

Introduction by David Garrett Izzo

Life, Work, Thought

Many people know the name “Aldous Huxley” in connection with his landmark 1932 novel, *Brave New World*. Few know much more than this and that at one time Huxley was one of the most revered and respected figures in 20th century literature and philosophy. An irony of his present neglect can be found by noting that the day he died—22 November 1963—was the day John F. Kennedy was murdered; hence, Huxley’s passing was ignored. On any other day, his death would have likely been acknowledged with front-page articles and a retrospective of his life and work. The highlight of this work, *Brave New World*, is often selected as one of the greatest novels in all of literature, but there was much, much more to Huxley as a writer, philosopher, and influence.

There is not a writer who came after Huxley that does not owe to him directly or indirectly the new tangent in the history of the novel that his work impelled. There is not a person who learned about Eastern philosophy in the 1960s that is not directly or indirectly indebted to Huxley the philosopher. Anyone who admires the philosophy of Horkheimer and Adorno, particularly their essay, “The Culture Industry,” is actually influenced by Huxley, as these two German refugees from Hitler have said that their ideas came from Huxley. There *is* an academic Aldous Huxley Society with a home base in Muenster, Germany that *does* appreciate his impact on our world and spreads the gospel of Huxley through a book length Huxley Annual and a conference every year so that he will not be forgotten. His friend and fellow philosopher, Gerald Heard, called Huxley, “The Poignant Prophet” (101), and he was certainly a godfather of the New Age. And with all of his accomplishments, perhaps the most enduring was how endearing he was to those who knew him and adored his wit, his kindness, and, finally, his profound humanity.

Aldous Leonard Huxley was born on 26 July 1894 to Leonard Huxley and Julia Francis Arnold Huxley. He was the third child of four, two elder brothers, Julian and Trevenen and a

younger sister, Margaret. His father was the son of the great scientist and disseminator of Darwin, T. H. Huxley; Julia was the great niece of the Victorian era's pre-eminent man of letters, poet-philosopher Matthew Arnold. Hence, it was unlikely that Aldous would not be born clever; just how clever, however, no one could have foreseen. His childhood was advantaged and he took the most advantage of it, achieving a classical education in the public schools. In Britain the misnomer "public" really means private schools where anyone among the "public" who can afford them is allowed to attend. On 29 November 1908, his mother died from cancer; she was forty-seven. Aldous adored her and was devastated. In a final letter to her son written on her deathbed, she told Aldous, "Don't be too critical of people and love much" (quoted in Huxley, *Letters* 83). Huxley later added in 1915, "... I have come to see more and more how wise that advice was. It's her warning against a rather conceited and selfish fault of my own and it's a whole philosophy of life" (*Letters* 83). In the 1920s, his cynicism prevailed, but, indeed, in the 1930s, he began to formulize this "philosophy of life."

In the spring of 1911, Aldous contracted the eye ailment *keratitis punctata*, blinding him for over a year. His father and doctors feared that he might never recover his sight. Tutors were engaged, one for Braille, one for his schoolwork. During this period, his older brother, Trevenen, was his greatest comfort, sitting with him frequently and reading to him. His vision improved ever so slightly enough for him to function in the world. In 1913 Aldous stayed with Trevenen in Oxford. Trev, as he was called, was the most outgoing of the Huxley brothers and very popular with his school chums although he had a stammer. Perhaps the fact of dealing with it good-naturedly had encouraged his more effusive personality. In August of 1914, after a very difficult year at school, the sensitive Trev had an affair with a young woman he cared for but not of his social class, which then was still an impossible barrier that could never lead to marriage. Filled with guilt, Trev went missing. After seven terrible days of anxious waiting, he was found in a wood, hanging dead from a tree.

Aldous endured tragedy once again and he began his abhorrence for the strictures of class

divisions, which would become the main target for his relentless pen through fiction and essays. Aldous felt somewhat adrift. His father had remarried in 1912 and was leading his own life. In 1915 seventeen-year-old Maria Nys and her family, émigrés from Belgium fleeing the war, came to England to stay at Garsington, the celebrated estate of Philip and Ottoline Morrell. Garsington was a first or second home to artists, intellectuals and conscientious objectors who had officially received alternative work deferments and “worked” on the manor. Here, Aldous met Maria, fell in love, and they married on 10 July 1919 in her home of Bellem, Belgium. Their only child, Matthew, would be born 19 April 1920.¹

For the next eight years, Huxley lived the life of the struggling writer. He worked as an editor and contributing essayist for periodicals that ranged from the very literary *Athenaeum*, to the less literary *House & Garden*. His more serious essays were in the manner of the devastating *Prejudices* written by the American social commentator, H. L. Mencken, with whom Huxley corresponded. He often worked at more than one position, for example, editing *H & G* all day while attending the theater at night to write reviews for the *Westminster Gazette*. Meanwhile he published poems and short stories, leading to his first book of short stories, *Limbo*, and his first widely published book of poems, *Leda*, both in 1920 for Chatto & Windus. More poems and short stories followed, and in 1921, his first novel, *Crome Yellow*. The latter’s sharply satiric look at his Garsington days attracted the attention of a small but arch readership that enjoyed the darts Huxley threw at the pretensions of the upper class. Lady Ottoline did not speak to him for a long time.

This limited success encouraged Chatto to give Aldous his first three-year contract; one that included, of all things for a struggling writer, yearly advances, albeit small ones. The Huxleys packed their bags and traveled to Florence, Italy, where they could stretch that advance more so than in England, and where they saw the emergence of Mussolini’s fascists and the tools of media propaganda. Aldous now would write only what he wanted to write. From 1922 to 1928 Huxley wrote four more volumes of short stories (*Brief Candles*, *Two or Three More Graces*,

Little Mexican, Mortal Coils) two more novels (*Antic Hay, Those Barren Leaves*), two philosophical travel books (*Along the Road, Jestling Pilate*) and many essays collected in numerous volumes.

Huxley slowly increased his devoted following. Sales were modest, but steady; reviews were either full of praise from those who welcomed his savage wit, or full of hate from the traditional critics who were among those Huxley pierced with his sharp darts. As the twenties progressed, and the post-war era began to see changes in those British traditions, Huxley gained new readers from the young intellectuals who were adolescents in 1920, but who were now rebellious iconoclasts at Oxford and Cambridge. Huxley's targets were the same masters and dons, the same parents, the same aristocrats, the same bourgeois element that the university intellectuals raged against. With his 1928 novel, *Point Counterpoint*, an international success, Huxley reached a much wider readership.

His fifth novel, *Brave New World* (1932), while well received, was not quite so revered at that time as it became after World War II, precisely because there had never been anything like it before and some critics didn't know what to make of it. Who could believe in such a future—one that is already upon us.

Huxley's novels have been called "novels of ideas," and they certainly cover a wide range of literary, social, political, cultural, and philosophic topics. In 1935 his novel, *Eyeless in Gaza*, was published with its complex alternating time shifts in the life of the main character, Anthony Beavis; in it Huxley advocated his pacifist beliefs. Huxley's title was, in part, homage to author Conrad Aiken who had written a time shifting novel *The Great Circle* in 1933, in which Aiken twice used Milton's line "eyeless in Gaza."

Huxley relocated to Los Angeles in 1937 with his family and best friend, the philosopher Gerald Heard. Huxley's writing in America became increasingly philosophical, and fictional works became extensions of his non-fiction books and essays. His 1939 novel, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, tackles a Randolph Hearst-like character and influenced Orson Welles'

1941 film classic, *Citizen Kane*. In 1944, Huxley's anthology with commentary, *The Perennial Philosophy*, helped popularize mysticism in the United States and abroad. In 1945 his novel, *Time Must Have a Stop*, incorporated the Perennial Philosophy into its narrative.

Huxley's first wife, Maria, died in 1954. A year later he married concert violinist, Laura Archera. His novel, *The Genius and the Goddess*, was published in 1955. Huxley developed throat cancer in early 1963. On 4 November 1963 Christopher Isherwood saw Huxley for the last time: "Aldous was in obvious discomfort, but there was nothing poignant or desperate in his manner, and he clearly didn't want to talk about death.... I touched on subject after subject, at random. Each time I did so, Aldous commented acutely, or remembered an appropriate quotation. I came away with the picture of a great noble vessel sinking quietly into the deep; many of its delicate marvelous mechanisms still in perfect order, all its lights still shining" (*My Guru...* 259-60).

Huxley died of throat cancer on 22 November 1963. His ashes were initially buried in California but were later interred in Britain with his parents. In 1968, his 1962 utopian novel of ideas, *Island*, was reprinted and became a bestseller of over a million copies. Huxley wrote a great deal of non-fiction that far exceeded his creative writing. This writer has fully examined the non-fiction in his study, *Aldous Huxley and W.H. Auden on Language*.

Huxley was *The Man* in British Literature in the 1920s, much more so than Eliot was, although Eliot's reputation has fared better since then. His influence was enormous directly or indirectly in the U.K. and U.S. Undergraduates made sure to read him in the 1920s. When Christopher Isherwood was a student at Cambridge, his mid-1920s *Mortmere* Story, "Prefatory Epistle to my Godson on the Study of History," has a Mr. Starn proclaim, sounding Huxley-esque, that "man is the sole and supreme irrelevance. He is without method, without order, without proportion. His childish passions, enthusiasms, and beliefs are unsightly protuberances in the surface of the Universal Curve.... how perfect would be the evolutions of nature in a world unpeopled" (171). Starn also warns his godson to be skeptical of the New Testament saying: "I

refer to this exploded forgery with all due reference to Professor Pillard, who has, by the Historical Method, clearly proved that it is the work of Mr. Aldous Huxley” (171 footnote).

The cult of Aldous Huxley was afoot as he dared to write down what other artists and intellectuals would have loved to have said, particularly regarding class pretension and snobbishness. Indeed, his subject matter itself was innovative—and widely imitated. Isherwood’s first two novels in 1928 and 1932 are Huxley-esque attacks on the bourgeois middle and upper classes—or as Isherwood called them—*The Others*. Later, in Isherwood and Auden’s 1935 satirical play, *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, it is clear from the following lines that they had read Aldous Huxley’s 1932 novel, *Brave New World*: “No family love. Sons would inform against their fathers, cheerfully send them to the execution cellars. No romance. Even the peasant must beget that standard child under laboratory conditions. Motherhood would be by license. Truth and Beauty would be proscribed as dangerously obstructive. No books, no art, no music” (167). Huxley in the 1920s and 1930s was a marked man by *The Others* who considered him the most cynical of the post-war cynics.

The nihilistic tone of T.S. Eliot’s, *The Waste Land* (1922) is the tone of Huxley’s essays, his first novel, and the early short stories that had preceded the poem that is now much more remembered. Huxley’s own nihilism matches in vitriol any post WWII writer—or angry young men as they were labeled. One can also point out that even if autobiographical fiction became more prevalent after WWII, it was far from unprecedented. Aldous Huxley’s first novel, the satire *Crome Yellow*, 1920, is based on his days at Garsington Manor. Huxley’s 1928 breakthrough best seller, *Point Counterpoint*, featured, with fictitious names, D. H. Lawrence, the British fascist Sir Oswald Mosley, shipbuilding heiress Nancy Cunard, and Huxley himself as Philip Quarles, the aloof, too intellectual author who drives his wife into the arms of the Mosley surrogate (which did *not* happen in real life). Philip’s son, the same age, seven, as Huxley’s son Matthew, becomes horribly ill and dies—punishment for the illicit affair (which in fact is planned but never consummated). Huxley’s wife Maria was not pleased. Huxley’s *Eyeless in Gaza*, 1935, features

another Huxley surrogate, Anthony Beavis, whose father (Huxley's father) does not come off very well. There is also a detailed account of Anthony's best friend who has a stammer and is very fragile as was Huxley's brother Trevenen. The character, as did Trevenen, kills himself, causing more woe among Huxley family members. This would be Huxley's last *roman à clef* and perhaps his switch to less familiar and familial subjects, starting with *Brave New World*, was not accidental.

Brave New World in 1932 was the first of two "before/after" dividing lines in Huxley's career. The second was his emigration from Britain to America in 1937. *Brave New World* followed four parlor satires of the upper class that largely took place in people's drawing rooms, and preceded his more directly philosophical novels of ideas, which is not to say that the parlor satires were not full of ideas but they were presented more discretely within the novel format than Huxley would choose to do later. The move to the U.S. and sunny California opened his eyes to a world much different than Europe, and through his initial interest in the Vedanta Society of Southern California, enhanced and codified his already existing predilection for mysticism.

Huxley's critical reception first generated immense praise among progressive critics when he was a *wunderkind* in the 1920s. These were the same critics that supported Forster, Joyce, Eliot, Woolf, and their peers in critiquing post World War I society. With *Point Counterpoint* in 1928 Huxley graduated from an *avant-garde* darling to international acclaim as a writer and thinker. His subsequent books were highly anticipated, with the 1930s and 1940s, perhaps a peak of esteem. The 1950s began to see him as a revered old master who was still quite interesting but not quite up to pre-World-War II standards. Huxley's reputation took a bit of a hit in the 1950s when he experimented with LSD and mescaline, which were then legal and he did so under Dr. Humphrey Osmond's scrutiny. He described these experiences in *The Doors of Perception* (1954) from which the 1960s' rock band, *The Doors*, took its name, and *Heaven and Hell* (1958) Indeed, even as late as 18 October 1958 the very sedate and respected *Saturday Evening Post* featured Huxley's front-paged headlined essay, "Drugs That Shape Men's Minds."

Had Huxley lived past 1963, he would have enjoyed a second coming with his best-selling utopian novel *Island* in 1968, considered a handbook for New Age thought. Through the 1960s and 1970s Huxley remained an iconic figure for his New Age thinking that had preceded the actual New Age. In the 1980s with the 1960s no longer such a strong influence, the conservative wave that took over from the New Age found Huxley's reputation and direct influence waning in terms of cultural appreciation, even while his indirect influence was—and is--as strong as ever. This waning engendered an article by John Derbyshire in London's *New Criterion* of 21 February 2000, titled, "What Happened to Aldous Huxley?" Derbyshire wrote:

Metaphysics is out of fashion.... Living as we do in such an un-metaphysical age, we are in a poor frame of mind to approach the writer [Huxley] who said the following thing, and who took it as a premise for his work through most of a long literary career.

It is impossible to live without a metaphysic. The choice that is given us is not between some kind of metaphysic and no metaphysic; it is always between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic. (Online)

Derbyshire is right on! As early as 1916 in a letter to his brother Julian, Huxley wrote: "I have come to agree with Thomas Aquinas that individuality in the animal kingdom if you like is nothing more than a question of mere matter. We are potentially at least, though the habit of matter has separated us, unanimous. One cannot escape mysticism; it positively thrusts itself, the only possibility, upon one" (*Letters*, 88). And in 1925: "I love the inner world as much or more than the outer. When the outer vexes me, I retire to the rational simplicities of the spirit" (*Along the Road* 110). The quest for choosing between a "good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic," and forming a way to live around the good metaphysic, is the fulcrum from which Huxley's entire body of fiction and non-fiction was launched. Even when he was at his most cynical and

satirically sarcastic, this was a cry by an angry young man who depicted the worst so that one could try to imagine something better to take its place. He spent his entire life seeking the “something better” and knew it would be found in the world of the metaphysic over the physic. This itself from 1920 to 1963 was the major innovation of his work—only the presentations changed, as Huxley grew older, wiser—and less angry.

Huxley’s novels of ideas are always about moral dilemmas that need to be sorted out. In the 1920s his characters wallow in the philosophy of meaninglessness with sarcasm as their defense veiling a prevalent despair. The other side of a cynical man is a fallen hero—or an aspiring hero. The characters secretly—or openly—seek a vehicle that can give meaning to a world that has realized that science, technology, and industry are not the answers. Huxley’s protagonists evolve as either upward seekers of The Perennial Philosophy of mysticism, or they devolve downward into an even greater disaffected nihilism

Only when individuals, then small groups, then larger groups, then towns, etc., seek to renew the life of the spirit can humanity reach its destiny—which is union with the divine ground of all being. This became Huxley’s motivation in fiction and non-fiction, leading up to his most profound novel of the spirit, *Time Must Have a Stop*.

***Time Must Have a Stop* 1945**

Sebastian Barnack is the young man at the human center of Huxley's novel, but the search for a spiritual center is the novel’s quest. The time frame is early Mussolini. Sebastian is a talented poet at seventeen. He is very handsome, but regrets his baby faced looks, because this is in conflict with the serious, aspiring genius he wishes to be.

His father is a humorously stern, British, of stiff-upper-lip, and an uncompromising lawyer who talks a good game of socialist politics that he does not act on whatsoever. He silently resents how Sebastian looks like his late mother, a beauty of more outgoing but cheerful

eccentricities. The father unconsciously (or is it consciously) withholds from Sebastian material advantages, such as an evening suit suitable to his station, claiming that luxuries will spoil the boy. Sebastian must endure being with his wealthy British public school peers wearing hand me downs. Sebastian is thrilled when he is sent to Italy to visit Uncle Eustace, a courtly man and *bon vivant* who gives rather than withholds life's finer things and ideas, one of which is a gift of a Degas painting to his nephew and a promise of new clothes. Sebastian falls in love with a down-to-earth but mischievous caretaker at Eustace's mansion, and is seduced by her. Eustace suddenly dies and Sebastian, realizing he will not get his evening clothes, decides to swap the Degas for a new tuxedo, being greatly cheated in the process.

An audit of the estate notes the missing Degas and employees are accused. Sebastian says nothing; he knows he must get the Degas back. Unable to do so himself, he enlists the help of Uncle Bruno Rontini, a “flighty” spiritual enthusiast.

Uncle Bruno retrieves the painting but by calling on certain friends for help he inadvertently makes himself an enemy of the Italian Fascisti. The Fascist police imprison and mistreat Bruno, and hasten his declining health. When released, a guilty and chastened Sebastian takes care of his dying uncle, and is profoundly moved by the old man's kindness and spirituality, which is now no longer seen as flighty, but essential. Bruno's spirituality begins a transformation in Sebastian towards a spiritual upward transcendence that teaches him awareness, maturity, love, and compassion for others. In Sebastian's adulthood Bruno's effect on the young man is still felt, as an epilogue indicates. Years after World War II, and missing a leg, a mature Sebastian still writes poetry. This is the story, but not the innovation, which is how Huxley writes a spiritual novel espousing a particular spiritual context, *The Perennial Philosophy* of mysticism.

Thus far, mysticism has been the intrinsic weave permeating Huxley's thought. At first it was unformed, just as Huxley was in his progress toward maturity. *After Brave New World* Huxley's next novel, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1935) was a study in the spiritual progress of Anthony Beavis, which included the pacifism Huxley embraced in the early-to mid 1930s. Beavis knew, as

Huxley knew, that pacifism was aligned with spirituality, but neither could define precisely how they were aligned. After coming to America in 1937 and moving to Hollywood in 1939, Huxley and Gerald Heard studied Vedanta, based on the ancient Hindu scriptures, the Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishads, et al. Vedanta is the oldest known scripture by centuries and was based in an intuitive belief in man's integral mystical spirituality, which remains dormant until each individual chooses to awaken it. Huxley's first American novel, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), began to incorporate a more studied mysticism through the character of Mr. Propter (based on Heard) who explains it to others. In 1944 Huxley published his anthology, *The Perennial Philosophy*, in which he correlated mystical writings from all eras and origins and showed, with his brilliant commentary, how they all expressed the same beliefs despite great separations of time and distance.

The plot above sounds simple, almost mundane; however, the philosophy in this novel of ideas is perhaps the most profound that was ever attempted to be conveyed in a "fiction." One can appreciate the novel without being an expert in *The Perennial Philosophy*, but one will be awed by the novel through understanding the *Perennial Philosophy*. One can even point to at least one conversion of a reader in a book titled *How I Became a Hindu*:

I was born a Hindu. But I had ceased to be one by the time I came out of college at the age of 22 [in 1946]. I had become a Marxist and a militant atheist. I had come to believe that Hindu scriptures should be burnt in a bonfire if India was to be saved.

I was heading full steam into Communism when I received a severe jolt. It was a novel by Aldous Huxley, *Time Must Have A Stop*.... I had never read a book by Huxley so far. This one was quite a revelation of his unique genius. I was enraptured by one of its characters, Bruno, contemplating the dark destiny of an erudite scholar with great compassion. But what almost broke my Marxist spell was his demolition of the dogma of inevitable progress which was the bedrock of all Western thought, including Marxism,

during the 19th century. He also questioned as a "*manipulative fallacy*" the repeated reconstruction of social, economic and political institutions to achieve a more equitable order of things. His conclusion was that the roots of social evils lay ultimately in human nature itself.

This book shook me very badly and its influence was to surface two years later. Meanwhile, I took to reading Huxley and finished his major novels as well as ... *Ends and Means* and the *Perennial Philosophy*. I was preparing myself to dwell on a different dimension of thought and feeling. I confessed my misgivings to my Communist friend from the share market. He had not read any Huxley. But he knew the party line on this great writer. It was not at all flattering. Next, my friend accused me of being an intellectual. It was his settled opinion, and experience also, that intellectuals did not last in the Party for long. Their great sin was their failure to become partisans on major ideological issues. They suffered from bourgeois objectivity. I felt properly snubbed, even though I knew that my friend had hardly ever read a book in his whole life. (Goel, Online).

In a Huxleyan irony, a Briton taught an Indian how to be a Hindu, although not a modern ritualistic Hindu, rather, the Vedantic, mystical Hindu. Many more converts to mysticism would follow. Yet in 1945, mysticism was still a new venue for philosophy and more so for literature. *Time Must Have a Stop* and Isherwood's novel, *Prater Violet*, also 1945, were philosophic parables. Few critics could grasp this because they had no clue about the underlying philosophical intentions of the authors. Bowering writes: "The critical reception of *Time Must Have a Stop* was largely one of unqualified mystification: one reviewer spoke of 'this immensely interesting, rather confusing, rather confused book; another referred to 'the baffling mystical abstractions of Mr. Huxley's new faith,' concluding that 'much of its mystic message is incomprehensible'" (160-61). In today's post 1960s, post New Age world, the message is no longer a mystery to the many

that have learned the Perennial Philosophy, which will here be summarized as a necessary framework for understanding how Huxley's mystical predilection found its clearest voice in his work from 1945 forward.

*But thought's the slave of life, and life's time fool,
And time, that takes survey of all the world, Must have a stop*

Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*

Now there are some things we all know but we don't take 'em out and look at 'em very often. We all know something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even stars—everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how many people are always letting go of that fact. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being. [People are] waitin' for something they feel is comin'. Something important and great ... waitin' for the eternal part of them to come out...

Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*, 1938 (44).

Huxley, despite his being called godless in the 1920s and 1930s, was far from being unspiritual. His cynical fiction was meant to display a world that was falling far short of the human potentiality that the mind, seeking, rather than rejecting an intuitive spirituality, could fulfill in a world where spirit would overcome materialism. Since much less has been written about Huxley's American writings after 1939 than his British writings before 1939, the full importance of Huxley's belief in the Perennial Philosophy and this philosophy's meaning has been given little coverage, which

means that his American work cannot be fully understood and appreciated. One cannot do justice to Huxley without a proper account of his mystical beliefs.

When he came to America in 1939 with Gerald Heard,² they both had been interested in the nature of evolving consciousness for many years. Heard and Huxley began attending the lectures at The Vedanta Society of Southern California. Vedanta, a mystical philosophy, is the basis for all subsequent mystical branches of the Hindu, Greek, Roman, Judaic, Islamic, and Christian religions. In 1945, Huxley anthologized the mystical writings of all religions in his book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, augmented with his brilliant commentary. This book would lead to a booming renewal of interest in Eastern and mystical philosophy that is still prominent with the 1960-1970s perhaps the zenith with translations of the Vedas selling in the millions. The following elucidation of mystical philosophy is derived from Huxley's writings and from the original sources that he was writing about.

The Perennial Philosophy³ (the philosophy of mysticism) has its seminal beginnings in the ancient Hindu sacred texts that are the first enunciations/elucidations of mysticism as an integral, continuous, contiguous, atomized essence within and without all existence physically and psychically. Atoms move but we can't see them; yet, they exist. Consciousness evolves but we can't see it; yet mystical philosophers believe it—beginning with the ancient texts. These texts—the Vedas—made their way from India to inform the East then the West through the derivatively evolving disciplines of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Platonism, Zen, Christian Mystics, German Transcendentalism, British Romanticism, American Transcendentalism, Theosophy, and on the eve of the 20th Century came full circle in the revitalization and dissemination of the Vedas through the worldwide Vedanta Society. The Greeks may have been the cradle of Western civilization, but the Vedas are the womb of world civilization. The links in the chain are definitive and strong. This wisdom is perennial from some amorphous, indefinable beginning to some future, as yet indefinable end—and then it will start all over again in an endless cyclical regeneration. The Vedas' impetus of creation is exactly the "Big Bang" theory of an initial first cause that evolves as

an ascending, widening spiral of the expanding universe, which scientists see as a physical process. The Vedas see it as both physical and metaphysical, that there is a corresponding psychical expansion/evolution concurrently.

According to the Perennial Philosophy there are immutable constructs that change constantly in appearance but remain constant in their essence; yet, the changes are distinct and recognizable to non-mystically inclined perceivers, which causes these perceivers to see only flux as defined by the five senses. These senses and the individuals using them feel a separateness devised by eye and ear that assumes that one is never part of a whole because one cannot see one's self included with others without the aid of a picture or mirror--relatively recent methods--that have not yet quite caught up with the thousands of years of "I am I; you are not I." Indeed, the revelation of a primal group standing over their reflection in still water must have been as astounding as thunder and lightning. Separateness is man's physical condition; alienation is his assumption inculcated from his inability to see himself with others. Thus, Vico's theory that humans created language to explain the disturbances to their senses (thunder, lightning) and from which they developed fables, was initially inspired by their awe/fear of the natural world. Language was a creation that attempts to overcome both nature and separateness, but in its development further separated individuals as no two people interpret language in exactly the same way. Vico believed that these *awe*-sociations became fables, then became poetic wisdom, then became esoteric wisdom (philosophy) in an ever-ascending and widening spiral of complexity that became so far removed from the initial feelings of awe-sociation that individuals can no longer intimate feelings of awe solely from the natural world as did their child-like primitive ancestors.

Feelings of awe are transcendent; the concentration upon the feeling of awe is systematic transcendence. Mystics meditate; artists create—both are intuitive concentrations that hope—and often succeed—in evoking awesome transcendent feelings. The Katha Upanishad (1.2.22-24) explains the importance of intuiting the undifferentiated unity of the Self: "The wise who knows the Self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among changing things, as great and

omnipresent, does never grieve. That self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him (his body) as his own. But he who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil, and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge.”

Plainly, intuition is paramount; yet, spiritual intuition is less likely for the many that do not have any clue about achieving some form of inner self-understanding. Mystics and artists choose to pursue self-understanding.

Disciples or audiences wish to share in the awe-sociations of the mystic and artist. This desire has not changed since the earliest fable-makers created Viconian “fabula.” The essence of awe has not changed either; the wise artist knows he is reflecting new images that are updated versions derived from the same long-evolving spiral begun by his ancestors. Fables to Poetry to philosophy—all the same. Flux is a process, not the chaos that is seen in the material world; dialectics is a process, not an end. Consciousness evolves from the reconciliation of opposites as described in the Isha Upanishad and in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita.

The Isha Upanishad teaches that evolving consciousness comes through the reconciliation of opposites, by the perception of essential Unity, of the apparently incompatible opposites, God and the World, Renunciation and Enjoyment, Action and internal Freedom, the One and the Many, Being and its Becomings, the passive divine Impersonality and the active divine Personality, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the Becoming and the Not-Becoming.

The Gita teaches that only the discerning man who chooses to be a calm center to life’s hurricane and understands the reconciliation of opposites can hope to see the undifferentiated unity of the Ultimate Reality.

He who regards
With an eye that is equal
Friends and comrades,

The foe and the kinsman,
The vile, the wicked,
The men who judge him,
And those who belong
To neither faction: □ He is the greatest. (81-2)

Through the fission of the reconciliation of opposites, activity creates graduated resolutions that proceed to another moment of the *eternal now* of “isness,” which is described by the Vedanta-influenced T.S. Eliot in “Burnt Norton” when Eliot echoes the Vedas and concludes:

And all is always now (www.allspirit.co.uk/norton.html).

The resolutions that graduate from the reconciliation of opposites exist in the *eternal now* and move fluidly without interruption to become the next sources of opposites needing to be reconciled while consciousness continues to move up the ascending spiral. The movement is fluid and imperceptible. The senses may see, hear, feel, touch, or taste the outcomes of these resolutions but these physical outcomes are static. The outcomes are the residue of a movement after a particular movement is over. One drinks water, eats food, touches silk only after the process of their becoming reaches its material end; one is rarely conscious of the process and becomes focused only on the results. For the many, awareness of process, whether of an apple or consciousness, is rarely and barely thought about unless an aspect of process becomes an expedient necessity such as drought or famine. Necessity may be the mother of invention, but for the many, “mother” often doesn’t speak until necessity is expedient and mandatory. Throughout history farsightedness has been in short supply and the barn door has been closed after the animals escaped. (Or a need to cut oil consumption is not seen as a necessity until chaos is recognized.) The many cannot grasp the hidden *allness* of the bigger picture. What is misperceived to be linear, to be before/after, cause/effect, is finite and confined to an expedient present disconnected from the process of evolution. To the misperceiving majority events are dots on a line and the majority cannot see the

continuity and contiguity of the present dots and how they are related to previous dots. The previous dots are forgotten or they are only memories or histories. The majority also cannot see the future that is ahead and too far off to consider or imagine. Conversely, to artists and mystics time is only a man-made construct to which we adhere slavishly and detrimentally.

Thornton Wilder wrote, “It is only in appearance that time is a river. It is a vast landscape, and it is only the eye of the beholder that moves” (*The Eighth Day*, 395). If one throws a rock into a pond, one can watch the process from the initial splash to the expanding circular ripples. If one could stand back far enough and see the “big bang,” one could see the first cause and follow the oval expansion of the universe moment-to-moment, *istgeist* to *istgeist* (*isness* to *isness*), and see the cause and effect of how each *isness* ripples into the next *isness*. From the expanding ripples in the pond to an expanding universe, these images—one real based on visible nature, one “metaphorized” as an extrapolation of invisible nature—help one’s actual eyes to “see” an idea, like atoms, that the mind’s eye can understand only by a leap of the imagination, even though atoms are real, not imagined. To imagine connotes “seeing” what isn’t there; but atoms *are* there, spinning in a circle that is the ultimate microcosm of the larger microcosm of the pond, and both the atom and the pond are within the ultimate macrocosm of the expanding universe. All the sense-perceived microcosms seem differentiated, but if one sees as the mystic sees, then Ultimate Reality is both *isness* and process. One sees a cloud that is made up of condensed water, from which drops of rain merge into an ocean. The drops are a process, a moment of *isness* that flows from one *isness* (cloud) to another *isness* (ocean).

From the eye of the beholder who sees the vast landscape, one can see both the *isness* and the process simultaneously and *Time Stops*:

Any given event in any part of the universe has as its determining conditions all previous and contemporary events in all parts of the universe.

Imagination (intuition) can allow us to see the timeless interrelations. But imagination is not just about seeing what isn't real; it is equally about "seeing" what *is* real—atoms. Imagination leads to the discovery of what is physically real and can be measured (science). Imagination also leads to the discovery of what is metaphysically real and can be "metaphorized" (art). Science and art are about seeing what previously was not seen but was imagined (intuited), after which the scientist and artist take what was imagined and make it into an outcome that *can* be seen or heard. Michael Polanyi said: *We know much more than we can tell*" (25)⁴ *Telling* is an outcome of what is already known, even when that telling might be imagining what is not yet known. (A science-fiction writer takes the known to imagine what an unknown future might be like. He wishes to transcend the known through the creative impulse.) Art is one vehicle for transcendence. Humans have a compelling desire for transcendence, which for most is an unconscious need without a cognitive—let alone, a philosophical basis. There are forms of upward transcendence and downward transcendence (Huxley).⁵ Upward transcendence is more conscious of its own ambitions; downward transcendence is often crudely unconscious. Upward: Mysticism, art, spirituality, love (mystic love for the individual as *Eros* then transformed to the transcendently awesome love for all existence of *Agape*); Downward: addictions (drugs, alcohol, sex, religious dogma and fanaticism, nationalistic fanaticism).

Transcendence, conscious or unconscious, is the desire of humanity; transcendence is the design of the Perennial Philosophy, first recorded in the Vedas. Still, long before the 3,000 year-old Vedas, awe-sociations were recorded by the primitive fabulists described in Vico's *New Science*. The creative impulse of Art/literature is the reflective dialectical synthesis of moments in space. These moments recreate awe and evoke a sense of unicity that seeks to overcome feelings of separation. Unity with the Ultimate Reality is the goal of the Perennial Philosophy.

The continuum of the statement above starting "any given event" includes the evolution of man's consciousness. The metaphysical basis for the quotation and its assertion of an overall perpetual continuum of existence is contained within The Perennial Philosophy.

Within this philosophy is the concept of an Ultimate Reality or Ground of Being (perhaps Divine) that is both the first cause of the continuum and the continuum itself. An artistic perspective as grounded in the Perennial Philosophy is just now becoming a view that some critics, particularly in Europe and Russia—and Satya Mohanty in America-- have begun to apply to literature, seeing certain writers as exponents who have consciously or unconsciously incorporated this philosophy into their art.

The vast literature of mysticism that reflects The Perennial Philosophy has been given an encapsulated form by Huxley. Referring again to the “any given event” statement, this aphorism is a good basis for understanding what Huxley called *The Minimum Working Hypothesis*, which summarizes the common denominators of the Perennial Philosophy into four basic tenets that were first stated in his introduction to the 1944 Isherwood/Prabhavananda translation of *The Bhagavad Gita* (7). To consider these tenets as a prelude to the American Huxley is to make the same metaphysical leap that philosophers and writers have made in their careers. If the reader is also able to make this leap even temporarily, then Huxley’s American fiction and non-fiction will fit into a much clearer context:

Minimum Working Hypothesis

1. *the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness—the world of things and animals and even gods—is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent.*

2. *human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference [intimating the Awe-sociations]; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition [i.e., meditation, art] superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.*

3. *man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal self, which is the inner*

man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with this spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

4. man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal self and so come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground of all existence.

The key to Huxley's Hypothesis is the role of intuition as a guide to knowledge that cannot be otherwise found empirically:

It is the task of philosophy to try to translate and understand analytically in terms of thought or conceptual thinking what has been presented in the living experience of intuition. It must start from experience and it must recognize experience to be the goal of all philosophy. Philosophy cannot give us an experience of the actual---it attempts to show what is possible, not what *is* but what *may be*. The merely possible demands verification or rather an actualization in concrete experience. This is supplied by intuition. A philosophy that does not base itself on this solid footing of perfect experience is a merely barren speculation that moves in the sphere of ideas alone, detached from Reality. This is what distinguishes Hegel's Idea from Sankara's Brahman. The latter is a concrete experience in ecstatic intuition, while the former is only the highest achievement of reason. (Brahma, 167)

Intuition drives the inspiration of the creative impulse even if hard work follows to see that impulse through to the art's completion. Art is a means to the end for the artist and his audience to intimate the *Awe*-sociations that are harbored in the unconscious in order to identify with and come to "unitive knowledge" of the "Divine Ground of all existence."

In *Time Must Have a Stop* Huxley intends to introduce the Perennial Philosophy to readers and also to write of Uncle Eustace's dying in terms of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, aka the Bardo Thodol, a Mayahana Buddhist text that describes the transitional state between the death of one body and the spirit of that body having a rebirth in a new body.

A body is a suitcase that carries the spirit around; suitcases may wear down or change, but the spiritual contents remain. The fact that Sebastian loses a leg is meant to signify that while his body has changed; his spirit has grown and this is what measures his existence, not his body.

The first half of the novel sets the stage for the second half. Huxley as narrator very early indicates where he is heading in this passage on Sebastian, "...he had read Nietzsche, and since then had learned to Love his Fate. *Amor fati*—but tempered with a healthy cynicism" (2). At seventeen, one can intellectualize *amor fati*, but its reality requires trials more severe than just teenage angst. Huxley introduces Nietzsche here but is also nodding at Nietzsche's mentor, Schopenhauer, who was the first notable Western philosopher to be thoroughly guided by Vedanta philosophy. To love fate is to accept that one's finite corporeal existence and that existence's travails are secondary to one's infinite spiritual existence. Hence, immediately in the novel, Huxley, in an incidental way, foreshadows the very serious considerations of fate and spirituality that are forthcoming.

Readers first encounter Bruno Rontini in a conversation about him while he is not yet present. Eustace says of Bruno: "He's the last person to gossip about a man when his back is turned.... There's nothing that so effectively ruins a conversation as charitableness. After all, no one can be amusing about other people's virtues" (82).

Bruno's good nature is here explained; he is in fact, an exemplar of Vedanta's two simple rules of ethical conduct: do no harm and compassion for all. Two pages later Eustace reads aloud a passage from a book he just purchased:

“Grace did not fail thee, but thou wast wanting to grace. God did not deprive thee of the operation of love, but thou didst deprive his love of thy co-operation. God would never have rejected thee, if thou hadst not rejected him.” He turned back to the title page.

“*Treatise of the Love of God* by St. Francois de Sales, he read. “Pity it isn’t de Sade (84).

Eustace’s pithy cynicism dots the text, which is counterpoint to his spiritual experience in the novel’s second half.

The message that Eustace reads in de Sales is that one chooses to intuit God and seek upward transcendence; one, however, may like de Sade, choose downward transcendence away from God. One rejects God; God rejects no one.

A character, Paul De Vries, an American from “New England,” (home of Vedanta-inspired American transcendentalism) is fascinated by Einstein, (Huxley’s reminder of the space-time possibilities that Einstein introduced.), and seeks any evidence of an undifferentiated unity. He was hoping,

...that someday one might get a hunch, an illuminating intuition of the greater synthesis.

For a synthesis there undoubtedly must be, a thought-bridge that would permit the mind to march discursively and logically from telepathy to the four-dimensional continuum....

There was the ultimate all-embracing field—the Brahma of Sankara [Vedanta] the One of Plotinus, the Ground of Eckhart and Boehme [German mystics]...” (92).

Huxley is giving readers an introduction to the Perennial Philosophy, which will be continued in Bruno’s bookshop. A young man comes in and asks for a book on “comparative religion. Bruno shows him the standard didactic selections, which the aspiring young philosopher buys. Bruno adds, “if you ever get tired of this...” ...in their deep sockets the blue eyes twinkled with an almost mischievous light. “...This kind of learned frivolity ... remember, I’ve got a considerable

stock of really serious books on the subject.... Scupoli, the Bhagavatam, the Tao The Ching, the Theologica Germanica, the Graces of Interior Prayer..." (102). Thus, does Huxley suggest texts if readers are so inclined to learn more.

Bruno becomes a source for felicitous thoughts that also teach; often, these thoughts come as *pas de deux* with the cynical Eustace, such as one on goodness:

Eustace: ...if only people would realize that moral principles are like measles.... [that come and go].

Bruno: One doesn't have to catch the infection of goodness, if one doesn't want to. The will is always free.... If only you could forgive the good [that refutes Eustace's cynicism]. Then you might allow yourself to be forgiven... for being what you are. For being a human being. Yes, God can forgive you even that, if you really want it. Can forgive your separateness so completely that you can be made one with him" (105).

The verbal duets between Eustace and Bruno are discussions of oppositions that need to be reconciled. Bruno's importuning to Eustace that he drop his cynicism and seriously consider his spiritual future takes on great significance when later Eustace is dying. Throughout the novel, passages both serious and lighthearted speak of the nature of the Perennial Philosophy and names many of its advocates that are in Huxley's anthology, *The Perennial Philosophy*, which would be published the year after *Time Must Have a Stop*, as if the latter was meant to introduce the former, which, in fact, it was.

The second half of the novel mainly concerns Eustace's dying. Bowering writes of this:

The second half ... is divided into three parts.... The Chikhai Bardo which describes the happenings immediately after death; then, the Chonyid Bardo which deals with karmic visions and hallucinations; and, finally, the Sidpa Bardo which is concerned with the

events leading up to reincarnation. In the Chikhai Bardo the deceased is faced with the ... Dharma-Kaya, or the Clear Light of the Void. This is symbolic of the purest and highest state of spiritual being which Huxley identifies with the Divine Ground or immanent Godhead of the Christian mystics. If, through a lack of spiritual insight, the dead person is unable to recognize the light as the manifestation of his own spiritual consciousness, karmic illusions begin to cloud his vision, the light is obscured and he enters into the second Bardo. In the Chonyid Bardo he is subjected to what Evans-Wentz calls the, "solemn and mighty panorama" of "the consciousness-content of his personality." This will vary according to the life and spiritual beliefs of the one concerned.... If the deceased is spiritually immature and unable to recognize the fantasy world confronting him as the product of his own consciousness he will pass into ... the Sipa Bardo [and] the person becomes aware that he no longer has a corporeal body and the desire for a new incarnation begins to dominate his consciousness.... As Jung points out ... "freed from all illusion of genesis and decay ... life in the Bardo brings no eternal rewards or punishments, but merely a descent into a new life which shall bear the individual nearer to his final goal [a final complete merging into spiritual consciousness].... This ... goal is what he himself brings to birth as the last and highest fruit of the labours and aspirations of earthly existence." This is the essential teaching of *Time Must Have a Stop*. (Bowering, 167-68)

Huxley on the death of Uncle Eustace: And through ever-lengthening durations the light kept brightening from beauty into beauty. And the joy of knowing, the joy of being known, increased with every increment of that embracing and interpenetrating beauty.

Brighter, brighter, through succeeding durations, that expanded at last into an eternity of joy.

An eternity of radiant knowledge, of bliss unchanging in its ultimate intensity. For ever, for ever. (138-39).

Eustace was, just as Bruno knew, “spiritually immature at the time of his death.” Sebastian, after learning mysticism from Uncle Bruno, is more advanced spiritually and further along in the path of evolving spiritual consciousness and union with the Divine Ground of all existence. In the epilog, Sebastian is looking through his notebook of thoughts and quotations concerning mystical spirituality. This notebook had its real counterpart as Huxley was accumulating material for *The Perennial Philosophy*. Sebastian reads from his notebooks and readers learn more about mysticism.

Sebastian also remembers taking care of Bruno when he was dying of throat cancer and gradually lost his speech. There is great irony here as Huxley would die of throat cancer eighteen years later. Sebastian remembers Bruno’s suffering.

But there had also been the spectacle of Bruno’s joyful serenity, and even, at one remove, a kind of participation in the knowledge of which that joy was the natural and inevitable expression—the knowledge of a timeless and infinite presence; the intuition, direct and infallible, that apart from the desire to be separate there was no separation, but an essential identity (286).

The last pages of Sebastian’s notebook concern how time must have a stop in the mystical sense of the “vast landscape.” These ruminations are followed by The Minimum Working Hypothesis, which by this juncture of the reader’s mystical education resonates with the full import and impact of this spiritual novel.

In 1954 when Maria Huxley was dying and had reached the pre-death state of unconsciousness, Huxley read to her from the Bardo.

End Notes:

1. Matthew Huxley had his own distinguished career in public health. He died at age 84 on 12 February 2005.
2. Christopher Isherwood wrote in 1950 that “Gerald Heard is one of the very few who can properly be called philosophers; a man of brilliantly daring theory and devoted practice. I believe he has influenced the thought of our time, directly and indirectly, to an extent which will hardly be appreciated for another fifty years” (The Heard Collection, UCLA). Gerald Heard was an enormous influence on Isherwood, W. H. Auden, W. S. Maugham and many more. Of course, a principal figure among the "many more" is Aldous Huxley. In Heard, even more so than D. H. Lawrence, Huxley found a friend who was of a simpatico temperament and more so, a train of thought that compelled them towards very similar approaches to what Heard called "intentional Living." That is, a way of living that took the part--the human mind--and integrated the individual mind with a world mind of evolving consciousness where each part acted in concert for the good of the whole. A tall order, but one that these two philosophical iconoclasts believed was the inevitable future of consciousness, if not in their lifetimes, in some future eon that would see the fruition of the impetus that they were a seminal factor in pushing forward. In Heard, Huxley found someone who agreed with much of his own thought, which allowed him to have a forum for further thought along the same lines. Heard befriended Huxley and Auden in 1929. Heard conveyed to Auden his theories on a universal evolving consciousness, which had won him a major prize from the British Academy that year for his breakthrough book *The Ascent of Humanity*. Books of fiction and non-fiction would follow almost yearly until his last in 1963 *The Five Ages of Man*. From 1929 to 1963, Heard was revered among an intellectual circle that would listen to and spread his ideas and then become better known than he was. There is compelling circumstantial evidence that Heard anonymously influenced the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson, with the handbook *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, which became the basis for the now ubiquitous Twelve-Step Recovery program that is based in the abnegation

of the individual ego to a spiritual source that Heard referred to as "this thing." (Heard's euphemism was meant to mean God without saying so.) Heard was a guru to gurus.

3. PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS: The term *philosophia perennis* first appeared in the Renaissance although its intended meaning is much older. The term *philosophia perennis* is associated with the philosopher Leibniz, in whose writings it appears and whose thought aims at many characteristics essential to it; however, he himself found it in Augustinus Steuchius, a theologian of the sixteenth century who in 1540 published the *De philosophia perenni sive veterum philosophorum cum theologia christiana consensu libri X*, a work which quickly passed through several editions. The term has also been applied retroactively to the Scholastics. Steuch's work returns to a revealed absolute truth made known to man before his fall. Leibniz in the next century and in the later years of his life took the term for the philosophy he was developing. Leibniz had already known of Steuch, noting him and his work in his journals. In these journals Leibniz gives a brief sketch of the contributions of the major schools and also makes a reference to the East.

4. Even science, that kingdom of supposed empirical objectivity, is dependent on language in order to learn it and make new discoveries about it. Since scientists are using language to explain discoveries, and since language is a medium of subjective interpretation, science is not nearly so objective as might be assumed. Michael Polanyi, scientist and philosopher, makes this case in *Personal Knowledge* (an early salvo of post-modernism), All efforts to acquire knowledge are personal, meaning subjective, not objective. When Polanyi says that "we know more than we can say" (*Tacit Dimension*), he is asserting that language is merely the outcome or tip of a vast iceberg that is knowledge held both consciously and unconsciously in the mind and memory from which reflexively makes correlations that can be enunciated or acted upon. The above introduction to which this note refers is a synthesized outcome of much reading, research, and life experience that knows much more than it can say.

We must conclude that the paradigmatic case of scientific knowledge, in which all faculties

that are necessary for finding and holding scientific knowledge are fully developed, is the knowledge of approaching discovery.

To hold such knowledge is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgment in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend. (*Tacit Dimension*, 24-5)

5. Huxley discusses upward and downward transcendence in his book, *Grey Eminence* (1941), a biography of Father Joseph, Cardinal Richelieu's spiritual advisor, a mystic who became corrupted by politics.

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