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THE HIDDEN MYSTIC: VIRGINIA WOOLF, *THE*  
*UPANISHADS*, AND BERNARD'S FINAL LESSON

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*Like two golden birds perched on the selfsame tree,*

*Intimate friends, the ego and the Self*

*Dwell in the same body. The former eats*

*The sweet and sour fruits of the tree of life*

*While the latter looks on in detachment.*

The Hidden Mystic: Virginia Woolf, *The Upanishads*, and Bernard's Final Lesson

“Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers” (Woolf, *The Waves* 256). With mystical statements such as these peppered throughout the entirety of Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*, one can’t help but get the impression Woolf was reaching for something spectacular and far outside of herself in crafting her 1931 masterpiece. Even when held against her previous work- which found itself hinged upon weighty deconstructions of the internal, external, and unknown- *The Waves* still stands out as a labyrinthian text radically removed from Woolf’s standard mode of authorial expression. This aberration has been noted by a variety of literary critics over the years, all who posit different angles of interpretation against Woolf’s “life seen as consciousness” (Nicolae 647) novel, with its knotty and unearthly complexion. These analyses do, in their own ways, add to the general understanding of *The Waves*; addressing the deep reservoir of questions the novel has in store for its readers. But there seems to exist amid this ongoing search for meaning in *The Waves* an equally-elusive component of the novel that has yet to be comprehensively covered by critics. As Dennis Young explains in the opening sentence of his article “The Mythological Element in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*”, “readers and critics of Virginia Woolf seldom, if ever, discuss the religious dimension of her writing” (94). Young goes on to point out that despite the presence of little, if any, discussion on the topic, there is no dearth of religious and mythical color within Woolf’s writing. Young specifies this point by referring to the tendency of Woolf’s writing in *The Waves* to gravitate towards topics traditionally associated with the mythical: “her attention to ‘moments of being’; her passion for finding a true self in the

flux of time; and her use of symbols to express a complex, spiritual vision” (94). Although the absence of discussion on a topic so seemingly ingrained in Woolf’s writing could be viewed as an indiscretion on behalf of her readers and critics, interestingly, it is also likely the case that Woolf inadvertently herself had much to do with it. Woolf had a fairly strong reputation throughout her personal life for being “areligious”, with varying degrees of areligiosity (atheistic, agonistic, antireligious, etc.) assigned depending upon whom one talked to. There admittedly does exist substantial amounts of evidence pointing to Woolf’s apparent distaste of religion and mysticism. To name a few examples, one of Woolf’s own personal diaries relays her views on the more mystically-oriented of her acquaintances: Woolf thought close friend E.M. Forster “mystic, silly” and the mystic John Mills Whitman having a “lack of a good head on his shoulders” (Kane 328). Pieces of her writing from pre-1928 openly mock mysticism: Woolf takes a jab at her cousin Dorothea Stephens for traveling to India to study ancient Indian philosophy in one early work, and then pens the satirical and mystically-absurd character of Jinny Carslake in her novel *Jacob’s Room* (Kane 347). These factors almost certainly have lured critics into the assumption that her work contained no worthwhile religious elements meant to analyze (‘why would there be any if she wasn’t concerned with it?’); or, at the very least, discouraged those who might have had an interest in further exploring the topic. How, then, do we make sense of Woolf’s apparent aversion to mysticism while also faced with Woolf’s use of language in *The Waves* that seems to simultaneously mingle with that of mysticism? As it turns out, with just about anything regarding Virginia Woolf, the outside is almost never a clear indication of what is happening on the inside; and only in digging deeper into the interior do we get close to any sort of inkling of the truth.

## Woolf's Curious Brand of Mysticism

Julie Kane gives what is arguably the best explanation for Woolf's lack of congruence on religious-based mysticism, linking it to the strikingly-majestic content of *The Waves*. In "Varieties of Mystical Experience in the Writings of Virginia Woolf", Kane makes two yet unheard-of assertions regarding Woolf's own religiosity that throw an entirely new light on the writer, in effect implying a possible meaning behind the creation of *The Waves*. One of these assertions is that Woolf was, for a significant portion of her later life, a sort of repressed mystic. According to Kane, Woolf somewhat unconsciously held onto a front of *outward* areligiosity, even well after she began to realize in the late 1920s that many of her own beliefs aligned with those of which she made fun of earlier in her career. Among the reasons she held onto this public rejection of the mystical: fear of others' perceptions about her. "The cognitive dissonance between her recorded experiences and her expressed beliefs," explains Kane, "may have arisen from, and been reinforced by, her observations that the intellectuals whom she most respected were scornful of 'mysticism' and 'mystics'" ... Woolf also "[feared of a perceived link] between her mystical feelings and her bouts of mental illness" (Kane 347). This hyper-awareness of others' perceptions, and the almost self-lashing style of response that accompanies it, fits snugly into the profile of what we already know about Virginia Woolf. The other assertion Kane makes- and the one that is vital to the thesis of this paper- is that writing *The Waves* is what chiefly drew Woolf to a point where she could privately accept her own repressed feelings on mysticism.

It appears Woolf believed that her time spent writing *The Waves* contained within it something far beyond that of simply typing words onto paper. In addition to being a time of great internal stress and tension for Woolf, her time spent with *The Waves* turned out to be a largely transformative period where she committed herself to actively altering her own system of beliefs.

As if affirming some personal goal for herself, she wrote in one of her diaries during the draft stages *The Waves* (at the time called *The Moths*), “now, if I write *The Moths* I must come to terms with these mystical feelings” (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf* 203). Then, towards the completion of *The Waves*, she wrote in a separate diary about the overall experience of writing the novel (as if to express just how hard this goal turned out to be): “...never have I screwed my brain so tight over a book. The proof is that I am almost incapable of other reading or writing. I can only flop down once the morning is over. Oh Lord the relief when this week is over and I have at any rate the feeling that I have wound up and done with that long labour: ended that vision” (*A Writer’s Diary* 167). Woolf here may have just been venting about her frustrations, but that still doesn’t take away from a certain profundity behind her description of *The Waves* as a vision she had to trudge through. One part of this profundity is that vision was what stood behind the very appeal of *The Waves*; and those who read it couldn’t help but to gravitate towards the vision.

Most early critical reviews of the novel, which Woolf believed to be overall the most positive set of responses she had received for any of her books up to that point (Routledge 23), recognized the unique visual clarity of *The Waves* and the sheer expansiveness of its creative reach. One of the more favorable of these early reviews Woolf received was from British author and journalist Storm Jameson. Jameson’s review was perhaps the most effective in conveying the clear-sighted and, at times, omniscient nature of *The Waves*: “In this book she is striving- without the concessions made in her earlier books- to convey a whole vision, the essence of life, not a story- full of scattered and fragmentary forms... In order to strive for a whole vision... Mrs. Woolf has made enormous sacrifices. She is like a woman who has turned her back on life and watches it passing in a mirror, so that nothing shall shake the steadiness of her glance, none of those distractions, those sudden blindings, that come from touching what one sees” (677-678). Even

those who likely had no idea of how tight Woolf “screwed her brain” to produce *The Waves* could intuit that this sort of vision required an element of self-sacrifice that isn’t taken on by most human beings. The other part of this aforementioned profundity is that *The Waves* marked, what must have been for Woolf, a quest of scrutinous internal vision and intense self-reckoning. Woolf was clearly on to something new and uncharted in writing *The Waves*, something that reflected the opening of paradigmatic floodgates she had only recently experienced inside herself. *The Waves* signified the birth of a new form of creative literary expressionism; and along with it, uncoincidentally, the birth of Woolf’s own form of visionary mysticism. What *The Waves* allowed Woolf to finally do was make sense of that which she spent her whole life unknowingly contemplating, but could never fully translate 100% into words. Woolf’s acceptance of her own mystical undercurrent, or what Bernard might refer to as “some little language such as lovers use” (*The Waves* 238), imbued her writing in *The Waves* with religious qualities reminiscent to those of a mystical “holy book” such as *The Upanishads*.

### The Essence of Religious Mysticism, *The Upanishads*, and Bernard’s Vision

While it is clear that Woolf began to channel a once-repressed, highly personal form of religious mysticism while writing *The Waves*, another question remains: what exactly are the qualities of religious mysticism that Woolf channeled? Let us look back at the articles discussed so far to piece together what we already know. As previously mentioned, Dennis Young cites some of the topics of mythicism her writing gravitated toward as “her attention to ‘moments of being’; her passion for finding a true self in the flux of time; and her use of symbols to express a complex, spiritual vision” (94). Julie Kane also addresses this topic, pointing to the mystical foci of Woolf’s writing: “loss of self; merger into the greater unity; the apprehension of numinous,

timelessness, transcendence, and intensified meaning” (332). While both of these comparisons serve as great jumping-off points for further discussion on how *The Waves* mirrors a mystical holy book like the *Upanishads*, they are slightly too niche (in regards to the aim of this paper) to use as centerpieces for this paper. Young’s article, “The Mythological Element in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*: Bernard’s Vision”, is an analysis of the **mythological** elements of *The Waves*’ central “protagonist” Bernard in relation to that of “myth, religion, and folktale” (96). Young does a great job identifying a neglected facet of Woolfian criticism and applying tangible examples to back its legitimacy. The spread of mythical connections Young makes, however, is too wide-ranging and disconnected to implement here, going into things such as the symbology of willow trees, teachings of Lao-tze, Indian creation myths, etc. (97;100;102). Kane’s article, “Varieties of Mystical Experience in the Writings of Virginia Woolf”, does brush upon some **mystical** elements of *The Waves*’, but Kane’s focus is, inversely, too specific to appropriately implement. Kane gives impressive insight into “the reasons why Woolf may have denied for own mystical bent for so many years” (329), but does so while simultaneously laying out the history of a philosophic movement just starting to spread throughout Britain called Theosophy. While these articles, in their own impressive ways, dip into unique aspects of Woolf’s religio-mystical undercurrent, neither develop their theses based upon any *actual* primary sources (e.g. mystical holy books). There exists, then, the need for an explorative, thematic comparison between the mystical elements of *The Waves* and that of a mystical holy book- one that purely and authentically embodies religious mysticism as a conceptual-based philosophy. In order to freshly realize and illuminate this unfamiliar side of Virginia Woolf, we need to be able to put *The Waves* up against a critically renowned holy book that immerses itself in the same spiritual ilk

and existential scrutiny of post-1928 Woolf. Those requirements are met, without a doubt, within the ancient writings of *The Upanishads*.

*The Upanishads* are a collection of poetic, spiritually-focalized teachings of Ancient India found inside the “second-half” of *The Vedas*, the religious scriptures of Hinduism. Meant to complement the ritual-section of *The Vedas*, *The Upanishads* are centralized upon the wisdom imparted by Ancient Indian teachers, or illumined sages (Easwaran, *Intro to The Upanishads* 16-20). Eknath Easwaran, regarded as one of the leading experts on Indian Spiritual Classics, masterfully explains the essence of *The Upanishads* through the etymology of the title: “What is an Upanishad? Etymologically the word suggests “sitting down near”: that is, at the feet of an illumined teacher in an intimate session of spiritual instruction, as aspirants still do in India today... Their purpose is not so much instruction as inspiration: they are meant to be expounded by an illumined teacher from the basis of personal experience” (*Intro to The Upanishads* 19-20). If this concept of a teacher retelling personal stories to that of a listener “sitting down near” sounds familiar, it is because Woolf uses this exact technique to close out *The Waves* during its final and famed chapter. Bernard, the outspoken storyteller of the six voices that make up *The Waves*, is given his moment to, as Neville puts early on, “describe what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence” (*The Waves* 27). Bernard accepts at a very young age to take on the responsibility of capturing his stories, and therefore, the stories of those around him; partially because of his natural ability to comprehend and verbalize this essence, and partially because the others believe him to be the only one capable to do so for them as a collective unit. Bernard’s final soliloquy- as critics like to call it- starts with Bernard, in an uncharacteristically succinct way, laying out his intentions for the rest of his soliloquy to an unidentified listener who sits with him at a table. This, quite fascinatingly, emulates the very nature of what Easwaran laid out as

the context of *The Upanishads*, going as far as matching up with the very etymology of the word ‘Upanishad’. Even from the first sentence of this final chapter, the reader gets the sense that Bernard is about to relay personal wisdom through didactic means: “Now to sum up,” said Bernard. “Now to explain to you the meaning of my life. Since we do not know each other (though I met you once I think on board a ship going to Africa) we can talk freely. The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life. If it were possible, I would hand it you entire. I would break it off as one breaks off a bunch of grapes. I would say, ‘Take it. This is my life’” (238). Could Bernard here be an illumined sage on the cusp of orating his own personal Upanishad to this unknown figure? What was Woolf trying to evoke in waiting until the last chapter of *The Waves* to give Bernard an uninterrupted, dissimilarly-formatted soliloquy offering “the outcome of long gestation, his sermon in the form of a rereading of what has happened so far?” (Nicolae 651). As Susan Dick notes in her article titled “I Remembered, I Forgotten: Bernard’s Final Soliloquy in *The Waves*”, “In [Woolf’s] notes for the final chapter she wrote: ‘That novel changed when the perspective changed.’” (39). Woolf, then, obviously had something crucial she was trying to convey (or something that forced itself to be conveyed) in writing out this last chapter the way she did. It might be logical for us, therefore, to narrow the scope of our comparison to simply this final chapter in *The Waves*- since it serves as an important, all-encompassing summation of the novel as well harboring what seems to be a telling parallel in format with *The Upanishads*.

As the reader gets further and further into Bernard’s soliloquy, it becomes more and more explicit why *The Upanishads* is such an exemplary book to use in compliment with *The Waves*. The teachings of *The Upanishads*- which take on topics such as the realization of self, the phases

of consciousness, and the dissolution of selfhood- seem yet again to uncannily correspond with the ‘teachings’ that Virginia Woolf devoted *The Waves* to exploring. William Butler Yeats, a sort of mystical guru in Woolf’s later life, even “linked Woolf’s *The Waves* to ancient Hindu philosophy in his Introduction to his 1934 play *Fighting the Waves*: ‘Certain typical books – *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*, Mr. Ezra Pound’s *Draft of XXX Cantos* – suggest a philosophy like that of the *Samkara* school of ancient India, mental and physical objects alike material, a deluge of experience breaking over us and within us, melting limits whether of line or twine; man no hard bright mirror dawdling by the dry sticks of a hedge, but a swimmer, or rather the waves themselves” (Kane 348). When Yeats references the *Samkara* school, he is referring to the adherents of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Hindu philosopher Shankara- who selected, out of what must have been hundreds of transcribed teachings from the sages, the ten that are now considered to be “The Principal Upanishads” (Easwaran, *The Classics of Indian Spirituality* 20). With a connective link as straightforward as this one, it seems now more appropriate than ever to dive into the actual text of *The Upanishads* and observe the passages that both mirror Woolf’s own mystical foci in *The Waves* as well as potentially assist in further elucidating them. In order to achieve this, we will separate relevant passages from *The Upanishads* into two categories (having borrowed the subject/name of each category from the aforementioned critics who recognized the religio-mystical slant of Woolf): Young’s “passion for finding a true self in the flux of time” and Kane’s “merger into the greater unity”.

## Passion for Finding a True Self in the Flux of Time (Self-Realization)

<sup>7</sup>It is but few who hear about the Self.  
Fewer still dedicate their lives to its  
Realization. Wonderful is the one  
Who speaks about the Self. Rare are they  
Who make it the supreme goal of their lives.  
Blessed are they who, through an illumined  
Teacher, attain to Self-realization.

<sup>8</sup>The truth of the Self cannot come through one  
Who has not realized that he is the Self.  
The intellect cannot reveal the Self,  
Beyond its duality of subject  
And object. Those who see themselves in all  
And all in them help others through spiritual  
Osmosis to realize the Self themselves.

-The Katha Upanishad (Easwaran 76)

<sup>25.1</sup> The Infinite is above and below, before and  
behind, to the right and to the left. I am all this. The  
Self is above and below, before and behind, to the right  
and to the left, I am all this.

<sup>25.2</sup> One who meditates  
upon the Self and realizes the Self sees the Self  
everywhere, and rejoices in the Self. Such a one lives  
in freedom and is at home wherever he goes. But those  
who pursue the finite are blind to the Self and live in  
bondage.

-The Chandogya Upanishad (Easwaran 140)

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The final soliloquy, spoken by Bernard that concludes *The Waves*, has attached to it a certain undeniable mood of time-sensitiveness. Even before getting into Bernard's scramble to make meaning of the others' lives (and, consequently, his own), the interlude of the chapter establishes from the get-go that Bernard is racing against the inexorable push of time to achieve something: "As if there were waves of darkness in the air, darkness moved on, covering houses, hills, trees, as a waves of water wash round the sides of some sunken ship. Darkness washed down the streets eddying round single figures, engulfing them; blotting out couples clasped under the showery darkness of elm trees in full summer foliage" (237). Death, or as Bernard conceptualizes it later on: "the unvanquished and unyielding enemy" (297), has snuffed out all the other voices we as readers have become familiar with- Rhoda, Louis, Neville, Susan, and Jinny; the "couples clasped under the showery darkness of elm trees...". Only Bernard remains,

and in one last push to accomplish what he set his entire life out to do, he furiously soliloquizes until death presumably takes him. Bernard's feverish efforts to find meaning before "the waves [break] on the shore" (297) are beautiful and imagistic, but dense and, at times, not understandable without proper guidance. This is where *The Upanishads*, in particular the Katha and Chandogya Upanishad, can act as a sort of decoding agent to fully understand Bernard's intentions at the end of *The Waves*. Bernard is plagued throughout his final soliloquy by moments defined by self-doubt and uncertainty. In recalling the time after Percival died, Bernard relays to the unidentified listener his time visiting friends while in search for internal meaning: "Thus I visited each of my friends in turn, trying with fumbling fingers to prise open their locked caskets. I went from one to the other holding my sorrow- no not my sorrow but the incomprehensible nature of this our life for their introspection. Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends; I to my own heart, I seek among phrases and fragments something unbroken... (266). It is evident that Bernard yearns for some existential truth that he senses is hidden from him, something that would very plainly clarify his existence in relation to others. What Bernard is aching for is what *The Upanishads* call Self-Realization, or the realization that the self is **everyone** and **everything**. Easwaran explains this concept in his *Introduction to The Upanishads*: "What remains when every trace of individuality is removed? We can call it pure being... The sages called it Brahman, from the root *brih*, 'to expand.' Brahman is the irreducible ground of existence, the essence of every thing - of the earth and sun and all creatures, of gods and human beings, of every power of life... This tremendous equation - 'the Self is Brahman' - is the central discovery of the Upanishads" (38). Bernard's primary concern, then, in trying to "plait into one cable the many threads" (144) in his life is the exact same concern of the Indian sages from thousands of years ago. They both seek an understanding far outside of themselves

that words usually only graze the surface of. Therefore, it can be said that Bernard's ambiguous mode of speech contains within it the unconscious desire to achieve Self-Realization as laid out by *The Upanishads*.

### Merger into the Greater Unity (Consciousness and Its Phases)

<sup>2</sup> Brahman is all, and the Self is Brahman.  
This Self has four states of consciousness.

There is only one way to know the Self,  
And that is to realize him yourself.

<sup>3</sup> The first is called Vaishvanara, in which  
One lives with all the senses turned outward,  
Aware only of the external world.

<sup>3</sup> The ignorant think the Self can be known  
By the intellect, but the illumined  
Know he is beyond the duality  
Of the knower and the known.

<sup>4</sup> Taijasa is the name of the second,  
The dreaming state in which, with the senses  
Turned inward, one enacts the impressions  
Of past deeds and present desires.

<sup>4</sup> The Self is realized in a higher state  
Of consciousness when you have broken  
through  
The wrong identification that you are  
The body, subject to birth and death.  
To be the Self is to go beyond death.

<sup>5</sup> The third state is called Prajna, of deep sleep,  
In which one neither dreams nor desires.  
There is no mind in Prajna, there is no  
Separateness; but the sleeper is not  
Conscious of this. Let him become conscious  
In Prajna and it will open the door  
To the state of abiding joy.

<sup>5</sup> Realize the Self, the shining goal of life!  
If you do not, there is only darkness.  
See the Self in all, and go beyond death.

<sup>7</sup> The fourth is the superconscious state called  
Turiya, neither inward nor outward,  
Beyond the senses and the intellect,  
In which there is none other than the Lord.  
He is the supreme goal of life. He is  
Infinite peace and love. Realize him!

-The Mandukya Upanishad (Easwaran 203-204)    -The Kena Upanishad (Easwaran 215)

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As many critics have pointed out, Bernard during his final soliloquy absorbs the consciousnesses of all the other characters we've become familiar with over the course of *The*

*Waves* in order to tell his tale. Bernard makes, as Cristina Nicolae puts it, “all the stories converge into one, all the fragments [making] up one story silently voiced by Bernard who acts now as the central consciousness of the novel, in which the six perspectives on the world (inward and outward reality) are coherently combined... (Nicolae 651). This distinction brought up by Nicolae of inward and outward reality- and how the characters fit into these different categories of perspective- is important when analyzing how the Mandukya Upanishad and the Kena Upanishad shed light unto *The Waves*. There, according to the Mandukya Upanishad, are four separate phases of consciousness: Vaishvanara (“in which one lives with all the senses turned outward”), Taijasa (“the dreaming state in which the senses are turned inward”), Prajna (the deep sleep state where “there is no separateness, but the sleeper is not conscious of this”), and Turiya (the superconscious state “beyond all senses and intellect”) (203-204). These phases, in an intriguing way, tie into each of the characters’ “personalities” within the novel; these being the same ones that Bernard ultimately summarizes during his final soliloquy. As Susan Dick explains this topic: “[Susan and Jinny] are content for the most part to live the life of a body... Neville assumes the continuity of the self... Louis looks beyond his own past into a distant former life to assert a continuity and stability of the self” ...and Rhoda’s identity centers, paradoxically, around the conviction that she has none...” (39-41). Considering this observation, it seems each of these characters fall pretty neatly (except for Bernard) into the phases of consciousness as laid out by *The Upanishads*. Susan and Jinny operate under Vaishvanara, because of their obsession with the outward (nature and aesthetic beauty); while Neville, Louis, and Rhoda operate under Taijasa, because of their distinct brands of inwardness and varying degrees of fixation with the past. Bernard, “the phrase-maker”, is the only exception to the smoothness of this Upanishad’s application. He occupies the first two phases (Vaishvanara and

Taijasa) concurrently throughout the novel; being bent on making sense of the interior through the stories of others- until we get to his final soliloquy. Woolf, by giving Bernard agency over the others' consciousnesses as well as providing him with flitting, transcendental moments of dream-like lucidity, places Bernard somewhere within the third phase of consciousness (Prajna). Bernard does experience a sort of lack of conscious mind and awareness (characteristic of Prajna), but they are beset with feelings of isolation. Take, for example, Bernard's "loss of self" in an excerpt from page 284: "This self now as I leant over the gate looking down over the fields rolling in waves of colors beneath me made no answer. He threw up no opposition. He attempted no phrase. His fist did not form. I waited. I listened. Nothing came, nothing. I cried then with a sudden conviction of complete desertion, Now there is nothing." This is interesting to consider because *The Upanishads* promise if the sleeper "becomes conscious during Prajna", it will result in the "opening of doors to the state of abiding joy". These doors are meant to represent the very same doors that keep the self from Brahma (and, consequently, Self-Realization: the thing Bernard has unknowingly sought out after for his entire life). The superconscious state of Turiya, defined by "infinite peace and love" through a sort of unification with the Lord, is never fully met by Bernard. The reason for this halt in progression, according to the Kena Upanishad, is that Bernard refuses to unconditionally submit himself to the death of the self. Bernard resists till the very end the dissolution of his earthly selfhood; or what he calls the enemy Death. He even creates another set of phrases to combat it, despite being admittedly tired of making them: "With my spear crouched and my hair flying back like a young man's' (211) ... [Bernard] makes this grand gesture with the knowledge of his inevitable defeat. Like the artist, he commits himself to the illusion..." (Dick 50). This type of self-illusion is, in the philosophic mythos of *The Upanishads*, a crucial element that prevents one from reaching Turiya; and also "to go beyond

death". The *Upanishads*, therefore, provide some reasoning behind why the cycle of the waves don't stop for Bernard- who seems so close to uncovering something about the nature of existence.

A reader has to wonder, therefore, with all of these thought-provoking similarities and attached implications that arise in considering *The Upanishads*; did Woolf ever read any of these teachings during her time spent writing *The Waves*? Is there a direct correlation between these ancient Indian teachers and the intensely curious English author of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who, as it turns out, was a lot fonder of mysticism than most thought? Did Virginia Woolf channel the spiritual dexterity of the illumined sages of long ago in *The Waves*? Perhaps the best way to take a stab at this set of inquiries, and simultaneously conclude this paper, is to pull from the wisdom of the late woman in-question (wisdom which, ironically, comes from some of Woolf's writing at the astonishingly young age of 20): "I think I see for a moment how our minds are threaded together — how any live mind is of the very same stuff as Plato's and Euripides'. It is only a continuation and development of the same thing. It is this common mind that binds the whole world together; and all the world is mind" (Morgan 2-3).

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