

# The Utopian Dilemma in the Western Political Imagination

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## Chapter 15

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### Aldous Huxley and the Rebels against Happiness

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# 15 Aldous Huxley and the Rebels against Happiness

Aldous Huxley denied having read *We*,<sup>1</sup> though some details of *Brave New World* are eerily close to those imagined by Zamyatin, especially the compulsory exchange of sex. Much of what is shared by the two books derives from Wells. Zamyatin was responding to his own direct experience of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which had not come up to his expectations, whereas Huxley, as a Wellsian projector, was responding to a broader, less definite set of economic, social, and political trends. Both Wells and Huxley believed in the power of science to transform human life and experience, but Wells's response to that power was irrepressible hope, whereas Huxley's predominant response was fear. For decades it was possible to read Huxley's novel as showing the utter barbarity of science employed in human engineering. More recent scholarship has done the work of connecting *Brave New World* with the very different opinions found in popular essays like "Science and Civilization" which Huxley was turning out prolifically during the same period.<sup>2</sup>

Huxley's understanding of the crisis confronting the developed world at the beginning of the 1930s was crucially shaped by his belief that the massive increases in population, especially among the lower classes, made possible by runaway science and technology, were leading to the degradation of the human species, so that eugenic constraints would be necessary simply to preserve the quality of the human race. It was, as we have seen, a common attitude among progressive intellectuals at the time. With the expansion of the franchise after World War I, democracy was looking a lot more dangerous in the eyes of intellectual elites, particularly owing to the fear that the masses could be manipulated by dictators and demagogues. "Half-wits fairly ask for dictators,"<sup>3</sup> as Huxley put it. The Bolshevik revolution and the rise of fascism in Italy were already suggesting the results of this trend. At the same time, Huxley believed, the discoveries of modern psychologists—especially Pavlov and Freud—had made the manipulation of the masses easier and potentially more effective than ever before, especially with the help of the newly emergent mass media. The stupidity of mass culture and entertainment seemed a threat to civilization itself. Fear of the rising masses and the population explosion would haunt Huxley throughout his life.

Given all these threats to rationality—the presumptive possession of the educated classes—there was no doubt in Huxley’s mind that civilization would have to take control of its swelling populations in order to survive. Going back to nature, of course, was not an option for modern societies; that would require a catastrophic reduction of scale.<sup>4</sup> Control was the only answer. The real question, then, was who was going to take control of the civilization of the future and whose interests would it be designed to serve. Would it be the humanist, whose “ideal society is one whose constituent members are all physically, intellectually, and morally of the best quality”? In that case, the result could be beneficial,

a society so organized that no individual shall be unjustly treated or compelled to waste or bury his talents; a society which gives its members the greatest possible amount of individual liberty, but at the same time provides them with the most satisfying incentives to altruistic effort; a society not static but deliberately progressive, consciously tending towards the realization of the highest human aspirations. Science might be made a means for the creation of such a society, but only on certain conditions: that the powers which science confers must be used by rulers who are fundamentally humanist. (150)

This is, of course, a grandly utopian prospect. However, in order to implement it, Huxley warns that the humanist-ruler might have to go a considerable way toward sacrificing the essential human value of liberty in order to provide a stable and predictable social order. Given that “any form of order is better than chaos” when civilization is in danger of collapsing,” it may be that “dictatorship and scientific propaganda” will provide “the only means for saving humanity from the miseries of anarchy” (153).

The alternative is the one pictured in *Brave New World*, in which the future direction of society will be controlled not by the humanist but by the “economist-ruler” serving the needs of industrialists and financiers, represented in the novel by Henry Ford. From the economists’ point of view, the most desirable qualities for the population will not be intelligence or quality of life but stability and sameness. “The mass producer’s first need is a wide market, which means, in other words, the greatest possible number of people with the fewest possible number of tastes and needs” (150). Liberty and the eugenic quality of the citizens will be irrelevant to rulers preoccupied with guaranteeing that regular, predictable pattern of production and consumption which capitalist markets now fail to provide. For such an economic order, even future scientific discoveries will be undesirable, their ultimate consequences being impossible to predict. Thus the rule of the economists, with their need for stability before all else, was threatening to usher in “the kingdom of industry and the machine” (152).

In the World State of *Brave New World*, Fordism has become a religion and people are mass-produced like cars, swearing not by “Our Lord” but by

“Our Ford.” Grown in test tubes, “decanted” rather than born, citizens of the World State are designed for the level of intelligence, or stupidity, that makes their work enjoyable (23).<sup>5</sup> With Freud being established as another god of the World State, the family, whose vicissitudes he theorized, has been eliminated, and along with it all deep emotions. No more family romances or Oedipal conflicts (44). Instead of sexual repression there is compulsory promiscuity—“everyone belongs to everyone else” (46). The remaining psychological wrinkles are smoothed out with Neo-Pavlovian conditioning, therapy, and a steady diet of the wonder-drug *soma*. Ordinary citizens have no access to science or history or great literature, or to the solitude that could produce these things, any of which might disturb their tranquility and undermine the stability of the state. Instead, the population is kept occupied with saccharine entertainments like the “feelies”—a sensually enhanced version of the “movies”—and games like “Electromagnetic Golf” and “Centrifugal Bumble-Puppy.” This relentless regime of vapid pleasure makes Homer’s gods look industrious by comparison. In one scene, we witness a chorus of dancers beating loudly on each other’s buttocks:

*Orgy-porgy Ford and fun,  
Kiss the girls and make them One,  
Boys at one with girls at peace,  
Orgy-porgy gives release.* (85)

In such rituals, the individual is made to merge completely with the group in meaningless pleasure. The overall impression is one of relentless, overwhelming triviality, stupidity, and, above all, vulgarity.

Huxley later described his book as having begun as a parody of *Men Like Gods* that had gotten out of hand and as an attack “on the horror of the Wellsian Utopia and a revolt against it”<sup>6</sup>; he even derided Wells himself as a “rather horrid, vulgar little man” (281). But although the “World State” is Wells’s proprietary invention, and he resented Huxley’s “bitter satire on progressive ideas,”<sup>7</sup> the regime mocked in *Brave New World* is not precisely Wellsian, for Wells, of course, was also eager to improve the human species and free it from servile labor and from subservience to industrial and business interests. Far from behaving like Huxley’s economist-ruler, the Wellsian *samurai* would work apart from narrow class interests to pursue the good of the whole, a notion that Huxley himself frequently endorsed.<sup>8</sup> The World State in *Brave New World* is at least as Huxleyan as it is Wellsian. Setting aside the machine-driven elements, all of its central features were ones that Huxley himself believed would be necessary to prevent the collapse of civilization—eugenics, elite centralized control, and propaganda. Hence his opposition to utopian planning was decidedly equivocal. Eugenics he welcomed so long as it aimed to improve the species; the system of political control he accepted as a necessary evil

in spite of its danger in the wrong hands; only the pandering to the masses involved in propaganda did Huxley regard with alarm and contempt, indeed with an almost Swiftian revulsion. Huxley could be compassionate toward the working classes, but he made no secret of his distaste for democracy. “The democratic hypothesis,” he wrote, “that all men are equal ... is so manifestly untrue that a most elaborate system of humbug has had to be invented to render it credible to any sane human being.”<sup>9</sup> American self-promoters were the advance guard of this humbug system—undertakers, for example, escaping the “base association” of the term by turning themselves into “morticians,” styling themselves as “artists and members of an almost learned profession” who render vital “services” to humanity. Such boosters

overlook the significant historical fact that all the valuable things in life, all the things that make for civilization and progress, are precisely the unnecessary ones. All art, all science, all religion (by comparison with making coffins or breakfast foods) are unnecessary. But if we had stuck to the merely necessary, we should be apes. (558)

This is an elite humanist-ruler speaking loud and clear, in a voice that could be mistaken for Huxley’s friend and correspondent H. L. Mencken.<sup>10</sup> Huxley goes on to insist that

In every part of the world and at all times the vast majority of human beings has consisted of Babbits and peasants. They are indispensable; the necessary work must be done. But never, except at the present time, and nowhere except in America, have the necessary millions believed themselves the equals of the unnecessary few. (559)

Clearly, then, Huxley’s attitude toward democratic mass culture is one of patrician resentment made all the more bilious by the political imperative to cater to the masses who were overpopulating the world and threatening its stability. As a member of the “unnecessary few,” Huxley was at pains to explain that its members were also destined to be the “happy few,” the nature of happiness being based upon limitation and the Law of Diminishing Returns. In “The Boundaries of Utopia,” an essay nearly contemporary with *Brave New World*, Huxley argues that every right enjoyed by human beings depends upon someone else’s loss and that the expansion of prosperity is only the expansion of mediocrity. “When everybody has three hundred a year,” he argues, “nobody will be less, but also nobody presumably will be more free than the contemporary confidential clerk” (125). Freedom, rights, democracy, education, leisure, all are either zero-sum quantities or subject to the Law of Diminishing Returns. Travel, a Wellsian idol, undermines the differences of culture it seeks to experience, leading to the “standardization

of the world.” The love of nature, too widely disseminated, destroys the unspoiled beauty which makes nature lovable (128). Every right we enjoy is “something which we have at other people’s expense” and “beyond a certain point the return in happiness of increased prosperity steadily diminishes” (127).

“This is an ancient commonplace,” Huxley adds, and he is right that he is articulating a familiar Cynic attitude, but he does not take up the Cynic remedy—to retrench one’s desires and find security in freedom from need. Rather, he argues that “deliberate breeding and selection” offer the only concrete hope for an increased human capacity for happiness without diminishing returns (129). Even then, Huxley goes on to suggest, eugenically improved human beings would still be incapable of happiness in the mass. “Experiences which, enjoyed by a few, were precious,” he says, “cease automatically to be precious when enjoyed by many.” Even if the problems of scale could be addressed, there would be a final, insuperable obstacle—those cases in which “the preciousness of the experience is found to consist precisely in the fact that it can only be enjoyed by a minority.” Once again we find the anti-utopian note that happiness itself is a competitive interest, dependent upon comparative advantage. The only solution Huxley can imagine is a Quixotic one based upon the proliferation of self-promoting delusions of just the sort he is normally eager to debunk. To provide experiences of value, he says, “it will be necessary in any future egalitarian state to create a number of mutually exclusive clubs or, better, secret societies, religious sects, even witches’ covens.” Only by such means can the members of an egalitarian society be granted “the infinitely precious experience of being in a superior minority.”

Huxley, then, it seems, was truly an enemy of the utopian and democratic conception of happiness, and since he believed that “the future of America is the future of the world,”<sup>11</sup> the American festival of vapid and exhausting popular entertainments was particularly alarming to him, especially as seen in Los Angeles—“the City of Dreadful Joy”—where he took up more or less permanent residence after the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> In private correspondence, Huxley observed that California is “pure Rabelais,” and “the nearest approach to Utopia yet seen on the planet,” but “after twenty-four hours of it, you begin to pine for the slums of Dostoevsky’s Saint Petersburg.”<sup>13</sup> Facing a temple of Baal even more imposing than the Crystal Palace, Huxley finds himself in the same dialectical situation as the Underground Man. So what, then, in *Brave New World*, are his resources for counterpoint to the World State’s utopia given the regime of conditioning which has vanquished all the vicissitudes of life and made people almost universally content with their lot? The characters Lenina Crowne, Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and John Savage each represent a potential candidate for the revolt against the World State, but all of them will prove disappointing.

Lenina Crowne, despite being an outstandingly “pneumatic” young woman, dissents in a minor way from “the strictest conventionality” (47)

of the World State because she likes to date the same men over and over again. Promiscuity does not appeal to her and is perhaps not as congenial to the World State's women as to the men, though "one's got to play the game," as Lenina's friend Fanny tells her (48). This potential for attachment is Lenina's only dissident trait, however. Bernard complains that "she thinks of herself as meat" (59), a creature of purely sexual value. Lenina constantly spouts the hypnopedic slogans of the World State's propaganda apparatus, and the steady consumption of *soma* insulates her from disturbances of the spirit. Lenina, of course, is only a Beta Plus, and there do not seem to be any Alpha females, so her potential to cause trouble is limited. Huxley's version of utopia lacks the feminist element.

Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson are the only two products of the World State's genetic machinery who "knew they were individuals" and who feel "different" from others (71). Bernard's sense of difference derives from the fact that he is eight centimeters shorter than the standard Alpha Plus model, while Helmholtz's derives from a slight "excess" of mental powers (73). Bernard wonders "what would it be like ... if I were free—not enslaved by my conditioning," "free to be happy in some other way" than the one provided by the World State (90). He would like to experiment with self-control, "to try the effect of arresting [his] impulses" rather than dissipating his feelings with constant satisfaction. Bernard craves intimacy with Lenina and hopes by taking her out alone under the night sky to be "more *together*" with her, though she is mystified by the idea and recommends *soma* (90). It is natural, then, for readers at this point to think that Bernard, given that he openly questions the values of the regime, will head a revolt against the World State, and it is likely that Huxley originally conceived of him as doing so, but the manuscript revisions show that, in the process of composition, Bernard's character was revised in a negative direction.<sup>14</sup> The problem with Bernard is that his rebelliousness is rooted entirely in a sense of caste inferiority. "A chronic fear of being slighted made him avoid his equals, made him stand, where his inferiors were concerned, self-consciously on his dignity" (69). Coming into conflict with his boss gives Bernard an "intoxicating consciousness of his own significance" (96), allowing him to give Helmholtz a "heroic" account of it. But Helmholtz hates Bernard's boasting and self-pity (97), while Bernard is humiliated by Helmholtz's magnanimity toward him (164) and jealous of the friendship between Helmholtz and the Savage (166). When those two allies finally start a riot in the Park Lane Hospital, Bernard fails to help his friends, stalling in an "agony of humiliated indecision" (193) and in the subsequent confrontation with the World Controller Mustafa Mond, Bernard has to be carried from the room in "a paroxysm of abjection" (203).

Bernard exemplifies the negative character of the system of distinction when it is grounded in nothing but the need for distinction itself. Helmholtz Watson, by contrast, exemplifies how the person of true distinction can be conditioned and deprived of valuable experience so completely that his

own gifts become incomprehensible to him. Helmholtz is a “propaganda technician” who spends his time writing the jingles and slogans that keep the inhabitants of the World State happy in their imbecile condition. Yet he is haunted by “a queer feeling” that he has “something important to say,” though he doesn’t know what it is—“something much more important. Yes, and more intense, more violent. But What?” Helmholtz wants to “write piercingly,” but the regimen of the World State offers no proper subject for such writing. “What on earth’s the good of being pierced by an article about a Community Sing, or the latest improvement in sense organs.... Can you say something about nothing?” (73). When the Savage, whose experience of civilization consists only of the works of Shakespeare, reads Helmholtz some lines from *Romeo and Juliet* “with an intense and quivering passion” (167–68), Helmholtz exclaims “What a superb piece of emotional engineering!” (168). Romeo’s situation seems ridiculous—“Getting into such a state about having a girl”—but its verbal expression is brilliant. Shakespeare “makes our best propaganda technicians look absolutely silly.” Helmholtz recognizes the secret of Shakespeare’s success—that he had “so many insane excruciating things to get excited about. You’ve got to be hurt and upset, otherwise you can’t think of the really good, penetrating, X-rayish phrases.” But Shakespeare’s subject matter—about “fathers and mothers!”—brings Helmholtz only “uncontrollable guffawing” (168); in the World State, live birth and parental relations are matters comically smutty. “We need some other kind of madness and violence. But what? What? Where?” (169).

Helmholtz’s hunger for madness and violence represents the claims of art and high culture against the World State utopia. Whereas Bernard represents the frustration of the heroic need for distinction, Helmholtz represents the epic imagination deprived of its heroic subject. Neither can manage a genuine challenge to the regime, though Helmholtz does join the Savage in a gesture of revolt. Neither Bernard nor Helmholtz is destroyed by his resistance to the World State. In their confrontation with the Controller, Mustafa Mond treats them leniently. Instead of freeing them from island captivity like Prospero, he sends them off to captive islands inhabited by people like themselves, “too self-consciously individual to fit in.” Mustafa observes that, instead of being hysterical, Bernard should “understand that his punishment is really a reward. He’s being sent to a place where he’ll meet the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the world” (204). Helmholtz even finds an additional charm in his exile, opting for a bad climate, with lots of wind and storms (206). Mark Twain’s minister advised “heaven for climate, and hell for society.”<sup>15</sup> Helmholtz goes him one better in his taste for dystopia—hell for society *and* climate.

In terms of literary form, the Bernard/Helmholtz plot is resolved as a darkly ironic comedy. Helmholtz is the only one of the three protagonists whose character was not debased in revision, and for him the ending is perhaps a minor triumph, though his role in the story is the smallest of the three. At the end of the comedy, Huxley even permits his three dissidents a



moment of sentimental leave-taking; as they depart for their separate fates, “There was a moment of silence. In spite of their sadness—because of it, even; for their sadness was a symptom of their love for one another—the three young men were happy” (217). By enduring frustration and struggle, the young men have learned something of value and importance, and actually experienced an emotion, but they have done nothing to disturb the World State. But John the Savage’s story is not over. Mustafa demands that his experiment must continue. His revolt will have a tragic form, but a tragedy even more darkly undermined by irony.

John the Savage has had the most exclusively literary and heroic education possible, raised on an Indian reservation with only the works of Shakespeare to instruct him. Though the Indians do not accept him as one of their own, he has fully internalized their religion and their warrior ethos, performing their painful and demanding rituals in private. He explains to Lenina that he wanted to be whipped “to show that I am a man” (111). Isolating himself in the desert in imitation of the natives’ rite of initiation to manhood, he discovers “Time and Death and God” (127). And the words of Shakespeare give him an invaluable means to articulate his grand and heroic feelings. This resource, however, also has its drawbacks, because Huxley’s Shakespeare is also Freud’s, reminding us that *Hamlet* played an essential role in Freud’s invention of the Oedipus complex. The Savage, having been brought into the world by a human mother, is subject to all the ills that Freudian flesh is heir to, all those “insane, obscene relationships” (43) in the family romance that Mustafa’s utopia has eliminated along with live birth. John’s mother’s native lover, Popé, thus tortures the boy with all the pains of Hamlet contemplating his own mother’s “enseamed bed.” “Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain,” repeats the Savage.

What did the words exactly mean? He only half knew. But their magic was strong and went on rumbling in his head, and somehow it was as though he had never really hated Popé before because he had never been able to say how much he hated him. But now he had these words, these words like drums and singing and magic. (123)

The words are as powerful as a ritual, and it is hard to tell whether they simply express what is already in the Savage’s psyche or whether they are conditioning him to share the feelings they evoke. Unlike Hamlet, though, the Savage makes an immediate attempt to stab his Claudius, and Popé responds with laughing appreciation of the boy’s heroic gesture (124). Popé’s uncivilized psyche doesn’t obey Oedipal dynamics.

Once he has been introduced to the dehumanized conditions of the World State, the Savage’s education enables him to articulate the heroic critique of utopia and even to act on it, but Huxley’s psychoanalytic treatment of his character makes him ultimately a satiric figure. Like Bernard, the Savage

begins as the novel's apparent hero, but Huxley made him more neurotic in the process of composition.<sup>16</sup> He is erotically fascinated by Lenina and replays Romeo's ecstasy over Juliet's "pure and vestal modesty" in the presence of her clothing (134), but when it comes to actual love-making, Lenina's unchaste behavior, her immediate willingness to sleep with him, revolts the Savage. He needs to see her as a being superior to himself and to his own desires. "He was obscurely terrified lest she would cease to be something he could feel himself unworthy of" (155). For the Savage, the culture of the World State is "base" and "ignoble" (156). He wants to do something grand to show Lenina his worthiness, to "undergo something nobly," like bringing her a mountain lion as the Indians would do (173). But she is merely baffled. When she finally strips to seduce him, he retreats in terror and resorts to Othello's imprecations: "Whore! Impudent strumpet!" He even threatens to kill her. A moment later he is Lear raging against lechery (177–78).

From this point on, the Savage's Oedipal vulnerabilities become the main driver of the narrative, further exacerbated by the death of his mother in her final state of *soma*-induced "imbecile happiness" (181) among a horde of gawking children who are being conditioned to the benign vacuity of death (187). The Savage's irrational guilt over his mother's demise brings on the crisis in which he tries to start a freedom riot with a Shakespearean oration against *soma*. By the end of the novel, the Savage is clearly insane. His attempt at Thoreauvian retreat, with monkish bouts of self-flagellation, turns him into a media spectacle—an anomaly in the tranquilized, stability-driven World State. The novel's ending is slightly obscure, but it seems that the Savage's self-flagellating fury and the conditioned "habit of cooperation" of the spectators bring them all together in an orgy, a "long-drawn frenzy of sensuality" after which the Savage hangs himself. Huxley mocks his character by describing how his dangling feet point toward every direction of the compass except Hamlet's "mad north-by-northwest" (230–31). He was not Hamlet nor was meant to be.

Just as the Bernard/Helmholtz plot ends as an ironized comedy, the story of John the Savage ends as a parody of Shakespearean tragedy, or as a psychoanalytic interpretation of tragedy itself, a form of interpretation which has an inherently ironizing and satiric effect.<sup>17</sup> Huxley often sniffed at psychoanalysis,<sup>18</sup> but he seems to have been captivated by it nonetheless. The Savage has often been associated with Huxley's close friend D. H. Lawrence, who died the year before *Brave New World* was written and whose letters Huxley edited. Huxley admired Lawrence's genius, and they shared a common disgust with the machine-driven way the world was going. Mark Rampion, the Lawrence character in Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, gives a diagnosis of the current world situation that could well serve as a *précis* for *Brave New World*.<sup>19</sup> But John Savage is not D. H. Lawrence; he is neither a genius nor an artist nor even an intellectual in the proper sense, though he does espouse the possibility of escape from the aridity of machine

culture back toward something more primitive, a notion, we have seen, that Huxley thought impractical. As Philip Quarles, the Huxley surrogate in *Point Counter Point*, tells Rampion, “You can’t go back, you can’t scrap the machine, unless you’re prepared to kill off about half the human race” (416).

In *Brave New World*, the Savage’s downfall makes a grim commentary upon life in the World State, and with all of the rebels either dead or vanished, we are left with Mustafa Mond as the ruling force in Huxley’s vision. The confrontation and judgment scene between him and the rebels is the highlight of the novel, and it sharpens the dialectic between utopian and heroic values to a fine point. Faced with the three trouble-makers, Mustafa’s response is not hostile but rather one of “good-humoured intelligence” (197). He understands their point of view perfectly, having sacrificed his own love of science to take up the demanding task of assuring everyone else’s happiness. In response to the Savage’s complaint that, compared with Shakespeare, the culture of the World State looks “horrible,” Mond can only agree. “Of course it does,” he says.

Actual happiness always looks pretty squalid in comparison with the overcompensations for misery. And, of course, stability isn’t nearly so spectacular as instability. And being contented has none of the glamour of a good fight against misfortune, none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt. Happiness is never grand. (199)

As for the reduction in quality of the human materials that constitute the World State, Mond describes the regime’s earlier efforts to avoid it. In the “Cypress experiment,” “an experiment in rebottling,” the island of Cypress was repopulated entirely with Alphas who were given all the equipment they needed to make a good life. “Within six years they were having a first-class civil war” (201). The natural state of fully developed humanity appears to be war. As for making life less dull for the lower-caste workers, giving them more leisure turned out to be a form of cruelty; they were soon looking for a holiday from free time (202). The World State has apparently been experimentally designed to preserve as much of the quality of humanity as possible without destroying human happiness, but that is not very much. “The optimum population ... is modelled on the iceberg—eight-ninths below the water line, one-ninth above” (201). And they are happier below the water line.

For the Savage, the worst of defect of Mond’s utopia is the absence of God, “the reason for everything fine and noble and heroic.” Mustafa actually presumes that God exists, but civilization has “absolutely no need” for the virtues fostered by such a being, things like nobility and heroism being mere “symptoms of political inefficiency” (213). And as for the divine principle

of cosmic justice that punishes Edmund's "pleasant vices" in *King Lear*, when the Savage wonders if the "pleasant vices" of the World State aren't just as degrading, Mond declares such religious sentiments "superfluous" in a world where youth and prosperity are guaranteed till death (211–12).

In the Underground Man's choice between "cheap happiness and lofty suffering," Mustafa is determined to make happiness as cheap as possible for individuals, whatever the cost to the species, while for the Savage, "Nothing costs enough here," all the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" having been abolished (214). His Shakespearean eloquence makes no impression on a ruler whose chief concern is to preserve the peace by doing everything "comfortably." The Savage's protest is painful.

"But I don't want comfort. I want God. I want poetry. I want real danger. I want freedom. I want goodness. I want sin."

"In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."

All right then," said the Savage defiantly. "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy."

"Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind." There was a long silence.

"I claim them all," said the Savage at last.

Mustafa Mond shrugged his shoulders. "You're welcome," he said. (215)

Mustafa Mond is correct when he argues that the disagreement between himself and the Savage depends upon the choice of fundamentally different values, or "postulates," as he calls them. "You can't play Electro-magnetic Golf according to the rules of Centrifugal Bumble-puppy," he says (212), a formulation whose comically undignified language underlines the very point of the dispute. In the life of the World State, no distinction will be any more important than the distinction between trivial pastimes. The disagreement between Mustafa and the Savage is not one of understanding; the two sides are completely transparent to one another. It is a matter of fundamental commitment. Mustafa makes the Savage look like nothing but a masochist for disclaiming the wish for happiness, but the Savage's complaint is hard to ignore when the happiness of human life has been reduced to the smooth functioning of a machine, with the State as the engineer of souls.

*Brave New World* expresses both Huxley's genuine hope that science can be harnessed to make human beings happier and his fear that happiness might be purchased at the cost of humanity itself. And while he is naturally drawn to the elite concern for dignity that motivates the heroic perspective,

he is unable to imagine, at least in *Brave New World*, a character who is capable of living up to the heroic argument. This shows something about Huxley himself. In spite of his patrician sense of his own superiority, Huxley was contemptuous of the social pretensions of aristocracy. He recognized the fatuous aspects of social vanity and the irony of wishing for an unhappy and difficult world just because it provides the pleasures of high art. In his view, even the glory of science, for which Huxley had a deep admiration, poses a threat to human flourishing because of its unpredictable consequences and its devotion to the machine, while Freud's version of science makes all human motives beyond sexual satisfaction look bogus. In the years to come Huxley would take a religious and mystical turn that gave new access to human dignity, but at this point the heroic aspects of the humanist's critique of utopia were difficult for him to stand behind. The fragments of the heroic protest in *Brave New World* are portioned out among Bernard, Helmholtz, and the Savage so that their confrontation with Mustafa Mond is ultimately a standoff—a standoff, however, which puts the dilemma with unrivaled clarity and force.

In his Preface to the 1946 edition of *Brave New World*, Huxley identified the fault in the novel as his failure to give the Savage another choice between the “insanity” of the World State and the “lunacy” of personal neurosis. Huxley claimed that the impasse between insanity and lunacy had appealed to his younger self, the “amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete who was the author of the fable” (6). But the impasse that ends *Brave New World* does justice to the issues it raises better than any practical solution Huxley could have offered, including the decentralized “Henry Georgian” economics and the “Kropotkinesque co-operative” politics he later imagined as a third option (7). No more than D. H. Lawrence was Huxley amused by the situation that faced the world of the early 1930s. The problem was that he was caught between the horns of the utopian dilemma—the choice between administered happiness and human dignity.

## Notes

- 1 Alex Shane, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamiatin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 140.
- 2 See especially the introductory essays by David Bradshaw in *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994) and “Huxley's Slump: Planning, Eugenics, and the ‘Ultimate Need’ of Stability,” in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. John Batchelor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 151–71. For a recent synthesis see Joanne Woiak, “Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics, and Fiction,” *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007): 105–29.
- 3 Huxley, “What Is Happening to Our Population?” in Aldous Huxley, *Complete Essays*, eds. Robert S. Baker and James Sexton (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), vol. 3, 1930–1935, 405.
- 4 “Science and Civilization,” in Huxley, *Complete Essays*, vol. 3, 149.

- 5 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper, 2004), 23.
- 6 *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Grover Smith (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), 348.
- 7 Letter to W. W. Pickard, October 1, 1935. In *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, 4 vols. Ed. David C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), vol. 4, 35.
- 8 See Bradshaw, *Hidden Huxley*, 31–41. Huxley even wished for another caste above the *samurai*. See Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History: A Study of Modern Despotism, Its Antecedents, and Its Literary Diffractions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 378.
- 9 “America,” in Huxley, *Complete Essays*, vol. 2, 557.
- 10 On Huxley and Mencken see Bradshaw, *Hidden Huxley*, 1–25.
- 11 “The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age” (1927), in Huxley, *Complete Essays*, vol 3, 187.
- 12 “America,” in Huxley, *Complete Essays*, vol. 2, 553.
- 13 Aldous Huxley, *Selected Letters*, ed. James Sexton (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 189, quoted in Claeys, *Dystopia*, 377. As Claeys goes on to point out, Huxley spent the rest of his life in this overly opulent utopia, promoting his own brand of counter-cultural hedonism. See *Dystopia*, 377–78.
- 14 See Donald Watt, “The Manuscript Revisions of *Brave New World*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 77 (July 1971): 376.
- 15 Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Speeches* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1910), 117.
- 16 Watt, “Manuscript Revisions,” 377.
- 17 On “Freudian Satire” see John Farrell, *Freud’s Paranoid Quest: Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), chapter 5.
- 18 See Peter Edgerly Firchow, *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984), 50–51, and Brad Buchanan, “Oedipus in Dystopia: Freud and Lawrence in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 25, no. 3–4 (2002): 75–89.
- 19 See Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), 415.

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