

CHAPTER IV

BRAVE NEW WORLD: THE BEST MAJOR NOVEL

Huxley's fifth novel, Brave New World, appeared in 1932. This is certainly his most famous novel owing to the somewhat sensational nature of its theme; the pessimistic vision of a scientifically organised future. This was a theme that H.C.Wells had dealt with, and an interesting comparison can be made between their two different visions. Wells has been called "the prophet of scientific optimism" and Huxley "the prophet of scientific pessimism."⁴¹ In his Men Like Gods, Wells depicts a modern Utopia in which private ownership, religious worship and parental control have been replaced by socialism, scientific humanism and education by the state, and where eugenics and birth control have produced a society which encourages freedom and tolerance.

Huxley's vision was the reverse of Wells's:

Mr. Huxley's Utopia, like that of Wells, 'doesn't stink enough', and besides being hygienically odourless, is in other respects modelled largely upon its Wellisian prototype; the difference between Men Like Gods and Brave New World lies chiefly in the point of view of the two writers. For Mr. Huxley the Wellisian Utopia, far from being a desirable state of affairs, represents the triumph of all that he most fears and dislikes: for it is a world in which humanity has been dehumanized, a world in which scientific 'progress' has been produced, so to speak, to the nth degree.⁴¹

All the elements of control exercised by the Wellisian World-State

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Jocelyn Brooke, op. cit., p.22.



are to be found in Brave New World, but whereas Wells envisions a world of supermen, of athletic physicists and chemists, Huxley emphasizes the growth of a scientific dictatorship which will stamp out all human individuality.

It is in this concept of the rulers that the two differ most clearly. Wells pictures scientific totalitarianism as a temporary method which will end as soon as its ideals are accomplished. In the shape of things to come he pictures the conference of Mogeve in the year 2059; the guardians of the world-state announce there is no further need for repressions and controls, and abolish their offices. To Huxley this act of benevolent reason seemed to be inherently improbable. He agreed with Wells that under a scientific dictator education would genuinely succeed, but the measure of its success would be:

... that most men and women will grow up to love their servitude and will never dream of revolution.

Furthermore, he adds:

... there seems to be no good reason why a thoroughly scientific dictatorship should ever be overthrown.

(Brave New World Revisited, ch.12.)

This is, in fact, the picture of Brave New World.

The idea of progress has been ironically and satirically stated. Ostensibly everything in this world is ideal; all the miseries and problems of the real world have been eliminated. People are happy; they have been conditioned to know no other state. Material prosperity is universal; applied science has

provided an over-abundance of goods and services. Even if there should appear a moment of regret over lost awareness, the world controllers have provided for it:

'Now -- such is progress -- the old men work, the old men copulate, the old men have no time, no leisure from pleasure, not a moment to sit down and think -- or if ever by some unlucky chance such as a crevice of time should yawn in the solid substance of their distractions, there is always some, delicious some, half a gramme for a half-holiday, a gramme for week-end, two grammes for a trip to the gorgeous East, three for a dark eternity on the moon; returning whence they find themselves on the other side of the crevice safe on the solid ground of daily labour and distraction, scampering from feely to feely, from girl to pneumatic girl, from Electromagnetic Golf Course to ...'⁴²

Our world regards progress by applied science as a way to Utopia. Scientific progress is regarded as the primary aim in human life. Every country's government, especially the Western ones, accept such progress as ~~its~~ ideal. They do ~~not~~ envisage any bad aspects of this scientific progress; and perhaps will not until one day when they are confronted with such results themselves. Their viewpoint is that of the Savage, John, who expects that this Brave New World must be heaven on earth; he is eager to leave the Reservation Area in order to live in this so-called 'civilized' world.

John also laughed, but for another reason -- laughed for pure joy.

'O brave new world,' he repeated. 'O brave new world that has such people in it. Let's

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Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), ch.3, p.54.

start at once.'

'You have a most peculiar way of talking sometimes,' said Bernard, staring at the young man in perplexed astonishment. 'And, anyhow, hadn't you better wait till you actually see the new world?'⁴³

As Bernard, an odd Alpha-Plus has warned by implication, the Savage is disappointed by his brave new world. Its progress is ~~undesirable~~ to him because people are all adapted to be happy by conditioning and by the use of the drug called Soma. There is no individuality and free will for them; they are slaves formed for scientific convenience. They are slaves of science from birth to death. The people are 'born' from bottles in the hatcheries. They never know the word 'family', 'father' or 'mother'. The Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons are the conditioned lower class⁵ in this society. They work happily in their positions. They have never been taught to read or write, conditioned scientifically and psychologically not to appreciate books or nature in order that they may not have emotion or reactions which could shake the stability of society. The Alphas and Betas are the élite classes of this society, trained to perform the skilled jobs that are beyond the more menial classes. But they also are rigidly conditioned to accept the essential rightness of all aspects of their life and the society they live in.

The conditioning that persuades each different stratum of society that their life could not be improved is begun in their very breeding process. At the beginning of Brave New World the process

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Ibid., ch.8, p.114.

is described:

In one set of bottles biologically superior ova, fertilized by biologically superior sperm, were given the best possible pre-natal treatment and were finally decanted as Betas, Alphas and even Alpha-Pluses. In another, much more numerous sets of bottles, biologically inferior ova, fertilized by biologically inferior sperm, were subjected to the Bokanovsky Process (ninety-six identical twins out of a single egg) and treated pre-natally with alcohol and other protein poisons. The creatures finally decanted were almost sub-human; but they were capable of performing unskilled work....

(Brave New World Revisited, ch.2)

The utilitarian advantages of such an upbringing are clearly apparent. At the lower levels it would guarantee a permanent socially adapted series of mindlessly content workers:

Standard men and women; in uniform batches. The whole of a small factory staffed with the products of a single bokanovskified egg ... 'If we could bokanovskify indefinitely the whole problem would be solved.'

'Solved by standard Gammas, unvarying Deltas, uniform Epsilons. Millions of identical twins. The principle of mass production at last applied to biology.'

To Huxley one of the real horrors of his Brave New World is the way these lower level groups are conditioned not just into an acceptance of their lot, but a positive liking of it. As the Director of the Hatcheries explains: "that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny." In the conditioning rooms at the nurseries, a group of

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Ibid., ch.1, p.18.

Delta babies are treated. They are made to approach flowers and brightly coloured books -- as they reach to touch them, they are subjected simultaneously to the loud ringing of bells and electric shocks. After a suitable course of this they are left with an ingrained dislike of these appurtenances of the higher levels of the class system.

A further element in the conditioning is hypnopaedia, or sleep teaching. The teaching concentrates on persuading the subject that they have one correct stratum in their society; the awareness is to be a double one, involving respect for those above and superiority over those below. A Beta child will be conditioned thus:

Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do, because they're so frightfully clever. I'm awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able....⁴⁵

The sum total of such an upbringing is absolute acceptance;

... the child's mind is these suggestions and the sum of the suggestions is the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too -- all his life long.⁴⁶

In case this conditioning should ever fail in any way, the individual may resort to the drug 'soma.' One of the essential

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Ibid., ch.2, p.33.

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Ibid., ch.2, p.34.

factors in this new society was that each and every individual should feel a sense of absolute contentment. This feeling was more than just desirable; it was a basic part of social normality. Happiness is normal; doubt or unhappiness is abnormal. Abnormality is anti-social and dangerous. Huxley had already speculated about the invention of new drugs, and had shown a certain interest in the influences of the old ones, especially in their uses in some of the more exotic mystical religions. In Brave New World the World Controllers encourage the systematic drugging of their own citizens for the benefit of the state:

The daily Soma ration was an insurance against personal maladjustment, social unrest and the spread of subversive ideas. Religion, Karl Marx declared, is the opium. In the Brave New World this situation was reversed. Opium, or rather Soma, was the people's religion. Like religion, the drug had power to console and compensate, it called up visions of another, better world, it offered hope, strengthened faith and promoted charity.

(Brave New World Revisited, ch.8)

In Brave New World the government is totalitarian. Huxley never gives an overt judgement of this regime as a bad one; he allows the readers to judge for themselves. The state is theoretically Utopian; the political policies of centralization and totalitarianism are benevolent in intention. The government has absolute power to determine people's actions. Some years later Huxley, in his essay Brave New World Revisited, discussed the possibility of a totalitarian state resulting from overpopulation. He pointed out that if the state or the world becomes overpopulated, the government will have control of all elements in the state. Power

will be centralized and such a state as is pictured in Brave New World will be inevitable. In Island he indicates how we can avoid it by decentralization of power and birth-control.

Aldous Huxley himself was deeply interested in science. His grandfather and his brother were scientists. After having read his books it is possible that readers may hold the mistaken belief that he is attacking science. This is not so. It is the way science is used and the irresponsible attitudes of many scientists that Huxley intended to attack. To many scientists at that time, science was a simple matter of pure truth unconnected to larger questions of ethics. Unavoidably the scientific pursuit of pure fact resulted in weapons of destruction, such as the Atomic bomb. Huxley believed that the scientists should have their own code of morality, and should feel responsibility for the things they invented. In the case of the Atomic bomb, Huxley illustrates his satirical point clearly in Ape and Essence:

First Einstein
It's unjust, it isn't right ...
Second Einstein
We, who never did any harm to anybody;
First Einstein
We, who lived only for truth.
Narrator

.....
'We make an idol of truth; for truth without charity is not God, but his image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship.' You lived for the worship of an idol.⁴⁷

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Aldous Huxley, Ape and Essence (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1960), p.38.

In the pursuit of pure scientific knowledge, scientists invent new things that are both useful and dangerous to their fellow men. They must also **take** a genuine measure of responsibility for their own creations.

Science was also the means of grouping men into larger and larger units, with a proportionate loss of individual freedom. Huxley thought it would be better to form small self-governing communities freed from the restrictive powers of Big Business and Big Government, where people can work together as individuals with free will. In Brave New World, the state power is centralized; people therefore have no free will. Huxley never believed in the abstract idea of men being equal in all respects. He states in Proper Studies:

... At ordinary times, then, we are perfectly certain that men are not equal. But when in a democratic country, we think or act politically we are no less certain that men are equal....⁴⁸

... Faculties are heritable: we are born more or less intelligent, more or less musical, mathematical, and so on. From this, it follows that men are not essentially equal, and that human beings are at least as much the product of their heredity as of their education.⁴⁹

In Brave New World, all religions are eliminated. The World Controller, Mustapha Mond, explains to the Savage:

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Aldous Huxley, Proper Studies (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1957), p.1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.13.

They say that it is the fear of death and of what comes after death that makes men turn to religion as they advance in years....

... "You can only be independent of God while you've got youth and prosperity; independence won't take you safely to the end." Well, we've now got youth and prosperity right up to the end. What follows? Evidently, that we can be independent of God. "The religious sentiment will compensate us for all our losses." But there aren't any for us to compensate; religious sentiment is superfluous.⁵⁰

This, then, is the basic reasoning behind the absence of religion in Brave New World. Religion deals with the various problems of human awareness; if there are no problems, there is no need for explanations. Mustapha Mond goes on to point out that

God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness.⁵¹

The nearest equivalent of a religion in the new state is the worship of Our Ford; Our Ford is "the patron saint and prophet of Huxley's new world-state..."⁵² Essentially the worship of Our Ford is seen by Huxley as an expression of the supremacy of the Machine over Man and of the Group over the individual. In an essay written about the same time as Brave New World, Huxley wrote:

Fordism demands that we should sacrifice the animal man (and along with the animal large

⁵⁰ Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, op. cit., ch.17, p.182.

⁵¹ Ibid., ch.17, p.183.

⁵² Peter Bowering, op. cit., p.99.

portions of the thinking spiritual man) not indeed to God, but to the machine. There is no place in the factory, or in that larger factory which is the modern industrialised world, for animals on the one hand, or for the artists, mystics, or even, finally, individuals on the other....⁵³

There are, however, various elements in this society who, for one reason or another, do not accept their passive roles. These exceptions are essential to provide us with an answer to the question: what happens to those who do object? In a society based on absolute acceptance, such people must obviously present a problem. The people around them are conditioned not to accept their environment as a process of selection, but rather to accept unquestioningly. Any element in such a society that would raise queries or doubts would obviously be an extreme irritant, and a potential hazard. The three who do pose objections are Helmholtz Watson, Bernard Marx, and the Savage. Their various motivations and reactions are, however, noticeably different.

Bernard Marx is an Alpha Plus: "adults intellectually and during working hours ... infants where feeling and desire are concerned". He is one of that class Huxley often visualised as a part of the new scientific society, the products of an excess of certain type of intellectual power unbalanced by a corresponding lack of a maturity and sensibility. His initial sense of revolt

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Aldous Huxley, Music at Night (London : Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1960), p.180.

seems to be partly caused by his physical difference from the others of his group. This sense of revolt is not only an anti-social reaction; it is also an expression of his desire to extend his range of feelings and expression beyond the limits of his conditioning. When he and Lenina are coming back across the channel in a helicopter, their reactions to the sight of nature in its natural state are significantly different:

On their way back across the Channel, Bernard insisted on stopping his propeller and hovering on his helicopter screws within a hundred feet of the waves. ...

'Look,' he commanded.

'But it's horrible,' said Lenina, shrinking back from the window. She was appalled by the rushing emptiness of the night, by the black foam-flecked water heaving beneath them, by the pale face of the moon, so haggard and distracted among the hastening clouds. 'Let's turn on the radio. Quick!' She reached for the dialling knob on the dashboard and turned it at random.

.....
'I want to look at the sea in peace,' he said. 'One can't even look with that beastly noise going on.'

'But it's lovely. And I don't want to look.'

'But I do,' he insisted. It makes me feel as though ...' he hesitated, searching for words with which to express himself, 'as though I were more me, if you see what I mean. More on your own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body.⁵⁴

To Lenina the stormy waves and the moonlit seascape are horrible mainly because they do not fit into her consumer-oriented upbringing, for things to be enjoyable they must be collective and they must

⁵⁴ Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, op. cit., ch.6, p.78.

involve some form of material consumption, like "escalator-squash" or "magnetic-golf".

Helmholtz Watson's sense of dissatisfaction springs from almost an opposite reason. Whereas Bernard is aware of his physical inferiority, Helmholtz is conspicuously successful. He is a lecturer, a sports champion and immensely popular with women. But he becomes increasingly aware that these are not enough for him, that his life is missing in some respects. His method of testing his awareness is to practise self denial; he wants to check the results of the deliberate withstanding of his natural impulses. The casual siking of these impulses was one of the basic ways in which the citizens of his society were kept happy. To deny this impulse was, therefore, to deliberately dislocate oneself from total acceptance. Bernard also undertakes the same physical and mental self-exercitation; both of them becoming increasingly aware that some significant part of themselves is not being used to the full. "Did you ever feel", Helmholtz asks Bernard, "as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using -- you know, like all the water that goes down the fall instead of through the turbines?"

The most important 'rebel' in this society is, however, the Savage John. Huxley was here using the familiar device of testing the concepts of a particular society by introducing an alien element into that society as a contrast. John provides a more complete contrast than Helmholtz and Bernard could ever do;

despite their revolt they are still essentially the products of a conditioned upbringing. The Savage comes from the one exception to this Brave New World, the primitive Indian reservations, where primitive superstitions and 'primitive' beliefs (such as religion and the family) still survive. But John is not simply a Savage; he is the son of an ex-member of the Brave New World (Linda). So he has been raised with an idealistic vision of what this society really is like. He is also educated mainly by means of Shakespeare, and much of his thought process is influenced by his plays.

John, with his knowledge of Shakespeare, becomes Huxley's symbol of the human spirit in its natural state, capable of good and evil, but above all, aware in a way impossible to the victims of the new world's conditioning. As M.D.Petrie says:

... the Savage has the weakness and the strength of a personality not 'artificially made'. He wants to love, but to love forever. He wants to work, but to work with effort and in the sweat of his brow. He wants to live, but to live dangerously. He wants to rejoice, but he also wants to suffer. He wants life with its fulness, but he wants also dealt with its tragedy. All the wonders of the material Civilisation leave him cold, because he remembers that:

'Ariel could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.'⁵⁵

The Savage's knowledge of Shakespeare serves as a focal point for all that he finds wrong in this society. His awareness is coloured strongly by the deeper aspects of human experience he has absorbed from his reading. Without this knowledge he would be able to compare the

⁵⁵The Hibbert Journal XXXI, 1932, p.70.

new society with only one other place, the primitive reservation. The inhabitants of Brave New World have no concept of culture in any way. It is not that they consciously reject the things which the Savage admires; they are, in fact, quite incapable of understanding them. By their upbringing and conditioning they are made happy, but that happiness is not dependent on contrast with misery. There is no misery in Brave New World. So Shakespeare and other aspects of culture are banned. As Mustapha Mond explains, one cannot make tragedies without social instability, and a knowledge of social instability would be a de-conditioning process to the docile happy citizens of this world.

The Savage is aware of the real need of choice as an aspect of the human condition. When the Controller points out the comfort and order of his world, the Savage rejects them. He is not rejecting comfort and order for their own sakes but because they have been bought at too high a price. "I don't want comfort," he says, "I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin". The disadvantages that go with a full state of awareness are indicated by the Controller: "the right to grow old and ugly and impotent ... the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind" But the Savage accepts them in return for his full humanity.

The Savage is the most alien of the three. He believes in a romantic concept of love but Lenina never understands him because she has been conditioned. The Savage never becomes accustomed to most of the ways of life of the Brave New World; such as the use of Soma and the casual physical love and feelies and so on. He attempts resistance at the Soma Distribution Place when he tries to interfere with the Soma

distribution. He is almost killed by the mob. Fortunately, Helmholtz and Bernard get him away safely. These outcasts are lonely in a society where people never feel lonely. The idea of the loneliness of the individual in society is often shown in Huxley's novels, as for example in Antic Hay, Point Counter Point and Crome Yellow. Loneliness is unavoidable if one behaves differently from the others in one's environment.

Huxley's preoccupation with the problems of human sexuality forms an integral part of the scheme of the novel. An interesting comparison can be made between the differing visions of Orwell and Huxley in this respect. Orwell's 1984 is a novel of the future, as is Brave New World. In both novels the sexual attitudes of the age play an important part. But in 1984, Orwell depicts a society in which a strict, ultra-puritanical code of morality is imposed by the ruling party. The world of 1984 is constantly at war, the society is therefore one of permanent tension and fear. The repression of sexuality serves as an extra method of keeping the sense of tension high. The rulers of Brave New World wish for an equally absolute control, but a control that is benevolent. They wish to rule not by fear, but by the reduction of the population to a level of happy mediocrity.

The Controllers of Brave New World were aware of the tensions inherent in the old emotions of love and passion. Sex is therefore reduced to a functional pleasure, devoid of significant emotion. Tension and emotion are therefore reduced to a minimum. The citizens of this world are not only saved from the unsettling effects of sexual repression, they are also saved from the potential emotional ties of

a limited group such as the family. Close ties such as this are pictured as disgusting and unnatural. Mother is a dirty word in the sanitised new world:

Home, home -- a few small rooms, stiflingly over-inhabited by a man, by a periodically teeming woman, by a rabble of boys and girls of all ages. No air, no space; an understerilized prison; darkness, disease, and smells.⁵⁶

Huxley himself discussed the defects of his picture of the Brave New World in the foreword which he wrote later. The most obvious is that there are no reasonable alternative choices for the Savage. He has only two choices: Brave New World or the Reservation Area. Huxley said that if he rewrote this novel, he would give the choice of sanity to the Savage. The Savage's character was a little exaggerated. He was in the Reservation environment and had read only some of Shakespeare's work but he could discuss the serious ideas with the World Controller. Huxley himself accepted that this characteristic was rather far-fetched.

Also he confessed that he neglected to include certain important aspects of the modern^{world} in the novel. For example he did not mention Nuclear Fission.

However despite such shortcomings Huxley was successful in portraying his pessimistic Utopia. Although defects are revealed, he insisted on keeping his novel the same even though he could have revised it. As he wrote himself:

To pore over the literary shortcomings of twenty years ago, to attempt to patch a faulty work into the perfection it missed at its first execution, to spend one's middle age in trying to mend the artistic sins committed and bequeathed by that different person who was oneself youth -- all this is surely vain and futile. And that is why this Brave New World is the same as the old one. Its defects as a work of art are considerable; but in order to correct them I should have to rewrite the book -- and in the process of rewriting, as an older, other person, I should probably get rid not only of some of the faults of the story, but also of such merits as it originally possessed. And so, resisting the temptation to wallow in artistic remorse, I prefer to leave both well and ill alone and to think about something else.⁵⁷

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Ibid., the forward, p.7.