

A brave new world of drug taking philosophy essay



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Aldous Huxley's Brave New World happiness derives from consuming mass-produced goods, sports such as Obstacle Golf and Centrifugal Bumble-puppy, promiscuous sex, "the feelies", and most famously of all, a supposedly perfect pleasure-drug, soma. Yet it is more akin to a hangover less tranquilliser or an opiate – or a psychic anaesthetising SSRI like Prozac – than a truly life-transforming elixir. Like Prozac, the soma of Huxley's world prevents the people of Brave New World to come face to face with negative emotions. However, according to the theories behind emotional quotient, all emotions are needed to have a high emotional intelligence, which leads to true success. Huxley's imaginary characters can never truly be happy or truly be successful because of this lack of potential emotional intelligence. Through creating a mirror image of today's society, Huxley exhibits the worst outcomes of taking mood drugs, leading people to run away from their reality thus hindering their capability to cope with basic human emotions causing a lower potential emotional quotient.

Feel good drugs are an escape from normal human emotions. An example of such drugs is antidepressants, used to relieve disorders such as depression. Depressive illness is caused by a decrease of certain chemicals or neurotransmitters in the brain that are responsible for mood. People experiencing depression have far less neurotransmitters being produced. Therefore, antidepressants known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) delay the reabsorption of one of these neurotransmitters, serotonin therefore raising the amount of it in the brain. This increase in natural levels of serotonin in the brain, the person's mood raises from the depressed state to a more normal state of mind.

While under the influence of Prozac people, feel a release from the pain they feel. Though many take antidepressants for medical purposes, once a person has become addicted to them, the person uses them to escape from their reality. This causes them to lose touch with their ability to perceive emotion and manage emotions since most of what they feel has been two key factors in our four-branch model. With these lacking, individuals have a lower emotional quotient, which in Daniel Goleman's novel "Emotional Intelligence" is the most important quality which marks people who excel in life. With the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions, controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances, the ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks and the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict. While under the influence of drugs, the individual is unable to successfully deal with and overcome many emotions thus making them incapable of identifying with them if faced with them. The person merely goes back into their drug-filled state of euphoria. Eventually their addiction leads to their demise causing many to overdose and die.

In Brave New World, soma is the resident feel good drug used by the dictators of the world to keep people from feeling negative attitudes. In the book, it is seen in various scenes as an escape from these negative feelings:

"I don't understand anything," she said with decision, determined to preserve her incomprehension intact. "Nothing. Least of all," she continued in another tone "why you don't take soma when you have these dreadful

ideas of yours. You'd forget all about them. And instead of feeling miserable, you'd be jolly. So jolly,"

Soma is also fatal to the human being as can be seen later on when Linda returns to civilization.

The remedy was to make the holiday continuous. Greedily she clamoured for ever larger, ever more frequent doses. Dr. Shaw at first demurred; then let her have what she wanted. She took as much as twenty grammes a day.

" Which will finish her off in a month or two," the doctor confided to Bernard.

" One day the respiratory centre will be paralyzed. No more breathing.

Finished. And a good thing too. If we could rejuvenate, of course it would be different. But we can't."

Soma is a very one-dimensional euphoriant. It gives rise to only a shallow, unempathetic and intellectually uninteresting well-being. Apparently, taking soma does not give Bernard Marx, the disaffected sleep-learning specialist, more than a cheap thrill. Nor does it make him happy with his station in life. John the Savage commits suicide soon after taking soma [guilt and despair born of serotonin depletion]. The drug is said to be better than (promiscuous) sex – the only sex brave new worlder's practise. However, a regimen of soma does not deliver anything sublime or life enriching. It does not catalyze any mystical epiphanies, intellectual breakthroughs or life-defining insights. It does not promote personal growth. Instead, soma provides a mindless, inauthentic " imbecile happiness" – a vacuous escapism, which makes people comfortable with their lack of freedom. The drug heightens

suggestibility, leaving its users vulnerable to government propaganda. Soma
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is a narcotic that raises “ a quite impenetrable wall between the actual universe and their minds.”

Huxley implies that by abolishing nastiness and mental pain, the brave new worlders have got rid of the most profound and sublime experiences that life can offer as well. Most notably, they have sacrificed a mysterious deeper happiness which is implied, but not stated, to be pharmacologically inaccessible to the utopians. The metaphysical basis of this presumption is obscure.

There are hints, too, that some of the utopians may feel an ill-defined sense of dissatisfaction, an intermittent sense that their lives are meaningless. It is implied, further, that if we are to find true fulfilment and meaning in our own lives, then we must be able to contrast the good parts of life with the bad parts, to feel both joy and despair. As rationalisations go, it’s a good one.

But it’s still wrong-headed. If pressed, we must concede that the victims of chronic depression or pain today don’t need interludes of happiness or anaesthesia to know they are suffering horribly. Moreover, if the mere relativity of pain and pleasure were true, then one might imagine that pseudo-memories in the form of neurochemical artefacts imbued with the texture of “ pastness” would do the job of contrast just as well as raw nastiness. The neurochemical signatures of *deja vu* and *jamais vu* provide us with clues on how the re-engineering could be done. But this sort of stratagem isn’t on Huxley’s agenda. The clear implication of *Brave New World* is that any kind of drug-delivered happiness is “ false” or inauthentic. In similar fashion, all forms of human genetic engineering and overt

behavioural conditioning are to be tarred with the same brush. Conversely, the natural happiness of the handsome, blond-haired, blue-eyed Savage on the Reservation is portrayed as more real and authentic, albeit transient and sometimes interspersed with sorrow.

The contrast between true and false happiness, however, is itself problematic. Even if the notion is both intelligible and potentially referential, it's not clear that "natural", selfish-DNA-sculpted minds offer a more authentic consciousness than precision-engineered euphoria. Highly selective and site-specific designer drugs [and, ultimately, genetic engineering] won't make things seem weird or alien. On the contrary, they can deliver a greater sense of realism, verisimilitude and emotional depth to raw states of biochemical bliss than today's parochial conception of Real Life. Future generations will "re-encephalise" emotion to serve us, sentient genetic vehicles, rather than selfish DNA. Our well-being will feel utterly natural; and in common with most things in the natural world, it will be so.

If desired, too, designer drugs can be used to trigger paroxysms of spiritual enlightenment – or at least the phenomenology thereof – transcending the ecstasies of the holiest mystic or the hyper-religiosity of a temporal-lobe epileptic. So future psychoactives needn't yield only the ersatz happiness of a brave new worlder, nor will euphoriant abuse be followed by the proverbial Dark Night Of The Soul. Just so long as neurotransmitter activation of the right sub-receptors triggers the right post-synaptic intra-cellular cascades regulated by the right alleles of the right genes in the right way indefinitely – and this is a technical problem with a technical solution – then we have

paradise everlasting, at worst. If we want it, we can enjoy a liquid intensity of <https://assignbuster.com/a-brave-new-world-of-drug-taking-philosophy-essay/>

awareness far more compelling than our mundane existence as contemporary sleepwalking Homo sapiens. It will be vastly more enjoyable to boot.

If sustained, such modes of consciousness can furnish a far more potent definition of reality than the psychiatric slum lands of the past. Subtly or otherwise, today's unenriched textures of consciousness express feelings of depersonalisation and derealisation. Such feelings are frequently nameless – though still all too real – because they are without proper contrast: anonymous angst-ridden modes of selfhood that, in time, will best be forgotten. “ True” happiness, on the other hand, will feel totally “ real”. Authenticity should be a design-specification of conscious mind, not the fleeting and incidental by-product of the workings of selfish DNA.

Tomorrow's neuropharmacology, then, offers incalculably greater riches than souped-up soma. True, drugs can also deliver neurochemical wastelands of silliness and shallowness. A lot of the state-spaces currently beyond our mental horizons may be nasty or uninteresting or both. Statistically, most are probably just psychotic. But a lot aren't. Entactogens, say, [literally, to “ touch within”] may eventually be as big an industry as diet pills; and what they offer by way of a capacity for self-love will be far more use in boosting personal self-esteem.

<http://www.huxley.net/>