CHAPTER V

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What I propose to do in this chapter is to underline Durrell's own declaration that his object in his novels is 'to interrogate human values'. Also I attempt to highlight the fact that Durrell is an optimist and he anticipates the dawn of a good future.

Lawrence Durrell positions The Alexandria Quartet and The Avignon Quintet in the historical period of World War II. As James R.Nichols points out: "Durrell, like so many novelists of the century, has been haunted by World War II and the seeming inability of man to control the very machinery of modern civilisation that he has created" (1995; 105). According to John M. Rose, in this century, there has been a "loss of a sense of social and political order" as a result of the two world wars, regional conflicts and civil wars. At the same time this century has "produced an increasing awareness of the relative nature of culture, values and meaning" (75). Durrell is a writer who is acutely aware of and concerned about issues such as culture and values. In the 'Consequential Data' which follows Balthazar, he writes: 'My objects in the novels? To interrogate human values through an honest representation of the human passions. A desirable end, perhaps a hopeless objective' (The Quartet 387).

Durrell examines these pertinent issues of culture and values in the context of World War II. According to Nancy Lewis, his ideas about war are not fully realised until his Avignon Quintet. Clea, the last volume of The
Quartet, set during World War II, indicates that Durrell's thought is headed toward the conclusion that the desire for war is rooted in the human psyche, so until the psyche is transformed, war will exist (1995-96; 97). In Clea, we hear Keats explaining to Darley about this:

I believe the desire for war was first lodged in the instincts as a biological shock-mechanism to precipitate a spiritual crisis which couldn't be done any other how in limited people. The less sensitive among us can hardly visualise death, far less live joyfully with it. So the powers that arranged things for us felt they must concretize it, in order to lodge death in the actual present. . . . It will sound damn silly to you, but the presence of death out there as a normal feature of life — only in full acceleration so to speak — has given me an inkling of Life Everlasting! (The Quartet 796-97)

Again, in Quinx Durrell points out that, "The will to self-destruction seems more advanced in the more gifted nations or peoples" (173).

As Foreign Press Officer for the British Embassy in Cairo and later as Press Attache in Alexandria, Durrell was familiar with the details of the war in Egypt and he includes those in Clea — air-raids, bombed-out buildings, the French warships immobilised, petty rivalries in the embassies and so on. War uproots people and in The Quartet people who survive the war in Egypt "displace" themselves into new life, — Nessim and Justine to Switzerland, Lisa and Mountolive to Paris, and Darley and Clea to France. Pauline Beard observes that Darley:
Cast up in Alexandria without roots, family or background stands for the postmodern man’s displacement. Everything else on earth belongs, has a purpose, except man. After the First World War, when old values died, men sought for meaning in life. Youth settled into an anti-heroic phase. Especially, for the Englishman a lassitude developed, one which Durrell referred to as the “English Death”. (91-92)

Durrell refers to the “impersonality of war”. He says in Clea: “There was no room for human beings or thought of them under this vast umbrella of coloured death”. One morning, after one fearful night during the war, Darley hears “the first call to prayer from some as yet invisible minaret” and he wonders, “Were there, then, still gods left to invoke?” (The Quartet 669-70). To Durrell, “the fall of France” was “an event which symbolised all too clearly the psychic collapse of Europe itself” (677). He is filled with anxiety about “the fragmented psyche of European man... subject to hungers which could only be killed by satiety, but never satisfied...” (243). During the war, an extraordinary paralysis gripped the whole of Europe. As Ramón Plo Alastraé says, “the end of Livia describes the tension in Europe just before the outbreak of World War II” (118) and the period of war, the “chaotic period of violence, destruction and death” is described in Constance (120). Durrell describes in detail, the Nazi advance in France and the exodus of civilian population of Belgium and the northern sectors of France to the southern parts of France. There was total confusion and the victory of the Nazis was more than just physical, it was quite as much psychological. The war-torn world is described as “bitter world of shortage and curfew”, “a world of ration-card and movement-order” (Constance 211).
Prince Hassad cannot but wonder how people could conceive of another war, after the lessons of 1914. He says to himself: “It is because it is quite unthinkable that it must happen. People want death really, life poses too many problems” (*Livia* 212). Sutcliffe’s comment about his insane wife is relevant: “It’s appropriate to the day and age”, he said bitterly. “Indeed when one sees the state of the world one wonders why one should call her back to it — supposing we could” (*Constance* 119). Later Constance thinks, “What good is a poor psychiatrist when the whole world has gone out of its mind?” (157). Prince Hassad is shocked that the “Germans... are not only foul, but they revel in foulness for its own sake” (192). In *Constance* there are several anecdotes to show the cruelty, the ruthlessness of the Germans. Once, when a train full of starving refugees passed at the level crossing, Constance and Nancy Quiminal from inside their truck, passed on to them two laundry baskets, filled with fresh loaves of bread. For this, they were beaten by peasants to their knees under orders of German Officers (222-23). Another anecdote is the crushing of bicycles of natives using tanks by German Officers — a calculated military move to prevent messages being carried to the Resistance in the hills (194-95). According to Ludovic, the Honey Man it is because “The youth of France has gone work-shy and gun-shy” that the country has been ruined (227).

Smirgel tells Constance that Hitler’s intention was to establish the “New Order”, “a black order, not white” in the western world through German arms. He wanted to sweep away the Jews and gypsies “together with the whole Judeo-Christian corpus of ideas based upon gold”. In his new vision, the “world will be based no more on gold, but on blood — the document of the race-might” (236). Smirgel continues, “It is not cupidity or rapacity which drives
the Führer but the desire for once to let the dark side of man have his full sway, stand to his full height” (237).

Durrell examines not only the period before and during war, but also the situations of the post-war world. As Andrzej Gasiorek points out, the early post-war period, “was marked by a gamut of emotions ranging from uncertainty to despair” (1). According to Durrell, the post-war world is one devoid of ‘values’. The western man particularly, has no sense of purpose or sense of direction; there is a “failure of value”, to put it short (The Quartet 243).

It would be worthwhile here to consider what is meant by values. Harold B. Barclay observes that “Values refer to desirable ends, what people consider to be the important achievable goals in life” (64). Dr. N. L. Gupta states that, “Values are generated mainly from our purposes, aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, interests, convictions etc. having close link with society and environment around us” (Preface v). He notes that “Without any values, the world could not be a place worth living in” (4). Swami Muni Narayana Prasad mentions about values:

Man, apparently, is born, grows up and withers like vegetables, but what is distinctive of human-life is the value-notions man inherits from his ancestors, and those he fashions out of his own day-to-day life. Such values, eternal in nature, which marks the loftiness of human nature, transcends the transitory nature of worldly life. (9)

What Durrell says is that, western man, having lost this essential ‘sense of values’ is groping in the darkness, desperate and confused. In The Avignon Quintet Livia tells Blanford that the old world “died in 1832, with the death of
Goethe; the old world of humanism and liberation and faith” (Livía 109). Durrell stresses the impact of war, through certain images, which resulted in this loss of ‘sense of values’. Certain images connected with war can be listed. Verfeuille and Tu Duc bleed from war-torn landscape. Certain other images are Sabine’s favourite shade of lipstick ‘the second cousin of arterial blood’ (Monsieur 41) and its echo in Trash’s nail polish and ‘red maw’ (Constance 335) and in Livia’s nail polish, ‘Sadist Red’ (Livía 21); the blood bath at Aby Fahym (Constance 90-91); Constance’s and Affad’s menstrual manipulations (Constance 265-66); the slit Constance makes in the thigh of Livia’s corpse (Constance 256); the Red Cross in general; and of course, Sutcliffe’s red notebooks (Constance 351).

Durrell touches upon certain post-war problems like international capitalism, greed for money, absence of attachments or lack of love and so on. Clea’s conclusion opens up a post-war problem i.e., international capitalism. Towards the end of Clea ten technicians are building a communications relay station:

It seems inescapable the death we bring to the old order without wishing it. It is simply done too — a few steel girders, some digging equipment, a crane! Suddenly things begin to alter shape. A new cupidity is born. It will start quietly with a few barbers’ shops, but will end by altering the whole architecture of the port. In ten years it will be an unrecognizable jumble of warehouses, dance halls and. . . . (The Quartet 869-70)

Nancy points out that the ‘new cupidity’ of international capitalism — the international banks, the multinational corporations, the stock exchanges around the globe bespeak greed. Durrell’s next two novels, Tunc and Nunquam
describe a world controlled by the Firm and *The Avignon Quintet* proposes that the Templar's treasure might be gold — these suggest, says Nancy, that Durrell is dismayed over the greed in international capitalism. "It stifles the psyche", she adds (1995-'96; 101-02).

In the post-war world, the "old certain stability of things had melted into something new — a sort of state of limbo" (*Livia* 180). There is "the pre-eminence of matter and will in the world"(161). It is a world where a "thirst for goodness becomes unhealthy"(*Quinx* 139). As Pursewarden puts it, "the immense extension of knowledge in this our age, the growth of new sciences, makes it almost impossible for us to digest the available flavours and put them to use"(*The Quartet* 117). C.Wright Mills points out that:

> The cultural meaning of physical science... is becoming doubtful. Recent developments in physical science... have been currently seen as a result of highly specialised inquiry, and improperly felt to be wonderfully mysterious. They have raised more problems — both intellectual and moral — than they have solved, and the problems they have raised lie almost entirely in the area of social not physical affairs. The obvious conquest of nature, the overcoming of scarcity, is felt by men of the overdeveloped societies to be virtually complete. And now in these societies, science — the chief instrument of this conquest — is felt to be footloose, aimless, and in need of re-appraisal. (15-16)

This is exactly the situation in the West, which Durrell voices through Pursewarden. In *Monsieur*, Durrell observes that man is on his way to the tomb, "Trapped between conflicting notions of rest and motion", and "rest never
bringing him the peace and reassurance he needs, motion only sterile change and ideal sorrow” (266). Lucifer, the narrator of The Black Book reveals the English condition, the “English death”.

We are lit up in the signs of a new chaos. We are like patches of tissue, kept warm in sealed flasks, fed, washed and commanded to multiply under the watchful supervision of a scientist. Our world is a world of strict boundaries, outside which we dare not wander, not even in our imagination; whose seasons come and go without any sense of change. It is medieval in its blindness, this existence. (22)

In an interview, Durrell describes modern man, particularly Western man as “cruel, hysterical, stupid and self-destructive” and adds that his motto is “Accidie, Satiety, Modernity” (Kneller Tape 73). According to him during wartime the world lived “in a tension without remedy” (Constance 115).

In Justine, Durrell states that this world is one of “studied carnal money making” where a person like Vessim, “a spirit essentially gentle and contemplative” could find no true province of operation (The Quartet 29). He refers to Banquo, the banker’s “brave old face which seemed to have foundered on the reefs of success, the disappointment which the money - power brings” (Monsieur 273). However, money is something which we need. Georges Gaston Pombal, a minor consular who shares a flat with Darley quotes the Arabic proverb which says: “Riches can buy riches, but poverty will scarcely buy one a leper’s kiss” (The Quartet 142). To Justine, “Poverty is a great cutter off”, and “riches a great shutter off” (137). Smirgel, in Quinx speaks about riches as protection from one’s fellow-beings:
I think that riches offer the only tangible safety for a man who has clearly seen how dangerous and horrible his fellowman is. There is no other way of protecting oneself against him except by amassing money and creating a protective power-field of money... (132)

Anyhow, the greed for money makes man self-centred and ruthless, such a one will not have any reluctance to do any kind of cruelty for the sake of money. The modern man wants to walk with a “purse under each eye and one under his waist-coat which stirs when he breathes as if a mole were trying to surface” (*Quinx* 140).

Durrell expresses anxiety over the fact that human beings are no more attached to each other. They do not find any meaning in attachments and value more than anything else, material comforts or power of money. Durrell feels that the reason for this is too much of freedom. From a novel of Sutcliffe which Piers copied:

> In our age too much freedom has destroyed the fragile cobweb which gave the great human attachments their form and substance — their truth. Health rages in us like a toothache, but fine styles in living, as in writing, have been overtaken by loutishness.

(*Monsieur* 91-92)

No more attachments are there between men and women, Sutcliffe states in *Quinx*:

> The new day is dawning — women have become sex-service stations; no more attachments, just distributors of friendly
faceless lust. Modern girls whose body-image is smashed by neglect. Neither caressed enough nor suckled without disgust nor respected and treated with the awe they deserve. Pious loveless lives... (138-39)

Durrell tells Gray in an interview about his resentment against England and says that he finds a spokesman in D.H. Lawrence because

Yes... Lawrence confirmed my resentment against England because he was precisely against those narrow, suburban values and because he depicted so marvellously in things like Sons and Lovers the crushing of a spirit that can go on in that urban mould. So in a sense he was a great signaler of that; in fact I borrowed literally from him in tones of voice. (Gray 79-80)

In Durrell’s novel The Black Book, Lucifer admits his obsession with the external rather than the internal, with the separation of body and spirit. He is typically English, and is not able to break out of the thought patterns of the culture which generated him. Durrell declares that the man of the West is “spiritually underdeveloped” and hence must “either evolve or disappear” (Farcet 252). According to him, Europe is a civilisation based upon the principle of the will.

Durrell is very much concerned about the “doing down of a woman” by the Western culture. In an interview given to Mc Donald he says:

What was concerning me about our culture was precisely the doing down of a woman who is after all the basic brick; if we have any future it depends on her. The most critical part of our civilisation
is not an atom bomb at all but over-population. But basically, the kind of children that we’re going to make are going to be pretty sterilised if women cannot be more respected and if their role cannot be more combined with complete freedom, with also a functional freedom as the matriarch of society... but the issue is, I think, still very clear before us, and it’s really, what’s going to become of the girls? (Mc Donald 158-59)

Durrell states in explicit terms that he doesn’t like the British people, in another interview:

Durrell. I can’t deny I’m British, and what a lovely language to write in. But I don’t like the people.... We are a very constipated race.

Gray. ...Rhodes is an island, so is England. What’s the difference?

Durrell. I wouldn’t say England is an island. England is part of Europe, but she deliberately wants to be superior and insular, and that’s what I resent. It’s pretentious....

(Gray 80)

Pauline Beard observes that Pursewarden, like D.H.Lawrence has rejected England as being too “stultifying for art”. Pursewarden complains of all the mackintoshed English policewomen ‘waiting to see if one pees straight’. Thus, Darley, Mountolive and Pursewarden, all expatriate Britons find themselves in Alexandria (Beard 93-94).

Durrell directs our attention to the rotten state of affairs of the present
day world. In the interview given to Farcet, Durrell says:

You see, all the debates on which we keep harping seem to me totally outmoded. The essential is elsewhere. Intellectuals and politicians go on and on, but the truth is that we are not adequately evolved to confront the tragedy taking place in front of our eyes. Consider the state of the world: the battlefields are multiplying, famine reigns in a number of regions, pollution is getting worse, and we do not know how to hold back the deluge... (Farcet 252)

Durrell is obliged to accept the assertion of the Gnostics that the spirit of evil might have seized hold of the universe. In Monsieur, Durrell elaborately and graphically portrays through Akkad, the gnostic, the situation of the world today with evil at its helm. Akkad speaks to Bruce of a Black Prince who made away with the Original King. Bruce realises that

The interloper, who had replaced the original monarch of the ages, had thrown into confusion the workings of the cosmic law. Since he came, the Black Prince, everything had to be re-ordered, reapprehended, reshaped; the whole of reality therefore. (117)

Akkad called the situation “The very death of God”,

for the usurping prince had made away with the original king whose reign had been an illustration, not of nature’s discord, but of nature’s harmony and congruence. Under him birth and death had been fully realised, spirit and flesh, animal, insect and man were joined in a creative symbiosis of light and justice — such as we had not dared even to conceive since the date when the Prince of Darkness
took his place on the throne. (118)

Akkad’s lengthy exposition of three R’s and four M’s conveys convincingly the pathetic situation of today’s world. Evil rules the day, but humanity is too weak to face the truth. Today’s is a munching world of death and disillusion which pretends to have a saviour. Here there is only the spirit of nothingness and it is a world in which we are each other’s prey (137). The gnostics make the plea to “Refuse, refute, renounce”. Four Ms characterise our age — “Monotheism, Messianism, Monogamy, and Materialism” (140-41).

According to Akkad, “Man is in a trap” and goodness avails him nothing in the new dispensation. Whoever it was who had concern for ours’ and the worlds’ fate has been replaced by another “who glories in our servitude to matter”. Man is protected “from the full consciousness” of his nature by “a hard scaly integument” and unless he makes a special effort he can only see the truth indistinctly. For the gnostics, Akkad points out that “the equation matter-spoil-loot-capital value-usury-alienation... seems to sum up the present state of things” which “runs counter to nature” (166-68). Akkad continues: “Thus human reality was a limbo now peopled with ghosts, and the world was embarked on a collision course with the spirit of default, of evil, at the helm, guided to destruction by inferior demons” (191).

The “astonishing letter from Alexandria”, from Akkad to Sutcliffe describes a sort of nougat land before the Fall, so to speak, before the Flood. There came a radical shift of emphasis which pushed the balance over from the domain of spirit into matter. Akkad brings out attention to the fact that hints of this can be traced in the old mythologies (216-17). This is true, for we can find the same in Hindu mythologies. R.C. Zachner says:
For the Hindus the world was not created once for all nor was there any end to it: from all eternity it had been recreating itself and dissolving back into its unformed and unmanifest condition, and these periods of evolution and devolution were called days and nights of Brahma. Each day and each night of Brahma lasts one thousand years of the gods, and each year of the gods correspond to twelve thousand years of men. . . . Each ‘year of the gods’ is in its turn divided into four periods of yugas of varying length, the first or Kṛta age lasting 4, 800 years, the second or Treta lasting 3,600, the third or Dvapara lasting 2400 and the last, the Kali age in which we now live lasting only 1,800 years (61-62). . . . in the Kali yuga, the last, shortest and nastiest age in each world-cycle evil proliferated and dharma was well nigh extinct in a world given over to luxury and vice. . . . the lives of men became ever more brutish and short. When this extreme of degeneration had been reached, a fearful drought afflicted the earth, and men died in their thousands. . . . Then did a mighty conflagration appear. . . . and the rains came. For twelve long years did it rain. . . . The oceans overflowed their bounds. . . . and the earth sank down under the boundless deep, and all was water, endless water, everywhere. (104-05)

Only one person, Markandeya was saved who entered into the Lord’s belly and a new age dawned. This cycle repeats. Definitely, Durrell has made use of the concept of ‘Kaliyuga’ of the Hindu mythology in his novel Monsieur.
Durrell observes that in this evil world, the ancient vegetation gave place to new steel vegetation and that the table of the essences gave place to the table of the elements (Monsieur 217). Here, Durrell explicitly hints the Hindu idea of science which is explained by James J.Preston. According to Preston, “the Hindu idea of science is based on different premises than that in the West. It is a science that finds validity in essences, rather than in the external form and structure of things” (80).

Durrell continues in Monsieur that in the present day world the values of the gold bar was “the new ruler of the soul” and man began to found cultures based on “key repressions — the faculty of storing, holding back, accumulating”. Then came periodic blood-lettings in the shape of wars. Durrell calls today’s culture “death desiring culture” wherein the “new sacrament was to spill blood, not to spill sperm and impregnate the universe. To hoard gold and to spill blood were now the imperative . . . .” (Monsieur 217).

Akkad says: “Of the two forces in play in the world the black is winning, and may win completely”. Man has to, first of all, face the basic truth courageously namely, the death of God and “the ascendancy of a usurping power of evil” (219). Durrell describes in the last pages of Monsieur what actually happened to the Templars as well as the European man.

They had gone too far, clear beyond the Orphics, beyond the double sex, the gnostic two, Tiresias and all that bedlam. They lost their balance and plunged into this new and terrifying darkness where they could realise all flesh as excrement only, decay as the only truth, death as the great Motive of the usurping godhead.
Cannibalism and cabeiric orgies overcame their reason. So they came to the eatable foetus of the gnostic cults — the horror of sows gobbling their own litters for which the wine sacrament was so imperfect a surrogate. Eating and defecating at once they remained blind and earthbound — were carried into the chthonic darkness of unreason. And with them the destiny of man in Europe. (294-95)

Later in Quinx, Durrell observes that “The kiss of Judas — the poisoned arrow of our history. . . . signified the truth of the matter — namely, that our whole civilization could be seen as a tremendous psychic mishap” (35). In the same novel, Blanford describes the West:

Suddenly the human will metastasised, the ego broke loose, took wing in a desire not to conform to nature but to dominate it! . . . mental stress and the greed of narcissism, self-love, vainglory. It has brought us the unbearable loneliness of speed, of travel, and lastly to the orgasm of flight . . . . It has brought no peace while a displaced alchemical thirst for gold has attracted the most insecure, the Jews, and has brought us Lord Galen and the World Bank and the Marxist theory of value. . . . (40-41)

According to Constance, “We have started getting a poor quality of human being for whom wisdom has become mere information” (Quinx 173). In Quinx Sutcliffe wonders whether Western Civilization is “the first Civilisation which cannot decide if the answers lie in art or in science. They appear to flow from different centres in the same animal, man” (175).
Durrell, in short, seems to say that “the rational barbarism” of the Westerners prove that they have no “controlling holistic - value - system valid for the future” and that “there is a great Emptiness everywhere” (Ghose 307).

Akkad says that in such a rotten state of affairs, the gnostics opt for death. At the same time, he states that “You were not obliged to die if you knew how to go on living without wearing out — you could cross the time barrier into the deep hibernation of selflessness, such as the wise men of the East still know in fragmentary form, for it falls just short of immortality.” Durrell in the above statement, puts forth in clearecut terms that for the Western man “bent and bowed” under his “perverted system of values” the only way to save themselves is by adopting the knowledge of the ancient men of the East (Monsieur 218).

Thus, though Durrell in Monsieur repeatedly states that the new universe is evil, ruled by the Black Prince, he is not without hope for a good future. As William Dunbar Buchan says, “with a firm understanding of the past, Lawrence Durrell manifests a seemingly unrealistic optimism that represents a strong faith in the future. The world is a fundamentally good place to him, whose defects can be remedied with enough efforts; all bad things can be reformed, and all good things made better”(216-17). Durrell has such a strong faith in the future because he sees ‘Original Innocence’ as the foundation of human character. He says so in an interview given to Huw Wheldon on 14 February 1960:

I’m probably saying something which is not in our Christian Canon, but I see Original Innocence rather than Original Sin as the foundation of the human character. It’s not an acceptable view,
naturally, to many people. I think at bottom that religion will be something as simple as Lao-Tze and that people have a natural spring of innocence in them. But we start so early putting them in blinkers and tailoring them and shoving them about as moral propositions and growing them up into moulds. It’s an age when you have to be a very strong personality to grow away from the trellis. (Wheldon 59)

Durrell turns to Eastern philosophy since he feels that in the wisdom of the ancient men of the East, lies the solutions for the problems of today’s world. He compares Christianity with the Eastern religions like ‘Buddhism’ and advocates systems like ‘yoga’ for the improvement of individual life which is the basis of a good civilisation. “As Radhakamal Mukherjee has shown, civilisation depends on the working of at least three factors: Man, values, cosmos” (qtd. in Ghose 303). Durrell draws upon Oriental philosophy, maybe because, as he says, Anglo-Saxons are incapable of thinking “for” themselves and they live by cant (The Quarten: 757).

According to Durrell, “Life is more complicated than we think, yet far simpler than anyone dares to imagine” (702).

To intercalate realities... is the only way to be faithful to Time, for at every moment in Time the possibilities are endless in their multiplicity. Life consists in the act of choice. The perpetual reservations of judgement and the perpetual choosing. (370)

Durrell chooses the wisdom of the East as a way out of today’s stress-filled life. He affirms that man is born into bliss.
Durrell explains why he prefers Eastern religions to Christianity. He was impressed by Hindu thought and Indian civilisation. The prime purpose of Hindu Science is “to bring an experience of the ‘divine essence’ to the individual” (Preston 80). Indian civilisation impressed Durrell maybe because, to put in Singer’s words:

The traditionalism of Indian civilisation is not opposed to innovation and change, to modernity, to the foreign and the strange... India’s traditionalism is rather a built-in adaptive mechanism for making changes. Essentially, it is a series of processes for incorporating innovations into the culture and validating them. (404)

Durrell tells Wheldon that he has been influenced by Chuang-tze, a philosophic comedian, who is really the basis of early Chinese religion. Chuang-tze was a philosopher who realised that the truth is double faced and since one can’t take up an exact yes-or-no position with regard to anything the best thing is to “come in slightly at a slant, ironically”(Wheldon 58-59).

Another interview given to John Hawkes is a proof to show how much Durrell has been influenced by Oriental philosophy.

Durrell. ....We have to try to find ways of discerning what this reality we are trying to describe is about. The Chinese aphorisms of course get much nearer to it, I think, than we Europeans — the Indian and Chinese. (Hawkes 235)

Chinese and Indian philosophy attract Durrell because those are preoccupied with knowledge of life than the knowledge of truth and give
emphasis to ‘being over doing’ whereas Westerners place ‘action above being’.

Durrell tells Claudine Brelet in an interview that if he had to choose a religion Buddhism would satisfy him more than the others. Also that, he prefers Epicureanism to Christianity. He starts talking about Buddhism and then about Epicureanism:

First of all, it is clear. It is not obscure. It is a little like a reprieve without accountability: if you follow this path you can get some results. Epicureanism was the only European religion that was as rigid as Marxism and as mystical as Buddhism. Epicureanism made the universe into a system that had a logic as powerful and rational as Marxist materialism but which gave, on the other hand, freedom to the metaphysical side. For three centuries there was such an intense struggle between Christians and Epicureans that one would have thought that it would be the Christians who would be eliminated. But on the contrary it was Epicurus. It is the greatest misfortune philosophically! Now, even Epicurus’ Books are difficult to find. Finally I found one and lent it to some youngsters. They got totally enthusiastic about his philosophy because it satisfied all at once, technological and materialistic preoccupations and was a green light for the religious side.

Brelet. What is your definition of Epicureanism?

Durrell. This philosophy is based on sincerity, honesty, engagement... perhaps as social involvement and responsibility were defined centuries later by Rousseau and
Again, Durrell explains to Montalbetti why he prefers Buddhism to Christianity:

Durrell. It’s easier with Buddhism than with any other system because in Buddhism the individual and the self do not exist. That saves us from narcissism which is the most horrible aspect of Christianity. I do not consider myself truly Christian, Christianity never satisfied me. Buddhism is much more logical, and bit more austere and honest; there are many more things in the Catholic or Protestant religion one has to believe in blindly. (Montalbetti 194)

Durrell continues:

One has to be Christian to be anxious about death. Inevitably, since death is the end of everything in Christianity, there is only Hell and there you are! With all that stupid notion of sin. The ancient Greek concept is much more spacious. The Hindu concept is also one in which one has to come back to atone for one’s mistakes. One relives life until he gets it right. You have all the centuries ahead of you. (199-200)

In the above words, what Durrell refers to is the doctrine of ‘rebirth’ of Hinduism. As R.C.Zachner says, “What most sharply distinguishes Hinduism, like its offshoot Buddhism, from the religions of Semitic origin, is its unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, reincarnation,...” (57).

Durrell in another interview given to Michael Braudeau makes a
comment about himself that he was "more like Veda" and that "after death, life doesn’t stop, one simply changes costume" (Braudeau 187-191), an idea conveyed in *The Bhagawad Gita*. Thus, to Durrell, James A. Brigham points out, "death is not the end of life, but rather another state of being to which the soul passes through the gate of dying", an idea of Eastern philosophy (1984; 25). Lawrence J. Shifreen observes that Durrell "works to establish a ground between death and life..." (117).

Durrell describes Buddhism as "scientific" — "a kind of science of harmlessness" and acknowledges that his "life is informed by this Buddhist orientation" (Claffey 241). As Christmas Humphreys observes, the West has need of a new enlightenment since both science and religion have failed in hours of adversity. Two world wars have struck such a blow at Christianity as may prove mortal, that enquiring minds have sought new outlets for the religious sentiments of the mind. The West is ripe for Buddhism in one form or another (1976; 200). Durrell has the same opinion and he is an advocate of Taoism, Tantric Buddhism and the philosophy of Sahaja.

Graham Howe states that when we read a little Buddhism we "realise that the Buddhists knew 2500 years ago, far more about our modern problems of psychology than they have yet been given credit for. . . . We are now rediscovering the ancient wisdom of the East, and new knowledge is again coming from that direction as it has always done in the past" (qtd. in Humphreys 1976; 201). Aldous Huxley points out that "At the present time the rites and ceremonies of traditional Christianity are at least demonstrably very ineffective and have failed to stand up to the new god of nationalism" (qtd. in Humphreys 1976; 203).
In short, Durrell says through Blanford in *The Quintet* that the Westerners should discover their own way of applying Oriental religious principles. What the West needs is integration of knowledge which has been cut into different departments. Human knowledge can be achieved only by insight and intuition, the Orientals believed thus and Durrell who openly asserts his distrust in logic or reason is with them. What Durrell says to Gray about the Western man is worthy to be related in this context.

Gray. Where does religion, in the orthodox sense, and Christianity, fit into your picture of twentieth-century man?

Durrell. I think we are suffering from this appalling plague of (a) Christianity and (b) scholasticism which has ruined us as philosophers and as human beings. . . . (Gray 83)

Durrell continues that he is not against morality:

I’m only against it being imposed on people who are not ripe for it. Again I think that it’s part and parcel of our Christian civilisation. We start from dogma. It’s the wrong way to start. The dogma must grow out of the experience. (84)

Durrell asks Gray to compare Christianity with Buddhism:

Think of the blood-stained record of our Christian civilisation and then of the sort of things that were going on in people’s nuts compared to, say, a system like Buddhism which is so simple, which hasn’t an organised dogmatic system, has never caused a war, that has no party system
and which you can do at home, as you wish. I mean, the
take-it-or-leave-it principle, but no sort of orthodox
foundation or dogmatic scholasticism, as we had in
the Middle Ages - which of course produced lovely
things... (83)

In Quinx, Durrell accuses Christianity of "master minding" the
"intellectual disarray" in the West (168). Prince Hassad in Livia distinguishes
three strains in English character which came, from Saxons, Jutes or Normans.
"The Saxon strain made them bullies and pirates, the Jutish toadies and
sanctimonious hypocrites, while the Norman strain bred a welcome quixotry,
which was capable of raising like north wind and predominating over the other
two" (213). Blanford falls in love with Egypt and says: "I felt extraordinarily
heartened to see people who could love each other so devoutly; it was so unlike
Europe where serious thinking about passion has really come to a
standstill" (Constance 52). In the same novel, Sutcliffe thinks: "The Christian
mind is a wonderland of smut... Why was it so hard to imagine a reality
without qualities, and an illusory soul? The whole of Europe was dying of
blood-poisoning because of this inability" (135).

As Dwight Goddard says, the West is overburdened with "religions of
authority and priest-craft of ritual, and a faith that demands the setting aside of
the individual mind, and the acceptance [of] and obedience to irrational
dogmas and arbitrary authority" (qtd. in Humphreys 1976; 202). This is why
Durrell turns to the Eastern religions. He speaks of his intention: "Me change
the world? Good Lord, no. Or only perhaps indirectly by persuading it to see
itself and relax; to tap the source of laughter in itself..." (Kneller Tape 71)
Through Pursewarden in *The Alexandria Quartet*, he states more clearly what he proposes to do:

I feel I want to sound a note of... affirmation — though not in the specific terms of a philosophy or religion... I’d like to think of my work simply as a cradle in which philosophy could rock itself to sleep, thumb in mouth. (380)

Pursewarden insists “that there is hope for man, scope for man, within the boundaries of a simple law” and he seems to see mankind as “gradually appropriating to itself the necessary information through mere attention, *not reason*, which may one day enable it to live within the terms of such an idea — the true meaning of ‘joy unconfined’” (381). Durrell is at one with the Oriental philosophy in his distrust of reason and trust in attention. Balthazar’s Cabal posits nothing beyond a science of Right Attention. Balthazar once says of himself, “I am a Jew, with all the Jew’s bloodthirsty interest in the ratiocinative faculty. It is the clue to many of the weaknesses in my thinking, and which I am learning to balance up with the rest of me through the Cabal chiefly”(80).

Durrell strongly believes in the power of art to influence man. As MacNiven observes, the “development of the artist” is an important theme of Durrell’s fiction (1995; 17). In *The Alexandria Quartet*, Pursewarden contemplates a world where art will find its true form and place. Art, by manuring the psyche, helps it to find its own level, that level is an original innocence and he refers to the Original Sin as the filthy obscenity of the West. He urges the European artists, cry-babies of the Western World, to unite and says that he is full of hope and dreams of an Ideal Commonwealth. One day, he hopes that the artist accepts the full responsibility for his origins in the people,
and when simultaneously the people recognise his peculiar significance and value, and greet him as the unborn child in themselves, the infant Joy! Only then we shall be able to dispense with hierarchy as a social form. The new society will be born around the small strict white temple of the Infant Joy! (*The Quartet* 761-62). Shelley Cox says that "artistic creativity is both "human and fundamentally mysterious" *(45). According to Jennifer Linton Fruin, to Durrell, "the artist is that man among men who struggles through the medium of his craft to understand and attain spiritual insight and grasp the underlying principles of the various levels of experience which constitute our reality" *(4). In an interview recorded on April 23, 1959, Durrell tells the interviewers that the "theme of art is the theme of life itself" *(Plimpton 276).

Gordon K. Thomas remarks that like Wordsworth, Durrell's "chief concern is Art, art as a way of life..." *(1984; 186). The artists have an important role to play in this chaotic world. Darley suggests that the role of the artist is to promote continuity, a pattern of meaningful values behind the seemingly, meaningless chaos of our lives. Finding his identity as a writer, Darley realises that he might contribute to the post modern world, joy and hope. Durrell's fiction abound with artists. Paige Matthey Bynum remarks that "the Durrellian artist is aware that there is a mysterious poetic potential at the heart of every human being and that it is this potential that he must rediscover and persuade his audience to pursue" *(96). Ray Morrison points out that for Durrell, all men are artists in the egg *(1984; 143). Nancy Lewis, in her essay "The Alexandria Quartet and the Motion of the Field: Drifting, Exploding, Regrouping" says, "The artist may intuitively perceive what the scientist, centuries later, confirms through experiment" *(145).
Durrell dreams of the day when the free man will be born. Lin Yu Tang explains in *The Importance of Living* that great Chinesemen of letters like T’ao Yü’ānming, Su Tung p’o, Po Chüiji, Yuan Chunglang, Yuan Tsets’ all opted a life of the free and careless individual. Durrell has been impressed by the Chineseman’s love of leisure and eventually pronounces right the Taoistic philosophy of life.

Durrell repeatedly affirms that happiness is innate, the only thing is we should listen to nature. Sutcliffe is sure that if we can leave reality alone, we will discover that “reality is bliss” (*Quinx* 140-41).

*By simple oxygen and silence slip

Into the Higher Harmlessness!* (153)

Sutcliffe explains that if we were able to shut up and give nature a chance to talk we will be able to learn that “Happiness, nay, *Bliss* is innate!” (153). In *Livia* there is a dialogue between Blanford and Sutcliffe about happiness.

“And happiness, have you found it?” Sutcliffe put on the adenoidal voice of an interviewer.

“You find it only when you stop looking, Rob.”

“And have you?”

“No”

“Why not?”

“Now that would be worth answering but I don’t for the life of me know how to.” (14)

Balthazar sounds Durrell when he says: “This world represents the promise of a unique happiness which we are not well-enough equipped to grasp” (*The
Quartet 667). Carol Peirce points out how John Wain describes Durrell as one who is “grateful for the beauty of the earth” (1979; 7). Sabine and Constance both repeat that reality is “really bliss-side up”, that “in reality one is born into bliss - it is we who cause trauma with these mad doctrines based on guilt and fear” (Qunix 17). In an interview given to Marc Alyn, Durrell voices his concept of happiness.

Alyn.

What does happiness consist for you?

Durrell.

Happiness is the complete acceptance of one’s responsibilities. (Alyn 140)

The above statement of Durrell reflects the philosophy of Karma as it is expounded in The Bhagavad Gita. In Monsieur there is a statement which sounds the same: “When one is fully extended by day and exhausted every evening one lives differently, without the weight of yesterday or tomorrow on one’s shoulders” (153). As O.P. Ghai in his book The Bhagavad Gita points out, the Gita advises that “One must do one’s duty however distasteful it may be. One must be faithful to it unto death. Doing so even death brings blessedness” (32). Ghai notes in his introduction to the above book, that “The Bhagavad Gita presents the Science of Being and the Art of Living. It is a complete guide to mastering the problems of day-to-day life — indispensable to any man in any age. The teachings of The Gita inspire all to realise the reality within them. True fulfilment lies in the simultaneous development of the heart and the mind” (xiii).

Durrell’s The Quartet and The Quintet abound with ideas drawn from Indian, Chinese and Tibetan philosophy which according to him, if practised will turn this world of chaos into a world of peace. Durrell uses the Vedanta
philosophy "Thou Art that" at many a place. In Constance Sutcliffe thinks:

We are all fragments of one another; everyone has a little bit of everything in his make-up. From the absolute point of view — Aristotle's fifth substance, say — all persons are the same person and all situations are identical or vastly similar.(123)

In Quinx Blanford observes that the idea of "discrete identity" is very much in question and adds— 'Be ye members of one another' or 'spare parts'. . . .(15). In the same novel, Blanford tells Sutcliffe that "all people are slowly becoming the same person," that "all these so-called characters" are "illustrations of a trend"(26).

Durrell himself conveys his belief in this philosophy of 'Thou Art that' in many interviews.

To Michael Braudeu he says: "At the same time it's true that everyone from the gnostic point of view, as I mentioned, tends to become one. . . ."(Braudeu 190). He explains to Montalbetti that:

*The Alexandria Quartet* is a European novel which suggests that personality is not coherent and distinct but made up of a collection of attributes. *With The Avignon Quintet* I completed a Tibetan novel, much more mad of course but which calls into question the separateness of 'individuality'. (Montalbetti 195-96)

Thus in the final analysis, everything will be found to be true of everyone. Once people are able to assimilate the 'Thou Art that' philosophy, there would be peace in the world, the world will be a happy place to live in, where all have realised that "harmlessness is the highest good", a Buddhist
thought (Quinx 53).

One becomes a success to a great extent, Durrell points out, if one can tell one’s ego “to go to hell and not make a misery of what should be essentially fun, joy”. Pursewarden tells Clea that “Work-blocks are caused by the swelliing-up of the ego” (The Quartet 737). ‘Ego’ not only causes work-blocks, but prevents one from loving truly, and this is one reason for the failure of Western man in ‘love’. The idea that one should discard one’s ego to achieve happiness is conveyed in Eastern philosophy. Julius Lipner while talking about “enlightened souls” says that they “live not through the ego, which normally grows through self-centred desire (į ų ą) by assimilating everything and everybody to itself, but through the expansive, egoless nature of spirit” (244). Blanford refers to Buddha’s “policy of unwrapping the poor ego from its mummy-like swaddling clothes — the nervous aggressive reactions” (Quinx 53). According to Affad, the ego is only “a sort of negative for the superlative esoteric state - tiny glimpses of wholeness; as if light passed through them, printing out a different reality” (Quinx 137). Durrell reiterates that man should do away with ego to lift himself up into the higher state of calmness and harmony.

To be successful in life, man must discover his own self, acquiring calmness of mind, by “side-stepping the time-chain” (Monsieur 257). Durrell strongly believes that this can be realised through Indian yoga practice. Gavin Flood explains that “The term yoga, derived from the Sanskrit root yij, ‘to control’, ‘to yoke’ or ‘to unite’ refers to . . . disciplines of asceticism and meditation which are thought to lead to spiritual experience and profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence” (94). Durrell himself
tells in an interview how Buddhism and Yoga permeated his childhood:

The writings of Alexander David Neel fascinated me. Furthermore, I spent my childhood in India. . . . I was influenced by the atmosphere so particular to that country. I went to school in Darjeeling and the image of the lamas coming down to the plains was a daily spectacle. Moreover, my family owned rather a lot of sacred Buddhist texts, one of which my uncle translated. I was introduced to that tradition at a very young age. Despite the heat my father practised the rudiments of yoga to keep in shape. He took lessons from the yogi of the neighbouring village. I imitated him, tried to stand on my head, without understanding what I was doing. Later I discovered that yoga allowed me to warm up again in a glacial environment. That was very useful to me once I had returned to England. Buddhism and yoga thus permeated my childhood. But all that was very innocent. No theology entered into it. Something simply settled into me. (Farcet 249-50)

Durrell in another interview tells that it was yoga which helped him to control his habit of taking alcohol (Braudeau 189). In both The Quartet and The Quintet there are numerous references to ‘yoga’ and this confirms how much this practice of the Orient impressed Durrell. In Quinx, Blanford tells Sutcliffe that yoga can relieve “stress caused by pressure of an unduly swollen ego”(37). Livia had the habit of doing ‘yoga’. Blanford used to hear “the sweet voice of Livia intoning the AUM of yoga as she sat in the green thicket behind the tower, recharging her body, re-oxygenating her brain”(Livia 113). In Quinx
Sutcliffe talks about yoga:

You see, we only live in the instant between inhalation and ex-. This point in yoga time is the only history. But suppose we refine and purge and strengthen this small glimpse of truthful time, why, we would redeem eternity, the heraldic vision, the panoramic insight! (24)

Livia had taught Sutcliffe several yoga asanas and he performed them while he thought of her sitting somewhere out among the olives beyond the tower in the lotus pose which seemed to cost her no effort at all, intoning the Aum; or lying in the corpse posture, snuffing out her whole will and body, and by her meditation “swallowing the sky”. Sutcliffe was afraid that all this was very much a fad, though he admitted to feeling better after it (Livia 116).

Sutcliffe asks Blanford to “sharpen” his “intuitions in the cobra pose”(177). Blanford is grateful to Egypt for having his back shot to pieces, because he says:

I might never have bothered with this yoga jape and so missed a deeply transforming experience. A religion which harbours no ifs and buts, not even the shadow of a perhaps. . . . Formal logic dissolves and as you orchestrate the body you exchange lard against oxygen. The hunger is not to possess, to own, but to belong. (Quinx 20)

Durrell compares yoga with Christianity in an interview:

. . . . And of course in yoga, you have a controlled regimen. You distribute your own oxygen, and through meditation you register
your own progress. You can’t do that in Christianity. I’m not a
great Buddhist, but I’m fond of yoga which I picked up in my
youth, you know. I see it is a form of control of your
psycho-spiritual development. You can’t do that in Christianity.
(Garner 224)

According to Durrell, a Christian prayer’s purpose is to ask for
something, while “in yoga there is a progressive relaxation of the body”, and
“of the spirit”(Graf 203). Jean Pierre Graf and Bernard Claude Gauthier remark
that “Through yoga Durrell conjured up what he sees as the central aim of
Buddhism; the impermanence of things. An apprenticeship, which is
developed with breathing, the ‘asanas’ positions”(210).

In yet another interview given to Goulianos, Durrell praises yoga:

Goulianos. ....you seem to be going into mystic philosophy. Do
you see that as an answer, at least for yourself?

Durrell. For me, certainly. The practice of yoga could prove
to you, I believe in ten days that our thinking is
connected with our breathing, and sight controls the
breathing rhythms. I think there’s a very great field
there to explore. (Goulianos 123)

The Gnostic philosophy put forth by Akkad in Monsieur includes many
of the aspects of Indian philosophy. The patron saint of the gnostics was the
Aesculapian snake. For the gnostics, the serpent is a symbol of the caduceus of
Aesculapius, of the spinal column, of the Kundalini - serpent of the Indians.
Durrell himself says through Akkad that one “will be able to trace the
ancestry of the idea through many continents and many religions. It is also the
sacred phallus of Greece and Egypt and India, ..." (Monsieur 133). Akkad
describes the Gnostics as "those who are born and reborn again unlike the
Many. . . . The thrust of their souls is towards the moon of non-being. . . ." (118).
Durrell here, conveys the Hindu notion of rebirth until one gets ‘moksha’. I had
already mentioned about rebirth in Chapter Three. As Oliver Leaman
observes, according to the Bhagavad Gita:

Selves that are not freed are reborn repeatedly, until liberation is
finally achieved, although there is a self that is not touched by this
involvement in samsara, the cycle of birth and rebirth. There are
two ways of looking at the self, atman or the self that is in contact
with brahman, absolute reality, and jiva, or the temporal aspect
of this unchangeable self. Death is really of little consequence, it
is going to take place many times within the cycle of change, and
the more that the person can disregard it the more likely he or she
is to transcend the cycle eventually and attain moksha or escape.
(89)

He clarifies that the concept of ‘moksha’ in Indian thought literally
means ‘‘setting free’ or liberation, the aim of spiritual life in Indian thought. It
is equivalent to release from samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth” (211).

It can be illustrated, by citing passages both from The Quartet and The
Quintet, and also from his interviews that Durrell has been very much
influenced by Oriental philosophies like Tao, Wu-wei (Chinese), Zen
(Japanese) and Sahaja (Indian). Durrell talks about Wu-wei philosophy to
Goulianos in an interview:
Goulianos. Isn't there a passivity in Oriental philosophies?

Durrell. No. Absolutely not. The Wu-wei is not passive. It's actively passive. It's the will power of desirelessness. It's a technique of not interfering but influencing. It's not asceticism either... It's not asceticism at all. But you see, the minute you try to conceptualise these things, it's useless; you kill them. You have to do, you have to act them first, and then be them later. (Goulianos 123)

Christmas Humphreys points out that the doctrine of Wu-wei is excellent Zen:

The Taoist doctrine of *wu-wei* is excellent Zen. Non action, as it is often translated, does not mean no action, but no such action as begets opposition. “Right action” is neither to oppose nor to give way, but to be pliable, as a reed in the wind. In the West, we are too pugnacious, so quick to fight all circumstance that we make by our very violence more problems than exist to be solved. (1976:217)

Durrell also is of the opinion that it's wiser to walk delicately “with a hold on life so light that it would not ruffle the bloom on a butterfly's wing”(217). Durrell is with 'Zen' which is a "sense of Now and Here and This"(225). ‘Satori’, the state of higher consciousness brings serenity and an understanding that all is somehow “right”, a sense of flowing with the rhythm of things (224). If people could assimilate such lofty ideals, the state of the world will be much better than it is at present.
In *Constance* there is a direct reference to Zen Buddhism. It is said that Huxley’s essay on Zen Buddhism set Blanford “dreaming once more of faraway peoples educated in harmlessness, in places like Lhasa, by the reading of golden sutras engrossed in golden ink...”(11-12). One reason why Blanford started loving Livia was that, it was she who introduced him to Zen Buddhism(11). Durrell recommends an act of walking on. As L.P.Singh & B.M.Sirisena point out:

The chief characteristic of Zen Buddhism is that it does not give any evidence to abstractions and concepts. Zen is a concrete philosophy and it lives in facts. The object of Zen meditation is to integrate the part with the whole, the conscious with the unconscious mind and in this process of unification *Satori* is experienced. This process of unification has been termed as an act of walking on with no path, no walker and no goal. (Singh 18-19)

Humphreys also observes, “Zen has no ritual, no prayer, no God that made us, nor a soul to be saved, and the only commandment is ‘Thou shalt walk on!’ ”(1976; 203). The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by storm, eventhough the great strength which returns the penny is an artful letting go, an acceptance of all things for what they are (219). This sort of an ‘acceptance’ is what Akkad makes a plea for and through him Durrell:

We need purer and purer definitions to keep us from being coarsened by the values which the world imposes on us, and which we must try our best to refuse... You see quite clearly that the stability of the gnostic universe is quite inadvertent; the conformity of matter to models or modes is very precarious and
not subject to causality as they imagine. Once this dawns on you the notion of death is born and gathers force so that you start, not to live according to a prearranged plan or model, but to improvise. It is another sort of existence, at once extremely precarious, vertiginous, hesitant — but truthful in a way that you never thought you could be. . . . (Monsieur 167)

The need of the day is that one should know “how to go on living without wearing out”(218). Durrell, apart from voicing his faith in Chinese Taoistic philosophy, and Zen Buddhism, makes use of the Philosophy of Sahaja which calls for a realisation of self and which lays emphasis on ‘Right Attention’.

Moksha as release is often identified as being equivalent to becoming brahman or realising one’s true nature. This is a state of perfection in which we transcend the normal distinctions between self and non-self, good and evil and so on. Some argue that it is possible to achieve release in this life, while others insist it can only be attained in the next life. (Leaman 211)

Durrell is of the opinion that one can realise one’s true nature in this life itself. Darley, in The Quartet had tried to know Cabbala, Gnostics etc., hoping he “might find a pathway” which could lead him to a deeper understanding of himself (The Quartet 84). Darley remembers Balthazar saying, “None of the great religions has done more than exclude, throw out a long range of prohibitions. But prohibitions create the desire they are intended to cure. We of this Cabal say: indulge but refine” (The Quartet 85). In another passage, Balthazar conveys the philosophy of Sahaja when he tells Darley:
The most tender, the most tragic of illusions is perhaps to believe that our actions can add or subtract from the total quantity of good and evil in the world. . . . ‘And that fat brute Father Paul talks of acceptance! Acceptance of the world can only come from a full recognition of its measureless extents of good and evil; and to really inhabit it, explore it to the full uninhibited extent of this finite human understanding — that is all that is necessary in order to accept it. (706-07)

The same idea is repeated in Clea, that of “a universe at rest, a universe in love with itself” and then like a babe in arms one can “milk the universe at every breath”(763). Durrell makes a plea to surrender to the universe, because “refusal to co-operate with the universe, to surrender, to give, would in its final stage amount to catatonia”(Livia 3). Akkad in Monsieur, voices the same idea, and he says that Nature has “no norm, no absolute” and that all deviations are allowed, still “total freedom is the key we must dare to turn in order to repose her. . . .” (143).

You can know something and yet not realise it, not having lived it. . . . Realisation is a real sigil conferred upon an experience. . . .

Everything lies in the act of acceptance, to join finally the spiritual trust of the mature who have tasted the world to the full and wish to be purged of the physical envelope. . . .

The very concept of order in nature is home-made, the product of our finite minds. In the theology of process, the queen
of the sciences, coincidence and contingency rule, but never fortuitously. . . (144-45).

Again, in Quinx Durrell repeats: "The universe simply does the next thing; it has no programme, does not predict, knows not where it is going. A perpetual spontaneity rules!" (38). He praises the principle of indeterminacy in the same novel: "Ah! blessed principle of Indeterminacy which renders every eventual second of time miraculous: because all creation is arbitrary, capricious, spontaneous. Without forethought or afterthought" (53).

Durrell pines for an old "spontaneousness which had once been innate, unrehearsed", for "a perfected nonchalance of being" (63).

Blanford dreams:

To live in a fearless approximation to nature — to cultivate the consciousness of material intangibility. . . The central truth of the Dharmic brain - flash is linguistically quite incommunicable, it outstrips language, even the most conceptual forms. It is a privileged experience. . . there is no concept of impatience in all nature! (93-94)

Another beautiful passage in Quinx which reflects the philosophy of Sahaja is:

Yes, to savour to the full the sheer inherence of things, so pure and gently is it; if you get still enough you can hear the grass growing. You can see landscape in terms of a divine calligraphy! Ah, the mind - numbing ineptness of the rational man with his formulations! Defeated always by the flying
multiplicity of the real. "Ordinary life" is there such a thing?

Yes, the observer fouls up everything by trying to impose a plan, an intention, upon nature which can only reproduce the limitations of his understanding, the boundaries of his personal vision. He disturbs the rest of the universe which has no fixed plan, but simply lolls about and goes whichever way things tilt, just as water does! What to do then? Why, play for time just as nature does! Become what you already are! Realise! Discontented and vigilant body so much adored, you know too well that death and life coexist. (94-95)

According to Durrell, there is no meaning in "point-events" "The universe is playing, the universe is only improvising" (167). One should be able to come to terms with death, like Constance who has seen much of death in her work.

Constance says in Quinx: "Somewhere in the middle of the whole thing there comes a luxurious feeling of surrender to inevitability in the dying themselves. It belongs, this mood of gradually deepening amnesia, to the rhythms of plant life" (177).

Donald P. Kaczvinsky notes that in an essay which Durrell wrote in 1960, he states that if man is to live truly he must first of all conquer his fear of death. Durrell who has been influenced by the findings of the psychologists believes that all human unrest — personal anxiety or explosions into war on the part of whole communities, is actually based on the fear and mystery of death (1995; 35-36). Edmund Keeley is right when he says in his review of Caesar's Vast
Ghost, “Lawrence Durrell’s Last Journey” that a “redefinition of death” emerges from Durrell’s fiction which, in fact confirms his “long devotion to the bright and green things of this world” (126). In Tibetan Buddhism, the ambition of the practitioner is to become enlightened in his lifetime, and this means transcending death during this life. This involves overcoming what might be thought of as the ordinary notion of linear time. . . . What we need to do is to replace linear with cyclical time, the idea being that in this way we can control time, as against the usual notion of time controlling us. (Leaman 264)

Barbara Anderson points out that in The Quartet, “past, present and future are united in a kind of continuous present”. She continues: “There is virtually no sense of a passage of time: there is no linear progression, no chronology in the Quartet. . . . Even death, the ultimate indicator of time’s passage, is denied significance in The Quartet” (6-7).

Anderson cites certain examples - we learn of Purswarden’s suicide in Justine, but he is very much alive throughout the four volumes. Scobie, after his death, is reborn as the Coptic saint ‘El Scob’ and Capodistria’s “death” at the Hosnani duck shoot turns out to have been a well-planned disappearance (7). Alan Warren Friedman states that “Durrell’s fiction invariably records. . . the self-reflexive awareness that, for all our efforts, death always waits—and is both imminent and inspiring”(95).
Once we conquer the fear of death we will be able to “cooperate with reality and the inevitable” (Quinx 191) and “play for time just as nature does” (94). This is what Taoism, Zen philosophy and the philosophy of Sahaja declare and Durrell says through Lord Galen in Quinx that one can realise this through yoga practice. Hearing Felix say that Constance has fallen in love with Blanford and disappeared, Lord Galen thinks:

But life has its own imperatives and everything must take its turn. So she was perfectly right to behave as she must. The only art to be learned was how to cooperate with reality and the inevitable! And then immediately he reproached himself for this rather specious formulation, but at the same time he recognised that it came out of his yoga practice — the fidelity to insight and to oxygen! (191)

In the first novel of The Avignon Quintet i.e, Monsieur, Durrell expresses his hope that the old world of love, liberalism and faith is still accessible to man. “Across the abyss of our present despair and darkness the frail light is still there, though it seems always to be flickering out” (Monsieur 219). The “frail light” is definitely the wisdom of the East, I assert, because Quinx, the last novel of The Avignon Quintet abound in philosophical ideas of the East, that of Sahaja, Zen, Tao and so on. Paul Lorenz remarks that “the message of the Quincunx is a message of hope” and also that “Durrell proposes a return to the ancient’s vision of a society based on instinctive principles and dedicated to the continuation of life” (1995; 163). Lorenz adds that the message of the Quincunx is that

The key to human renewal exists within the very architecture of
the human soul. . . . Moments of insight and harmony with the
cosmos are as fleeting as the experience of simultaneous orgasm,
but that is no reason not to exploit the human architecture of the
soul to its fullest potential. . . .

Durrell's *Quincunx*, in form and content, is a vibrant
affirmation of human life and the never-ending potential
within each of us for spiritual and physical renewal through a
metamorphosis of consciousness. (171)

*It is to be noted that for Confucians, Daoists and Buddhists human nature*
is the “launching pad for our eventual emancipation and self-transformation.
*Human nature is in principle able to be transformed and perfected. This is*
a theme of much Chinese philosophy. . . .”(Leaman 134). Durrell strongly
believes that human nature can be transformed or perfected.