

**BEN'S NOTES**

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**BRAVE  
NEW  
WORLD**

**BY ALDOUS HUXLEY**



**Ben  
Shapiro's**  
**Book Club**

# ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* represents perhaps the scariest form of utopia: the utopia so many people seem to crave. It is not the story of a foreign-seeming totalitarian state, engaged at all times in the repression of human happiness on behalf of a larger transformative ideal, as is George Orwell's *1984*. It is instead the story of a society peculiarly our own: a society dedicated to the facsimile of human happiness, an ersatz happiness defined not by glorious ideals but by the Freudian *id*, incentivized and structured and indoctrinated into quiet stability by a powerful state. The happiness sought here is not the *eudaimonia* of the Greeks or the *simcha* of the Bible; it is instead the happiness of Marquis de Sade, who wrote in 1785, "Virtue can never bring anything but a fantastical happiness ... there is no true felicity except in the senses, and virtue gratifies none of them." And that happiness requires the restructuring of humanity from the cradle to the grave – a reduction of the human instinct for something higher to embrace biological pleasures and drives.

## STABILITY THROUGH DEHUMANIZATION

We are a generation raised in Huxley's *Brave New World*; we have been dehumanized, indoctrinated into the belief that our individual sense of sexual identity represents the height of human achievement. So it seems odd to us to read *Brave New World* and see in it the ugly reality: that the Freudian "pleasure principle" – which suggests that primal drive of mankind is to seek pleasure and avoid pain – when taken as the guiding force behind human life, actually turns us into obedient and compliant animals, convinced of our own individuality while fading into the broader herd of humanity. To human beings, who have higher aspirations than mere animality, members of the animal species seem alike; individuals degraded to the level of animals similarly fade into the general mass.

That is why the central principle of the World State in *Brave New World* is "COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY." A focus on the pleasure principle flattens all drives until they are similar; this allows identity to recede into community, producing stability. As the Director of

the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre observes, “[T]hat 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.”<sup>1</sup>

To that end, human beings are treated from the outset like animals. Huxley’s description of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre is purely animalistic: laboratories and workers and “corpse-coloured rubber” gloves, “frozen, dead” light, work tables filled with the “butter” of human genetic material.<sup>2</sup> Human beings are treated as widgets, molded by the factories of the State: “We also predestine and condition. We decant our babies as socialized human beings...”<sup>3</sup> Pavlovian conditioning is the chief method of the State: “Books and loud noises, flowers and electric shocks—already in the infant mind these couples were compromisingly linked; and after two hundred repetitions of the same or a similar lesson would be wedded indissolubly. What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder.”<sup>4</sup> Children are, at the earliest available opportunity, trained in sexual pleasure:

*He let out the amazing truth. For a very long period before the time of Our Ford, and even for some generations afterwards, erotic play between children had been regarded as abnormal (there was a roar of laughter); and not only abnormal, actually immoral (no!): and had therefore been rigorously suppressed. A look of astonished incredulity appeared on the faces of his listeners. Poor little kids not allowed to amuse themselves? They could not believe it.*<sup>5</sup>

Any institution that threatens this order – community solidarity through the pleasure principle, as facilitated by the State – must be treated as an enemy. History itself must be waved away. Family must be obliterated; the home must be leveled. Citizens of the State are so thoroughly conditioned that they respond with actual nausea at the mere thought of “[h]ome, 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.”<sup>6</sup> In the State, the dual gods of Ford and Freud are worshipped – assembly-line division of labor and sexual pleasure lie at the root of all virtue:

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