

Huxley: Brave New World “Coming True Sooner Than I Thought”

In 1931, Aldous Huxley wrote *Brave New World*—a dystopian novel imagining a future in which people live in a highly organized society that they are conditioned to accept.

In 1958, in *Brave New World Revisited*, he looked back on his novel and reflected on how accurate its predictions of the future had been (you can read the whole work [here](#)).

His conclusion? “The prophecies made in 1931 are coming true much sooner than I thought they would.”

He goes on:

“In the West, it is true, individual men and women still enjoy a large measure of freedom. But even in those countries that have a tradition of democratic government, this freedom and even the desire for this freedom seem to be on the wane. In the rest of the world freedom for individuals has already gone, or is manifestly about to go. The nightmare of total organization, which I had situated in the seventh century After Ford, has emerged from the safe, remote future and is now awaiting us, just around the next corner.”

Interestingly, Huxley also compares the future envisioned by *Brave New World* to that of George Orwell’s comparably famous dystopian novel *1984*. According to Huxley, recent historical events had made *Brave New World* a much more likely scenario:

“In the context of 1948, 1984 seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change. Recent developments in Russia and recent advances in science

and technology have robbed Orwell's book of some of its gruesome verisimilitude... we can say that it now looks as though the odds were more in favor of something like Brave New World than of something like 1984."

In *1984*, people are largely controlled by punishment and the threat of punishment. In *Brave New World*, on the other hand, people are controlled through population control, genetic engineering, brainwashing, discouragement of critical thinking, drugs, consumerism, and hedonism. In reality, Huxley saw that populations in his time were mainly being controlled through reinforcement of desirable behavior (as in *Brave New World*) via techniques such as propaganda and advertising.

Over 50 years later, do you think Huxley or Orwell was right? Are we increasingly moving toward the "World State" of a *Brave New World*, or the "Oceania" of *1984*?