

The Burning Wheel, Aldous Huxley

THE BURNING WHEEL

Wearied of its own turning,  
Distressed with its own busy restlessness,  
Yearning to draw the circumferent pain—  
The rim that is dizzy with speed—  
To the motionless centre, there to rest,  
The wheel must strain through agony  
On agony contracting, returning  
Into the core of steel.  
And at last the wheel has rest, is still,  
Shrunk to an adamant core:  
Fulfilling its will in fixity.  
But the yearning atoms, as they grind  
Closer and closer, more and more  
Fiercely together, beget  
A flaming fire upward leaping,  
Billowing out in a burning,  
Passionate, fierce desire to find  
The infinite calm of the mother's breast.  
And there the flame is a Christ-child sleeping,  
Bright, tenderly radiant;  
All bitterness lost in the infinite  
Peace of the mother's bosom.  
But death comes creeping in a tide  
Of slow oblivion, till the flame in fear  
Wakes from the sleep of its quiet brightness  
And burns with a darkening passion and pain,  
Lest, all forgetting in quiet, it perish.  
And as it burns and anguishes it quickens,  
Begetting once again the wheel that yearns—  
Sick with its speed—for the terrible stillness  
Of the adamant core and the steel-hard chain.  
And so once more  
Shall the wheel revolve till its anguish cease  
In the iron anguish of fixity;  
Till once again  
Flame billows out to infinity,  
Sinking to a sleep of brightness  
In that vast oblivious peace.

The end