

# NEW YORK AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

## Humanities I



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON ALFRED KAZIN

1. The spirit of competition – competitive atmosphere – key to exploring learning possibilities – a sense of respect for authority – sense of self-discipline – a sense of roots/family – sense of ancient values – augmented self-discipline (moral values as opposed to money /commercial values – everyone pitched in in the hope of producing a successful kid – love & support – Jewish mama is protective (fancy that?) also superstitious – conservative family followed & patterns – values: education, family, religion, success personally, past, art, support for others (generosity)
2. Museums – learning was unlimited – parks, to get away, to be alone – NATURE / same rules, etc. – we take things for granted

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON BARBARA DUGAN

1. Her disease – it came as no result of her action – debilitating – she can't work – poverty is second problem – children are third – sexual assault, vice, etc. in the streets – welfare has its limits – submitted her to psychological degradation – invasion of privacy – (welfare calls the shots – no individual, personal freedom)
2. Fighting spirit – cope with her attitude – she is a realist – patience, aggression – she's frustrated, dominated – she must have inner strength – no progress – the will to fight is deteriorating – her will to survive remains constant
3. It gives her the means in which she can physically survive – invasion of privacy – reduction; reduce to the absolute absurd

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE PUERTO RICANS

1. Equality for their people – equal opportunity – respect from society (RJ) Education – acquisitions (VZ)
2. No jobs in P.R. Looking for a better chance – they can't afford to go back – to get ahead so they can eventually return with enough money to afford houses, etc. They saw NY as a kind of paradise
3. Discrimination – lack of money – lack of jobs – lack of training in English

Yes P.R.'s are America citizens – need same rights as us

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE BUSINESS WORLD

4. Success
5. No time for family – family, leisure, social activities outside business
6. No – lack of time with family – one dimensional – yes – no – individual recognitions

\* family, health, leisure

\* contribution, satisfaction

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE HIPPIES

aspects: Parental control, rationalization

1. independence, individuality, freedom of expression
2. no, setting his values others
- 3.
4. deterioration of society

---

P.B. Shelley "A man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another, and many others, the pains and pleasures of his species must be his own."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE THREE CAREER WOMEN

1. hard-working, able to face challenge, caring
2. incentive, tough
3. friends, moral support
4. respect, conflicts, closer relationships, role reversal to a point [of] competition
5. differ

## BRAVE NEW WORLD by Aldous Huxley

*Quotations*

**Forward** – Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not... as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them.

The theme of *Brave New World* is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it effects human individuals.

The love of servitude cannot be established except as a result of a deep, personal revolution in human minds and bodies. To bring about that revolution, we require, among others, the

following discoveries and inventions. **First**, a greatly improved technique of suggestion – through infant conditioning, and later with the aid of drugs such as scopolamine. **Second**, a fully developed science of human differences, enabling government managers to assign any given individual to his or her proper place in the social and economic hierarchy. (Round pegs in square holes tend to have dangerous thoughts about the social system and to infect others with their discontents.) **Third**, since reality, however utopian, is something from which people feel the need of taking pretty frequent holidays, a substitute for alcohol and other narcotics, something at once less harmful and more pleasure-giving than gin or heroin. And **fourth**, (but this would be a long-term project which it would take [sic] generations of totalitarian control to bring to a successful conclusion) a foolproof system of eugenics, designed to standardize the human product and so to facilitate the task of managers.

**Chapter 1** – Bokanovsky Process ... One egg, one embryo, one adult--- normality. But a bokanovskified egg will bud, will proliferate, will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a full-sized adult. Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress.

- Bokanovsky Process is one of the major instruments of social stability!
- The lower the caste, the shorter the oxygen
- And that... that 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.

**Chapter 2** – They'll grow up with what the psychologists used to call an "instinctive" hatred of books and flowers. Reflexes unalterably conditioned.

We condition the masses to hate the country. But simultaneously, we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus so that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport. Hence, those electric shocks.

**Chapter 3** –

- Ending is better than mending. The more stitches, the less riches.
- I do love flying. I do love flying.
- The introduction of Our Ford's first T-Model

**Chapter 5** –

- All men are physio-chemically equal

### Chapter 8 –

- O brave new world that has such people in it

### Chapter 11 –

- Our library contains only books of reference. If our young people need distraction, they can get it at the feelies. We don't encourage them to indulge in any solitary amusements.
- All the best toys are kept there and they get chocolate ice cream on death days. They learn to take dying as a matter of course.

### Chapter 15 –

- Synthetic Anti-Riot Speech Number Two (Medium Strength)

### Chapter 16 –

- ... we haven't any use for old things here
- It's an absurdity. An Alpha-decanted, Alpha-conditioned man would go mad if he had to do Epsilon Semi-Moran work... Alphas can be completely socialized, but only on the condition that you make them do Alpha work. Only an Epsilon can be expected to make Epsilon sacrifices, for the good reason that for him they aren't sacrifices; they the line of least resistance.
- One would think he was going to have his throat cut. Whereas, if he had the smallest sense, he'd understand that his punishment is really a reward. He's being sent to an island. That's to say, 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. All the people who, for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community life... Everyone, in a word, who's anyone.
- That was where the science first began to be controlled – after the Nine Years War. People were ready to have even their appetites controlled then. Anything for a quiet life.
- God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness.
- But people are never alone now... We make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so that it's almost impossible for them ever to have it.

### *Notes on BRAVE NEW WORLD*

**HUXLEY** – born into a scientific family – affected by a disease making it impossible to pursue a scientific career – his ability to forecast set him apart from other writers.

In the opening chapter, Huxley shows methods of a police state of the future to control and segregate its citizens – this is necessary because of the population problem – the problem has

gained in threat – Huxley poses a solution to the problem – the rate of population must be scientifically controlled.

Leaders are not mass-produced – followers are by embryo budding – in the developmental stages of life they are to feel a bond to each other – they would react the same – **they would have no expectations, no desire beyond that which they were produced** – after they are no longer needed, they would be euthanasially done away with – with no demand – this is PRODUCTIVE! - death is socially acceptable – no cause for worry or aggravation – accepting death is part of their productive, stable identity.

*Brave New World* shows man's failure to control science – science then becomes a weapon whereby man can be controlled – science creates disease rather than trying to eliminate it – it becomes a scientific exploit to eliminate man (*Fahrenheit 451*.)

**BOOKS AND ROSES** – with one, they are given a terrible, painful experience, with other, a pleasant experience – **If you want a race to learn, you turn them to books. If you don't, you make books a danger.**

To avoid having to pay factory workers for vacations from their jobs, make them hate nature – the law of supply and demand – make them hate nature and make them love sports that require expensive equipment.

**CASTE SYSTEM** – All individuals are stereotyped by dress, appearance and walk of life – there are establishment methods and anti-establishment techniques – when people are forever consumed, they are distracted – industry tries to maintain supply and demand by making things that won't last.

**OUR FORD** – Huxley used Ford as a satiric version of the worship of God in a new, mechanized world – with the law of precedence, ANYTHING GOES – if you cut out the past completely, where will you be?

**MUSTAPHA MOND** – (his fordship) – upholds banning of books, family, family life, etc. You can eliminate feeling by shortening the time span between the desire and the satisfaction.

1. What you don't know won't hurt you
2. What the eye cannot see the heart cannot grieve after
3. What you've never had, you can do without

**BERNARD MARX** – abhorrence of crowds – responds emotionally to beauty – he finds conventional games a bore – refused soma – cannot submit to the hysteria of the orgies – when exiled to Iceland individual attitudes desert him.

Solidarity groups pray for the elimination of individuality – it is the infinite rendering of human will to animal behavior (cutting down human restraint.)

**DEATH THE UTOPIAN WAY** – the sight of John weeping over his mother's death scandalizes the hospital – we can accomplish a swing in values in a very short time – we ignore the fact that these changes can be made – John instigates riot in [the] hospital – lecture workers on the value of truth, beauty, person, wisdom.

Some riots are justified by discontent and injustice – **the rebellion is caused by workers considering John a threat to their slavery** – John declares his dislike of Utopia – he is surprised Mond knows Shakespeare – Mond maintains that the people of Utopia wouldn't understand Shakespeare – Utopians are being *fed* emotions – **Mond says that individuality is exciting but not practical.**

The justification for a person's position must be acceptable – once a person accepts his position, he must obey – Huxley points out that there are factors, (over-population, wars, human indifference) working against the democratic system.

If we cannot control science for public good, it will be used to control us as well as itself – once you permit fascist control of science, it becomes irreversible.

**UTOPIA OR NOT UTOPIA** – (that is the question) it is ultimately given exile – breaks down, begs and cries (it gets pretty ugly) Watson, however, conforms physically – Mond respects Watson – Mond makes it clear that Utopians have no need for art, science or religion.

## The triumph of mediocrity!

**The people have no need of spiritual pursuits; they are too busy producing material goods.**

B & W compromise but J can't – he must beat the system or succumb to it – J recalls how he unsuccessfully tried to prevent the seduction of L – L disowns and resents him – she blames his existence on him for he [sic] exile from Utopia – she's frequently drunk.

J is lonely and ostracized because he's unlike both the Utopians and L.

**THE NOBLE SAVAGE** – Despite this, John is noble – he admits he prefers death - compare J's nobility to superficial Utopia.

The Utopians are tuned into collective forces – John is individual – attached to nature and things he thinks are beautiful



---

Thomas  
More "We do not live as a human being if we give up our  
principle just to live."

If you are forced into a principle you do not believe in, you're dead.

## Study Questions for the Foreword of *Brave New World*

viii 1. A community of exiles and refugees from the Brave New World, living within the borders of the Reservation. Science and technology would be used as though they had been made for man, not as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them.

iv 2. The theme of *Brave New World* is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals

x 3. The revolution of individual men women and children

x 4 Their aim is not anarchy but social stability

xi & xii 5. A large-scale popular movement toward decentralization and self-help

xii 6. The love of servitude cannot be established except as a result of a deep, personal revolution in human minds and bodies – to bring about that revolution we require, among others, the following discoveries and inventions: **First**, a greatly improved technique of suggestion – through infant conditioning and, later, with the aid of drugs such as scopolamine. **Second**, a fully developed science of human differences, enabling government managers to assign any given individual to his or her proper place in social and economic hierarchy (round pegs in square holes, etc.) **Third**, a substitute for alcohol. **Fourth**, a system of eugenics, (see quotes from the book.)



## Filmstrips



### **The Transformation of Society**

The struggle to keep our tools from controlling us – what will be the result of the interaction between technology and ourselves – we will decrease quality of life, enrich it, destroy it?

Technology changes man physically (the depletion of the body until there is nothing left? -- a thought by me)

Black Mesa was destroyed by technology - (Black Mesa being spiritually sacred) – People gauge their worth by what they own – Are we so consumed with “doing our thing” that we forget everybody else’s thing – we become very vulnerable when our technology doesn’t work (blackout) – must we start breeding individuals who can adapt to technology

### **The American Dream**

America in 1960, tanned and fun-loving – no family ties – cures for cancer – no aging – American addiction to progress – technology was being created faster than ever before – technological advancements are made before the long-term effects are considered – future shock – Doomsday

### **Implications for the World System**

Technology can provide physical comforts, but it cannot overcome the cultural aspects – media makes public opinion strong – economics controlling space – use technology to control technology – analyzing impact beforehand

### **Vulnerability, The System Tested**

Technology must progress until humans become extinct – it might progress until humans can no longer adapt – dependency on drugs creating an inferior species (China & the little finger)

### **Visions of the Future**

Death prediction – we must start to shape the future before the future shapes us – death is not biologically inevitable

# MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

## New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy

### Euthanasia – James Rachels

Attitude of ancient Greece – not all life is precious – In Sparta, deformed infants were put to death – Athens too – it was not required but there was no condemnation – surely it is not immoral to help a person die sooner

---

Stewart	“No human being with a spark of pity could let a living
Alsop	thing suffer so, to no good end”

**The Utilitarian View** – any action of the part of society to increase happiness and decrease misery is morally correct

*\*The Golden Rule and the sexual pervert*

It is permissible to kill in self-defense in time of war providing the war is just and you are observing the rules of war – capital punishment... Thus, killing is *usually* wrong but not always wrong – **if a person loses anything of value (life) he's harmed – if life has no value, he isn't harmed.**

**Religious Views** – God is the only one to determine who lives and who dies (consider Oedipus notes) → you had no say about your birth, you shouldn't have anything to say about your death – Thou shalt not murder – no other references in the Bible

*Suffering and God's Plan* – suffering is a part of life by killing, we are interfering with God's Plan.

### The Sacral Power of Death in Contemporary Experience – William F. May

Broadening the definition of religion – “gods” were late-comers – roots of early religion concerned sacred power, fate – religion then is something that man cannot fully master – **Hardly traditional that it is [the] destructive power of death, not life, that is the object of awe.**

“Nothing has more affected the quality of life in the last two hundred years and our objective capacity to cope with the powers that beset us than the application of technology to disease and death.”

“Uncle John cannot be allowed to die and repose in solemn dignity. He must be prettied up with rouge and cheap satin, his face molded into a smile. It is not simply his beautification but his beautification that the mortician attempts to achieve... we are supposed to look on the very face of the corpse and say about Uncle John “Doesn't he look natural?” which, of course, is the one thing he doesn't look.

Martin Heidegger – a being toward death – man may either open himself up in anxiety before death or attempt to determine his life in a such a way as to evade and conceal his end – evasion of death = self-evasion

## 1984 by George Orwell

**Doublethink** – means the power of holding contradictory beliefs in one's mind and accepting them both. A person, therefore, is no longer saying the opposite of what he thinks but thinks the opposite of what is true. "Doublethink" means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting both of them. The process has to be conscious or it wouldn't not be carried out with sufficient precision. It must, however, also be unconscious or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity or guilt.