

Shakespeare and the Perennial Philosophy
Aldous Huxley's *Time Must Have a Stop*

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Aldous Huxley considered *Time Must Have A Stop* to be his most successful attempt at combining narrative and idea. By the time he had written *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), he had had considerable practice at uniting the two efforts.

Douglas Dutton asks us to consider the value of dividing Huxley's literary career into three distinct eras: the satiric novels, the novels of ideas and the final period devoted to mystical writings.¹ But these divisions seem somewhat arbitrary in light of the fact that Huxley seemed to be perennially devoted to hammering out a plausible value system, whatever form his literary creation took. *Time Must Have a Stop* was a culmination of the mystical and ethical quest he had earlier pursued in *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), and *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939) and would return to again in *Ape and Essence* (1948). Likewise, the circumstances that plague Sebastian Barnack in *Time Must Have a Stop* also troubled Anthony Beavis in *Eyeless in Gaza*. Both protagonists suffered socially from not having the proper evening attire. This theme shows Huxley busy with satirizing his social set, and the mystical and ethical urge is well represented in *Eyeless in Gaza*, *After Many a Summer Dies a Swan*, *Ape and Essence* and in particular with Bruno Rontini in *Time Must Have a Stop*, a character that Sebastian Barnak initially rejects but after his aesthetic development is complete he finds to be the most beloved of figures.

By the time Huxley wrote *Time Must Have a Stop* his political fervor and zeal for social amelioration had transformed itself into a personal spiritual quest. The pacifism for which he and Gerald Heard were strong public advocates did not find a welcoming

atmosphere in the years before and during the outbreak of WWII. Somewhat disaffected by the opposition to their political stance, both he and Heard would travel to the United States to lecture on more philosophical and religious themes. They would eventually establish a center for Eastern meditation in California (Heard's Trabuco College), where Huxley would find work writing Hollywood scripts. The association with Gerald Heard left its mark in ways that his earlier friendship with D. H. Lawrence did not. Huxley found companionship with Lawrence, who had promoted an exuberant and intuitive worldview, but it was Heard's ascetic and monastic spiritualism that would ultimately resonate with Huxley and inform his literary work. Trabuco College was a joint effort that reflected a compatibility that would lead to a lecturing partnership that took the two throughout the country.

There is much autobiography in Huxley's writings and *Time Must Have a Stop* is no exception. Along with some of his other works, *Time Must Have a Stop* can be considered a *Bildungsroman*, more precisely a *Kunstlerroman*, since in the end Sebastian Barnack, the main character, is transformed into a legitimate playwright, having intermittently tried his hand at poetry throughout the narrative. From the opening scenes of the story, as he walks through Hampstead Heath, he searches his memory for lines from Keats. He edits *Endymion* in his head because he is sure that Keats may have been guilty of aesthetic errors. Some day, he muses, he would show the world what could be done with a proper understanding of Greek mythology. James Joyce, of course, made such an effort earlier in the century with the character of Stephen Daedalus, who, like Sebastian, has the name of a prominent martyr. It is Stephen's last name; however, that is the key to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This key appears in the epigraph to

the book, while Huxley's *Kunstlerroman* is framed by its title, which is an allusion to a dramatic moment in a Shakespeare play. The connections between Huxley's *Time* and Joyce's *Portrait* do not stop here. Both narratives are illuminated by their respective literary allusions. In Stephen Dedalus, there is the reference to Ovid's *Metamorphosis, et ignotas animus dimittit in artes*, through which we can envision the episode in which Daedalus and Icarus take to the sky after altering Nature's laws, and in Sebastian's case, the title of the book directs us to the internecine intrigues of *Henry IV*, Part I. The epiphany that Stephen Dedalus experiences at the end of Chapter 4 is woven together with imagery from the Daedalus episode and his confusing name finally delivers Stephen from the bonds of country, religion, and language. This strange name that was the source of ridicule from his school chums now struck him with the force of a prophecy. The name of this ancient artificer comes over Stephen like a warm fog and produces a temporal enchantment in which "all ages were as one to him." This transcendent moment was the call of life to his soul, a call to recreate life out of life. The old self, that ignored the destiny delivered by his name, is shed like cerements. Here Joyce mixes the metaphors of the transfiguration of Christ with Greek mythology in a powerful potion that produces a peaceful union in which the earth, the heavens, the vast indifferent dome above takes him to their breast. There are even more psychoactive transcendent moments in *Time Must Have a Stop* but they do not happen to Sebastian, it is his carefree and fun-loving Uncle Eustace through which Huxley represents the temporal ecstasy that he would later catalogue in *The Perennial Philosophy*.

The reader must wait until the Epilogue of *Time Must Have a Stop* to gain an understanding of the relevance of the perennial philosophy to the narrative. While the

out of the body experiences of Uncle Eustace may have been informed by a reading of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the narrative as a whole is tied together in a poetic interlude from Shakespeare, which illuminates the tension between the ambitions of the physical and temporally-bound self and the rewards of cosmic consciousness. It is in the exchange between Hotspur and Henry at the end of *Henry IV*, Part I that Huxley will find the evidence for a systematic metaphysics, epistemology and an ethics, all rolled into one. Such a search had been an ambition for sometime; Huxley would find his answer in Shakespeare, not in the Vedas.

Uncle Eustace's forays into mystical consciousness are illustrations of the *Bardo* experience in which a departing soul appears to have several options available at the moment of death; personal memory and the weight of earthly existence versus the awareness of absence and the consciousness of an overarching presence in which nothing in particular can be visualized or known. These are the moments in which Huxley is at his most descriptive and insightful about the consciousness of color and light which pervade the experience of being between individual awareness and the cosmic awareness that comes with a luminous brilliance, a sense of a privative existence in which the status of individuality no longer makes sense, a knowledge of pure and utter absence. (117) The new world that Eustace's consciousness reports upon is similar to the experience of Stephen Dedalus at the moment of his calling to the aesthetic life. Joyce, like Huxley, had suffered from chronic eye problems. Both would put their visual impairment to good use. These encumbrances would become literary energy: Joyce's epiphanies have been connected to his eye problems and Huxley, when he was for all intents and purposes blind, except for the vague presence of light in one eye, had the opportunity to dwell on

light without the presence of real imagery. In his later use of the controversial Bates method, he would have further opportunity to combine psychological strategies with the act of perceiving. Huxley was personally adept at distinguishing qualities of light and seeing only light. Of course Huxley's later use of hallucinogens provided ample sense data to express the chaotic and calming stages of the Bardo spiritual pilgrimage. By the time of his death on November 23, 1963, he had ample meditative and psychoactive experience to prepare him for his personal *Bardo* pilgrimage; that day he made preparations for his transition with the help of LSD.

It is not ironic that the fun loving, exuberant and sexually charged Eustace Barnack would be the subject of Huxley's insights into the knowledge of absence that marks the various stages of the *Bardo* experience in *Time Must Have A Stop*. Eustace's love of physical pleasures, which Huxley repeatedly illustrates through his habit of sucking on fine cigars, provides the perfect biographical backdrop to represent the tensions that occur in the self-conscious dissociation of the body from the soul. The Tibetan Buddhist tradition that informs Huxley's understanding of the *Bardo* transition, of course, does not have the spiritual concept of the soul familiar to westerners. What amounts to a repository of Karma, the causal nexus of spiritual merits and demerits, provides the psychic energy for the Bardo trip. Uncle Eustace has accumulated considerable Karmic baggage, so his transition is especially turbulent. Huxley's treatment of the details of the three stages of Eustace's transition, which for all of us occurs over 49 "days", reveals the range of chaotic turmoil and blissful knowledge that accompanies a typical Bardo journey. Like his admirers in the sixties, Leary, Baba Ram Das, et al, a roadmap for the trip can be found in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which

was popularized through the personal exegesis of Leary and Alpert. Under the title of *The Psychedelic Experience*, Leary et al. provided a new generation of spiritual enthusiasts with a psychoactively enhanced guide for rebirth. They expressed their gratitude to Carl Jung, but it is to Aldous Huxley that they admiringly dedicated their version of *The Book of the Dead*. John Lennon was a beneficiary of Leary's interpretation of the *Bardo* experience; his lyrical interpretation would be captured in the Beatle's first psychedelic effort in *Revolver*. The song *Tomorrow Never Knows*, awkwardly labeled *The Void* at first, is perhaps best known for a mystifying guitar solo, but offers counsel on how to approach the *Bardo* experience:

Turn off your mind, relax
and float down stream
It is not dying
It is not dying

Lay down all thought
Surrender to the void
It is shining
It is shining

That you may see
The meaning of within
It is being
It is being

That love is all
And love is everyone
It is knowing
It is knowing

That ignorance and hate
May mourn the dead
It is believing
It is believing

But listen to the
color of your dreams
It is not living
It is not living

Or play the game

existence to the end
Of the beginning
Of the beginning
Of the beginning
Of the beginning
Of the beginning

Some of the essential ingredients of the Bardo experience are present in Lennon's lyrics, along with advice on how to approach the encounter with the shining void. While it may appear and feel like annihilation, it is only facing up to the knowledge that personal identity is a delusion and that the world of subject-object relations is not as true as previously thought. We are advised, Lennon sings, to turn off the mind and give up all thought. This counsel tells us that our volition is inoperative and subduing our cognitive energy is a propaedeutic to encountering the void. Eustace Barnack had spent the better part of his adult life seeking pleasure and indulging his aesthetic appetites; he was not prepared to "Drop out, turn on and then come back and tune it in..." But the real story of the problems with the ego in *Time Must Have a Stop* is not reflected in Eustace's resistance to the shining void, they are more subtly displayed in the character of Sebastian Barnack. Sebastian's vanity is the real subject of Huxley's narrative; it is a stock problem that he had addressed in a previous story. Sebastian's narcissism revolves around his ambition to attend a social event for which he must have the proper evening attire. This is the banal backdrop of the narrative, which makes Huxley's dramatic reflections on reincarnation and metaphysics seem so sensational.

There is little indication at the beginning of *Time Must Have A Stop* that the story will culminate with insights that integrate a metaphysic, an epistemology and an ethic. Sebastian Barnack appears to be a not so unusual teenager. He is preoccupied with the prospects of sexual encounters, he clearly directs some of this energy to poetry and he is

caught up in a typical family intrigue. His father John is a lawyer and widower who has devoted his adult life to social causes. He has little time for Sebastian and would rather be in the company of Italian anti-fascists. Sebastian's Uncle Eustace is the opposite type; he is religiously dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure and he is absorbed by aesthetic pursuits. John Barnack has no time for such bourgeois niceties; his apartment is devoid of any conventional taste. His Italian companion, Cacciaguida, is nostalgic for the arts, but they both know that such indulgences cannot be justified in the face of human suffering. Eustace is a counterpoint; he has no compunction about enjoying the good life. He has inherited great wealth after the early death of his rich wife, and he spends his time traveling, visiting his lovers, and satisfying his aesthetic whims. He is a bon vivant and gourmand, but he is troubled by the lack of attention Sebastian receives from his father.

The problem that haunts Sebastian in this story is not whether his poetic aspirations will be realized, it is not whether he will find true love, and it is not whether he can reconcile his abstemious father with his capricious uncle. His ambition is to have proper evening attire so that he may attend a much touted social event. He has not been able to convince his father of this burning need; after all there are still too many starving to indulge such petty fancies. Nonetheless he persists in his efforts to convince his father who is about to go off on another socialist mission.

Sebastian spends a great deal of time thinking about how he will approach his father. He is aware that his father's socialist ethics are a problem, but underneath this he sees a man who has a problem with desire. Uncle Eustace is the opposite, he is never without a Havana cigar; it is, ironically, a habit and expense that keeps him from buying the appropriate amount of insurance to cover his material goods. Sebastian is sure that if

he can make his case in an unenthusiastic way, he can break through his father's socialist defenses. Sebastian does not get a chance to try out his strategy, and so he travels to Florence to visit his Uncle Eustace with this problem still on his mind. He is sure that his fortunes will turn on showing up at an evening affair with the acceptable attire.

The metaphysical, epistemological and ethical questions, for which Huxley sought solutions, center on the problem of the ego. Sebastian's anxiety over the proper evening attire epitomizes this problem. He has, in ultimate terms, misidentified the self; he is sure that it is in most part equivalent to the reflection he sees in the mirror; hopefully adorned with a spiffy dinner jacket. Eustace is by far the most earth bound character in the narrative, but Sebastian presents the real spiritual crisis that motivated Huxley, how to realize the true self. Sebastian's father can be of no help, since he has psychologically abandoned his son in the pursuit of social reform. Eustace can be of some help and indeed he indirectly provides him with the funds to accomplish his goal. In the final analysis it will be the mystical figure of Bruno Rontini, who understands that real social reform begins with the improvement of one's own self, who provides the requisite enlightenment. Rontini, the antiquarian bookseller, who toils modestly under a dim yellow light and who Sebastian first sees as a tired old man with a beak of a nose is the real counterpoint to John Barnack's hopes for progressive social amelioration. This tradition, going back to the French Revolution, according to Huxley, has neglected the need to *be* good in order to do good. Too often while one hand is helping, the other is unwittingly doing harm. This information is revealed in an emotional exchange between Eustace and a young colleague of Rontini, Carlo Malpighi, who is an anti-Fascist devoted to the new religion of humanity. (71-71) Rontini's creed entails the Aristotelian

exhortation to do good deeds, to perform just acts in order to be good and just. This prescription was integrated with a commitment to self-realization and the final goal of well-being or *eudaimonia*. Eustace leaves this encounter with a book entitled *Treatise of the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales, though he would have preferred something by de Sade. (72)

Sebastian's anxiety follows him to Florence. As a guest of his Uncle Eustace he enters a social order that his father vehemently opposes. Eustace is the only male in a hierarchical household that is headed by a titular "Queen Mother," complete with a lap dog that bears his own title. Sebastian is warmly welcomed, his angelic charm engages each generation, and he is even politely seduced in the middle of the night. Remarkably, Sebastian has very good luck despite never having good intentions. He is single minded and determined to get his hands on evening wear that will provide the proper entrée into society. His Uncle Eustace finally takes pity on him, and agrees to take him to his tailor for the appropriate accoutrements. Uncle Eustace understands Sebastian's social ambitions; after all he is a financial success for having married into money. Eustace decides on a whim to go even further to ensure Sebastian's social standing. He has also decided to give him one of the Degas drawings that he bought from a rather unscrupulous dealer. Sebastian will experience a minor setback, since Eustace suffers a massive heart attack.

While Sebastian delights in his material gain, Eustace begins his rather torturous *Bardo* transition into the next life, as he collapses onto an enameled toilet with an agonizing pain that grips him with a terror "more intense than any fear he had ever experienced." (115) Eustace's physical pain subsides only to encounter a spiritual

privation in which an eternity of durations expands into the knowledge of absolute absence. This initial stage of the Bardo experience is soon followed by a vision of the proverbial brilliant light which confers a new kind of knowledge, the knowledge of being known. This knowledge is somewhat satisfying compared to feeling compelled “to know more than it was possible for the participant to know.” (118) At this initial stage of the transition, Eustace struggles not to give up his separate existence “to the beauty of that impossible incandescence,” (120) a luminosity that anticipates only opacity and disintegrated dust. Suddenly there is relief that comes with “something partaking of a memory.” (121) Soon consciousness becomes more clear and distinct; it is Eustace Barnack who is aware, not an awareness from without but a recollection of his Romeo and Juliet as it vanishes into blue smoke. This earthly attachment keeps the memory of the past and his identity alive. Still, the brightness remains a threat. The next day Sebastian wakes to the news of his Uncle’s sudden demise. His first thoughts turn to Uncle Eustace’s promise to provide funds for his evening wear and what kind of excuse he could formulate for not attending the much anticipated social gala. As Sebastian schemes, Eustace is tossed between memory and annihilation.

Now that Eustace is gone Sebastian’s funding source is eliminated. While the household is a flutter after Eustace’s sudden death, Sebastian sees the Degas as a new revenue source. In contrast, Eustace’s memory of his “slobbered cylinder” (132) keeps a fragment of his selfhood in view, but this time it is against an interlocking system of lattices that is at once an activity and a place. Against this “ubiquitous web of beknottedness” (132) Eustace sees various fragments of himself: as a young boy playing in a muddy ditch, sucking on his cigar, and deep in the center of this lattice he appears

sucking a stringy length of licorice. In this geometricized and splintered space the image of his German nanny preparing the pleasure-anguish of the *Spritze* appears as another fragment of the self, but the tantalizing light through the interstices of the lattice make him realize that these shameful fragments are residual clots of a former existence that had to be extinguished in order to prepare for “the beauty , the knowledge , the bliss.” (134) Eustace finds momentary solace in the nostalgic grip he maintains on his clotted past, but “his thoughts were like lumps of excrement, like the noise of vomiting.” (146) Nevertheless, he must hold on to these fragments or face the alternative of “a total self-knowledge and self-abandonment, a total attention and exposure to the light.” (147) Eustace imagines an alternative to the annihilation of the light and the extreme pain of holding on to the memory of his fractured past, and for a brief moment he experiences real bodily sensations beyond his closed eyelids, heaviness in his gut and a constriction in his chest. His physical self is dying.

Meanwhile, the scheming art dealer, Gabriel Weyl is more than happy to accommodate Sebastian. He will take back the Degas but only at a fraction of the price Eustace paid. Weyl offers his sympathies and Sebastian finds himself reporting on his father’s achievements, which he portrays as heroic and self-sacrificing. He surprises himself by momentarily suspending the bile he would ordinarily spew on “those bloodsuckers” that have inadvertently deprived him of a dinner jacket. A smug and satisfied Sebastian leaves Weyl’s shop just as Eustace’s *Bardo* experience reveals yet another swath of his intellectual being. These reports on Eustace’s *Bardo* travels are set off by a more poetic and flamboyant Huxley whose narrative reports on transcending ordinary temporal succession. This time Eustace’s visions are punctuated by the refrain

“Whore and Brothels, Whore and Brothels.” The events in Eustace’s awareness are embedded social commentary. This is Huxley the social critic speaking, not the mystical aspirant. In a series of episodic flashes out of history Eustace is enveloped in universal derision and contempt: Visions of the casualties that preceded the Gettysburg Address are followed by a sequence of the crusade for liberty, equality, and fraternity, the rise of Napoleon and the fight against him; the subsequent rise of German nationalism, followed by abandoned hordes of maimed and half-animated corpses filling up the streets after the great war. Coming in like a signal from his brother John’s voice, Eustace next becomes aware of calls to end laissez-faire capitalism and the promise of the Russian Revolution, an unfolding drama in which ideals are eclipsed as one set of hooligans exchanges power with another. Courage and loyalty have always been at the root of humanity’s “long-drawn suicides and assassinations.” (163) Each crusade produces new crusades that are fueled by the inventions and intelligence generated by previous crusades; all the while treasures of knowledge are placed at the disposal of these aggressive passions. The Triumphs of Religion and Science and the Triumphs of Education are lumped into this parade of militant campaigns. We have Protestantism to thank for backing capitalism, St. Francis of Assisi provided an interpretation of the Mystical Body that evolved into a business and an ideology, and Faraday and Maxwell are denounced for allowing their ether to become a source of lies and stupidity. Eustace’s father is recalled as one who worshiped at the altar of education, since his philanthropy supported the sort of Polytechnic Institute whose results included the commercial promotion of cigarettes, whiskey and laxatives, preparation for conscription and a curriculum of false history and self-congratulations. The Triumph of Education will guarantee a perpetuation of

crusades since it provides a grounding in the religion of nationalism. This new politicized religion can do without God now that its infallible Foreign Offices have been deployed. As this new religion spreads its tentacles worldwide, it will be followed by the very industry that thrives in the conventional military atmosphere that accompanied the old crusades. Once again, Eustace's universe shakes with laughter.

After Eustace's earthly demise an inventory of his worldly goods reveals a discrepancy between receipts and the number of objects present. To Sebastian's dismay it is discovered that one of the Degas drawings is missing. He knows that he and Eustace were the only ones in the know, and he remains silent even when suspicion is cast on a young girl servant. It seems his luck cannot be broken. Finding himself alone, however, he begins to brood over some of the comments made by the ladies of the household and he grows uncomfortable with the thought of the poor girl and her family being harassed by the police. He imagines that he will approach Weyl and get the drawing back, and he toys with telling Mrs. Ockham, the primary beneficiary of Eustace's estate, since she is the daughter of Eustace's deceased wife. Sebastian's plans are stymied when later that same night he is distracted by an unexpected sexual liaison with another member of the now all-female household, except for the angelic Sebastian. The next day there is no new emotion in the house because of the tryst the night before; he and his self-possessed seducer enjoy a routine breakfast that like always is laid out under silver on the sideboard. Dispassion and detachment turn to excitement when Sebastian reads a note he has received that morning from Bruno Rontini. Rontini has written to offer his condolences but Sebastian only has loathing for the old fool who believed in Gaseous Vertebrates² and who spent too much time proselytizing. Ever the scheming pragmatist

Sebastian imagines that Rontini, the book dealer and trader in pictures, might just be able to help him with the cunning Weyl. Sebastian will soon learn that he has misidentified Bruno Rontini's character.

Huxley had been cultivating character types for some time, and *Time Must Have a Stop* is perhaps his first effort at character development following the influence from William Sheldon's psychological taxonomy. An article in *Harper's Magazine* from 1944, the same year *Time Must Have a Stop* was published, reflects this influence. He explicitly addresses Sheldon's various types in *The Perennial Philosophy*³ but *Time* provides living examples in the personalities of Sebastian, John, and Eustace Barnack. Bruno Rontini is not subsumed under this morphological classification, perhaps because his physical body is only a shell, as he is described in *Time*. Sebastian clearly represents the cerebrotonic ectomorph who is turned inwards, John, the somatonic mesomorph, is the earnest idealist bent on social amelioration, and Eustace is circumscribed by his endomorphic hedonistic drives. Rontini is yet another incarnation of Huxley's mystical personality with whom he is able to clarify the special relationship between morphological typing and moral temperament.

Huxley's essay in *Harper's Magazine* is a rather straightforward analysis of Sheldon's classificatory system, until the end when he expresses a concern over the dominance of somatonic values that he associates with the rise of Nazi education, or, as he puts it, "education for war."⁴ Naturally this educational philosophy had to be inculcated into the cultures of Nazism's opponents. The defeat of Nazism morphed into a Cold War that only perpetuated the aggressive tendencies of the somatonic personality. This personality type would be ensconced in social and foreign policy. As an extension

of geopolitical containment, administrations in the US would become ever sensitive to celebrating and promoting physical fitness and the powers of masculinity. Huxley took a wider historical perspective and saw this contemporary shift in terms of the eclipse of the traditional contemplative spirit of Christianity. Christian spiritual values cultivated stoicism, while the somatonic revolution calls for the manipulation of the environment in order to cushion existence with technological gadgetry. Huxley leaves it to history to resolve the hegemony of the somatonic revolution, but he does provide an immediate solution in the profile of the mystical character Bruno Rontini.

Huxley surmised that a world full of contemplatives like Bruno Rontini, who inwardly adapt to their material surroundings, would be disastrous for a consumer society in which advertising agencies produce the most influential writers. Advertising copy keeps the somatonic focused on the immediate external world. In contrast, the counsel Sebastian receives from Rontini asks him to imagine the consequences of his actions through generations, thus requiring an attentiveness that supersedes individual existence. Rontini wants to hear first hand from Sebastian about Eustace's last minutes, but Sebastian must force himself not to be rude when Rontini admonishes those who only take death seriously when it is staring them in the face. Rontini wants Sebastian to think about what happens to that "x" factor that leaves the physical self at death. Sebastian forces a politeness, since he wants to approach him about his dilemma. Following the minor distraction of a "big-blue bottle fly" that Rontini sweeps out of thin air and returns to the outdoors, Rontini knowingly turns to Sebastian and asks what is on his mind. Rontini agrees to help Sebastian after hearing the story about the Degas drawing and the threat to the little girl who is perceived as the primary suspect. Rontini arranges to have Weyl return the Degas, which settles the intrigue within the English household, but the real help comes in the form of a lesson on the genealogy of morals. It is a lesson that falls on deaf ears. In times like these, Rontini advises, it is good to imagine the genealogy of ones actions, that is, to reflect on the ripple effect that they will have over the generations and to contemplate the circumstances of their origin. Sebastian ought to picture a family tree on which his offense lies in relation to its descendants and branching collateral offspring. From such a moral vantage point one can easily realize that there is nothing one does that is not significant and that there is no unadulterated private action. As an introspective type that always imagines that he is about to do the right thing, this message is not well received. When Rontini leaves to mediate the return of the Degas, Sebastian tries to follow Rontini's advice, but his interior dialogue only discovers disdain for his father's socialistic principles and fellow-travelers that put him in a position to lie and scheme in the first place. What Sebastian could have recognized as a passable universal standard for moral reflection provokes a bout of derision for everyone connected to his dream of proper evening attire, including the young women he plans to conquer. He

reduces them to “excuses for sensual daydreamings.” (205) While Sebastian overlooks the moral potency of Bruno Rontini’s genealogy of morals, he does not ignore how they can be aesthetically absorbed into his next poetic creation. His musings light on the compatibility between patterns at atomistic and cellular levels and the chaos and disorganization that is observable at the level of human interactions. There is a Pythagorean structure to the disintegration that is all around, a logic that he sums up in the formula; “The square on lust is equal to, so to speak, to the sum of the squares on vanity and idleness.” (206)

Catching Sebastian in his poetic reverie when he returns from his successful mission, Rontini dispenses advice tailored to the writer, a role that Sebastian will eventually fulfill only after the loss of a limb helps him see that he is not identical to the body that had previously been pitted against his will. In light of his ambition to become a writer, Bruno offers yet another lesson. No matter how all the great writers, including Chaucer, Dante, and Shelley labored at communicating their knowledge of reality; their efforts only undermined any ultimate grasp of reality. They were all too busy writing to take their own advice. All of Dante’s furor and obsession with the contemporary politics that dragged him down made it impossible to meet his own moral standard of making his will commensurate with the will of God. He sacrificed his own peace that he could write about it for others. Rontini prescribes the very same advice that Huxley dispensed in his *Harper’s Magazine* article on William Sheldon’s classificatory system: The knowledge you have is in direct proportion to who you are and this is determined by the dynamic of inheritance (evidenced in body type), the effects of environment, and what you choose to do with the first two aspects of this dynamic. Huxley complements his advice with wit from Thurber cartoons but there is no humor in Rontini’s advice that knowledge of reality that is not accompanied by action dislodges metaphysical insight from its moral foundations. (211) The Epilogue in *Time Must Have a Stop* is reserved for a more in-depth discussion of the systematic unity of a metaphysics, an epistemology and an ethics.

This tripartite structure is the conceptual ambition of Huxley in this work; the reader hears it in the form of random notes jotted down by Sebastian who by then has emerged as a bona fide playwright whose every encounter is the occasion for character creation.

Before Sebastian is called home to work on a political campaign with his father, Rontini is rounded up on suspicion that he has been commiserating with anti-fascists and Eustace is still torn between the two things that for him have maintained their constancy: the ubiquity of the blue-shining stillness (222) and dark sensations of flesh and blood that presented an alternative salvation. For the first time Eustace is able to “remember” events that have not yet taken place, future events in which the Weyls, now desperate and on the run through a war torn district, are seen with a carriage full of old canvases and remnants from an antique shop. A skinny child at their side, Mme. Weyl contemplates suicide and Gabriel Weyl pushes on with planes overhead, gunfire in the distance and a rumbling convoy at their backs. In the next moments Mme. Weyl’s high heels catch a cobblestone and she is tossed to the ground as the convoy rolls over her struggling body. In the lattice of relationships through which Eustace has been traveling a new stage has been reached. Eustace now has a seat onto the future, thus achieving a final, full temporal participation beyond the normal succession of time that is accompanied by fixed places. Moreover, he is enveloped in a knowledge in which the self is no longer separate. The awareness of the spindly little boy, crying as his father scrambles to collect the scattered goods from the tram, becomes a direct identifying consciousness in which Eustace becomes one with the child’s experience of agony and fear. As this experience trails off we leave Eustace stretched between the polarities of pungent cigar smoke and the shining of the silence.

The final episode of Eustace's *Bardo* experience is an opportunity for Huxley to introduce the war in which Sebastian lost his right hand. In the Epilogue Sebastian has moved beyond the poetic trifles that occupied his mind at critical psychological moments when all he could think about was acquiring the right evening attire. The loss of his hand has only enhanced his aesthetic acumen, and Sebastian has also discovered that the loss has liberated him from the distraction of the physical self. His new found introspection has now tamed the alien body which used to invariably undermine his resolve. As he dwells on the ways in which his relatives can be absorbed into his work, he finds them all to be rich moralistic characters that could benefit any playwright. They are all what he could never be: trustworthy, upright and unselfish, but their bourgeois goodness is rudderless without the knowledge of the end and purpose of existence. (234) Sebastian does not mock his relatives, it is just now that he has benefited from the tutelage of Rontini and the loss of his hand in the desert campaign, he has learned to appreciate the redemption that comes with the authentic sacrifice of self-will, which is the only propaedeutic to the knowledge of God. Sebastian now speaks to us as a spiritual aspirant who has made his own study of the perennial philosophy. His random notes are all about him on the floor, and now he begins to diligently survey them.

Some of Sebastian's first notes recall the phase of Eustace's *Bardo* experience in which the Triumphs of Religion, Science, and Education were denounced as arms of crusading nationalism and a corrosive capitalism. This time Sebastian is not troubled by the fact that so many choose not to waive the right to disillusionment; "Three cheers for Technological Progress and a College Education for Everybody." (235) He bemoans the fact, however, that children are not taught that there is a downside to so-called

technological progress, while there is some attention given to the dangers of political ambitions. Huxley cites Xerxes as a good example of someone who, in bridging the Hellespont to accommodate his invading forces, invites his Nemesis through a combination of imperialism and an arrogant rejection of the natural order.

The advice that follows introduces Huxley's effort at an attenuated metaphysics, one that will eventually entail an ethics and an epistemology. This variety of metaphysics is distinguished from contemporary linguistic approaches that fill in intellectual gaps with *le mot juste* or a contrived term. The older brand of metaphysics associated with the Hindu philosopher Sankara follows a train of thought that culminates in transformation and an intuitive association with the object of knowledge. Discursive speech is the preeminent tool of the modern metaphysician, but it is also the source of the philosopher's own entanglement. Poetry, however, is much more in tune with the life of the spirit than academic philosophy can ever be. Constructed on the basis of figurative links with the world, it is better suited to life in the present. Adapting to a life exclusively lived in the present requires the annihilation of memory. While mortification of the flesh might tame the baser instincts, the mortification of memory enables a life detached from the past and not concerned with anticipation. The end result is the taming of the will, a necessary step in the direction of union with God. Here, Huxley introduces a twist on the orthodox interpretation of mortification (of the flesh) as well as an alternative to discursive thinking. The strong claim for the philosophical potency of poetry in laying the groundwork for the systematic thought that is randomly disbursed throughout Shakespeare's corpus and the call for mortification is touted as a "bridge-idea" that can link the "island universes of discourse" (237). So that we can understand this special

application of mortification, Huxley spells it out in rather profane terms. Alluding to a cultural division that C.P. Snow would later popularize in his seminal work, *The Two Cultures*, Huxley provides a formula for overcoming the gaps separating art, science, religion and ethics. Mortification is the bridge: “mortification of prejudice, cocksureness and even common sense,” which will clear the way for objectivity in science; “mortification of the desire to own or exploit,” so that beauty can be contemplated and created; “mortification of the passions,” as Kant called for in his rational ideal for morality; and finally a “mortification of the self” to the end of liberation and union with God. (237-38) Sebastian occupies himself with these profound thoughts as he recalls committing adultery with a friend’s wife, right before his own wife died of blood poisoning after a miscarriage. No amount of writing about the knowledge of the divine Ground, Rontini, always advised, will bring one closer to unitive knowledge; displays of talent and self-expression, at best, can be only for the edification of one’s neighbors. Sebastian is searching for redemption, but through all the self-reproach and remorse his banal self remains intact. Sebastian fantasizes that a heroic gesture will expiate his guilt, but the sickly Rontini confronts him with the knowledge that he is no Joan of Arc; any attempt at heroism would be pathetic and would generate sympathy from women whose affections he would not resist. There is only one sacrifice that will do, the sacrifice of self-will. That is not the same as acting the part of another, according to Rontini; the secret is to simultaneously find the inner not-self in God and to maintain the outer self for the world.

Sebastian’s random notes then return to the methodological gap between the orderly and logical ways of science and the less discursive approach to religious reality

that was later implied in C.P. Snow's essay. Natural science can boast research that systematically follows a train of logical inferences with good prospects for an explanatory framework and some sort of technological expression. On the other hand, the sentimental humanists eschew hypothesis in favor of inspiration from Wordsworth. The historical religions fare no better, since they are blinded by dogma and push their inspired saints to the sideline. For those who are not lured by either organized religion, the working hypothesis of the perennial philosophy presents an alternative. In outline form, Sebastian sets forth the tenets of the worldview that Huxley methodically explored in his most extensive philosophical work, *The Perennial Philosophy*. Primarily through Rontini's insights and through the dramatic *Bardo* explorations of Uncle Eustace, Huxley had already scattered ideas that comprise the perennial philosophy. While it might be expected that the discussion of the reality of the unmanifest ground of all manifestations and the spiritual goal of unitive knowledge would be framed in terms of Eastern philosophy, Huxley will find the essence of the perennial philosophy closer to home in the works of Shakespeare. The Tao may represent the humility and compassion required to see beyond the discrete ego; Dharma may be an expression for the kind of mortification needed for self-transcendence, but it will be a dialogue between Henry and Hotspur at the end of *Henry IV, Part I* that encapsulates the unity of (a redemptive) epistemology, ethic and metaphysic.

There is an internecine battle at the center of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, but it is the inimitable and larger than life Falstaff who has been ensconced in our cultural memory. Since Harold Bloom's deification of Shakespeare in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human Mind* (1998) not only are we to regard Shakespeare as the creator of the modern

psyche, but Falstaff and Hamlet alike are touted as intellectual powers that circumscribe the breadth of human awareness. Hamlet does it with the superior quality of his interior dialogue and Falstaff with the masterly use of wit and irony to negotiate the perils of political life. Aldous Huxley's apotheosis of Shakespeare predates Bloom's by some forty years. When Sebastian Barnack is searching to make sense of the hypothesis of the perennial philosophy, he refers to his personal commentary on Hotspur's final speech. Everything has been said in Shakespeare. However, linguistically encompassing being in this manner is as good as saying nothing. There is no clear and precise philosophy to garner from Shakespeare, but as "a system of beauty-truths" there is implied a metaphysic that can be pressed from the spaces that join memorable lines like "told by an idiot, signifying nothing." (248) Shakespeare's plays, Huxley announces through Sebastian, are equal to Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. This is surely a judgment that rivals the sum of the praise heaped on Shakespeare by Bloom. Ironically, *Henry IV, Part I*, is Harold Bloom's favorite, and Falstaff his favorite character. What draws Sebastian to *Henry IV, Part I*, are Hotspur's dying words that for him "summarizes an epistemology, an ethic and a metaphysic." (248)

But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's fool,
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop.⁵

Harry and Hotspur have their final encounter on the fields in Shrewsbury. Harry not only needs to protect his father's threatened power, he also needs to win his affections. With an anachronistic allusion to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, the king has made it clear that Hotspur's impetuosity and aggressive demeanor are more suited to political rule. Harry settles this dispute with a parry and a thrust and Falstaff, who has

momentarily fallen, rises to take credit for Hotspur's demise with a thrust to the thigh. Typically, Shakespeare's slain characters live long enough to deliver poignant parting words. The final conversation between Hotspur and Henry sums up the problems of egoism and self-centeredness that have erratically rattled Sebastian Barnack's consciousness. At the moment of his death Hotspur musters the eloquence to decry his political reversal; he is not as perturbed by the immediacy of his mortal wounds. From the vantage point of one who is about to give up his mortal coil, Hotspur summons his remaining breath to prophesy Henry's future as food for worms. Henry completes Hotspur's final sentence, offers his final respects and notes that absent the spirit that drove his ill-intentioned political ambitions, a few paces of the earth beneath his feet are sufficient to contain him. While he was alive the expanse of a kingdom could not hold him.

Huxley's exegesis of Shakespeare's philosophical insight extends beyond the rivalry between Hotspur and Henry. Hotspur's attachment to the titles he is about to relinquish at the moment of his death is Shakespeare's way of demonstrating how the mind is ruled by forces beyond our control. Huxley recognizes the preoccupation with thought's enslavement to life as the source of much philosophical speculation. In his time, the various schools, pragmatism, behaviorism, Marxism and we must add evolutionism, all produced a variation on how the mind is but an intellectual tool designed to produce other tools. Whatever elements are at play have been thrust upon us by unconscious forces: dialectical materialism, love and hate, natural selection, the *élan vital*, and the list can go on. The various methodological ways in which the world is fragmented suggest that the world is nothing-but (as demarcated by whichever vantage

point), but the claims to general validity that they all make suggest that the mind is something else besides.

Huxley presses a practical message from the second clause, life's time's fool. Time can disrupt any amount of conscientious planning; after all, between time a and time b so many unexpected variables can intervene to make it clear that there can never be a window onto the future. Nonetheless, western thought, since the Enlightenment, has been in awe of the idea of progress and the promise of a better future. There isn't a major political campaign without echoes of this sentiment, usually in the form of not wanting to deliver unstable economic conditions to our children and our grandchildren. At the altar of Faith in the Future, humans are willing to sacrifice the only real moment available for living, the Present. All of the ideological projections devised by Marxism, Fascism, Capitalism and Catholicism, as listed by Huxley, amount to idolatrous pseudo-religions which either look to a Utopian future or the restoration of the Garden of Eden.

The final clause to Hotspur's packed words embodies an ethical imperative for Huxley. The term *must* is not the real indication of the statement's moral import, its greater ethical significance is conveyed by the indicative sense that time, in fact, has a stop. We know that Hotspur faced the stark reality of time having a stop. As long as we ignore the fact of eternity, wherein the present alone toucheth thee, we will remain ignorant of that which we should be most assured.⁶ Importing wisdom from yet another Shakespeare play, Huxley provides an additional way to avoid turning our lives into "pointless and diabolic foolery." (251) What Huxley is really alarmed about is the sacrifice of the future on advice from delusional ideologues who promise world superiority and everlasting security. Persisting in the ignorance of what we should be

most assured is most obvious when it comes to our management of natural resources, according to Huxley. Even the knowledge that we produce environmental degradation through ill-conceived farming and forestry management does not deter the greed which sacrifices the future. By the same token, the present is eclipsed when we depend on foresight that is perpetually undermined by the vagaries of life. This temporal imbalance is conceived as a mental disequilibrium with which the gods have struck humanity. Huxley concludes with a quote that may have been directly taken from Longfellow, but the famous line has a pedigree that goes back to Euripides: “Those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.”(252)

In the name of the many variations on Christianity, marauding Europeans have invested a great deal of energy in conquering, exploiting, and oppressing “the colored peoples inhabiting the rest of the world. A shared religious worldview, or perhaps the eradication of all theologies, is the pre-requisite for peace, but in the meanwhile oppressors need to be cognizant of the fact that the oppressed have long memories. Sebastian, on a small scale, represents the folly of marauding Christianity. His constant worry about what he will say if his schemes are uncovered in the future detaches him from the present. Similarly, his preoccupation with an upcoming social event for which he’ll need the proper attire, among other things, kept him from looking after Eustace, who has pledged a solution to his obsession, in his moment of crisis.

The Epilogue concludes with a debriefing between Sebastian and his father, who has spontaneously dropped in after a rather unsatisfying tour of Canada and the United States. John Barnack has maintained the same arduous schedule since his youth, but now at sixty-five he is worn out and ill-prepared to face old age and his own death. He has

devoted himself to public service and he has led a rather abstemious life, but his spiritual cultivation is no more advanced than someone who had devoted their life to sex and gambling. The elder Barnack is the embodiment of an idolater of the future, but after the war a look into the future revealed only new political hegemonies, Malthusian nightmares, an industrialized China, and in India an economic atmosphere ripe for “sweated factory labor.” (259) The flood of cheap manufactured goods onto western markets, Sebastian speculates, will set the stage for “the impending war of color.” (259) John Barnack’s ameliorative vision of the future neglected the fact the empire would some day back up on itself.

Sebastian and his father are finally communicating with one another, though it may be too late for John Barnack to get to know his son or any other individual for that matter. Over the years John Barnack’s ideological attachment to a better future had subsumed people under political and economic categories; individual identity had been absorbed by social causes. All of his ideals and good intentions left him completely unaware of how real people were affected by the conditions he labored to eliminate. This is why John Barnack is mystified by Sebastian’s affection for Bruno Rontini, who taught Sebastian to be attentive to the nature of things. Even though Sebastian knew his father had a mild antipathy toward Bruno Rontini, he persisted in trying to explain what he found so moving in the man who so intuitively talked of the Gaseous Vertebrate. The slight figure Rontini cut concealed “something incommensurably other than himself.” (262) Rontini concealed a transcendent beauty and peace, and above all he was convinced that everything made sense. He did not communicate this knowledge with words but through his very being. Rontini did not have to ask if life made sense, John Barnack

finally understood, he only had to be about his work and his metabolism would take care of the problem of evil. In the same way animals, whose being is identical with their bodies, have no need for a philosophical worldview because they are attuned to a cosmic order. Most humans, and he had always placed his father in this category, were too attached to money, politics, drink and the like that they were chronically out of touch with the macrocosm. They could never be sufficiently still or dwell on a thought long enough to have anything make sense.

There is only one reference to Shakespeare in Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* and the citation reflects the circumstances of John Barnack after a life of pursuing noble social causes. The reference from *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc I is taken from a dialogue between an estranged father and son, Gloucester and Edgar, who for his own protection has been disguised as a beggar.⁷ Expressing remorse for the ill treatment of his son Gloucester ironically rewards him with money that should have been his. Gloucester admits to ignoring the laws of Heaven (Nature or God) as he diagnoses the conditions which led to the problem. Like John Barnack, he qualifies as a lust-dieted man that slaves Heavens' ordinance. Like Lear who becomes enraged at the only honest response he received from his daughters, they have subordinated their understanding of Nature to their own cravings. Through the maze of their desires they were unable to see into the Nature of things; Lear was certainly out of touch with the present when the vision of his noble retirement was torn asunder by Cordelia's honesty.

John Barnack may just as well have devoted his life to licentiousness. Pursuing the vanity of a Don Juan who moves from one conquest to another, there has never been sufficient time to know anyone, let alone feel the suffering that his ideals wished to

vanquish. He may just as well have spent his life listening to the news, as he is doing at the end of *Time Must Have a Stop*. Or, in the alternative, as Sebastian recommends, one can listen to something else. Sebastian sees that his father now understands the true worth of a Bruno Rontini; he affectionately reaches for his father and without having to determine if it makes sense, he leads him to bed.

¹ Huxley, Aldous, *Time Must Have a Stop*, Preface, Douglas Dutton, p. viii,

² This is apparently a term adopted from Ernst Haeckel, the German zoologist who used it to refer to God. Haeckel was one of the most oft quoted thinkers during Huxley's early intellectual maturation. Haeckel was also the first to use the term ecology in 1873; he also introduced the expression ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.

³ Chapter VIII, Religion and Temperament.

⁴ *Harper's*, p. 522, vol,189,1944..

⁵ **Hotspur:** O, Harry, thou hast robb'd me of my youth!

I better brook the loss of brittle life
Than those proud titles thou hast won of me;
They wound my thoughts worse than sword my flesh:
But thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop. O, I could prophesy,
But that the earthy and cold hand of death
Lies on my tongue: no, Percy, thou art dust
And food for--*Dies*

PRINCE HENRY: For worms, brave Percy: fare thee well, great heart!

Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough: this earth that bears thee dead
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.
If thou wert sensible of courtesy,
I should not make so dear a show of zeal:
But let my favours hide thy mangled face;
And, even in thy behalf, I'll thank myself
For doing these fair rites of tenderness.
Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven!
Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave,
But not remember'd in thy epitaph!

⁶ "Cease being ignorant of what you are most assured, your glassy essence, and you will cease to be an angry ape, playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep" comes from *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Scene II.

⁷ The entire passage is included here. Huxley begins Chapter V with a series of quotes including one from these lines.

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched
Makes thee the happier: heavens, deal so still!
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
That slaves [stands] your ordinance, that will not see
Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly;
So distribution should undo [under] excess,
And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

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