

Read Brave New World!

We live in an amazing high tech world of personal computers, flat screen TV sets and magic micro-chips. Our portable phones communicate with satellites in outer space and allow for immediate access to the www wherever we might be at a given moment. Soon we will walk the earth wearing clothes, watches and jewelry endowed with artificial intelligence continuously hooking us up to banks, doctors, psychiatrists, lovers and family. Huxley's famous literary vision of a modern world of streamlined technology, control and design seems to have come quite true.

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Huxley's Book

In 1932 British writer Aldous Huxley published the novel that was to put him on the literary map of world literature. As a member of an English family with a long standing tradition of scientists he was a highly educated man in touch with what was going on in the fields of chemistry, physics, biology, medicine, sociology and psychology. Drawing from his immense knowledge in those areas he created his famous dystopian novel *Brave New World*, by now translated into any relevant language of the world. (A dystopia is a negative scientific and cultural prognosis about a future state of affairs and a dystopian novel usually presents a critical view of a present state system by means of describing the future development of that system. The three modern English classics of this literary genre are H.G. Well's *Time Machine*, George Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*.)

What a World!

Let us now look at the world Huxley describes in his novel. There is one world power, the language, of course, is English and the city of the novel is London. A unified culture monopolizes political power and the world economy. A government of ten world controllers is in charge of mankind. The sacred principles of this futuristic world are: identity, stability and community, and they are visible on every level of society and human experience and activity. There is an identity of looks and thoughts first of all. Five different classes of identically designed people are mass produced in government controlled laboratories. The members of those five classes live absolutely identical lives, both professionally and in their spare time. They all like the same things, believe in the same ideas, dress and look identically and pursue the same leisure activities. They identify with their class completely and they are proud of the class they belong to. They would never want to belong to a higher or lower class, even though that would mean different life styles and different degrees of beauty and intelligence. There also exists identity in religious and amorous concerns. Everybody goes to the same group therapy meetings designed to keep the citizens spirits up and balanced, and all their sex lives are promiscuous, playful and free.

Stability over Change

Nothing is meant to change and hurt in brave new world. There is no disease or pain, no war, no hate, no conflict or competition and no unemployment. Everybody has got a job and everything he or she needs for a high standard of living. The government does not change and there are no political parties, elections or refugees. Every individual is efficiently conditioned from birth and thus prepared for life in a well-balanced, stable way. In case of slight tremors of depression there is always soma, a synthetic drug that instantly makes the user feel good, light and happy. And the drug is free and at anybody's disposal anywhere, anytime. Nobody has any problems, melancholic feelings or critical thoughts. Nobody gets older

either. Time seems to stand still for the citizens who look twenty for about fifty years. Then they have to go to the hospitals for the dying where they gently drift off under the influence of soma, music and television before they get cremated and transformed into organic fertilizer for farming. And in this seemingly perfect stability the story starts. For various reasons there are two men and a woman who start developing individual traits and notions of suffering, depression, envy, passion, ambition, inferiority complexes and other destabilizing characteristics that go against the very heart and mind of the system. To make matters worse a grotesquely normal and romantic young man, from our 20th century point of view that is, gets helplessly involved with the London society, which he can not understand because he grew up in the reservation, a kind of human zoo preserving people in older forms of cultural development, fenced in and disconnected from the rest of the world, an animal park, a live museum for the scientists of brave new world. Misunderstanding and conflict are bound to happen and a true story of heart rending romance unravels. Read and enjoy it!

Community over Individual

One of the most typical characteristics of the brave new world creatures is their lack of individualistic traits. They are never alone and there is always some kind of activity going on. They work, they go out, they play or do sports, they dance, they have sex, they talk. They are absolutely gregarious (sociable, always in groups) and there is a soundtrack to everything they do together: music, spoken orders, tips or information of varying degrees of intensity are omnipresent and worm their way into the minds of the people. Nobody wants to be different. They dress the same, perfume the same, have the same bodies and cosmetics and say the same things over and over again. Families do not exist anymore, words like mother, father, love, birth, baby, brother or sister are considered dirty words that are not spoken by everybody. People are produced and cloned under synthetically sterile conditions. There is no individual variation, sweat, dirt, smell or form. They all buy and throw away things in exactly the same way. They waste material as a philosophy of life, since they have learnt that using and fixing old stuff is wrong. They all change their sexual partners in the same regular way, they all have sex in the same childish and playful way, they keep playing the same games, and they go to the same restaurants, clubs and cinemas every night. The cinemas are called feelies and as soon as they sit in their comfortable seats they not only see action on the screen, they hear and feel it as if it was reality too. When they kiss on the screen they get that kissing feeling, when they run they get exhausted etc.

Food for Thought and Highly Entertaining

In 1959 Huxley published a book called *Brave New World Revisited*. He had analyzed the world around him with respect to the predictions of cultural change made in his novel. He found a worrisome number of respects in which the world had moved closer to his vision. After reading the book which I highly recommend as very entertaining, educational and inspiring you can play the game yourself. Looking around where do you find parallels or even precise manifestations of Huxley's predictions? Where is the blessing and where is the curse of our fun, convenience and consumer oriented world? Where do you stand in the midst of all this? For the fascinating thing about the novel is the impossibility to read it in a simple black and white way. None of the phenomena it deals with is completely right or wrong, necessarily harmful or beneficial only. And there is a rather bitter twist to it all. While the more dubious predictions have all been fulfilled to a certain extent, the establishment of worldwide peace, the fair distribution of work and property, the equality between men and women and the defeat of hunger in the world seem to be as much out of reach as ever before today.