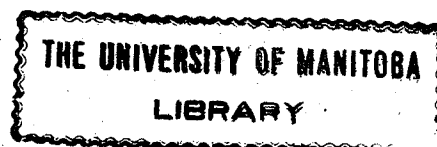


ALDOUS HUXLEY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS THOUGHT

A Thesis

Submitted to

**the Graduate Studies Committee of the
General Faculty Council,
The University of Manitoba**



**In Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

by

Mary E. Cawson

Mary E. Cawson.

April 1943

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MR. HUXLEY'S FIRST PERIOD	1
Introduction	1
General lines of the development of Mr. Huxley's thought	1
Organization of thesis	2
Attitude to ^{wards} loneliness	3
Treatment of stories of lonely lives	3
Characteristics contributing to loneliness	7
Selfishness and cowardice	8
Free-love	10
Unawareness	14
Hypocrisy	15
Attitude towards futility	18
Portrayal of patternless existences	19
Emergence of a moral norm	23
Condemnation of "good times"	23
Passive philosophy	25
All-round development of the individual .	25
Criticism of mal-developed individuals ..	27
Conclusion to first period	32

CHAPTER

PAGE

II. MR. HUXLEY'S SECOND PERIOD

33

Introduction	33
General lines of change in Mr. Huxley's thought	33
Possibility of altering character	33
Love, basis of plan for altering character ...	38
Mr. Huxley's relationship to mysticism	38
Mr. Huxley's attitude towards mystic love of nature	40
Mr. Huxley's attitude towards mystic love of beauty	41
Mr. Huxley's attitude towards anthropomorphic conception of God	41
The answer to the problems of loneliness	46
Love as an ethical force creating non-attach- ment	46
Social conditions and movements as factors in creating non-attachment	57
Education	57
Industrial and mechanical progress	62
War	63
Social reform in general	66
Conclusion	67
The answer to the seeming futility of life	73
Attitude towards orthodox religions	74
Attitude towards substitute religions	81
"Good times"	81
Science	81

CHAPTER II (Cont'd)	PAGE
Worldly success	85
Nationalism	88
Mysticism	89
Mr. Huxley's conception of God	90
Mr. Huxley and the three mystic steps	91
Difficulty of expressing mystic beliefs	95
Usefulness of mystics to their fellow men	98
Conclusion	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	1

CHAPTER I

MR. HUXLEY'S FIRST PERIOD

Introduction

Aldous Huxley's thought advances from a cynical nihilism to a hopeful mysticism. Coming to maturity during the Great War of 1914-1918 Mr. Huxley shared the pessimism of his age. He lacked faith in the individual, in society, and in orthodox Christianity, until the overwhelming impression of the loneliness of individual lives and the futility of life as lived by these individuals impelled him to seek a solution. The solution he has found is, on the ethical side, a faith in the rightness and power of compassion and understanding, and on the spiritual side, a belief in the goodness and effectiveness of a mystical religion.

This advance is logical and consistent. It began with the emergence of a moral norm, limited at first, but nevertheless showing up certain defects in the contemporary scene, such as a philosophy of "good times." The establishment of this norm paved the way for the second stage in the development of Mr. Huxley's thought, a growth which expressed itself as a sort of passive positive philosophy. It was the belief that the best one can do is to develop oneself as fully and harmoniously

as possible. But this belief provided no solution for the ills of futility and loneliness, and he temporarily abandoned it in favour of a positive and even militant philosophy of compassion and understanding. Later the two were united to form the idea of non-attachment, from which, with the addition of a mystical religious element, has emerged the latest phase of his thought.

To facilitate tracing this development a mechanical division of Mr. Huxley's works into two periods will be used in this essay.¹ The first period, beginning with nihilism and developing into a passive philosophy, ends with Do What You Will, 1929. Subsequent works, expressing his active positive philosophy, belong to the second period.

The change both between and within these two periods has been expressed in Mr. Huxley's attitude towards human loneliness and the purposelessness of life. In the first

1. This division is, of course, true only generally speaking. There are instances when it does not hold, as for example: In 1923 he writes as though he believed in mysticism: "... the truth is that the greatest triumphs of art take place in a world that is not wholly of the intellect, but lies somewhere between it and the inenarrable, but to those who have penetrated it, supremely real, world of the mystic." ("Ben Jonson" in his On the Margin (Lond., Chatto & Windus, 1923) p.195.) Also, The Monster of the Masque says: "With love I recreate a world from within." Antic Hay (Lond., Chatto & Windus, 1923) p.230.

In his first period Mr. Huxley's attitude towards loneliness was nihilistic; he seldom criticized, he seldom proposed corrective solutions. On the whole, he accepted it. But this acceptance had an emotional quality, and therein lay the impetus for the positive quality of his later philosophy. In essays, novels, poems, by direct statement, by stories of lonely lives, by the counterpoint method, by continual attention to human feelings which contribute to the separateness of mankind, he forced upon us the fact that he believed "we countess willings live alone."

Attitude to Loneliness

period, generally speaking, his attitude revealed itself in a continual and amoral presentation of this separateness and futility, with overtones of distress. In the second period, still speaking generally, his attitude expressed itself in much direct criticism and many suggestions for reform, so that the feeling of distress has, on the whole, given place to a feeling of hopefulness.

From the impact of direct and indirect statements upon each other -- although each in itself is neutral in tone -- one gets the emotional quality -- a feeling of distress, a feeling that the whole situation was intolerable to the writer.

Only a reading of his early works can prove this latter statement -- for only from them do we get the neutral tone of the individual statements and the cumulative effect of his continual selection of the subject of separateness. However, an examination of the various occasions on which Mr. Huxley affirms this idea, will help to substantiate the opinion that he does not, in general, complain or sympathize, and also that it is a subject which is much on his mind.

3. There are some exceptions to this. There are a few times when Aldous Huxley shows emotion, as for example when Gumbriel says: "... oh, the horrible pain of weeping, vainly, for something that was nothing, that was everything in the world." (Antic Hay, p.85.) Another example is Lypiatt's question: "Do you know what it is ... to love so much, that you begin to long for the anodyne of physical pain to quench the pain in the soul?" (Ibid., p.101.)

4. It should be borne in mind that the following discussion of methods is not one of artistic technique, but since Mr. Huxley so frequently sets forth his ideas in artistic form, it is to these that we must look for a correct interpretation of his thought.