

**ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*—
STILL A CHILLING VISION AFTER
ALL THESE YEARS**

*Bob Barr**

BRAVE NEW WORLD. By *Aldous Huxley*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1932. (Harper Perennial 2005 ed.). Pp. xxi, 340.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings, by their very nature, are not static creatures. Lesser creatures, including man's best friend, the dog, seek stability; they are, in a sense, satisfied with the basic elements of existence. Give a dog enough water to drink, enough food to eat, and sufficient shelter to survive the elements—in other words, provide the canine companion a safe and stable environment—and it will be quite content with the status quo.

Man alone among the creatures of the earth abhors stability. Man alone among the creatures of the earth possesses the ability and the inclination to question, to imagine, to build, to take risks for the sake of advancing some perhaps unarticulated goal; in other words, to achieve. Stability, that is, the status quo, is not among mankind's intrinsic goals. Were it otherwise—were mankind hardwired to remain content with the status quo, to be happy with stability—we would still be hunting with flint-tipped spears, dressed in animal skins. Mankind has traveled to the surface of the moon and explored the infinitesimally small components of an atom, not by being content with the status quo, but by tossing aside the stability and comfort of the status quo in favor of the untried and at-best *possible* rewards of the *unknown*.

Probably the best example of man's inquisitive nature, and of the need to constantly look for better and better ways of doing things (even though the status quo may be working fine), is Thomas Edison. Edison, certainly the twentieth century's greatest inventor, experimented ceaselessly, even after creating the particular devices he set out to build.¹ His constant drive and flurries of imagination left many of his younger contemporaries exhausted, mentally and physically.² Thomas Edison would not have survived in the dystopian world of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The world Huxley

* Representative for Georgia's 7th District, U.S. House of Representatives, 1995–2003. The author was the Libertarian Party nominee for president in 2008.

1. See, e.g., MARTIN V. MELOSI, THOMAS A. EDISON AND THE MODERNIZATION OF AMERICA 123–38 (Mark C. Carnes ed., 2d ed. 2008) (chronicling the speed of the early evolution of motion-picture projectors, from the kinetoscope to the vitascope, and finally the kinetophone, a device that combined film and phonograph).

2. See *id.* (noting several inventors who could not keep up with Edison's pace of innovation and cost reduction in motion-picture cameras and projectors).

envisioned was not a world comfortable to inventors of any stripe, or to artists, writers, architects, builders, chemists, doctors, physicists, lawyers, or members of any other profession that places a premium on the advancement of skills and the use of imagination, foresight, and risk taking. It is a world in which the only class of person that thrives is the bureaucrat—the government official.

This is so because government, being an unnatural state of affairs for humans—although necessary to a limited extent—has as its goals the polar opposite of man's. Man is inherently pushed by a free spirit to change the world around him and his own self. Government by its very nature seeks to limit and to *control*; government accomplishes this by fostering a sense of, and value in, *stability*.³ In essence, the only thing the government seeks to change is the degree and form of its power.

Our Founding Fathers, especially Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the principal authors of the Declaration of Independence and the *Federalist Papers* respectively, recognized the inherent and inevitable conflict between man and government.⁴ The moment of the assertion of American independence vividly evidences this conflict.⁵ All those things that account for mankind's ascent from subsistence hunter to harnesser of the atom—imagination, the ability to foresee events, and, most important, the ability and the willingness to risk the comfort of the status quo for the thrill of accomplishing what was theretofore unattainable—are the enemies of government. Government, after all, strives for certainty, for uniformity, for control.

This is no different today, in this first decade of the twenty-first century, than it was in the world facing Aldous Huxley in the early years of the third decade of the twentieth century. The names and faces have certainly changed, as have the identities of the threats facing us, but government em-

3. See, e.g., JAMES H. READ, *POWER VERSUS LIBERTY* 119 (2000) (“The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield, and government to gain ground.” (quoting Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington (May 27, 1788))); Walter J. Riker, *Democratic Legitimacy and the Reasoned Will of the People*, in *COERCION AND THE STATE* 77, 77 (David A. Reidy & Walter J. Riker eds., 2008) (“The modern democratic state is a coercive legal apparatus meant to order and regulate a number of important societal activities . . .”).

4. See, e.g., ALLEN JAYNE, *JEFFERSON'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: ORIGINS, PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY* (1998) (discussing the philosophies behind Thomas Jefferson's politics, including his belief that a revolution should occur with each generation to start government over from a clean slate); *THE FEDERALIST* NO. 41, at 223–24 (James Madison) (Clinton Rossiter ed., 1961) (arguing that it is critical to vest powers in the federal government, but that these powers must be limited to what is necessary in order to prevent a perversion of its power).

5. For example, Thomas Paine stated as follows:

Freedom hath been hunted round the Globe. . . . Europe regards her like a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart. Now is the seed-time of Continental union, faith and honour. . . . A new era for politics is struck. . . . A new method of thinking has arisen. All plans, proposals etc. prior to the nineteenth of April . . . are like the almanacs of the last year.

1 BOB BARR, *PATRIOT NATION* (2008) (quoting CATHERINE DRINKER BOWEN, *MIRACLE AT PHILADELPHIA: THE STORY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1787*, at 135–36 (1966)).

loys the tools available to it—including the use of force—to constrict, limit, and control those within its jurisdictional reach.

In Part I of this Review, I provide an overview of *Brave New World* and place it in its proper historical context. In Part II, I explore the parallels between Huxley's World State and post-9/11 America. In Part III, I argue that *Brave New World* provides prescient warning signs about the dangers of excessive government interference in the economy—warning signs that are of particular importance in the face of the recent economic crisis.

I. *Brave New World* AND ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Our Founding Fathers correctly anticipated that our federal government—whether in 1932 or in 2009—would use its power to control and limit both the state governments and the individual citizenry. In response to this, they crafted a governmental structure with built-in checks and balances that would minimize the ability of the federal government to exert control. What they could not possibly have foreseen was the development of technology to control the human body and its mind, which has factored greatly in the expansion of governmental power far, far beyond that which confronted those geniuses in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁶

Several twentieth-century writers clearly saw what was happening to individual freedom as a result of the government's use of technology. Perhaps most well known among them were Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, all of which vividly demonstrate these dangers. More so than either Orwell or Rand (who are probably both more commonly associated with futuristic, dystopian novels), Huxley foresaw the development and dangerous abuses of *technology* by government in its perpetual search for ways in which to control its subjects.

Huxley also understood the power of technology to not only enable government to control the populace, but also as a way to control the human mind. The government in *Brave New World* repeatedly conditions its citizens to use "soma" and attend the "feelies," to afford them a sense of pleasure.⁷ The control mechanisms are designed to render the consumer complacent and intellectually lethargic. Indeed, the government agents in Huxley's satirical utopian world—especially its benign dictator, Mustapha Mond—understood that you attract more bees with honey than with vinegar.

In other words, by using the power of technology to deliver pleasure and a sense of stability and security to its subjects, the government in Huxley's vision could actually minimize the use of force to coerce the populace; thereby also disguising what it is in fact doing. For example, by making that

6. E.g., Bob Barr, *Listen up: our rights are at risk*, ATLANTA J.-CONST., May 14, 2006, at 1D ("The National Security Agency . . . has been gathering the phone numbers called and the Internet addresses visited by millions of Americans, virtually none of whom have even the remotest connection with any terrorist or terrorist organization.").

7. And the whole "soma state"-inducing process was underlined by its romancing in song. P. 79 (providing lyrics to the song "Bottle of Mine").

which was previously frightening—death—appear benign,⁸ by conditioning people to the notion that the lifeless human body is (like everything else) a tool for the betterment of society (“making plants grow”), government removes even the threat of death as something for individuals to resist.

From the moment of artificial, preprogrammed “conception” (literally, in a test tube) in the nightmare world of Huxley’s “World State,” human beings are limited in both mental and physical abilities to meet the needs of the government and society at large, not their own.⁹ It is this preprogramming, and the carrot-and-stick manipulations of the government, that keep Huxley’s people largely, if not totally, submissive, content, and unquestioning. Exceptions certainly present themselves even in Huxley’s utopian dystopia, as when a major character, Bernard Marx, indicates a preference for a thoughtful relationship with a female rather than soma-laden sex (pp. 89–93). The same man is later admonished by his superior for not exhibiting sufficient enthusiasm to “conform” (pp. 95–96). The overwhelming predisposition among its inhabitants, however, is for everyone to recognize and accept his or her role to move society forward; not his or her own mind and person. Thus, the inhabitants of Huxley’s brave new world are admonished relentlessly that “[e]very one works for everyone else,” “. . . we can’t do without anyone,” “. . . every one belongs to everyone else,” and “. . . every-one is happy now” (pp. 48, 77).

John the Savage, born on a “savage” reservation to a “civilized” mother in a freak accident, finds himself in this “nightmare of swarming indistinguishable sameness” (p. 189–90). When brought to modern society to be shown the wonders of technology, he can respond only with initial curiosity, followed quickly by horror and disgust.

II. *A Brave New World*’s EIGHT-YEAR WAR AND POST-9/11 AMERICA

Even more troubling than Huxley’s prescient description of technological advances employed to manipulate and control mind and body is the manner in which government seizes on a military threat as the vehicle to not only control the population, but also to convince the people, even as their freedom is being stolen from them, that it is necessary to do so, and that taking freedom will make them free.

The “Nine Years War” provided that vehicle for the happy but hapless citizens of Huxley’s world; the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were a similar gift to the leaders of twenty-first century America.

8. For example, isn’t the government today engaging in the concept of making death benign when even in the instance of actual innocence the law attempts to foreclose access to the courts? *See* Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA), Pub. L. No. 104-132, 110 Stat. 1214 (codified as amended at 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2006)) (foreclosing defendants’ opportunities to test the legality of their detentions through habeas corpus proceedings, regardless of their actual guilt or innocence, by preventing them from challenging the legality of their detentions if more than one year has passed since a final appellate ruling on direct appeal). The AEDPA, as misinterpreted by the federal courts, sends the message that it is okay to kill an innocent man who misses a simple deadline. Bob Barr, Op-Ed., *Death Penalty Disgrace*, N.Y. TIMES, June 1, 2009, at A21.

9. The referenced words are thematic to Huxley’s message.

September 11, 2001, will forever haunt the minds of those who experienced it, whether in person or through their television screens. In a few short hours, America was reminded that no nation is invulnerable. Overnight, “security” became the watchword of the day; it will remain the watchword at least for the ensuing decade. Fighting “terrorism” and protecting the “security” of the “Homeland” became the currency of virtually every public-policy issue and pronouncement,¹⁰ even as a limit on our fundamental liberties enshrined in the Constitution.

The truth is, a committed terrorist can and always will be able to injure or kill our citizens, destroy our buildings, and strike fear into the hearts of the innocent. No amount of law-enforcement tools, regulations, or laws—short of imprisoning the entire population—will be able to stop such individuals. This raises the central question of our real world as it does for *Brave New World*: to what lengths is society willing to go to ensure safety and stability? There is an inherent trade-off between stability and freedom, and new laws and policies must be examined both for the benefits they provide and the costs they impose. Far too little of our current policy has been scrutinized in this manner.

For example, the security procedure, now standard at all airports, requiring passengers standing in line to show a government-issued card, and then to remove their shoes, take their jackets off, remove most belts, go through a body scan¹¹—all supposedly to ensure no weapons or explosives are brought on board planes—may be seen as trivial or necessary, but it is a telling example of what we are discussing here. It is all about *control*. Why does a TSA employee need to see your government-issued ID to ensure you are not bringing a gun or a bomb on the plane? The additional minutes required of travelers collectively impose a heavy burden on society. While much of this is explained as a response to the failed attempt in December 2001 by terrorist Richard Reid to bring down a plane with a bomb implanted in his shoe,¹² the reality is it is all about control. That Reid was an idiot, and was stopped at any rate by passengers on the plane, is no longer relevant. These comforting but unnecessary procedures restrict our freedom, and hinder our progress; but such actions definitely make it easier for the government to control you (after all, how far can you run with no shoes and no belt?).

What is even more tragic is that the American citizenry has allowed—even encouraged—much more grievous assaults on its liberty.

Little more than a month after the tragic events of September 11th, Congress passed and President Bush signed into law the USA PATRIOT

10. See, e.g., George W. Bush, President of United States, Address to a Joint Session of Congress (Sept. 20, 2001) (transcript available at <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript>).

11. Transportation Security Administration, Passenger Security Checkpoints, http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/editorial_1049.shtm (last visited Oct. 8, 2009).

12. See generally Fox Butterfield, *Qaeda Man Pleads Guilty To Flying With Shoe Bomb*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 5, 2002, at A11.

Act.¹³ This gargantuan—over 450 pages long—piece of legislation was passed with little debate, and still less comprehension; I doubt a single representative read the entire bill (I tried to, but the only version available on the day of the House floor debate was on the floor, and I simply could not leaf through its entire length during the debate, though I tried). The PATRIOT Act brought about major changes—from the merely tedious paperwork now required of financial institutions to help monitor possible “money laundering,”¹⁴ to the outright pernicious amendments allowing so-called “sneak and peek” searches of homes¹⁵ and “roving wiretaps”¹⁶—without an even cursory examination of the potential costs the changes could incur and without requiring any link whatsoever to “terrorist” acts or groups.

Noticeably absent from Huxley’s dystopia is the Orwellian surveillance found in so many other dystopian novels, which (as I will argue shortly) pervades Western societies today. Huxley instead envisioned a world in which ever-present surveillance was not necessary. Each citizen is brainwashed from birth in a haunting system of conditioning and incentives. The hatcheries manager who was charged, among other things, with implementing this process, describes the process thusly: “[T]he sum of the suggestions *is* the child’s mind. . . . The adult’s mind too—all his life long. . . . [A]ll these suggestions are *our* suggestions! . . . ‘Suggestions from the State’” (p. 36). There is no need for an overbearing system of surveillance because there is no misbehavior—all of the citizens’ thoughts are the mere product of the government’s suggestions.

Our “leaders” are not so lucky; they have not yet found a way to so completely brainwash and control us, so they must instead rely on the blunter instrument of surveillance. Today, Americans face an onslaught of surveillance—their every communication, foreign and domestic, is monitored (or, at least *able* to be monitored) by the NSA, and their moves are monitored by a legion of cameras and sound devices, all carefully looking and listening for the slightest hint of a suspicious turn of a phrase.¹⁷ This surveillance state has only increased with the march of progress. Each familiar refrain from the politician supporting the measure as an effort to “prevent terrorism” and “make us safer” only grows more tiresome. Yet, the number of cameras and listening devices only increases.

13. USA PATRIOT Act, Public L. No. 107-56, 115 Stat. 272 (2001) (codified as amended in scattered sections of the U.S.C.).

14. *Id.* §§ 301–77 (International Money Laundering Abatement and Financial Anti-Terrorism Act).

15. *Id.* § 213 (codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. § 3103a(b) (2001)).

16. *Id.* § 206.

17. Bob Barr, *We Told You So: Government Spying Has Been Targeting Innocent Citizens, not Terrorists*, HUFFINGTON POST, Oct. 10, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-barr/we-told-you-so-government_b_133493.html (“Congress went along with the administration’s violation of both the Constitution and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act by passing new legislation that gave the administration authority to wiretap American citizens in our own country with no individualized warrant, or any evidence of wrong-doing.”).

The “War on Terrorism” launched in late 2001 already has spawned wars with two countries and countless covert measures, actions certainly not without controversy. In the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal, many Iraqi prisoners languished for significant periods of time without formal charge and were routinely tortured and humiliated by the United States.¹⁸ The detention center at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba has witnessed the indefinite detention of persons with no access to even rudimentary judicial due process; and many of those detainees were brought initially to the facility based on the flimsiest of evidence.¹⁹

These actions shocked and infuriated many Americans and people around the world, and rightly so. Torture is antithetical to the values on which our nation was founded. The Constitution specifically prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment,”²⁰ which certainly includes torture within its ambit.²¹ Denying due process or even a writ of habeas corpus to have a judicial officer determine if there is at least a reasonable basis for one’s continued detention, are—or at least before September 11, 2001, were—universally held to be fundamental violations of a person’s inalienable rights.²²

Like John the Savage, at least some of us are shocked and repulsed by the results of our pursuit for security, but far too many are not (many, such as former Vice President Dick Cheney,²³ appear proud of such actions and transgressions). The citizens of this nation continue to offer at least tacit support to our political leaders, allowing themselves to fall prey to the siren song of “security.”²⁴

Fear of terrorism has been used repeatedly and with great effect to justify otherwise unreasonable incursions on the liberty of Americans. The citizens of this nation have granted what amounts to *carte blanche* to our political leaders, permitting themselves to be pacified by platitudes of “security” as their liberties are stripped from them. *Brave New World* offers a cautionary tale, describing a society that, in a state of fear similar to our

18. See generally Seymour M. Hersh, *Torture at Abu Ghraib: American soldiers brutalized Iraqis*, *NEW YORKER*, May 10, 2004, at 42; Douglas Jehl & Kate Zernike, *Scant Evidence Cited in Long Detention of Iraqis*, *N.Y. TIMES*, May 30, 2004, § 1, at 11.

19. See generally Tim Golden, *Administration Officials Split Over Stalled Military Tribunals*, *N.Y. TIMES*, Oct. 25, 2004, at A1.

20. U.S. CONST. amend. VIII.

21. See Jesselyn Radack, *Tortured Legal Ethics: The Role of the Government Advisor in the War on Terrorism*, 77 *U. COLO. L. REV.* 1, 22–24 (2006).

22. *C.f.* *Johnson v. United States*, 333 U.S. 10, 13–14 (1948) (“The point of the Fourth Amendment, which often is not grasped by zealous officers, is not that it denies law enforcement the support of the usual inferences which reasonable men draw from evidence. Its protection consists in requiring that those inferences be drawn by a neutral and detached magistrate instead of being judged by the officer engaged in the often competitive enterprise of ferreting out crime.”).

23. Sam Stein, *Cheney Has “No Regrets” Over Interrogation Policies, War on Terror*, *HUFFINGTON POST*, May 10, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/10/cheney-has-no-regrets-ove_n_201322.html.

24. For example, each of the communication companies that aided and abetted the NSA intercept program was given immunity. Eric Lichtblau, *Telecoms Companies Win Dismissal of Wiretap Suits*, *N.Y. TIMES*, June 4, 2009, at A17.

own, turns to the government to offer a sense of security. The government complied then, and is more than willing to comply now, in this very real world; but in both scenarios—the imagined and the real—at a terrible cost. Huxley reminds us that we must be mindful of that cost—in terms of lost freedom and lost opportunities.

III. *Brave New World's* ECONOMIC CONTROLS AND THE RECENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The brave new world Huxley posits is not just one in which civil liberties are restricted; all aspects of the economy—from production to consumption—are controlled by the central government. Every individual has a predetermined job, for which he or she is perfectly suited; government-run factories produce everything needed in the exact amount required (pp. 23–24). A perverse system of incentives—instilled since birth through government conditioning—ensures that individuals always want the products in the quantity produced (pp. 29–30). The government runs the economy—smoothly but inefficiently—for the stable happiness of all.

Many of our real-world leaders operate under the same notion—that given the proper mix of rules, regulations, incentives, and taxes, the economy will run smoothly and normalcy and stability will be achieved. There is one problem with this notion: there is no “normal.” Neither the economy nor those participating in it are precise machines, carefully calibrated and consistently producing a steady output; there is no magic lever that can be manipulated to control what is produced. Cavalierly, we ignore this and seek to exert control over the economy, often according to “plans” (such as the former Soviet Union’s series of never-realized “five-year plans”).

The recent economic downturn has brought on a slew of problems; employees are losing their jobs, businesses are closing their doors, and consumers are not as willing as they once were to buy every product that catches their eye. Among the most spectacular failures—no doubt enhanced by a multitude of previous mistakes—were the bankruptcies of Chrysler and General Motors. For many years, these two former titans of Detroit have slowly spiraled downward, burdened with poorly designed cars, bad management, and bloated labor forces. Their failures came as no surprise to those Americans who actually understood economics and business.

The real surprise was the lengths to which the government was willing to go to support these failed businesses and many others. Blinded by hubris, the government reached out with “loan guarantees” and bridge financing, sugarcoating bankruptcy for the two companies in exchange for a sizeable stake in their operations.²⁵ This was a truly momentous occasion—instead of

25. Bob Barr, *Dim bulb idea: Feds driving auto industry*, ATLANTA J.-CONST., Apr. 8, 2009, at 12A (“The president and his crack team of automobile bureaucrats mean to tell America’s auto-makers how, when and in what quantities to produce the cars they want—the government, that is; not the consumer.”).

focusing merely on the unemployed and the money supply, the government now considers itself justified in taking over private corporations and indirectly controlling those it does not yet control overtly (like GM); gone is even the façade of private-sector control.

The amount paid out to auto companies, however, pales in comparison to the exorbitant amount of borrowed taxpayers' dollars paid to a number of financial institutions—a group whose actions helped precipitate the very crisis the government was now “bailing us out of.” The Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve have become judge and jury, arbitrarily and capriciously deciding which firms will survive and which will fail (insofar as our Constitution's mandates for “equal protection” apply to corporations, they seem now to be quaint relics of a past era). Some firms, such as Bank of America and Citigroup, were determined “systematically important” and given substantial loans and other assistance.²⁶ Other firms, including the hapless Lehman Brothers, were passed over without so much as a word of explanation. The financial industry has become a government playbox in which a firm's survival depends not on market forces, but the arbitrary decisions of a government bureaucrat. Mustapha Mond would feel right at home.

Huxley understood that an efficient economy would be inoperable under a system in which all decisions were made arbitrarily by government bureaucrats; this truly corrupt system of incentives, whereby a business must please the government before its customers, would yield terrible results. While describing the society he lives in to John the Savage, Mustapha Mond remarks that the World Controllers carefully restrain the growth of science and technology to ensure that many jobs remain labor intensive—all for the good of the lower classes (pp. 197–98). Mond, an unelected leader with absolute power, arbitrarily decides to restrain innovation in an effort to keep every individual happily employed—he is a villain who hides the suffering he causes behind his intentions.

Huxley's warnings, offered through Mustapha Mond and other of his characters, were not the idle rambling of a science fiction writer. The paternalistic and controlling attitude exhibited by Mustapha Mond and his compatriots, pervades the thinking of government bureaucrats and government leaders today. Nowhere is this attitude more conspicuous than in the economic stimulus bill passed by Congress in early 2009²⁷ in a futile effort to right the economy in the wake of a massive credit crisis. The stimulus package was filled with make-work jobs and funding for a multitude of projects of dubious value at best, such as money to provide less fatty foods for children in schools,²⁸ or “tens of millions of stimulus

26. Edmund L. Andrews, *As Doubts Grow, U.S. Will Judge Banks' Stability*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 23, 2009, at A1.

27. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Pub. L. No. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115.

28. Kristina Sherry, *Seminar's goal: a leaner U.S.*, L.A. TIMES, July 29, 2009, at 16.

dollars to repair and build toilets across the nation.”²⁹ The bill was nothing more than a thinly veiled power grab; an effort by the government to further the cycle of dependency, thereby increasing the government’s power and stifling innovation (because it cannot be controlled by government).

The government justifies its meddling in the economy in the same way it justifies its seizure of civil liberties—by stimulating a climate of fear to surround the debate, and then grabbing power through cleverly packaged legislation that purports to “save the economy,” or one’s “safety.”

CONCLUSION: THE DANGERS OF A SAFE AND STABLE SOCIETY

One of the chief lessons of *Brave New World* is that the greatest human achievements arise from suffering; Shakespeare’s plays would hold little meaning if his characters lived a perpetually happy but undistinguished life. The beauty of the emotion that shines in the darkest moments imbues the words of “the Bard” with timeless relevance and humanity. Creative destruction—absent interference from the government—is what drives economies to the heights that we had come to expect. It is from failure that we learn our most important lessons; firms must take the good and the bad and learn to succeed, without the assistance or hindrance of the government. *Brave New World* shows that the greatest heights are achieved only by those willing to suffer at times.

Brave New World implants the reader in what a truly safe and stable society looks like; there is little to no violence, everyone is happily employed, and there is a bounty of resources and products available to all. It is when the reader ventures beyond this superficial description that he or she understands the great cost at which these have come. The only progress is that which is defined, planned, and permitted by government. No Thomas Edisons inhabit or could exist in such a world. The inhabitants of Huxley’s future utopia are imprisoned in a predefined government mold, guided through carefully crafted and persistently enforced incentives. There is no path but the one given.

These inhabitants have no options, no free will, no chance to make a difference; only the opportunity to be another happy cog in a vast machine designed and run by the government. The machine is certainly stable, but what it lacks is the ability to do anything beyond what it is programmed to do. It can consistently produce the same mediocre product forever, but nothing great or of greater value will ever emerge from it. Truly great things come from the work of an individual, a master artisan who spends many hours to first envision then produce an exceptionally unique item.

These are the astounding and unknowable results we forgo, sacrificing them rashly at the altar of stability. The stable and secure path never leads anywhere new or deeply interesting; it cannot. Countless would-be wonders of science, literature, and art do not exist today because some

29. Geoff Earle, *Money Down The Toilet: Stimulus Millions Go To Pots*, N.Y. POST, July 27, 2009, at 21.

April 2010]

Aldous Huxley's Brave New World

857

bureaucrat, some regulation, some law rendered barren the environment in which they could have been born and flourished. We will never know the true cost of our blind pursuit of stability and security, but warning signs do exist. Our Founding Fathers gave us one, the Constitution. Aldous Huxley has offered another.

Copyright of Michigan Law Review is the property of Michigan Law Review Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.