

Siddhartha Savage: The Importance of Buddhism in Huxley's Brave New World

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By

Carey Tufts

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Head of the Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5

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To My Everything: My Rebecca and My Madeline

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Introduction: An Unnamed Longing

Brave New World is not a novel about Buddhism. Nonetheless, the pastiche of the brave new world, the journeys of Aldous Huxley's rebels, and Huxley's own Buddhist leanings suggest that Buddhism influenced Huxley's formation of Brave New World. The story of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha of our age, and the Buddhist world view and philosophies, were particularly seductive for Huxley, evidenced by his own statement that "alone of all the great world religions Buddhism made its way without persecution, censorship or inquisition" (Buddhism in a Nutshell). Buddhist belief and practice was the subject of a number of his prolific writings for precisely the reasons they are absent in Brave New World; the key issues the societies in the novel face are ones brought about by world views that are founded in extremes, and curiously absent is what, for Huxley, represents the Buddha's greatest offering: the Middle Way. Huxley inserts seemingly Buddhist elements into the text of Brave New World in order to raise questions regarding the relative efficacy of the two societies he depicts in particular and regarding extremism in general.

Huxley, a 'man of ideas' and beneficiary of an ancestry rich in science, letters, and philosophy, spent much of his life and his work scrutinizing and examining first-hand world religions, spiritualities, and systems of thought. Perpetually dissatisfied with Christianity in particular and Western determinism in general, and unabashedly open to new experiences and extremes of human thought and endeavor, Huxley explored virtually every 'alternative' philosophy into which he was able to gain insight. His extensive travels brought him into contact with a diverse set of religions and ways of life, and

helped to form his spiritual background, evident in his thorough examination of plethoric spiritualities, including Hinduism and Buddhism, in the 1927 essay “The Essence of Religion” and 1929’s “Spinoza’s Worm”. While Huxley’s religious alignment shifted many times throughout his life and usually included varying degrees of atheism or at least agnosticism, some essential considerations in terms of Huxley’s spirituality are his rejection of dogma, his embrace of the unknown, and his belief that one’s religion should work in harmony with other elements of his life rather than running contrary to them.

Huxley’s experiences in India, and the influence of Eastern philosophy on his work and his life, are well-established. Although Huxley traveled extensively and explored virtually every system of thought he encountered to some extent, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the social systems of India above others had a particularly profound impact upon him. Huxley first visited India with his wife, Maria, in 1925. Short on money and living “strenuously,” Huxley was exposed to the raw reality of Indian culture and society, and the impact of those experiences on his life and writing is well-documented, by his biographers and critics as well as by Huxley himself. Of particular note, given its striking resemblance to Bernard Marx’s introduction to the savage reservation in Brave New World, is Huxley’s being at once fascinated and disgusted by an encounter with a holy man on a train ride when first being exposed to Indian culture: “he and his admirers exhaled the sour stink of garments long unwashed” and, very much reflected in his description of the savage reservation via the experiences of Bernard and Lenina, “Aldous sat reflecting on the fact of cleanliness dividing man from man” (Bedford 163). Such musings would soon lead Huxley to an intense scrutiny of just what so starkly separates human societies, which would lead to vast speculation about religious

systems and the importance of the Middle Way, including discussions of Prince Gotama and the Four Sights in the 1930 essay “Vulgarity in Literature,” and would in turn help to form the centre of Brave New World.

Aldous and Maria Huxley’s visit to India most certainly gave rise to elements of Brave New World, in particular to Huxley’s depiction of the savage reservation and its oppressive incivility. Like Bernard Marx, Huxley attempts to cast an uncritical eye on India during his visit, in the interest of experience and understanding, but even he eventually deduces that “India is depressing as no other country I have ever known” (Bedford 164). Huxley naturally points to India’s British occupation as one cause of her malaise, but also believes that “It is the preoccupation with “spiritual” realities, different from the actual historical realities of common life, that has kept millions upon millions of men and women content, through centuries, with a lot unworthy of human beings” (Bedford 165). This reaction to the state of Indian culture is important not only on account of its direct connection to the vista of the savage reservation, but also because it highlights Huxley’s rejection of dogma and rigidity in religion that for him lends Buddhism so much of its appeal and embroiders it into the subtext of Brave New World in particular and Huxley’s world view in general.

Further to the potential impact of this particular voyage on the conceit and structure of Brave New World is that, less than a month after their stay in India, the Huxleys were introduced to California. Stunned by the fearless, exuberant, extravagant comfort in which he found Americans living in the 1920s, Huxley writes (in Jesting Pilate) that “Americans live with confidence, and therefore with enhanced vitality. A generous extravagance, undreamed of in other parts of the world, is the American rule”

(Bedford 175). Not completely seduced, however, Huxley notes a certain artificiality to the American way of life, adding that “nowhere, perhaps is there so little conversation . . . Hence there appears to be even more vitality in the Americans than there really is” (175). This fierce experiential contrast is one that is mirrored in Brave New World and Huxley’s visits to India and California can hardly be overlooked in a discussion of its source. His exposure to such equally ineffective extremes causes Huxley to seek an intellectual and philosophical middle ground, and this in part is what leads him to Buddhism.

Huxley, particularly via Island, all but calls Buddhism an ideal (or, in his manner of thinking, a least-worst) religion. In the 1946 foreword to Brave New World, in fact, Huxley outlines what form he believes a religion should take in a utopic society (and which comes to be manifested in Island): “Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man’s Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman” (Nance 82). Despite these kinds of musings being directly attached to Brave New World, however, Buddhism’s role in forming Huxley’s dystopia has been almost entirely overlooked.

Huxley’s Island, in contrast, contains many explicitly Buddhist elements. It is in Island that the element of Indian religion comes to the forefront, and such is the clear reason that that particular novel tends to usurp the major part of critical attention when it comes to discussions of Huxley and religion. However, Buddhism is present throughout virtually all of Huxley’s canon. Huxley’s ‘spirituality’ is certainly well-studied, with a particular focus on his ‘mysticism’. These are such general terms, though, that such discussions tend to bring very little of meaning to light. Buddhism is discussed in the context of Huxley’s final novel, and the profound impact that his trips to India had on the

novelist are well-documented. And yet, apparently no critic (with the possible exception of Nand Pandey), including Jerome Meckier, author of hundreds of thousands of words on Huxley and roundly accepted Huxley authority, has made mention, let alone done a comprehensive study, of the potentially important elements of Buddhism in Huxley's most influential, popular, and studied novel, Brave New World.

Brave New World contains so much philosophy of note that it is unsurprising that Huxley's integration of Buddhist elements might go unnoticed. Indeed, amidst Huxley's social commentary, his biting satire, and his critiques of technology, hedonism, and sexual simplicity among others, it is easy to circumnavigate his comparatively pedestrian Buddhist borrowings. It may be in these Buddhist elements, however, that many of Brave New World's essential truths are revealed.

A near-exhaustive survey of the influence of the East on Huxley can be found in his criticism over the past eighty years. From Hindu-influenced Christian mysticism to meditative Zen Buddhism to psychedelic meditation, the importance of the East for Huxley is quite well-documented. This aspect of Huxley's fiction is so universally accepted among critics that the author's dependence upon mysticism is routinely referred to as accepted fact with alarmingly little study of just what, exactly, mysticism might mean in terms of Huxley's specific works rather than the grand, sweeping, vague manner to which it is typically referred.

Closest to the mark in terms of Huxley's religious influences is Nand Kumar Pandey, who begins his inspired 1964 dissertation, "The Influence of Hindu and Buddhist Thought on Aldous Huxley," by pointing out that although

vague references are made by critics to his interest in the Vedanta and other philosophical systems of India, no serious and scholarly study of the nature and scope of these influences has been made so far. While the present work does not pretend to be exhaustive, it may claim to be the first serious effort in this direction. (1)

Indeed, Pandy's work at Stanford may have been not only the first effort of its kind, but also the most recent, given that the impact on Huxley's work of Buddhism and Hinduism has been considerably overlooked.

Pandy performs a commendable examination of the connections between Eastern religion and Huxley's novels. He succinctly identifies the source of much of Huxley's philosophy not as simply a vague metaphysics, but rather quite specifically points to Hinduism and Buddhism. Pandy examines the three 'rebels' of Brave New World extensively, and presents a fine piece on what he calls Huxley's Fantasies – Brave New World, Ape and Essence, and Island. In terms of Brave New World specifically, Pandy focuses on broad world-view notions such as individualism, impersonalisation, and the general metaphysical conceits discussed (primarily) by Mustapha Mond and John. Even in this insightful work, however, is one critical element missing: the Buddha himself.

Buddhist philosophy is inseparable from the story of the Buddha. While not considered divine, Siddhartha Gautama, to a certain extent, *is* Buddhism. This is an integral part of Buddhism, and something with which Huxley was clearly familiar. Pivotal moments in Brave New World seem to correspond quite precisely to events in the Buddha's life. Yet, while many scholars have examined the effects of these events, none among them, including Pandy, has examined the events themselves. No scholar to the

author's knowledge has identified what is in some ways a striking similarity between the story of the Buddha and the story of Brave New World, which is what the current work strives to highlight.

Contemporary Huxley criticism has somewhat shifted away from religious and mystical discussions altogether. Thorough examinations of Christian and Shakespearean elements, of psychedelic drugs and mystical experience, of non-attachment and otherness, and of Brave New World's position in the utopian tradition have all supplanted discussions of Eastern spirituality overall. The reason could potentially be that, while Huxley's examiners could not but notice the distinctly Hinduistic and Buddhist elements of his fiction, it was difficult to know exactly how they interacted with the narrative of Brave New World without taking into account the story of Siddhartha Gautama.

Mysticism in Huxley need not be discussed much further, for while this element of Brave New World criticism has given rise to a great deal of insightful commentary, it is true that "any definition of mysticism involves us in as many difficulties as it gets us out of" (Enroth 124). As such, mysticism has laid the foundation for a colourful and vibrant debate about Huxley's intentions and the disparate experiential influences behind his utopian/dystopian novels. In the end, however, that debate is incomplete, for "In the novel, the only two choices are the brave new world and the savage reservation; man has the choice, Huxley says in his preface, between insanity on the one hand and lunacy on the other. But Huxley hints at a third alternative" (Enroth 130). That alternative, when a discussion of the essentials of Buddhism, rather than one of the vast array of definitions

of mysticism and Eastern spirituality, is undertaken, could comfortably be called the Middle Way.

It is interesting to examine references to Buddhism in Huxley's non-fiction – his essays and letters primarily – for there is certainly a strong influence that Huxley addresses directly. To cite such references as conclusive, however, would be desperately flawed, for Huxley, as a 'man of letters', a devoted lifelong scholar, and a man of great philosophical exploration, refers, in varied and plentiful instances, to virtually every religion and system of belief known to man. It is, then, little more than an exercise in investigator's bias to draw conclusions about the influence of Buddhism on Brave New World via Huxley's extensive personal writings; to extract anything of meaning it is rather necessary to focus on the novel itself. The importance of the Buddha to Huxley's personal philosophy is clear; the importance of the Buddha to the conceit of Brave New World, it will be revealed, is also most certainly worthy of examination.

Chapter One: Huxley's Buddhist Basics

Huxley's interest in the spirituality and mysticism of the Far East in general and Buddhism in particular are well-documented. That this "devotee of Oriental mysticism" (Meckier 166) relies on the teachings and stories of the Buddha as a source for much of his work is evident covertly in several of his early novels, and can be seen quite clearly in his last novel, 1962's Island¹. The point at which this influence shifts from implicit to explicit is 1932's Brave New World, however, and as such, the influence of Buddhism on Huxley's famous dystopia is also the most pronounced in his canon. Given that Huxley was not a practising Buddhist, and that he was more interested in the philosophies upon which Buddhism is founded and the many legends of the Buddha's life rather than the day-to-day manner in which those philosophies are implemented, my emphasis in this thesis is on Buddhism's general principles and primary narratives.

To attempt to survey the entirety of a spirituality adhered to by the citizens of dozens of countries and spanning well over two millennia is obviously beyond the scope of this study. Huxley's attraction to Buddhism stems from an appreciation that "it is not a religion as much as a spiritual philosophy whose attitude to life is as cool and objective as that of the modern scientist" (Humphreys 9). Such a philosophy would have been particularly appealing for Huxley, whose "descent both on his father's and his mother's side brought down on him a weight of intellectual authority and a momentum of moral obligations" (Bedford 1). Indeed, given his family background as "the grandson. . . of

¹ The influence of Eastern spirituality on Huxley's work – especially his later works such as Island, has been explored extensively and need not be recounted here. In particular, see "Attention!": Aldous Huxley's Epistemological Route to Salvation" by Rederick Connor or Meckier's "Housebreaking Huxley: Saint Versus Satirist".

Thomas Henry Huxley, biologist, man of letters, protagonist of Evolution, one of the most forceful minds England has produced” and “grandson, on his mother’s side, of . . . Rev. Thomas Arnold who kept hopping from one religion to another” (Bedford 18), an interest in Buddhism seems almost an inevitability for Huxley². The pool from which Huxley draws much of his material consists of the various stories of Siddhartha Gautama’s life, the myths and legends surrounding that life, and those ideals and philosophies which are the most widely accepted and relied upon by disparate groups of Buddhists. It is these fundamentals, then, that will be the present focus.

One of the reasons that Buddhism commands such fascination for both practitioners and outside observers, Huxley included, is that in its most basic precepts and fundamental ideals, it is unique, even from its precursor, Hinduism³. The Buddha based his teachings on his own observations of the world and those of others. Appeals to faith, dogma, and ineffability are all but nonexistent⁴. The Buddhist makes no assumptions and no great logical leaps, for “Whatever Reality may be, it is beyond the conception of the finite intellect; it follows that attempts at description are misleading, unprofitable, and [a] waste of time” (Humphreys 79). For the Buddhist, there is no requirement to believe in an omnipotent, personal God, or in such an abstract construction as the soul. This is not

² Huxley’s ancestry is remarkable. In addition to having such noteworthy grandfathers, Aldous was also the great-grandson of “that eminent Victorian, Dr Arnold of Rugby, educational reformer, creator of generations of Christian gentlemen. . . great-nephew of Matthew Arnold (poet and educator); the nephew of the . . . novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward” (Bedford 18-19) and son to Mrs. Julia Arnold, who herself founded a school.

³ While Hinduism and Buddhism share many beliefs and traditions, Buddhism differs in several fundamental ways, primary among which are the denial of the Hindu focus on worshipping divine beings and the insistence that the soul does not exist.

⁴ For further explanation, see the Dalai Lama’s The Four Noble Truths in which he explains that, not only should individuals select whatever spiritual path is most appropriate to themselves (Buddhist or otherwise), but also that no one should accept that the Buddha’s teachings are true without scrutinizing them logically. In Buddhism, something that is neither observable nor in keeping with rules of logic can hold no claim to truth, and therefore has no reason to be believed. These and other precepts make Buddhism conventional as a moral philosophy, but radical as a religion.

to say that Buddhism is strictly atheistic or even agnostic, but it proceeds from the premise that since there is no proof of these things, and they cannot be observed, even if they do exist, we certainly cannot have anything meaningful to say about them, and therefore there is little to be gained from discussing them at all.

Confusion also arises, for those more familiar with western traditions, surrounding the nature of the Buddha himself, Siddhartha Gautama. While it is often assumed that the Buddha plays a very similar role to that of Jesus Christ, as the divine One sent to Earth in order to teach human beings about the way of God, this is most decidedly not the case. While Siddhartha is revered for his teachings, he is not intended to be worshipped, nor is he divine, nor, even, is he unique. The term 'Buddha' does not denote a specific individual, but rather, defines a state of being. It is "a state of spiritual perfection" which, "though of great rarity, is not a single occurrence; it is like the flower of the *Udumbara*, which blossoms once every three thousand years. Not only were there Buddhas in the very distant past, there is the implicit promise of a Buddha in the future" (Karetzky 3). This is part of what gives Buddhism its unique tenor; because Siddhartha was never believed to be a divine being, none of his teachings or words were assumed either to hold an inherent truth or to have been derived from a supernatural or divine source. Rather, they were to be scrutinized and accepted or rejected on their own merits alone.

The dual notion of Karma and rebirth is one upon which all Indian thought systems rely, and Buddhism is certainly no exception. Karma and rebirth are fundamental to the implementation and maintenance of the Indian caste system, which plays a profound role in both the Hindu and Brahministic philosophies, and they also

provide an ultimate goal for the Buddhist, if there must be one: right behavior will result in a rebirth into a higher caste, and eventually, after many lifetimes, will come a release from the cycle of rebirth altogether with the attainment of Nirvana. Of course, to strive for and desire the release of Nirvana is intrinsically contrary to the tenets of the Buddha, and therefore contrary to the accumulation of positive Karma, given that any desire, even the desire for positive things (or even the desire to be rid of desire), is to be avoided, but such is the goal nonetheless. This entire metaphysical system is by no means the claim of Buddhism alone; it is, in fact, founded upon a decidedly Hindu approach to the transmigration of souls. The most important difference for the Buddhist, however, is that there is no continuing ego: the notion of ‘self’, where one is conceded at all, merely refers to the particular combination, disintegrated at death, of the five aggregates (form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*sanna*), volitions/habits (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*vinnana*)) of which a person consists for the duration of a single lifetime (Jones 33). Because these combinations of aggregates cannot, for the Buddhist, be meaningfully distinguished from the rest of the matter which surrounds them, human beings are considered parts of a greater whole rather than individuals, rendering any discussion of ‘self’ essentially counterproductive. The Buddha’s teaching of *anatta*, or ‘no soul’, is a hotly debated one, but one which still underlies most Buddhist teaching and practice in one form or another. *Anatta* is the starting point for much of the Buddhist world view, an outlook which eventually works to eliminate all ideas of a soul, a self, desire, and the entire notion of the individual as a distinct, self-conscious entity.

The Buddhist philosophy is an holistic one to the point where it could comfortably be termed monistic. For the Buddhist, “all forms of life, being

manifestations of one life, are interrelated in a complex web beyond our full conceiving” (Humphreys 18). The notion of an interconnectedness among all things is essential to all Buddhist philosophies: the Buddhist does not pray to an overseeing creator because there can be no otherness when all is one; the Buddhist spends a great deal of time in meditation because he or she is never alone, never distinct; one’s personal happiness and desires are unimportant because they are minute in terms of the whole.

A discussion of Buddhism can hardly be meaningful without a solid foundation in the Four Noble Truths. The precepts of the Buddhist can be distilled in several different manners, but the Four Noble Truths are the most all-encompassing and important of such distillations. What is important to realize about these principles is that “Gotama’s teaching does not depend on faith in a divine being or on the performance of sacrificial rituals or on prayers for divine grace and favour; it claims to be the truth – hence the ‘Four Noble Truths’” (Jones 122). This is an unremarkable claim – most religious texts include some appeal to truth and irrefutability. The words of the Buddha, however, follow the rules of logic almost without exception. His teachings are outlined in such a manner as to stand up logically even stripped of all spiritual overtones. In fact, it is said that Siddhartha “followed the physician’s method of treating patients, prescribing the therapy that best cures the disease” (Mizuno 152). This is why these precepts may comfortably be referred to as “truths”. They may be termed “noble” not only because “they are morally and spiritually fruitful,” but also because “it takes a noble person, a person of courage, honesty, and insight, to realize them” (Mitchell 46).

At their simplest, the Four Noble Truths are the Truth of Suffering, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Truth of Cessation, and the Truth of the Path. The Four

Noble Truths are primarily concerned with *dukkha*. *Dukkha* has been translated from its original Sanskrit as ‘craving’, ‘disease’, ‘unhappiness’, and a variety of other English terms, but in its most widely accepted translation it becomes ‘suffering’. The importance of the prevalence and understanding of *dukkha* for the Buddhist can hardly be overstated. Indeed, in some ways, Buddhism’s “root focus is on the down-to-earth fact that all existence, including human existence, is imperfect in a very deep way” (Snelling 43). Such an ideal does not give rise to as pessimistic a world view as one would expect, however. On the contrary, the Buddha believed that focusing on the melancholy and miserable aspects of human existence to the exclusion of its positive ones was very harmful. Likewise, though, his slightly less typical contention was that focusing only on the positive while ignoring certain negative undertones was just as destructive. Thus, Siddhartha taught The Middle Way, in essence an objective world view through which one recognizes both the joyous and the painful and the extent to which each permeates existence until, no longer tainted with an excess of either, the Buddhist may “begin to appreciate the full grandeur and challenge of human existence” (Snelling 44).

Siddhartha Gautama makes no attempt to present *dukkha* as an ineffable or difficult notion. The First Truth, the Truth of Suffering, is, at its simplest, a mere acknowledgement that suffering exists, and that it “touches everything” (Snelling 43), but “*Dukkha* is not an abstract idea; every person has his or her personal *dukkha*” (Mitchell 48). The overarching source of *dukkha* is “an attachment to ideas, views, theories, or beliefs. This kind of attachment produces dogmatism, prejudice, and intolerance” (Mitchell 49), all of which run contrary to the ideals of the Buddhist.

In the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, Siddhartha, working within the confines of the oral tradition, presents most of his major ideas in succinct, numerical lists, and outlines eight sources for suffering, four primary and four secondary. The four primary sources of suffering are birth, illness, old age, and death, while the four secondary sources are slightly more mundane and intuitive: contact with what we hate, separation from what we love, unattained aims, and the suffering inherent to an attachment to the five aggregates and sensual, worldly things (Mizuno 155). These sources are, again, logical and self-explanatory with the possible exception of the suffering arising from birth, but for a Buddhist, or one of any Indian spirituality, birth represents a failure of sorts, because implicit in birth is the realization that nirvana has not been attained, and so another lifetime must be spent working to accumulate Karma.

The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering and the Truth of the Path, for understanding Siddhartha Gautama and Buddhism itself, are imperative. Through the Truth of Cessation the Buddha offers hope, simply stating that there can be an end to *dukkha*, and in the Truth of the Path, he offers guidance, suggesting that he can reveal the path that one must take to end suffering. That there can be an end to craving and suffering is a concept which should not be taken too lightly, for not only is it not a notion that is common to all religions, but it also arises at a time when the Brahmanic religious leaders from whom Siddhartha received his initial teaching believed that suffering was to be sought out and embraced in the harshest of ascetic traditions rather than avoided. As we will discover, the Buddha, while he found that no spiritual ground was to be gained by simply doing nothing, neither did he find that extreme asceticism was the proper route to

enlightenment. The answer, he preached, was somewhere in between the two extremes – again, the Middle Way.

The next topic addressed in Siddhartha's first sermon outlined that Way more clearly and succinctly in the form of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is simply the means by which the disease identified in the Four Noble Truths may be eradicated. In keeping with the medical framework that is included in much Buddhist practice, the Path treats the symptoms of disease, but "since the body and the mind are organically related, good health, in this case nirvana, cannot be achieved unless improvement is both physical and mental" (Mizuno 158). More specifically, the Path purports to rid its follower of desire, but also of the root causes of that desire in order to avoid its recurrence. It is also of note that, while the eight practices of the Buddhist are divided quite reasonably and succinctly, primarily for ease of teaching and memorization, "they are an organic whole and have no existence in isolation from one another" (Mizuno 159). These practices are not steps in a spiritual progression; they must be worked on simultaneously and diligently, for to succeed only partially is, in pure Buddhism, to fail.

The Noble Eightfold Path, like most Buddhist tenets, is not an abstract or divine notion. It is, rather, a reasonable guideline for the average practitioner and the monk alike, "both simple and profound" (Humphreys 109). Just as the Path outlines the four causes of negative behavior that it aims to conquer (desire, hatred, delusion, and fear), it is also said that there are three, graded sources of motivation for following the Path at all. The first is selfish. Quite simply, good behavior contributes to good karma, so it is more profitable to behave rightly. The second is a rational motivation that is born of the logic that, if all is one, then to do evil hurts everything, including oneself, while to do good

benefits all. The third source of inspiration, and the type expected of all Buddhist monks, is motiveless, which upholds virtue as its own reward and sees goodness not just as a means to something else, but as an end in itself (Humphreys 108).

The Noble Eightfold Path is simple and straightforward. It has, unsurprisingly, however, been scrutinized and complicated and subdivided by countless scholars, most of whom divide it into practices related to wisdom, morality, and concentration, but it need not be any more complex than the following: Right View implies a good perspective on life and the world, which starts with a solid understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Right Thought, which precedes action and speech, is just as important because, with training, the mind “becomes increasingly gentle, compassionate, and pure” (Mizuno 159). Right Speech and Right Action arise from Right Thought, and in the negative, they imply refraining from lies, foul language, slander and frivolous speech, murder, theft, and adultery respectively. This may seem akin to Christian doctrine, but the emphasis is very much on the positive: using speech in positive ways out of true love and acting generously and protectively toward all life. Right Livelihood is indeed concerned with entering into a positive profession, and one that does more good than harm, but it may also be extended to include our daily routines and habits, which should be diligent, regular, and balanced in order for us to improve ourselves and others. Right Effort is necessary in order for any real progress to be made, and this part of the Eightfold Path is often applied to the other seven parts. Right Mindfulness implores that one never forgets the goal of the Cessation of Suffering, and maintains awareness of impermanence, suffering, non-self, and the Buddha’s other teachings. Finally, Right Concentration is generally an extension of Right Mindfulness, but refers more specifically to the four

dhyanas, or states of meditation (Mizuno 159-60). The path to enlightenment is further divided and subdivided into many specific steps and aims, but the Noble Eightfold Path outlines the general structure of Buddhist practice, and is one of the fundamental elements with which Huxley appears to be working in Brave New World.

All of the major precepts and philosophies of Buddhism appear to be within Huxley's scope, but in Brave New World it is clear that the central Buddhistic focus, and the source of much of Huxley's satire, is taken from the actual legends of Siddhartha's life. It is not known precisely when Siddhartha lived, and his actual teachings, the exact route covered by his wanderings, and other certainties about his life do not exist. Texts about Siddhartha and Buddhism do not appear until centuries after his death, now approximated to be somewhere between 486 and 360 BCE (Strong 1), and while most of the major events in Siddhartha's life are more or less universally accepted, there is naturally some debate surrounding lesser events and, as with the Bible, disparate translations of the major Buddhist texts give rise to disparate interpretations of Siddhartha's words and intentions. The general outline of the Buddha's life myth, however, is widely accepted, and thus its truth, or lack thereof, is of little consequence, first because

It would be impossible to disentangle the purely historical events from their fantastic and miraculous embroidery, but it would in any case be an exercise of little value; the essential features of the Buddha's life and teaching are quite clear, and of the rest, if many incidents did not happen as reported, they might as well have done, such is their symbolic quality. (Saddhatissa 9)

Even more important, though, is that the standard compendium of Buddha stories is clearly that with which Huxley was most familiar and drew from extensively, and so is that which is most relevant to this study.

The birth of Siddhartha Gautama is extremely important, not just because it signifies the return of a Buddha to Earth, but also because a great deal of what will transpire over the course of Siddhartha's life, and what he will teach, is decided or prognosticated immediately following. Siddhartha, which is usually translated as 'wish fulfilled,' was born into the Sakya Kingdom, a small but prosperous community near the border between modern day India and Nepal (Saddhatissa 7). He was born to the ruler of the kingdom, King Suddhodana, and his wife, Queen Maya (sometimes Mahayama)⁵, and what occurs immediately following the birth of Siddhartha is considered to be just as important as the birth itself to the Buddhist canon. Immediately following his birth, Siddhartha takes seven steps North (in later traditions, his steps are taken in all four directions), surveys the four directions, and makes a proclamation, which generally announces his own destiny as a Buddha, although the words themselves differ widely from source to source; some give his words heavy religious overtones, announcing him to be "supreme in the world" (Strong 40) among other things, but this tone is not universal. The Buddha is then examined by a Brahmin sage who, upon discovering and

⁵ The pregnancy and birth themselves are sometimes given heavy divine overtones, with Siddhartha living in a sort of temple and preaching to other deities while inside Maya and the Earth quaking and a wave of miracles occurring at the moment of his birth, but these tend to be inconsistent and exaggerated. Several elements of the birth myth are common to most sources, however, and are well-compended by John S. Strong in The Buddha:

He dwells in her womb for exactly ten lunar months, during which time he remains calm, alert, perfectly formed in body, and unsullied by any pollution. . . At the end of this period, she gives birth while standing up holding on to the branch of a tree. The birth is painless. The Buddha is not born vaginally but emerges from his mother's side. (38)

Maya's right flank is also the point at which the Buddha enters Maya, conceived immaculately, the description of which almost always refers to him descending either on a white elephant or as a white elephant (Karetzky 15).

interpreting the baby's thirty-two physical signs of greatness, weeps and proclaims that he is destined for one of two possible fates: he will either remain at home and become the greatest leader his kingdom and the world have ever known, or he will wander into the world and become the next Buddha⁶. This dual predestination, which is common to most early Buddhist texts, is of great importance, for, while in some sources the wisest Brahmin rejects the notion of there being a second possible destiny for Siddhartha, insisting instead that his fate is to be the next Buddha, it seems clear that, as will be explored later in more depth, Huxley embraces the idea of a two-pronged existence and expresses it through the duality of the harsh life of the Savage Reservation and the seemingly free, sheltered, and painless existence enjoyed by the 'civilized' citizens of the World State.

Maya dies seven days after Siddhartha's birth, and her sister assumes responsibility, although his upbringing is generally credited to a team of nurses and attendants (Strong 41). It is Gautama's father, then, who decides how he should be raised, which is essential to the narrative of the Buddha's life because his father definitely preferred that his son become a great ruler rather than a Buddha. In fact, he "feared the prophesy of his son's leaving home to be a religious and tried in various ways to keep him home. Consequently, he had palaces constructed for each season" (Karetzky 39). Also, because a further prophecy declared that Siddhartha's transformation into a Buddha would be precipitated by an encounter with the Four Sights - disease, old age, death and asceticism - King Suddhodana took great pains to prevent his son's exposure to any of

⁶ This choice, it should be noted, does bear some resemblance to that offered Huxley's Mustapha Mond who, upon being found doing a "bit of real science" in his youth was "on the point of being sent to an island" (206) when he was offered the choice between being sent to a quite pleasant island on which he could continue his studies in peace and going on to become a societal leader as a World Controller. He, of course, chose the latter.

these unpleasant or upsetting phenomena. He had each palace carefully guarded, and surrounded Siddhartha with young, vibrant, healthy companions. Religious persons, the ill and the elderly were all banned, and “any mention of illness, old age, death or monasticism was strictly forbidden. Even fading flowers and leaves were removed from gardens and pleasure parks so that the prince should not see anything that might suggest decay and death” (Saddhatissa 16). The young Buddha was eventually married, although sources are disparate on both the timeframe for his marriage and its relative importance. The marriage is sometimes described as a love match, but sometimes merely as another device employed by Siddhartha’s father to maintain the boy’s sheltered existence. Regardless, Siddhartha was given an ideal life. Despite this,

like other lads of less exalted rank, Gautama had an insatiable curiosity. For four years he had been wondering what lay beyond the palace and the park, and at last, when he reached the age of twenty, he resolved to escape the vigilance of the attendants and to find out for himself whether all life were such as he knew.

(Baynes 24)

What is brought to pass as a result of this restlessness provides us with our primary link between the story of the Buddha and the story of the brave new world to the extent that two of the protagonists in Brave New World exhibit a similar desire to move beyond the confines of their pleasure-filled world.

Near Siddhartha’s twenty-ninth birthday, with his wife, Yasodhara, expecting a child, the restlessness and yearning for exploration that had been evident for years culminate in a voyage beyond the prince’s palaces. The Buddha convinces a

servant, Channa, to take him for a drive through the countryside. It is on this trip⁷ that Siddhartha encounters the Four Sights: Siddhartha encounters an old man, a sick man, the specter of death (either in the form of the corpse of a dog on the road or a funeral procession that the chariot passes), and an ascetic, a wandering monk with a shaved head and yellow robe. The prince, having neither encountered nor heard tell of such things, asks for explanation from Channa, and is deeply distraught, but in the monk he sees some sort of hope. He returns to the palace,

deeply pondering, and, that night, while his pleasure girls lay sleeping in unbecoming postures at his feet, he revolted from sensual pleasures, and at the same time the flame of compassion awoke within him. Not for the first time, but now with overpowering effect, he felt the positive call to save not only himself but all mankind from birth in the world of suffering. (Humphreys 31)

It is almost immediately after bearing witness to the Four Sights that Siddhartha renounces his life of leisure and pleasure and ventures out into the world.

Another story in the Buddha's myth, which, although not as important as that of the Four Sights, still has some relevance, is that of the First Meditation at a ploughing festival. The ploughing festival is a symbolic turning of the earth by the king and his royal court to announce the opening of the ploughing season. The reason for the meditation, which occurs more or less spontaneously, is "said to stem from his observations at the festival. Seeing the laboring oxen, the sweating men, and the insects and worms which are turned up by the ploughs and quickly devoured by the birds, he

⁷ Sometimes the trip is divided into four short trips, with each of the Sights being encountered singly, but the essential elements are always the same.

realizes that what is supposed to be pleasant. . . is actually filled with suffering” (Strong 46). Upon looking more carefully, Siddhartha discovers an entire chain of suffering:

the worms uncovered by the plough are snapped up by a frog which is then swallowed by a snake, which is eaten by a peacock, which is killed by a hawk, which, in turn, is devoured by an eagle. More precisely, however, it should be noted that all this suffering is brought on not just by men ploughing but by the *king* ploughing at a festival which is a royal ritual meant to reassert his sovereignty. (Strong 47)

While the First Meditation is not always afforded the same importance as other events in Siddhartha’s life, it is relevant because it represents an early discovery not only of suffering, but also of suffering that was unnecessary and avoidable.

In all accounts, the morning after seeing the Four Sights, Siddhartha finds his formerly beautiful attendants wanton and repulsive, and decides to leave his palace. Suddhodana attempts to change his son’s mind, but, unable to guarantee him a life without suffering, he eventually concedes and gives Siddhartha his blessing to leave behind his palace, his wife, and his newborn son, upon whom he has not lain eyes and considers merely another unwanted tie to his old life.

The first acts of Siddhartha, upon leaving his palace, are “to take off his princely jewels, to cut his hair with his own sword, and then to exchange his princely clothes for the robes of a monk” (Strong 60). The prince then goes forth into the forest and begins his wandering life. He eventually attaches himself, as was the common practice among monks, to two teachers, Alara and Udraka, who teach him that the soul can be purified and salvation can be attained by various ritual and sacrificial means. However, even after

he performs all their doctrines, Siddhartha is still unable to find peace, so he leaves them in search of more skilled mentors (Baynes 25). He joins with five other truth-seekers, one of whom, Kondanna, was one of the Brahmins to have made the great prognostication upon the event of the prince's birth. These five monks will later become the first Buddhist disciples. The group attaches itself to two more gurus in turn, with the Buddha absorbing all that he can from them before exhausting their spiritual resources and moving on. Their attachment to an ascetic follows, and Siddhartha initially embraces the long-standing practice of asceticism:

Mortification of the body has been practiced by many people in many places as a spiritual discipline, and this was the procedure that Gautama, along with his companions, now decided to follow. He began by eating less. At first he restricted himself to one meal a day, then gradually it became a meal every two days, then every three. He no longer begged but fed himself on a rude diet of fruit, roots and the leaves of certain plants. . . He began to suffer terrible pain and hunger. (Saddhatissa 31)

From starvation, Siddhartha's self-mortification advances to self-inflicted pain, forbidding all pleasure, even pleasurable thoughts, to the exclusion of suffering and slow torture. After six years of this regimen, Siddhartha collapses and is nursed back to health by a shepherd.

Having, at great expense to his health and at the cost of six years, grown no closer to enlightenment, Siddhartha renounces the ways of asceticism, and, shunned by his five companions as a result, goes off to find his own path (Saddhatissa 32). The prince settles under what is called the Bodhi tree ("tree of awakening") to meditate (Mitchell 17).

While the meditation and subsequent attainment of ultimate enlightenment under the Bodhi tree is more or less a universally accepted part of the story, what happens under the tree and how long Siddhartha remains there are very much in dispute. The offering of a special bowl of milk-rice by a young woman named Jataka is sometimes granted great importance as the woman recognizes the bodhisattva's⁸ importance and gives him an offering intended for the gods, a gift which is said in some accounts to contribute to his enlightenment (Strong 68). In other versions, the prince simply determines that he shall not move until he has attained enlightenment, which he is granted after a long meditation (most often seven motionless days), but in still others, Siddhartha faces arduous trials while under the tree, including the sending by Mara, the evil one, of his three daughters, Discontent, Delight, and Desire, to tempt him away from his path (Mitchell 18).

Regardless of how his meditation is described, however, the result is always the same: Siddhartha arises from his meditation as a fully enlightened one, a Buddha, and thus one who will escape the cycle of rebirth. The Buddha has been awakened to the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and the fundamentals of what will become Buddhism.

The Buddha next ventures out to teach the knowledge that has come to him, to spread the word of his doctrine, the Dharma, and to establish a school of followers, the Sangha, which, along with the Buddha himself, make up the figurehead of the Three Jewels in which every Buddhist must take refuge to become such. First, however, the Buddha remains near the Bodhi tree for seven weeks, coming to grips with his recent enlightenment and meditating on how best to begin his teaching life (Strong 79-82). After this period, he seeks and finds his five former companions, and delivers to them the First Sermon:

⁸ A bodhisattva is an unenlightened one who will, but has not yet, become a Buddha.

There, in the Deer Park of Isipatana. . . [o]n the night of the Full Moon of July he preached to them his First Sermon of ‘Setting in Motion the Wheel of Righteousness’. He spoke of the two extremes of sensuality and mortification, and of the Middle Way. . . he taught the Four Noble Truths. . . and of the Eightfold Path which leads to the end of suffering. (Humphreys 34)

The brightest of the five monks immediately understands the truth and importance of Siddhartha’s words, and is ordained as the first Buddhist monk. The four others follow, forming the foundation of Buddhism’s Sangha, or community (Mitchell 21). It is at this point in the Buddha’s lore that the shift in emphasis from the formative and mythical events in his life to his actual teachings takes place.

The development and growth of the Sangha, and the eventual divisions and codes of conduct that shape it, are well-documented and extensive. The Buddha converts thousands in his lifetime, including many privileged, disillusioned young men, but also many orthodox monks and Brahmins of established Indian traditions (Strong 89). The Buddha eventually returns home, is able to convert his father, and meets his son, Rahula, now eleven years old, for the first time. This event is treated rather casually, and seems to exist as simply another opportunity to teach a young man about the Middle Way (Saddhatissa 73-5). Failed by several monks who variously assist him during his early years of wandering, Siddhartha decides to take on a devoted, longtime friend of his, Ananda, as a lifelong personal servant, advisor, and assistant (Saddhatissa 78). Ananda figures prominently in many Buddhist texts, and is instrumental in the formation of the order of Buddhist nuns⁹. The Buddhist order continues to grow remarkably in number

⁹ . The decidedly early acceptance of women into the order of the Buddha is in keeping with the Buddha’s principle of acceptance generally, as he accepts disciples from all castes, even Untouchables (Saddhatissa

and diversity during Siddhartha's twenty years of wandering, and due in part to varying interpretations of the Buddha's teachings and schisms between members, different Buddhist sects begin to arise.

Much of the early Buddhist literature reads remarkably like doctrine, even decidedly resembling the biblical commandments at times, and as a result, varied interpretations of such texts give rise to various schools of Buddhism. The categorization and major precepts of the different Buddhist schools is an enormous subject matter and is as varied as the religions that find their foundations in the Bible. As with the latter, though, certain ideals and fundamentals can be said to be more or less universal among Buddhists, and it is these with which Huxley works. Because Buddhism is essentially non-dogmatic, certain principles can be said to form a pool of fundamentals that contain the essence of Buddhism. These same principles are those that are at the centre of Brave New World, as will become evident in subsequent chapters.

The notions of Karma and rebirth, the impermanence of all things, the absence of soul, the holistic nature of the universe, and the Four Noble Truths form the bases of Buddhist thought, but the fundamental beliefs springing from such primary ideas are nearly as important, and are well-summarized by Christmas Humphreys in Buddhism:

1. Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom.

64), remarkable given the social climate in India at the time, and even at present. The acceptance of women should not be given undue reverence, though, as it is not only hard-won, but also, regarding establishment of the first order of nuns, "in the process the Buddha hobbles it with additional rules and regulations" (Strong 93), primary among which is the dictum that "a nun even of a hundred years' standing shall (first) salute a monk and rise up before him, even if he is only just ordained" (Thomas 108).

2. The Universe was evolved, not created; and it functions according to law, not according to the caprice of any God
3. The truths upon which Buddhism is founded are natural. . .
5. Ignorance produces desire. . . the cause of sorrow. . .
9. Sakya Muni taught that ignorance can be dispelled and sorrow removed by the knowledge of the four Noble Truths. . .
10. Right Meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man. . .
14. Buddhism discourages superstitious credulity. Gautama Buddha taught it to be the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature. He also taught that no one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book, or affirmed by tradition, unless it accord with reason. (71-3)

The way of the Buddha is the way of reason, acceptance, and kindness. Such elements are present in its fundamental precepts, as well as Buddhist views on religion in general, such as those presented by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in introducing his The Four Noble Truths: “Since we should respect all human beings, we must also respect those who are following different religious paths. . . It is clear that for some people the Christian approach is more effective than the Buddhist one. It depends on the individual’s mental disposition. We must therefore appreciate that potential in each religion, and respect all those who follow them” (3). None of these precepts must be overlooked, for it is in concert that they form the basis for, and provide the source of the satire in, Brave New World.

Two alternative but not contradictory versions of Siddhartha's death are prominent in Buddhist literature. In one, the Buddha grows very ill, and although he gradually recovers with Ananda by his side, he is served "a rich meal that included mushrooms. It was after, and perhaps because of, this meal that the Buddha's sickness returned. This time there was to be no recovery" (Saddhatissa 123). The Buddha then addresses Ananda, telling him to let the law be his teacher after the teacher himself is gone, and then the monks around him, encouraging them to continue to strive for perfection. He then, feverish, "passed through various rapturous stages of meditation until he passed away" (Saddhatissa 124). In the second, more generally accepted, story, Mara (god of the realm of desire and antagonist to Siddhartha) appears to the Buddha at the end of his final journey and implores him to finish his worldly life and enter into Nirvana. Eventually convinced that he has taught enough that the Sangha will be maintained after his death, the Buddha agrees to end his life in three months' time (Strong 132). In the sources which emphasize this aspect of his departure, while the Buddha is still fed a relatively lavish meal, and he still becomes ill, no connection between the two is suggested (Strong 132-3). Regardless of where emphasis is placed, the Buddha dies, the earth quakes, the land mourns, and his body is cremated in accordance with the funereal rites reserved for kings. Interesting here is that the death of the Buddha is not quite the monumental event that one might expect. The Buddha, satisfied with his work and prepared for death, moves on to Nirvana, escaping the cycle of Karma and rebirth, and thus the event is to be rejoiced as much as mourned.

Important elements to be retained from such a brief exploration of Buddhism are those Buddhist ideals most thoroughly manifested and manipulated by Huxley in Brave

New World: common sense and compassion. Above all, these two ideals seem to guide the Buddha's actions and teachings, and indeed, serve to shape virtually all that is Buddhism, because studied "in the formal terms in which it has been recorded by the scriptures, the Buddha's teaching appears dry and forbidding. It comes to life in the stories we have of the Buddha's day-to-day activities as a teacher and leader"

(Saddhatissa 88). Indeed, through the allegories of the Buddha's wanderings, it becomes clear that the Middle Way is exemplified not only in his words, but also his personality, "serene but not remote, compassionate without being sentimental, intellectually subtle yet full of common sense. In his work he exemplified integrity of thought and action"

(Saddhatissa 88). The Buddhist Dharma is undeniably founded upon rationality and simple, undocinated moral soundness. It is, to a large extent, these qualities that appeal to Huxley, and they are particularly interesting when stretched to extremes of practical implication, obeyed and implemented in accordance with their literal meaning but without any of the spirit of the words or the spirit of the Buddha. This is Huxley's experiment, and its result is manifested in the citizens of the Brave New World.

Chapter Two: Buddhism in Huxley's Text

Brave New World is a study in mixed mythologies. The citizens of the World State revere “Our Ford”, a sort of pseudo-god figure formed by a conflation of the legends of Henry Ford and Sigmund Freud, while the inhabitants of the savage reservation retain a polytheistic form of religion that appears to blend elements of Aboriginal spirituality, Voodoo, and Christianity, to which we are introduced by way of a flagellation ceremony “to make the rain come and the corn grow. And to please Pookong and Jesus” (105). The World State, likewise, incorporates some of the mechanics of Christianity into its synthetic spirituality, with citizens blessing themselves by making the sign of the ‘T’ rather than the cross on their chests¹⁰ and revering the “Arch-Community-Songster” (211) rather than the archbishop. Additionally, the words of Shakespeare are treated like Scripture by John, and are invoked on many occasions when he is searching for guidance. As if this were not enough, elements of other religions are also present – John’s asceticism vs. the artificially-induced transcendence offered by *soma*, “Christianity without tears” (217), to name only two. Each of these religions and systems of thought is discussed explicitly throughout the text of Brave New World, and more importantly, each is, in its own way, profoundly unsatisfactory.

Huxley does not mention Buddhism once in Brave New World, even in passing¹¹. What he does do is to make stark the overly harsh and brutal nature of the religion in place on the Savage Reservation, superimposed upon the problems that are prevalent in

¹⁰ In honour of the Ford Model T, of course.

¹¹ In his later works, Eastern spirituality plays an important role for Huxley, and it arguably forms the spiritual foundation for the society depicted in his novel Island (1962).

that society, and the apparent lack of solace that has been afforded by a belief in “Pookong and Jesus” (105). In glaring contrast is the pleasure-centred secular pseudo-religion of the World State. While certain parodic aspects of Christianity are evident, Christian accountability is non-existent because, given the extent of the citizens’ conditioning, free will is virtually non-existent and terms such as ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are accordingly irrelevant, if not meaningless. In John, Huxley provides a character who, like the young Gautama, experiences both extremes, and eventually, chooses between the two, although in a manner far different from the choice Gautama made. John’s initial religious system on the Savage Reservation proves to be wholly unsatisfactory and painful for him, offering no solace for his rejection, and eventually leaving him “all alone, because he had been driven out” (124). Likewise, when John is immersed in the homogeneity and hedonism on offer in the World State, he is repelled and disgusted, and eventually declares, “I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin” (219). John subsequently rejects the ideals of the World State altogether and ventures out to live according to his own beliefs, which leads not to enlightenment, but rather, to his tragic death. The glaring deficiencies of these, the two primary systems of belief presented by Huxley in Brave New World are, no doubt, intended. Those who are privy to a knowledge of both systems, John and Bernard,¹² find fundamental flaws in each, and are unable to find a suitable place for themselves on the Pueblo or as World State citizens. What is missing is not only obvious, it is obvious intentionally. What Huxley fails to present is a happy medium between these extremes. In short, what is missing is the Middle Way.

¹² While both Linda and Lenina experience each way of life in some form, both are so successfully conditioned that neither can be said to have rationally explored the Pueblo spirituality.

Eastern spirituality may not be mentioned explicitly in Brave New World, but it might as well be – it is subtextually evident throughout. Huxley introduces such a subtext immediately by way of the World State’s caste system. Not only is there a caste system in place, the mere suggestion of which cannot but point to that of India, but that system includes five castes, which correspond comfortably to the five castes in place in India:

Alpha – Brahmans (priests and teachers)
 Beta – Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors)
 Delta – Vaishyas (merchants and traders)
 Gamma – Sudras (workers and peasants)
 Epsilon – Harijans (‘Untouchables’)

In these systems, an individual’s identity, vocation, and conditioning are directly linked to the caste he or she is born into, and one is expected, if not required, to fraternize only with those who are of the same caste. In Brave New World, as in India, the caste system is explicitly a device for social control. In glorifying the social advances achieved by the World State, Mustapha Mond upholds the iceberg model, with “eight-ninths” of the population below water, as an ideal one as far as social stability is concerned (204). Huxley puts a caste system in place in Brave New World for many reasons, certainly, but also, by implementing an idea that is so fundamental to the notion of karma and rebirth, there is a distinct possibility that this is the author’s first hint at the importance of Buddhism in the novel. This is particularly interesting because, despite the seemingly apparent connection between Huxley’s created caste system and that of India (with whose customs he was undeniably familiar), it is a connection that has been almost completely overlooked by critics. Indeed, many scholars have commented on the “topicality of satire, well illustrated in Huxley’s novel by the caste system that is obviously a satiric commentary on the English class system” (Posner 11). The rigid five-caste system of

Brave New World can hardly be more “obviously” related to a (comparatively) flexible English class system than to the far more rigid five-caste system of India. This more precise parallel has been overlooked, however, which is one of the primary reasons the true nature of the influence of Eastern spirituality on Huxley tends to go unnoticed.

Although Huxley incorporates into the World State a social hierarchy that seems related to the social structure of Eastern civilization, he most certainly is not depicting a Buddhistic society. Rather than the philosophic, inquisitive, probing manner in which Buddhists are expected and encouraged to go through life, the World State citizens’ desire for knowledge and understanding is suppressed and masked both by pressures to adhere to social decorum as well as by the overwhelmingly distracting diversions so carefully put in place by the Controllers, such as the feelies, soma, and expectations of constant activity. Citizens are given vocations, are made to feel that they possess knowledge and skill, and told that they have a good general idea of how their world works; in reality they are given “as little of one, if they were to be good and happy members of society, as possible” (2). In direct contrast to the Buddhist ideal that in order to become enlightened and have a good, successful life, one must constantly examine the things around him or her and evaluate them based on their own merits, the suppression of intellectual autonomy is deeply ingrained in the World State citizens, for “not philosophers, but fret-sawyers¹³ and stamp collectors compose the backbone of society” (2). Huxley, introduces elements to Brave New World that closely tie it to the life of Siddhartha Gautama and the fundamentals of the Buddhist philosophy, but the World State society most decidedly runs opposite to the spirit of those ideals, more closely

¹³ Carpenters who worked with a pre-electric type of scroll saw, popular in the late 19th Century, called the fret saw.

resembling the palace of Siddhartha's youth than an ideal, free society. This will prove to be true of nearly all of the Buddhist elements he explores.

Another striking connection between Brave New World and Buddhism, and another that has gone essentially unnoticed, is Huxley's use of the term *soma* to describe the ultimate drug and pacifying device for social control carefully researched and developed by the World State. The term *soma* in fact refers to the "plant, or the intoxicating juice of the plant, used in ancient Indian religious ceremonies. Inevitably, given the Indian tradition, the plant and its juice were personified as a god, Soma" (Pierce). Referred to in the Rig Veda, the actual plant that was used to make *soma* is unknown, but what is apparent is that Huxley is invoking another element of Eastern spirituality in his choice of terms, just as he does in Island, in which he refers to the intoxicating substance in use on the island as "moksha medicine," *moksha* being a Sanskrit term meaning "liberation," but Huxley's use of the term *soma* has further particular implications that provide additional interesting parallels.

Soma use is tied to the upper castes of India, particularly to the Kshatriya (warrior) caste into which Siddhartha himself was born. This is significant because, of course, the young Buddha in essence rejected this background, and rejected in particular the all-too-effortless, anesthetized existence on offer in his pleasure palaces, where intoxication was the rule. This seems suggestive of John's own attempt, albeit a decidedly fruitless one, to free the World State citizens from their own anesthetizing intoxication. John seizes the Delta workers' *soma* ration, shouting "I come to bring you freedom" (193). Not unlike the Buddha in his early attempts, however, John is met with great resistance and his cry quickly becomes "I'll *make* you be free whether you want to

or not” (194). That the Buddha as well as Huxley’s pseudo-Buddha figure reject similar elements of these disparate cultures is not of great significance – but that those similar elements share the exact same term – that they are both called *soma* – makes a strong case for the existence of a relationship between Brave New World and Eastern religion.

The World in which Bernard Marx and John the Savage find themselves has many similarities to that encountered by the Buddha as a young man. In each, citizens are chained to the “unescapable social destiny” (13) laid out by the caste system, and the rigid, unquestioned adherence to the status quo which eventually led Siddhartha to frustration and exploration is a definite element in Huxley’s society, in which “the secret of happiness and virtue” is identified as “liking what you’ve *got* to do” (13). Like the apparently ridiculous but socially accepted practices of the Brahmin priests that the Buddha eventually rebels against, in favour of a more logical approach to spirituality, Huxley’s World Controllers deeply ingrain, in all of their citizens, a “Moral education, which ought never, in any circumstances, to be rational” (23). Through the discussions of the mechanics and principles through which their society operates, all of the World State’s leaders, from the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning to Mustapha Mond, present, very early in Brave New World, a social system which, although apparently perfected, the reader soon sees is rife with problems. Collectively, these problems appear strikingly similar to the problems faced by Siddhartha Gautama. Mortal life’s fundamental flaw for the Buddhist is that it is filled with a pervasive suffering. Suffering and desire touch and sully all aspects of life, and are the source and target of the Buddha’s journey and teachings. The primary sources of suffering for the Buddhist (birth, death, disease, and old age), are also identified as fundamental sources of suffering

by Mond, who sees that suffering as being the fault of our notion of the family: “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” (32). Mond refers to this suffering, however, as something that has been overcome by careful planning and the provision of “The primal and the ultimate need. Stability” (38). The World State Controllers have essentially identified the same causes of suffering and instability as the Buddha, but have aimed at eradicating what they believe to be the root of many of them – the family.

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The family is an institution that has at times presented difficult spiritual analyses for Buddhists, and that struggle is most certainly reflected in Brave New World. The role of the family and the *dukkha* inherent in the daily events of the family unit have been hotly contested throughout Buddhism's history. At its most basic, it has been suggested that Buddhism cannot but be anti-familial, simply because birth, one of the Four Sights, and thus one of the primary causes of suffering, is for the most part the inevitable product of the family unit. How, then, can the family, by design a means to produce children, be favoured by the Buddhist? Often accompanying this question is an emphasis on the fact that Siddhartha upheld the life of the wandering and solitary monks and nuns as an ideal. Renunciation, as it is in many religions, was a necessary step for Siddhartha along his path to enlightenment, and one he required of all of his followers. Additionally, the family unit is what causes much of the suffering that accompanies old age, sickness, and death; for when a solitary individual is ill or dies, only the individual suffers; when that individual is beloved by his or her family, that suffering is magnified.

.....

Highlighted further in such analyses is the role of the mother. Despite "Buddhism's early rejection of discrimination on the basis of gender . . . The Buddhist community began to increasingly focus on the difficulty of women achieving self-enlightenment because of their procreative functions" (Peek 2). In true Buddhism, gender equality is assumed, and has been since its very early days, but at a number of points in history, attempts have been made to challenge the role of women. Almost without exception, these challenges are extensions of the above notion – if rebirth is a primary cause of suffering, then the figure of the mother must stand opposed to righteousness, as it is mothers who bring about birth. This notion is understandably a hotly contested one, and is considered by many as completely false, for a variety of reasons, not least of which being the simple fact that birth, while a primary source of suffering, is a necessary one, for enlightenment cannot be attained without a struggle over many lifetimes, necessitating many births¹⁴. Nonetheless, the notion exists, and if interpreted superficially and with a sort of single-minded dementia (as the World State is wont to do), it would stand to reason that, given all of the suffering attributable to (or at least enhanced by) the family and motherhood, simply eliminating, eradicating, and outlawing each of those elements of society might eliminate the accompanying suffering. The fact that this is quite clearly false is irrelevant; the logic employed by the World Controllers in the process of shaping their society follows thus: the family is the source of many emotional problems and much suffering; therefore, eliminate the family. The same is true of a very important part of Buddhism and the most essential event in a human life: birth.

¹⁴ Not to mention the glaring facts that first, without mothers there would be no species to concern itself with spiritualities of any sort, Buddhism or otherwise, and that second, without fathers there would be no mothers.

Despite the existence of a caste system in the Brave New World, the suffering that, in a karmic system of thought, results from being born, has been averted, for despite the “trauma of decanting” (10), nobody is actually ‘born’ in the World State. Likewise, disease, apparently through in-bottle inoculation, has been wiped out, evident in the reactions of horror and disgust that greet the aging and unfit Linda upon her return from the Savage Reservation, looking, as she does, unhealthy. The sight of an unhealthy, diseased, elderly human being has simply been eliminated and disguised to such a degree that the citizens of the World State have never seen one. Death itself has not been conquered by the World Controllers, but just as the Buddha was protected by his father, the citizens have been protected from the fear of death by the Controllers. The stigma attached to death and the suffering that, in our society, it elicits, have been completely removed. Death-conditioning is another part of the socialization process, and one which strips it of all negative overtones, to the point where Henry Foster, passing by the Slough Crematorium and explaining how phosphorous is recovered from the gasses emitted from burning corpses, has only the comment that it is “Fine to think we can go on being socially useful even after we’re dead. Making plants grow” (65). For the World Controllers, after the suffering associated with birth, death, and disease had been removed from society, “It only remained to conquer old age” (48). This feat is accomplished through “Gonadal hormones, transfusion of young blood, magnesium salts. . .” (48), and the Buddha’s four primary sources of suffering and desire no longer seem to exist.

Huxley’s World Controllers, like Siddhartha Gautama, found that suffering permeated every aspect of human life. Their attempt to eliminate this suffering and its

causes cannot really be seen as evil or malicious. It is only in their methods that they fail, for rather than through meditation, positive acts, and enlightenment, the Controllers sought to eliminate suffering through the identification and destruction of those human and social mores and institutions that contributed to it. Also like the Buddha, the Controllers recognized that the primary source of suffering was desire, but in an even more particular manner than had the Buddha, contending that “feeling lurks in that interval of time between desire and its consummation” (38-9). In the brave new world, unsatisfied desire is the greatest threat to society, but all strong feelings tend to lead to some sort of desire, and so strong feelings of any nature are eliminated, primarily by way of societal structures that seem to grant citizens the objects of their desires immediately, such as the “everyone belongs to everyone” attitude towards promiscuity, but also by way of tools (notably soma and distractions such as the feelies) that are used explicitly to dull the emotions and rationality of those citizens and limit their expectations. Where in Buddhism the antidote to strong desire is to transcend that desire, in the brave new world, it is mere capitulation. Rather than working to identify and eliminate the source of strong desire, the World Controllers seek simply to negate its effects, obliterate its source, and sedate its sufferers. The hard-won victories over desire claimed by the Buddhist are supplanted by nothing more than steady doses of suppression, denial and soma. Mindless bliss and a life free from suffering are what the World State offers, the ability to take “a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology” (48), and in many ways, their approach is an absolute success. Rather than the Buddha’s approach, encouraging individuals to study the universe logically and draw their own conclusions, finding their own path to the end of suffering, the citizens of the

World State are afforded no logical reasoning ability, are able to reach only those conclusions which have carefully been reached for them, have only to conform to the norms of society in order to attain the end of suffering, and have given up nothing more than their “freedom to be a round peg in a square hole” (41).

The totalitarian social control and the systematic homogenization of human beings in Brave New World are not without their obvious counterparts in Buddhist myth. Within the heavily guarded gates of young Gautama’s palace, “All that human ingenuity could devise to keep him from knowing the sorrows of the world the anxious father had done. Noble youths and beautiful maidens were his companions, and the sunny hours were spent in music and dancing, archery and song” (Baynes 23). The young prince is surrounded only by the young and ‘pneumatic’, has no exposure to death, disease, or old age, and is constantly presented with new, elaborate entertainments to distract him from any sort of serious contemplation or strong feeling. In the World State, archery has been replaced with obstacle golf and centrifugal bumble-puppy, but their purpose is the same. The World Controllers, like King Soddhana, have attempted to filter all that might be harmful to their citizens and social order out of society. Like Siddhartha’s father, however, the World Controllers, while enormously successful, are not entirely so.

The Buddha eventually seeks out the world beyond his palace’s walls. Likewise, certain individuals in Brave New World grasp at something beyond what is on offer in their society. Siddhartha, despite being daily surrounded by beautiful things and constant distractions, eventually comes to recognize in himself an “insatiable curiosity” (Baynes 23), being “from earliest childhood. . . unusually self-possessed and never satisfied for long with sensual delights” (Humphreys 31). This unidentified longing, and

overwhelming desire to seek out the something more that may or may not exist is certainly echoed in Brave New World – indeed, it is initially exemplified in Bernard Marx’s “sense of being alien and alone” (58), his (given his conditioning) inexplicable desire to explore more difficult and challenging things than society would have him explore, and his decidedly anti-social interest in monogamy. Likewise, this element of objectless longing presents itself later in Helmholtz Watson’s interest in an inexpressible “something else” (60) and his embrace of “the voluntary blindness and deafness of deliberate solitude, the artificial impotence of asceticism” (61). Interestingly, Watson’s individuality, and subsequent unidentified longing is caused, not by being deficient in intellect or stature, but rather by being exceptional. From within the confines of a society founded upon instant gratification, several characters uncoincidentally seek trial – trial for something more important, and indeed, trial for its own sake. Just as the apparently pleasure-filled world of the World State evokes an image of an Edenic existence akin to that of Siddhartha in the palace, so too does the unnamed craving of Huxley’s protagonists echo that of the Buddha.

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify a single figure in Huxley’s society who bears a direct resemblance to Gautama, there are several characters who occupy that role in certain respects. The plotline of Brave New World is concerned with several characters who share one important trait: individuality (and its accompanying self-conscious sensitivity). The World State society is designed in every aspect to crush individuality, through extensive psychological conditioning and augmented biologically in the Bokanovsky Process, the “principle of mass production at last applied to biology”

(5), through which human beings are produced in batches of exact genetic copies¹⁵.

Nonetheless, several individuals emerge. Bernard Marx is set apart from the rest of his Alpha caste because of his short stature and other physical abnormalities, which lead him to set himself apart in other ways as well. Helmholtz Watson, while ideal physically, is also something of an alienated individual, on account of his supreme intellect and ability. Mustapha Mond and John are individuals as well, and provide an interesting contrast to Bernard and Helmholtz because the former are able to explore and experience the society of the World State without actually being directly subject to it. Bernard and Helmholtz, like Siddhartha Gautama, begin to wonder whether or not they are being exposed to all available life experiences. Watson, successful in virtually every aspect of life in the World State, “this admirable committee man and best mixer had realized quite suddenly that sport, women, communal activities were only, so far as he was concerned, second bests. Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what? In what?” (60). This vague sense of longing is mirrored by Bernard’s sense, amidst crowds of peers and innumerable social activities, “of being alien and alone” (58). In a similar situation to that of Gautama, and recognizing for the first time similar longings, Bernard and Helmholtz would take similar action.

Bernard Marx succinctly expresses the distress and confusion surrounding his abhorrent sense of individuality when he says, “I am I, and wish I wasn’t” (57), in stark contrast to the Solidarity Service hymn of “I am you and you are I” (73). This burgeoning individuality, spawned by his social ostracism, comes to be expressed both in a desire for some unnamed other, as well as a desire for solitude. The primary desire for

¹⁵ Sadly, bokanovskification seems to reach its limit at ninety-six exact genetic copies (5)

Watson stems from “a feeling that I’ve got something important to say and the power to say it – only I don’t know what it is, and I can’t make any use of the power” and the notion that he “could do something much more important. Yes, and more intense, more violent” (62). For Siddhartha, this longing could be satisfied only through meditation in solitude, something not attainable in his palace, and likewise, Bernard and Helmholtz seek the “voluntary blindness and deafness of deliberate solitude” (61). The journey towards solitude and some greater understanding begins in Brave New World much as it begins in Buddhist myth. Indeed, many aspects of those eventual journeys are markedly similar. Where they end, however, is extraordinarily different.

Bernard begins to reject the ideals of society and to act upon his reluctance to remain “just a cell in the social body” (81). He does so primarily by rejecting the sexual promiscuity expected of him, and by avoiding soma. Bernard attempts to put off having sex with Lenina Crowne, wishing to spend more time with her first, a notion which confuses, to the point of appalling, one as successfully conditioned as Lenina. These are decidedly small rebellions in contrast to the struggles of Siddhartha Gautama, but there is no denying the similarity between Bernard’s wanting “to try the effect of arresting my impulses” (84) and Siddhartha’s own program of self-deprivation. Bernard is also approximately the same age as was Siddhartha when he set out on his great journey, and the sense of importance Bernard assigns to his newfound quest is no less monumental, as he proposes that “he stood alone embattled against the order of things” (88). Bernard “wondered what it would be like to be subjected to some great trial, some pain, some persecution; he had even longed for affliction” (93), and like the Buddha, he would

receive that trial, when put in a situation that proves to be a retelling of the story of the Four Sights.

Siddhartha Gautama's eventual foray into the unsterilized, uncloaked real world is of monumental importance to the story of the Buddha and to Buddhism itself.

Siddhartha, thus far incredibly sheltered and ignorant of the realities of human existence in all its pathos, has only an inarticulate uneasiness and curiosity as to how the universe actually functions until he reaches the great catharsis as a direct result of his exposure to the Four Sights. This climactic event is treated with no less *gravitas* by Huxley, and it finds its correlative in Bernard's journey to the savage reservation. Having established Bernard's situation in the World State, and having coloured it quite similarly to that of Siddhartha in his father's palaces, with Bernard having been protected from the same aspects of mortal life as had the Buddha, Huxley exposes Bernard, not to similar phenomena to those depicted in the story of the Four Sights, but to *identical* ones. The correlation between the Buddha's journey and Bernard's trip to the savage reservation provides what is perhaps the strongest evidence of the influence of Buddhism on Brave New World.

Like the Buddha, Bernard and Lenina are first introduced, upon arriving at the savage reservation, to the existence of death. Walking with a guide, Bernard and Lenina notice that "In a crevice of the rock lay a pile of bones. It was all oppressively queer" (97). This is their first glimpse of human existence in all its raw, unembellished unpleasantness, and the beginning of the extreme discomfort that will accompany them during their entire journey. Bernard attempts to treat the experience with a Buddha-like investigative curiosity, but Lenina is unable to reconcile the world she knows with the

one in which she finds herself on the Pueblo, beginning to repeat “I don’t like it” (98). Her discomfort is magnified upon being exposed to the second of the Four Sights.

Immediately following Bernard and Lenina’s exposure to death, they encounter what has been, up to now, the unknown phenomenon of old age. In front of the pair, an Indian man climbs down a ladder

with the tremulous caution of extreme old age. His face was profoundly wrinkled and black, like a mask of obsidian. The toothless mouth had fallen in. At the corners of the lips and on each side of the chin a few long bristles gleamed almost white against the dark skin. The long unbraided hair hung down in grey wisps round his face. His body was bent and emaciated to the bone, almost fleshless. Very slowly he came down, pausing at each rung before he ventured another step. (98-9)

A seemingly innocuous picture of an elderly man, the specter of this aged native is met by Lenina with revulsion. Her “eyes wide with horror and amazement”, Lenina asks, “What’s the matter with him?” (99). Lenina is told that the man is simply old, and unlike the euphemized and stunted old age in the World State that takes the form of “Youth almost unimpaired till sixty, and then, crack! the end” (99). Lenina is unable to accept the existence of this different kind of aging, and says “But it’s terrible. . . it’s awful. We ought not to have come here” (99). The sight of old age, which profoundly affects Siddhartha, and effectively begins in him the meditative journey that will lead to his discovery of the Middle Way, is decidedly a source of little more than discomfort and horror for his counterparts in Brave New World.

The third sight to which Bernard and Lenina are exposed on the pueblo is that of

human disease. Illness and disease, thanks to in-bottle inoculation and careful genetic screening, have been eliminated by the World Controllers. Having, like Siddhartha, been previously sheltered from the effects of any human ailments, Bernard and Lenina are noticeably unnerved by the “passage of an old woman with ophthalmia and a disease of the skin” (100). Lenina begs to leave the pathos of the pueblo, to be led away from “the goitres and the skin diseases and the old people” (101-2), but she will not get her wish until the pair has been exposed to the last of the Four Sights.

Led to some sort of native ritual that begins innocently enough, Lenina is somewhat sated by its rhythmic, musical introduction. Lenina “liked the drums. Shutting her eyes she abandoned herself to their soft repeated thunder, allowed it to invade her consciousness more and more completely, till at last there was nothing left in the world but the one deep pulse of sound. It reminded her reassuringly of the synthetic noises made at Solidarity Services” (101). This ritual begins like the pseudo-spiritual events that take place in the World State. What pass for religious gatherings in the World State, however, are merely barely-disguised state-centred propaganda rallies-cum-orgies, and in reality, Bernard and Lenina have been just as sheltered from the true passion and voracity of spiritual ritual as was Siddhartha during his time in his father’s palaces. The ritual on the Pueblo begins sweetly enough, similar to a Solidarity Service, but “a little later it was reminding her a good deal less of that innocuous function. For suddenly there had swarmed up from those round chambers underground a ghastly troop of monsters” (102). The dance grows in fervour, black snakes are added to the ceremony, and “one woman had shrieked, and then another and another, as though they were being killed” (102). Being exposed, for the first time, to religion, is an extremely important element in the

Buddha's journey of the Four Sights, but what influences and shocks him most profoundly is the sight of an ascetic – one who willingly undergoes great suffering in order to prove his spiritual worth and please his god(s). This is precisely what Bernard and Lenina are exposed to, and it is likewise this sight that evokes from them the most profound reaction on their own journey:

Naked but for a white cotton breech-cloth, a boy of about eighteen stepped out of the crowd . . . The boy moved as though unaware of the other's existence. The coyote-man raised his whip; there was a long moment of expectancy, then a swift movement, the whistle of the lash and its loud flatsounding impact on the flesh. The boy's body quivered; but he made no sound, he walked on at the same slow, steady pace. The coyote struck again, again, and at every blow at first a gasp and then a deep groan went up from the crowd. The boy walked on.
(103)

As the whipping continues, and the boy bleeds more and more profusely, Lenina becomes increasingly distressed and horrified: "Too awful," she kept repeating. . . 'Too awful! That blood!' She shuddered. 'Oh, I wish I had my *soma*'" (104). Lenina immediately enters into progressively extreme states of psychological distress, but for Bernard, the spectacle would prove to be, as it was for Siddhartha, a life-altering event.

Having encountered the Four Sights, Siddhartha Gautama immediately finds revulsion in the sensual pleasures that have surrounded him his entire life. He returns to the palace, knowing that his experience has been an overwhelmingly important one, and that he must venture out into the world and attempt to come to terms in some way with the pervasive suffering of humanity, to contemplate exactly what form his journey will

take. Bernard enters into a similarly contemplative state upon having seen his own Four Sights: “‘So hard for me to realize,’ Bernard was saying, ‘to reconstruct. As though we were living on different planets, in different centuries. A mother, and all this dirt, and gods, and old age, and disease. . . ‘ He shook his head. ‘It’s almost inconceivable. I shall never understand unless you explain’” (111). John, whom Bernard has just met, then relates his own history, from early childhood, to Bernard. John has most certainly not led a sheltered life, and his childhood was one filled with the very things from which the young Siddhartha was sheltered: violence, death, disease, extreme religion, and alcoholism. But like Bernard, John has also been sheltered in his own way. The only exposure he has been given to World State society has come in the form of his mother’s stories, which treat the ‘other place’ as a utopia. John is afforded a confusing array of myth and fact to the point that, “‘lying in bed, he would think of Heaven and London and Our Lady of Acoma and the rows and rows of babies in clean bottles and Jesus flying up and Linda flying up and the great Director of World Hatcheries and Awonawilona” (116). John, like Huxley’s other seemingly Buddha-like figures, is an individual in a homogenized society. Not being a full-blooded native ensures that John becomes an outcast among his own people, with the other men beating him, throwing stones at him, and shouting, “‘Not for you, white hair!’” Not for the son of the she-dog” (123). John’s inversely sheltered existence would lead him, too, to a journey and an encounter with new and disturbing sights.

Bernard’s contemplative state following his exposure to the Four Sights represents the final similarity between him and Siddhartha Gautama. Upon returning to the World State, Bernard, because he has brought with him such a fascinating creature as

John, is met with a popularity and celebrity so unfamiliar to him that he completely abandons his goal of moving beyond his life and striving for something of greater meaning. The great longing for more with which Bernard had wrestled recedes into his mind as “Success went fizzily to Bernard’s head, and in the process reconciled him. . . to a world which, up till then, he had found very unsatisfactory” (141). The array of sensual pleasures available in the World State is so vast and consuming that even Huxley’s Buddha-figure cannot resist their embrace. Bernard, having been up to this point alienated because of his physical shortcomings and unpopularity, became an individual as a result, and was therefore able to develop individual ideas and to examine his society critically. Once those barriers to Bernard’s social inclusion have been removed, he rapidly and entirely becomes just another cell in the social body, and has no more cause nor desire to scrutinize the shortcomings of the World State. For Huxley, it is only true individuals, those who are set off from the group in some way, who can be sources of original criticism and intellectual independence. Even Bernard, once most decidedly an outcast, immediately forgets his individuality, and therefore his philosophy, upon being accepted into the group of his peers, for Bernard’s willingness and desire to seek something more important in his life are primarily driven by the everyday pleasures of the World State being denied him on account of his social shortcomings. Once those obstacles are removed, Bernard no longer needs to seek more, and his quest is extinguished.

At precisely the same time that Bernard’s minor quest comes to an ignominious end, John’s own quest begins. Just as Bernard has entered John’s world, and has been exposed to those elements from which he had previously been sheltered, and which he

finds revolting, so too does John find himself immersed in a foreign world he too comes to find similarly revolting. The important difference between the two is that while Bernard enters the reservation expecting the worst, having heard stories of the repugnant way of life of its citizens, John enters the World State having heard only stories that paint it in a most favourable light, and treat that world with a heaven-like reverence by way of Linda, John's mother: "The happiest times were when she told him about the Other Place. . . she would tell him about the lovely music that came out of a box, and all the nice games you could play, and the delicious things to eat and drink. . . and everybody happy and no one ever sad or angry, and everyone belonging to everyone else" (115). John travels to the 'Other Place' in search of such a utopia, exclaiming "O brave new world that has such people in it. Let's start at once" (126), but instead he experiences, much as Bernard has experienced on the Pueblo, pure misery.

Presented with the sights and people of the brave new world, John is soon unimpressed. As Bernard writes in his report to Mustapha Mond, "The Savage . . . shows surprisingly little astonishment at, or awe of, civilized inventions" (143). Also included in Bernard's report is the curiosity of "his interest being focussed on what he calls 'the soul', which he persists as regarding as an entity independent of the physical environment" (143). These two elements of John's reaction to the World State are inseparable, as the primary drawback to the lives of World State citizens, in John's eyes, is "finding civilized infantility too easy or, as he puts it, not expensive enough" (143). John realizes that without trial, specifically religious or metaphysical trial, life cannot offer meaningful rewards. In short, John discovers that what are missing are the Four Noble Truths. The truth of suffering has not been discovered in the world in which he

finds himself, simply because a dramatic, society-wide effort has been made to eradicate suffering, and all evidence that suffering ever existed, and upon witnessing the spectacle of a factory manned by people who had been created in a similar setting, John's rejection of this "brave new world that has such people in it" begins to boil over, and he begins "violently retching, behind a clump of laurels, as though the solid earth had been a helicopter in an air pocket" (144).

John's revulsion grows and intensifies through to the close of Brave New World, until it results in his death. As an interesting counterpart to the Four Sights witnessed by Siddhartha Gautama and Bernard Marx, what John finds so repugnant is not old age, sickness, death, and disease, but rather, the lack thereof. Where all things are easy to acquire, nothing can be meaningful, and the effect this knowledge has on John becomes more and more powerful: "Bound by strong vows that had never been pronounced, obedient to laws that had long since ceased to run, he sat averted and in silence. Sometimes, as though a finger had plucked at some taut, almost breaking string, his whole body would shake with a sudden nervous start" (153). The longing for some great trial, something of meaning, that John feels so desperately, is absolutely contrary to the society in which he finds himself upon leaving the reservation, and while it seems to be upheld as a valid desire by both Huxley and his wisest character, Mustapha Mond, it is also a desire that must be crushed swiftly and absolutely for the survival of society:

It was the sort of idea that might easily decondition the more unsettled minds among the higher castes – make them lose their faith in happiness as the Sovereign Good and take to believing, instead, that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere; that the purpose of life

was not the maintenance of well-being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge. Which was, the Controller reflected, quite possibly true. But not, in the present circumstances, admissible.

(161)

John holds ideals that, while perfectly natural, and perhaps perfectly reasonable, have been suppressed in the World State, and as he will find, there are overwhelming social controls in place to ensure that this remains the case.

Like the Buddha, John the Savage is faced with the task of searching for answers to his unarticulated spiritual questions in a foreign world. Like the Buddha, John is met with a collective spirituality that is troubling and with what he sees as a universal suffering that pervades society in the form of a contemptible promiscuity, an insidiously overwhelming over-stimulation of the senses, and an utter lack of opportunity for quiet contemplation. Even if the World State citizens do not believe themselves to be suffering, from John's perspective, these elements make their society deeply flawed. Also decidedly like the Buddha, John first turns to the extremes of asceticism to further his enlightenment, and attempts to teach others his beliefs. Unlike the Buddha, however, John absolutely fails.

John, deep in the "miseries of space and time (161), finds life in 'civilized' society more and more unbearable, as did Siddhartha in his own initial ventures beyond his father's palace, and asserts that he would "rather be unhappy than have the sort of false, lying happiness you were having here" (162). The lack of death, disease, suffering, and old age disturbs John as much as being introduced to those elements disturbed Bernard. The absence of the Four Sights is not in itself an obviously negative aspect of

Huxley's society – in fact, the removal of death, disease, and old age, and the suffering they create can hardly be seen as anything short of appealing. The problem is that John (and Huxley, it would appear) believes such elements to be tied to the essence of human existence and that removing them from view does not mean that they no longer exist, but have simply been hidden. The Buddha was absolutely vehement in his opposition to any and all voluntary ignorance of the sort, believing instead in the truths to be gained through “sustained contemplation and deep investigation” (Buddhasasana 433-4). John’s frustration with the artificially-induced numbness of the World State’s citizens reaches a climax when he sees his mother in the Park Lane Hospital for the Dying, and witnesses the casual irrelevance with which her imminent death, and the deaths of those around her, are regarded. It is at this point that John ceases his attempts to fit into the society he has been presented with, and rejects its values and social systems entirely. It is at this point that John’s attempts to fit into, or at least to function within, the society of the World State, cease entirely. Not coincidentally, it is also at this point that the author shifts from referring to him as ‘John’ and begins calling him only ‘the Savage’.

After his mother’s death, John the Savage begins to take actions decidedly like those of Siddhartha Gautama, and all fail. In his first attempt to effect change among the citizens of the World State, “suddenly it was luminously clear to the Savage what he must do; it was as though a shutter had been opened, a curtain drawn back” (191). Crying, “I come to bring you freedom” (193), John attempts to block the distribution of soma to a group of workers. His minor rebellion, however, is quickly and easily quashed by the police, for soma, “Christianity without tears” (217), has so effectively supplanted the role of any meaningful spirituality that not a single of the manufactured humans has any

interest in, or even understanding of, the latter. This event is similar in spirit to the newly awakened Buddha's First Sermon, which he delivers to the five ascetics to whom he had initially charged his spiritual development – it is the Buddha's first attempt to present to others the truths that he has discovered. There are, of course, notable differences: the Buddha is successful in part because, unlike John, he speaks to a group that already seeks spiritual guidance which, added to the fact that John is most un-Buddha-like in seeking a simple solution and giving up when it does not work, this makes for a very different outcome.

Like Siddhartha Gautama, who spent many years experimenting with leading an ascetic life, John also attempts to live ascetically, beginning with induced vomiting. He says, "I ate civilization. . . It poisoned me; I was defiled. . . I ate my own wickedness" (220). Because cleansing oneself spiritually cannot be achieved through purely physical means, however, this cleansing is eventually not sufficient, and John retreats to an abandoned lighthouse, his own sort of inadequate Bodhi tree in a techno-centric society. His intentions are not unlike those of the Buddha – to retreat and meditate, "to be purified and made good" (225). Indeed, Siddhartha began his spiritual journey similarly, aiming to cleanse himself in the extreme ascetic tradition: "Legend has it that he eventually learned to exist on one grain of rice a day which ended up reducing his body to a skeleton. His practice of self-mortification had brought him closer to the point of death instead of enlightenment" (LetUsReason). John begins ritually to purify himself, and seems to be progressing in his attempts to cleanse himself of what he sees as an impure society, but that same society seeks him out and finds him. John's asceticism elevates to the point of self-flagellation, just as had the Buddha's prior to his discovery of the Middle

Way, when his “rustic solitude was suddenly broken by the arrival overhead of a great swarm of helicopters” (232). The invasion by society into what John had intended to be a retreat from that society is too much, and John’s quest is ended by his hanging himself.

The final words of the novel describe John’s dangling feet:

Slowly, very slowly, like two unhurried compass needles, the feet turned towards the right; north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-south-west; then paused, and after a few seconds, turned as unhurriedly back towards the left. South-south-west, south, south-east, east . . . (237)

John’s feet pointing to the North, South, East, and West paints a remarkably similar scene to those of the Buddha upon his birth, when immediately following his birth he takes slow, careful steps in each of the four directions.

John the Savage and Bernard Marx are certainly not intended to act as allegorical Buddha figures. Each is far too weak and confused. Their journeys are brief, incomplete, and ineffectual, and while the connections between their stories and that of Siddhartha are very strong ones, the former are also deeply ironic in many respects. Huxley’s intention was not to introduce a Buddha or Buddhas into the Brave New World, but it is clear that “Bernard’s experience parallels that of the Savage, though without any of the Savage’s intensity of feeling” (Firchow 314), as it is clear that John and Bernard are grappling with antagonistic elements that closely resemble those faced by Siddhartha. The reason for this is simple: Bernard and John struggle for the same reasons that the Buddha struggled, but their societies are, each in its own way, so crippling set against any alteration to the status quo that no significant change or even evolution seems even remotely possible, which is “probably to be read as the inevitable consequence of

behavior conditioned by a society quite as rigid as the Fordian one” (Firchow 314)

without that glaring, all-important, lacking element: the Middle Way.

Chapter Three: Buddhism's Profound Influence

Brave New World most certainly depicts a totalitarian regime, but unlike those portrayed in the novels with which it is typically grouped¹⁶, the problems its society faces are not the result of political corruption, obsession with power, or overt oppression. Huxley's World Controllers simply do not have ulterior motives governing the directions in which they steer their society, and do not appear to be corrupt and oppressive. Their genuine goal seems to be the maintenance of a stable and secure society. Indeed, the one man Huxley presents in such a position of authority in the World State, Mustapha Mond, is a rational, caring, concerned citizen who, despite overseeing the mass production of human beings, reveals no outward signs of ill will towards fellow citizens or any desire to cause them harm. There is no room 101, and the executive class does not rule through any sort of fear-mongering. Indeed, upholding happiness and stability as the pillars of civilization, the World Controllers attempt to make available these pillars to every citizen, even those who, like Bernard and Helmholtz Watson, are no longer able to function within the confines of their society. The target of Huxley's satire is most certainly not a political one.

One element that Brave New World seems to share with others of its genre is the proliferation and omnipresence of technology. While it is true that Huxley's society is highly dependent on technological devices, from helicopters to the feelies to the various highly complicated distractions available, the intent underlying that technology is so dramatically different in Huxley and (for example) Orwell that the connection is a weak

one indeed. In 1984, technology (such as it is) explicitly serves as a device for effective social control and for the monitoring of citizens. Oceania has failed as a society because a single political party has gained far too much power and authority, and the use of technology as a means of enforcing that authority is a direct result. In Brave New World, however, while technological devices are used to create and condition stable and predictable citizens, they are viewed essentially as socialization devices, are used primarily in aversion therapy during early childhood, and are not feared in the slightest. For adults, at their worst, technological devices are used as a means to encourage the consumption of resources and spending of money among the World State citizens. Overdependence on technology for Huxley is just one of the results of the World State's primary failing, not its root cause.

Huxley's satire is also not dependent on the society in Brave New World having failed to adopt, or having adopted unsuccessfully, any particular religion or spirituality. Buddhist ideals and references to Buddhist lore are implicitly present throughout Brave New World, but there is not a single Buddhist encountered, and it can hardly be said to be a Buddhist novel in any meaningful sense. It is in this very contradiction, however, that the heart of Huxley's satire begins to come to light. Brave New World seems to explore many facets of Buddhist culture, beliefs, and ideals in some form, but without a successful Buddha in the past, any sort of promise of one in the future, or any sort of embrace of true Buddhist ideals. That is, although what appear to be decidedly Buddhist elements exist, but under scrutiny it is apparent that Buddhist ideals are completely lacking. The World State favours abolishing desire by satisfying rather than transcending it, and certainly has little in common with the teachers or students of Buddhism. What

exists in Brave New World seems on its surface to be in keeping with many of the teachings of the Buddha, but under any scrutiny that appearance fades to reveal a society quite opposed to anything Siddhartha could have upheld as ideal, let alone praiseworthy.

In the brave new world, the causes of human suffering have indeed been identified and desire has indeed very nearly been eliminated (or satisfied, to be more precise). This in itself does not tie Huxley's novel to the Middle Way – all religions address desire in some way, usually explicitly – but the language of Brave New World is much more specific than that, echoing the decidedly Buddhist language of suffering and desire, an 'unnamed longing' which will turn out to be a common element to the stories of Siddhartha, John, Helmholtz, and Bernard. While the desire is similar, the manner in which the World Controllers have sought to eliminate it is so superficial that the end product is something a true Buddhist could not but revile. Although the issues faced by the World Controllers are precisely those that were faced by Siddhartha Gautama – are in fact faced by all of humanity – the means by which the Controllers accomplish their ends run so contrary to the ideals of Buddhism that the result would be seen as a twisted and perverse solution in the eyes of the Buddhist or of any rational, unindoctrinated human being. Siddhartha's father attempted to shelter his son from the Four Sights and from the desires and burdens that riddle human existence, and he did so quite effectively. He was able to virtually eliminate desire within his palaces by granting the objects of desire essentially before they can even be desired. He was able to cure his son's suffering – so he thought - by removing, and denying entry to, suffering's causes. He was able very nearly to counteract all unhappiness by providing an overabundance of happiness. But

the palaces were unsatisfactory to Siddhartha, and so, too, is the World State to Bernard, Helmholtz, and John.

It is how Huxley uses Buddhist principles to expose the fundamental flaws inherent in the World State that exposes his satire and its targets. It is in his characters, though, and their individual journeys, that these principles are explored. Three of Huxley's characters embark on personal quests of sorts. Each quest – those of John, Bernard, and Helmholtz – shares elements with the quest of Siddhartha Gautama. Unlike the Buddha, however, each man's quest ends in failure. This is in part because none of the men have anywhere near the fortitude or strength of character of the Buddha, but is also owing in great part to the fact that the World State society makes allowances for nothing like a personal quest, spiritual journey or search for self. It makes allowances for no personal evolution at all. It is in this, exemplified by these three particular failings, that the heart of Brave New World can be reached.

Where everything is easily come by, nothing can have great value. This is John the Savage's unspoken mantra, driving him to his death, but it is also comfortably in line with the underlying and explicit ideals of the Buddhist. Buddhism is a spirituality whose great truths and higher levels of consciousness are realized through trial and determination, meditation and mental rigor, and discipline and dedication – none of which are made possible in the palaces of Siddhartha's youth, and all of which are made very nearly impossible in the World State. Just as an as-yet-unnamed longing gripped Siddhartha Gautama while he was enveloped in the simple pleasures of his father's palaces, so too is Bernard, like Helmholtz and John, "interested in something else. But in what?" (60). This is, for each man, the longing for a great trial, for a quest that will lead

to something meaningful are impossibilities in the hedonistic realms of the Buddha's palaces and of the World State.

That Bernard, Helmholtz, and John appear to be relatively alone in their dissatisfaction (a dissatisfaction that is at times as weak as a mere curiosity) with their society is not to be ignored. Huxley's fable is certainly not so simple as to depict an evil government and the struggles of its oppressed masses. On the contrary, the vast majority of the World State's citizens seem perfectly content and even the three aforementioned malcontents carry out not-unpleasant existences. This is precisely Huxley's criticism. His primary concern clearly is not that society will become oppressed and crushed into submission, as was Orwell's, but rather that the complacency into which society is lulled by way of excessive conveniences, all-consuming distractions, and no need to ever be overburdened, physically, mentally, emotionally or otherwise, will not only not rise up against such a way of life but *will actually prefer it*.

It seems to be that one of the primary vehicles for Huxley's satire is the manner in which the World State's efforts run absolutely contrary to the premises of Buddhism, for which Huxley clearly had great respect. The target of this satire is also relatively simple to deduce when it is considered what society is potentially the most diametrically opposed to the Middle Way, and therefore most similar to the World State. In every portion of Brave New World there is an example of how opposed the values of the World State are to those of Buddhism. While the Buddha's teachings emphasize deep meditation, careful scrutiny and consideration of the world, and stolid determination, the World Controllers preach the opposite: instant gratification. Likewise, Huxley condemns "effortless" or "ready-made" distractions that are "the same for every one over the face of

the whole Western world” (Meckier “Prepping” 235), and he criticizes what he sees as a slide in Western culture in general (and perhaps the conspicuously hedonistic United States in particular). Of course, this criticism is launched via the most effortless and ready-made culture of them all, the World State.

Huxley had a complicated relationship with the United States. As he admits in a 1946 foreword to Brave New World, Huxley is essentially repulsed, “almost thrilled to find the United States every bit as vulgar and as freakish as he had anticipated when he first visited the country in 1926”, but in the end decidedly drawn by the lure of Los Angeles, “City of Dreadful Joy” (as he referred to it) and making his home there, Huxley seemed to find the United States equally beautiful and horrible¹⁷. It is the latter sentiment that doubtless dominated his thoughts when Brave New World was composed, and it is apparent throughout the novel, for it is the desire of the West in general and the United States in particular to remove, to as great an extent as possible, all trial and discomfort from life with which Huxley takes issue. The World State is, in Huxley’s eyes, an extrapolation of western civilization in the early Twentieth Century. In the United States and in Europe at that time, he finds an increasing degree of sterilization, homogenization, and a corresponding degradation of true passion that he deems worthy of the biting satire of the Western way of life that is Brave New World.

In American Society in the Buddhist Mirror, Joseph Tamney astutely explores the relationship between American society and Buddhism early in the Twentieth Century, and among many other elements, attributes its popularity to the peacefulness it seemed to

¹⁷ The decidedly pedestrian semantic parallels are also not to be overlooked – between ‘World State’ and ‘United States’ and between ‘Brave New World’ and ‘New World’. Although not by any means strong evidence, particularly given that the novel is primarily set in England, this may suggest that it is indeed America and its emphasis on hedonism that is the primary target of Huxley’s satire.

offer as a counterpart to the American culture of violence: “Unlike Christianity, Buddhism accepted nature and did not motivate conquest; Buddhism gave fruit not to Puritanical people or to continually restless individuals but to peaceful persons” (22). In the World State, where promiscuity is the rule and instant gratification is one of the foundations of social stability, Puritanism cannot exist, because the very notion becomes meaningless. There can be no sense of depravity in a society without morality, and there can be no diligence in worship where there exists no true object of worship. A peace similar to the Buddhist peace to which Tamney refers has indeed been granted to World State citizens, for when all conflict has essentially been eradicated, and virtually all objects of desire are granted almost as quickly as they can be desired, there can hardly be anything other than peace (or stasis), particularly since any time the inherent elements in society are not enough in themselves to maintain that state of satisfaction, there is always *soma* to virtually guarantee it. These accomplishments represent the elimination of desire and the end of suffering – the ultimate aims of the Buddhist – but only according to the synthetic methods approved by the World Controllers, and accomplished without any individual dedication or effort – an interpretation so far from the way of the Buddha that any true Buddhist would not but find it perverse.

In Brave New World, it becomes clear that the World State has apparently achieved for its citizens many of the aims of the Buddhist superficially, with no higher meaning whatsoever, and through no trial or journey, which in essence is to have achieved nothing at all. In fact, none of the aims of the Buddhist has been achieved; nothing has been achieved beyond effectively shielding society from the negative elements of human life, precisely what is achieved by Siddhartha’s father through his

son's palaces. It appears on the surface that desire has satisfactorily been dealt with, since each desire seems to be consummated immediately. It appears also that suffering has been overcome. The relationship between suffering and desire has been so simplified, though, that its significance, and therefore the significance of its outcome, is nil in Buddhist terms. To grant every object of desire and decree that desire has thus been eliminated is fallacious, and is utterly contrary to the ideals of Buddhism, but more importantly, to any other spiritual or thinking persons, Huxley in particular. For the World Controllers, and by extension for the citizens who serve as an audience for their propaganda, however, a desire that has been fulfilled is equal to one which has been overcome. This is effective, and the Controllers have implemented their plan masterfully, but in simply fulfilling desire without addressing its root cause they are destined never to control desire sufficiently (of which Helmholtz, Bernard and John are evidence). This is precisely the means by which Siddhartha Gautama's father attempted to shelter his son from the reality of the Four Sights and the universality of suffering, and with similar results. In the palaces of the Buddha's youth, as in the World State, blocking undesirable elements and magnifying desirable ones is equated with the attainment of satisfaction and happiness. Huxley condemns such an empty and easily-come-by notion of happiness, however, and emphasizes the importance of difficulty in attaining anything of meaning. This is particularly true of the attainment of spiritual enlightenment.

Tamney's belief that the "real effect of modernity upon religion, then, is to make the religion which was once the possession only of an aristocracy of the spirit, the sole, possible kind of religion for all modern people" (34) touches on precisely what has gone wrong in Brave New World. The truths of Buddhism have indeed revealed themselves to

Siddhartha because of an aristocracy of the spirit – for he chose, against much simpler and more readily available alternatives, a very difficult path – and it is this sort of determination that Huxley admires, while reviling the modern response to the same issues. Huxley clearly respects the difficult path, for what lies at its end is all the more valuable. As is the case with most of what seem to be authorial embellishments, Huxley explores the notion of higher purposes through Mustapha Mond and his reaction to an original and thus potentially subversive piece of scientific literature for which he serves as censor. Mond notes immediately that it contains

the sort of idea that might easily decondition the more unsettled minds among the higher castes – make them lose their faith in happiness as the Sovereign Good and take to believing, instead, that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere; that the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well-being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge. Which was, the Controller reflected, quite possibly true. But not, in the present circumstances, admissible. (160-1)

Even within the confines of the rigid World State, Mond himself, highly responsible for the suppression of such notions, cannot help but wonder about there being something more important than happiness to strive for.

If one were to strip a spirituality such as Buddhism of its difficulty, and therefore its meaning, the resultant system of thought would be precisely what has prevailed in the World State, and is precisely the reason for the sense of general uneasiness in three of Brave New World's main characters. Once again, it is striking just how similar the

World State is to the pre-enlightenment world that the Buddha's father created for him in his palaces: sheltered, devoid of strong feeling, but nonetheless incubating a hidden but growing sense of longing. The World State has not yet seen the Buddha of its age, nor does it within the events of Brave New World, and nor, perhaps, *could* a Buddha even emerge out of such a stiflingly hedonistic society (although three, to varying degrees, make their attempts at the path to enlightenment), for an escape from the metaphorical palace becomes decidedly more difficult when that palace is in fact most of the Earth's society. Such an environment stifles, if not disallows, any sort of aristocracy of the spirit, and therefore, though it may appear to have internalized some of the superficial elements of Buddhism, it stifles the possibility of its citizens developing true Buddhist ideals – or more to the point – true ideals of any nature. This is true of all of the citizens in Brave New World, but is most stark and pronounced in those characters who struggle to find an ideology – Bernard, John, and Helmholtz.

Bernard and John are strikingly similar characters. Despite their undeniable failings as pseudo-Buddhists, they nonetheless embody many of the essential driving ideas behind Siddhartha's quest and his eventual discovery of the Middle Way. Bernard yearns to be more “on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body” (81). He is unique among his peers in feeling so (well-evidenced by Lenina, his fearful, crying companion). Longing for some sort of great trial, something of importance and difficulty, he takes an absolutely essential step in that journey when, as we have seen, he encounters the Four Sights at the reservation in Malpais. This is the pivotal point in Bernard's life, but rather than it leading, as it did for Siddhartha, to eventual enlightenment, the immense pressure and overwhelming presence

of hedonistic World State life crush his quest, for when one must go out of one's way to find things difficult, it becomes all the more impossible to resist the temptation of simplicity.

It is, for Siddhartha Gautama, the realization that all of life is tainted by an underlying unsatisfactoriness that drives him, that pushes him to seek greater truth, and to search for an end to the suffering caused by such longing; where Buddhism teaches its *sangha* to move diligently beyond longing, the brave new world capitulates to it. For Bernard, however, once his reputation and popularity have been substantially bolstered by his association with John, it becomes very difficult for him to remember why he thought civilization flawed in the first place:

Success went fizzily to Bernard's head, and in the process completely reconciled him (as any good intoxicant should do) to a world which, up till then, he had found very unsatisfactory. In so far as it recognized him as important, the order of things was good. (141)

Bernard is someone who, having been forced to live a rather ascetic life, managed to make a virtue of that life until society embraced him, at which point he embraced the values of his world. He never regains his drive to move towards something more 'important' than what is offered by the World State, even to a great enough extent to come to the aid of his friends, Helmholtz and John, when they are being attacked by a violent mob. Bernard was initially forced to embark on a path similar to that followed by Siddhartha Gautama, but against his will, as we soon see, and is deterred from that path almost instantly. Where Siddhartha struggled and suffered immensely for many years in pursuit of enlightenment, undeterred by enormous hardship, Bernard's quest evaporates

at the very first sign that a more pleasurable path exists. Even Bernard, one of Huxley's poorly-conditioned outcasts seemingly desperately in search of a great trial, cannot face even a minor trial, or resist even a slight temptation. Bernard is an anti-Buddha in a way, and is perhaps evidence that the society of Brave New World could not possibly produce a Buddha.

The unceremonious destruction of Bernard's quest in its infancy is the first of Huxley's two adamant, absolutely unambiguous implicit statements that the brave new world allows no opportunities for trial, for difficulty, for a search for meaning, at least within its borders. Such elements are a threat to stability, the ultimate good in the World State, and therefore they are not only not permitted, but have virtually been eliminated altogether, for, as Mustapha Mond articulates,

But there aren't any losses for us to compensate; religious sentiment is superfluous. And why should we go hunting for a substitute for youthful desires, when youthful desires never fail? A substitute for distractions, when we go on enjoying all the old fooleries to the very last? What need have we of repose when our minds and bodies continue to delight in activity? Of consolation, when we have *soma*? of something immovable, when there is the social order? (213)

The trials of Siddhartha were long, great, and arduous. For Bernard, it is not that such trials would be longer, greater, or more arduous; it is simply that they would be unnecessary, for he lacks the depth of character to see that there can be deeper levels of satisfaction and the fortitude to attempt to achieve them. The social climate and physical environment which have been so carefully conceived and implemented by the World Controllers are such that a Buddha figure not only would be hesitant to emerge, but more

to the point, could not emerge. The systems that have been put in place in the World State are quite possibly just too oppressive for them ever to make room for enlightenment – not even for another Buddha.

The path of John the Savage begins just as Bernard's ends, and is crushed at least as quickly and far more violently. At the point at which John is introduced, he has already suffered great trials in his life. A social outcast, he has struggled with the effects of alcoholism, violence, and exclusion. Conditioned, not as the World State citizens have been, to believe that nothing that is not easy is worth doing at all, but rather, to believe that anything of value must be won through great trial, John cannot be placated as simply as has Bernard been by the various pleasures offered him. So misunderstood by society is John, though, and so unwilling to accept anything he desires without its accompanying difficulty, that the end of his quest cannot but be all the more violent. Tamney paraphrases Jackson Lears in arguing that “the interest in Buddhism [in early Twentieth-Century America] can be understood as part of an antimodernist movement. People outside the lower classes were becoming increasingly critical of “overcivilized” American society” (18). In John exists Huxley's own increasing criticism of just that - the overcivilization, and therefore overemphasis on ease, in American society.

John, to a certain extent, represents all religion. Ambassador of a cruelly mingled system of belief seemingly peculiar to himself alone, John's confusion seems all but inevitable: “He spent hours on his knees praying, now to that Heaven from which the guilty Claudius had begged forgiveness, now in Zuni to Awonawilona, now to Jesus and Pookong, now to his own guardian animal, the eagle” (222). John's dissatisfaction with both of the societies in which he lives must at least in part be due to his jumbled frame of

spiritual reference. For John, as it was for Siddhartha early in his travels, not only is enlightenment inseparable from suffering, but unlike Siddhartha, he concludes that the former can only be successfully discovered through the latter. Finding himself in a society that wholly rejects the notion of voluntarily undergoing any sort of suffering, and therefore does not understand its effects, and being highly prone to self-imposed suffering, John seems destined to meet with a violent end, and eventually does in the form of his suicide. Manifested in John is Huxley's outrage at the "idiocies of the bright young generation and the spiritual deafness of the world at mid-century, a world developing its apehood rather than its essence" (Meckier "Housebreaking" 167). Where convenience is the great and ultimate good, there can be no room for the difficult and the noble - in the World State or in the United States of America.

The World State represents the end of suffering, but also the end of ever being able to understand its causes and attempt to transcend it. Nothing is difficult; no goal (such that they are) unattainable; no thirst unquenched. Suffering has all but been ended, through the "horrible paradise of mechanical progress" (Firchow 302). The World Controllers, represented by Mustapha Mond, take great satisfaction in this, and it is no coincidence that the pillars of all that is meaningful to the Buddhist, the Four Noble Truths, hinge upon the end of suffering. In the World State, there exists none of the suffering inherent in old age and disease, for both have essentially been eradicated; there exists none of the suffering inherent in death, as John is wondered at for his "disgusting outcry - as though death were something terrible, as though anyone mattered as much as all that" (188); and most importantly, there exists none of the suffering inherent in

religious trial or any sort of spiritual quest, for “there aren’t any losses for us to compensate; religious sentiment is superfluous” (213).

It is interesting that Huxley has chosen to embellish Siddhartha’s story by adding a sort of fifth sight to the four that the World Controllers have seen fit to eradicate: the family. This seems to be a break with Buddhist lore, but really it is just Huxley’s explanation of the World Controllers’ methods. For while the Buddha sought to free himself and his followers from the suffering inherent in the pervasiveness of the Four Sights, the World Controllers, in seeking to eradicate suffering, have identified the family unit as its primary source. That is, despite their efforts to remove old age, disease, and religion, and to eliminate the stigma associated with death, they would be unable if it were not for the removal first of all of the bonds associated with the family, for where love and passion exist, so must mourning and, occasionally, the dreaded spectre of unhappiness.

Helmholtz Watson is, to a certain extent, Huxley’s voice of reason, and it is no surprise considering that he is a writer by trade and by desire. Characteristically, Helmholtz is mesmerized when John first introduces him to the words of Shakespeare, but even he, intellectually superior and open to experiences beyond those made available by the World Controllers, cannot transcend his conditioning sufficiently to understand or even remotely sympathize with the notion of the family. When John reads from Romeo and Juliet and Juliet weeps for her impending union to Paris, “Helmholtz broke out in an explosion of uncontrollable guffawing. The mother and father (grotesque obscenity) forcing the daughter to have someone she didn’t want! And the idiotic girl not saying that she was having someone else . . . In its smutty absurdity the situation was irresistibly

comical” (167). The family unit, in the eyes of the World Controllers, is a primary source of suffering, for where love and passion are allowed to exist, misery and anger must also. Invoking the dual messiahs of Ford and Freud, Mustapha Mond explains to the young Alphas at the conditioning centre that “Our Freud had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life. The world was full of fathers – was therefore full of misery; full of mothers – therefore full of every kind of perversion from sadism to chastity; full of brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts – full of madness and suicide” (34).

Through the elimination of gestation and birth, the essential outlawing of monogamy, and the eradication of love in any meaningful sense, the Controllers of Brave New World have effectively ended the miseries that spring from the family unit. They have also, of course, eliminated the joy, pleasure, and meaning that are bred of that same institution.

None of the primary causes of suffering for Siddhartha appear to exist in the World State. It appears on the surface that what Siddhartha perceived as suffering has been successfully eliminated by Mustapha Mond and the other World Controllers who came before him. So why, then, are there still islands like the ones to which Bernard and Helmholtz will be sent in order to slip out from under the dictates of that society? The simple, but absolutely essential, answer to that question, is that the society fails. It certainly fails according to the standards of the Buddha, for although it has superficially achieved many similar goals to those of the Buddhist on behalf of its citizens, it is quite simply a shallow accomplishment of some of the ends of Buddhism without their all-important means, from which they are inseparable. The result, although it carries with it the appearance of success, is at best a perverse interpretation of Buddhism, and at worst, pure and simple oppression.

Buddhism, at its heart, is a difficult spirituality. As evidenced by the Noble Eightfold Path and the decidedly comprehensive model of ideal behavior that it outlines, there is great difficulty included in the path of the successful Buddhist. In fact, it is likely that this is one of the elements that endears it to Huxley, for he “condemns “effortless” or “ready-made” distractions” which “rob individuals of their questioning intelligence” (Meckier “Prepping” 235). Of course, effortless and ready-made distractions are the only type available in the World State.

The basest type of misinterpretation of the intent of Buddhism is evident in many minor and major elements of the society in Brave New World. It is evident in a misguided notion of monism that takes the Buddhist notion that human beings are one with the universe and translates it into human beings (and not even all of them) being one with society. For Siddhartha, no thing is different, or perhaps even distinguishable, from any other thing, himself included. The World Controllers have quite effectively accomplished a sort of distorted oneness in their society of individuals, even going so far as to provide a pseudo-religious ceremony explicitly designed for the manufacture of oneness in the Solidarity Services. In those drug-addled, highly sexual services, the chant-like Solidarity Hymns are rife with the language of oneness such as “we are twelve; oh, make us one” (72) and “I am you and you are I” (73), and post-service, most of the participants do indeed seem to feel a certain solidarity, but it is an intoxicated and false one (owing to its artificiality), and one which Bernard does not feel at all. Alternatively “drops within the Social River” (72) and a “cell in the social body” (81), it is not only clear, but explicit, that such a solidarity is merely a form of social control, and little resembles any sort of spiritual monism or emotional oneness.

A corresponding contradiction between the spirit and intent of Buddhist teachings involves the soul. The Buddhist principle of *anatman*, or no-soul, is a very important one, and one of the key elements that separates it from all other traditions. For the Buddhist, because the universe is one, there can be no individual, and therefore, no soul – at least not in the way in which the soul is viewed in Western traditions. Of course, there can also be no admission that anything so ineffable and oblique as a soul exists in the World State, either. Even Bernard cannot fathom such an entity, writing in his report on John of “his interest being focussed on what he calls “the soul”, which he persists as regarding as an entity independent of the physical environment” (143). The essential failing, in this particular case, is not necessarily society’s rejection of the notion that anything metaphysical whatsoever may exist on the part of society, but rather, the refusal even to consider it. This is a seemingly self-evident truth, that a society in which it is forbidden to consider that which is not immediately and unmistakably knowable is one that has run absolutely contrary to the ideals of Buddhism, but it may also be argued that Huxley, who it is widely acknowledged had an “intense preoccupation with the relationship between seen and unseen – between the world perceived by the senses and what is, in the root meaning of the word, ”extrasensory“” (Yoder 291), saw this fact as perhaps the World Controllers’ ultimate perversion of spiritual journey, and their most unforgivable act. While a well-being exists and the World Controllers seem sincere in their dedication to its maintenance, it is evident that the brave new world is as much a dystopia as its much more overtly dark and oppressive cousin, 1984’s Oceania.

The essence of dystopian fiction is struggle. The fundamental difference between a dystopia like that depicted in Brave New World and a utopia like the one depicted in

Island is that in the latter there is harmony between those in power and the subjects of that power; essentially that no power discrepancies exist at all. In a dystopia, however, there always exists a profound gap between a society's rulers and its ruled. This gap is sometimes seemingly benign as in Vonnegut's Player Piano, or sometimes overt and violent as in Orwell's 1984. The weapons and means implemented in these battles for control of self and society are varied and the primary goals of those in power are often disparate, but the manifest competition in these societies is almost always one between mysticism and logic, creativity and rationality, and abstract and concrete, for the simple reason that that which is finite and knowable more readily lends itself to power structures based on the monitoring of and dominance over citizens than does that which is mutable and subjective. Precisely these struggles are evident throughout Brave New World, and while the battle between the Controllers and the citizens has cooled most distinctly, with order and satiety certainly appearing to be the norms, there nonetheless exist riot police, contingency plans, disruptions of order . . . and islands. While the struggle between rulers and ruled is not at the forefront in Brave New World it is only because the balance of power is so overwhelmingly in the World Controllers' favour. Huxley's point, that "all the evils of religion can flourish without any belief in the supernatural" (Yoder 294), is fitting in the context of Brave New World where, although its rulers cannot comfortably be called evil, social order is maintained in part by way of decidedly religion-like institutions, notably the Solidarity Services, but with none of the spirituality, faith, or prayer those institutions are typically centred on. In the World State, in which citizens happily "drink to [their] annihilation" (74), the only true remaining deity is

Stability and the only spiritual path is one of soma-induced numbness, and Huxley clearly sees such a state as perverse.

Like the Solidarity Services, technology is a device in Brave New World for social control. Of course, such is the case in virtually all dystopic fiction. In Brave New World, though, Huxley attacks a particular type of technological tyranny – the separation of ends from means. It is no wonder that the sublime society of the World State upholds Henry Ford, a man unquestionably far removed from Buddhism, as its messiah and visionary: all of its technology appears to be solidly grounded in the cold efficiency of the factory model, including the birth/decanting of human beings, the “principle of mass production at last applied to biology” (5). What tends to occur for those employed in such a setting is an ever-increasing degree of crippling specialization to the point that one knows his or her task very well, but ceases to know why it is necessary, to what it eventually leads, or how to perform any of the other tasks in the larger process. Once this principle is applied to science, literature, art and, yes, procreation, the separation of ends from means in the society as a whole is complete and all of the workers are rendered helpless. That is, there is a vast advantage to be gained in terms of repression, docility, and contentment through withholding knowledge, and the World State has most definitely been successful in doing so. While Buddhism implores its *sangha* to take nothing on faith alone, and to examine logically all they are confronted with in order to reach decisions, the World Controllers make it impossible to do so, obvious in Linda, who is later asked by John what chemicals are, how they are made, and where they come from. Despite her having worked at a conditioning centre, “generally she couldn’t answer at all . . . It was the same with everything else he asked about. Linda never

seemed to know” (118). The World Controllers not only make it completely unnecessary and inconvenient to seek any sort of knowledge, but they also make it virtually impossible, in the unlikely event that one would try, to find any, because they reason (probably accurately) that knowledge could be destabilizing.

The obstacles to knowledge are even more insidious in Brave New World though, as hypnopoeitic suggestion, foetal conditioning, and Pavlovian training supplant three of the most absolutely fundamental human paths to knowledge: art, science, and religion.

Art, not surprisingly, is treated by Huxley with great reverence, for “he can only wonder what “the new synthesis” will be like. Untiringly, he demands that artists step forward to repair the wreckage” (Meckier “Prepping” 236). His three noble characters, Mond, Helmholtz, and John, all manifest a very deep appreciation for art (specifically for literature). John treats the works of Shakespeare like scripture, Helmholtz is a writer just beginning to explore the extent of what he is capable of writing, and Mond is well-versed in many art forms, particularly Shakespeare. Meckier notes that in “The Cry for a Messiah in the Arts” Huxley demands that “only a new Shakespeare . . . can rescue a “steadily decaying civilization”” (236). Artistic expression is one of the most profound ways in which human beings explore their own universe and find their place in it, both of which, revered by the Buddha, are absolutely forbidden in the brave new world. Mond explains why art must be hobbled, because “You’ve got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We’ve sacrificed the high art” (201), but he adds that “It isn’t only art that’s incompatible with happiness; it’s also science. Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled” (205).

It would at first appear that science is the foundation of the society depicted in Brave New World rather than a supplanted path to knowledge, but for precisely the same reason that Linda has little idea about the actual science behind the work she does, scientific discovery in general is suppressed to as great a degree as possible:

“Besides, we have our stability to think of. We don’t want to change. Every change is a menace to stability. That’s another reason why we’re so chary of applying new inventions. Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive; even science must sometimes be treated as a possible enemy. Yes, even science.” (205)

Of course, like everything else that has been carefully eradicated by the World Controllers, science has been replaced with a surrogate, in this case what is called science and perhaps a little resembles its namesake, but that which, as Mustapha Mond puts it, “is just a cookery book, with an orthodox theory of cooking that nobody’s allowed to question” (206). The free inquisitive, critical spirit that Buddhism so endorses is, of course, considered subversive in the World State and is thus prevented at all costs. Cleverly, however, those stirrings which give way to scientific inquisitiveness have been quelled by a sort of pseudo-science; to borrow from Huxley’s style of satirical language, the citizens have been provided a eureka-surrogate.

More dangerous even than art and science, though, is the threat of religious knowledge. Once again, there are many substitutes available (and required) in the World State, most obvious among which is *soma* (‘Christianity without tears’), but something so ineffable and unknowable as God, and as unsettling as a pure concept, most certainly cannot be permitted. Religion is absolutely subversive to this brave new world order, and

further, unnecessary: “‘You can only be independent of God while you’ve got youth and prosperity; independence won’t take you safely to the end.’ Well, we’ve now got youth and prosperity right up to the end. What follows? Evidently, that we can be independent of God . . . religious sentiment is superfluous” (213). The coldly pragmatic rationality of Mustapha Mond may not be true, but in the sterile rational happiness that pervades the social fabric of the World State, and in the world in which the effects of his and the other Controllers’ experiments in social control are already known, it can be nothing short of undeniable.

There is also quite clearly no harmony with nature in Brave New World, except perhaps among the Morlock-like inhabitants of the Savage Reservation. A reverence for, and harmony with, the natural world, is essential to the Buddhist, for if all is one, then to harm anything is to harm everything. For the World State, however (and almost certainly simultaneously for America through Huxley’s lens), nature offers little more than dirt and inconvenience. This is true in the electrified fence on the pueblo, “the geometrical symbol of triumphant human purpose” (94) to which the animals never grow accustomed, and by which they are constantly being killed; it is true in all flies and mosquitoes having been made extinct on account of their being annoying; and it appears to be true in the “‘Eight hundred Simple Lifers” who were “mowed down by machine guns at Golders Green”” (44). Nature is, for the World Controllers, a hindrance to consumption that simply must be removed or more to the point, one more influence from which their citizens must be sheltered. The communion with nature that is absolutely essential to the development of a Buddhist, and indeed, was essential to the development of Siddhartha

himself, is not permitted by his father in his palace (only fresh flowers, trimmed of dead and unhealthy leaves were present), and likewise, is not permitted in the World State.

Virtually all scripture implores its devotees to love. Love, compassion, and kindness are, quite possibly to a greater extent than any other characteristics, universals among the teachings of major and minor faiths. These are particularly important elements of Buddhism, for the “Buddha offered to the world his own spiritual experience, and he modeled that enlightened and nirvanic ideal with joy, loving kindness, and compassion” (Mitchell 31). In fact, the importance of love and compassion is so great that in later Buddhism they form the foundation for the “Four Divine Abodes – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (Mitchell 79). It is clear in all of the teachings of the Buddha that love is, in itself, a nearly divine good, and that love and compassion must guide the way of every Buddhist. It is this sort of elevated happiness that forms the path to Nirvana. Such is most decidedly not the case in Brave New World.

Huxley’s World State has tried to minimize discontent by minimizing the opportunities for unsatisfied desire. More specifically, where the compassion of the true Buddhist is harvested through determination, meditation, and self-exploration, the same product – a satisfied existence – is harvested in the World State simply by minimizing the likelihood of any other outcome. The citizens in Brave New World most certainly seem happy – indeed, as Mustapha Mond puts it:

The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age;

they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's *soma*. (200-01)

In short, in removing or crushing anything that they found to be the cause of suffering, the World Controllers also destroyed anything they found to be the cause of loving, for the latter, potentially to as great a degree as the former, runs contrary to Stability, “the primal and the ultimate need” (38).

A form of happiness that has been inflicted upon its subjects is unlikely, though, to be a true happiness at all. Very early in the novel, it is announced just what is “the secret of happiness and virtue – liking what you've *got* to do” (13). Huxley sees, in the United States, a nation of people being numbed into believing that they are happy doing what they've *got* to do – it is very early in the Twentieth Century that he forecasts society's approaching downfall, owing much to what he sees as distractions from the far more important and meaningful elements of life – movies, newspapers, bad fiction, radios and cheap automobiles (Meckier “Prepping” 234). He says that, given such substanceless, but highly accessible distractions, people are likely to “go through life with the intellectual development of boys and girls of fifteen” (Meckier “Prepping” 235). This is, of course, precisely what is being satirized in Brave New World, exaggerated for effect in the World State citizens, but unmistakable – the feelies, scent organs, obstacle and electromagnetic golf, and *soma* are all even more accessible, less intellectually-engaging elements which society has employed to ensure that its citizens remain trapped inside “an invisible bottle of infantile and embryonic fixations” (203). It is this invisible

bottle with which John, Bernard, and Helmholtz struggle, and it is this invisible bottle whose formation Huxley believes he is witnessing in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, providing Brave New World's genesis.

It is apparent that Huxley saw little value in those things which are easily attained, and no exception is to be made for the case of happiness or love. What appear on the surface to be happiness and love are easily come by in Brave New World, but both, as a direct result, in fact are vague empty impersonations at best of their namesakes, a fact of which Mustapha Mond is most certainly not unaware: "Actual happiness always looks pretty squalid in comparison with the over-compensations for misery (201-2).

Presumably reacting in large part to the permissive character of the late 1920s in America, Huxley writes that "Nothing is more dreadful than a cold, unimpassioned indulgence. And love infallibly becomes cold and unimpassioned when it is too lightly made" (Buchanan 80). The 'love' and happiness that are omnipresent for the citizens of the Brave New World are profoundly unsatisfactory, for love (or more accurately sexual gratification in its stead) which is freely given is, for Huxley, at its most basic level, no love at all. For the Buddhist, love is all-important, for "If there is love, there is hope that one may have real families, real brotherhood, real equanimity, real peace" (Dalai Lama). In Buddhism, though, love is about others far more than it is about oneself. Indeed, it has been said that the definition of Buddhist love is "wanting others to be happy." In keeping with Huxley's now-familiar modus operandi, love seems to persist in the World State, and seems to drive very much of how its society operates, but upon further inspection it is revealed to be nothing more than a selfish love, bred of the notion that others exist to provide pleasure to oneself. In what passes for love in Brave New World, the other is a

non-factor. Once again, an element that seems to resemble the word of the Buddha – that love should be all-encompassing and should surround every living thing – has been incorporated into the ideals of the World State with none of its spirit, resulting in the opposite of what Siddhartha sought and a great and gaping hole in what is presented as an ideal society.

What sort of artificial love and happiness are available are easily come by in Brave New World, and that appears to be Huxley's primary point of criticism. In the World State, there is no need or possibility for anyone to struggle or undergo any sort of trial for any reason. The American emphasis on simplifying life, and making it easier, more convenient, and less trying is something Huxley reacts to strongly. In a 1931 essay, he argues for the usefulness of impediments to happiness, saying that no "reasonable hedonist can consent to be a flat racer. Abolishing obstacles, he abolishes half his pleasures. And, at the same time he abolishes most of his dignity as a human being. For the dignity of man consists precisely in his ability to restrain himself . . . to raise obstacles in his own path" (Buchanan 80). Even more precisely to the point of the oversimplification of love, Huxley bitingly observes in a 1946 foreword to Brave New World that there "are already certain American cities in which the number of divorces is equal to the number of marriages. In a few years, no doubt, marriage licenses will be sold like dog licenses, good for a period of twelve months, with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time." The struggle that is inherent in attaining meaningful pleasures, to attaining knowledge, true beauty, and fundamental truths, is the beautiful struggle for Huxley, a belief that is explicitly present throughout Brave New World.

The vague, unnamed longing that gripped Siddhartha Gautama in his palace also grips Huxley's main characters. Helmholtz "had realized quite suddenly that sport, women, communal activities were only, as far as he was concerned, second bests. Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what? In what?" (60). Bernard decides that he would like to "try the effect of arresting my impulses . . . I want to know what passion is . . . I want to feel something strongly" (84). John, who has been given extremely vague, unrealistic impressions of the World State, and calls it "what I've dreamt of all my life" (126) is the strongest ascetic of the group, wanting and seeing value in nothing that comes easily, ashamed and enraged by Lenina's willingness to give herself to him without trial, and horrified at the easy escape from difficulty offered by *soma*. In concert, these characters reveal Huxley's unwillingness to accept that happiness can ever be won without trial, and that the cheaply found pseudo-happiness that is so pervasive in the World State is still no match for the innate human desire to strive for some unknown other.

There are two ways of life presented in Brave New World. There is the civilized, sterilized, homogenized way of life in the eminently stable, superficially happy World State, and there is life on the savage reservation, rife with death, disease, alcoholism, abuse, and misery. Huxley's primary intent is to skewer the seemingly perfected civilization of the World State, but he quite clearly does not present life on the pueblo as ideal. What he presents is two extremes – one of passion unrestrained and the heartache it causes, evolved and raw; the other passionless and an absolute lack of meaningfulness, rational and deliberately planned. What he fails to present is the Middle Way.¹⁸

¹⁸ In his 1946 Brave New World foreword, Huxley is far more explicit about this careful omission, in fact saying that "if I were now to rewrite the book, I would offer the Savage a third alternative. Between the

The Middle Way is the essence of Buddhism. It is what Siddhartha struggles to find, and in turn, what he gifts to humanity. It is neither the “freedom to be a round peg in a square hole” (41), nor “Getting rid of everything unpleasant instead of learning to put up with it” (217), but rather, in Huxley’s own words, “What I glory in is the civilized, middle way between stink and asepsis” (Rolo, 36). The World Controllers realized that contented masses and the resultant social stability that they sought and required could not be had while passion, science, art, and religion were allowed to run rampant, as they do on the reservation, so essentially they eliminated them and, when necessary, provided innocuous substitutions such as the Pregnancy Substitute and the Violent Passion Surrogate. This was not the way of the Buddha, of course, was not the Middle Way, was in fact the opposite of suffering rather than its cure. In an attempt to rid society of its miseries, the World Controllers have been alarmingly successful, but as is apparent in Helmholtz and Bernard, have not been entirely so.

Bernard and Helmholtz have marked dissatisfaction in their lives, and this is the obvious flaw in the World Controllers’ social controls. Mustapha Mond argues the necessity and the beauty of the World State to the last, touting the perfection that has been achieved, even while that perfection has been challenged and disrupted by Bernard, Helmholtz, and even John. The irony of his statement near the end of the novel that a piece of literature such as Othello would be nonsensical in AF 632 because it is a tragedy and “you can’t make tragedies without social instability” (200) is of great importance – for he says so *while* playing a pivotal role in what is, by any definition, a tragedy. John’s unavoidable death, set in motion initially by his desire to see the World State and brought

utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity.” Nonetheless, the glaring lack of any sort of Middle Way must be viewed as intentional.

to a conclusion all but directly by that very society reveals the essential flaw in the same. Suffering, *dukkha*, exists in the brave new world, no matter how masked and drugged it is. Anyone who is different – as John is because of his background; as Helmholtz is because of his intelligence; as Bernard is because of his stature – cannot thrive in this society, and because of that, there are the islands, for “I don’t know what we should do without them. Put you all in the lethal chamber, I suppose” (209). The islands are, in fact, the hope that Huxley offers at the end of Brave New World. Unrestrained passion has failed, unrestrained satiation has failed, and since the World State cannot provide a Middle Way, those individuals who long to assert their individuality rather than becoming just another drop in the social river, must do so while completely removed from the general population. It is no coincidence that Huxley’s famous utopia, which will follow three decades later, and which will take its spiritual cues from Buddhism, is titled Island.

The mistake has been made over and over of calling Brave New World a novel about technology. Brave New World is no more a novel about technology, or about cloning, or about drugs, than the story of Noah is a story about boats. Technology, for the World Controllers, is simply *how* their ideals find their apparent perfection in the World State, and, more to the point, is only one of such tools. Huxley is far more concerned with the ideals themselves, and with the *why* than he is with the science and technology that represent the *how* – the rest are mere details. The ‘big ideas’ of Brave New World have far more to do with spirituality and with truth even than with social control. Social control and stability are not inflicted upon a society by its rulers, but rather, invited: “What’s the point of truth or beauty or knowledge when anthrax bombs

are popping all around you? That was when 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. We’ve gone on controlling ever since” (208). This difference is absolutely fundamental to understanding Brave New World.

The World State exists because of trends which Huxley saw beginning at the time of the novel’s publication. The events of the novel are a continuation of the events of Huxley’s lifetime, beginning in the era of Ford and Freud. The society of the World State is one that has been invited by its inhabitants, not forced upon them. It has been invited because of a gradual shift away from difficult things, away from the searches for knowledge and truth, and away from the inherent difficulties of meaningful spirituality. While this is often under-emphasized in analyses of the novel, it is by no means hidden, as is apparent in Mustapha Mond’s speech to the three malcontents about the ‘time of Our Ford’:

They seemed to have imagined that it could be allowed to go on indefinitely, regardless of everything else. Knowledge was the highest good, truth the supreme value; all the rest was secondary and subordinate. True, ideas were beginning to change even then. Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness. Mass production demanded the shift. Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can’t.

(208)

The shift is beginning, Huxley warns, and it entails much more than just the shift from hand-crafting to mass-production – it is the shift from meaningful to easy, from profound to simple, from meditation to *soma*.

Desire, longing, *dukkha* – these are constants. It is merely the way that individuals and societies deal with them that changes. The Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning, when explaining some of the processes employed successfully to manufacture human beings, says that “Feeling lurks in that interval of time between desire and its consummation” (38-9). This could hardly be better put by Siddhartha himself, and is one of the key early elements of the novel that point to the Buddha – essentially saying that suffering exists, and is caused by desire. The Middle Way, however, is strikingly absent. While he does not quite call it The Middle Way, and does not quite hit upon Huxley’s Buddhist leanings precisely, Clyde Enroth touches on Huxley’s prime intent in “Mysticism in Two of Aldous Huxley’s Early Novels” in his analysis that only two choices are the brave new world and the savage reservation; “man has the choice . . . between insanity on the one hand and lunacy on the other. But Huxley hints at a third alternative” (130). In fact, Huxley hints at that third alternative throughout Brave New World, and indeed, throughout his entire canon.

While the Buddha teaches that, because of the Four Noble Truths, we must be diligent in our thoughts, words, actions, and meditations, and must follow the Noble Eightfold Path no matter how arduous the journey, essentially transforming that interval between desire and its consummation into something that is no longer suffering, the World State instead simply chooses to “Shorten that interval, break down all those old unnecessary barriers” (39). Both the Buddha and Mustapha Mond (and therefore the World State) are faced with the same enemy: desire. The Buddha attacks that enemy through a decidedly Eastern diligence and concentration, eventually transforming desire

into something positive, while the World State attacks it through an equally American attempt at full-bore eradication.

Much later in his writing, Huxley remarked, “I want to show how humanity can make the best of both Eastern and Western worlds” (Watt 149). Brave New World is precisely a tale of what would happen if what he saw as the deeply troubled Western world were to implement the best of the Eastern world without understanding it, or by responding in a typically pragmatic and technologically-driven way to philosophical issues. It is apparent that to Huxley, the notion of ending human suffering by simply bombing, gassing, breeding, and drugging away all that which was found to cause suffering is born of a class of foolishness and self-importance that could only be born of what he saw as a declining Western civilization. Huxley looked upon the trends that had begun to take hold in that society prior to writing Brave New World and “sensed that culture’s fate had been sealed by 1925” (Meckier “Prepping” 234). Particularly in terms of spirituality, that which is come by easily cannot be of any meaningful worth, a notion that is certainly not unfamiliar to Huxley, who suggests that the “way to enlightenment consists, not of some remote visitation from the sky, from outside the self, but rather of tilling the soil of one’s individual soul” (Watt 149).

Once the critic has observed the connections between Brave New World and Buddhism, there is little surprise that they exist. The influence of the East on Huxley is evident throughout his writings, and as Sally A. Paulsell notes in “Color and Light: Huxley's Pathway to Spiritual Reality,” we see that “in 1915 when Huxley published his first book of poetry, The Burning Wheel - reminiscent of the Buddhist “wheel of becoming” - he was already exploring the importance of light and color as it relates to

mysticism in his need to find order in his grievous, chaotic world” (84). Huxley has long been considered a ‘mystic’, and ‘mysticism’ has long been considered one of his primary sources. Mysticism, simply referring to a belief in extra-perceptual realities that can be witnessed through subjective experience, is such a general, ambiguous term, though, as to carry very little meaning indeed. It has become the accepted term because critics have failed to recognize that there is a much more basic, simple, concrete source for this mysticism – the Buddha – for of course, mysticism is simply the end; a way of experiencing Buddhism, rather than any sort of experience in itself.

Huxley’s relationship with the Buddha pervades his canon, in very different sorts of incarnations. Between the vague musings of his early novels and what seems like a full-fledged reverence in his final novel, Island, there is an evolving relationship with the Buddhist system of thought, and while that importance is generally acknowledged, it has for the most part gone unobserved in Brave New World. The notions of spirituality, happiness, personal quest, suffering, the ideal society, and desire are all examined throughout the novel, and all can be juxtaposed with the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. While Brave New World perhaps cannot quite comfortably be termed an endorsement of the Buddhist way, while the Buddhist system of thought is not necessarily the focus of the novel, and while the novel can be meaningfully discussed in other contexts . . . the added significance revealed by the superimposition of Siddhartha Gautama upon it should not be overlooked.

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