

in the *Sevance Review*,* saying that the old Huxley and the new Huxley were really just the same. Don't, he said, be deceived by the change. The old Huxley in *Point Counter Point* is a bitter and cynical man of destructive brilliance; he loves to pick people apart. But this is the same Huxley appearing now in the guise of a mystic, for in Eastern mysticism the object is to transcend and thus abolish personality and all differentiation. The ideal of dissolving the whole world of multiplicity and of form into a sort of undifferentiated morass is a new way of playing Huxley's old game.

There was, as I also felt, *some* truth in this at the time, but obviously Savage didn't know Huxley very well as a person. What was so striking about the man and his surroundings—the kind of house he lived in and the works of art he collected—was his actual fascination with the material world and his love of the good life. His prickly attitude, his critical-satirical point of view, was not really destructive: it was a defense of his own sensitivity. He was a very sensitive man indeed—too sensitive. Therefore he adopted a slightly aloof and superior attitude. After all, he and I went through the same kind of education—the British “public” school—and thus I understand not only his sexual preoccupations (as they come out in *The Genius and the Goddess*) but also the need for just this kind of “character armor.”

As the years passed—say from 1945 on—Aldous Huxley's philosophy made a definite progression. He became, in effect, a full-fledged Mahayana Buddhist, with the vision of the total union of the spiritual and physical domains. This is the Bodhisattva ideal, not of passing out of the world of form into the formless world of Nirvana, but of realizing the inner unity of Nirvana and the everyday world. He saw this unity not as one who, like a *laissez-faire* do-nothing reactionary, would leave the world as it is, but as one who incarnated the paradox that if you can see that the everyday world, *as it is*, is a divine manifestation, then and then *only* can you love it enough to want to change it in a constructive way. Otherwise people are changing the world not because they love it but because it is personally inconvenient to them.

This philosophy of “spiritual materialism” found its final expression in *Island*, a book with which I find myself in complete harmony, so far as its philosophical content is concerned. Huxley

*Autumn, 1947. Reprinted in B. Rajan, ed., *The Novelist as Thinker*. London: Dobson, 1948.

made it a novel because the novelist was so largely his role and because the book had to be a counterpart to *Brave New World*. But as a writer of *fiction*, Huxley's skill in describing the ideal was not up to his skill in satirizing the real. Yet it must be admitted that for *any* artist the depiction of heaven is the hardest task of all—and thus the task in which he may most easily make a fool of himself. *Island* is a “thinly fictionalized” collection of essays on education, psychology, and metaphysics in which Huxley stuck out his neck as far as it would go. He advocated everything calculated to evoke the ridicule of sensible people—abolition of the sacred American family, free love, Tantric sex practices, drugs for inducing mystical experience, and the fantasy of the island paradise. He made himself a sitting duck for snickers in the literary reviews and scandal in the Sunday supplements.

But Huxley was no fool, and no sentimentalist. It is just in those “sore point” areas where the public defends itself by jeers without argument, that we find the most touchy and important issues of the time. Within twenty years it will be clear to all of us that Aldous Huxley had a genius for raising the right questions.

THE LAST MESSAGE OF ALDOUS HUXLEY

Timothy Leary

NOVEMBER 22, 1963, was for Aldous Huxley the time to go.

In paying tribute (a curious word) to a departed luminary, it is customary to appraise his contribution, to wrap up the meaning and message of the hero and to place it with a flourish in the inactive file.

This ceremonial function is notoriously risky in the case of writers. The literary game has its own stock-exchange quotations in which hard-cover commodities rise and fall to the irrational dictates of scholarly fashion.

To predict the place that Aldous Huxley will have as a literary figure is a gambling venture we shall leave to the professionals who are paid to do it. They might note that he did not win a Nobel prize—a good sign, suggesting that he made the right enemies and was properly unacceptable to the academic politicians. They will note also that he was a visionary—always a troublesome issue to the predictor.

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Since all visionaries say the same thing they are perennial commodities, difficult to sell short, annoyingly capable of turning up fresh and alive a thousand years later.

But Aldous Huxley is not just a literary figure, and for that matter not just a visionary writer. Which adds to the critic's problem. The man just wouldn't stop and pose for the definitive portrait. He just wouldn't slide symmetrically into an academic pigeonhole. What shall we call him? Sage? Wise teacher? Calypso guru? Under what index-heading do we file the smiling prophet? The nuclear age bodhisattva?

Many of the generation of scholars and critics who presently adjudicate literary reputations received their first insights into the snobbish delights of the mind from the early novels of Huxley.

"... I believe that no one under fifty can quite realize how exciting Huxley seemed to us who were schoolboys or undergraduates in the 'twenties... he was a popularizer of what, at the time, were 'advanced' ideas... he was a liberator, who seemed to encourage us in our adolescent revolt against the standards of our parents."¹

This obituary appraisal, a nice example of the "cracked looking glass" school of literary criticism, continues in the same vein:

"I remained under the Huxleyan enchantment well into my twenties. The magic began gradually to fail after *Point Counter Point* (1928); its failure was due partly to my discovery of other contemporary writers (Proust, Joyce, Lawrence), partly to the fact that Huxley himself had by that time lost something of his original sparkle. I felt little sympathy for his successive preoccupations with scientific utopias, pacifism, and Yoga..."

Of all the misunderstandings which divide mankind, the most tragic, obvious, and vicious is the conflict between the young and the old. It is surely not Huxley who lost his sparkle but perhaps the quoted critic, who graduated from "adolescent revolt" (a dubious, ungracious middle-aged phrase) to a static "post-adolescent" fatigue with new ideas. Huxley continued to produce prose which sparkled, to those who could transfer their vision from the mirror to the events which were occurring around them.

I believe that no one over fifty can quite realize how exciting Huxley seems to the generations which followed their own. The

¹"The Wicked Uncle: An Appreciation of Aldous Huxley," by Jocelyn Brooke. *The Listener* (London), Vol. LXX, No. 1811 (Dec. 12, 1963), p. 991.

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early Huxley was the urbane sophisticate who taught naive youngsters that parental notions about sex and society left something to be improved. The early Huxley was an exciting coach in the game of intellectual one-upmanship, wickedly demonstrating how to sharpen the mind so that it could slice experience into categories, how to engage in brilliant witty repartee, how to be a truly sophisticated person.

But, "Then came *Brave New World* (1932), an entirely new departure, and not, I think, a happy one..." Yes indeed. Then comes the grim new world of the 1930's and a new generation who were less concerned with sparkling conversation than with trying to figure out why society was falling apart at the seams. The game of polishing your own mind and developing your own personality (although kept alive in the rituals of psychoanalysis) starts to look like narcissistic chess. Huxley was one of the first men of his times to see the limitations of the obsession with self and never again wrote to delight the intellectual.

But old uncles are supposed to keep their proper place in *my* picture album. They have no right charging off in new directions. Investigating meta-self social ideas and meta-self modes of consciousness. No right to calmly ask the terrible new questions of the mind: is this all? Shakespeare and Joyce and Beethoven and Freud—is there no more? Television and computers—is this all? Uncle Aldous who taught us how to be clever, rational, individualistic, now claims that our sharp minds are creating air-conditioned, test-tube anthills. "... as Mr Cyril Connolly put it, 'science had walked off with art', and a latent streak of vulgarity found expression..." Yes, the specific prophecy is vulgar.

And what is even more tasteless—to be so right. Within fifteen years the ludicrous, bizarre mechanization of new world fantasy had become a reality. The conventional artistic response to automation is the nihilist protest. But again Aldous Huxley refuses to play the literary game, insists on tinkering with evolutionary resolutions. Some of us forgot that Uncle Aldous was also grandson. The extraordinary, dazzling erudition which spun out *bons mots* in the early novels is now sifting through the wisdom of the east.

Huxley's diplomatic journey to the east brings back no final answer but the right questions. He seeks the liberating seed while avoiding the deciduous underbrush of ritual.

The first question: is there more? Need the cortex be limited to the tribal-verbal? Must we use only a fraction of our neurological heritage? Must our minds remain flimsy toys compared to the wisdom within the neural network? How to expand consciousness beyond the learned mind? How to find and teach the liberation from the cultural-self? Where are the educational techniques for exploiting the potentials? Here again Huxley avoids doctrinaire digressions into mood, authority, semantics, ritual. He keeps moving; looking for the key which works.

In 1954 he announces the discovery of the eastern passage. *Doors to Perception. Heaven and Hell.* Psychedelic drugs can provide the illumination, the key to the mind's antipodes, the transcendental experience. You may not want to make the voyage. You may have no interest in transcending your cultural mind. Fine. Don't take LSD. Or you may want illumination but object to the direct, short-cut approach. You prefer the sweat-tears of verbal exercises and rituals. Fine. Don't take LSD. But for those who can accept the "gratuitous grace," there it is.

The age-long problem of how to "get out" has finally been solved. Biochemical mysticism is a demonstrated fact. Next comes the second problem. There is the infused vision of the open cortex, flashing at speeds which far outstrip our verbal machinery. And there is the tribal marketplace which cannot utilize or even allow the accelerated neural energy. How can the gap be bridged?

Aldous Huxley preached no escape from the insanity and semantic madness of the 20th century. His next message was not one of quietism and *arhat* passivity. No one was more concerned, more engaged, more involved in the active attempt to make the best of both worlds.

To make the best of both worlds—this was the phrase we heard him repeat over and over again during the last years. Of course most of his readers and critics didn't know what he was talking about. If you don't realize that it is now a simple matter to reach ecstasy, to get out, to have the vision, to reach the other worlds of your own cortex, then technical discussions of "reentry" problems make little sense to you.

But there it was. The old *Mahayana* question now made real and practical. How to apply the now-available potentialities of the accelerated cortex?

ALDOUS HUXLEY'S LAST MESSAGE to the planet contains the tains the answer to this question in the form of the utopian novel, *Island*.²

This book, published in 1962, is the climax of the 69-year voyage of discovery. It is a great book. It will become a greater book.

Like all great books it is misunderstood in its time because it is so far in front of its time. It's too much to take. Too much. *Island* is a continent, a hemisphere, a galaxy of a book.

At the most superficial level it's a science-fiction tale with heroes and villains in a fantasy land. It's a satire as well—of western civilization and its follies. So far, the book can be dealt with.

But it's much more. It's a utopian tract. Huxley's final statement about how to make the best of both worlds. Of individual freedom and social responsibility. Of East and West. Of left and right cerebral hemispheres. Of action and quietism. Of *Tantra* and *Arhat*. Of verbal and non-verbal. Of work and play. Of mind and meta-mind. Of technique and nature. Of body and spirit. Of religion and the secular.

It's a manual on education. A handbook on psychotherapy and mind control. A solution to the horrors of the bi-parent family, the monstrous father-mother pressure cooker.

Too much, indeed, for one book; but there's more.

Island is a treatise on living, on the living of each moment.

And most important and staggering, the book is a treatise on dying.

The easy intellectual rejection of this wealth of practical, how-to-do-it information is to call it fantasy. Adolescent daydreams about how things could be, in a society imagined and run by gentle, secluded scholars.

But here is the terrible beauty of Huxley's science-fiction-satirical-utopian manual on how to live and how to live with others and how to die and how to die with others: it's all based on facts. *Island* is a popular presentation of empirical facts—anthropological, psychological, psychedelic, sociological. Every method, every social sequence described in *Island* is based on data. Huxley's utopian

²New York: Harper & Row, 1962 (London: Chatto & Windus; Toronto: Clarke, Irwin). Paperback from Bantam Books, N. Y., 1963.

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ideas can work because they have worked. It's all been done—not in a fantasied future but yesterday.

It has been tried and done by Huxley himself, and by his "Palanese" wife Laura Archera Huxley, who presented many of these intensely practical down-to-earth ideas in her book, *You Are Not The Target*.³ It's a mistake to think of him as a detached novelist observing and commenting on the scene. Huxley was a tall, slightly stooped Calypso singer—intensely topical—strolling near-sightedly through the crowds, singing funny stilted verses in an English accent, singing about the events in which he is participating. He didn't just figure it out—he experienced much of it himself.

Huxley's explorations with psychedelic drugs are an example of his engagement. His willingness to get involved. Remember, every person who can read without moving his lips has heard about what the *Saturday Evening Post*⁴ calls "the dangerous magic of LSD." And despite the controversy, almost everyone knows what is involved—the mind-loss and the vision. Everyone has had to come to terms with the new development in his own fashion.

There are as many rational reasons for not taking LSD as there are facets to the human mind—moral, practical, medical, psychiatric, mental. The real reason—however it is expressed—is fear. Fear of losing what we have. Fear of going beyond where we are.

Aldous Huxley had spent years preparing himself for the fearful psychedelic voyage, and he made it without question when it presented itself. Why? Duty? Curiosity? Conviction? Courage? Faith in the process? Trust in his companions—divine or human?

He did it, and the world will never forget it.

But the gamble of the mind was not the last act of faith and courage. Aldous Huxley went on to face death as he had faced the whirling enigma of the life process. He tells us about it with poetic sensitivity and concrete specificity in the fourteenth chapter of *Island*, his book of the living and the dying.

Rounding a screen, he caught a glimpse . . . of a high bed, of a dark emaciated face on the pillow, of arms that were no more than parchment-covered bones, of claw-like hands . . . He looked at the face on the pillow . . . still, still with a serenity that might almost have been the frozen calm of death . . .

"Lakshmi." Susila laid a hand on the old woman's wasted arm.

"Lakshmi," she said again more loudly. The death-calm face remained impassive. "You mustn't go to sleep."

. . . "Lakshmi!"

The face came to life.

"I wasn't really asleep," the old woman whispered. "It's just my being so weak. I seem to float away."

"But you've got to be here," said Susila. "You've got to know you're here. All the time." She slipped an additional pillow under the sick woman's shoulders and reached for a bottle of smelling salts that stood on the bed table. . . . Then after another pause, "Oh, how wonderful," she whispered at last, "how wonderful!" Suddenly she winced and bit her lip.

Susila took the old woman's hand in both of hers. "Is the pain bad?" she asked.

"It would be bad," Lakshmi explained, "if it were really my pain. But somehow it isn't. The pain's here; but I'm somewhere else. It's like what you discover with the *moksha*-medicine. Nothing really belongs to you. Not even your pain."

. . . "And now," Susila was saying, "think of that view from the Shiva temple. Think of those lights and shadows on the sea, those blue spaces between the clouds. Think of them, and then let go of your thinking. Let go of it, so that the not-Thought can come through. Things into Emptiness, Emptiness into Suchness. Suchness into things again, into your own mind. Remember what it says in the Sutra. 'Your own consciousness shining, void, inseparable from the great Body of Radiance, is subject neither to birth or death, but is the same as the immutable Light, Buddha Amitabha.'"

"The same as the light," Lakshmi repeated. "And yet it's all dark again."

"It's dark because you're trying too hard," said Susila. "Dark because you want it to be light. Remember what you used to tell me when I was a little girl. 'Lightly, child, lightly. You've got to learn to do everything lightly. Think lightly, act lightly, feel lightly. Yes, feel lightly, even though you're feeling deeply' . . . Lightly, lightly—it was the best advice ever given me. Well, now I'm going to say the same thing to you, Lakshmi . . . Lightly, my darling, lightly. Even when it comes to dying. Nothing ponderous, or portentous, or emphatic. No rhetoric, no tremolos, no self-conscious persona putting on its celebrated imitation of Christ or Goethe or Little Nell. And, of course, no theology, no metaphysics. Just the fact of dying and the fact of the Clear Light. So throw away all your baggage and go forward. There are quicksands all about you, sucking at your feet, trying to suck you down into fear and self-pity and despair. That's why you must walk so lightly. Lightly, my darling . . . Completely unencumbered."

³N.Y.: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1963. (Foreword by Aldous Huxley.)

⁴November 2, 1963.

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. . . He looked again at the fleshless face on the pillow and saw that it was smiling.

"The Light," came the hoarse whisper, "the Clear Light. It's here—along with the pain, in spite of the pain."

"And where are *you*?" Susila asked.

"Over there, in the corner." Lakshmi tried to point, but the raised hand faltered and fell back, inert, on the coverlet. "I can see myself there. And she can see my body on the bed."

"Can she see the Light?"

"No. The Light's here, where my body is." . . .

"She's drifted away again," said Susila. "Try to bring her back."

Dr. Robert slipped an arm under the emaciated body and lifted it into a sitting posture. The head drooped sideways onto his shoulder.

"My little love," he kept whispering. "My little love . . ."

Her eyelids fluttered open for a moment. "Brighter," came the barely audible whisper, "brighter." And a smile of happiness intense almost to the point of elation transfigured her face.

Through his tears Dr. Robert smiled back at her. "So now you can let go, my darling." He stroked her gray hair. "Now you can let go. Let go," he insisted. "Let go of this poor old body. You don't need it any more. Let it fall away from you. Leave it lying here like a pile of worn-out clothes."

In the fleshless face the mouth had fallen cavernously open, and suddenly the breathing became stertorous.

"My love, my little love . . ." Dr. Robert held her more closely. "Let go now, let go. Leave it here, your old worn-out body, and go on. Go on, my darling, go on into the Light, into the peace, into the living peace of the Clear Light . . ."

Susila picked up one of the limp hands and kissed it, then turned . . .

"Time to go," she whispered . . .

Notes on the Present Status of Ololiuhqui and the Other Hallucinogens of Mexico *

R. GORDON WASSON

Picietl, peyotl, teonanacatl, and ololiuhqui—these were the four great divinatory plants of Mexico at the time of the Conquest. We give the names in Nahuatl, the *lingua franca* of that time, spoken as a mother tongue by the Aztecs and many other peoples. By 'divinatory' we mean plants that served in Middle American cultures as keys to knowledge withheld from men in their normal minds, the keys to Extra-sensory Perception, the Mediators (as the Indians believed) between men and their gods. These plants were hallucinogens, psychotropic agents, psychotomimetics, if we must use the nonce words of contemporary science.

Among the remote monolingual peoples of Mexico these plants continue to this day playing their divine role. Whenever the Indian family is troubled by a grave problem, it is likely to turn to one or the other of these plants and consult it according to the usage prevailing in the region. There were other drugs, certainly, that belong to the same class, and of these more will be said later. But if we may rely on the number and quality of the witnesses, the importance that they attribute to these plants, and the strangely moving episodes that they tell us of the Indians' utter faith in and defense of them—then these four were preëminent.

The civilization of Europe had known nothing like these novel drugs of Mexico, at least not in recorded history. Similar miraculous

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