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**SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT:  
ENGLISH NOVELISTS AND THEIR INTEREST IN EASTERN PHILOSOPHY**  
BACHELOR THESIS

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl v ní veškeré použité podklady i literaturu.

V Olomouci, dne.....

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As Larry in *The Razor's Edge* says: "I couldn't go back now, I'm on the threshold. I see vast lands of the spirit stretching out before me, beckoning, and I'm eager to travel them."<sup>1</sup> hoping that it will help him answer his questions, Helen a little later replies: "People have been asking those questions for thousands of years. If they could be answered, surely they'd have been answered by now."<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, people have been trying to see behind the curtain and get a grasp of the purpose of existence as such from the time immemorial since all of the first civilizations, of which there are extant remnants of, corroborate their highly visionary character, worshipping God in one way or the other.

As for the subject matter of this thesis, an analysis comparing the literary works of the British authors Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood is presented. The chosen works are *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *A Meeting by the River*, respectively. Much connected with author's own personal live experiences and motives for writing about the particular subjects, the analysis is categorized into the following themes.

The first theme, probably most precisely depicting the protagonists' fate, is pilgrimage, which the concept of The Tao alludes to (a term from Chinese, literally meaning "way" and representing the harmony of the cosmic intelligence). Similarly, the majority of religions points to this principle of conscious actions.

The second analysed theme is characterized by the motives of one's detached complacency intertwined with asceticism and, in Anthony's case in *Eyeless in Gaza*, political pacifism.

The third one aims at the origin of the main characters as they all come from erudite intellectual circles and move through different societal classes, which are in some cases far from the upper and even from the middle class. In concert with their pilgrimage, they go through variety of foreign cultures and, due to the previously mentioned theme of the personal detachment, they experience themselves as transcultural beings.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* (London, Penguin Books, 1963), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 72.

The last theme deals with the Jungian psychological principles, in particular terms with the ego and the Self. I believe that these are ones of the pivotal terms for conceptualising psychological, religious, mystic and even political ideas. The psychological term, self-actualisation, which is according to Abraham Maslow, the renowned psychologist, “the full realization of one’s potential and one’s true self”,<sup>3</sup> and the term of Eastern philosophy, self-realization, play an important part in defining the aspirations of our protagonists.

In any case, there is dead certainty possessed by all of the protagonists, though fluctuating on the Oliver’s journey in *A Meeting by the River* from time to time and therefore representing a more realistic portrayal of the character. On the contrary, Larry in *The Razor’s Edge* is idealistically detached and Anthony from *Eyeless in Gaza* remains rather contemplative and is more concentrated on his struggle in the present moment as the whole book is written in a slightly experimental style and designed to follow Anthony’s contemplation.

Their assuredness is like a source of an emanating light that lies in mysticism and selfless thinking, which they strive for all their lives, helping them to get closer to the answers to the “eternal” philosophical questions. However, it might not be the rational understanding that would be the purpose of such a path but the fulfilment and self-actualization they are left with. In other words, the common subject matter, that can be found through an analysis of the plots, is the pervasive rumination about these questions, the satiation of the needs through knowledge and travelling, and the pursue of enlightenment. After all, they are a mere catalyst for self-actualization.

As some proverbs have it, enlightenment is attained when nothing is pursued, not even enlightenment as such, which was also noted by many scholars of Enlightenment, for example by Denis Diderot during the Age of Enlightenment as documented by Richard King in *Orientalism and Religion*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, any endeavour of the seekers, in particular of our three protagonists, serves as a lesson, which needs to be taken in order to prevent mistakes leading to suffering.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Gleitman; Alan J. Fridlung and Daniel Reisberg, *Psychology* (New York: Norton & Company, 2004), 487.

<sup>4</sup> Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1999), 118.

As far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, the main part in the fourth chapter is preceded by the chapters about the dissemination of the Eastern philosophy and biographies of the authors. This lays the foundations for the overall analysis by means of providing some information about the development of the Eastern philosophy in the Western culture and making connections between the authors and the analysed motifs of the works.



## 2. DISSEMINATION OF THE EASTERN PHILOSOPHY IN THE WESTERN CULTURE

This chapter is focused mainly on Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta school and Vedas for a variety of reasons. The major one is the fact that Hinduism, which some other religions arise from as well, is the religion with the biggest number of adherents when considering eastern religions. Another reason is the orientation of this thesis on the influence in the UK, which is rooted in the colonial period of British India and Vedanta society. Thus the influence of British writers interested in this topic emerged from the travels Indian gurus spreading their teachings in the west.

The very term Hinduism is an anachronism, and is not referred to in any of the sacred scriptures. James Lochtefeld in the *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism* states that “it was used to describe all sorts of beliefs and practices, from simple nature worship to the most highly sophisticated ritual and philosophical systems.”<sup>5</sup> For the sake of convenience, I will continue to use the term as it accords with the studies in the West.

The same applies with my usage of the term religion, which is not meant in the context of an institution but as the actual philosophical doctrines, traditions and, above all, dharma. Dharma is of the greatest significance to Hindu culture as it means the proper path which, when taken, supports and upholds one life and thus moves one closer to the ultimate purpose to keep one’s life integrated and balanced.<sup>6</sup> Dharma corresponds with the term Tao.

### 2.1. Early Research

Since ancient times, cultures have been merging with each other whenever a contact between them happened to be. One of the first recorded studies of India dates back to Megasthenes, a Greek historian and the author of the book *Indica* in the Hellenistic period. *Indica* was focused on many branches as the land’s history, geography, societal

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<sup>5</sup> James Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2002), introduction, vii.

<sup>6</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 189.

classification and economy. The book has not survived and its content is accessible only through secondhand paraphrases in later texts.<sup>7</sup>

Another example, although almost one millennium and half later, is Al-Biruni, a Persian scholar who devoted himself to plenty of scientific disciplines and Comparative Religion in the Islamic Golden Age. He made an expedition to the Indian subcontinent, whereupon the study *Tārīkh al-Hind* (literally meaning the history of India) followed. The study was based on his observations about Indian religion, anthropology and politics.<sup>8</sup>

## **2.2. Hindu Revivalism of the Modern Times**

The issue which should be considered is the fact that the introduction to the Hindu revivalism of both western and eastern influencers mentioned in the next chapters is not comprehensive since there is not space for a thorough elaboration. Only a concise overview with a few important names is introduced.

As the previous subchapter was directed to the first traces of Vedanta research, the next two subchapters give one some insight into the modern academic ground made on the one hand by the western orientalist and on the other by eastern intellectuals. The chapters are separated due to the rather theoretical orientation of the Western academia and the practical orientation of the Eastern spiritual leaders, as the majority of the most dominant mediators of the teachings were Hindu gurus, yogis, monks, saints and other individuals devoted to spiritual practices and philosophy.

As a result, many religious organizations arose. In spite of the separation for the purposes of layout, there is undoubtedly a huge overlap between the academic and religious domains as they were incessantly in contact.

### **2.2.1. Western Scholars**

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<sup>7</sup> Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2008), 323.

<sup>8</sup> Himanshu Prabha Ray, *Negotiating Cultural Identity: Landscapes in Early Medieval South Asian History* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 52.

The merging process was set in motion the most noticeably at the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century in the context of Company rule in India (1757-1858) and British Raj (1858-1947), which was seen by many as an opportunity for a thorough research of the Indian culture with its philosophical doctrines. During the colonial period, the British changed the Indian structure a lot but so did it happen the other way around.

This time significantly contributed to globalization and also gave rise to new academic disciplines as the fields such as Asian studies or Indology itself because, from the modern academic point of view, they were unorganized and not well-researched.

Probably the most famous scripture of the Hindu world is *Bhagavad Gita*, of which the first English translation appeared in 1785 by Charles Wilkins and since then, in the context of the Hindu Renaissance, it has been seen as the “Hindu New Testament”.<sup>9</sup> As the Vedas and especially its later part, the Upanishads, are considered as central teachings of Hinduism, it was not publicly known to a Western reader until the years 1801-1802 when A. H. Anquetil, a French Indologist, published *Oupnek’hat*—the Latin translation of Dara-Shukoh’s, which was the Persian translation of parts of the Sanskrit *Upanishads*. Up to this time, it had been the first translation to a European language, of which influence reached many western Orientalists.

Apart from the religious teachings it provided and the proof that Upanishads played the central role of Hinduism, it also showed how the first recorded teachings of Christianity were already present in the manuscripts of Vedas. This was accompanied by an Indo-European link proposed by William Jones in his research of comparative linguistics, of which original source most often appeared to be in the East.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, all these findings broadened the foundations of perennialism, the set of concepts referring to the same fundamental truth.

Among other pioneers of Vedic studies of this time was Max Müller, who was appointed to a professorship of comparative philology, comparative religion and Sanskrit at Oxford University. He translated some parts of Upanishads, which he considered to be the most important, and was in charge of the translation of an enormous 50-volume work, *Sacred Books of the East*, where the sacred texts of various religious branches of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism and Islam are collected, as stated by King.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 124.

<sup>10</sup> King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 120.

<sup>11</sup> John B. Hare, *Internet Sacred Text Archive*, 2010, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/sbe/>.

Immanuel Kant and Schopenhauer's disciple Paul Deussen played a part in the formation of the academic sphere too. Together with the previously mentioned scholars, they all contributed to the rudiments of today's Indology.

### **2.2.2. Indian Scholars**

As the time goes on, the form changes. Here, form is meant to be any means of expression—as for example language. With the revivalism of Hinduism, new forms of interpretations have come into existence and the accumulating mass of scholars with their eagerness to further exploration forges ahead.

Therefore, the ancient interpretations are distinguished from the ones that have started to develop more recently, namely in the nineteenth century. The later ones are classified as Neo-Vedanta. The mixture between the ancient and the new form of Vedanta was augmented as the Indian scholars studied the religious scriptures in English. As pointed out by Gavin Flood in *An Introduction to Hinduism*, even Gandhi could not have been untouched by the English translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, whom he studied.<sup>12</sup>

One of the leading figure here was Swami Vivekananda, a patriotic Hindu saint, whose motives for the support of the Hindu revival were partly rooted in the supremacy of British Raj and its counter-current Indian nationalism within the Indian Independence Movement pursuing to end the rule under Great Britain.<sup>13</sup>

During Vivekananda's travels around the United States and Europe, he met two already mentioned leading Indologists in Oxford and Kiel—Max Müller and Paul Deussen, respectively.<sup>14</sup> He founded the Vedanta society in New York in 1895, which at the same time became the first missionary organization of Vedanta in America.<sup>15</sup> His traces are also visible in the religious organization called Ramakrishna Mission, which he founded a year after his travels in 1897. The organization is focused on educational and philanthropic support and is involved in the administration of hospitals,

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<sup>12</sup> Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 258.

<sup>13</sup> Christian D. von Dehsen, *Philosophers and Religious Leaders* (Phoenix: The Oryx Press, 1999), 191.

<sup>14</sup> Romain Rolland, *The life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Calcutta: Swami Vireswabananda, 1931), 111, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 745.

dispensaries, schools, colleges, orphanages and religious and cultural centres in the Indian states.<sup>16</sup>

The endeavour related to the mentioned organizations grew on and triggered further expansion of them as other Vedanta societies across the USA emerged as branches of the Vedanta society of New York, being an indirect influence of Ramakrishna Mission and its philosophy. One of these branches is The Vedanta Society of Southern California, which Huxley and Isherwood got engaged with.

Later, in the twentieth century, Paramahanmsa Yogananda, Sarvepalli Radhakrishan, Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo were of great importance in the context of the formation of Hinduism as a universal world religion. Their influence was so dominant that what most religious education courses deal with are the Hindu and Vedantic teachings which were filtered through the modern interpretations in the colonial era.<sup>17</sup>

Yogananda was one of the earliest Hindu missionaries that came to America. Having come to Boston in 1920, he immediately founded Self-Realization Fellowship, the international spiritual organization continuing up to the present day.<sup>18</sup> Radhakrishan, a lecturer of comparative religion and philosophy and the former president of India, held professorship at various Western universities such as Oxford University, Manchester College and The University of Chicago. He wrote numerous books on the subject of Indian philosophy such as *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, which was another effort to make an amalgam of the traditional Hindu teachings and the Western rational classification.<sup>19</sup>

Before moving on, a mention of Ramana Maharshi is especially important for this thesis because of his influence on Maugham during their encounter in 1938. Subsequently, Maugham portrayed the holy man in *The Razor's Edge*, Shri Ganesha, who Larry meets in his ashram.<sup>20</sup> There is a passage in the documentary book, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, where Maugham's stay in the ashram is described. Among

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<sup>16</sup> Web.archive.org, *The Ramakrishna Mission*, October 13, 2010, accessed April 20, 2020, [https://web.archive.org/web/20170702041412/http://www.centre-vedantique.fr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=116&lang=en](https://web.archive.org/web/20170702041412/http://www.centre-vedantique.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=116&lang=en).

<sup>17</sup> King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 69.

<sup>18</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 782.

<sup>19</sup> Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 249.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Hawthorne, *1940's Vedantic Novel Still a Hit* (California: Hinduism Today Magazine, 2000), 1.

other details, the author of the book noted: “They remained silent and sat facing each other for nearly an hour.”<sup>21</sup>, which resembles the protagonist’s description of the meeting in *The Razor’s Edge*.<sup>22</sup>

Ramana’s impact on the Westerners was enabled for the most part in 1935 on account of the book *A Search in Secret India* written by the British author of spiritual themes, Paul Brunton. The bestseller book has been translated into 20 languages, making thereby another step further in revealing the Eastern concepts to wider audience.

All in all, Hinduism started to grow as a global religion in the nineteenth century and was shifted due to the revivalism (or the Hindu renaissance) through English modern interpretations causing a gradual chain reaction.<sup>23</sup> The merging process of the cultures was accelerated through the colonial period, specifically during the British Raj. All the religious and nationalist influence was a supportive force to the revolutionary unrest and, subsequently, to the establishment of India as a secular state in 1948. All three authors analysed in this thesis had direct contact with some of the major disseminators of Eastern philosophy, which left its mark on their works and thereby on the British literature.

### **2.3. The Clash of Scientific Rigidity and Mystical Certitude**

This subchapter serves as a guideline of the clash between the materialistic measuring techniques and the mystical phenomena, between the Western rationality and Eastern axioms. While providing a brief insight into the today’s world and its approach to conceptualizing Eastern philosophy, it helps to set the analysis of the protagonists into the situational context.

The point is simply to introduce other possible views than just the one of Indology. Modern physics and psychology research these issues intensively, giving us various explanations of the essence of the chosen novels.

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<sup>21</sup> Sri Ramanasramam, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai, V.S. Ramanan, 2006), 535.

<sup>22</sup> Maugham, *The Razor’s Edge*, 273.

<sup>23</sup> Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 250.

Firstly, from the Western point of view as sceptically pointed out by Helen in the short passage mentioned in the very beginning of the introduction, no thinker has ever received any answer either about the God or the purpose of existence which could be outlined on a paper in a rationally satisfactory way. In more scientific terms, there are no measures yet how the consciousness and its origin could be traced and mapped.

In spite of the scientific unamiability by means of the Newtonian procedure, the mystique is still firmly anchored in the Western world and its prominent writers, psychologists, philosophers and scientists as for example Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, Immanuel Kant or Albert Einstein. Owing to their greater knowledge of both Western and Eastern perspectives, they are able of the more proper substantiation, which results in a larger scope of perspectives and arguments.

Another approximation to a solution might be introduced by innovative scientific disciplines as for example quantum physics or transpersonal psychology. The new findings in the research of consciousness are analogous to Upanishads, proving that the material objects cannot be fundamental reality.

Secondly, from the perspective of Eastern philosophy, which is set on the abstract ground and therefore criticised for its axiomatisation, beingness is deeply analysed on the basis of awareness and its dualistic derivatives—the ego and the Self.

The leading researcher in transpersonal psychology, Stanislav Grof, states that modern scientific consciousness research has revealed great amount of data underlying the spiritual dimension, for example the scriptures of traditional Eastern religions or Huxley's work *The Perennial Philosophy*. Being one of the researchers who examined both the Eastern and the Western domains, he adds that many of the Eastern philosophies are products of a thorough exploration of the human psyche, which resembles modern scientific research.<sup>24</sup>

As it is in the habit of all forms, the forms of the spiritual seeking are constantly transforming. Yet, the core archetypal principles remain up to our present world. Hence one could hypothesize that the inquisitiveness about the spirit world with the

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<sup>24</sup> Stanislav Grof, *The Cosmic Game: Exploration of the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 13-15.

active exploration is even on the rise because the effortless of the almost automatized catering for the needs in the industrialized civilization enables one to invest the energy elsewhere than in the security of needs.

On the other hand, Aldous Huxley's societal critique represented in *The Brave New World* would represent a counter-argument to that because of the ceaselessly distracting mechanisms of the consumerist society. Of course, is not possible to find out what kind of spiritual aspirations the ordinary people of the ancient Maya or Mesopotamian civilisation had. Partly because of the abstractness and subjectivity of such a research, it would be very difficult to measure the percentile of the awakening of the today's population.

Yet it is still helpful to scrutinize the thoughts of the prominent British authors of the twentieth century in order to understand the philosophization about freedom, the Tao and the concept of enlightenment better.



### 3. BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY OF THE CHOSEN AUTHORS

#### 3.1. William Somerset Maugham

Maugham was born into a lawyer family on his father's side, including his elder brother, Frederic Herbert Maugham. His mother died on tuberculosis and, a few years later, the death of his father ensued when diagnosed with cancer.

Maugham did not continue in the family tradition of becoming a lawyer, but instead decided to study medicine. Apart from that, he spent one year in German Heidelberg to study literature and philosophy. Simultaneously, Maugham started writing intensively with a prospect of becoming a literary author, which he pursued throughout his medical studies.

That culminated in publishing his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, where he depicted the working class together with its protagonist and a young factory worker, Liza. At this point, Maugham already graduated and, with his novel being a hit sold out within a few weeks, he embarked on the career of a writer. That allowed him to travel and to incorporate the gained experiences from the foreign destinations thematically into his work, as for example into *The Razor's Edge*.

Apart from his travels around Europe, Maugham even took a journey to India in January 1938 and met Sri Ramana Maharshi, a venerated Indian Hindu guru, in his ashram.<sup>25</sup> Although they saw each other shortly and barely talked, Maugham's experience of the encounter was obviously deeply powerful as it later motivated him to write about it in the essay *Saint* published together with other four essays in his work *Points of View*.

Another important stop in Maugham's life took place in Pacific. The exotic environment and foreign culture with all its unknown remarkableness play a huge part in developing one's fantasy. Maugham definitely made use of all of these impulses and based on them his next writings.

For example, the short story *Rain* is situated on Pago Pago, the capital of Samoa in the South Pacific Ocean. The fictionalized story was inspired by a physicist, who was in the lead of the then missionary expansion, and a prostitute named Thompson. Both

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<sup>25</sup> David Godman, *Somerset Maugham and The Razor's Edge*, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.davidgodman.org/somerset-maugham-and-the-razors-edge/>.

of them sailed on the ship to Pago Pago with Maugham in 1916.<sup>26</sup> He continued to visit Tahiti in 1917 to make a research about Paul Gauguin, who was, one could say, the most famous Western painter of Polynesia Islands. Subsequently, the novel *The Moon and Sixpence* followed, which he planned for a longer time already on the basis of his long-term admiration for Gauguin.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, with the gained experiences, Maugham successfully chronicled the situation of late colonialism in India, Pacific, China and Southeast Asia.

Maugham avoided the on-going modernist wave and thus was a frequent target of critique for his plainness. His prolific writing career often collided with harsh criticism not forgiving him his success and his works were considered as potboilers. Although the then society demanded strict social norms, Maugham was fascinated about homosexual artists as for example El Greco, who he wrote about in an extended essay *Don Fernando*.<sup>28</sup>

After all, Maugham's stories were widely known for being based on actual meetings and conversations he collected throughout his life as he points already on the first page of *The Razor's Edge* with the proclamation "The man I am writing about is not famous. It may be that he never will be."<sup>29</sup>

Despite the fact that his style of writing was not so refined, sumptuous and rich in vocabulary when compared with the ones of his experimentalist and modernist contemporaries such as James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, he did appear as a proficient author in novels, short stories, essays and plays. The criticised simple style became so popular that many of his works ended as widely read bestsellers, which he made a fortune with, and was great inspiration for elegant simplicity to many of his followers as for example George Orwell, who proclaimed: "but I believe the modern writer who has influenced me most is Somerset Maugham, whom I admire immensely for his power of telling a story straightforwardly and without frills."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Samuel J. Rogal, *A William Somerset Maugham Encyclopedia* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 244.

<sup>27</sup> Wilmon Menard, *The Two World of Somerset Maugham* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1965), 227.

<sup>28</sup> Rogal, *A William Somerset Maugham Encyclopedia*, 96.

<sup>29</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Francisca S. Linares, *W. Somerset Maugham and Philosophy of Life* (Durham: Durham E-Theses Online, 1992), accessed April 25, 2020, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/5735/>.

### 3.2. Aldous Leonard Huxley

Huxley's family background was distinctive of its intellectual prominence, which was a supportive of him to strive for education and wisdom. Soon, he became well-read in all disciplines of knowledge.

Among the influential thinkers of the higher classes at that time, who Aldous met at gatherings at Garsington Manor House in 1915, were for example Lady Ottoline Morrell, Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence.<sup>31</sup> His Victorian ancestors on his mother's side were the historian Thomas Arnold and the poet Matthew Arnold. His grandfather on his father's side, Thomas Henry Huxley was a controversial biologist, who championed Darwin's theory of evolution. Besides other things, he [Thomas] was a great proponent of agnosticism and even coined the very term.

Aldous, having been later a strong opponent of deeming science as salvation, openly disagreed with him.<sup>32</sup> Considering Aldous' philosophical foundation permeating through his writings, there is no wonder because Huxley masterfully depicted the horrible price of dehumanization and industrialization, which is to be paid in exchange for the technological aspect, in his seminal novel, *Brave New World*, where the buoyant technological progress is possible only at the expense of one's freedom and spiritual realization.

Possibly, considering this principle and Huxley's involvement with Eastern philosophy, he might have drawn on a metaphysical law of conservation of equilibrium between the polarities, which are represented by the dualistic concept of any Eastern religion as for instance yin and yang.

Nowadays, we find ourselves in a situation, when the technological amenities and economical progress are booming, which was in the spotlight of Aldous Huxley's satirical social criticism. Having started his prolific writing career during the First World War, when the age of technological superiority not only started gaining momentum but also showed its negative character through millions of deaths, his literary work of fiction is intertwined with political, social and moral instruction, whereby he advocates

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<sup>31</sup> Ronald T. Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 17.

<sup>32</sup> Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels*, 8.

the pacifistic stance towards any materialist obsession—being it the war and the need of annihilation on one side and the deceptive praise for the material progress as means of solving all human woes on the other. At the time of writing *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley actively participated in the Peace Pledge Union promoting pacifism. A few years after, he moved to the USA in 1937.

In his novels, he portrays the pleasure seeking nature and material obsession as self-destructive and, in a satirical undertone, questions the human civilization and its deeds. Especially during the 1930'and 1940', he looked more inwards then outwards, while he tried to understand himself and his place in the universe more, which is also apparent through the personality change of main characters in his novels.

The solution he offers to mankind is self-discovery and self-awareness. This statement is supported by Huxley's citation of Boethius, a Christian philosopher of the sixth century, in his comparative study of Eastern and Western mysticism *The Perennial Philosophy*: "In other living creatures ignorance of self is nature; in man it is vice."<sup>33</sup>

In the last years of his life, Huxley became interested in psychedelics, mind-expanding substances, after his first experience with mescaline. He elaborated his experiment with them in *The Doors of Perception*, which led to further findings about the consciousness phenomena in *Heaven and Hell*. Huxley's fascination with mescaline, LSD and psilocybin grew because of the enriching and knowledge-providing potential of the substances.<sup>34</sup>

Having been used by many indigenous Native American tribes in religions and shamanism for healing purposes and spiritual development throughout the history of mankind, entheogens were of primary importance when Huxley structured *Island* since the principles of the fictional folk Pala consist also in the use of their so-called moksha-medicine.

Huxley's all intentions boiled down to the essence of life aiming for nirvana, and his following statement is an evidence for his intentions with entheogens not to be an exception: "a substance akin to psilocybin could be used to potentiate the non-

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<sup>33</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1947), 185.

<sup>34</sup> Aldous Huxley, Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer, *Moksha: Aldous Huxley's classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1999), 17.

verbal education of adolescents and to remind adults that the real world is very different from the misshapen universe they have created for themselves by means of their culture-conditioned prejudices.”<sup>35</sup> Having considered psychedelics as sacred mystical tools, he warned of guidance and preparation to be of great importance for any mystical sessions with them. He was faithfully devoted to the spiritual realm and psychedelics until his very end when he asked his wife to administer a dose of LSD while being on his deathbed.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.3. Christopher Isherwood

As it is inevitable in the majority of writings, or in any other way of projecting ideas, to be influenced of one’s own experiences and one’s life in general, it is still worth mentioning that the work of Christopher Isherwood is highly autobiographical.

Having been born to a an upper middle class family, he, together with his great friend Edward Upward, wrote ghostly stories about a Rat Hostel and a fictional village called Mortmere, which is apparent from his work *Lions and Shadows*.<sup>37</sup> In this book, he described how he evolved from a precocious schoolboy.

Later, he got a scholarship to Cambridge but in the second year decided to end his academic career by writing comical but sophisticated answers to his Tripos examination, which were according to Peter Parker and his biography about Isherwood “clever, insolent and academically suicidal”.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence of such sabotage, he was expelled. Simultaneously, dropping out of the university was tough to accept for his mother, who had strong ambitions for him.<sup>39</sup>

At this time, abandoning university was in a certain sense a kind of relief for Isherwood since it provided him more space to explore his passions. His homosexuality in particular played a huge role in his further decisions because his potential got the possibility to crystallise, namely in his next destination—Berlin.

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<sup>35</sup> Huxley, Horowitz, Palmer, *Moksha: Aldous Huxley’s Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels*, 199.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows* (Connecticut, Norfolk: New Directions, 1947), 71, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Parker, *Isherwood: A Life* (London: Picador, 2004), 113.

<sup>39</sup> Parker, *Isherwood: A Life*, 146.

Berlin has stood out for its reputation of a sexual metropolis for more than century, where various subcultures and communities of young people have been forming due to the fact that its multifarious scenes constitute a perfect melting pot of homosexuals and transsexuals. Especially in the twentieth century and in comparison with the back then constraining England with all the societal rigidity among the rest of Europe, there was not a better place to go when wanting freedom of exploring one's sexuality. Isherwood's experiences in Berlin laid the autobiographical foundation of his work, *The Berlin Stories*, where number of German characters that he met and the atmosphere of the pre-Nazi Germany are portrayed.

A huge part of his life is attributed to the friend of Isherwood, Wystan Hugh Auden, whom he met earlier at school and who he sympathized with on the literary level to the extent that they collaborated on their writings. Together with Edward Upward, Stephen Spender and other influential British and Irish writers, they participated in so-called Auden's Circle by publishing newspaper articles and sharing various political ideas.

However, Isherwood decided to leave Germany after Hitler came to power. He travelled and lived transiently on different places around the Western Europe. Having set off for China, Isherwood and Auden made observations about the Sino-Japanese War for their later novel *Journey to War*.

When they had come back to England and had seen the tense situation with the newly erupting war, they immigrated to The USA. Having had a little writing crisis, Isherwood obviously missed Berlin and ascribed a great significance in forming his personality to it. This impact was present for the rest of his life, which is apparent also in his later novel, *Down There on a Visit*, published in 1962.

Again, even here left the sojourn in Berlin a great mark when writing this novel, which deals with the struggle how to live his life, accompanied by various means of pleasure and experimenting with licentious lifestyle but also by the contrary themes such as spirituality, meditation and asceticism. As far as these two opposite directions go, the discord corresponds to the same framework of Huxley's pair of dystopia and utopia, *Brave New World* and *Island*. However, here one needs to take into account that these works were separated from each other by half of Huxley's life.

Isherwood was on the way to learn more about pacifism and because of that he hoped to get in touch with his friends Heard and Huxley but instead he found that both of them started to focus on Vedanta philosophy following Swami Prabhavananda, who as a prominent figure significantly broadened the Vedanta Society. Isherwood was never interested in politics to such degree that he would have felt an urge to express it publicly. Much of his attention was paid to people, their lifestyle and fate. Even his opposition to fascism was rather personal than political.<sup>40</sup>

With that being said, it follows that the ossified class structure of Britain or any other dogmatic template-like system as Catholicism or communism did not appeal to him at all. Therefore, his conversion to Vedanta happened very naturally and he became so engrossed in studying it that he helped Swami Prabhavananda to translate *Bhagavad Gita, The Song of God* to English in 1943. Year after that, Isherwood lived as a monk in the Vedanta Centre Los Angeles but abandoned it before long. Yet, the direction of Vedanta philosophy was a huge jumping-off point, which remained crucial until his death.

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<sup>40</sup> Parker, *Isherwood: A Life*, 419.

## **4. CENTRAL THEMES OF THE CHOSEN NOVELS**

After setting the situational background in the previous chapters, this chapter analyses the subject matter of the three novels. By the way, *A Meeting by the River* is technically a novella. The analysis is divided into two head parts. In the first half of the chapter (4.1), general analysis to each novel is given, which serves as an introductory foundation to the comparative analysis of the central themes and ideas in the second half (4.2), hence unifying all three novels.

### **4.1. PART 1: INTRODUCING THE NOVELS**

#### **4.1.1. The Razor's Edge**

##### **4.1.1.1. Introduction**

When analysing the title, a reader is given a direction to Hindu philosophy right on the front cover because the name is identical with the formulation in the verse in the fourteenth stanza of Katha Upanishads in the translation by W. D. Whitney.<sup>41</sup> Opening the book, a direct citation from Katha Upanishads follows. In the beginning of the plot, one can feel a romantic tint when the protagonist Larry Darrel is presented through the poetic idealism like the one of nineteenth century. The portrayal of his complacent and soothing personality accompanies the reader throughout the most of the novel, which is intertwined with Larry's urging need for searching the Unknown.

The eager motives for the actual search of the ungraspable God, Enlightenment, self-realization, self-actualization, nirvana, moksha, awakening, satori, paradise or whatever one decides to call it, come from the harsh experience during The First World War when he, still as a very young man, was in service as an aviator and saw his best friend die.

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<sup>41</sup> William Dwight Whitney, *Translation of the Katha-Upanishad* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1890), 104.



Such a kind of testimony leaves oftentimes severe—if not physical—psychological consequences on soldiers, albeit Larry serves as a great proof of exception since in compliance with his deeds and statements it seems to have transformed his direction in life positively. Therefore the change after the war was necessary in order to gain the great source of motivation for the acquisition of knowledge, which drove all of his following actions to read educational literature, to travel and to explore his life as much as his consciousness.

Larry's detached affability is noteworthy when one considers the contempt of the portrayed upper class and, at least in Eliot's case, even occasional misanthropy. The novel structured the clash of materialism and spiritualism outstandingly, accentuating Larry's preservation of assertiveness.

#### **4.1.1.2. Family Background as an Obstacle to Authenticity**

In order not to sound more idealistic than the plot itself, the novel's mystique of the philosophy of life is counterbalanced with deep snobbism, where Larry has to come to terms with the presupposition of the upper middle class he comes from that money is the symbol of success. The opposing material domain is embodied for the most part in Eliot, but also in Larry's ex-fiancé Isabel and their families through the wasting excess of first-class goods and incessant seeking of snobbish parties, which Larry is expected to follow.

Eventually, since Larry's personality shows itself to reader as uncompromisingly even-tempered and accepting, it was neither the alienation from his family due to its pompous lifestyle nor the constant pressure on him to launch a business that is tough to solve but the struggle to find the meaning of his life. He sets out for the way of a pilgrim at the cost of losing the romance with Isabel and wealthy lifestyle.

#### **4.1.1.3. The Scrutiny of Maugham's Dialogue with Darrel about Vedanta**

Although *Eyeless in Gaza* was written before *The Razor's Edge*, the order of the analysed works was set already in the beginning according to the dates of births of the authors. However, the more significant reason for that is this subchapter, where Larry's talk with the narrator about the essence of the Eastern religions, namely about Vedanta, is scrutinized. As the philosophy is the locus of the other two protagonists'

lives as well, this subchapter will serve as a guideline to any other philosophical train of thought of the protagonists.

The following excerpts are taken from the sixth part of the sixth chapter. As Maugham states in the beginning of it, this chapter is completely dispensable for the uninterrupted course of the plot. However, at the same time, it is the most relevant one since it reveals Larry's enigmatic and unpredictable personality up to this point. The part of the dialogue is used here as a demonstration how some of the central themes of Vedanta are incorporated in the novel.

While countless indirect allusions to the concepts like the ones of Infinity, the Absolute or the God have been made throughout the book, the following excerpt of the narrator's (Maugham's) dialogue with Larry expresses it more comprehensibly and sheds light on the vagueness through the context.

'And what do the Hindus think is the object of this endless recurrence?' 'I think they'd say that such is the nature of the Absolute. You see, they believe that the purpose of creation is to serve as a stage for the punishment or reward of the deeds of the soul's earlier existences.' 'Which presupposes belief in the transmigration of souls.'<sup>42</sup>

As the two discuss the belief in the transmigration of souls, it is hinted at the karmic law and reincarnation, which are shared as key concepts by any adherents of Indian religions such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs. Karma is based on the assumption that any action that one takes will influence one either during the lifetime or in the next lives. As Larry says: "Has it occurred to you that transmigration is at once an explanation and a justification of the evil of the world?"<sup>43</sup> the polarity between good and evil actions must be taken into account here since the former has good consequences while the later has bad consequences.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 264.

<sup>43</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 265.

<sup>44</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 351.

The narrator questions the possibility why would any omnipotent creator integrate suffering into life at the beginning of it, which already by its definition is in contradiction with any of the transcendental ways of thinking as Larry explains in the next excerpt.

‘But why didn’t God create a world free from suffering and misery at the beginning when there was neither merit nor demerit in the individual to determine his actions?’ ‘The Hindus would say that there was no beginning. The individual soul, co-existent with the universe, has existed from all eternity and owes its nature to some prior existence.’<sup>45</sup>

According to Hindus, the consciousness is the eternal set of truths, neither with the illusory beginning or the end nor with time and space. In Larry’s words, “there was no beginning” and “the individual soul has existed from all eternity and owes its nature to some prior existence”, by which he most likely means Brahman, being both the material and final cause of the existence.

The term Brahman is accepted as the formless supreme reality in the universe, which is eternal and ever-present.<sup>46</sup> Although there are many deities across the diverse spiritual culture, the significance of Brahman as the supreme God makes Hinduism monotheistic. Therefore, to prevent a possible confusion of the increased number of terms, Brahman within the individual is identified with Atman (Sanskrit word for the Self) or the soul. Brahman as the unchanging absolute reality is interchangeable with the term Absolute, of which usage has been avoided by modern philosophers and materialists due to its obscurity. In Western terms, the concept of consciousness would substitute it adequately.

After admitting in the previous three excerpts that the circulatory loop is interwoven with the evil, Larry suggests in the next excerpt that the way out of that is to “proceed on the journey to one’s goal”, which is a metaphor to the “liberation from the bondage of rebirth” as he clarifies.

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<sup>45</sup> Maugham, *The Razor’s Edge*, 265.

<sup>46</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 122.

'I suppose he proceeded on the journey to his goal.' 'And what was that?' 'Liberation from the bondage of rebirth. According to the Vedantists the self, which they call the atman and we call the soul, is distinct from the body and its senses, distinct from the mind and its intelligence; it is not part of the Absolute, for the Absolute, being infinite, can have no parts, but the Absolute itself.'<sup>47</sup>

In the next excerpt, Larry attributes Brahman to the Absolute. Highlighting how ungraspable the topic is, Larry's interpretation as the formless eternal truth transcending the physicality with its space and time is identical with the one mentioned in the analysis of the excerpt.

'You talk very familiarly of the Absolute, Larry, and it's an imposing word. What does it actually signify to you?' 'Reality. You can't say what it is; you can only say what it isn't. It's inexpressible. The Indians call it Brahman. It's nowhere and everywhere. All things imply and depend upon it. It's not a person, it's not a thing, it's not a cause. It has no qualities. It transcends permanence and change; whole and part, finite and infinite.'<sup>48</sup>

In the Hindu philosophical tradition, Maya is explained as the illusion or confusion about the true nature of the world and oneself, which results in the continuation of the reincarnation.<sup>49</sup> Having said that, it should not be confused with the assumption that in spite of the proclaimed illusion the physical laws do not exist, but rather that Vedanta distinguishes between two levels of existence, the material one and the non-material one. While underlining the transitoriness of the physical domain and thus classifying it as illusory, it deems the non-material domain as the source of eternal life.

The last lines of the excerpt just confirm Larry's detailed overview of the Hindu general acknowledged truths and principles. Adherents of Hinduism and its closely

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<sup>47</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 268-269.

<sup>48</sup> Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*, 269.

<sup>49</sup> Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 433.

related religions consider gaining knowledge about the true nature of being to be one of the ways to soul's liberation.

When conceptualising any fundamental principle of Vedanta, an elucidation through dualism is necessary since the philosophy of Eastern religions revolves around it. In other words, the tenets of Vedanta inevitably incorporate the polarity of the material and the non-material, the body and the mind, passing time and eternity, to their teachings on karma, moksha, Brahman, etc. Various schools in the religions as Advaita Vedanta, Dvaita Vedanta and Vishishtadvaita Vedanta schools in Hinduism are in dispute with what they regard as "genuine" and "illusory" in the context of Brahman and Maya, respectively.

Although Hinduism is relatively fragmented across the whole Indian subcontinent and in comparison to Christianity with Ten Commandments is not considered to be an organized religion, in many cases not even a religion at all, the central doctrine of all just mentioned schools rests upon the summary of the principles in the dialogue with Larry.

To summarize, the excerpts of the dialogue are an ample evidence of Larry's enthusiasm for the Truth, which transforms him to be enthusiastic about knowledge and, above all, makes him firmly determined in all aspects. After years of searching throughout Europe and Asia, he made it to the point of settling down in New York as a humble common man of a working class.

## **4.1.2. Eyeless in Gaza**

### **4.1.2.1. Introduction**

*Eyeless in Gaza* is a successful representative of pacifistic and Vedantic writings among the classic British literature.

The very name is an underlying trope valid through the whole Huxley's novel. Originally, the phrase comes from John Milton's poetical tragedy *Samson in Agonistes*, which was inspired by the Biblical story of Samson. The formulation of the phrase was

used in the same form as in the next two verses of *Samson in Agonistes* by John Milton.

Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves.<sup>50</sup>

In *Eyeless in Gaza* and both of the related works, there is an overriding symbolic meaning behind blindness which makes the person unable to see the truth and therefore epitomizes an escape from one's responsibilities and suffering. The concept itself can be traced to the ancient Greece, the cradle of tragedy, when Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles blinds himself at the end of the plot in order not to see what chaos he wreaked.

Another significant theme of the works is the contradiction between death and freedom, when one needs to die in order to be free from the current burden and responsibilities. The specification with the attribute *current* is to be stressed here for humanity has not reached the point to know a thing about the consequences of such an incident. Therefore, on the level of metaphysics, it might only transfer the old encumbrance and obligations to the future, which would be according to the karmic principles of Indian philosophy perfectly justifiable. By Samson's death, the Israelites are freed from the Philistines and at the same time, which is common with *Eyeless in Gaza*, are released from the illusory separation of the Self. Because of its death, the termination of separation is followed by the embracement of unity, being the contrary to the separation.

Its plot is chaotically fragmented as if someone has shuffled the chapters just after they had been finished, which reads as a metaphor to Anthony's volatile rumination over his current life at the age of 43—approximately the age of Huxley when the book was being written. Simultaneously, the haphazardness holds the reader in suspension. As random as it might seem, the organization of the novel is far from classical and even somewhat experimental. However, when the dates of each chapter

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<sup>50</sup> John Milton, *Samson Agonistes* (Global Language Resources, 2001, accessed April 30, 2020, <http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/MILTON/SAMSON/Download.pdf>), 5.

are arranged sequentially, the novel sticks to the genre of a narrative. Ronald T. Sion characterized it as the novel of transformation or the novel of ideas.<sup>51</sup>

#### **4.1.2.2. Anthony's Character**

The narration is launched through one of the many autobiographical themes, namely the death of Anthony's mother, which sets a strong predisposition to haunt him in the future. Going through school, college, noble upper classes and various liaisons with women, his experiences prove hollow in the long run apart from snobbery, competition, nationalism, war, economic shallowness, class hatred and colour prejudice.<sup>52</sup> The misfortune is amplified by his own fault when he kisses Joan, the fiancé of his best friend Brian, just for the purpose of a foolish stake and, as a consequence, Brian commits suicide.

All these incidents lay the foundation of Anthony's detachment from the physical world. They are part of the reason for his resistance against the grieve stemming from his sombre experiences. Anthony's newly made introverted identity, like the one of an indifferent observer, comes into being. Owing to the resulting inability to express love in spite of his passion, it is on a collision course with his romantic relationships as well.

Anthony's behavioural phenomenon which has just been presented is worth an elucidatory commentary here. As Anthony went through emotional ordeal as a child and embarked on the path of detachment as a solution, it can be perceived again as the direct connection to the already analysed blindness. Being grounded on an escape, those wounds from childhood still might stay unhealed in the subconscious under the surface of his persona. Though unseeable, they have the potential to affect some other areas in his life sooner or later. While this might not be true and the idea is purely hypothetical, nowadays, one could say, the hidden part of the escape from one's wounds is connected with psychosomatics. Similarly, Brian's mother,

Mrs Foxe, also makes a notion on the topic at the time of the funeral of Anthony's mother 1903, as in the next excerpt.

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<sup>51</sup> Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels*, 45, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Giza* (London: Granada Publishing Ltd, 1977), 102.

Covers up his vulnerability in the most exposed place and at the same time uncovers it elsewhere, so that the slighter wounds shall act as a kind of distraction, a kind of counterirritant. It's self-protection.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.1.2.3. Anthony's Awakening**

Anthony finds himself in the position of dealing with the mystery and quirks of fate. He states in the diary in chapter III: "The thirty-five years of his conscious life made themselves immediately known to him as a chaos—a pack of snapshots in the hands of a lunatic."<sup>54</sup> Anthony's diary represents his changed state of mind between the years 1933 and 1935.

Being deeply devoted to the intellectual domain and his sociological research about personality as such, named *Elements of Sociology*, Anthony's main theory about personality pledges the fact that it is bounded by a constant change and, supposing that there is nothing else anyway that lasts, personality is rather a series of contemporary states which the construct called personality arises from.

Countless discussions with Brian (and memories of him after death) and Helen put Anthony into a deep contemplation. They make Anthony question all of his interests. Anthony is heading towards his epiphany, which is the realization through the words of the bewitchingly serene doctor, Miller, whom he met in Mexico while supporting a local revolution.

Having been given encouraged by Mark, who is slightly bored with the theoretical routine and wants to truly feel that he is alive, they are astounded when hearing the pacifistic doctrine proposed by Miller. His idealistic perception of reality is later on propagated throughout the chapters of Anthony's documentary diary. However, one can still notice Anthony's recognition of the recurrent pattern of knowing what one ought to do but continues what one oughtn't to do—for example, the incident when he kisses Joan, knowing that it is far from virtuous.

Marked for its dualistic qualities, the dichotomy between good and evil occurs in all religions. In spite of Huxley's disapproval of any religion, this idea is one of the pillars of his attitude towards the perennial philosophy, where the constant tug-of-war

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<sup>53</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 72.

<sup>54</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 20.



between the pursue of noble virtues on one side and the temptation of sensual pleasures on the other takes place.

Miller's influence comes in two ways. Firstly, as far as Mark's avowed rebelliousness is concerned, Miller takes a firm stance towards the very opposite when being in the midst of the political debate as in the excerpt from chapter L, where crux of the matter is the principle and importance of pacifistic attitude towards any revolutionary way of thinking. In the next excerpt, Miller speaks to Mark.

'Because words express thoughts, Mark Staithes; and thoughts determine actions. If you call a man a bug, it means that you propose to treat him as a bug. Whereas if you call him a man, it means that you propose to treat him as a man. My profession is to study men. Which means that I must always call men by their name; always think of them as men; yes, and always treat them as men. Because if you don't treat men as men, they don't behave as men. But I'm an anthropologist, I repeat. I want human material. Not insect material.'<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, in another discourse addressed to Anthony, Miller's demonstration of the Buddhist belief represents his transcendental insight into the concept of personality, comparing it with the level of the universal mind as in the next excerpt. This is just an example of the numerous snatches of Miller's thoughts scattered over the entire Anthony's diary.

Now look at the Buddhists. Vegetables and water. And what's their philosophy? They don't exalt personality; they try to transcend it. They don't imagine that God can be angry; when they're unenlightened, they think he's compassionate, and when they're enlightened, they think he doesn't exist, except as an impersonal mind of the universe.<sup>56</sup>

Dr James Miller's role, symbolizing F. M. Alexander, a therapist and author who had a

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<sup>55</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 387.

<sup>56</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 373.

great impact on Huxley when writing *Eyeless in Gaza*, is central here. This is another proof of striking resemblance between Huxley and Anthony since Huxley wrote the essay in 1936, entitled *How to Improve the World*, wherein he suggests the same life solution as Miller to Anthony: start with one's diet and seek the road to self-knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Huxley's involvement with the Peace Pledge Union and Vedanta Society just confirms that.

After hearing Miller's words, Anthony's way toward a solution is much clearer. It is the sort of awakening thanks to which he is shifted from the long-time intellectual escapism to real commitment and action since up to this point, as he acknowledges himself, he invests all his energy to theoretic ideas but not to his physical surroundings. It is the moment when he realizes the impracticability of his over-observing and over-theorizing nature, which in exchange is transferred from egoism to selflessness, moving afterwards substantially closer to his beliefs.

In Anthony's words with conspicuous Vedantic gist, it was a realization of cowardice since the former abstract world of ideas was revealed to be idle and vain. The motive of getting closer to freedom is the fundamental pursue.

The illusory separateness and individuality are now consciously perceived as the one and only metaphysical unity displaying the lack of responsibility and, in the context of the pacifistic propaganda, destroying the nationalistic guise. Anthony's formulation of the gained insight is as it follows in the next two excerpts.

I used to think I had no will to power. Now I perceive that I vented it on thoughts, rather than people. Conquering an unknown province of knowledge. Getting the better of a problem. Forcing ideas to associate or come apart. Bullying recalcitrant words to assume a certain pattern. All the fun of being a dictator without any risks and responsibilities.<sup>58</sup>

One: We are all capable of love for other human beings. Two. We impose limitations on that love. Three. We can transcend all these limitations—if we

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<sup>57</sup> Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels*, 76.

<sup>58</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 118.

choose to.<sup>59</sup>

Still being grounded in the connection with blindness, it means an inevitable redirecting inwards, which is one of the most fundamental revelations of Anthony and spiritual awakening in general. Caused by proper insight, the outcome of the new personality is freedom from within.

The latest entry of the given timeline and simultaneously the last chapter is shaped into a free indirect discourse. The background for his talk is a preparation for the forthcoming lecture on pacifism, which is slightly disrupted by a letter Anthony receives, which, having been signed by “A Group of Patriotic Englishmen”, threatens him severely and discourages him from making the public speech. In spite of his old self not being able to resist the sudden flow of the cowardly thoughts, inciting him to an escape by means of the imagined punishment or death, his newly formed alert consciousness following the Miller’s guidance of “the proper use of the Self”<sup>60</sup> does not allow him to avoid his strong commitment again.

Anthony refreshes his memory with Miller’s morals, exhorting him for one thing to detach himself from the physically convenient bounds and for the other not to handle people according to his comparison with “bugs” but rather as “people”. After he lucidly encourages himself with the final extensive Vedantic soliloquy about the unity, he sets out for the lecture. The end of the novel depicts acceptance and determination, concluding with the utterance “Whatever it might be, he knew now that all would be well.”<sup>61</sup>

### **4.1.3. A Meeting by the River**

#### **4.1.3.1. Introduction**

*A Meeting by the River* is an epistolary depiction of the suspenseful encounter of two brothers, Oliver and Patrick. Although opposites sometimes attract and these two are

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<sup>59</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 156.

<sup>60</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 220.

<sup>61</sup> Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza*, 415.

exact opposites of each other, it is nowhere near the complementarity between them that is developed in their relationship. Rather, the reader is exposed to the ceaseless struggle of their egos to confirm themselves in the convictions they hold. In this simplified sense, the fact that each of the two grapples with one's own problems can be categorized as commonness between them, yet the actual manifestations of their egos are opposite to each other. As Vedanta teachings are partly based on the principle of dualism, the next paragraphs highlight the qualities of the two opposite poles, which form the very structure of the plot.

Oliver, the younger brother, formerly worked for the Red Cross and the Religious Society of Friends, known as the Quakers. At the time of the narration, he prepares to take Sannyas, the final vow and renunciation as a monk in a Hindu monastery. He represents modesty, chastity and non-attachment. The non-attachment is to be taken as a mere representation and as an ideal since, along with a whole range of concomitant negative emotions, the unattainability of it is the heart of the matter of the story line.

Patrick is by contrast a secularist and works in the publishing and film industry. Avoiding his responsibilities, he has the bravado to play games with everyone in favour of himself. His male lover from California, Tom, is in the centre of his interests, which he hides successfully together with his bisexuality, especially from his wife and his children from London, whom he asks for forgiving his neglect.

#### **4.1.3.2. Opposing Forces—Spirituality and Secularity**

Regarding Isherwood's own interests during his life, on the one hand his inclination towards the Eastern way of thinking accompanied by the consideration of becoming a swami and on the other the debauched lifestyle with a rich sexual past, the conflict between Oliver and Patrick could be grasped as an epitome of his internal contradiction.

Joining the Vedanta Society of California and leaving it shortly afterwards for the sake of not renouncing the lavish way of life serves as a good example of that. Therefore, Oliver is the embodiment of Isherwood's Vedantic tendencies while Patrick symbolizes his worldliness with the sensual desires.

Because the chapters are comprised of the letters between the brothers, their mother, Patrick's wife from London and, contradictorily, his male lover from California, and, perhaps most importantly, the entries from Oliver's confessional journal, the novel offers countless passages full of introspection and psychological conflicts.

At first the brothers exchange a few letters and they present themselves very maturely and outspokenly, nonetheless they prove the opposite when Patrick comes to visit him in the monastery in India after a long-lasting estrangement. Due to the interspersed communication by means of Oliver's diary and other letters written by Patrick to his family and Tom, the reader may notice how different each interpretation appears. In the course of Patrick's visit, he describes the same situation in four versions, each differing in the emotional tone changing the message.

Oliver's veracity is simpler to detect for it takes place only between that how he treats Patrick and his inner redeeming voice in the journal. Considering their initial kindness, attentiveness and politeness and the later uncontrollable obsession to outperform each other, Isherwood did not provide any allusion to a stronger negative emotion such as hatred that would elicit maliciousness in them. If they are depicted in dispute with each other, it is only a superficial and short-term one that might be a manifestation of their mutual unacceptance as we have the proof how the actions are really intended, at least in Oliver's case when we inspect the journal. In Patrick's case, it is a bit trickier because of his dissimulation.

After all, he comes all the way to India to persuade Oliver to abandon his new vision, though not necessarily to benefit Oliver but rather for the sake of the resistance of the human egoistic nature to let things go.

Additionally, in one of the letters, he discloses that he has always admired Oliver's strong will and goodness. Possibly, Patrick envied him his capabilities and determination, which would have caused Patrick to struggle with leaving him go after the highest goal, the blissful state. Patrick persuades him of the opposite that Oliver ought to return to the Western ordinary life. Besides, he belittles the way of self-denial, which of course he might not be really sure of as his own life evinces considerable instability of his decisions. He deludes not only himself but also his surroundings due to the refusal of self-acceptance as distinct from Oliver.

In relation to their encounter in India, we can speak of an emotional block that is a burden to Patrick. For example, the block which has lingered since childhood. However, on the basis of the literary text, the fraternal block is deducible the other way around as well when one takes into account Oliver's natural tendency to imitate and follow the older sibling. One may notice that there is a certain kind of brotherly jealousy that repeats itself as the narration unfolds.

#### **4.1.3.3. Surrender**

Comparing the two and setting them into a Vedantic dualistic frame, each of them represents one pole. Patrick is the seeker of pleasure focused much more externally and he lets the ego be in the lead while Oliver is the seeker of the pleasure for the soul, which means for him to turn inside and letting the Self be in the lead.

Oliver makes a record in the diary describing such differentiation of the two worlds in the context of his internal struggle with Patrick's wife, who he fell in love with in the past, and perhaps is emotionally attached to her even at the present time. Needless to mention, this is influenced to a large extent by Patrick's presence. In any case, Oliver strives for surrendering the ego—the death of the persona—as it is palpable both in the following excerpt and his whole diary.

None of that really matters. It's just psychology, and psychology is merely a sophisticated parlour game unless you indulge yourself by playing it and giving it the power of truth. I have vowed not to play the game—that's the whole meaning of my life here. In Patrick's world, everybody plays it, and so the precious ego is flattered and cultivated and fattened by being told about its remarkable sicknesses. In our world, the ego is methodically starved to death.<sup>62</sup>

Together with Patrick's effort to coax Oliver into coming back to "real" values of the Western world, holding the view that Oliver has no idea where he is heading, Oliver's doubts about his vocation, which he does not confide to Patrick of course, get

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<sup>62</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *A Meeting by the River* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1984), 31.

intensified. Equally, Patrick divulges neither his secret about the paramour, Tom, nor his bisexuality until the very end when Tom calls to the monastery and deluges Oliver with frank outburst of emotions, mistaking him for Patrick.

When Oliver discovers Patrick's ambitions, he is utterly unmoved and cool-headed as it is in accordance with the Hindu detached stance. However, Oliver views Patrick's influence as a lesson for him as it is apparent from the following excerpt, which was taken from his diary.

Of course it's entirely possible that Patrick got me into this mess without realizing what he was doing. But let's assume that he did realize, that he deliberately arranged the whole thing because he wanted to make me face up to the comic picture of myself which the world will always have—the Englishman in Hindu masquerade, the holy fraud. Even so, I ought to be deeply grateful to him, because this is something I've got to face and it's true that I haven't been facing it properly, up to now.<sup>63</sup>

Trying to master the unbiased ubiquitous awareness of Brahman when one gets rid of the persona, Oliver blames only himself and takes responsibility for any negative impulses he is surrounded by. That is to say, he still does feel the prejudice against his brother but by means of accepting the role of an observing martyr, he has recognized it as mere ills of his mind. Instead of blaming Patrick, he tries to learn his lesson and wants to find some benefit of his brother's selfishness as in the next record of his diary.

His power over me is nothing but my own doubt and weakness. If I really believe in what I say I believe in, then a million Patricks won't be able to shake me. I won't feel threatened by him, and so I won't have to cut myself off from him and hate him.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, their exposure to each other increases awareness in both lives. After facing the

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<sup>63</sup> Isherwood, *A Meeting by the River*, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Isherwood, *A Meeting by the River*, 95.

harsh truth, Oliver does take his vow and Patrick's feels relief when he confesses to Oliver, which prompts him partially to lead more honest life and to break contact with his lover.

## **4.2. PART 2: OVERALL ANALYSIS OF THE LEADING THEMES**

In terms of the influence of Vedantic teachings on the three authors, a great impact on their lives is reflected in their works. They tried to solve their lives in a similar way as their protagonists. Because the central elements of the Hindu philosophy are projected onto all three novels, which are thus formed from the same ideological source, this chapter treats the main themes separately and analyses them in greater detail.

### **4.2.1. Pilgrimage and the Tao**

Pilgrimage is a way of searching and following the inner Self. Both in the literal and in metaphorical sense, it is a journey, which also the Laozi's term Tao translated as "the way" in traditional Chinese philosophy alludes to, just as religions do. Tao is the hypostatization of the spirit or of the consciousness that is to be cultivated.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the essence of Taoism and other Eastern philosophies is to live in equilibrium, in other words, in harmony with the Tao (or with dharma in the Hindu terms).

The Eastern doctrines prefer correct behaviour to correct belief. Pilgrimage as the search for the inner contentment is evident from all three protagonists. Being inseparable from the Tao, the longing for the wisdom through experience and knowledge is another commonality of the heroes. Each gains experience in different way.

Larry from *The Razor's Edge* travels the world, goes through times of devoted study of ancient literature in foreign languages and, in contrast, gives a try to the drudgery of coal mining or to hermit lifestyle just for the sake of pondering on his life. As the outcome of that, one could say the outcome of coming closer to self-

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Lafargue, *The Tao of the Tao te Ching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 245.



actualization and enlightenment, he comes to the conclusion of Brahman's existence, the eternal awareness. Then he starts to live the ordinary working life.

Neither Anthony from *Eyeless in Gaza* sees a tangible goal in his life, which not only instigates him to dedicate his time to the sociological research but also to consciously provide space for new potential happenings, manifesting itself in making the journey to Mexico and becoming aware of the deep eternal wisdom in Miller's words.

Likewise, Oliver's journey in *A Meeting by the River* leads through his stay in Africa with The Quarkers and involves the work for The Red Cross, though still not feeling the fulfilment of his potential. Subsequently, he finds a sanctuary for his soul in a Hindu monastery. Living there in accordance with dharma, he overcomes the struggle between his family and the ego, resulting in the conquest of the last Hindu Ashrama—the vow of the renunciation for the secular world.

#### **4.2.2. Detachment and Asceticism**

Detachment and the closely related asceticism are meant to be the process of overcoming one's attachment to the physical reality and of transcending one's bodily needs. Hence the purpose of various methods of detachment and asceticism boils down, for one thing, to the deprivation of the ego of its power and, for another, to freeing the Self.

The detachment appears in two particular kinds, which is understandable since the two kinds usually influence each other. That is on the emotional level as well as on the material level.

With respect to Larry and Oliver, the material detachment goes to an utmost degree when living without any property. By Anthony, it manifests itself in the form of not engaging in such matters at all. He holds neither the positive nor the negative stance towards it and his material detachment is hence of lower degree. On the emotional level, all three protagonists pursue an absolute detachment from one's persona as analysed later.

In comparison with Larry from *The Razor's Edge*, Oliver's inner task of attaining self-actualization and is portrayed to be a much harder task for him to do since he is in doubts about the purpose of such a great devotion every now and then, chiefly due to

the intervention of the older brother, Patrick. On the other hand, Larry's family is importunately discouraging as well. Therefore, when both of them try to come to terms with the pressure, it is the capability of detached complacency that counts.

Metaphorically expressed, Oliver keeps looking back to the darkness of negativity instead of the light unlike Larry, whose determination seems unwavering. Anthony holds a quasi middle course as he balances between his self-assurance and the constant brooding state of mind, portraying his character more realistically.

By and large, to demonstrate the connection between the protagonists, their revelations are interchangeable between them. In particular, Larry reveals the wisdom of Advaita Vedanta, Anthony finds that personality is nothing but merely a constantly changing series of states and Oliver surrenders to the egoistic inner voice.

That is to say that the mentioned scenarios would fit in any of the three storylines and in their opinion frame perfectly. Their conclusions indirectly points to the spiritual conception of death as it is exemplarily formulated by Eckhart Tolle in the passage from his book *The Power of Now*: "Death is a stripping away of all that is not you. The secret of life is to "die before you die"—and find that there is no death."<sup>66</sup>

Tolle's claim corresponds both with the Anthony's formulation of the constantly changing personality, or the ego, and with the Hindu teachings of the eternal Self. The dying part is preoccupied with the past and the future, clinging on the external stimuli and thereby causing the death per se due to the constant change of them. The eternal part is the ever-present awareness (or Brahman), representing the undying part. When one's life is reconciled with the eternal part, the harmony with the Tao (or dharma) is established.

On top of that, in the course of pursuing self-realization, all three heroes show no evidence of wanting a love relationship. Larry is forced to abandon his fiancé as he intuitively follows the unknown path of exploration. Anthony is unable to express love in his relationship with Helen, partly because of the detachment and partly because his mind is permanently occupied with intricate issues about himself and his personality.

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<sup>66</sup> Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (Vancouver: Namaste Publishing, 1997), 56.

In *A Meeting by a River*, partnership neither plays any role in Oliver's case nor is addressed apart from the mention of the foregone falling for Patrick's wife.

#### **4.2.3. Erudition**

While the origin of the protagonists is between the middle and upper class, they go through different social classes. As a result, they experience many cultural changes, which, together with their level of education, provides potential for further development. All three come from erudite circles and aim towards knowledge and wisdom. Pilgrimage and the exploration of spirituality itself force one to set out for the path of knowledge and wisdom in one form or the other.

Another hallmark of their path is to find meaning for they are desperate not to have any satisfactory one. Nevertheless, it happens only within the context of knowledge if some meaning is supposed to occur. As simple as that, it is the difference between things that underpins meaning. If it was not about the difference, about making things discernible from each other, meaning would lose its sense.

Thus Larry spends almost two years engrossed in various branches of intellectual literature such as philosophy and Anthony's room is described as covered with books. A proof of Oliver's background is harder to find, yet deductible. According to the rather noble writing style of the correspondence between Oliver and Patrick and of his diary, it evinces eloquence and good manners. Furthermore, in order to become a Hindu monk and to take Sannyas, one is confronted with the dedicated study of sacred texts.

#### **4.2.4. The Ego and the Self**

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the repeated psychological model of the ego and the Self is the pervasive subject matter of the novels, which sheds light on the process how the protagonists developed. They benefit themselves and others by means of their capability of feeling the tranquillity, detached complacency and, in Anthony's case, political pacifism.

As Larry gives answers to the intangible existential question with the term Self, he opens us a whole new topic about the model, which Eastern philosophies, spiritual practices and certain fields of psychology revolve around. In the twentieth century, it

was an essential descriptive instrument for psychoanalysis, for example, in the Jungian circles. Last but not least, it serves very well as a guideline when trying to grasp Larry's, Anthony's and Oliver's thoughts.

In order not to give the dismissive impression of the ego and to establish a more objective ground, it is to be stated that the ego has the most significant role when securing the external life of an individual. In terms of Carl G. Jung, the ego is the centre of the conscious part of the personality while being integral to the superior all-encompassing Self, which is therefore central to the whole personality, the totality of conscious, subconscious and unconscious parts of psyche.<sup>67</sup>

Jung categorized the Self as the archetype of wholeness.<sup>68</sup> It follows that the ego and the Self are in the relation of meronymy, the part-whole relationship because the ego is integrated in the Self in the same way as atoms are in molecules.

Therefore, it is the subconscious and the unconscious, being the unknown parts of one's psyche, that the protagonists strive for to explore as they relinquish the materiality and the domain which the ego accounts for in general. They manage it at the time of their epiphanies when the integration of the whole and of the ego is given priority over the ego's leading position. The Self is fundamental constituent of the supreme ideas and ideals of unity inherent in all religious systems.<sup>69</sup>

Jung situated the Self and the ego into the context of analytical psychology, yet, in comparison with religious ideas, it is only a usage of another terms that the difference between the psychological and religious spheres rests on. Jung himself deemed the Self as "God within us".<sup>70</sup> This statement is tantamount to the Hindu framework of Brahman when God is not regarded in the sense of a person but of a realized universal principle—the self-realization.

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<sup>67</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Darwin of the Mind*, (London: Karnac Books, 2008), 129, 141.

<sup>68</sup> Jung, *Darwin of the Mind*, 153.

<sup>69</sup> Jung, *Darwin of the Mind*, 112.

<sup>70</sup> Jung, *Darwin of the Mind*, 154.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis analyses three works of the British authors, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood. The works, *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *A Meeting by the River*, are related to each other through the mainstay of Eastern philosophy and mysticism, which account for the orientation in life of each protagonist. Before commencing the analysis in the main part, where the constituent elements of the novels come under scrutiny, both the situational context and the brief summary about the lives of the writers are introduced.

The situational context represents the development, how Eastern philosophy and Western culture have intermingled with each other. In the course of time as new impulses has been exerted on the West, it influenced the way of thinking of the prominent writers, psychologists, philosophers and scientists. The biggest expansion of the merging process took place at the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century. The then supremacy of Company rule in India and British Raj offered an opportunity for a thorough research of the Indian culture with its philosophical and religious doctrines.

The biography of the chosen writers serves as the underpinning for the further analysis as their experiences and inner conflicts are mirrored in the novels. Maugham's travels and curiosity about Hinduism led him to meet Ramana Maharshi, one of the most significant modern Indian representatives of Advaita Vedanta school. On account of their encounter, Maugham portrayed the holy man in *The Razor's Edge*, Shri Ganesha, whose presence is supportive of Larry's self-realization. As the other family characters of the novel are from upper middle class, the book captures their noble conventions and their shallowness, which is in contradiction with Larry's attitude.

That's why Larry has to come to terms with the presupposition of them that money is the symbol of success. The excessive concernment of the material domain, which Larry is expected to follow, leads to his new complacent and independent state of being.

Similarly, Huxley's devotion to certain ideas signifies the central subject matter of the novel, in particular the research of personality as a psychological phenomenon

and the study of pacifism as a rescue. This is directed at the inner level of an individual soul as well as on the exterior level of the collective political world. His later immigration to the United States of America was a great turning point as, from this time on, he devoted himself to the study of Vedanta.

Obviously, Huxley's research of consciousness was of great importance to him. Accompanied by psychedelics and various experiments with them, he was focused primarily on achieving nirvana and better understanding of the Self. When following these aims, greater harmony should be under the reign of society.

Being highly autobiographical with Anthony from *Eyeless in Gaza*, these ideas are of great importance when analysing his concept of personality. Anthony's epiphany reaches its point when he encounters Miller, whose demonstration of the Buddhist belief and pacifistic doctrine leaves a permanent positive mark on Anthony.

Likewise, Isherwood's *A Meeting by the River* features deep autobiographical elements. The clash between the licentious life as a homosexual and his fascination as well as active cooperation with the Vedanta society epitomizes the central theme of the novella and of Isherwood himself. It was the internal contradiction between the worldliness with its sensual desires and the redemptive ascetic path of the Tao that constitutes the root idea of the novella.

When having migrated to the States, he became interested in Vedantic philosophy and Vedanta society. Although he resigned membership shortly afterwards, he became so engrossed in studying the Vedas that he helped Swami Prabhavananda to translate a part of the Vedantic ancient scripture, *Bhagavad Gita*.

While the plots of the novels differ in forms, the common essence directed towards the life without suffering is present in each book. The first part of the analysis is focused on each book individually. In order to understand the relations of the novels, the second part of the analysis is structured according to the framework of the following main themes: the Tao, emotional and material detachment, erudition and the Jungian paradigm of the ego and the Self. The analysis also highlights the fact that the personality features of the protagonists are interchangeable.

Therefore, the analysis proposes the synthesis of Eastern and Western perspectives, of both Vedantic and psychological terminologies. In other words, the breakdown of the novels creates the integral vision of both Eastern and Western

explication of the same subject. Eastern elucidation rests upon the traditional axiomatic principles as for example Brahman, dharma karmic law and dualistic polar principles. The doctrine explains hence the co-existence and the causality between the material and the non-material, the body and the mind, passing time and timelessness or illusory and non-illusory states of consciousness.

Understandably, the train of thought of many Western thinkers is based on modern psychology and science. The specialized fields of study as quantum physics, analytical psychology and transpersonal psychology set foundation stone for further research nowadays.

It has been only since the last century that such comparison is possible to draw because all three just mentioned scientific branches emerged in the twentieth century and, together with their innovative groundbreaking findings, they set a new paradigm of thinking. According to recent data of quantum physics and modern psychoanalytical techniques of consciousness mapping, current research accords with the Eastern views on the fundamental reality.

Huxley's dedication to the research of consciousness played an important role too when the interconnection of Eastern and Western ways of thinking was being established. From this point of view, the aspirations and the mentality of the protagonists are examined by means of Jungian archetypal principles of psyche as the ego and the Self.

In the psyche, the Self is categorized by Carl G. Jung as the archetype of wholeness, while the ego, securing the external life of an individual, is included in it. The Ego is one's persona and sensual perception. The ego and the Self are in the relation of meronymy, the part-whole integrating relationship because the ego is a component of the Self in the same way as atoms are of molecules.

The struggle of the protagonists fits into the model perfectly and so do any forms of spirituality or original religious aspirations. The point of the integral vision is to demonstrate the set of terminologies in a similar way as Huxley did with *The Perennial Philosophy*, whereupon the possibility of an integration into a larger whole emerges as for example the relationship between the pairs of the Self and the ego, or of the good and the evil. In that sense, perennial and transcendentalistic views of sharing the same metaphysical principle occur.

To summarize the fates of the protagonists, they all are led by their intuition to follow the longing for personality renunciation and self-realization. Taking the responsibility for their position in the world, they acquire emotional intelligence and a great degree of transculturality.

Larry from *The Razor's Edge* travels the world, goes through times of devoted study of ancient literature in foreign languages, while he, in contrast, gives a try to the drudgery in a coal mine and to hermit lifestyle just for the sake of pondering on his life. As the result of that, one could say the result of coming closer to self-actualization and liberation from suffering, he becomes reconciled. He becomes reconciled to life as such with the Vedantic essence—the existence of Brahman, the eternal living awareness. Then he starts to live the ordinary working life in his homeland.

Neither Anthony from *Eyeless in Gaza* sees a tangible goal in his life, which instigates him to find meaning and dedicate himself to the sociological research. This provides space for new potential happenings over time, manifesting itself in travelling to Mexico and surrender to the flow of the fate. Consequently, he meets Miller, a wise and serene doctor. After hearing his pacifistic and Buddhist doctrine, Anthony feels great persisting enthusiasm, whereupon he becomes clairvoyant of the deep eternal wisdom.

Oliver's journey in *A Meeting by the River* involves pilgrimage lifestyle. He travels through different countries, though still not feeling the fulfilment of his potential. Subsequently, he finds refuge for his soul in a Hindu monastery. Living there in accordance with dharma, he goes through the emotional struggle between his brother and the ego, whereupon he manages to take all responsibility for the volatile unfolding of his life. It is his own personal test for the conquest of the last Hindu Ashrama—the vow of the renunciation for the secular world.

Being valid for all three pilgrims, it is not the renunciation in the sense of refusing the worldly life with all its sensual amenities, but in the sense of attaining a positive overview of their actions. Only this way they accept life with great complacency and become consciously involved in it.



## 6. RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou tří děl Britských autorů, a to Somerseta Maughama, Aldouse Huxleyho a Christophera Isherwooda. Díla *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza* (v češtině *Raněný slepotou*) and *A Meeting by the River*, spolu tematicky souvisí skrz Východní filozofii a mysticismus, což tvoří základ orientace v životě každého z protagonistů. Hlavnímu rozboru, který podrobně analyzuje jednotlivá témata, předchází jak situační kontext, tak stručné shrnutí života autorů.

Situační kontext představuje vývoj východní filozofie a její postupné zařazení do západního akademického modelu. Mísení kultur vyvrcholilo v době kolonialismu osmnáctého a devatenáctého století, kdy nadvláda Britů poskytla západnímu světu příležitost k důkladnějšímu prozkoumání indické kultury spolu s jejími filozoficko-náboženskými doktrínami. Tím byl odstartován proces mísení myšlenkových systémů, který následně inspiroval mnoho spisovatelů, psychologů, filozofů a vědců.

Biografie vybraných autorů slouží jako základ pro další analýzu, přihlédneme-li ke skutečnosti, že zkušenosti i vnitřní rozpory autorů patřičně ovlivnily jejich tvorbu. Maughamovy cesty a zvědavost po hinduismu ho přivedla k Ramanu Maharshimu, jednomu z nejvýznamnějších indických představitelů moderní advaita-védantské školy. Na základě jejich setkání ztvárnil Maugham hinduistického mudrce Shri Ganeshu, jehož přítomnost byla spoluutvářejícím faktorem k Larryho vlastní seberealizaci.

Jelikož pochází postavy románu ze středně-vyšší společenské vrstvy, dílo také poskytuje náhled do jejich zvyklostí, jejichž plytkost a pocit nadřazenosti jsou v přímém rozporu s Larryho přístupem. Larry hledá řešení v intelektuálním světě, který následně propojí s putovním cestováním po Evropě a Asii. Po té se vrátí do své rodné vlasti a začíná žít všední, ač uvědomělý život taxikáře.

Huxleyho názory a teorie jsou význačným nástrojem pro pochopení ústřední tematiky románu. Například jeho pochopení osobnosti, jakožto psychologického fenoménu, a pacifismu, který prosazoval jako vysvobozující nástroj jednak na rovině individuální a duchovní a jednak na navazující rovině kolektivní a politické. Huxleyho zmapování vědomí na základě experimentu s psychedelickými enteogeny bylo cíleno

k dosažení stavu nirvány a lepšímu porozumění sobě samému. Výsledek takové změny měl přispět k větší harmonii naší společnosti.

Kvůli autobiografické podobnosti s protagonistou Anthonym v knize *Raněný slepotou* je tato teze důležitá k pochopení jeho konceptu osobnosti. Anthony hledá spásu v jeho sociologickém výzkumu, který ho částečně utápí ve vlastním intelektu. Během putování v Mexiku se zmocní Anthonyho epifanie, která dosáhne naplnění při střetnutí s Millerem. Millerovo přesvědčivé vysvětlení budhistické podstaty a pacifistické doktríny ovlivní Anthonyho permanentně.

Stejně tak Isherwoodova novela *A Meeting by the River* vykazuje výrazné autobiografické prvky. Střet prostopášného života oslavující jeho homosexualitu a uchvácení védantskou organizací v Kalifornii, na které se aktivně podílel, přesně vystihuje průvodní myšlenku novely. Ta se zakládá na ztvárnění vztahu zcela odlišných bratrů, který je doprovázen rozporem mezi světskostí se všemi jejími smyslnými touhami a vykupitelským způsobem života asketismu v souladu s filozofií Tao.

Olivera poutní cesta prochází Afrikou a Asií, kde najde duchovní útočiště v hinduistickém klášteře. Tam ho navštíví jeho bratr, což s sebou nese sourozeneckou soutěživost s mnohými osobními komplikacemi, jejichž původ si Oliver uvědomuje v sobě samém. Takto se podaří i Oliverovi najít vnitřní vědomou rovnováhu a složit tak poslední hinduistickou přísahu ve formě ashramy, kdy dochází k transcendenci osobnostních rozmarů a přesahu světského života.

Osudy tří protagonistů tak spojuje následování vlastní intuice. Ta je vede k přijetí jejich místa v životě a zodpovědnosti, díky které nabydou emocionální inteligence a schopnosti transkulturálního a transpersonálního vnímání. Toto přijetí pomyslného místa ztělesňuje symboliku filozofie Tao nebo hinduistické dharmy, jež kladou důraz na vidinu životní cesty a uvědomělé přítomnosti jakožto ultimátního cíle.

Zatímco se dějové linie děl liší v jejich formách, podstata hrdinů směřující k svobodnému životu bez utrpení zůstává. První část analýzy prošetřuje každou knihu samostatně. Druhá část je strukturována pomocí myšlenkového rámce následujících kategorií: Tao, emocionální i materiální nezaujatost, učenost, a paradigma ega a bytostného já z pohledu analytické psychologie Carla G. Junga. Rozbor děl poukazuje také na fakt, že jednotlivé osobnostní rysy protagonistů jsou zaměnitelné.

Analýza je také zprostředkována pro zařazení jejich zkušeností. Zakládá se na syntéze východní a západní perspektivy, při které se opírá o védantskou i psychologickou terminologii. Jinými slovy, rozbor děl spočívá v integrálním uspořádání východních i západních myšlenkových systémů. Východní systém se zakládá na principu Brahman, dharmy, karmických zákonů a dualistických principů polarit jako například na protikladných doménách, materiálních i nemateriálních, těla a ducha, času a věčnosti nebo iluzorních a skutečných stavů vědomí.

Myšlenkový pochod mnohých západních myslitelů je založen na moderní psychologii a vědeckém přístupu. Transpersonální psychologie, analytická psychologie a kvantová fyzika položila základní kámen pro další výzkum. Huxleyho poznatky o fenoménu vědomí přispěly k vzájemnému propojení východních a západních systémů. V této bakalářské práci sloužila jungiánská archetypální teorie ega a bytostného já ke kategorizaci smýšlení protagonistů.

Jejich obtížné metafyzické úděly hladce zapadají do tohoto západního modelu, jenž spolu s východní filozofií dává vzniku integrální vizi. Model taktéž vykresluje princip jakýchkoli forem spirituality a původních náboženských záměrů.

Záměrem této analýzy je také poukázat na soubor různých terminologií v podobném světle jako Huxley s jeho perenialistickým dílem *Věčná filozofie* a vyzdvihnout tak jednotný pozorovaný subjekt. Díky integraci vzniká z menších součástí větší celek jako například mezi páry bytostného já a ega nebo molekuly a atomů. V lingvistice se tento vztah mezi jednotným celkem a jeho utvářejícími součástmi označuje jako meronymický.

Na závěr je nutno podotknout, že závěry protagonistů se nevztahují na zřeknutí se světského života se všemi jeho smyslovými kvalitami jako takového, nýbrž na dosažení pozitivního životního nadhledu a vědomé kontroly nad jejich činy. Jedině tak dosahují Larry, Anthony a Oliver vnitřního uspokojení a podílí se na aktivním spoluutváření života.

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## **Annotation**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses three works of the British writers, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood. Together with them, it provides concise biographies of them and sets the topic of the works into situational context. The chosen works, namely *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *A Meeting by the River*, respectively, are related to each other through the themes of Eastern philosophy and mysticism. The analysed themes are the Tao, detachment, erudition and the Jungian paradigm of the ego and the Self, which is to say the analysis is structured by means of the synthesis of Eastern and Western perspectives, both Vedantic and psychological terminologies.

## **Keywords**

Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza*, *A Meeting by the River*, British literature Vedanta, Jungian psychology, ego, the Self, Hinduism, Eastern philosophy, self-realization, self-actualization, detachment, consciousness, Tao, political pacifism

## **Anotace**

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## **Abstrakt**

Tato bakalářská práce analyzuje tři díla Britských autorů, a to Somerseta Maughama, Aldouse Huxlyeho a Christophera Isherwooda. Mimo to stručně představuje jejich životy a situační kontext k tématu vybraných děl. Těmito díly jsou *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza* (v češtině *Raněný slepotou*) a *A Meeting by the River*, které spojuje východní filozofie a mysticismus. Jejich stěžejními tématy jsou filozofie Tao, emocionální a materialistická nezaujatost, učenost a jungiánské paradigma ega a svého vlastního já. Z toho vyplývá, že analýza je strukturována pomocí syntézy východních a západních myšlenkových schémat, které se potýkají jak s védskou, tak psychologickou terminologií.

## **Klíčová slova**

Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, *The Razor's Edge*, *Eyeless in Gaza*, *Raněný slepotou*, *A Meeting by the River*, anglická literatura, Védánta, analytická psychologie, ego, bytostné já, Hinduismus, východní filozofie, seberealizace, sebeaktualizace, vědomí, Tao, pacifismus