allowing science to encroach on his last domain, on the domain of his animality. Mr. Scogan, a dinner-table philosopher and an overpowering bore, said of this fact:

> "With the gramophone, the cinema, and the automatic pistol, the goddess of Applied Science has presented the world with another gift, the more precious even than these--the means of dissociating love from propagation. Eros, for those who wish it, is now an entirely free god; his deplorable associations with Lucina may be broken at will. In the course of the next few centuries, who knows? the world may see a more complete severance. I look forward to it optimistically."[2]

Sexual promiscuity in its freest possible aspects, conducive only to the boredom of satiety was looked forward to by the short-sighted Mr. Scogan with delight. Huxley makes little obvious attempt at presenting any explicit irony about Mr. Scogan. The reader is intended to grasp it of himself, without any dependency upon the author. If he doesn't--well, it is just too bad.

Sometimes, just to make it a little more difficult for the reader, Mr. Scogan is permitted to say something with which Huxley ardently agrees, is permitted to act as another one of the strings on Huxley's fiddle. Huxley has always desired to break down the puritannical tabus regarding sex

2 Aldous Huxley, Crome Yellow, 49.

which, he feels, have smothered and stultified the English and the American people for generations. Puritanism was being broken down, but Huxley didn't approve of the particular turn the desired frankness was taking. He says through the mouth of Mr. Scogan:

> "The reaction, when it came--and we may say roughly that it set in a little before the beginning of this century--the reaction was to openness, but not to the same openness as had reigned in the earlier ages. It was to a scientific openness, not to the jovial frankness of the past, that we returned. Earnest young men wrote in the public prints that from this time forth it would be impossible ever again to make a joke of any sexual matter. Professors wrote thick books in which sex was sterilised and dissected. It has become customary for serious young women, like Mary, to discuss, with philosophic calm, matters of which the merest hint would have sufficed to throw the youth of the sixties into a delirium of amorous excitement. It is all very estimable, no doubt. But still"--Mr. Scogan sighed--"I for one should like to see, mingled with this scientific ardour, a little more of the jovial spirit of Rabelais and Chaucer."[3]

The road toward an uninhibited attitude regarding sex had forked at the time when science had made its appearance. From healthy, vigorous lustiness the world had turned instead toward cold, scientific detachment.

It is silly to refer to man as a reasoning being, since it is no longer possible to appeal to him through the intellect. He says,

> It is humiliating to find how impotent unadulterated sanity is. Sanity, for example, informs us that the only way in which we can preserve civilization is by behaving decently and intelligently. Sanity appeals and argues; our rulers persevere in their customary porkishness, while

3 *Ibid.*, 151.

> we acquiesce and obey. The only hope is a maniacal crusade; I am ready, when it comes, to beat a tambourine with the loudest, but at the same time I shall feel a little ashamed of myself.[4]

The air, such as it is at Crome, is strangely foetid, as is the air of modern society itself. Boredom is a static, sterile attitude, and that is the prevailing state of mind not only at Crome but everywhere. The Elizabethan country people had entertained themselves; they did morris dances on the village green, sang madrigals as they sat around the fire of a winter's evening, danced and sang with skill and creative power. They had been dependent upon no one except themselves for entertainment. The air had been clear and refreshing then. Now all that was changed, and the villain "Science" was to blame. The peasants in _Crome Yellow_ are strangely different from their ancestors of Elizabethan times. A group of the guests at Crome were walking down the road.

> At the first stile a group of village boys, loutish young fellows all dressed in the hideous ill-fitting black which makes a funeral of every English Sunday and holiday, were assembled, drearily guffawing as they smoked their cigarettes. . .they had nothing, nothing except Mr. Bodiham's forbidding Boy's Club and the rare dances and concerts organised by himself. Boredom or the urban pleasures of the county metropolis were the alternatives that presented themselves to these poor youths. Country pleasures were no more. .[5]

[4] _Ibid._, 228.

[5] _Ibid._, 182.

If the simpler, more unsophisticated members of society had lost their creative impulses, what had happened to those who were fortunate enough to be socially acceptable to the Wimbushes at Crome? Huxley draws a very discouraging picture on that score. To be a clever artistic fake, to be nothing more than a lively, amusing dilletante was all that was to be desired, all that could possibly be tolerated, since a really serious artist would be anything but amusing. So it was quite unnecessary for anyone to cultivate his native talents beyond a slightly disguised mediocrity. If the piano-playing were fortissimo enough, if the painting were symbolical enough, if the art were pyrotechnical enough as to color and even remotely in tune with the accepted artistic fashions of the moment, then that was all that could be desired. The person who could do all of these things in addition to possessing skill at the art of love, ability at extemporaneous versifying and could read palms as well was amply equipped to frequent the best society.

Curiously enough there is no alternative to the actions of the people at Crome. Huxley deplores their existences and everything they stand for. He disapproves of the way they waste their time. He fears the factors responsible for such a situation, fears science, the loss of values and the ever-encroaching industrialism. He hates it intensely, as his contempt for the figures in <u>Crome Yellow</u> will readily testify, but he doesn't quixotically desire any return to the past and

doesn't see much hope in the future for a solution that could be acceptable. One of Huxley's characters in Crome Yellow says, "It's futile to complain that things are as they are."[6] That is the tone of the entire book. Futility. Despair. Inaction.

Until 1925 there is hardly a character that deviates to any marked degree from the pattern set for his characterization in Crome Yellow. He could sneer at Mr. Scogan for making an inventory of the world's existing horrors, for saying,

> "People are being crushed, slashed, disembowlled, mangled. . Screams of pain and fear go pulsing through the air at the rate of eleven hundred feet per second. After traveling for three seconds they are perfectly inaudible. These are distressing facts; but do we enjoy life any the less because of them? Most certainly we do no. . ."[7]

But one can hardly say that this vomic reaction to Mr. Scogan's attitude is more than faintly positive in combatting the situation. Not only was he sneering at Mr. Scogan, but he was also sneering at himself, at his own inability to do anything more than express an utter loathing for the society about him, more than laugh at it sardonically without the faintest hope that his laughing might bring about any change.

In Crome Yellow, then, Huxley's fiddle played the ridiculously micabre tune of the hopelessness of man's position in

[6] Ibid., 228.

[7] Ibid., 158.

the modern world. Science had reduced man to the place where he was merely an animal--and not a very good animal either. Science had not fulfilled its early promise. Though it had made life more comfortable by means of ingeniously contrived gadgets, it had not made man the happier. The reverse had occurred--everyone was being forced into a doldrum of futility and boredom. Civilization was on the skids. Life in Crome Yellow is certainly a "Human Vomedy".

If such is the case in Huxley's first novel, it is even more definitely so in the second, Antic Hay. Here the pace has been quickened and intensified, however. Here the bored are even more hysterically bored. The frustrated go into paroxysms of impotent self-pity. The social-butterflies flit ever more closely to the flame of self-destruction. Success is an impossibility, defeat a certainty. All this is done with a polished self-assurance that the first, somewhat sophomoric novel lacked. The reader gets the impression that this is the ultimate in sophistication, that here is a wealth of the brightest, cleverest, most pointless chatter ever written. An added facility of style and plot-construction makes Antic Hay a much better book that its predecessor. And this is in the face of the fact that here one encounters the same theme, treated in somewhat the same manner as the one in Crome Yellow. Though there is considerable evidence of a development in Huxley's technique in this book, there is little evidence of any philosophical development here. He is saying in the essentials what he said in Crome Yellow, but he

is saying it better.

Theodore Gumbril finds that it is impossible for him to bear another moment of the weary grind that teaching school has become for him. The necessity of grading one more packet of papers like the one on the Risorgimento in which the students regurgitate what the master has forced down their protesting throats is appalling to him. So he gives up his job to live on the pittance of three hundred poinds a year that his Aunt Flo has left him. The novel, for the most part, deals with Gumbril's amorous adventures in London, amorous adventures requiring that he wear a false beard and padded overcoat in order to disguise his "native mildness", so that he can appear to be a ruthless, dashing roue, so that he can become the "Complete Man".

Gumbril travels in the society of the intellectually and socially elect of London. His friends are critics, painters, poets and revolutionaries. They are typical of the London cafe society of the times and similar in many respects to the guests at Crome. Here, in Antic Hay, too, the characters are wearied of it all. It is almost too much of a bore for them to seek after the new thrill--it wouldn't turn up anyway. There is Myra Viveash, one of the most bored creatures in all literature. She invariably speaks "as though wholly preoccupied with expiring"[8] as "though she were worshipping the

8 Aldous Huxley, Antic Hay, 251.

almighty and omnipresent Nil."[9] When she is surrounded by her usual cluster of admirers she feels she wants solitude and when she finally has the liberty she formerly felt she needed, she cannot bear to be alone. Quite the whole of contemporary society suffers from the same thing that bothers her: ". . .we build bandstands and factories. . ." on the quiet places in the mind. Never must one permit solitude to get the best of one, never! Never should one tolerate for a minute anything but whizzing and banging and clanging in one's life. When quiet, time for reflection is thrust upon you, Huxley says, you must

> quickly, before it is too late, start the factory wheels, bang the drum, blow up the saxophone. Think of the women you'd like to sleep with, the schemes for making money, the gossip about your friends, the last outrage of the politicians. Anything for a diversion. Break the silence, smash the crystal to pieces. There, it lies in bits; it is easily broken, hard to build up and easy to break.[10]

Like Myra, each member of society, with every passing year, "gets bored with another of the old things." Life has become hard for the one who can only look back nostalgically to the days when things were new, when there wasn't this all-pervading boredom. With Myra they say:

> "And wine: I used to think Orvieto so heavenly. But this spring, when I went to Italy, it was just a bad

9 Ibid., 232.

10 Ibid., 202.

> muddy sort of Vouvray. And those soft caramels they call Fiats; I used to eat those till I was sick. I was at the sick stage before I'd finished one of them this time in Rome. . .Disillusion after disillusion."[11]

One can never recapture the old thrills, not by chasing after them, at any rate. So what is to be done about it all? Huxley doesn't know, or at least he doesn't tell one here. Not that he has to, of course; destructive criticism has its place. Huxley only explains what the condition is. He can put into the mouth of one of his characters the following words: "Ideals--they're not sufficiently genteel for you civilised young men. You've quite outgrown that sort of thing. No dream, no religion, no morality."[12] Love has become mere lust--the gross satisfying of mere passion. Somewhere, somehow one might find the meaning, the significance behind it all. But the effort one would need to expend would be too great, hardly worth it really--and it, too, would quite likely be boring!

How ridiculous humanity is. What it should indulge in is mass suicide, in order to relieve itself of the trouble it has become. One of its most ridiculous aspects is the frenzy with which it promotes scientific research. In _Antic Hay_, just as he was in _Crome Yellow_, Huxley is disgusted with the modern trend in science. To what purpose does humanity encourage science, Huxley asks here. Is it so that happiness can some day be secured for all? Is it so that meaning for existence can be found? Hardly. Purposeless, extravagently

[11] _Ibid_., 224.

[12] _Ibid_., 63.

esoteric experiments are performed in the laboratories. Scientists are continually busying themselves making cages full of rats healthy on rich milk and then, like fates, giving the rats cases of diabetes, seemingly out of sheer perversity. Healthier man might become, but happier? Not by these methods alone certainly. At least not by Shearwater's methods, not through Shearwater, an intense, absorbed scientist who permits himself to be placed in a box, on a bicycle, so that he might pedal until he drops.

> "Pedal, pedal, pedal. . .He must have traveled the equivalent of sixty or seventy miles this afternoon. He would be. . .nearly at Harwich, pedalling through the green and golden valleys where Constable used to paint."[13]

But he isn't. He is right there in his box intently going nowhere, just so that the quantity of sweat that drops from his wearied brow might be measured. Will man, Huxley asks again and again, be made the happier by knowing how much Shearwater sweat in his little hot-box in the year of our Lord 1922? The answer, Huxley is afraid, must be No! Civilization, like science, is going nowhere and going there fast. It is sad that nothing can be done about it.

All that Gumbril can think of doing is to escape. To leave England and get away from it all, to get away from this maddening round of nothings, that was his solution. While teaching unwanted facts to the stupid children of the

13 Ibid., 345.

bourgeoisie was bad enough, this vain search for pleasure and relief from the ennui of modern city life was, if possible, worse. He had to get away, had to leave England.

Huxley, in his third novel, Those Barren Leaves, uses Italy for his locale. Here one meets the gay, sophisticated, artificial specimens of Mrs. Aldwinkle's merciless lion-hunting. Had Gumbril escaped to this pseudo-cosmopolitan but thoroughly English atmosphere, it could hardly be expected that he would have found much change over his former life. For here there is bright, brittle talk on an amazing range of intellectual topics; here everyone pretends to vast knowledge of art and literature and philosophy; here it is that the ultimate truths behind the universe might be disclosed. At least this is what Mrs. Aldwinkle hopes from her selected circle of individuals. Mrs. Aldwinkle hardly dares even to go to bed at night until everyone else is safely between the sheets for fear that someone might say "the one supremely important, revealing, apocalyptic thing that she had been waiting all her life to hear."[14]

The party includes a much more wordy, pompous and obnoxious version of Crome Yellow's Mr. Scogan, a Mr. Cardan. He is a whole card-index of multitudes of unrelated topics. He holds forth until everyone present is either stupified with boredom or furious at being unable to break into the unbearable monologues. Another of the guests is the clever Mary Thrip-

[14] Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, 71.

low, a lady-novelist whose writing is always misunderstood. She is supremely inconsistent. Never she display any depth of feeling, even to herself. She is quite incapable of feeling any way but that which she would suppose to be either the cleverest or the most attractive. There are several other satelites, the insipid Lord Hovendon, who lisps and plays at having a social-consciousness, and his companion, Mr. Falx, who is intent upon uplifting the underdog--including Mr. Falx.

It is to this selected group that it is conceivable that Gumbril might have come seeking his escape. But in his place there is an equally bored, more truly sophisticated and satiated individual named Calamy. He, too, has become tired of the ceaseless round of pleasures. He, too, is seeking relief from the boredom of modern life. He listens to Mr. Cardan's opinionated remarks on his materialistic philosophy. He listens, too, to the tired cynicisms of Francis Chelifer, another guest. He watches those about him live in accordance with the precepts of a hedonistic philosophy and sees how unsuccessful it is in making life bearable.

These people think it is absurd to feel that because, for instance, mothers love their offspring and soldiers will fight for their flag, humanity, then, can be viewed optimistically. Those are merely assurances of the fact that we tend to be fairly satisfactory animals. But are there any similar assurances to the effect that we tend to be equally successful as human beings, that we show any evidence of human

sapience? The multitudes of "horrors and squalors arise from men's lack of reason--from their failure to be completely and sapiently human,"[15] and there hardly seems to be any sign of there ever being a very widespread use of man's reason, at least according to Chelifer's way of thinking.

The prevailing attitude is to forget the troubles in the world, to forget, if possible, that the lower classes exist. When the evils of industrial exploitation force themselves upon the attention of the intentionally heedless, he may allay what twinges of social consciousness he may have "by subscribing to Settlements in the slums, or building. . .a quite superfluous number of white-tiled lavatories for the workers."[16]

The middle classes, as a whole, despise and distrust the classes beneath them. The compacent burgesses are not quite as complacent as they once were. They are afraid that their positions of precarious security might be usurped by the ever-encroaching workers. The bourgeoisie is actually much worse off than the poor, for whom such contempt is shown. It has more to lose. The upper middle-class has heard of art whereas the poor have not; it venerates art because such veneration is _comme il faut_ and because art has a very pleasant commercial value. While the bourgeois is so near to what evidence there is of man's superiority, man's greatest strength--his capacity for irrelevance, the ability to produce a St.

[15] _Ibid._, 106.

[16] Ibid., 43.

Paul's or a Sistine Chapel, it ignores that evidence, as far as possible, calls it "very nice" and asks, "What has it to do with me?"

One can rub his nose in all the unpleasantness in the world, he can make himself even more unhappy than is necessary if he wishes to, by taking it all seriously. "Fools do not perceive that the farce is a farce. They are the most blessed. Wise men perceive it and take pains not to think about it. Therein lies their wisdom. . ."[17] But this does not satisfy Calamy. He has been ignoring all the evils in the world for years. But where has it got him? Is he any the less bored, any more satisfied with his existence? No, of course he isn't. All his time has been spent in groups such as this one of Mrs. Aldwinkle's, in satisfying himself sexually--his favorite indoor sport, a game at which he has become very proficient through the years. Right now this Mary Thriplow is flaunting her charms before him. He isn't in love with her. He knows that. And anyway,

> It was a waste of time and there were other things far more important to be done, to be thought about. Other things. They loomed up enormously behind the distracting bustle of life, silently on the further side of the noise and chatter. But what were they? What was their form, their name, their meaning? Through the fluttering veil of movement it was impossible to do more than dimly guess; one might as well try to look at the stars through the London smoke. . .The only sensible thing to do was to go on in the usual way and ignore the things outside the world of noise. That was

[17] Ibid., 352.

> what Calamy tried to do. But he was conscious none the less that the things were still there. They were still calmly and immutably there, however much he might agitate himself and distractedly pretend to ignore them.[18]

What can he do? Thinking things through in this atmosphere is really impossible. Watching Mrs. Aldwinkle's undisguised efforts at luring Chelifer, listening to Lord Hovendon's lisp and Mr. Carden's interminable philosophizing was getting to be unbearable. Possibly it would be worth the while to make a real effort to concentrate on the important things he felt might exist but of the nature of which he wasn't certain.

> "If I could free myself," he thought, "I could surely do something; nothing useful, no doubt, in the ordinary sense, nothing that would particularly profit other people; but something that for me would be of the last importance. The mystery floats just above me. If I were free, if I had time, if I could think and think slowly, slowly learn to plumb the silences of the spirit. . ."[19]

something might come of it. This feeling of aching frustration might be lost. The meaning might appear at last. Some progress was made here along this line of thinking, progress in spite of Mrs. Aldwinkle. Later he says:

> "It's extraordinary. . .what a lot of different modes of existence a thing has, when you come to think about it. And the more you think, the more obscure and mysterious everything becomes. What seemed solid vanishes; what was obvious and comprehensible becomes utterly mysterious. Gulfs begin opening all

[18] Ibid., 207.

[19] Ibid., 285.

> around you--more and more abysses, as though the ground were splitting in an earthquake. It gives one a strange sense of insecurity, of being in the dark. But I still believe that, if one went on thinking long enough and hard enough, one might somehow come through, get out on the other side of the obscurity. But into what, precisely into what? That's the question."[20]

Others had thought things through to what they considered to be the answer. Isaac Newton could hardly be called a fool, and he had turned mystic. No, it wasn't the fools who became mystics. The fools are the ones who take for granted that about the world which seems to be inexplicable. They "skate about cheerfully on the surface and never think of inquiring what's underneath."[21]

There was but one thing to do, he decided, and that was to get away from here. He knew it now, knew that he must think it through. He gathered together some of his effects, left the babbling sophisticates behind him and climbed up a nearby mountain, in order to get to the bottom of things, alone, unhampered by the Mary Thriplows he left below.

Is there much hope of his discovering anything? Huxley is afraid that there isn't a great deal. The flesh is weak. And Calamy has shown but little that would qualify him for the life of the ascetic. But there, at the end of Those Barren Leaves, the reader leaves him trying to discover the mysteries of the universe.

Calamy is the first of Huxley's characters to become

20 Ibid., 363.

21 Ibid., 309.

even this optimistic. And one could hardly call this very optimistic, after all. Calamy was practically doomed to failure, but he had, however, given the matter some consideration, which is more than one can say for anyone in Crome Yellow. Everyone in that novel took it for granted that life was just boring and futile. In Antic Hay, as we have seen, there was a slight, very slight change from this attitude. It was cónceivable to Gumbril that there might be some meaning to existence, but he felt that any meaning that might exist is too over-laden with imponderable difficulties to make a search for them anything but quixotic.

Though there are these slight variations in Huxley's view of life in this first period of his, he remains on the whole fundamentally futilitarian. His philosophy until the middle twenties follows one orbit with an infinitesimal, very gradual shifting away from a philosophy of utter despair. The shifting is there, but it becomes almost unapparent beneath the welter of vomic characters and situations which he presents in Those Barren Leaves as well as in Crome Yellow and Antic Hay. One can say, therefore, that Huxley's first writings are futilitarian in attitude.

*

Huxley was not alone among the members of post-war society to feel that everything about life was futile. The outlook that he expressed was typical of that which had gripped the greater part of the world. There have been periods in which

militant disapproval of the evils of the times has been the key-note; there have been times when a cowed bending to the inevitable was widespread. But Post-war futilitarianism stands unique in the world's history as a period in which sterile, unavailing lassitude took over the keenest of social critics, the most alert of commentators.

To all intents and purposes it was a lassitude that gripped the world, albeit a rather analytic, probing one. The general tendency of those who wrote in the years immediately following the war was toward a criticism of artistic, economic and cultural trends which accompanied the industrialization and nationalization of Western civilization. Fundamentally it had grown out of the critical attitudes of this group's predecessors, out of the attitudes of men such as H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. There had, however, been a shift from an examination of political evils with the intention of bringing about some change in the existing set-up to a be-wailing of the evils which accompanied the growing provincialism, the stressing of the profit-motive, the materialistic outlook noticeable on every hand, the standardization and petty regulation imposed on everyone. These men subjected everything that came within their grasp to a searching analysis, to be sure. But at the same time they were imbued with a spirit of hopelessness. With H. L. Mencken they "constantly scoffed at any doctrine that offered a grain of hope for mankind."[22] If the writers of the period weren't really

[22] Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition, 210.

disillusioned and frustrated, they at least presented no alternative to the existing situation. None of them betrayed any confidence in a bettering of the world through their efforts as the writers of Shaw's generation had. There were, instance, T. S. Eliot and Norman Douglas, both of whose writing at this time showed obvious disgust with man and the social order of the day. Their writing for the most part was evidence of the scornful futility which was present everywhere at that time. Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Amy Lowell and Carl Sandburg lapsed into pessimism".[23] Mencken, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, John Dewey and Thorstein Veblen felt equally scornful.

This post-war futilitarianism was the logical result of long years--possibly as many as three hundred--of gradual moral disintegration and destruction of once universally accepted values. As far back as Isaac Newton the process was well under way. Newton's cosmology was one in which man was separated from the world and from the universe. The world, outside the human sphere, was conceived of mechanistically as a passive factor, put there for man's needs. Man, a rational being, a being with a soul, stood aloof and unique in the midst of a regularised outer-world. Man was capable of plumbing all natural laws and using them for his own purposes. He was free from older moralities in which man, the world, and the universe itself were the subject of the same Power.

[23] Ibid.

The idea of man as divorced from the natural world about him, as the direct subject of God through his reason, existed, for all practical purposes as the accepted view of the universe down until Darwin's time. While Newton had taken the world away from God's jurisdiction, Darwin took man down from his exalted position at the center of the world and made him simply another animal, an animal that had triumphed over the lower forms through Natural Selection. Man, viewed in the light of Natural Selection, was using only that which was basically a part of him when he acted unethically to better his own position. Thomas Henry Huxley, the grandfather of Aldous Huxley, at this time aided in the tearing down of previously approved bases for ethical activity. Such seemingly innocuous diversions as Thomas Huxley's application of scientific method to the Bible which were designed to sweep away the assurance that Moses was the writer of the Pentateuch and with it the trust in Christian theology as a basis for acting ethically, only assisted civilization onto the toboggan towards ultimate disillusionment. He could reassure everyone all he pleased. He could say:

> Religion, at first independent of morality, gradually took morality under its protection; and the supernaturalists have ever since tried to persuade mankind that the existence of ethics is bound up with that of supernaturalism.
> I am not of that opinion. . .[24]

24 Thomas Huxley, Science and Christian Tradition, 54.

But the insidious workings of this all-too-conclusive investigation accomplished unintentioned ends in spite of his frantic reassurances. Joseph Wood Krutch says of Thomas Huxley's activities:

> The generation of Thomas Henry Huxley, so busy with destruction as never adequately to realize how much it was destroying, fought with such zeal against frightened conservatives that it never took time to do more than assert with some vehemence that all would be well, and the generation that followed either danced amid the ruins or sought by various compromises to save the remains of a few tottering structures.[25]

The process of destruction was not completed by Thomas Huxley and Charles Darwin, however. They had reduced man to an animal--physically speaking. In their times there still remained a lingering feeling that man has a soul and that that soul is noble. But Freud blasted man from this, his last vestige of nobility, his soul. He helped in finishing things off smoothly and finally by being interpreted as saying that man is not only free from his conscience but obligated by the very nature of the fact that he is human to forget such things as conscience, since they will only deter him in his struggle for supremacy, will only make him repressed and un-

[25] Joseph Wood Krutch, Modern Temper, 23.

healthy.[26] Man came to be looked upon as little better than an animal in regard to the physical side of his nature and also in regard to what he had been pleased to term his spiritual side. Man was left, intellectually at least, without an orthodox religion, and, therefore, without what might be termed puritannical ethics because of this interpretation of Freud, Huxley and Darwin.

It would be impossible to attach any importance to a moral disintegration such as this were it a thing of the mind alone without some discernable application to fact as well. The dropping one by one of seemingly firmly entrenched values had, to be sure, occurred first in the theories of philosophers and scientists. But later, in the actions of individuals, groups of individuals and still later in nations themselves, the findings of the philosophers found an objective reality. Manifestations of the fact that the populace itself was becoming aware of the outmodedness of acting in ways that were formerly considered to be ethically present themselves in laissez-faire economics, in inhumane colonial exploitation and finally in the World War itself. Between 1914 and 1918 the struggle for survival took over the thoughts and actions of nearly everyone in the "civilized" world. In-

[26] For an example of a statement of such an interpretation, see Gerald Heard's Third Morality, page 56, on which he says that owing to Huxley, Darwin and Freud, "man's soul and the community were equally incapable of being aims--the one was a limiting illusion, the other only a means to his fulfilment."

ternational anarchy became a fact, a fact condoned by the religious bodies of the world and by the very mothers of the coming generation themselves. Slaughter, Fear, Greed, Avarice became socially accepted and necessary attitudes.[27]

It took a little while for disillusionment to set in, but not so long really. The more illusions one has, the more deadly is the impact of the fall of those illusions when it does happen. Darwinism had been in existence but a short fifty years, and the teachings of Freud were still comparatively new, so that youths who had been conditioned in childhood by Victorian complacency and good Public School educations still possessed illusions--though they were illusions on which they sometimes vaguely felt but seldom acted or thought. So naive were they that it is almost unbelievable to a generation raised on Hitlers, Mussolinis and Stalins that a young poet could say in 1914:

> Now, God be thanked Who has matched us in His hour,
> And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
> With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
> To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
> Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
> Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
> . . . . . .[28]

But a short while on war-time gear convinced most that there

[27] For remarks on the activities of the organized religions at the Front, see C. E. Montague's Disenchantment, page 80. He speaks of the army chaplains, in many cases ministers who were not able to enlist despite their physical abilities, as "sheep that were not fed". He says that "They became more bloodthirsty than the men."

[28] Rupert Brooke, Peace.

was no similarity between a Europe torn by conflict and "into cleanness leaping". Once the war was over, when the immoral peace had been made at Versailles, a peace that was almost Darwinian in its exemplification of the theories of Natural Selection, it was a little difficult to expect morality to be restored. The philosophical basis for acting morally had disappeared and so had its basis in fact. The time was ripe for post-war futilitarianism, for what seemed to be an almost universal acceptance of a hedonistic philosophy, for sexual, social and commercial immorality.

Women who had been taking the men's places in the business world found it more pleasant to continue in their jobs. Women acquired suffrage, began to smoke in public in general enjoyed an unprecedented freedom. They became the men's equals, became more and more capable of being independent of the guiding, protecting hand formerly supplied by the stalwart male. Chastity was looked upon by many in the large cities as becoming outmoded. The home and fireside tended to give way to the studio apartment with maid service. The cities became crowded with jazz-mad disciples of Hollywood, all out to make a little money on the market, have the best possible time and make as many conquests sexually as time and opportunity would afford. When women left the fireside and tea table for bars and offices, morality's last stronghold found itself in a precarious position. The time of the Flapper was fast approaching. The Jazz Age had arrived

in spirit, though it may have lacked a name. Morality based on a universally accepted set of values was swept away by years of scientific investigation and by a few hectic years of life spent on war-gear, years spent in putting to practice what the scientists had been sponsoring for years. Gerald Heard, a member of Aldous Huxley's generation, a man who lived in an environment somewhat similar to Huxley's sees a situation such as has just been described. He says that one could see

> . . .the individual becoming soft, hysterical, or paralysed if he is tender, tough if he is strong; tough since he realizes that it is his natural duty to get all he can for himself because he is the final reality, the only thing wholly real to himself; there is nothing ahead for him when he is no longer able physically to enjoy himself and there is nothing above him in the whole universe--he is the only creature which understands and he understands the whole means nothing.[29]

Since others of Huxley's generation living in similar environments to his saw these things, one may hazard the statement that a world the chief characteristics of which were futility, boredom, immorality, vulgarity and a loss of individuality was, then, no myth, no creation of Huxley's. The world about which he wrote was the one he saw about him, was the world in which he lived. Others saw these aspects and wrote novels using them as background. Not all of them reacted to them in the same way that Huxley did, but nevertheless they all saw the same sort of life about them that one finds described in Huxley's early novels. Some, like Noel Coward, Alec Waugh and Michael Arlen, looked at what was

29 Gerald Heard, Third Morality, 59.

going on about them, put down what they saw, and made no comment. Not all of them looked at the world as though it were something to make one retch.

The objective reality which furnished the subject-matter of Huxley's novels cannot, however, explain his special attitude toward that reality which it was his problem as an artist to portray. The fact that he views his characters and his characters' actions ironically, the fact that Huxley intends his readers to retch rather than be merely amused or titillated can be more satisfactorily explained by knowing what kind of early conditioning prepared him for such an attitude, what kind of a personality he possessed to make him portray things vomically.

There is some information available on Huxley's life that might be termed significant in finding reasons for the feeling of despair and distaste that prevails in his first novels. He was born in 1894 into a particularly intellectual and distinguished family. His was a family to which geniuses were nothing at all new. It was a family that was descended from geniuses, married geniuses and produced more geniuses. Aldous' father was the son of Thomas Henry Huxley, the eminent Victorian scientist. Aldous' mother was the niece of still another eminent Victorian, the traditionalist critic and poet, Matthew Arnold. Aldous' father, Leonard Huxley, was the translator of Hausrath's <u>New Testament</u>, wrote, among other things, the <u>Life of Thomas Huxley</u> and was assistant to Professor Lewis Campbell at St.

Andrews. He was related, too, to Mrs. Humphrey Ward. The intellectual heredity and environment that was to produce Aldous Huxley was also to produce the biologist and writer, Julien Sorrel Huxley, Aldous' older brother.

Aldous Huxley had, therefore, no lack of intellectual stimuli during his impressionable years. In a family of writers, scientists and scholars such as his it would be only natural for him to have had his tastes bent along intellectual, scholarly lines at an early age. He was no doubt encouraged from childhood to think originally and realistically in channels that differed from those of his contemporaries. Regrettable and not insignificant is the fact that he suffers and seemingly has always suffered with a serious eye-trouble. As a child he was partially blind for three years. Tall, thin, almost like a bean-pole, with a shock of unruly hair, and disfigured by thick-lensed glasses through which he had continually to be squinting he could hardly have been called average or nondescript in appearance. It may have been that this blindness, these peculiarities of appearance, these deviations from the norm that set him apart from the other children, contributed in making him introspective and of an analytical turn of mind. These factors played an important part in making him the cynic that he was later to become. It is hard to imagine Huxley's mingling normally with other children of his own age. It is much easier to draw up a picture of the precocious young Huxley watching from a

detached position the childish antics of his contemporaries.

Huxley's education was similar to that which is conventional for upper-class English young people. He went to Eton, where he learned no less, if not much more than his fellow-students. He went to Balliol College, Oxford, where his father and his brother before him had gone. If the war had not intervened, he would have finished his course in the normal length of time, but the war made it necessary for everyone to drop everything to take a part in the suppressing of the arrogant Boche. Even Huxley, whose eyesight was bad enough to prevent his actively participating, was compelled, if only by remote control, to undertake a routine clerical job in London to assist in the legalized massacre. Again he was made to be different, for feeling ran high against those who remained at home. The mildest form that this feeling took was that of contempt, contempt for those who could not go. At best Huxley was subject to that sort of reaction, at the worst was lumped in with those whom Brooke said ". . .honour could not move." This could not have hurt him, but probably assisted in intensifying the feeling of his difference from the mass of human-kind which had been his attitude since youth. It probably increased his natural contempt for the prejudices and absurdities of the hated Philistines.[30]

[30] For information regarding Huxley's life see Who's Who and The Saturday Review of Literature, XVII, 21, also Alexander Henderson's Aldous Huxley.

Certainly his reading at the time of the war and just after, his reading of the books that were being read by the intellectuals of the day only strengthened his feeling of repugnance regarding the actions of the bourgeois, made him aware of the hopelessness of ideals, the evils of industrialism and standardization. The very erudite essays and poems he wrote at this time for the Athenaeum, the London periodical of whose editorial staff he was a member, testify to the fact that his reading was along the lines prescribed by the intellectual atmosphere in which he lived. The embrionic writers of the period felt that those things which could be read were only those that were written in French. Laforgue with his bright cynicisms, his faculty for juxtaposing comic and tragic, serious and ridiculous, his brittle, intellectually-flavored verse appealed in style and matter to the rising writer. The scientific elements that the Parnassian school of poets attempted to incorporate into its verse were just the things that Huxley himself was prone to use. The hard clarity of Beaudelaire's verse with its interest in evil and the impersonal, nostalgic poetry of Heredia made these poets popular with Huxley's generation. Hardly more than infinitesimal, however, his writing at this time shows, was the effect of contemporary English writers on Huxley. Max Beerbohm, Lionel Johnson and Thomas Gordon Hake could be read without the loss of too much face. Skepticism, aestheticism and cynicism were the fruits the seeds

from France produced. The effects of the French poets and novelists were universally the same. Dos Passos with his anarchical yearnings and his militant disapproval of industrial civilization, T. S. Eliot, portrayer of a dying civilization going around its "prickly pear", writers with themes in common with Huxley's betray influences similar to those of Huxley's.

The economic security in which Huxley was raised naturally limited his horizons. It kept his interests from touching on problems with which less financially lucky writers are preoccupied, writers whose problems are connected with food and housing, with the question of where the next meal is to come from. In the snugness of his financial independence he could ignore (if in reality he ever thought of them at all) the more mundane problems of the body and concern himself with those of the spirit, for the questions that harry the seeker after the necessities of a bare existence bothered Huxley but little. This financial security of his coupled with a prying, intellectual mind, a mind that was forced inwardly through his physical handicaps, a mind that sought the writings of the clever cynics across the channel made the feeling of despair that was in the air more acute within him. For, as Joseph Wood Krutch says, "Despair. . . is a luxury in the sense that it is possible only to those who have much that many people do without. . ."[31]

[31] Joseph Wood Krutch, _op. cit._, 248.

So far we have seen that after the war there was a widespread feeling that might be termed a mal au siecle, that though other writers might ignore this feeling and still others might not see it because of differences in background, Huxley did concern himself with it. He looked at it intently and termed it a "Vomedy". The objective facts of his life suggest why it is that his reaction to post-war society was one of distaste mingled with irony. But these suggestions can be reinforced by the problems of various characters in the books we have examined thus far. By noticing the similarities which some of the characters bear to Huxley himself it is possible to know even more intimately the factors responsible for Huxley's primarily ironical attitude during this period and his growing dissatisfaction with that attitude. At this point we know that Huxley was an intellectual. We know that he was prone to view the world with detachment from a pinnacle of intellectuality and natural shyness. We know, too, that he was analytical, introspective, and inclined to cynicism. Huxley himself in various revealing passages of self-portraiture to be found in essays written during this period gives more insight into the sort of man that he is. In an essay on Democratic Art he says:

> I belong to that class of unhappy people who are not easily infected by crowd excitement. Too often I find myself sadly and coldly unmoved in the midst of multitudinous emotion. Few sensations are more disagreeable. The defect is in part temperamental, and and in part is due to that intellectual snobbishness,

> that fastidious rejection of what is easy and obvious, which is one of the melancholy consequences of the acquisition of culture. How often one regrets this asceticism of the mind! How wistfully sometimesone longs to be able to rid oneself of the habit of rejection and selection, and to enjoy all the dear obviously luscious, idiotic emotions without an afterthought.[32]

Emotionally he did not vibrate at all harmoniously with the great mass of people that gave the period its tone. It would be out of the question to expect him to be sympathetic toward the vulgarities of the sex-mad, jazz-mad inheritors and practicioners of the concepts of Thomas Huxley and Charles Darwin. This "intellectual snobbishness" of his forced upon him an attitude that prompted him to say, "How delightful, how queer and fantastic people are, at a distance!"[33] Partly out of shyness, partly out of a fore-knowledge of an inevitable revulsion at their crudeness or boredom at their utter dullness he would rather watch people from his position of aloofness. When it seemed likely that he might be getting too close to the Human Vomedy, he would run like a deer. He would hurry back to his complacent, smug little position on the flag-pole--for when, as he says,

> the outer world vexes me, I retire to the rational simplicities of the inner--to the polders of the spirit. And when, in their turn, the polders seem unduly flat, the roads too straight and the laws of perspective too tyrannous, I emerge again into the pleasing confusion of untempered reality.

[32] Aldous Huxley, <u>On The Margin</u>, 67.

[33] Aldous Huxley, <u>Essays New and Old</u>, 39.

> And how beautiful, how curious in Holland that confusion is![34]

The "outer-world" for him is not one that is made up of masses of people with whom he is intimately acquainted. Oh, no! It is the world of travel, the world of picturesque, fantastic inanimate objects and unusual learning and when not inanimate, then objects not too close to him. How almost nauseating his own nausea sometimes is. When he watches a group of pensionnaires at a small hotel in Amberieu he can say with complete unawareness of his own complacency:

> How I adored that party! With what passionate interest I overlooked them from my table in the little dining-room! How attentively I eavesdropped! I learned where they had spent their holidays, which of them had been to Paris, where their relations lived, what they thought of the postmaster of Amberieu, and a host of other things, all wonderfully interesting and exciting. But not for the world would I have made their acquaintance. The landlady offered to introduce me; but I declined the honour. I am afraid she thought me a snob; she was proud of her pensionnaires. It was impossible for me to explain that my reluctance to know them was due to the fact that I loved them even more than she did. To know them would have spoilt everything. From wonderful and mysterious beings, they would have degenerated into six rather dull and pathetic little employes, condemned to pass their lives drearily in a small provincial town.[35]

As long as he watched them and kept from getting involved with them, these people were "fantastic", "queer". He felt that they would nauseate him if he were to know them, simply

[34] _Ibid._, 159.

[35] _Ibid._, 40.

because he hadn't been able to permit himself to get to know them. He says, "The same situation may often be either tragic or comic, according as it is seen through the eyes of those who suffer or those who look on."[36] Huxley looked on and viewed them as "comic" or as he might have said, a "vomic".

As was suggested before, characteristics of Huxley's own personality are mirrored in his novels thus adding weight to the idea that these characteristics are real problems for Huxley, problems he is intent upon solving, problems that very vividly color what he has to say. One finds that the difficulty which is central for at least one of the characters in each of Huxley's novels is paralleled by a similar problem in Huxley himself. For instance, in his very first novel Crome Yellow Denis Stone, a young poet, essayist and contributor to London periodicals just as Huxley himself was at this time, a young man who is shy, slightly awkward and certainly lacking in self-assurance, may be said to stand for the author and the dilemma he was in at the time he wrote the book. Huxley says of Denis:

> Denis peeped at them other guests at Crome discreetly from the window of the morning-room. His eyes were suddenly become innocent, childlike, unprejudiced. They seemed, these people, inconceivably fantastic. And yet they really existed, they functioned by themselves, they were conscious, they had minds. Moreover, he was like them.[37]

36 Aldous Huxley, Along the Road, 158.

37 Aldous Huxley, Crome Yellow, 266.

At this time Huxley had, like Denis, been one of those who had felt it obligatory that he be "in the swim" as he puts it. He was to say later,

> There was a time when I should have felt terribly ashamed of not being up-to-date. I lived in a chronic apprehension lest I might, so to speak, miss the last bus, and so find myself stranded and benighted, in a desert of demodedness, while others, more nimble than myself, had already climbed on board, taken their tickets and set out toward those bright, but alas, ever receding goals of Modernity and Sophistication.[38]

The fact that he had been looking at these people and finding them "fantastic" and "queer" while at the same time he was doing just as they were doing was a bitter pill for him to take. What could one do about? One thing that could be done was to intensify one's despair, be even more hysterically "vomic" and laugh at himself along with the rest of the "fantastic" people he watched. At least that was what he did in Antic Hay. He drew another self-portrait and called it Gumbril. He made him an intellectual, scholarly young man who finds that he is sadly lacking in positiveness, who would like to indulge in a never-ending series of exploits, but can't simply because he lacks the vigor and self-assurance, the interestedness to make his dreams a reality. He, like Huxley, is an intellectual who would have liked to indulge his emotions, make them a more important part of his life. Gumbril seeks to be the "Complete Man", showing that

[38] Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 55.

he felt one part of his nature to have atrophied to a degree. Once Gumbril dons the garb of his "Complete Man" he is miraculously changed into the very being he had so ardently wished to become. But the realization of his desire to become a "Complete Man" did not bring with it the happiness that he felt it would bring; instead it brought only satiety. The overemphasis of emotion overbalanced the delicate human machinery and merely brought about more failure. I don't wish it to be supposed that I mean that Huxley went about indulging in sexual promiscuity as Gumbril did. Gumbril is significant for the fact that he indicates that Huxley is aware of this problem of personality that was making him incomplete. He shows that this problem was not solved for Gumbril. Gumbril's final solution, that of escaping to the continent, was Huxley's answer--he departed for Holland, for Tunis and for Italy, leaving nothing settled. Life was the hopeless thing that he had always considered it to be. Even when one admitted that there might be an answer one could only add that its discoover might prove boring.

In Those Barren Leaves there are two characters who bear the burden of expressing Huxley's problems. One, Calamy, as we have seen, represents the satiated side of Huxley, the Huxley, who is tired of everything that is sophisticated and a la mode. He it is that climbs the mountain to cultivate a little solitude in the hope of discovering some meaning for

existence. He represents as well Huxley's inchoate dissatisfaction with a futilitarian philosophy. He knows that it has led him nowhere and that something should be done to make life bearable. The other character is Francis Chelifer. He is similar to Huxley in that he is troubled by the lack of emotions in his personality. It is about Chelifer that people say, "He's queer, he's an extraordinary creature." and "He seems to care for nothing. So cold, such a fixed, frigid mask" and "He can't really be so utterly indifferent to everything and everybody as he makes out". Chelifer is an exaggerated Huxley, of course. Huxley is not necessarily as indifferent Chelifer nor as satiated as Calamy. But both of these characters and the light that they throw on society are derived from Huxley's own personality and attitude. It will be seen later that these problems become even more intimately associated with Huxley's novels and theories.

Huxley's writing until about 1925 is involved with a portrayal of the Human Vomedy. There is some slight change between his first novel and his last. While in Crome Yellow he practically discarded any possibility of there being any value to human existence he came to believe in his third novel, Those Barren Leaves that though it was probably hopeless to try to find the meaning it was necessary to make the effort just in case it might turn up. Huxley moved very slightly within the single field of hopelessness, boredom and frustration, but he did move, he did change his position slightly.

CHAPTER II

THE COMPLETE MAN

Calamy climbed Olympus in order that he might cultivate a little solitude, contemplate the universal muddle in which civilization found itself, and then see if any verities might sift through. Calamy, for all we know, is still there. But Huxley himself came down. In 1925 Huxley was sure of one thing, and that was that his attitude toward life was not at all conducive of the attaining of happiness. Futility, boredom, and skepticism might be intelligent outlooks to take, but they were certainly sterile, productive of nothing but even more futility, boredom, and skepticism. It can't be said that he was searching for some religious opiate, some manufactured faith to which he might tie and thereby give some purpose to life. No, he wasn't yearning for the church or a cause with which to associate himself. As he was to say, ". . .do we (that is to say all men) 'burn with desire' to find a fixed foundation of belief? All that I know with certainty is that I don't burn."[1] He wasn't burning for any belief as so many at this time (Huxley's statements to the contrary) were burning; as T. S. Eliot was burning; as he himself was to burn later. Life had become unendurable for many who saw the superficialities of modern existence, for those who were only blase. They had become as extreme in

[1] Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 313.

their acceptance of this attitude as it was possible for them to become. That there should be a reaction to this point of view was only logical. Some reacted one way and some another, as their own personalities decreed. Variations on this theme that the character and personality of the individual are responsible for his philosophy run through the essays and novels that Huxley wrote at this time. Philip Quarles in Point Counterpoint says, "Philosophy should be a rationalization of your own feelings."[2] Illidge in the same novel says, "Everything that happens is intrinsically like the man it happens to"[3] and not a "providential conspiracy." Another example of the importance of this idea to Huxley at this time may be found in one of the essays when he says, "People with strongly marked idiosyncrasies of character have their world view almost forced upon them by their psychology."[4] For example, it was in keeping with T. S. Eliot's personality and psychology and background that he should seek the way out through the Anglican Church, a traditional form of religion, sincehe is an American, who feels, as Henry James felt, that this country is lacking in the traditions which he deems so valuable. Huxley, as we have seen through the facts known about his life, through

[2] Aldous Huxley, Point Counterpoint, 13.

[3] Ibid., 287.

[4] Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 317.

remarks he has made about his personality, and finally through some of the characters in his novels, is "mild mannered", intellectual, reticent and indifferent. These are the "strongly marked idiosyncrasies" from which any philosophy of Huxley's would be derived. In Point Counterpoint he has drawn still another self-portrait in Philip Quarles, a self-portrait that presents his own personality traits much more vividly than did those that went before. Quarles, who possesses all those characteristics that the other self-portraits have had, only to a much more marked degree, shows just how important the factor of his personality is in his selection at this time the philosophy that he did.

Philip has a "strongly marked idiosyncrasy"--he is reticent to an alarming degree. This reticence of his nearly wrecks his home and certainly makes him unhappy and unsuccessful in his associations in society, to say nothing of its preventing the novels he writes from being the complete, well-rounded books that they might be were he a better rounded individual. There are many revealing passages in which Quarles' personality is discussed. In a moment of self-analysis, he thinks:

> All his life long he had walked in a solitude, in a private void, into which nobody, not his mother, not his friends, not his lovers had ever been permitted to enter. Even when he held her his wife thus, pressed close to him, it was by wireless. . . and across an Atlantic that he communicated with her.[5]

[5] Aldous Huxley, Point Counterpoint, 75.

He deplores this situation, this reticence that has become a part of him, yet he clings to it with tenacity:

> . . .discussions of personal relations always made him uncomfortable. They threatened his solitude--that solitude which, with a part of his mind, he deplored (for he felt himself cut off from much he would have liked to experience), in which alone he felt himself free. At ordinary times he took this inward solitude for granted, as one accepts the atmosphere in which one lives. But when it was menaced he became only too painfully aware of its importance to him; he fought for it, as a choking man fights for air. But it was a fight without violence, a negative battle of retirement and defence.[6]

Philip almost maddened Elinor, his wife, who was unaware of the fundamental differences in their natures when she first married him. He still maddens her after a number of years of married life. She looks upon him as being "intelligent to the point of being almost human, remotely kind, separately passionate and sensual, impersonally sweet."[7] His wife and his mother discussed this problem, a problem that is evident to all who come in contact with him. His mother had at one time said to Elinor:

> ". . .Intellectual contacts--those are the only ones he admits."
> "It's as though he only felt safe among ideas," Elinor had said.
> "Because he can hold his own there; because he can be certain of superiority. He's got into the habit of feeling afraid and suspicious outside that intellectual world. He needn't have. And I've always tried to reassure him and tempt him out; but he won't let himself be tempted, he creeps back into

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 78.

his shell."[8]

Philip, through the years, had become habituated to cultivating this feeling of reticence, this feeling that had probably been latent in him from birth. Just as Huxley's poor eyesight had possibly contributed to his aloofness and had kept him from the trenches during the war, so had Philip been similarly affected by an injury to his leg. It was almost too bad, his wife and his mother felt, that he hadn't been able to go to the war. The war might have cracked the shell in which he lived, made him "emotionally free" instead of merely intellectually free.

Quarles, like Huxley then, is troubled by this serious personality quirk. He realizes that he is in its grasp and that it is choking him at the same time that he realizes that it is almost impossible for him to change. His entire outlook is tempered by it. He is distrustful of his fellow-men, desirous of avoiding them as much as possible. And, too, he is cynical, disillusioned, bored and generally unhappy. He knows that something must be done to save himself from the abyss into which he is rapidly slipping. What kind of solution would be best suited to his personality? It isn't as if he would consciously set about analysing his personality and its deficiencies and then seek a philosophy that would satisfy the needs felt by his personality. No

[8] *Ibid.*, 228.

more would Huxley do this. Huxley's problems were similar to Philip's--though not necessarily to so advanced a degree. He was aware of the fact that the year 1925 found him in sorely straightened circumstances spiritually, and he knew that something must be done to make life worth something, anything.

To a person who found that his reticence kept him from getting into contact with other people and furnished all the difficulties in his life, a way of life that would force him out of his shell would probably be attractive. From the dwelling upon the subject of people's indifference and reticence that one finds in Huxley's novels it is apparent that he is and always has been seriously concerned with this problem. Because this difficulty has always been vital to him, because of the stress that is laid upon it in all his novels, it is probably his most important personality problem. It would, then, be logical for it to have an important effect upon his philosophy--"People with strongly marked idiosyncrasies of character have their world view almost forced upon them by their psychology".

If this difficulty could be cleared up, Huxley might be able to look upon life as something other than a Vomedy, might be able to see life wholly from other than a spectator point of view. His idiosyncracies of character would naturally eliminate some solutions that would be the answer for others. Nothing mystical, for instance, would be suited to his particular personality, at least so he felt at this time. He was

He was intellectually distrustful of the world's Pascals, people who gave such supreme importance to faith over the reason. He was more inclined to polytheism than to any belief in a single god, to any at-oneness with the universe. He says,

> Even the same man is not consistently the worshipper of one God. Officially an agnostic, I feel the presence of devils in a tropical forest. Confronted, when the weather is fine and I am in propitious emotional circumstances, with certain landscapes, certain works of art, certain human beings, I know, for the time being, that God's in his heaven and all's right with the world. On other occasions, skies and destiny being inclement, I am no less immediately certain of the malignant impersonality of an uncaring universe. Every human being has had similar experiences. This being so, the sensible thing to do would be to accept the facts and frame a metaphysic to fit them.[9]

Being an agnostic (a term that his grandfather had coined, incidentally) it was impossible for him to put much credence in mystics. He distrusted these people who "promote their fancies to the rank of universal and absolute truths",[10] for after all aren't they creating philosophies which are merely rationalizations of their own personalities? No, his philosophy must be one that would satisfy his personality problems and at the same time have a universality about it, something that would make it applicable to all. Obviously it couldn't be mystical, since mysticism, he felt,

[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Ibid.

is composed of "fancies" that might be true for the fancier but not for anyone else. What could be more appropriate to his ways than a kind of pseudo-humanism that deals with man in this world and leaves the unknowable other-world alone?[11] Since he couldn't bring himself to believe that the other world is anything but unknowable and since most of his preoccupations were with man in this world and with his own personality difficulties, which had nothing to do with a hereafter, "humanism" would be thoroughly acceptable.

A philosophy that deals with man as a human being without regard for any god-like aspects he might have would at least satisfy the agnosticism to which he professed, the skepticism which was so essentially a part of him. This "humanism" would satisfy the promptings of his psychology as well. Hadn't Quarles' wife at one time termed her husband "almost human"? That is the key: he hadn't been acting "humanly"; he had been stressing the intellect, rationality, just as Quarles had been. There were other aspects of his personality which he had been ignoring. Man has a body, has emotions, passions and instincts as well as a brain. To live "humanly", he reasoned, one must take ad-

[11] This "humanism" of Huxley's is not to be confused, of course, with that of Paul Elmer More, Stuart P. Sherman and the "Neo-Humanists" with their veneration of classical literature and belief in a strict morality. While the "Neo-Humanists" advocate the avoidance of all excess, Huxley's "humanism", as will be shown, reverses this attitude.

vantage of all these elements that are involved in being human. It was a very logical conclusion for him to arrive at, since he desired a philosophy that would make it possible for him to live in a less one-sided fashion. If one-sidedness had brought only unhappiness for him, then the solution of his personality problems lay in his becoming well-rounded by integrating the many potentialities which he as a human being possessed. From his own difficulties and those of the people whom he saw about him, it was possible for him to generalize, to say that man's main problem, the main thing that keeps him from being successful, is the fact that he refuses to take inventory of all his many aspects and make use of them. Man has continually made the mistake of thinking that he is a unified, harmonious entity when in reality he is a "series of distinct psychological states, a colony of diverse personalities."[12] Never for any appreciable length of time does an individual live in accordance with any one part of his being, never should his nature be animated by one of the members of this "colony of diverse personalities" exclusively. Men, he says,

> want to be masters of stiff consistency; they pretend, in the teeth of the facts, that they are one person all the time, thinking one set of thoughts, pursuing one course of action through life. They insist on being *either* Pascal *or* Voltair, *either* Podsnap *or* Keats, when in fact they are potentially always, and at different times actually, a little of what each of these personages symbolically stands for and a great

12 *Ibid.*, 321.

> deal more besides. . .For me, the pleasures of living and understanding have come to outweigh the pleasures, the very real pleasures (for consciousness of being a man of principle and system is extremely satisfying to the vanity), of pretending to be consistent. I prefer to be dangerously free and alive to being safely mumified. Therefore I indulge my inconsistencies. I try to be sincerely all the numerous people who live inside my skin and take their turn at being the master of my fate.[13]

This desire for what Emerson called "foolish consistency" is the factor responsible for all the world's "causes" through which man lulls himself into a purely fictional world in which everything acts in accordance with the views he takes. Everyone has always shied clear, Huxley felt, from admitting to himself that life is primarily a conglomerate mass of diversities. Mystics in their zeal to discover a meaning to life snatch at some force within them that provokes what they call a "mystical experience" and then interpret everything in terms of the findings of that "experience". They ignore all the other elements in their personalities and in the world about them; they deliberately repress any hints of diversity that might present themselves. But despite his general disapproval of mysticism, Huxley does not abrogate all possibility of there being "mystical experiences". On the contrary, he admits their existence. He says in fact:

> . . .the mystical experience is like all other primary psychological facts, susceptible of none but a tautological explanation. These things happen because they do happen, because that is what

13 Ibid., 257.

> the human mind happens to be like. Between the various explanatory hypotheses in terms of the "God of Abraham", Nirvana, Allah, and the rest, there is nothing to choose; in so far as each of them claims to be the unattainable Truth, and all of them postulate a knowledge of the unknowable Absolute, they are all equally ill-founded.[14]

The trouble he has to find with mysticism is in the fact that there is a tendency on the part of all mystics to wish to impose their ideas upon everyone else, to make everyone else live in accordance with that which they consider to be the ultimate in reality. One should realize that any mystical insights he might have are only a part of the diversity of which he is composed. To emphasize any one feature to the exclusion of the others he undoubtedly has would not be acting "humanly".

To wish to be human, that should be man's fundamental desire at all times. Because it is possible for an individual to be struck by the fact that God is in His heaven and that He is good, it is therefore part of his being human that he should at times feel this way. But it is not natural for an individual to desire to be superhuman. "To aspire to be superhuman," Huxley says, "is a most discreditable admission that you lack the guts, the wit, the moderating judgement to be successfully and consummately human."[15]

How is life lived on this human level? How does Huxley

14 Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 277.

15 Ibid., 75.

feel that men should make the most of all these diversities? How can so many conflicting elements, the essences of being human, be brought into any kind of workable way of life? Those are the questions Huxley set about answering in a series of essays written between roughly 1927 and 1932.

The basic premise premise in Huxley's "humanistic" philosophy is that life in itself is valuable. One doesn't have to feel that there must be an idyllic immortality awaiting him so that he can fully express himself. Life here and now is the important factor in existence. One is here to live and take advantage of all that is here for him to use. The aim in life is life and still more life. "The purpose of living is to live"[16] God manifests Himself to man in life, for after all God is life. He is both the good and the evil that are to be found. A universe that contained only good would be a stifling place in which no contrast would exist and therefore no life would exist, for the essence of life is in its diversity. Huxley shows just how impossible a perfect society, an ordered existence with social good as the only goal would be, as we shall see, when we come to the examination of Huxley's satirical novel _Brave New World_. Blake sums up this idea for Huxley in _The Marriage of Heaven and Hell_ when he says:

> Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are

16 _Ibid._, 298.

> necessary to Man's existence.
> Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd body is a portion of the Soul discern'd by the Senses, the chief inlets of spirit in this age. Energy is Eternal Delight.
> God alone Acts or Is in existing beings or Man.[17]

Man must live in accordance with all the diverse elements that make up life, then. And even more important--he must live them excessively, Huxley says. All who have aided progress in a noteworthy fashion have done so by living in this manner. Unfortunately, however, the Napoleons and the Hitlers have done their living, their excessive living, in one direction without consideration for other aspects of their existences. Such people allow their other potentialities to atrophy. They are specialists in one particular excess, and though they have a perfect right to smother their potentialities if they desire, they have no right to impose their precepts upon others, have no right to advocate the murdering of valuable aspects of life simply because they consider them unimportant.

Balanced moderation and excess are more apt to create advantageous living conditions. All the facets of an individual's personality must be taken into consideration; all of them must be lived to the fullest possible degree. It is most important that one should not live excessively to excess, or it is likely that he will do so along one line, as the Napoleons have done, letting the other phases of his existence become ne-

[17] Ibid.

glected. In a word, Huxley says,

> he will accept each of his selves, as it appears in his consciousness, as his momentarily true self. Each and all he will accept--even the bad, even the mean and suffering, even the death worshipping and naturally Christian souls. He will accept, he will life the life of each excessively.[18]

The degree to which a man lives diversely indicates the amount of success in life which he might claim. The more of his elements he can bring into play to their fullest degree the more happy, the more significant his life will become, according to Huxley. Man will give free reign to all of his impulses. The successful man will be the one who will alternate his propensities--whether they be toward godliness or toward perversions. As D. H. Lawrence says regarding this theory of Huxley's, ". . .it's what you thrill to. . .You live by what you thrill to." But the trick is to allow oneself to thrill to everything he is capable of thrilling to. Huxley, whose own desires would most probably never lead him into perversions, into rape, murder and suicide, tends to minimize the chaos in which the world would find itself were those who are potential murderers encouraged to emphasize such aspects of their nature. He can advocate such a philosophy simply because he is, as he says, "mild mannered" and phlegmatic. He would never run afoul of the law. Anarchy would be a sensible condition were the anarchical state populated only by Huxleys.

18 Ibid., 303.

Conventional moralities would be quite unnecessary if Huxley's "humanistic" philosophy were generally accepted. Acting morally would consist in acting in accordance with all the diverse elements in man. ". . .any course of behavior pursued to the exclusion of all other possibile courses open to a normally diverse personality is obviously, according to our standards, immoral, because it limits and distracts the manifestations of life," he says.[19]

It is wise to maintain the status quo if one is going to live morally according to Huxley's light. "Whatever is is right" could be changed to "Whatever is is life" thereby making a preservation of the status quo practically obligatory. Huxley in looking at the history of revolutions and the disrupting orders saw that little if anything is ever accomplished through attempts at changing what is. Post-war futilitarianism still gripped the world at this time, at least as far as social-consciousness was concerned. Versailles was still too new, too fresh in Huxley's thoughts for him to feel that anything could be gained by attempting to bring about change through violence--or through any other means in fact. But in spite of this fact revolution has a certain value in that it heightens present living and is an impetus to action and thought--"new faiths and hopes stimulate men to intenser living and the creation of yet another

19 Ibid., 309.

new reality",[20] another facet to human personality.

The emphasis that is placed upon the necessity of living up to all the potentialities that one possesses, let me repeat, shows quite clearly how this philosophy was designed by Huxley to suit his own personality. Since he had stressed the rationality and the intellectual aspects of his own life to the disadvantage of other elements in his personality and since he had found this attitude to be very unsatisfactory, he conceived of his new philosophy in terms of his own self-realization. If he were to live up to the precepts of this "Humanism" of his, it would be impossible for him to be so reticent, so rational and so indifferent to life.

It was not enough for Huxley to formulate a philosophy without doing something with it artistically. He could imply as much as he pleased that he is not a "congenital novelist", but he had already written three novels, three rather unconventionally constructed novels, to be sure, but they are nearer to being novels than they are to being any other literary form. It was at this time that he wrote Point Counterpoint, a novel that answers the following question printed on the title page:

> Oh, wearisome conditions of humanity!
> Born under one law, to another bound,
> Vainly begot and yet forbidden vanity:
> Created sick, commanded to be sound.
> What meaneth Nature by these diverse laws--
> Passion and reason, self division's cause?

20 Ibid., 272.

Needless to say, he answered the question in terms of his newly-created philosophy in a novel which he himself calls a "novel of ideas". It is the ingenious correlation of ideas, style and plot that makes Point Counterpoint one of the most interesting books he has written. It is significant that what is probably his best novel should be concerned with ideas, with people who are embodied ideas, people who exist primarily for the ideas of which they are representative. It is significan t because such a theory of the novel is so very obviously the product of novelists with intellectual turns of mind, novelists whose general attitudes are somewhat similar to Huxley's. Peacock wrote such novels, and Andre Gide toyed with the idea of writing one but thought better of it. In a conversation between Edouard and Bernard in The Counterfeiters Andre Gide says:

> . . ."Must we condemn the novel of ideas because of the groping and stumbling of the incapable people who have tried their hand at it? Up till now we have been given nothing but novels with a purpose parading as a novel of ideas. But that's not it at all, as you may imagine. Ideas. . .ideas, I must confess, interest me more than men--interest me more than anything. They live; they fight; they perish like men. Of course it may be said that our knowledge of them is through men, just as our knowledge of the wind is through the reeds that it bends; but all the same the wind is of more importance than the reeds."
> "The wind exists independently of the reed,"ventured Bernard. . .
> "Yes, I know; ideas exist only because of men; but that's what's so pathetic; they live at their expense."
> "But," thought Bernard, "the reed lifts its head again as soon as the wind has passed."[21]

21 Andre Gide, The Counterfeiters, 179.

Gide felt that the novel of ideas is in a sense a contradiction of terms, for the word "novel" has come to imply in part a literary form that deals with flesh-and-blood people, with actuality, and it is simply impossible for one to expect ideas as such to live and breath. It would be impossible to expect a character who is an embodied idea to do anything but live in the shadow of that idea. He would therefore possess no attitudes, would engage in no activities that would be inconsistent with the idea that he represents.

To act consistently, in accordance with some fixed principle is impossible. If any character is presented as doing so, that character loses all touch with reality; he becomes a mere wooden symbol of a concept, not a human being. This, as we have seen, is the danger involved in writing novels of ideas. Such novels are usually stilted, unreal things which are not at all pertinent to life. The fact that no one ever acts consistently, that no one should ever try to because life is composed of a number of diversities each of which it is man's duty as a human being to make the most of, which is the essence of Huxley's "humanism", makes it appear on the surfact to be a bit strange that he should attempt such a novel. But one must remember that Huxley's novels are all satirical and that one of the features of that kind of writing is the emphasizing of one aspect of a person's nature and making that aspect stand for the idea that is being satirised. Lypiatt in Antic Hay said that "every man is ludicrous if you look at him from outside, without taking into

account what's going on in his heart and mind."[22] That is Huxley's method; he looks at the people in his novels from the outside. One rarely gets into the heart of his characters; one isn't intended to. Huxley maintains the vantage point of the spectator, even in Point Counterpoint, the novel intended to be the culmination of his new philosophy. In spite of his "humanistic" beliefs, he hasn't changed much regarding his personality, only regarding his idea of what his personality should be.

The spectator-technique has been given a new twist, owing to the precepts of his "humanism". Because man is so diverse and because the universe itself is so diverse, he draws his characters by means of what he calls a "multiplicity of eyes".[23] Instead of Huxley alone looking on, there are a mumber of others doing it with Huxley, through Huxley. He describes this method in the words of Philip Quarles, who says,

> ". . .the essence of the new way of looking is multiplicity. Multiplicity of eyes and multiplicity of aspects seen. For instance, one person interprets events in terms of bishops; another in terms of the price of flannel camisoles; another, like that young lady from Gulmerg. . .thinks of it in terms of good times. And thenthere's the biologist, the chemist, the physicist, the historian. Each sees, professionally, a different aspect of the event, a different layer of reality. What I want to do is to look with all those eyes at once. With religious eyes, scientific eyes, economic eyes, homme moyen sensuel eyes. . ."
> ". . .what would the result be?" she asked.
> "Queer," he answered. "A very queer picture indeed."[24]

22 Aldous Huxley, Antic Hay, 294.

23 Aldous Huxley, Point Counterpoint, 192.

24 Ibid.

Huxley looks at his characters with all these eyes. And from all of these different points of view he sees his characters as the embodiments of ideas, each individual standing for one of them. The reader views the characters and therefore the ideas themselves as they would be as a diversity, seen through this "multiplicity of eyes".

Certainly the picture he presents is "queer". And so it should be, according to his theories, for Huxley feels that there are a number of things wrong with the world which should be cleared away. The best way for him to assist in this clearing away is to paint things as being "fantastic" and "queer", so much so in fact that they will be laughed out of existence.

The objects of his satire in Point Counterpoint are those aspects of life which do not conform to his "humanistic" philosophy. But still, many of the things he satirises are familiar to the reader of Huxley's earlier novels. Where he had formerly scoffed and sneered and poked fun at things because they merely revolted him, he knows now why they revolt him, appear as a vomedy to him. The trouble is invariably to be found in the fact that one is not living "humanly", that he is trying to be superhuman or subhuman, that he is living excessively in one direction or another.

Just as he ridiculed in his essays during this period those who devoted their lives to such things as podsnappery and grundyism because they were stressing one aspect of life to the detriment of another, so he ridiculed people like Shelley,

for instance, in Point Counterpoint. Shelley, who said, "Hail to thee, blythe spirit, bird thou never wert", was attempting to be superhuman. Because Shelley lived exclusively in a world of the spirit and couldn't speak of a skylark as simply a bird but had to call it a "spirit", Huxley calls him a "mixture between a fairy and a white slug". There are other real people in this novel who come in for a share in the general castigation. There is Pascal, who looked at the world through dyspeptic eyes and wished to impose his dyspepsia upon everyone else. There is Proust, who interpreted the world through asthmatic eyes and believed that what he saw was an objective reality, true for all as well as for himself. Some have seen in Point Counterpoint a roman a clef, just as they have seen real characters, people like Byron and Southey and Leigh Hunt in Peacock's novels of ideas.[25] It has been suggested that Augustus John is pictured in Point Counterpoint. We have seen that Philip Quarles is certainly Huxley himself. There are others, too: J. Middleton Murray, D. H. Lawrence and Sir Oswald Mosley. Huxley weaves these people into a novel designed especially to present his ideas on the integrated life.

For this purpose he has evolved a contrapuntal style, a method of presentation that works in admirably with his theories regarding man's diversity. Life, according to Huxley, is a vast musical composition filled with multitudes of themes

25 See, for instance, J. H. Roberts, "Huxley and Lawrence" in Virginia Quarterly Review, XIII,4.

which are sometimes cacophanous. However dissonant the composition might appear to be, none of its elements can be neglected or the structure of the thing will be destroyed, just as man himself must consider all the elements of his diversity or his equilibrium, his completeness, will be destroyed. Philip Quarles in *Point Counterpoint* has the same theory concerning the construction of a novel that Huxley himself has. He sees the parallel that exists between the composition of a fugue for instance and the writing of a novel. In an excerpt from his notebook Quarles answers the question how this parallel can be made use of in literature. He says,

> "All you need is a sufficiency of characters and parallel, contrapuntal plots. While Jones is murdering a wife, Smith is wheeling the perambulator in the park. You alternate the themes. More interesting, the modulations and variations are also more difficult. A novelist modulates by reduplicating situations and characters. He shows several people falling in love, or dying, or praying in different ways--dissimilars solving the same problem. Or, *vice versa*, similar people confronted with dissimilar problems. In this way you can modulate through all the aspects of your theme, you can write variations in any number of different moods. Another way: The novelist can assume the god-like creative privilege and simply elect to consider the events of the story in their various aspects--emotional, scientific, economic, religious, metaphysical, etc. He will modulate from one to the other--as, from the aesthetic to the physico-chemical aspect of things, from the religious to the physiological or financial. But perhaps this is a too tyrannical imposition of the author's will. Some people would think so. But need the author be so retiring? I think we're a bit too squeamish about these personal appearances nowadays."[26]

This is essentially the formula used in writing *Point*

[26] Aldous Huxley, *Point Counterpoint*, 294.

Counterpoint. It is a sort of fusion of similars and dissimilars solving problems that are in the large similar but in regard to detail not the same. Everyone in this novel is attacking the same problem: how is one to live successfully? Those who do not arrive at what Huxley feels is the correct solution are made to appear "queer" or "fantastic", "vomic", in short. They are the ones whom Huxley satirises.

Huxley presents a central figure, Mark Rampion, who acts as the medium through which Huxley's own theories are expressed. Extremely obvious parallels between Rampion and D. H. Lawrence exist, for Lawrence possessed many of the ideas that Huxley began using about 1927. Huxley and Lawrence were friends of long-standing (their friendship began in the latter part of 1915 and continued until Lawrence's death in 1930)[27]. Huxley had profound respect for that author both as an individual and as a thinker. Though Huxley knew that Lawrence found his own doctrines too much for even their author to live by, he was struck by the wisdom of what these ideas were intended to bring about. Because of this strong tie which lay between the two men and because Huxley had probably acquired many of his ideas from Lawrence, it is not difficult to understand why it is that Lawrence appears here. It is Rampion, who has discovered the correct way to live. He it is that has evolved a philosophy that is in reality the one already described as being Huxley's. Rampion and his wife

27 See Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Dec. 23, 1915.

live simply, in what is an approximation of an integrated way of life. Rampion spends most of his time talking, expounding his theories, and though one gets a view of him as being partially three-dimensional through discussions of his early conditioning, one rarely witnesses him doing anything but talk. Rampion becomes therefore little more than an embodied idea. He exists because of his theory of the integrated man and for little else. It is perhaps interesting to note that though Rampion is merely the medium through which the ideas held jointly by Huxley and Lawrence and though Rampion is in reality Lawrence himself, Lawrence did not, at first at least, recognize this fact. He says in a letter to Huxley, ". . . your Rampion is the most boring character in the book--a gas-bag"[28] It is possible that Huxley had inadvertently changed Lawrence from flesh and blood into a "gas bag" because he was writing a novel of ideas.

Rampion's and his wife's way of life become the norm. By showing this family talking and attempting to live the theories which are embraced in the ideas regarding the integrated man, Huxley desires to throw into relief the other characters who do not follow the tenets of this philosophy. The actions of the others, the actions of Sir Edward Tantamount, of his daughter Lucy Tantamount, of John and Walter Bidlake, of Philip Quarles and of Burlap are all deviations from this norm set by the Rampions.

28 *Ibid.*, 758.

It is the lives of these people that he weaves together in the contrapuntal fashion. Huxley doesn't bother with plot in Point Counterpoint. He is interested exclusively in promulgating his theories by presenting various figures (ideas) acting in relation to those theories. Philip Quarles, who is contemplating writing a novel of ideas, too, feels that this type of novel runs into difficulties when it comes to the portraying of real people both because such a novel would exclude "all but about.01 per cent. of the human race" and because "people who can reel off neatly formulated notions aren't quite real."[29] Practically the only ones who expound any ideas here are Rampion and Quarles; the rest merely act and act "vomically" you may be sure, for Huxley tries to make their lives appear so much like a "vomedy" that one will be revolted by their activities.

Lucy Tantamount is perhaps the most outstanding character of them all. She is an extension of the personality of Myra Viveash with an added touch of nymphomania in her make-up. She is twice as bored as Myra, twice as rich, and twice the failure. Her life is what it is because she has allowed society, sophistication and the modern tempo to limit her to mere seeking after pleasures. Living modernly, she says,

> . . .is living quickly. You can't cart a wagon-load of ideals and romanticisms about with you these days. When you travel by airplane, you must leave your heavy

[29] Aldous Huxley, Point Counterpoint, 295.

baggage behind.[30]

She let her desires to be modern interfere with other capabilities she undoubtedly possessed, other elements in her personality. Her life had become lop-sided because she refused to carry "heavy baggage". Consequently she had become bored. Whereas Myra, Huxley felt, had been bored simply because boredom was in the air, because science and the loss of values had put universal boredom in the air without any hope of its being taken away, now Huxley knew what tricks these contributing factors have played on the personality. He knew that if Lucy had but integrated her life, made "living" rather than "thrilling" her proccupation, she would not be bored.

The one who is probably furthest from the norm in one direction is John Bidlake; that is, he is the complete sensualist. There is no intellect at all in his make-up. While Bidlake is represented as having been one of the greatest living artists, the reader meets him when he is getting old, when the fruits of his chosen way of life are ready for picking. As an artist Bidlake has seen everything in terms of buttocks; as a man he has done exactly the same thing. His most famous painting is of "eight plump and pearly bathers" which is a wreath of "nacreous flesh". "Even their faces were just smiling flesh, not a trace of spirit to distract you from the contemplation of the lovely forms and their

30 Ibid., 203.

relations.[31] His whole life had been just one love affair after another--London seems almost to be populated by his former mistresses. But now everything is changed. He is old--physically and artistically. His art is passe, and his body is no longer any good to him. He is dyspeptic and the possessor of what is probably a cancer. From living a life of the flesh he is reduced to contemplating the ravages that this type of life wreked. The only thing that is left is a short period of regret and finally the welcome grave. Though he led a physically excessive life, there is no integration in his way of life. One retches rather seriously at the vomedy of Bidlake's life.

Sir Edward Tantamount's difficulties arise out of the fact that he has allowed his life to follow the opposite direction from that which Bidlake took. He hasn't the slightest grasp of what living physically means. By dint of decades of living in a sphere of rationality he has become, to be sure, one of the world's greatest scientists, but he has also become one of the world's most outstanding failures.

> ". . .Lord Edward was in all but intellect a kind of child. In the laboratory, at his desk, he was as old as science itself. But his feelings, his intuitions, his instincts were those of a little boy. Unexercised, the greater part of his spiritual being had never developed. He was a kind of child, but with his childish habits in-grained by forty years of living."[32]

31 <u>Ibid.</u>, 44.

32 <u>Ibid.</u>, 19.

Lord Edward views with interest the sex life of "axolotls and chickens, guinea pigs and frogs; but any reference to the corresponding activities of humans made him painfully uncomfortable"[33] As far as he is concerned sex doesn't exist for the human species, yet sex is rampant in the lives of those about him, in that of his wife and that of his daughter. He, too, is ridiculous; he, too, is anything but human in Rampion's sense of the word.

Quarles, we have already mentioned. It is enough to say that his life has been one-sided in that he has withdrawn into himself too much, that he is far too indifferent to what is going on about him and that he lives too much a life of the intellect. He deviates from the normal in the same way that Lord Edward does, but he does so pathetically rather than ridiculously.

There are other characters, too. There is Burlap, the literary critic, who has excluded sincerity from his nature, who doesn't know a genuine feeling from a false one. The book ends with Burlap and his mistress, Beatrice Gilray, "sitting at opposite ends of the big old fashioned bath. And what a romp they had! The bathroom was drenched with their splashings."[34] And Huxley says, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." As long as there are Burlaps--and Burlap symbolises all the ridiculous characters in the book--this will be the

[33] Ibid., 134.

[34] Ibid., 432.

"Kingdom of Heaven". Could anything be more vomic?

There is no hope for mankind; its future will be that of the world's Burlaps unless the individual psyche is remodelled. Fix up each person, make him live successfully, and then there will be time enough to think of social reform. Huxley at this time could look at the world's muddle and see it only in the light of individual errors. He himself had never had any serious financial worries. Poverty and its attendant miseries were unknown to him, had nothing to do with his life. He not only knew nothing about the socially inferior and economically destitute, but he was apparently not interested in this class, for hardly an example of it appears in any of his novels that he had written up to this time. Social-consciousness was an intellectual matter for him, one that had nothing to do with his own life. The security in which his own existence was nurtured fostered within him complete equanimity in the face of the impending financial holacaust of 1929. The proletarian novel was not yet born, for there did not appear to be any need for such a type of literature in the boom years following the war. Because people were not starving on every hand, Huxley and his colleagues could completely ignore the problem of going hungry. They could clip their coupons and expect to keep on clipping them indefinitely. Huxley in 1928 felt that the proletariat was rapidly disappearing, that it was being absorbed by the bourgeoisie and that everyone might just as well ignore Marx and the menace of communism because the problems

which nurtured such ideologies would soon disappear. He actually felt that unemployment would soon become negligible if not non-existent. He was convinced that "the immediate future promises. . .a vast plateau of standardized income."[35] Therefore it was only logical that he should concentrate on psychological problems, problems indigenous in the individual, not in masses of individuals. To do him justice, he didn't ignore the difficulties that did exist; he was very much exercised over the evils of science, standardization, the machine and the growing dis-regard of established values. He did not, as so many did, escape into aestheticism, did not drown himself in the exoticisms of Dada. No, he saw everything that was wrong very clearly, and he can be forgiven for not seeing what was about to be wrong.

Brave New World is quite obviously the product of a socially and economically secure background and era. It deals satirically with the trend toward social planning and its reduction of the individual to the standardized cog in the wheel of the general good. It deals with the problem that Joseph Wood Krutch describes in The Modern Temper when he says:

> Students of its [the ant's] evolution tell us that the automatic and yet cunning elaborateness of the life-habits which it reveals are explainable only on the theory that insects were once more variable, perhaps we can say more 'intelligent', than they are now, but

35 Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 241.

> that, as perfection of adjustment was reached, habit became all-sufficient, and hence the biologically useless consciousness faded away until they are probably now not aware of their actions in any fashion analogous to the awareness of the mammals who are in certain respects so much less perfect than they.[36]

It is a problem that has interested Huxley almost from the very moment he began writing. As early as Crome Yellow, his first novel, he said, "An impersonal generation will take the place of Nature's hideous system. In vast state incubators, rows upon rows of gravid bottles will supply the world with the population it requires. The family system will disappear; society, sapped at its very base, will have to find new foundations; and Eros, beautifully and irresponsibly free, will flit like a gay butterfly from flower to flower through a sunlit world."[37]

For in Brave New World the babies are born from bottles. They spend their youth in vast dormitories where they are exposed to mass conditioning, conditioning which causes them willingly to subject themselves to the good of the state, the common good rather than the individual good. They indulge in open, unabashed sexual investigation from an early age; they consider the word "mother" to be the most obscene word in the language. And later, when they reminisce sentimentally about their childhood they sing songs such as the one with the refrain

36 Joseph Wood Krutch, The Modern Temper, 49.

37 Aldous Huxley, Crome Yellow, 49.

that cries: ". . .that dear little Bottle of mine." Family life in the Brave New World has definitely and irretrievably disappeared.

In _Antic Hay_ he suggested a life in which quiet and solitude would become an almost unheard of, completely undesirable condition, an existence in which the encroachment of solitude would be a thoroughly undesirable situation, would cause "one to begin living arduously in the q iet, arduously in some strange unheard-of manner."[38] No one in _Brave New World_ lives arduously. Everything has become stultifyingly comfortable. In case life should by an chance become too wearying there is always the drug called _soma_ which lulls one into forgetfulness. When existence becomes too boring one merely hops a rocket so that he may court new varieties of noise in Iceland, in Mexico or in Patagonia where sumptuous resorts are equipped with the latest "feely" productions, entertainments that are not only movies but "smellies" and "feelies" as well. The people in this super-civilization of Huxley's have lost all ability to entertain themselves. They are examples of what Huxley had said in one of the early essays in _On the Margin_ might be one of the main conditions of life in the future. He said:

> . . .civilization looks as though it might easily decline into a kind of premature senility. With a mind almost atrophied by lack of use, unable to entertain itself and grown so wearily uninterested in the ready-made distrac-

[38] Aldous Huxley, _Antic Hay_, 202.

> tions offered from without that nothing but the grossest stimulants of an ever-increasing violence and crudity can move it, the democracy of the future will sicken of a chronic and mortal boredom.[39]

The inhabitants of the Brave New World would certainly sicken of their synthetic, mechanical entertainments were it not for the inventive genius which is constantly at work finding new and ever more ingenious methods of lulling the populace into feeling it desirable that it work exclusively for the state.

In Those Barren Leaves Huxley says:

> At some distant future date, when society is organized in a rational manner so that every individual occupies the position and does the work for which his capacities really fit him, when education has ceased to instill into the minds of the young fantastic prejudices instead of truths, when the endocrine glands have been taught to function in perfect harmony and diseases have been suppressed, all our literature of conflict and unhappiness will seem strangely incomprehensible; and our taste for the spectacle of mental torture will be regarded as an obscene perversion of which decent men should feel ashamed. Joy will take the place of suffering as the principal theme of art; in the process, it may be, art will cease to exist. Happy people, we now say, have no history; and we might add that happy individuals have no literature. The novelist dismisses in a paragraph his hero's twenty years of happiness; over a week of misery and spiritual debate he will linger through twenty chapters. When there is no more misery, he will have nothing to write about. Perhaps it will be all for the best.[40]

This is exactly what has happened in this new civilization of Huxley's. Everyone is hysterically happy all the time. Misery has at last been swept from the world, and lo and behold, tragedy is completely mystifying to everyone. Since the world

39 Aldous Huxley, On the Margin, 51.

40 Aldous Huxley, Those Barren Leaves, 65.

is stable, the people have everything they want, "are blissfully ignorant of passion and old age", aren't "plagued" by mothers and fathers, and since they are totally unaware even of the existence of such conditions, it is impossible to expect them to comprehend in any way the problems involved in Othello, for instance. They have "the feelies" and the "scent organ" instead.

When Huxley wrote Those Barren Leaves, he could have one of his characters say, as is quoted above, that perhaps all this will be for the best. He had no philosophy of life against which he could hold up the world around him and by so-doing draw conclusions about what he saw. But at this time, at the time he wrote Brave New World, he knew that one must live an integrated life in which all man's diversities are given full play. In the civilization portrayed in Brave New World none of man's aspects but the impetus which makes him strive for more and more pleasures and that which makes him security are lived fully. The evils and unpleasantnesses which are so very much a part of life and exist as much as the good features should be accepted along with the other more desirable elements. It is because life is not integrated in the Brave New World that life has become a failure, that art and literature, things which result from man's "capacity for irrelevance" have become non-existent. Just as Krutch asks, ". . .who, however weary he may be of human instability and discontent and violence, would exchange his state for that of the ant?", so does Huxley say that the worst of possible worlds would be

better than this one in Brave New World, the best of possible worlds.

Huxley, who has probably never gone hungry a day in his life, can say that suffering and tragedy and hunger are but normal aspects of life and should therefore be retained. Especially is he to be condoned for saying it in a period when everyone else was well-fed and expected to be well-fed and even better-fed tomorrow. It is not surprising that he should be preoccupied with these aspects of the period in which he wrote Brave New World, aspects of the steady improvements which were being made technologically, economically and politically. For Brave New World, a book about modern civilization reductio ad absurdum, portrays a civilization in which all the goals toward which we are striving, all the elements in modern society which we are trying to improve upon have been bettered by the means we should like to use. It is the world today with which he is concerned here, for Huxley says, "My own feeling, whenever I see a book about the future, is one of boredom and exasperation. What on earth is the point of troubling one's head with speculations about what men may, but most certainly will not, be like in A.D. 20,000?" Huxley doesn't for a moment suppose that people in the future will substitute "Oh, Ford" for "Oh, God"; he doesn't suppose that sexual promiscuity will necessarily be as rampant as he portrays it as being in Brave New World, but he does say that this society is a caricature of our world today, only ever so much more "Vomic"!

It is with Brave New World that Huxley closed the second phase of his changing philosophy. In 1931, before the financial holocaust had really hit him, before the Mussolinis and Hitlers had become obviously malignant, he could write such a book as this with its mingled optimism and pessimism. He could be sardonically optimistic about man's social and financial future but pessimistic over man's spiritual future. Such an attitude was definitely the product of the 1920's with their blindness to the inevitably impending evils. It took a series of severe blows to transfer the views of Huxley and his contemporaries from a preoccupation with man as an individual to man as a member of society. And the years since 1929 have been crowded with such blows.

CHAPTER III

MYSTICISM

With the publication of Brave New World Huxley laid aside his theories regarding the Life Worshipper, put them away definitely and finally, and closed another chapter in his philosophical peregrinations. He didn't, however, put down his "humanistic" theories with one hand while simultaneously picking up his new theories with the other. Rather he eased himself out of the one and into the other--just as he had eased himself out of futilitarianism and into "humanism". Four years elapsed between Brave New World and the appearance of Eyeless in Gaza, in which his third philosophical attitude is presented full-blown with all its many ramifications worked out. In these four years two books appeared: the first, Texts and Pretexts, an anthology which is obviously a stop-gap, a work that signifies either disillusionment over or lack of interest in his "humanistic" doctrines. For where his earlier books were full of his views on the particular philosophic mood to which he held, this work does not stress philosophy at all. The second volume to occupy his time during this transitional period was a travel book, a sort of diary of his wanderings in Central America, called Beyond the Mexique Bay. If one looks back to the previous transitional period in Huxley's life, the interlude between his futilitarian and humanistic periods, he will see that travel occupied Huxley's

time then, too.

<u>Beyond the Mexique Bay</u> testifies to a sudden sterility of creative ability owing to the drying up of his faith in what he had had to say. It is a somewhat bitter, always searching book that reveals, along with its disgust for Mexicans, a new disgust for humanity in general. Humanity had let him down, as it had let nearly all his contemporaries down. With the spread of the effects of the Wall Street Crash in 1929 there was a widespread tightening of belts on both sides of the Atlantic. The soup kitchen, the bread-line and the dole became everyday topics. Hyde Park's soap boxes were being occupied over time. Dissatisfaction ran rife, with hunger marches, strikes and demonstrations taking place on every hand. The Brave New World looked far from brave. Where was the plateau, the level on which wages were going to find a resting place? Where was this leveling of the bourgeoisie and working class to which Huxley had looked forward with such complete certainty? These attitudes to which he had held, he discovered, were ill-founded, to put it mildly. The world in which he had been living just did not exist any more. New concepts had taken the places of the old ones. He could no longer look at man in relation to an economically sound state. Man's former "context" in which financial worries were slowly being erased from his life by technological improvements no longer suited man in the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Whereas Huxley had formerly concerned himself with the individual's psyche and forgotten about his economic, socio-

logical, and political environment, he now found himself unable to do so. A new situation confronted him; the individual appeared in a new light, in the "context" the thirties imposed upon him.

International difficulties as well as domestic problems were growing in number and severity. By 1931 the Sir Oswald Mosleys and their strutting automatons were taking on a sinister rather than a ridiculous aspect. Economic unrest was reaping its sowing of dragon's teeth, in the emphasis on Hitlers, Mussolinis and Stalins, isms, schimsms, the Aryan Race and a universal strengthening of nationalistic feeling which took over the world. This was the Brave New World. Could one solve the international muddle by means of Huxley's "humanism"? Evidently Huxley himself felt that one couldn't, that living in no matter how moderately an excessive manner would not cure the world of its rash of Hitlers and depressions. Something different must be done. Time must be taken off to consider man's plight and see it carefully. Huxley again felt that he must sift things through so that he might discover the correct explanation of man's dilemma and the correct way out of it.

So he went to Mexico, which Lawrence had said possessed a "good natural feeling--a great carelessness."[1] Here he could watch man, one might say, anthropologically. He could investigate the reactions of civilization on a more primitive

[1] D. H. Lawrence, Letters of D. H. Lawrence, 565.

culture. He could see, for example, the results of American whims on the mahogony industry and the frenzied but on the whole ill-starred measures of adjustment. He could see man with the barriers down, acting openly as his more civilized brothers in Europe and America were acting beneath a veneer of cultural and legal restraints. The actions of the impulsive Mexican permitted him to see the dilemma in which the Western World had become involved. Where the European resorted to subtle means for removing his adversaries, the Mexican accomplished his ends more expertly and no less ethically with a quick thrust of the knife. This fact or one very closely akin to it must have impressed him very definitely, for later, as we shall soon see, he was to make much of generalisations from such examples of human folly.

At this time he could only comment on the situation. He could see what was wrong with things, but he could not follow what he saw to what were for him its logical conclusions. He could quote a bit of doggerel that asked,

> Will the hate that you're
> so rich in
> Light a fire in the kitchen,
> And the little god of hate
> turn the spit, spit, spit?[2]

He could say rather pontifically that

> One of the preliminary conditions of international peace is the unculcation of a new (or rather of a

[2] Aldous Huxley, Beyond the Mexique Bay, 89.

> very old) scale of moral values. People must be taught to think hatred at least as discreditable as they now think lust; to find the more raucous manifestations of collective vanity as vulgar, low and ludicrous as those of individual vanity.[3]

But these are merely descriptions of the existing situation. He could condemn hatred and still have very little that could be termed a workable solution, a well-wrought plan of attack. At the same time, however, he says, in passages such as those just quoted, in a negative way what was to be an integral part of his next philosophy.

It took a few years of floundering and meditation for him to finally decide upon a satisfactory solution of the world's evils. The particular trend which this meditation of his took was being paralleled by the trends of many of his contemporaries. While T. S. Eliot had been in the vanguard of those who were seeking a way out through mysticism, there were others who followed closely on his heels. There was, for instance, Ernest Hemingway, who for a time at least embraced Catholicism, Heywood Broun and Evelyn Waugh, who also took to the Church. These men were able to associate themselves with established forms of religion. There is a quality of desperation in the wholesale succumbing to religion at this time. World conditions had become so bad that many could no longer face the myriads of problems that so obviously stretched out before them in the years to come. It was possible for them to lose themselves by finding a meaning to existence

[3] *Ibid.*, 99.

through such methods.

Others chose to combat the economic, social and political evils that were sweeping over the world by associations of another kind. They became Communists, Fascists, Pacifists and Internationalists. Social consciousnesses ripened and produced proletarian novels, party-line poems, and tracts. There was no withdrawing into ivory towers for these people. They intended to fight and, therefore, felt only contempt for those who lulled themselves into a forgetfulness of their plight. They wrote articles in the Daily Worker demanding that the Workers Arise! Like Granville Hicks and Malcolm Cowley in books such as The Great Tradition and The Exile's Return, many confused aesthetics and politics and pointed the way to the market place. Strikes and strikers became the majors subjects in literature. Young English and American poets, Auden, Spender, Lewis, Rukeyser, Patchen, Fearing and so on ad infinitum became enmeshed in the vogue of the day. In political and economic circles as well there were the devotees of the various social schemes for the planning of society. Harold Lasky and the Webbs, among others, added authoritative impetus to the communistic band-wagon. There were Cook's Tours to Russia taken by everyone from John Dos Passos to such infinitely respectable lady-novelists as E. M. Delafield. All were shouting in a raucous din to the effect that something must be done, and invariably everyone knew exactly just what that something must be.

There were two camps then; one occupied by those who

scrambled up out of sight in the clouds of religion and mysticism; one for those who joined the picket line, the labor organizers and the revolutionists. Nearly everyone did one thing or the other. Just as they had all reacted to post-war hysteria by letting down their back hair and uttering lamentations or equally impotent sneers of displeasure, just as everyone had permitted the mirage of financial security to waft them into fogs of Dada and estheticism, so they all at this time expressed the to-be-expected individuality by becoming to a man inhabitants of the heights or the depths. Those who scorned both positions were ignored as too insignificant or were lambasted for wasting valuable talents.

Huxley, however, was different. Where he had formerly been the spokesman for his generation--when everyone had been futile after the war; where he had at least been expressive of the general attitude during the boom period before 1929; now at last he was different. And how was he different? He embraced both attitudes, both mysticism and a social consciousness.

It is strange that Huxley should turn mystic when one remembers his loud expressions of disapproval of mysticism in his earlier writings. In _Do What You Will_ he had termed mysticism a "confession of a fear of life, of an inability to deal with the facts of experience as they present themselves--the confession, in a word, of a weakness, of which men should

be ashamed, not proud."[4] But now he confesses that he was speaking from his own lack of experience. "Non-mystics," he says, "have denied the validity of the mystical experience, describing it as merely subjective and illusory. But it should be remembered that to those who have never actually had it, any direct intuition must seem subjective and illusory."[5] For Huxley himself has at last had such an experience, and he frankly admits that he formerly did not know whereof he spoke.

It was in Eyeless in Gaza, written in 1935, that he presented a fictionized version of what might be termed a spiritual awakening. But it is more than an explanation of his attitudes regarding mysticism. It is a document in which he presents his social philosophy as well, for his personal and social philosophies are of course indissolubly related. It is only strange that mysticism characterised by withdrawal from society should accompany a very outward-looking, forward-looking attitude toward the individual in his relationship with society. It is not strange from Huxley's own point of view that he should be interested in the satisfactory solution of man's social problems while at the same time professing a belief in a mystical explanation of the universe. It isn't strange when one considers the fact that though Huxley has always been phlegmatic, indifferent to people in regard to actually knowing them, he has never been at all introverted in

[4] Aldous Huxley, Do What You Will, 75.

[5] Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 332.

the true sense of the word. Lawrence in a letter to Huxley sums up this situation pretty well: "You are an extravert by inheritance far more than *in esse*. You'd have made a much better introvert, had you been allowed."[6] The important factor is that he hadn't been allowed to withdraw to the exclusion of others completely. He was able to and had always been able to think in terms of the difficulties that were plaguing others as well as himself, even when he was not able to find any solution to those problems or any meaning to life. This Ivory Tower-Market Place attitude is strange only in its comparative uniqueness and illustrated as graphically as does any other single fact concerning Huxley his surprising amenability to the general trends which thinking has taken during his lifetime. It takes a good deal of agility and the power of reconciliation to possess a philosophy in which the supreme importance of the soul does not make the body any the less important.

He fixed his eyes on man and on God at the same time. He looked to the future of man in relation to the world as it has become. He saw that the world was in a mess just as

> Victorian England, outside the villages, the country houses and the genteeler quarters of the large towns, was a land of indescribable ugliness and misery. To escape from it Karl Marx went out imaginatively into the revolutionary future. Ruskin and William Morris into the pre-industrial past.[7]

[6] D. H. Lawrence, *Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 693.

[7] Aldous Huxley, *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 232.

Though he might yearn for the past of Elizabethan England, he never foolishly saw any solution in a disregarding of the industrial aspects of the world today, never considered a return to former ways of doing things.

It was a philosophy founded on bases such as these that Huxley presented in Eyeless in Gaza and again a year or so later more seriously, more formally in his book of essays called Ends and Means. In this novel Huxley writes of Anthony Beavis, who might really be named Aldous Huxley in regard to temperament and attitudes generally. Eavis' life parallels Huxley's in his post-war feeling of futility and his later embracing of the concepts of what might be called a mystic in hip boots. The construction of this novel is moderately experimental. Huxley, in writing of Beavis' life, has thrown the idea of chronology to the winds. The various chapters are headed by the date on which the events described therein took place. One skips about from 1934 to 1902. Huxley moves neither backward nor forward through time; he simply jumbles everything with a gleefully hectic abandon. He hints at an excuse for organizing Eyeless in Gaza in this manner: Beavis looks through his collection of old snapshots: pictures of his mother taken at different periods in her life, of his friends and of himself. By looking at these pictures he recalls bits of the past. "Somewhere in the mind a lunatic shuffled a pack of snapshots and dealt them out at random, shuffled once more and dealt them out in different order, again and again, indefinitely. There was no chronology. The

idiot remembered no distinction between before and after. The thirty-five years of his conscious life made themselves immediately known to him as a chaos--a pack of snapshots in the hands of a lunatic."[8] In this crazy, illogical way Beavis sees his life and what he sees is recorded in the novel just as it comes to him. To write logically the story of the life of a man of the contemporary world, Huxley suggests, one must be illogical in regard to the selection of the order in which the events are to be related.

But there is another, more practical reason for Huxley's using this method in Eyeless in Gaza. He is presenting anew theory here. It is a philosophy that comes as the culminating point in the life of his hero Anthony Beavis. Since Huxley desired to show Beavis' life from early youth until the forties, when he accepted this philosophy, there would be in the first place little space devoted to the philosophy itself were it to appear at the very end of the novel. Too, the point, the value to this philosophy would in a sense be vitiated if he were to tack it on at the end as a sort of moral to Beavis' early misspent life. As this novel stands, without the usual chronology, one becomes acquainted with this philosophy in the very early pages. By the time one completes Eyeless in Gaza he is thoroughly familiar with what Huxley has to say regarding his solution to the chaos of the thirties.

Beavis, as we have already suggested, is in many respects

8 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, 17.

similar to Huxley himself. By reading about a man who is like Huxley arriving at a philosophy that is in every way the same as Huxley's, it is possible to become better acquainted with the philosophy's appropriateness to its propounder. There are even obvious physical similarities between Huxley and Beavis. For example, Beavis, like Quarles, was injured before the war at a training camp in England. "A half-witted bumpkin with a hand-grenade[9]" had prevented his going to war, just as a fool with a cart had made it impossible for Quarles to go to France, just as bad eyesight had kept Huxley in England during the war-years. The time Beavis spent in reflecting while recuperating from his wound had prepared him for an acceptance of post-war futilitarianism. This "bumpkin" had liberated him from the war hysteria, made him realize that stupidity as well as honour had "come back as a king, to earth".[10] In the hospital he watched its "royal progress through the earth".[11] Beavis found himself confirmed in his pessimism when the vogue for that attitude was just getting under way.

The years following the war found a Beavis, who was very much like Huxley in his general attitudes. The way to a philosophy of meaninglessness had been prepared for him in the same school that Huxley's had been prepared for him. Beavis came from a scholarly, comfortable background which had

[9] *Ibid.*, 68.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

given him a public school and university education, made him economically independent, given him a career that offered him prestige as well as added financial security. Besides a firmly entrenched futilitarian attitude, Beavis shared other things with Huxley. He, too, was indifferent--even in childhood. "There are times," his father had said in discussing him, "when he seems strangely indifferent."[12] Later in life he was to look back upon this dominating influence in his affairs. "I've always," he says, "condemned showing off and the desire to dominate as vulgar, and imagined myself pretty free of these vulgarities. But in so far as free at all, free, I now perceive, only thanks to the indifference which has kept me away from other people, thanks to the external-economic and internal-intellectual circumstances which made me a sociologist rather than a banker, administrator, engineer, working in direct contact with my fellows."[13] In his attitude toward love, too, there is a striking similarity between Beavis and Quarles and possibly with Huxley himself, one might surmise. The greatest warmth he could muster in his relationship with the woman he came closest to loving was "a kind of detached irresponsible amusement."[14] Instead of loving this woman he wanted freedom, he says,

[12] *Ibid.*, 75.

[13] *Ibid.*, 295.

[14] *Ibid.*, 233.

> ". . .for the sake of my work--in other words, to remain enslaved in a world where there could be no question of freedom, for the sake of my amusements. I insisted on irresponsible sensuality, rather than love. Insisted, in other words, on her becoming a means to the end of my detached, physical satisfaction and, conversely, of course, on my becoming a means to hers."[15]

It seems that Beavis had deliberately kept from getting away from his own private little world, kept from being attached to Helen in any way. Beavis explains his adherence to a philosophy of meaninglessness along much the same lines as he explains his maintenence of a detached point of view even in his love affairs.

> He himself, Anthony went on to think, he himself had chosen to regard the whole process as either pointless or a practical joke. Yes, chosen, for it had been an act of the will. If it were all nonsense or a joke, then he was at liberty to read his books and exercise his talents for sarcastic comment; there was no reason why he shouldn't sleep with any presentable woman who was ready to sleep with him. If it weren't nonsense, if there were some significance, then he could no longer live irresponsibly. . .He had chosen to think it nonsense, and nonsense for more than twenty years the thing had seemed to be. . .[16]

There is an amazing similarity between these remarks of Beavis' and some of those of Huxley's own on the same topic in Ends and Means. The fact that Beavis is obviously a portrait of Huxley himself in regard to this one point strengthens the similarity between Beavis and Huxley on other points. Compare the following statement in Ends and Means with the one just quoted from Eyeless in Gaza:

15 Ibid., 245.

16 Ibid., 469.

> For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. . .As in the days of Lamettrie and his successors the desire to justify a certain sexual looseness played a part in the popularization of meaninglessness at least as important as that played by the desire for liberation from an unjust and inefficient form of social organization.[17]

That choosing of which Huxley speaks in these passages was probably not as conscious, as deliberate as he would like to suppose that it was. It is more reasonable to believe that such a selection of attitudes would appear as an effort of the will in retrospect. However, since he was to believe, in Eyeless in Gaza and in Ends and Means, that his selection of a philosophy of meaninglessness was owing to a desire to seek liberation from the restraints of conventional morality and a desire to register protest against the existing social set-up, then it would be supposed that one of three things would have to be done: He would have to reconcile himself to the existing conditions, though it is hard to imagine Huxley indulging very seriously in reconciliation in the face of his continuously violent expressions of distaste at the vomedy he saw about him; he would have to prepare a workable plan that would give meaning to the sort of life he felt he could lead only when things were meaningless; or he would have to discover altogether new ends for his existence. In fact, what really did occur, however, was a sort of fusion of the

[17] Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 316.

first and the last alternatives. His new view of the universe, as it happened, conformed in many respects to present-day mores and ethical attitudes. He approved of these attitudes, however, for very different reasons than are customary.

Where it might seem doubtful that Huxley had consciously selected a futilitarian attitude in the years after the war for a definite reason, it is not so doubtful that this was the case in regard to his "humanism" and his mysticism. It is reasonable to believe that if a feeling of futility and frustration becomes intense enough, ingrained enough in an individual, there is quite apt to be a reaction. Futility is a negative, unsatisfying attitude conducive only of further dissatisfaction. At least this proved to be the case with Huxley and with many of his contemporaries. There is an implied explanation of the result of his conscious desire for a new philosophy in the middle-twenties, an excusing of himself for the channels in which this desire took him, when he says in Ends and Means:

> . . .those who, to be liberated from politican or sexual restraints, accept the doctrine of absolute meaninglessness tend in a short time to become so much dissatisfied with their philosophy (in spite of the services it renders) that they will exchange it for any dogma, however manifestly nonsensical, which restores meaning if only to a part of the universe.[18]

This passage might be interpreted as a kind of disposing of the second phase of his changing philosophy, since he had held to

[18] Ibid., 319.

it for so comparatively short a period of time and since he had ultimately arrived at another interpretation of life. His acceptance of a philosophy of meaninglessness, according to him, satisfied certain demands made by his personality, gave him a certain ephemeral satisfaction at least. He saw people living by it and, he confesses, lived by it himself. It had a measure of validity about it whereas his "humanism" was merely the result of a desire to find a meaning, any meaning for existence. It was an ingeniously worked out philosophy, to be sure, but it had no applicability about it. Lawrence had not been able to live by it, nor had Huxley. That it was a philosophy incapable of being applied we have already seen. His "humanism" was a fundamentally intellectual matter with him and was therefore doomed to failure. He could take cognizance of this fact, and, though he was to deliberately choose his new way of life also, he would select one that he could feel and apply as well as understand. It would at the same time be one that would have its practical applications in improving domestic and international problems as well as personal ones, since the sorry mess that had gripped the world at this time had thoroughly impressed itself upon his mind.

Mysticism is an attitude that can be held by means of the feelings. It is an attitude that can be acquired only through extra- or super-mental prcesses. And mysticism is the foundation upon which his new philosphy was based. Beavis' acquisition of a mystical view of life is in many respects parallel to Huxley's own. After years spent indulging his indif-

ference and satisfying his sexual desires Beavis, much to his own amazement, is prevailed upon by Mark Staithes, who has a theory that one should live dangerously in a Nietzshean sort of way, to go to Mexico to take part in a revolution there. The stupidity of such a plan, the impossibility of its making for any kind of success is apparent from the start, but Beavis is willing to try anything as an antidote for the dissatisfaction with life that too long an adherence to meaninglessness has caused. This idea of Staithes' is similar enough to Huxley's own idea of moderate excesses to make the Mexican interlude in Beavis' life symbolize the "humanistic" one in Huxley's. Neither attempt at finding an answer was successful. But Beavis' trip to Mexico proved to be more valuable to him than he had supposed it would. While he had gone in a despairing way to test a theory in which he had no real hope at all, he met a physician-anthropologist named miller, who had a much more satisfactory theory than Staithes' that Beavis found would answer his every demand.

Beavis simply absorbed the teachings of Miller, just as Quarles had absorbed those of Rampion. There is no reticence on the part of Huxley's characters about lifting the theories of others and using them for their own. No more is there reticence on Huxley's own part about doing identically the same. Huxley had felt no qualms about using Lawrence's theories in his "humanistic" period. Now one finds such obvious similarities, similarities that will become apparent as we go along, between Huxley's mystical point of view and that of the

author and philosopher, Gerald Heard, that one cannot help but decide that Huxley has done the same thing again at this time.

Through talking to Miller Beavis realizes that his former life was a complete failure and that in order to acquire an integrity in his own eyes if not in those of others he must embrace the theories of Dr. Miller's philosophy. He admires the doctor's efficiency in a crisis, the quiet assurance that his personality radiates and finally the apparent wisdom and basis of truth that lies behind the doctor's theories, so he determines to become a disciple of Miller's. Whether or not there is as intimate a link between Huxley and Heard as there is between Beavis and Miller, I do not know, but it is not too fantastic to suppose that something like that is the case. The fact that Huxley's address, at this writing, is Santa Monica, California and that Heard's is Hollywood may be pertinent to this question.

Beavis and Huxley, too, through a mystical insight have been made aware of what they believe is the underlying principle in the universe. Miller tells Beavis how to arrive at this mystical experience. A mystical experience is not the haphazard sort of thing that one might suppose it to be, but it must rather be courted by the individual who would wish to arrive at the truth. Through meditation it is possible for one to train himself to the point where he can become aware of the unity in the universe. Beavis in his journal describes the plan by saying that "Empirically, it is found that a de-

votional atmosphere increases efficiency, intensifies spirit of co-operation and self-sacrifice. But devotion in Christian terms will be largely unacceptable. Miller believes possible a non-theological praxis of meditation."[19] Huxley explains this idea of meditation more completely, however, in Ends and Means. He says,

> But meditation is more than a method of self-education; it has also been used, in every part of the world and from the remotest periods, as a method for acquiring knowledge about the essential nature of things, a method for establishing communion between the soul and the integrating principle of the universe. Meditation, in other words, is the technique of mysticism. Properly practised, with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called "transcendental consciousness"--the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it.[20]

The true nature of the univers of which one may eventually become aware through the meditative training is not an easy thing to put one's finger on. Huxley's view of the matter hinges on the idea that there is an all-pervasive "mind" that is ever-present throughout the universe. Matter and physical activities may be controlled by means of the mind, such things as hypnosis, clairvoyance and mental telepathy. In speaking of mental telepath in Ends and Means he quotes Professor C. D. Broad as saying that it is probably necessary to postulate the existence of some kind of purely mental me-

19 Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, 12.

20 Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 332.

dium, in which individual minds are bathed, as in a kind of non-physical ether. Huxley concludes from this fact and from the fact that if one grants the existence of "prevision" that "this mental medium has its existence outside time. It would seem, then, that mind, or at any rate something of a mental nature--"a psychic factor', within a psychic medium--exists independently of the body and of the spatial and temporal condtions of bodily life."[21] <u>Eyeless in Gaza</u> has its references to this explanation of the unity that exists in the universe. Beavis in his journal says:

> "Divisive emotions; but the fact that they can be interchanged, can be transferred from mind to mind and retain all their original passion, is a demonstration of the fundamental unity of minds."[22]

Huxley's theories regarding the force that lies behind the universe coincide exactly with those of Gerald Heard, who says in <u>The Third Morality</u>:

> In the deeper layers of consciousness, telepathy, clairvoyance and prevision seem to be proceeding. In other words, in these layers we seem to emerge into a comprehensive, impersonal consciousness out of which all our individual personalities are thrust, as islands out of an underlying land mass are thrust above sea-level. Our personalities, it also appears, can serve that common and personal consciousness so long as they keep contact with it through their depths and through the realization that they are not ends but means, not separate wholes but parts of a single state of being.[23]

21 <u>Ibid</u>., 300.

22 Aldous Huxley, <u>Eyeless in Gaza</u>, 468.

23 Gerald Heard, <u>The Third Morality</u>, 161.

and again in the same book:

> Our present knowledge of the nature of reality shows us there is a consciousness around us, similar to, but not the same as our personalized consciousness.[24]

These passages from Heard's book illustrate fairly clearly just how similar the philosophies of Heard and Huxley are. Even the terminology is very much the same in the presentation of the philosophies of the two men.

This is the Ivory Tower side of Huxley's philosophy. It is the mysticism that gives meaning to the universe, make it worth the struggle to improve matters. If there is some value to existence then it is valuable to bring down from the Ivory Tower the ideas that have been gleaned while reflecting there and make these ideas applicable to the Market Place. The super-individuality with which it is possible to merge oneself if a person will but try makes it necessary for a wholesale shifting of actions and values.

The greatest part of both _Eyeless in Gaza_ and _Ends and Means_ is devoted to a carefully worked out program for making man aware of what Huxley feels is the true meaning to existence. There is little time spent in explaining the nature of this universal and all-powerful unity which lies behind the seeming diversity in men's physical and mental aspects. It is the program that is important. The goal's nature will become clear in proportion to the amount of effort that is

24 _Ibid._, 168.

expended in striving to reach that goal which is outlined in these books but which is impossible to really know at second hand because of its mystical nature.

Since the force behind man and nature is this "fundamental unity of minds", it is necessary for one to cease thinking in terms of the individual personality, in terms of activities that will further the ends of one person to the disadvantage of others and begin thinking and acting in ways that will best advance the group. The first step toward acquiring this group-habit is for the individual to know himself: if one knows himself in a detached manner, he will then know how to change himself, know how to weed out those elements in his nature which obstruct his associating himself with the group. Indifference, Huxley says, is a "form of sloth".[25] One cannot fuse one's own interests with those of others if he is too lazy to pay any heed to others and their interests. Indifference, which in himself Beavis (and Huxley) recognizes to be a chief characteristic, he lifts to the importance of a major sin.

The next step, after advancing oneself in the ability to submerge one's own desires for the good of all the people, is to join small self-governing groups organized for the purpose of meditating upon the nature of the universe, acquiring training in physical control and through that control of the impulses and feelings. Once steps have been made toward im-

[25] Aldous Huxley, Eyeless in Gaza, 11.

proving the individual's behavior it may be expected that there will be corresponding improvements in national conduct which is a "large-scale projection. . .of the individual's secret wishes and intentions."[26] If one loves his fellowmen in what seems to be a Shelley-like manner, it will be impossible for him to miss associating his cause with that of others. After undergoing a period of considerable training along these lines the individual will tend toward becoming the ideal man whom Huxley calls "Non-attached." In Ends and Means Huxley defines this ideal man by saying that

> The ideal man is the non-attached man. Non-attached to his bodily sensations and lusts. Non-attached to his craving for power and possessions. Non-attached to the objects of these various desires. Non-attached to his anger and hatred; non-attached to his exclusive loves. Non-attached to wealth, fame, social position. Non-attached even to science, art speculation, philanthropy. Yes, non-attached even to these. For, like patriotism, in Nurse Cavell's phrase, "they are not enough." Non-attachment to self and to what are called "the things of the world" has always been associated in the teachings of the philosophers and the founders of religions with an attachment to an ultimate reality greater and more significant than the self. . .
>
> Non-attachment is negative only in name. The practice of non-attachment entails the practice of all the virtues. It entails the practice of charity, for example: for there are no more fatal impediments than anger (even "righteous indignation") and cold-blooded malice to the identification of the self with the immanent and transcendent more-than-self. It entails the practice of courage; for fear is a painful and obsessive identification of the self with its body. (Fear is negative sensuality, just as sloth is negative malice.) It entails the cultivation of intelligence; for insensitive stupidity is a main root of all other vices. It entails the practice of generosity and disinterestedness; for avarice

[26] Ibid., 171.

> and the love of possessions constrain their victims to equate themselves with mere things. And so on.[27]

The condition in which one would live were he to become "non-attached" would not be one of asceticism, for that makes one conscious of the self, of separateness rather than of the group.

~~The non-attached men will combine to form non-attached~~ nations. It is in regard to international relationships that Huxley hits at the fundamental truth that was later to prove almost shattering to his regained faith. Throughout Eyeless in Gaza and Ends and Means he declaims against the use of violence--between individuals and between nations. It is here that the major emphasis in his philosophy at this time lies. "Ends do not justify means," "Non-violence rather than violence" he uses as kind of refrains in the two books.[28] Brotherly love, compassion, charity and the use of intelligence between nations will tend to decrease war and thus bring about a situation in which individuals will be able to become aware of their oneness with each other and the universe. The use of Non-violence has worked on various occasions, Huxley insists. If this is true, then why not use it instead of war? Of course, it is not easy to acquire the technique that is necessary before the use of non-violence can be assured of proving successful. It may take three years of training to

[27] Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 4.

[28] For examples of this "refrain" see Eyeless in Gaza, pages 315 and 246, and Ends and Means, pages 31 and 161.

produce a man who will be valuable in the use of non-violence, but it takes an equal length of time to produce a soldier. Wouldn't a try at the use of such methods be worthwhile, Huxley asks? When one considers that there are a number of events recorded in history in which non-vilence has triumphed against violence, he realizes that the preaching of such a doctrine is not as foolish as it might seem. Huxley cites the example of the difference between the way the insane were treated in Bedlam and the way they are treated today in modern hospitals as a triumph for non-violence. Gandhi in South Africa was eminently successful in the use of non-violence. The Finns resisted the Russian's law demanding conscription and gained the desired ends in 1905. Deak in Hungary in 1867 was successful in his use of non-violence. Certainly violence has never proved successful, never created any lasting peace. One can trace the emergence of Hitler and Mussolini right back to the French Revolution and the use of violence at that ime, Huxley points out. Since nothing can ever come from the use of war and violence, why continue using such antiquated means?[29]

Huxley felt that it was worth the preaching of such doctrines in the hope that some progress might be made toward arriving at the ends he so thoroughly believed in. From the nature of the examples of application of his theories regarding non-violence it is obvious that Huxley's desire was to swing great masses around to his way of thinking. He didn't

[29] Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 264.

of course think for one minute that it would be through his efforts that sufficient numbers of people could be reached. Huxley, according to Ross Parmenter, has no illusions on this score.

> If Mr. Huxley can't organize things, serve on committees, or address mass meetings, what is he to do about the dangerously encroaching and destructive ills of the world? He feels about writing as Edith Cavell felt about patriotism--that it is not enough.[30]

He did, however, believe that it was his duty to do everything in his power to make his theories realities. Every chirp, however feeble, would be needed to make a noise of sufficient volume to accomplish the ends he desired to reach. It was not quixotic, he felt, to attempt to change "human nature", for, as he says, ". . .'unchanging human nature' is not unchanging, but can be, and very frequently has been, profoundly changed."[31] He gives as example of this condition the change, for instance, in the attitude toward marriage that has come about since the days of "courtly love", when "love and marriage were completely dissociated."[32] Now it is not impossible to find married couples who are in love. There are other instances in which it becomes obvious that attitudes formerly felt to be natural were not inevitable at all. Neither is it true, as so many would like to believe, that "human nature" is

30 Ross Parmenter, "Huxley at 43", Saturday Review of Literature, XVII,10.

31 Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means, 26.

32 Ibid., 25.

the same all over the world.

> By us, success is always worshipped. But among the Zunis it is such bad form to pursue personal distinction that very few people even think of trying to raise themselves above their fellows, while those who try are regarded as dangerous sorcerers and punished accordingly. There are no Hitlers, no Kreugers, no Napoleons and no Calvins. The lust for power is simply not given an opportunity for expressing itself.[33]

Huxley at the time he wrote Eyeless in Gaza and Ends and Means felt, then, that it would be possible to improve upon "human nature", to change it from one thing to another. From Slothful malicious, craving egotists it was possible, he felt, to change men into compassionate, self-effacing individuals. His entire theory postulated the ability to make man over, and it was on this postulate that his plan of non-violence was based. Huxley could be reasonably optimistic about man's ability to change. He could construct his philosophy so that its emphasis lay in the fact that men, whole nations, in fact, were potentially capable of becoming "non-attached", the exponents of a theory of non-violence, and finally, both men and nations, aware of the unimportance of the ego and the importance of God. Huxley was not consciously talking to any particular audience but was interested in conveying his ideas to anyone who would listen.

This mystical philosophy seemed at first to be successful for him in every way. Since it was mystical it had its basis in the feelings and the emotions as well as in the intellect. Huxley had faith in his theory's practicality, too, a factor that added likelihood to the idea that it would be

33 Ibid., 22.

more satisfactory than his "humanism" which, as we have already seen, he could neither apply nor feel but could only understand. Another element of this philosophy would seem to point to ultimate success for Huxley in maintaining these theories--his strange quirk of personality, his ingrained indifference could be satisfied by them. Though, as we have seen, he declaims against indifference, he utilizes that indifference for one of the cornerstones of his philosophy. In short, he attempts to solve his indifference with indifference, just as he says Proust utilized asthma and Pascal dyspepsia in their philosophies.[34] This solving of "indifference with indifference" operates through his desire to change "human nature" by encouraging people to resist oppression and violence by passive means, with non-cooperation, with strikes, refusal to answer violence with violence, with, in fact, indifference to violence. In Eyeless in Gaza he writes of Dr. Miller's permitting himself to be knocked again and again from the platform on which he was delivering an address on non-violence, of Miller's deliberately allowing a pugnacious heckler in the audience to use violence on him to the heckler's disadvantage. Austere indifference to the undignified onslaughts of brute force can be eminently satisfactory in combatting the use of violence. It is psychologically impossible for the heckler to go on using his brawn against Miller's cool indifference. True,

[34] See above page, 61.

in this case, this method would be true in all cases were it but given a chance, Huxley feels. He went further, we know, than merely advocating it for use by individuals; he wanted it used by entire populations against aggression. In every case that this method has been genuinely followed it has been lastingly successful. Violence, however, has never, in the history of the world, resulted in anything more than further violence. Violence, then, should be deemed a failure and should be thrown out in favor of non-violence. The use of indifference was Huxley's answer to the problem of contending with the Hitlers, Stalins and Mussolinis.

But no sonner had Huxley uttered these theories in 1937 than the deluge descended upon him and upon the world. Nine-hundred thirty-eight with its Anschluss and its subjugation of Czechoslovakia played havoc with Huxley's theories. As suited as his new philosophy might seem to have been for him, a seed of doubt was planted in his mind as to the extent of the theory's applicability. He was still sure that in the long run non-violence would prove to be better than violence--if non-violence were used. The world was dealing with swarms of invading locusts rather than with mere men. The analogy between the armies of the totalitarian states and swarms of vermin and the spread of pestilence or feeling similar to that provoked by such an analogy would naturally arise in the minds of those forced to combat such armies. With the applicability of the theory becoming doubtful to Huxley, he was left with his mystical and intellectual knowledge that his ideas

were ultimately the right ones. This sort of awareness of his own correctness could not be expected to be enough to preserve his philosophy in its original form. Some sort of shift in his point of view, some kind of retrenchment could only be expected.

He didn't seek any new philosophy, didn't immerse himself in impotent sloughs of despond. But what he did do was to change the emphasis, withdraw into his Ivory Tower a bit further, and acquire a new disgust for humanity, a disgust that did not, however, keep him from concerning himself with man and his relation to the universe. Man in relation to society was minimized with every step of his retreat from the Market Place.

It is important that his latest novel, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, published in January 1940 and written after the full signficances of Munich had been digested, after the Spanish War had resulted in what would seem to be the emasculation of all idealism, should contain only the most casual, the most disillusioned references to the use of non-violence on a large scale. After discussing the disastrous effects of the use of violence through the years, Propter, a philosopher through whom Huxley expounds his theories in this novel, is asked,

> "What do you expect people to do when they're attacked by the Fascists? Sit down and let their throats be cut?"
> "Of course not," said Mr. Propter. "I *expect* them to fight. And the expectation is based on my previous knowledge of human behaviour. But the fact that people generally do react to that kind of situation in that kind

> of way doesn't prove that it's the best way of reacting. Experience makes me expect that they'll behave like that. But experience also makes me expect that, if they do behave like that, the results will be disastrous."[35]

Huxley's experience, at the time he wrote Eyeless in Gaza and Ends and Means, did not tell him that by and large people are unable to do anything but meet violence with violence. He was primarily hopeful. In those years he felt that something might be done about educating the people up to his theories. But as he became more and more aware of the terrifying methods that the totalitarian states were capable of using, the fanatical barbarisms that could be utilized, and, what is more important, the fear that these factors engendered in the potential victims of Fascist aggressors, the more he was able to see how impractical his views of non-violence had become. He could see that he must shift his attitude from the short to the long view of things. He must forget about trying to assist the world out of its muddle today and concentrate upon an extremely gradual progression toward ultimate extrication possibly the day after tomorrow. The way to a mystical awareness of God and the universe lay over a much rougher road than he had formerly supposed that it did.

The knowledge that violence can never solve men's problems coupled with the still more disillusioning knowledge that men are incapable of using the only thing, non-violence, that can save them proved an overpowering blow to him. What is it

[35] Aldous Huxley, After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, 127.

in man that keeps him from surmounting his own petty desires, keeps him from seeing his personality as the unimportant thing that it is, keeps him from knowing God? Propter sees man as a "nothingness surrounded by God; indigent and capable of God, filled with God, if he so desires."[36] But man does not so desire. On the level of his humanity man is in reality incapable of so desiring. Very few could possibly, even though they might wish to, ever acquire a realization of God, who is, as Propter says, quoting John Tauler, 'a being withdrawn from creatures, a free power, a pure working.'[37] Since it is impossible to become aware of this "pure working", there must be some other route, some other medium for attaining a knowledge of God. There are three levels on which men may live: the animal, the human and the spiritual. It is on this human level that most people exist, on a level that is concerned with but two things, Time and Craving. Time, as Mr. Propter says, is nothing more than

> ". . .the medium in which evil propagates itself, the element in which evil lives and outside of which it dies. Indeed, it's more than the element of evil, more than merely its medium. If you carry your analysis far enough, you'll find that time is evil. One of the aspects of its essential substance."[38]

It is with Time and the subject of longevity that Dr. Obispo and his assistant, Pete, are concerned in their laboratory

36 Ibid., 101.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 119.

at the idiotic, castle-like estate of a wealthy Los Angeles business man, Jo Stoyte. They experiment with pikes. They wonder about the reason for a cicada's living as long as a bull, wonder why corocodiles continue laying eggs after reaching the age of two hundred when a female of the human species becomes sterile in the forties. If they could only make men live longer, they wish, and Propter asks why. Why should people desire to live longer when their reasons for so doing are tied up in egotistical impulses, when they merely wish to go on pursuing their appetites, their greeds, their malicious impulses, indulging in lust for power, hatred, anger and fear, the elements of life on the human level. Why should scientists try to add years to a period in which craving is, with time, irrevocably entangled?

> "Time and craving," said Mr. Propter, "craving and time--two aspects of the same thing; and that thing is the raw material of evil. Another century or so of time and craving. A couple of extra life-times of potential evil."[39]

Man on the human level, according to Huxley, is only involving himself ever more deeply in the chaotic conditions from which he is so desirous of escaping. It is in regard to Huxley's conception of man's on this level that one is again reminded of Gerald Heard and his theories. Heard says,

> The world as we see it is, then, a world created by desire and, as it must appear quite different to another being without our cravings, it is true to say that what the or-

39 Ibid., 122.

dinary man calls reality is illusion.[40]

This life based upon an illusion is made intolerable to Heard for the same reasons that it is so distasteful to Huxley. We are impressed with what is essentially ephemeral in existence, Heard says.

> We are individuals for the time being. We easily come to regard our individuality as final and absolute. When we do that we betray life, prey upon it, become centers of morbidity and decay, dying and in distress ourselves spreading distress and death. Evils spring from the individual believing that he is an end in himself, and not a phase in a life which embraces all, for, so believing, he must act against that life.[41]

The human level, then, is worthless when regarded as a way to man's goal. Man must concentrate on the other aspects of his nature, Huxley says. He must desire to live on the animal and on the spiritual levels. It is here alone that good manifests itself to any appreciable degree. On the animal level "good exists as the proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being."[42] When man lives on the human level he imposes handicaps upon his physical make-up that can be avoided by escaping the cravings that life on that level necessitates. Incorrect posture, for instance, is a direct result of worry over the immediate future. "High blood pressure, heart disease, tuberculosis, peptic ulcer,

40 Gerald Heard, The Third Morality, 178.

41 Ibid., 172.

42 Aldous Huxley, After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, 135.

low resistence to infection, neurasthenia, sexual aberrations, insanity and suicide"[43] are the direct results of fear, greed, worry and craving. On the spiritual level one may first intellectually and finally through direct experience, after he has trained himself in meditation and after he has acquired the ability to forget his ego and realize the viciousness of personality, become aware of the true nature of the universe, the all-pervasive being that transcends man's humanity.

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Huxley's knowledge of the inadequacy of life lived in relation to one's ego, his desire to associate himself with something more noble, more meaningful than life lived in accordance with frustrated individuality stems from the same economic and sociological forces that have caused so many others in the present-day to do the same thing. There is an almost universal necessity to find meaning somewhere, to rationalize one's methods of doing one thing or another, or simply to make life bearable in the midst of seeming chaos. Hitler's deification of the Aryan race, his reduction of everyone to tools of the state is one example of this necessity, as is the communist's desire to ennoble the proletariat and militarism. Another phase of this same tendency may be found in T. S. Eliot's associating himself with a traditional religion and thereby attempting to escape the evils that man has brought about and give a more than humanistic meaning to life. These are all in reality but variations of

the promptings that have been responsible for the turn that Huxley's philosophy has taken in the past five years.

The unrest with which the world is filled today has caused Huxley to retreat from life, and made him dissociate his aims from those which are concerned with the mundane strivings of everyday people. With those who, like Buddha, have resorted to the contemplation of their navels, Huxley prefers to let life surge about him, prefers to call it all evil. Efforts to improve matters in the ordinarily accepted senses he terms quixotic. It is best, he says, to be content with staying out of mischief. "Twiddling the thumbs and having good manners are much more helpful, in most cases than rushing about with good intentions, doing things."[44] Though he is compelled by the problems of present-day society to think about them and to seek a way out for himself and for his fellow-men, he has climbed higher and higher into the Ivory Tower and is attempting to pull the rest of humanity up with him.

Huxley has gradually evolved from the place where he held to a philosophy of total meaninglessness, a philosophy in which nothing had the slightest signficance, through a deliberately manufactured philosophy that died of its own fundamental inadequacies, through a powerful and sincere social consciousness to an equally sincere, as far as he is concerned thoroughly assuaging mysticism that is outside life itself.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 172.

Though it may be granted that he is right when he says that ". . .the work of art which, in its own way, 'says' more about the universe will be better than the work of art which says less,"[45] he is, in concerning himself with the universe and dissociating himself from the world of the living and the breathing, defeating his own ends as a novelist. The novel deals with life and with actuality, and he, as an artist, will live or die in direct proportion to the degree with which he betrays the dictates of his medium. The course open to him at this point is to set himself to the writing of philosophical tracts, at which--in regard to his ideas--he can at the very least be interesting and exciting, at the most signficant and profound, properties that fall short of making for great novels.

[45] Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature" in Saturday Review of Literature, VII,158.

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