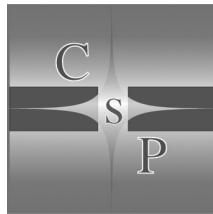


Between the Pigeonholes

Between the Pigeonholes:
Gerald Heard, 1889-1971

By

Alison Falby



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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PREFACE

Transforming a doctoral thesis into a publishable book is an arduous exercise. This particular transformation has taken longer than perhaps it should have done. I can only wonder how much longer it might have taken had Gerald Heard preserved rather than disposed of many early papers. At one point in my research, a self-proclaimed “Heardian” suggested my subject didn’t want anyone to write about him and was destroying his life traces from beyond the grave. I can only hope that this is not the case.

Where my doctoral thesis focused principally on Heard’s ideas and contexts in interwar Britain, this book examines his life and work in both interwar Britain and postwar America. In writing the first book-length treatment of Gerald Heard on a limited scholarly budget, I have tried to balance breadth with depth by concentrating on the connections between Heard’s religious, scientific, and political ideas. This concentration curtailed my treatment of other ideas. I would have liked to delve more deeply into Heard’s influence on pastoral theology, for example, and I have left discussion of his fiction to literature scholars. My bibliography of Heard’s published work and reviews thereof, while lengthy, is incomplete. Some readers may consider these gaps to be significant. In any case, I hope this book will provide something on which other scholars may build.

The wide dispersion of Heard’s papers has indebted me to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for travel support. For continuing administration of my research grant, I am very grateful to Joan Sangster of Trent University’s Frost Centre. I also appreciate the help I received from archivists and librarians: Lucy Bartlett of Dartington Hall’s High Cross House; Sharon Bosnell of Trent University’s Inter-Library Loans Service; Joanne Euler of the Vedanta Society of Southern California; Thomas Harkins of the Duke University Archives; Erin O’Neill of the BBC Written Archives; Jeff Rankin, Octavio Olvera, and the students of UCLA Special Collections; the staff at the Library of Congress; volunteers at the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives in Toronto; and staff at the Bodleian, British, Huntingdon, Firestone, King’s College, Lambeth Palace, New York Public, Robarts, Reading University, University of Liverpool, and University of Oregon libraries. I am also thankful for information received from Bill Bergfelt and Gordon Stavig of the Vedanta Society of Southern California; William Forthman, retired

professor of philosophy from California State University, Northridge; and Trevor West from Trinity College, Dublin. I am particularly grateful to Rhodri Hayward for sharing his unpublished work on Gerald Heard.

I am greatly obliged to John Roger Barrie of the Barrie Family Trust, literary executor of the Gerald Heard estate, for his untiring efforts on behalf of this book: for proofreading, for recommending additional sources, and for securing documents and copyright permissions, among others. His many courtesies are too numerous to list. Thank you.

Thank you also to my friends, colleagues, and relations who read and commented on various portions of this manuscript: Martin Conway, Rory Coughlan, Barbara Falby, Patrick Falby, Rhodri Hayward, Pamela Klassen, Jeffrey Kripal, Jeff McNairn, and Janet Miron. Thanks for early feedback from Ravit Reichman's Biography Working Group at Yale in 2002 and from the British Society for the History of Science in 2004. I value the input I received from Michelle Nickerson over lunch at the Huntington Library as her work on "Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls" provided me with an illuminating lens for Heard's Californian years. Grateful thanks also to those friends and relatives who made room in their homes for me during research trips to Los Angeles, London, New York, and Oxford: Roland Bennett, Cecile Fabre, Caroline and Sean Melia-Falby, Myfanwy and Tom Kuhn-Lloyd, and Jacqui and Anthony Teasdale. Thank you also to Eunice Scarfe and my supportive writer friends from her Saga seminars, Denise Kenny and Karen Shelnut.

I would not have made it to the manuscript stage without the support I received during my doctoral research from my supervisor, John W. Burrow, whose acquaintance with a myriad of historical characters ensured grounded contexts for my research; Martin Conway, who kindly overlooked my bad typing and rusty French to provide me with a dependable stream of research and editorial work; Jane Garnett and her Themes in Modern Religious History seminar; the Oxford Graduate Studies Committee; and Worcester College.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of friends and colleagues at the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, especially the late and much-missed Colin Matthew, Robert Brown, Philip Carter, Rosemary Mitchell, and Kim Reynolds. This dedicated community provided a scholarly haven during my graduate student years, kept me in tea and biscuits, and reminded me that biographical research is worth doing.

I am sure that my family and friends have wondered whether I would ever finish with Gerald Heard. To their credit, they kept such thoughts to themselves. I dedicate this book to my parents, Robert and Barbara Falby.

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Grateful thanks to the Barrie Family Trust, literary executors of the Heard estate; the BBC Written Archives; the Huntington Library; the Aldous and Maria Huxley estate; the James C. Ingebretsen estate; the University of Oregon Library; the Plunkett Foundation; and the Stepping Stones Foundation.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBL	Clare Boothe Luce
DWE	Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst
EMF	E.M. Forster
GH	Gerald Heard
HCH	High Cross House, Dartington, Devon
HL	Huntington Library
JMB	Jay Michael Barrie
<i>JSPR</i>	Journal of the Society for Psychical Research
KCLC	King's College Library, Cambridge
LC	Library of Congress
LKE	Leonard Elmhirst
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London, England
MI	Margaret Isherwood
PD	Plunkett Diaries
PF	Plunkett Foundation, Long Hanborough, England
PPU	Peace Pledge Union
<i>PSPR</i>	Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research
SC	Special Collections
SPR	Society for Psychical Research
TS	Theosophical Society
UCLA	University of California at Los Angeles
UO	University of Oregon
VSSC	Vedanta Society of Southern California Archives
WCF	World Congress of Faith
WJHS	W.J.H. Sprott

INTRODUCTION

The real history of man can . . . only be told as the history of an emergence, and of an emergence into an even fuller and more general awareness of himself, of life and of the world.¹

—Gerald Heard, *The Emergence of Man* (1931).

Part I Heard Who?

One must know oneself before one can know the world. This popular psychological credo drove the life and work of Gerald Heard (1889–1971), the Anglo Irish author of the passage above. Described seriously as “one of the most penetrating minds in England” by E.M. Forster, and sardonically as “the cleverest man in the world” by Evelyn Waugh, Heard is largely unknown today despite playing a pivotal role in several significant twentieth-century movements. Writer, science broadcaster, pacifist, mystic, gay activist, and psychedelic pioneer, he deserves notice for his revealing contexts and his wide social reach. More a communicator than an ideologue, Heard pushed and pulled the cultural and intellectual tides of his age and class. He did this first in interwar Britain and then in the United States, where he migrated in 1937. In Britain, Heard immersed himself with liberal intellectuals of the upper-middle class who sought to redefine spirituality on their own terms, particularly in the terms of psychology, science, and Eastern religion. In the United States, he joined forces with conscientious objectors and postwar conservatives, particularly business executives plumbing their own spiritual depths.

This book is partly a petition for Heard’s historical significance. Since common cords connect his various activities, the book also makes three larger arguments. First, Heard’s life and work reflect an important twentieth-century sub-culture which attracted followers in both Britain and the United States. This sub-culture, labeled “New Age” by some, sought to reconcile science and religion by using the language and concepts of the physical, biological, and social sciences to explore religious ideas like salvation and the soul. Second, this sub-culture shows the heterodox legacy of liberal religion in twentieth-century Anglo American thought. Leigh Schmidt has recently argued for liberal religion’s centrality in nineteenth and twentieth-century America, but he tends to conflate liberal

religion with liberal politics, underlining its adherents' penchant for social reform.² He does not address liberalism's twentieth-century transformations, where the postwar growth of welfare states induced individualistic liberals, or libertarians, to ally with conservative traditionalists. Some libertarians, like Heard and his followers, retained certain liberal religious notions. They believed in the importance of individual mystical experience, and thought science reflected human divinity. At the same time, they argued against the efficacy of welfare states, claiming that people will only build moral, equitable societies if they can first attain a sustainable level of religious experience. They maintained that religious change must take precedence over political change. Heard's conservative set also used science to argue for intelligent design. In this sense, the looser theological framework offered by liberal religion became a conservative tool because of its intellectual malleability.

The book's third argument pertains to the secularization thesis, or the theory that the modern period coincided with religion's decline, a theory which has held significant sway in British historiography. Heard's different contexts, from popular science to psychotherapy, all contained religious undercurrents. Although many scholars today acknowledge the shortcomings of the secularization thesis,³ religion's influence on popular twentieth-century ideas still requires fleshing out. Early-twentieth-century British psychology was a broad church, as Mathew Thomson has recently shown,⁴ encompassing the academic study of mind as well as fashionable notions of self-help.

American psychology has exhibited a similar diversity, although historians have only recently begun to examine its religious elements. Robert C. Fuller, for example, has noted the links between "psychological concepts" and the "unchurched [American] religious imagination," and suggested that scholars should take greater account of popular psychology's influence on American spirituality.⁵ Heard helped shape popular spirituality and psychology in both Britain and the United States, including several self-help groups that are still influential today. These groups comprise the Human Potential movement, an innovator in Gestalt therapy centered at California's Esalen Institute; the hugely popular Alcoholics Anonymous; and the westernized Hindu sect Vedānta. Vedānta, though not conventionally associated with psychology, functioned as a self-help movement for many "seekers" in mid-twentieth-century California, and it helped to popularize yoga. Heard combined scientific, psychological, and Western and Eastern religion in his writing and lectures, rapidly becoming one of Vedānta's most popular spokesmen when he moved to Hollywood in the late-1930s. He recruited the novelist

Christopher Isherwood to its practice and inspired the scholar Huston Smith, author of the best-selling *Religions of Man* (1958).⁶

Despite his links to AA, Esalen, and Vedānta, Heard is better known, if at all, for his influence on such literary figures as W.H. Auden, Aldous Huxley, and Isherwood, and for the Gandhian pacifism he expounded in the late-1930s. Although his association with British writers has often relegated him to the footnotes, a handful of scholars have tried to bring him into the main story. Where Humphrey Carpenter characterized Heard as one of the “passing attractions” that Auden “played with . . . in his poems,”⁷ Paul Eros has claimed that “Heard’s influence on Auden’s mysticism was early, profound and enduring.”⁸ David Garrett Izzo explored Heardian echoes in *W.H. Auden: A Legacy* (2002) and in *Christopher Isherwood: His Era, His Gang, and the Legacy of the Truly Strong Man* (2001).⁹ Martin Ceadel noted Heard and Huxley’s joint contributions to the Peace Pledge Union, a pacifist organization that gained a rapid popularity in the mid-1930s,¹⁰ and David Bradshaw has demonstrated Heard’s vital role in Huxley’s pacifist conversion.

Huxley scholars have devoted the most space to Heard. He and Huxley enjoyed a long and close intellectual companionship after becoming fast friends upon their introduction in January 1929 by the Bloomsbury art critic Raymond Mortimer.¹¹ Heard recalled the six foot four Huxley sailing in like a galleon with “a long coat billowing around him,” his “eyes dilated through high-magnification lenses, broad, lofty forehead and, on top of that an oversize-brimmed hat.”¹² The two great talkers, one exploding like Roman candles and the other, as Heard put it, “neat as a seamstress’ stitching,” conversed at Mortimer’s until one o’clock in the morning.¹³ They continued their discussions on a three-mile trek back to Heard’s flat that night and in regular afternoon walks from then on.

In her classic Huxley biography, Sybille Bedford asked, “How serious . . . was the influence of . . . Gerald Heard?”¹⁴ She answered her own question by quoting from Huxley’s novel *Point Counter Point* (1928):

In point of fact [Philip Quarles says of himself] . . . he had never deeply and whole-heartedly admired anyone. *Theoretically, yes; but never in practice, never to the point of wanting to make himself a disciple, a follower.* He had adopted other people’s opinions, even their modes of life—but always with the underlying conviction that they weren’t really his, that he could and certainly would abandon them as easily as he had taken them up. [Bedford’s italics.]¹⁵

Huxley wrote these words before he met Heard. Still, Heard recruited him to the pacifist movement in the mid-1930s, as Bedford acknowledges and

as David Bradshaw has written about at greater length; interested him in Vedānta, which profoundly shaped his later work; and provided a never-ending stream of information, ideas, and theories to fuel his writing.¹⁶ Heard's different contexts shed some light on Huxley's own intellectual development.

A handful of writers portray Heard as more than just a literary influence. Some see him as a prophet, as evident on the website geraldheard.com, which states that "Heard . . . anticipated, formulated, and stated properly many of today's major problems before the twentieth century was thirty years old."¹⁷ The site contains testimonials from several of Heard's acquaintances, such as the journalist Marvin Barrett, who described him "as one of the truly remarkable souls and intellects of his time."¹⁸ The researcher John Cody has expressed similar sentiments, writing, "Gerald Heard . . . has to be one of the best-kept secrets of twentieth-century philosophy, science, and literature . . . Heard was one of the first twentieth-century thinkers to detect harbingers of [a] post-mechanist, New Age cultural awareness."¹⁹ David Garrett Izzo asserts, "Heard alone had just as much impact as Huxley on the thought of our new age, perhaps more so."²⁰

Despite such accolades, historians have largely neglected Heard. This neglect can be attributed to several historiographical trends. First, historians of ideas have tended to pursue academic innovators rather than popular disseminators like Heard. Second, British historians have tended to push intellectuals to the margins, viewing them as un-British, although Stefan Collini, a historian of ideas, is trying to pull them back.²¹ Third, as both science broadcaster and religious writer, Heard contradicts some influential paradigms. One such paradigm, advanced by C.P. Snow in 1959, maintains that scientists and literary types inhabit "two cultures," operating in entirely separate realms. The other paradigm, the secularization thesis, holds that the modern age is a period of uniform religious decline.²² Although these models are increasingly under attack,²³ their decades-long dominance has abandoned figures like Heard between the cracks.

Finally, Heard's politics do not fit into neat definitions of Left and Right. As a spiritual liberal in interwar Britain and a counter-cultural conservative in postwar America, he defies conventional ideological categorization. Aldous Huxley described him as "that rare being—a learned man who makes his mental home on the vacant spaces between the pigeon-holes."²⁴ Heard's occupation of these spaces is another key to his importance: his ideas and contexts illuminate neglected aspects of liberal and conservative politics, particularly their common links to liberal

religion, and broader intellectual connections between interwar Britain and postwar America.

As European politics became tenser through the 1930s, Heard engrossed himself in unorthodox spiritualities, particularly Vedānta, which shared the holistic philosophy of left-liberalism. He subsequently embraced a pacifist anarchism underpinned by this same holism and spent the latter half of the Second World War at Trabuco, a loosely cooperative community which he founded for research into prayer. Although political disenchantment did not solely motivate Heard, his example is suggestive. His choices illustrate why some Britons didn't join the Communist or Fascist movements, and why Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism gained a rapid popularity during the 1930s. Heard also contributed to the general political and cultural unease felt on both the Left and the Right. The same malaise that drove him into pacifism and religious heterodoxy in the 1930s would later propel him into the arms of postwar conservatives, LSD, gay studies, and Esalen.

Heard undoubtedly deserves more attention than he has received. Ironically, given his efforts at self-transcendence, his personal charisma greatly enhanced his influence. Those who knew him emphasized his extraordinary capacity for conversation. Igor Stravinsky called him “a virtuoso talker” and “a stunning performer,” comparing his locution to Roman candles exploding in all directions.²⁵ Many described Heard as brilliant, although Stravinsky admitted he “had no idea what his talk was *about*.”²⁶ Some compared Heard's conversational style to that of a bird: singing, chattering, or flying.²⁷ An intellectual magpie, he collected gleaming ideas everywhere. Charismatic and slight, with penetrating, light blue eyes, his hands would swoop and soar with each point, creating an electrifying atmosphere. At the core of this energy stood the bearded, birdlike Heard.

Part II Early Years: Childhood, Education and Ireland

Heard's charisma developed over time, which may have shaped his belief that all humans have the capacity for psychological evolution. In *The Ascent of Humanity* (1929), he described humanity's psychological evolution from “primitive” unconsciousness to modern self-consciousness to a futuristic “super-consciousness.” This last stage enabled one to draw on the universe's vast reservoirs of unseen energy. Heard thought he had transcended the morbid self-consciousness of his youth through group fellowship, prayer, meditation and yoga, which enabled him to draw on unseen forces greater than himself; the charisma of cosmic love, as it were.

He described self-consciousness as an evolutionary stage exacerbated by the mechanistic, materialist mindset inherent in Victorian Darwinism. His childhood home life exhibited a ‘red in tooth and claw’ quality; he described it as a “world of nightmare and petty violence.”²⁸ Born in London in 1889, Heard was the youngest and weakest of his father’s three sons, due to a childhood spinal injury and the premature loss of his mother (*Times*, February 13, 1893).²⁹ His earliest memory, aged three, “was whether new clothes must be bought, or whether everything might not be dyed black.”³⁰ His mother’s mother moved in and kept death’s imminent prospect alive. A Christian fundamentalist from County Clare, Ireland, she had buried most of her children and, Heard recalled, “her belief in eternal damnation had a strong and painful presence on my early life.”³¹ A controlling, “very strong minded woman,” she believed a “child’s will must be broken.”³²

Heard’s father, Henry James Heard (1856–1931), agreed. Like his own father, John Bickford Heard (1828–1908, hereafter referred to as John Bickford), Henry was an Anglican minister and had attended Cambridge while Modernist Theology held sway. He had rejected John Bickford’s intellectualism, however, for a disillusioned, low Anglican evangelicalism. Disillusionment combined with fire and brimstone made for a house of suffering. The youngest Heard endured physical and psychological assaults at the hands of his father, brothers,³³ and a drunken nursemaid, memories of which fuelled his adult interest in Alcoholics Anonymous.³⁴ Some respite came with his father’s remarriage in 1899, whereupon the “worst horrors ceased.”³⁵

The young Heard was fascinated by science and technology, and he began reading the works of H.G. Wells (1866–1946) around the age of eleven.³⁶ Wells had also grown up in an evangelical household, and his novels showed how scientific concepts might be reconciled with religious ideas of salvation. Heard saw the science–religion conflict play out in his own household, and later remembered his “elders” dismissing such phenomena as X-rays and the Wright Brothers’ 1907 flight as fraudulent.³⁷ Almost 50 years on, he could still recall the “frightful explosion” that erupted with the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics in 1908.³⁸

Heard underwent new struggles at his Dorset public school, Sherborne, which he enrolled in May 1904. Founded by Edward VI in the sixteenth century, Sherborne’s stone buildings originally formed part of a medieval Benedictine Abbey, and religiosity comprised a significant portion of the school’s programme. This religiosity was tempered by the liberal Anglicanism of the school head, Frederick Brooke Westcott (1857–1918), a former headmaster of Rugby and the son of the Bishop of Durham,

Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901), a noted liberal Biblical critic.

Physical competition made up another portion of the Sherborne education. Alec Waugh's thinly-disguised portrait of the school, *The Loom of Youth* (1917), painted it as a bullying haven of athleticism where "the sure way to popularity lay in success on the field."³⁹ Not surprisingly, the frail young Heard did not find this muscular Christian environment agreeable. He later described public schools as places where children are naturally intolerant and their teachers ignorant and timid.⁴⁰ He concurred with Raymond Mortimer's description of "the average Public school . . . as filthy-minded as Sing-Sing [prison]" when it came to sex, and expressed his contempt for the public school system as a whole.⁴¹ He acknowledged that Sherborne had been rough, and claimed that the seeds of his narrative career could be traced back to the school, where he relayed stories to keep the bullies at bay.⁴²

Heard found respite from bullying in 1908 when he matriculated at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he graduated with a Second-Class B.A. in History in 1911. Originally founded in the fourteenth century by Edmund Gonville and then refounded in the sixteenth century by John Caius, the college impresses its high expectations upon students with a series of gray stone gates through which they must pass on their journeys to academic achievement. The slim, auburn-haired Heard, who reached an adult height of five feet nine inches, began his college career by passing through a plain "Gate of Humility" on the eastern side of the grounds. Then, every day throughout his course of study, he passed through a classically inspired "Gate of Virtue" near the centre of the college, Caius Court. Finally, when leaving the college for graduation, he and his fellow students passed through the tall, ornamented "Gate of Honour" at the college's south end.

With such daily spurs to integrity, Cambridge provided further fodder for intellectual and spiritual discord. Heard entered university expecting to become a clergyman like his grandfather, father, and eldest brother Alexander, but changed his mind along the way. He studied history under the Caius medievalist Z.N. Brooke (1883–1946), who used a "scientific" or critical approach to sources,⁴³ and he later described himself as having a "German-Cambridge mind," though he also regarded himself as an academic failure.⁴⁴ Heard acquired an Idealist outlook, and sought to integrate history, religion, and the social, physical, and biological sciences.⁴⁵

This idealism came at least in part from Heard's politics tutor, the Platonist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862–1932), who viewed the scientific spirit as threatening. Dickinson's Platonism embodied the

intellectual and social atmosphere of Edwardian Cambridge with its mystical idealism and its high esteem for “passionate friendship between men.”⁴⁶ The philosophic system of British Idealism, or the belief in some unifying intellectual or spiritual force, is associated more with Oxford than with Cambridge. But Dickinson’s idealism was less a system than a way of life, as evident in his lifelong concern for the alleviation of poverty and his subsequent efforts in establishing the League of Nations, which Heard came to support. As befitted his Greek ideals, Dickinson contributed to young Heard’s intellectual development and wrote the introduction to his second book. Dickinson’s writings, particularly his highly influential *Greek View of Life* (1896), address many of Heard’s later interests including the mind of primitive man, the evolution of religious consciousness, the threat of the scientific spirit, the fundamental importance of love, and the role of religion in making man “at home in the world.”⁴⁷

Initially, Heard attempted to make his home in the world by studying theology, although he would come to define spirituality on his own terms. Despite the reduction of clerical influence at Cambridge in general, the decline of dogmatic evangelicalism at Caius in particular, and the rise of various Cambridge sciences, religion still exerted a powerful force during Heard’s years there.⁴⁸ He became a Theological Exhibitioner at Caius in 1911,⁴⁹ studying Hebrew and probably the Greek Testament while exploring psychical research on the side.⁵⁰ The Society for Psychical Research, which sought to investigate the paranormal, had centered on Cambridge since its foundation in 1882. Like Heard, its “most active workers [came] from religious, and even deeply religious, households” who had repudiated their families’ denominational ties.⁵¹ These workers included J.E. McTaggart (1866–1925), a philosophy Fellow of Trinity College between 1897 and 1925, and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, who may have introduced Heard to the Society. Heard would serve on the Society’s council until 1937.⁵² Although he cast off their belief in personal immortality, he retained their idealism.

One year before the Great War broke out, Heard left Cambridge without a theology degree to enter the employ of the former lawyer and retired Liberal politician William Snowdon Robson (1852–1918) as his private secretary. Robson had embarked upon his political career under Gladstone’s government in 1885 and supported Irish Home Rule.⁵³ Heard did not serve in the Great War as the military had rejected him on physical grounds.⁵⁴ With Ireland’s conflicts temporarily repressed and Europe’s conflicts vehemently expressed, Heard’s own anxieties came to a head. He suffered a nervous collapse in 1916, one year after his second-eldest

brother Robert died on the front in North Africa.⁵⁵ His later secretary and manager Jay Michael Barrie wrote:

It had been Heard's intention to follow in the footsteps of his paternal grandfather, father and elder brother and take orders in the Church of England. However, his probing mind, consumed with curiosity and with such a vast spread of interests, was on a collision course with doubt as to many of the doctrines of the Church from the time he was in his teens. When at last the crash came in 1916, the result was a nervous breakdown. When he recovered, after a long illness, he found that he was a scientific materialist with a strong sense of social responsibility, and in the next few years was active in such things as progressive education, prison visiting and penal reform.⁵⁶

Although he recovered from this breakdown, Heard would suffer bouts of depression for the rest of his life.

Barrie attributed Heard's rejection of the priesthood to the influence of Cambridge sciences.⁵⁷ Another factor may have been his initiation into bohemian London. Around the time of his breakdown, Heard became acquainted with the painter Glyn Philpot (1884–1937), who shared his religious upbringing, his homosexuality, and his loquaciousness. He later wrote that he owed to Philpot "the fact that I met the intellectual world."⁵⁸ By this he meant that the painter introduced him to artistic and literary circles in London and Europe, extending his hospitality in Italy, for example, in 1925.⁵⁹ It would take time for Heard to become comfortable in this world, however; he later described himself as "Under heavy pressure of inhibition" during these years.⁶⁰ Philpot painted three portraits of Heard, which depict a wistful, delicate-featured man with short, dark brown hair combed to the side of a high forehead, sad, gray-blue eyes, a Roman nose, and a reddish-brown moustache and pointed goatee framing a poignant mouth.

Heard's rejection of the cloth may also be viewed as an outgrowth of the Modernist Theology espoused by his father's family. His paternal grandfather, the clergyman and prominent religious writer John Bickford Heard (1828–1908, hereafter referred to as John Bickford), participated in many religious debates of his day. A Cambridge graduate, John Bickford was, like many of his fellow Cantabridgiens, a Modern Churchman. Modern Churchmen believed that God could be known to a certain extent in other religions, but believed that He was supremely revealed through the Bible. Heard reversed these beliefs, finding world religions more revelatory than Scripture. He shared their faith in the supernatural as opposed to the miraculous, however, and accepted their Biblical

criticism.⁶¹

Heard's life and work reflected both the evangelical and Modernist Theological aspects of his upbringing in that he remained preoccupied with spiritual and scientific questions. Although he refused holy orders and never committed to a particular Christian denomination, his religious group work and writing in both interwar England and postwar California, exhibited a certain evangelical fervour for changing lives.⁶² At the same time, he echoed many of his grandfather's Modernist Theological themes: developmentalism, or the Idealist belief in history as progress; the danger of individualism; the importance of prayer and the immanence of God; sacerdotalism, or the corruption of the established Church and the purity of the early Christians; the psychology of religion; and the links between science and religion. Heard was more ecumenical and less Biblical than his grandfather, however, as reflected in his association with the inter-denominational Guildhouse church discussed in Chapter Two and with Vedānta, discussed in Chapter Three.

Perhaps most significantly, Heard absorbed Modernist Theology's insistence on reinterpreting traditional ideas in contemporary language. He stressed the importance of semantics, and he engaged in a degree of sophistry himself. Christopher Isherwood attributed his own interest in Eastern religious philosophy to Heard's having "straightened me out semantically. I mean, a lot of my categories were simply based on being frightened of certain words; and by rephrasing things he got me into a receptive mood."⁶³ Modern Churchmen redefined salvation as psychological rescue from egotism and individualism. The liberal religious climate of the interwar period enabled Heard, Isherwood, and others to reinterpret spiritual and political ideas in the more modern terms of psychology, Eastern religious philosophy, and quantum physics. Heard's BBC science talks, broadcast between 1930 and 1934 and discussed in Chapter One, indicate that debates about the relationship between spirituality and popular physics became a cultural battlefield for liberal politics in the early-1930s.

Heard and his contemporaries analogized the soul and the cosmos to the individual and society, whose relationship preoccupied political thinkers. The individual had anchored classical liberalism, but the "New Liberals" of late-nineteenth century Britain sought to counter individualism's excesses by arguing for a larger state role. By the interwar period, many thinkers had internalized the New Liberals' aims but disagreed over how to achieve them; that is, over what type of and how much control states should exert over individuals.

Heard began by exploring small-scale cooperative solutions. He spent

a few years near Dublin working as a private secretary for the former M.P. Sir Horace Plunkett (1854–1932) before he launched his career as a writer, broadcaster, and lecturer in London. His ancestral roots lay in Ireland, with his mother's family in County Limerick and the Heard family seat (held by his grandfather's cousins) at Coolmain Castle, Kilbrittain, near Cork.⁶⁴ Plunkett recorded in his diary that he hired Heard as his private secretary with the hope of making him his successor in the cooperative movement.⁶⁵ Under the slogan "Better Farming, Better Business, Better Living," the Anglo Irish landowner encouraged voluntary cooperation among Irish dairy farmers to share information, tools, and the organization of sales to strengthen rural communities and create the foundation for a healthy political structure.⁶⁶ Although the movement encountered many obstacles in Ireland, it became a guiding light for rural reformers in other parts of the British Empire. Heard would come to differ with Plunkett on the means for social change, but he would maintain a close connection to the cooperative movement throughout the interwar period, founding his own pacifist cooperative, Trabuco, in California.

Heard began working for Plunkett on February 24, 1920, just as Ireland's Troubles were beginning,⁶⁷ and he later described his three years near Dublin as "the twilight."⁶⁸ Violence greeted the reopening of the Irish Question after the First World War as tensions between republicans, Irish and Ulster unionists, and constitutional nationalists increased. Extreme nationalists, who later formed the Irish Republican Army (IRA), assassinated policemen, whom they considered to be members of an occupying force. British troops struck back. In 1920, partition became further cause for conflict and guerilla violence escalated, consuming the island in civil war from 1922 to 1923. Although Plunkett supported home rule, he opposed republicanism on the grounds that economic reconstruction should take precedence over political change. Irish Republican terrorists attacked his cooperatives as symbols of anti-nationalism, striking over sixty of them from April 1920 onwards.⁶⁹ Heard and Plunkett left Ireland in 1923 after raiders burned Plunkett's house, nearly killing Heard in the process.

Part III Middle and Later Years: London and California

A few months after the fire, Heard found a temporary home for the two men on Tellside Street in Weybridge, Surrey, and then arranged for the purchase of Crest House in the same area, where the elder statesman lived out his last years.⁷⁰ Through Plunkett, Heard met E.M. Forster, a Weybridge neighbour. Now a commuter town for London professionals,

Weybridge had the distinction of possessing one of England's first airfields. Serendipitously, one of the first private airplanes belonged to Heard's friend Christopher Wood (1900–1976), a Plantagenet descendant⁷¹ and young heir to the grocery fortune of Petty, Wood, and Co. Heard began an affair with Wood, a slim fellow Anglo Irishman eleven years his junior, some time in the mid-1920s. He described his new boyfriend in a 1926 letter to Naomi Mitchison: “[he] has nothing to do save play—piano, etc: lacking (through parental foresight in accumulating and then dying) economic urge, wavy hair, 26 and somehow appealing.”⁷² This affair, among other issues, contributed to his rupture with Plunkett a few years later.

Heard wrote that his years in Ireland prompted him to think about the need for “psychological knowledge as to the proper size of groups and the types of constitution which are needed for different cultures and races” for cooperation.⁷³ This thinking led him to prioritize psychological change over economics. Ireland also got him pondering evolution and Eastern religious philosophy as he received his first copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* from Charlotte Shaw (1857–1943), George Bernard's wife.⁷⁴ The Shaws visited Plunkett frequently in the early-1920s, and the bearded, loquacious George Bernard (1856–1950) became a formative influence for Heard. Years later, many would compare the younger Anglo Irishman to the elder, both in ideas and physical appearance. Like many writers and thinkers in the 1920s, Shaw hankered after a new source of optimism. He found it in “creative evolution,” an idea expounded by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who suggested that imagination underpins all progress.⁷⁵ Shaw expounded this notion in *Back to Methuselah* (1921), a three part serial play that combined themes from Genesis and Darwinism and included a long preface explaining the scientific and political contexts of his theories. The play's evolutionist ideas ripple throughout Heard's writing.⁷⁶

Influenced by the socialist writer Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), who knew both Forster and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Heard began pondering the evolutionary function of homosexuality in the 1920s, a theme to which he would return in the 1950s.⁷⁷ He expressed dissatisfaction with the sexual act, writing to a friend, “I don't agree about it being thrilling. I used to shoot but have never hunted. Shooting was almost as thrilling but far more painful, I still feel, for the object of my attentions so I gave it up.”⁷⁸ But as a fetishist, Heard acknowledged, “acts are not so important to me”, and claimed that he found even the most routine prayers “more satisfying than most [sexual] experiences.”⁷⁹

Despite or because of his distaste for “acts,” Heard flaunted his sexuality in this period. A dress fetishist, he clothed himself in outlandish

attire and had caused a scandal in Ireland, it is alleged, by walking hand-in-hand with a “whistling postman.”⁸⁰ Plunkett’s diaries hint that Heard led something of a promiscuous existence. His behaviour was more in keeping with London’s bohemian set, where he adopted a more “slyly exotic” style.⁸¹ After he returned to England in 1923, he became part of a fashionable literary group which included Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986), Duncan Grant (1885–1978), W.H. Auden (1907–1973), Joe Ackerley (1896–1967), John Betjeman (1906–1984), Lionel (“Leo”) Charlton (1879–1958), Tom Whichelo, Raymond Mortimer (1895–1980), and Lytton Strachey (1880–1932). Ackerley biographer Peter Parker writes:

This group . . . formed a raffish and intellectual circle that racketed around London, visiting cinemas, theatres, concerts, the zoo and the Ring in Blackfriars Road, where Harry Daley’s beloved boxers took part in competitions. They had their favourite pubs, notably the York Minster in Soho’s Old Compton Street, and their favourite restaurants: the Café Royale; the Criterion, which did a good three-and-sixpenny lunch; the Isola Bella in Greek Street; and Gennaro’s in New Compton Street, famous for its beautiful waiters, who were carefully selected by the flamboyant old proprietor during holidays back in his native Italy.⁸²

Ackerley recalled a colorful Heard arriving for dinner as a guest one night at his family home. Attired in a leopard-skin collared jacket and purple suede shoes, sporting black, mascara-like ointment for conjunctivitis under his lower eyelids,⁸³ Heard proceeded to lecture Ackerley’s fruit merchant father “on the problem of the uneconomic banana skin.”⁸⁴

In 1927, Heard moved in with Christopher Wood at 1A Wilton Street in well-heeled Belgravia. His relationship with Plunkett was floundering at this point, not only because of his competing attentions to Wood, but also from his mounting devotion to his own work. Heard’s secretarial work had become increasingly part-time to his employer’s increasing chagrin. In 1924, Plunkett had appointed Heard to the board of his foundation, established in 1919 for the study and development of cooperatives. The same year, Heard published his first book, *Narcissus: An Anatomy of Clothes*.⁸⁵

The core theme of *Narcissus*, human psychological evolution, would preoccupy Heard for the rest of his life. Where he would later trace this trajectory through human consciousness and religion, here he traced it through the vagaries of fashion. To Heard, these different subjects all reflected his deep conviction that human evolution had ceased being physical and had become wholly psychical.

In these years Heard was also writing for the revived *Irish Statesman* under the editorship of George Russell (AE) (1867–1935). Plunkett recorded in his diary, “Having to dispose with his help (beyond occasional use of the typewriter) in my special task has doubtless shortened my life. But he does not see this.”⁸⁶ Despite the rupture, Plunkett named Heard as his sole executor and main beneficiary in his will, and Heard remained a member of the Plunkett Foundation for Agricultural Cooperation until 1948.

Trevor West has suggested that “Plunkett [fell] under Heard’s spell.”⁸⁷ Although certain passages in Plunkett’s diaries indicate his deep attachment to his secretary, he seems to have repressed any homoerotic inclinations. He is said to have been “unquestionably” in love with the Countess of Fingall, although their relationship remained a companionable one.⁸⁸ Plunkett’s other Dublin employees were known for their intrigue, according to James Meenan. Meenan wrote, “A contemporary saying was that Saint Patrick had banished snakes from Ireland, [but] Sir Horace had brought some of them back.”⁸⁹

In 1929, Heard and Wood moved to 28 Portman Square, in the West End, where they inhabited a modern new luxury flat overlooking the roof garden of Selfridge’s department store, with “a cat which tone[d] in perfectly with the furnishings.”⁹⁰ Like Heard, Wood had had an unhappy childhood. Born Christopher William Graham Wood to a wealthy wholesale grocery family in Lambeth, Surrey, his mother died in childbirth, and his father remarried and died shortly thereafter.⁹¹ His father, Graham Wood, bequeathed to him the bulk of his estate (valued at 101,556 pounds in 1905) and the guardianship of a jealous stepmother.⁹² Wood and Heard had grown in opposite directions from their early experiences: where Wood had learned to hang back, Heard had learned to entertain. Where Heard sought pleasure in ideas and spirituality and clothes, Wood sought it almost entirely in things. Where Heard dedicated himself to his writing, Wood never completed his Cambridge degree.⁹³ Christopher Isherwood described Wood as “the spoilt, wayward younger son, with his airplane, his musical boxes, his superbicycle and all his other dangerous or expensive amusements and toys.”⁹⁴ E.M. Forster took a definite dislike to Wood, describing him as “that shit.”⁹⁵ Heard and Wood were like two sides of one person, which, according to Isherwood, gave them the air of brothers. Wood looked after Heard’s material needs, and his inheritance allowed Heard a better lifestyle than he could have achieved on his own. Still, he complained of poverty whenever Wood left town.

Heard’s relationships are perhaps less interesting than the evolving social and intellectual backdrop against which they took place. Although

homosexuality remained illegal, it attained a level of public interest in the 1920s unseen since the trial of Oscar Wilde. Radclyffe Hall's 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness* pleaded for tolerance of lesbian love and her publisher, Jonathan Cape, was charged under the Obscene Publications Act. Even before the Hall affair, many prominent reformers concerned with the rights of women and homosexuals had banded together in the British Society for Sex Psychology after an International Medical Congress in London in 1913.⁹⁶ And Freud, despite labeling same-sex relations as deviant, helped normalize sexuality as a legitimate subject of discussion.

Interwar interest in "inverts," as the sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) termed homosexuals, can also be seen as a watershed after several decades of attention from Ellis, his fellow socialist Edward Carpenter, and the poet and critic John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), among others. Where Ellis had striven to show homosexuals were different but equal, Carpenter had argued that their differences indicated a more highly evolved nature. He called them the "intermediate sex," capable of interpreting "men and women to each other" and indeed pointing civilization in the right direction.⁹⁷

Carpenter may have been unique in justifying homosexuality with evolutionist theory, but his evolutionism and concern for civilization simply reflected intellectual trends. These trends were also evident in Horace Plunkett's *Ireland in the New Century* (1904) and in more popular works like Oswald Spengler's two-volume *Decline of the West* (1918–22), an indictment of Western decadence whose fans believed it explained the First World War.⁹⁸ Philosophies of history were hardly new, however. Gianbattista Vico had pioneered the field in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, Hegel had legitimized it in the early-nineteenth century, and evolutionists like Darwin had unwittingly shaped the biological dimensions of Hegel's imitators in the late-nineteenth century. The First World War's traumas infused philosophies of history with an urgent tone, as their authors combed the past for illumination about the present. The turmoil of the 1920s and 30s, with the 1926 General Strike, the Stock Market crash of 1929, the Great Depression, the "Red Menace" of Communism, and the Fascist threat, only reinforced the importance of finding answers to pressing social, economic and political questions.

This turmoil persuaded Heard and others to study psychology for answers, a response that echoed certain strains of the liberal tradition. "Moral sentiments" had lain at the heart of Adam Smith's ideas in the late-eighteenth century, and although the New Liberals of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries adopted a more hands-on approach to

economics and the state, inner development lay at the heart of their programmes. New Liberalism had developed out of the German, Hegelian-influenced philosophies propounded by Oxford's Idealists: T.H. Green (1836–1882), F.H. Bradley (1846–1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923), and others. Although these three thinkers differed in their metaphysics, they agreed that some kind of inner development, whether mental, spiritual, or psychological, must precede social and political reform. Green, for example, argued that spiritual revelation lies in understanding that one can only actualize oneself as a moral citizen in one's community.⁹⁹ The sociologist L.T. Hobhouse (1864–1929) described (New) Liberalism as “the belief that society can be safely founded on this self-directing power of personality,” and argued for government intervention in the lives of individuals to help them actualize their best selves.¹⁰⁰

Many First World War veterans had not realized their best selves, as the many shellshock cases indicated. These cases underscored war's serious psychological consequences, and their treatment contributed to several developments: psychology's professionalization; the spread of talk therapy; increasing recognition that illness doesn't always have physical causes or even physical symptoms; and increasing recognition that anyone can be vulnerable to mental illness.¹⁰¹ Some of talk therapy's pioneers, such as W.H.R. Rivers (1864–1922), Heard's friend C.S. Myers (1873–1946), and the anthropologist G. Elliott Smith (1871–1937) published widely in the popular intellectual press. A significant number of veterans were still suffering from shellshock, and their families suffered with them.¹⁰²

Heard's personal interest in psychology received encouragement from W.J.H. “Jack” Sprott (1897–1971), a lecturer in the subject at Nottingham University and a Cambridge friend of Christopher Wood's.¹⁰³ Sprott, also known as “Sebastian,” read and commented on most of his early manuscripts.¹⁰⁴ Their correspondence reflects Heard's concern with his own psychological development and suggests that his interwar writing can be read as a kind of intellectual autobiography. If so, then his books document his evolution from psychological crisis (1929) to greater equanimity through small fellowship groups (1931) to his need for rigorous regimens like yoga (1935), vegetarianism, and militant pacifism (1937).

Heard's broadcasts, published works, and reception also reflect the peculiar contradictions of interwar liberalism. New Liberalism took a hit in the First World War, not only because Britain's Liberal leaders had sent so many soldiers to their deaths, but also because of New Liberalism's Idealist undercurrents. Idealism's German origins made it intellectually

verboden in certain interwar circles. The Labour party overtook and in some ways subsumed the Liberal party in 1929, but progressive liberalism remained a deep, albeit divided, current in British political and social thought throughout the interwar period.¹⁰⁵

Michael Freedon has shown that British liberalism divided into two strands: centrist liberalism, which emphasized the values of individual liberty and self-reliance, and left-liberalism, which accentuated the state's significance in facilitating this individual liberty and self-reliance.¹⁰⁶ Although these divisions contributed to the Liberal party's demise, they paradoxically helped keep progressive liberalism alive by maintaining a variety of political positions for those unwilling to side with the Conservative or Labour parties.

While Freedon does not address the grassroots effect of liberalism's divisions, Heard's example suggests that it allowed self-titled liberals to draw on both leftist and centrist ideas while experimenting with such practices as cooperativism. Heard conveyed a centrist-liberal ethic of self-help in emphasizing the importance of small groups over state intervention, and sounded something of a left-liberal trumpet in criticizing individualism and advocating internationalism. His distaste for individualism led him to adopt elitist notions of spiritual hierarchy as conditions in European politics deteriorated in the latter half of the Thirties, but these notions do not necessarily indicate a shift to the right. Heard's elitism arose out of his concern for moral renewal and desire for a constructive "third way," and it presaged the ideas of the Moot, a Christian group in wartime England concerned with civil society.¹⁰⁷ Intellectuals of the British interwar period are commonly discussed in terms of extreme politics, with much attention given to Communists and Fascists, and little to those in between. This focus on extremes is due in large part to the Spanish Civil War's role in mobilizing large numbers of the literati for and against Fascism. This focus on extremes can obscure the shades of gray within British political activity of the interwar period, shades colored partly by liberalism's divisions.

In 1937, Heard crossed the Atlantic and the United States to California with Aldous, Maria, and Matthew Huxley. He founded Trabuco College during the Second World War, where he received such visitors as the comparative religion scholar Huston Smith and the spiritual leader Jiddu Krishnamurti. Heard carved out new careers for himself as a conservative religious prophet, gay spiritual leader, detective novelist, and science fiction writer. He influenced AA founder Bill Wilson (1895–1971), the writer and Republican congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce (1903–1987), and counter-cultural figures like Richard Price and Michael Murphy, the

Californian cofounders of Esalen.

In the early-1930s, Heard pioneered self-help through self-surrender and group fellowship, presaging some central tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous. He later described AA groups as “ad hoc churches,” similar to his own spiritual groups, and part of the general psychological revolution which he sought to effect. Bill Wilson shared Heard’s sentiments about churches and psychological revolution, and the two men admired one another greatly. Wilson described Heard as “the best example of spirituality” he knew.¹⁰⁸ Although Heard has gone down somewhat dubiously in AA history as one who introduced Wilson to LSD, he helped form the psychotherapeutic milieu surrounding both the man and his movement. An anonymous source consulted by David Garrett Izzo has suggested that Heard contributed to AA’s *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1953).¹⁰⁹ While it is impossible to verify this suggestion, the similarities between Heard’s and Wilson’s groups challenge some of the “Great Man” versions of AA history which tend to dwell on the roles of Wilson and his colleague “Dr. Bob.”

Through his writing and lectures on religion, science, and psychology, Heard also helped shape the cultural and intellectual climate for the Human Potential Movement. By encouraging the Esalen Institute’s cofounder, Michael Murphy, he also influenced the movement’s formal establishment at Big Sur.¹¹⁰ Less prominent now than it was in the 60s and 70s, the Esalen Institute has had a lasting impact in spreading such practices as group therapy.

By the time of his death in Santa Monica in 1971, Heard had published thirty-eight books on overlapping themes. He wrote by hand, mostly on a board which tilted upward as he preferred to write on an inclined surface.¹¹¹ He wrote fourteen books on psychological evolution,¹¹² four on popular science, mostly based on his BBC broadcasts,¹¹³ ten on spirituality,¹¹⁴ one on flying saucers,¹¹⁵ one for children,¹¹⁶ and eight in detective and science fiction.¹¹⁷ He published most of his fiction in the United States under the name H.F. Heard, and one scholar has suggested “there are two H.F. Heards: a [detective] novelist and a short-story writer [of science fiction].”¹¹⁸ Where the novels resemble the Sherlock Holmes tales by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the short stories combine ecological and mystical themes.¹¹⁹ Heard’s 1944 collection, *The Great Fog and Other Weird Tales*, was reviewed for the *New York Times* by the acclaimed Southern writer Eudora Welty (1909–2001). In a piece entitled “Animal, Vegetable, Mineral Ghosts,” she said Heard’s stories “have their special fascinations,” but she wished he would quicken the pace of his plots (*The New York Times Book Review*, September 3, 1944). He also published

several articles on homosexuality under the name D.B. Vest, and is now considered a trailblazer in gay spirituality.¹²⁰ He gave public lectures on pacifism, religion, immortality, evolution, homosexuality (as D.B. Vest), LSD, and many other topics throughout the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s.

Heard's liberal to conservative drift exemplifies larger twentieth-century political currents in both Britain and the United States. On both sides of the Atlantic, many postwar voters became disillusioned with liberalism, albeit at different paces. Heard's ideas and contexts illuminate the links between politics, science, and religion in this disillusionment. As professional scientific research lost its promise for Heard in the wake of the atom bomb, so did political liberalism. And while liberal religious ideas shaped his collective notions of immortality and salvation, these very notions ultimately sank liberalism's cornerstone: the autonomous individual.

The liberal religious underpinnings of Heard's politics highlight the hazards of equating political conservatism with religious traditionalism.¹²¹ In British political history, religion rarely enters the conversation when discussing the interwar period although, as Matthew Grimley and others have indicated, it should.¹²² Given the deep connections between religion and politics in the rest of 1930s Europe, it stands to reason that England would have been susceptible to similar trends.¹²³

Heard's postwar career raises questions about the politics of American counter-culture and the sub-cultures of the New Right. Although several critics have noted the conservative aspects of Esalen's Human Potential Movement, few have explored conservative counter-cultural activities, like LSD experimentation. Given its legality, however, one may well ask how counter-cultural LSD really was in the late-1950s and early-1960s, especially among conservatives who viewed it as a sacrament. At the same time, LSD's ritual use emerged out of an essentially liberal approach to religion and spirituality. Like Heard himself, the rationale behind LSD usage does not fit into a neat ideological category.

Part IV Summary

This book focuses primarily on Heard's life and work as a public intellectual, and the links between his ideas and his social, political, and cultural contexts. It does not examine his fiction in depth because other scholars have done or are doing so elsewhere.¹²⁴ The book touches on Heard's literary influence at certain points since it is impossible to avoid the subject in discussions of Huxley, but literature does not take center stage.

Christopher Isherwood described Heard's life as "an artistic performance, expressed in a language of metaphors and analogies."¹²⁵ On paper, it is difficult to do justice to someone whose personal presence generated such power. Critics may argue that Heard's own writing is beside the point; that to understand his impact, one should scrutinize his speech. Heard's compelling orations, however, led many to his published work, which distill his lectures' essences. In any case, this book does examine some of Heard's spoken words, drawing on the taped addresses housed in UCLA's Special Collections.

This book is based largely on Heard's writings, reviews thereof, and works by his contemporaries. Reviews are especially helpful in conveying his reception in interwar Britain and postwar America. The book also relies on archival material, particularly the Heard collection at UCLA; the W.J.H. Sprott papers at King's College Library in Cambridge; various collections at High Cross House in Dartington, Devon; various collections at the BBC Written Archives in Caversham Park, Reading; the James C. Ingebretsen papers at the University of Oregon; the Clare Boothe Luce papers at the Library of Congress; and the Trabuco College files at the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

The book's overlapping chapters are roughly chronological as well as thematic. The first chapter, "Popular Science and Liberal Ideology at the BBC," establishes Heard's importance as a science broadcaster and writer in the early-1930s. It argues that his Idealist, psychological interpretation of physical science reflects popular science's larger importance to debates about liberalism in the early-1930s. The second chapter, "The Crisis of Liberalism and Psychological Evolutionism," examines the psychological ideas that underpinned Heard's broadcasts, analyzing *The Ascent of Humanity* (1929), *Social Substance of Religion* (1931), and *The Emergence of Man* (1931). This chapter shows that these works appealed principally to other writers concerned about the crisis of liberalism, and reflected Heard's personal psychological travails in the same period. The third chapter is titled "Consciousness, Collectivization, and Immortality," and relates Heard's growing interest in Eastern religious philosophy, particularly the Hindu sect Vedānta, to liberal internationalism. This chapter establishes Heard's contribution to religious change by explaining his dissemination of Vedantist-influenced ideas, such as the collective conception of immortality. The fourth chapter, "Radical Pacifism," examines Heard's peace work and reception in the late-1930s. Believing that spiritual elites could show the way forward, Heard adopted ideas from anarchists and communitarians. His pacifism bore many similarities to continental European "Third Way" politics, albeit with Vedantist rather