

Brave new world story



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In the context of its time, Brave New World can be seen as an expression of the beliefs and concerns shared by the people of the 1930's.

The decades of the twenties and the thirties were ones of crisis and disillusionment unravelling in the political crisis that unfolded in the wake of the New York crash of '29. The socio-economic problems of the late 1920's and early 30's drove Huxley to reflect deeply upon the particularly negative and destructive elements of the times. Brave New World would appear to be a diffusion of new ideas and attitudes of the time whilst reflecting Huxley's scepticism regarding history, progress and human rationality, (Encyclopaedia Britannica Millennium Edition PC Rom). Huxley focused on the growth of modern technology and totalitarian ideology emerging at the time. This unrest and bewilderment speak avidly in Brave New World as Huxley exploits the anxiety of his bourgeois audience of Soviet communism and 'Fordist' American capitalism.

Huxley himself noted; " under Hitler/Stalin rule, personal ends were subordinated to organisational means by a mixture of violence, propaganda and systematic manipulation of minds", (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New World Revisited' Flamingo Press, pgs 37-8). The emergence of fascism demonstrated how political liberalism was in full retreat in the latter part of the 1920's. In Spain, many attempts at fascism were made while Benito Mussolini ensured a totalitarian regime in Italy. In early 1930-1 Japan's liberal regime gave way to a nationalist one while in the Soviet Union, Stalin and later Lenin supported a fascist regime with use of force and coercion to the populace. In Germany, the Nazi's were working towards a single, undivided

people's community (Volksgemeinschaft) with a firm belief in solidarity, conformity and uniformity.

The nazi's were obedient to their order-giving elite paralleling immensely the brave new worlder's, " Sane men, obedient men, stable in contentment" (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New World' Flamingo press, pg 37). Under Hitler/Stalin's rule as under the rule of the controller in Brave New World, the belief that people need controlling in order to avoid civil unrest, conflict and revolution is all too apparent; " Stability...no civilisation without social stability, no social stability without individual stability, (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New World' Flamingo Press, pg 37). However, as fascism is based on the idea that a nation would only succeed through discipline and ruthless conformity this would appear more akin to George Orwell's ' Nineteen Eighty-Four' than the benevolent power structure in Brave New World; " The world's stable now.

People are happy; they get what they want...they're safe; they're never ill", (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New World' Flamingo Press, pg 200). Huxley though, had an immense fear and distrust of large scale democracy and threats of revolution, thus there is dictatorship in Brave New World and no civil unrest leading to a more organised and structured society than that of the time.

Yet, it was while visiting America in 1926 and with the resulting pessimism he felt that Huxley conceived the idea of writing a satire on what he had observed. Brave New World thus reads as Huxley's contribution to the widespread fear of Americanisation, (David Bradshaw 1993 introduction in '

Brave New World Revisited' 1994, Flamingo Press). In particular, the Ford production lines and the 'illusion of individuality' in which to a greater extent man is dehumanised affected Huxley. The 'Fordist' America of the twenties in which the individual's life form 'conception to conveyor belt reproduction' (Aldous Huxley 1994 'Brave New World Revisited', Flamingo Press, pg 80), was determined by Big Business was a concept that disturbed Huxley.

Advances in organisation accompanied the successive advances in technology, yet too much organisation transformed men and women into automata thus exemplifying "the dehumanising effects of over-organisation.

.. people are embodiments of economic functions", (Aldous Huxley 1994 'Brave New World Revisited' Flamingo Press, pg 32), "everyone works for everyone else", (Aldous Huxley 1994 'Brave New World' Flamingo Press, pg66). The emerging 'Social Ethic' of work does indeed encompass the basic assumptions of Brave New World that the social whole has greater worth and significance than its individual parts.

The key words of the social ethic; 'adjustment, adaptability, group loyalty/thinking/creativity would indeed relate well to production values within Brave New World. At the time, America had major growths in many new industries; gas, chemical, plastics and factory automation. All these consumer durables prospered after 1931, yet these growths produced 'technological unemployment' with as many as two hundred thousand workers a year replaced by automatic machinery. This would be viewed badly within the Brave New World, as it would eliminate the manual/repetitive tasks leaving lower castes dissatisfied/without a role (allegedly a good reason for freezing scientific progress), "it would be sheer

cruelty to afflict them with excessive leisure” (Aldous Huxley 1994 ‘ Brave New World’ Flamingo Press, pg 205). Unemployment also reduces purchasing power therefore the new worlde’s are given differing levels of intellect in order for all jobs to be catered for, maintaining full employment and full purchasing power. The two extremes of governments of the time; the dictatorship of Lenin/Hitler and the laissez-faire attitudes of America were problematic to Huxley.

A medium was required without the harsh realities of totalitarian regimes. The presidents of the time in America; Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge “ The business of America is Business” and Herbert Hoover all believed in non-interventist government in which markets were allowed to operate without government interference. Huxley would have noted however that monopolies were allowed to form and inequalities of wealth and income reached record levels, hence the interventist nature of the controllers in Brave New World in which production and consumption are controlled and ordered. Indeed, Huxley could therefore have foreseen ways of avoiding the great depression of October ’29. “ After World War I, the economy of the US saw rapid growth but the Wall Street crash brought an abrupt end to this and resulted in worldwide depression”, (Anthony Wood 1964 ‘ Europe 1815-1945’ Longman, pg 411).

A fundamental cause of the great depression has been cited as lying in the overproduction and under-consumption of commodities. Thus, it is unsurprising that Huxley demands consumption by this new worlde’s; “ Ending is better than mending”, (Aldous Huxley 1994 ‘ Brave New World’ Flamingo Press, pg 43). It is also worth noting that Europe was growing

increasingly sensitive to any changes in the American economy in the 1920's. It would appear that Europe's fate was utterly dependant on the prosperity of the US and Huxley would have observed that all economies of Europe receded into depression as a result of their connection with America (thus showing the power that America wields), ([http://www. deoxy.org/huxley/htm](http://www.deoxy.org/huxley/htm)). To Huxley, laissez-faire capitalism was utterly inadequate throughout the great depression and rather the dictatorships through their power to suppress opposition and their greater control over state economies were on the whole strengthened. In 1932, when Brave New World was published, approximately one out of four Americans were unemployed, (Anthony Wood 1964 ' Europe 1815-1945, Longman, pg 413). The core problem to Huxley was the immense disparity between the country's productive capacity and the ability of people to consume as " advanced production technology raised output beyond the purchasing capital", (David Bradshaw 1994 ' Aldous Huxley Between The Wars: Essays and Letters' Chicago, pg 200). It would appear that Huxley would be a supporter of the Keynesian Theory in which consumption is greatly encouraged to support the flow of money and expand the monetary supply of the country, " we always throw away old clothes", (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New WorldHHH' Flamingo, PG 43). Consumerism requires the services of persuasion (commercial propaganda) to " influence into the consumers thoughts and ideals and indirectly turn the wheels of industry", (Aldous Huxley 1994 ' Brave New World Revisited' Flamingo, pg 70).

In Brave New World the ' fordist utopia' is based on the production and consumption of manufactured goods. Utopians are kept purposely occupied

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and focused on working for yet more consumption; “ No leisure from pleasure”. In Brave New World, happiness is derived from consuming mass-produced goods such as ‘ obstacle gold’. Religion in the new world is deemed as dangerous therefore the new religion in society is based on the extremely positive consumption of mass produced goods.

At the same time, advancements in radio, cinema and the press also encouraged mass consumption of goods. The repetition of adverts produced a process of manipulation (subconscious persuasion) whilst “ consumption acted as a distraction preventing people from paying too much attention to the realities of the socio-economic situations”, (Aldous Huxley 1994 ‘ Brave New World Revisited’ Flamingo, pg51) In brave new world the distracters are the ‘ feelies’, ‘ orgy-porgy’ and ‘ centrifugal bumble-puppy’ whilst propagandist materials of the 1930’s encouraged conformity by means of more subtle conditioning, e. g. radios, loudspeakers and moving pictures. As Huxley observes; “ Propaganda teaches us to accept as self-evident matters about which it would be reasonable to suspend our judgement or to feel doubt”, (Aldous Huxley 1994 ‘ Brave New World Revisited’ Flamingo, pg 567).

In 1931, when Huxley was writing about the imaginary tranquillisers by means of which future generations would be made both happy and docile, biochemist P. R. Irvine had spent two years working on the chemistry of the brain (discovering serotonin). All nations provide temporary relief from stress, depression and conformity in the form of stimulants and tranquillisers.

A drug such as soma could be ensured against political unrest by guarding against anti-social behaviour and reinforcing the effects of government propaganda. Indeed, it would appear that in Brave New World, Huxley heightens the populace's already exaggerated fear of state sanctioned mood drugs producing zombified addicts. Brave New World presents the possible future world as seen from the 1930's with the new concepts of 'test-tube babies' and 'genetic engineering' (in fact all the potentials of science and technology for changing human life). Along with George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', Brave New World is an influential book in terms of anti-utopian literature and thus a byword for all that is repellent and abhorrent in the future world. It would thus appear that Huxley's writing expresses the disillusionment of the twenties and the cynicism of the future, reinforcing Huxley's status as "one of the most acute and observed observers of the social and ideological trends of the interwar period", (David Bradshaw 1994 'Aldous Huxley Between the Wars: Essays and Letters, Chicago Press, pg 253)The book is conceptual rather than literal, a dystopian novel making a statement about the desire for social stability which will ultimately destroy the fundamental human right to make free choices, "Huxley's sombre mood in the late twenties was epitomised in Brave New World, a defence against what he regarded as the vulgarity and perversity of mass production", (David Bradshaw 1993 in 'Brave New World Revisited' 1994, Flamingo).