

AP4CTE AP Seminar: Building a Dynamic Workforce

Research Strategies for Innovating and Problem-solving Across Career Paths

Module 3

Point Counter Point

Selections from Chapter XIII

Aldous Huxley

Point Counter Point presents a set of character vignettes interwoven in the style of a fugue. Set in 1928 London, Huxley's 'novel of ideas' offers a variety of characters who experience love, heartache, work, frustration, desire, etc. as they try to navigate the modern world. In chapter XIII, the speaker of the passage below is Mark Rampion, a political cartoonist who has been long and stably married to his wife Mary, who somewhat left her aristocratic upbringing to live a more homely life with her husband. Rampion is the character in the novel who often advocates for a pragmatic, relativistic philosophy, critiquing the problems of modern life as living too one-sidedly (it is generally accepted that Huxley's contemporary, D.H. Lawrence, was the inspiration for his characterization). Here, he speaks to his peer Philip Quarles, a literary writer, who—in private journaling—often admires Rampion's consistency of thought and action, though recognizes his inability to live in the way Rampion advocates.

* * *

“But it’s so silly, all this political squabbling,” said Rampion, his voice shrill with exasperation, “so utterly silly. Bolsheviks and Fascists, Radicals and Conservatives, Communists and British Freeman—what the devil are they all fighting about? I’ll tell you. They’re fighting to decide whether we shall go to hell by communist express train or capitalist racing motor car, by individualist bus or collectivist tram running on the rails of all of them bound for hell, all headed for the same psychological impasse and the social collapse that results from psychological collapse. The only point of difference between them is: How shall we get there? It’s simply impossible for a man of sense to be interested in such disputes. For the man of sense the important thing is hell, not the means of transport to be employed in getting there. The question for the man of sense is: Do we or do we not want to go to hell? And his answer is: No, we don’t. And if that’s his answer, then he won’t have anything to do with any of the politicians. Because they all want to land us in hell. All, without exception. Lenin *and* Mussolini, MacDonald *and* Baldwin. All equally anxious to take us to hell and only squabbling about the means of taking us.”

“Some of them may take us a little more slowly than others,” suggested Philip.

Rampion shrugged his shoulders. “But so very little more slowly that it wouldn’t make any appreciable difference. They all believe in industrialism in one form or another, they all believe in Americanization. Think of the Bolshevik ideal. America but much more so. America with government departments taking the place of trusts and state officials instead of rich men. And then the ideal of the rest of Europe. The same thing, only with the rich men preserved. Machinery and government officials there. Machinery and Alfred Mond or Henry Ford here. The machinery to take us to hell; the rich or the officials to drive it. You think one set may drive more cautiously than the other? Perhaps you’re right. But I can’t see that there’s anything to choose between them. They’re all equally in a hurry. In the name of science, progress, and human happiness! Amen and step on the gas.”

Philip nodded. “They do step on it all right,” he said. “They get a move on. Progress. But as you say, it’s probably in the direction of the bottomless pit.”

“And the only thing the reformers can find to talk about is the shape, colour, and steering arrangements of the vehicle. Can’t the imbeciles see that it’s the direction that matters, that we’re entirely on the wrong road and ought to go back—preferably on foot, without the stinking machine?”

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“You may be right,” said Philip. “But the trouble is that, given our existing world, you can’t go back, you can’t scrap the machine. That is, you can’t do it unless you’re prepared to kill off about half the human race. Industrialism made possible the doubling of the world’s population in a hundred years. If you want to get rid of industrialism, you’ve got to get back to where you started. That’s to say, you’ve got to slaughter half the existing number of men and women. Which might, *sub specie aeternitatis* or merely *historiae*, be an excellent thing. But hardly a matter of practical politics.”

“Not at the moment,” Rampion agreed. “But the next war and the next revolution will make it only too practical.”

“Possibly. But one shouldn’t count on wars and revolutions. Because, if you count on them happening, they certainly will happen.”

“They’ll happen,” said Rampion, “whether you count on them or not. Industrial progress means over-production, means the need for getting new markets, means international rivalry, means standardization of work, means more ready-made and unindividual amusements, means diminution of initiative and creativeness, means more intellectualism and the progressive atrophy of all the vital and fundamental things in human nature, means increased boredom and restlessness, means finally a kind of individual madness that can only result in social revolution. Count on them or not, wars and revolutions are inevitable, if things are allowed to go on as they are at present.”

“So the problem will solve itself,” said Philip.

“Only by destroying itself. When humanity’s destroyed, obviously there’ll be no more problem. But it seems a poor sort of solution. I believe there may be another, even within the framework of the present system. A temporary one while the system’s being modified in the direction of a permanent solution. The root of the evil’s in the individual psychology; so it’s there, in the individual psychology, that you’d have to begin. The first step would be to make people live dualistically, in two compartments. In one compartment as industrialized workers, in the other as human beings. As idiots and machines for eight hours out of every twenty-four and real human beings for the rest.”

“Don’t they do that already?”

“Of course they don’t. They live as idiots and machines all the time, at work and in their leisure. Like idiots and machines, but imagining they’re living like civilized humans, even like gods. The first thing to do is to make them admit that they are idiots and machines during working hours. ‘Our civilization being what it is’—this is what you’ll have to say to them—‘you’ve got to spend eight hours out of every twenty-four as a mixture between an imbecile and a sewing machine. It’s very disagreeable, I know. It’s humiliating and disgusting. But there you are. You’ve got to do it; otherwise the whole fabric of our world will fall to bits and we’ll all starve. Do the job, then, idiotically and mechanically, and spend your leisure hours in being a real complete man or woman, as the case may be. Don’t mix the two lives together; keep the bulkheads watertight between them. The genuine human life in your leisure hours is the real thing. The other’s just a dirty job that’s got to be done. And never forget that it *is* dirty and, except in so far as it keeps you fed and society intact, utterly unimportant, utterly irrelevant to the real human life. Don’t be deceived by the canting rogues who talk of the sanctity of labour and the Christian service that business men do their fellows. It’s all lies. Your work’s just a nasty, dirty job, made unfortunately necessary by the folly of your ancestors. They piled up a mountain of garbage and you’ve got to go on digging it away, for fear it might stink you to

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death, dig for dear life, while cursing the memory of the maniacs who made all the dirty work for you to do. But don't try to cheer yourself up by pretending the nasty mechanical job is a noble one. It isn't; and the only result of saying and believing that it is will be to lower your humanity to the level of the dirty work. If you believe in business as service and the sanctity of labour, you'll merely turn yourself into a mechanical idiot for twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four. Admit it's dirty, hold your nose, and do it for eight hours, and then concentrate on being a real human being in your leisure. A real complete human being. Not a newspaper reader, not a jazzier, not a radio fan. The industrialists who purvey ready-made amusements to the masses are doing their best to make you as much of a mechanical imbecile in your leisure as in your hours of work. But don't let them. Make the effort of being human.' That's what you've got to say to people; that's the lesson you've got to teach the young. You've got to persuade everybody that all this grand industrial civilization is just a bad smell and that the real, significant life can only be lived apart from it. It'll be a very long time before decent living and industrial smell can be reconciled. Perhaps, indeed, they're irreconcilable. It remains to be seen. In the meantime, at any rate, we must shovel the garbage and bear the smell stoically, and in the intervals try to lead the real human life."

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Brave New World

Selections from Chapter I

Aldous Huxley

Brave New World, published in 1932, is arguably Huxley's most well-known novel. The dystopian fiction details a world of 'stability' built upon the models of scientific advancement—but not one applied to production of material, but rather production of individuals. The first chapter provides the backdrop for understanding the new world of the novel as students follow the directory and World Controller through various factory-like aspects of social creation. Here, they see the Hatchery, Embryo Store, and Decanting Room where all humans derive—no longer a product of a human womb, persons are bred in test tubes and then genetically- and environmentally-determined for specific function in the mechanism of their society in the name of "stability."

...

"We also predestine and condition. We decant our babies as socialized human beings, as Alphas or Epsilons, as future sewage workers or future..." He was going to say "future World controllers," but correcting himself, said "future Directors of Hatcheries," instead.

The D.H.C. acknowledged the compliment with a smile.

They were passing Metre 320 on Rack 11. A young Beta-Minus mechanic was busy with screwdriver and spanner on the blood-surrogate pump of a passing bottle. The hum of the electric motor deepened by fractions of a tone as he turned the nuts. Down, down...A final twist, a glance at the revolution counter, and he was done. He moved two paces down the line and began the same process on the next pump.

"Reducing the number of resolutions per minute," Mr. Foster explained. "The surrogate goes round slower; therefore passes through the lung at longer intervals; therefore gives the embryo less oxygen. Nothing like oxygen-shortage for keeping an embryo below par." Again he rubbed his hands.

"But why do you want to keep the embryo below par?" asked an ingenuous student.

"Ass!" said the Director, breaking a long silence. "Hasn't it occurred to you that an Epsilon embryo must have an Epsilon environment as well as an Epsilon heredity?"

It evidently hadn't occurred to him. He was covered with confusion.

"The lower the caste," said Mr. Foster, "the shorter the oxygen." The first organ affected was the brain. After that the skeleton. At seventy per cent of normal oxygen you got dwarfs. At less than seventy eyeless monsters.

"Who are no use at all," concluded Mr. Foster.

Whereas (his voice became confident and eager), if they could discover a technique for shortening the period of maturation what a triumph, what a benefaction to Society!

"Consider the horse."

They considered it.

Mature at six; the elephant at ten. While at thirteen man is not yet sexually mature; and is only full-grown at twenty. Hence, of course, that fruit of delayed development, the human intelligence.

"But in Epsilons," said Mr. Foster very justly, "we don't need human intelligence."

Didn't need and didn't get it. But though the Epsilon mind was mature at ten, the Epsilon body was not fit to work till eighteen. Long years of superfluous and wasted immaturity. If the physical development could be speeded up till it was as quick, say, as a cow's, what an enormous saving to the Community!

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“Enormous!” murmured the students. Mr. Foster’s enthusiasm was infectious.

He became rather technical; spoke of the abnormal endocrine co-ordination which made men grow so slowly; postulated a germinal mutation to account for it. Could the effects of this germinal mutation be undone? Could the individual Epsilon embryo be made a revert, by a suitable technique, to the normality of dogs and cows? That was the problem. And it was all but solved.

Pilkington, at Mombasa, had produced individuals who were sexually mature at four and full-grown at six and a half. A scientific triumph. But socially useless. Six-year-old men and women were too stupid to do even Epsilon work. And the process was an all-or-nothing one; either you failed to modify at all, or else you modified the whole way. They were still trying to find the ideal compromise between adults of twenty and adults of six. So far without success. Mr. Foster sighed and shook his head.

Their wanderings through the crimson twilight had brought them to the neighborhood of Metre 170 on Rack 9. From this point onwards Rack 9 was enclosed and the bottles performed the remainder of their journey in a kind of tunnel, interrupted here and there by openings two or three metres wide.

“Heat conditioning,” said Mr. Foster.

Hot tunnels alternated with cool tunnels. Coolness was wedded to discomfort in the form of hard X-rays. By the time they were decanted the embryos had a horror of cold. They were predestined to emigrate to the tropics, to be miners and acetate silk spinners and steel workers. Later on their minds would be made to endorse the judgment of their bodies. “We condition them to thrive on heat,” concluded Mr. Foster. “Our colleagues upstairs will teach them to love it.”

“And that,” put in the Director sententiously, “that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you’ve got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny.”

In a gap between two tunnels, a nurse was delicately probing with a long fine syringe into the gelatinous contents of a passing bottle. The students and their guides stood watching her for a few moments in silence.

“Well, Lenina,” said Mr. Foster, when at last she withdrew the syringe and straightened herself up.

The girl turned with a start. One could see that, for all the lupus and the purple eyes, she was uncommonly pretty.

“Henry!” Her smile flashed redly at him—a row of coral teeth.

“Charming, charming,” murmured the Director and, giving her two or three little pats, received in exchange a rather deferential smile for himself.

“What are you giving them?” asked Mr. Foster, making his tone very professional.

“Oh, the usual typhoid and sleeping sickness.”

“Tropical workers start being inoculated at Metre 150,” Mr. Foster explained to the students. “The embryos still have gills. We immunize the fish against the future man’s diseases.” Then, turning back to Lenina, “Ten to five on the roof this afternoon,” he said, “as usual.”

“Charming,” said the Director once more, and, with a final pat, moved away after the others.

On Rack 10 rows of next generation’s chemical workers were being trained in the toleration of lead, caustic soda, tar, chlorine. The first of a batch of two hundred and fifty

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embryonic rocket-plane engineers was just passing the eleven hundred metre mark on Rack 3. A special mechanism kept their containers in constant rotation. “To improve their sense of balance,” Mr. Foster explained. “Doing repairs on the outside of a rocket in mid-air is a ticklish job. We slacken off the circulation when they’re right way up, so that they’re half staved, and double the flow of surrogate when they’re upside down. They learn to associate topsy-turvydom with well-being; in fact, they’re only truly happy when they’re standing on their heads.

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Island

Compilation of “The Notes on What’s What”

Aldous Huxley

Island is Huxley’s final novel, published posthumously in 1963, and presents a fictionalized culmination of his perennialist philosophies. Like Dante’s Divine Comedy, Huxley’s character Wil is led through an experiential journey through the island of Pala, exploring its structure, culture, social identity, and ideals. Huxley marries the spiritualism of the East with the positive scientism of the West in an attempt to find a balance where “nothing short of everything will really do”—life in all of its experiences and facets. In many ways, it provides answers to the problems acknowledged in Point Counter Point and then heightened in Brave New World. The “Notes on What’s What” given below is—in essence—the treatise of the island of Pala, given to Wil early in the novel by Dr. Robert; Wil then reads selections from the “Notes” sporadically throughout the novel, though compiled as a single document below.

...

I

Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there.

If I only knew in fact I am, I should cease to behave as what I think I am; and if I stopped behaving as what I am, I should know who I am.

What in fact I am, if only the Manichee I think I am would allow me to know it, is the reconciliation of yes and no lived out in total acceptance and the blessed experience of Not-Two.

In religion all words are dirty words. Anybody who gets eloquent about Buddha, or God, or Christ, ought to have his mouth washed out with carbolic soap.

Because his aspiration to perpetuate only the “yes” in every pair of opposites can never, in the nature of things, be realized, the insulate Manichee I think I am condemns himself to endlessly repeated frustration, endlessly repeated conflicts with other aspiring and frustrated Manichees.

Conflicts and frustrations—the theme of all history and almost all biography. “I show you sorrow,” said the Buddha realistically. But he also showed the ending of sorrow—self-knowledge, total acceptance, the blessed experience of Not-Two.

II

Knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being, and Good Being results in the most appropriate kind of good doing. But good doing does not of itself result in Good Being. We can be virtuous without knowing who in fact we are. The beings who are merely good are not Good Beings; they are just pillars of society.

Most pillars are their own Samsons. They hold up, but sooner or later they pull down. There has never been a society in which most good doing was the product of Good Being and therefore constantly appropriate. This does not mean that there will never be such a society or that we in Pala re fools for trying to call it into existence.

III

The Yogin and the Stoic—two righteous egos who achieve their very considerable results by pretending, systematically, to be somebody else, even somebody supremely good and wise, that we can pass from insulated Manichee-hood to Good Being.

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Good Being is knowing who in fact we are; and in order to know who in fact we are, we must first know, moment by moment, who we think we are and what this bad habit of thought compels use to feel and do. A moment of clear and complete knowledge of what we think we are, but in fact are not, puts a stop, for the moment, to the Manichean charade. If we renew, until they become a continuity, these moments of the knowledge of what we are not, we may find ourselves, all of a sudden, knowing who in fact we are.

Concentration, abstract thinking, spiritual exercises—systematic exclusions in the realm of thought. Asceticism and hedonism—systematic exclusions in the realm of sensation, feeling and action. But Good Being is in the knowledge of who in fact one is in relation to *all* experiences. So be aware—aware in every context, at all times and whatever, creditable or discreditable, pleasant or unpleasant, you may be doing or suffering. This is the only genuine yoga, the only spiritual exercise worth practicing.

The more a man knows about individual objects, the more he knows about God.
Translating Spinoza's language into ours, we can say: The more a man knows about himself in relation to every kind of experience, the greater his chance of suddenly, one fine morning, realizing who in fact he is—or rather Who (capital W) in Fact (capital F) “he” (between quotation marks) Is (capital I).

St. John was right. In a blessedly speechless universe, the Word was not only *with* God; it *was* God. As a something to be believed in. God is a projected symbol, a reified name. God = “God.”

Faith is something very different from belief. Belief is the systematic taking of unanalyzed words much too seriously. Paul's words, Mohammed's words, Marx's words, Hitler's words—people take them too seriously, and what happens? What happens is the senseless ambivalence of history—sadism versus duty, or (incomparably worse) sadism *as* duty; devotion counterbalanced by organized paranoia, sisters of charity selflessly tending the victims of their own church's inquisitors and crusaders. Faith, on the contrary, can never be taken too seriously. For Faith is the empirically justified confidence in our capacity to know who in fact we are, to forget the belief-intoxicated Manichee in Good Being. Give us this day our daily Faith, but deliver us, dear God, from Belief.

...

Me as I think I am and me as I am in fact—sorrow, in other words, and the ending of sorrow. One third, more or less, of all the sorrow that the person I think I am must endure is unavoidable. It is the sorrow inherent in the human condition, the price we must pay for being sentient and self-conscious organisms, aspirants to liberation, but subject to the laws of nature and under orders to keep on marching, through irreversible time, through a world wholly indifferent to our well-being, toward decrepitude and the certainty of death. The remaining two thirds of all sorrow is homemade and, so far as the universe is concerned, unnecessary.

...

“‘PATRIOTISM IS NOT ENOUGH.’ BUT NEITHER IS ANYTHING ELSE. Science is not enough, religion is not enough, art is not enough, politics and economics are not enough, nor is love, nor is duty, nor is action however disinterested, nor, however sublime, is contemplation. Nothing short of everything will really do.”

...

We cannot reason ourselves out of our basic irrationality. All we can do is to learn the art of being irrational in a reasonable way.

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In Pala, after three generations of Reform, there are no sleeplike flocks and no ecclesiastical Good Shepherds to shear and castrate; there are no bovine or swinish herds and no licensed drovers, royal or military, capitalistic or revolutionary, to brand, confine and butcher. There are only voluntary associations of men and women on the road to full humanity.

Tune or pebbles, processes or substantial things? “Tunes,” answer Buddhism and modern science. “Pebbles,” say the classical philosophers of the West. Buddhism and modern science think of the world in terms of music. The image that comes to mind when one reads the philosophers of the West is a figure in a Byzantine mosaic, rigid, symmetrical, made up of millions of little squares of some stony material and firmly cemented to the walls of a windowless basilica.

The dancer’s grace and, forty years on, her arthritis—both are functions of the skeleton. It is thanks to an inflexible framework of bones that the girl is able to do her pirouettes, thanks to the same bones, grown a little rusty, that the grandmother is condemned to a wheelchair. Analogously, the firm support of a culture is the prime-condition of all individual originality and creativeness; it is also their principal enemy. The thing in whose absence we cannot possibly grow into a complete human being is, all too often, the thing that prevents us from growing.

A century of research on the *moksha*-medicine has clearly shown that quite ordinary people are perfectly capable of having visionary or even fully liberating experiences. In this respect the men and women who make and enjoy high culture are no better off than the lowbrows. High experience is perfectly compatible with low symbolic expression.

The expressive symbols created by Palanese artists are no better than the expressive symbols created by artists elsewhere. Being the products of happiness and a sense of fulfillment, they are probably less moving, perhaps less satisfying aesthetically, than the tragic or compensatory symbols created by the victims of frustration and ignorance, of tyranny, war and guilt-fostering, crime-inciting superstitions. Palanese superiority does not lie in symbolic expression but in an art which, though higher and far more valuable than all the rest, can yet be practiced by everyone—the art of adequately experiencing, the art of becoming more intimately acquainted with all the worlds that, as human beings, we find ourselves inhabiting. Palanese culture is not to be judged as (for lack of any better criterion) we judge other cultures. It is not to be judged by the accomplishments of a few gifted manipulators of artistic or philosophical symbols. No, it is to be judged by what all the members of the community, the ordinary as well as the extraordinary, can and do experience in every contingency and at each successive intersection of time and eternity.

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*Aldous Huxley was born in Surrey in 1894 to well-established parentage—his father was a biographer, editor and poet, whose father was famous Darwinian scientist, T.H. Huxley, while his mother was related to famous British poet, Matthew Arnold. While Huxley aspired to be a scientist in his youth, such dreams were cut short by a bout of keratitis punctate that rendered him completely blind for 18 months and functionally blind for the rest of his life. Rather than be discouraged, Huxley taught himself Braille and continued to study voraciously. His writing career is a testament to his vast studies—his fictional novels, essays, travel writings, poetry, and lectures attest to broad knowledge of human experience, artistic appreciation, and scientific inquiry. Some of his most famous non-fictional works, the *Perennial Philosophy* and *Doors of Perception*, have had wide influence philosophically on many movements, including those sympathetic to Eastern spiritual practices such as those he experienced after moving to California in 1937. Huxley died in November 22, 1963, the same day as Kennedy’s assassination, and the death of contemporary writer and philosopher C.S. Lewis.*