

Brave New World: Do you remember this theme?

While sex and soma are themes few can forget from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a deeper current that runs through the book is actually the government-managed economy, with its desires for employment through industrial production and massive, conspicuous consumption.

To achieve such control, the government breeds different classes of people and then brainwashes them through verbal, subliminal messaging in nurseries. In some cases, there are speakers directly under the mattresses or pillows of infants. All of the propaganda is designed to instill a loyalty to the established economic order.

Soma, the magic pill with "all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects," is actually just the means to make up for the overall orientation of society toward the material side of man. With the spirit neglected or ignored, something must be used to fill that need. Hence, soma.

As for the materialism, below is an example of how it is promoted through subliminal messaging to children. It may be a bit hard to follow, understand that three things are happening at once. The subliminal messaging about consuming, then subliminal messaging about the government and history, and then a conversations between two characters in the novel. That pattern is loosely repeated throughout the passage, with the parts about consumption in bold.

"In the nurseries, the Elementary Class Consciousness lesson was over, the voices were adapting future demand to future industrial supply. 'I do love flying,' they whispered, 'I do love flying, I do love having new clothes, I do love ...'

'Liberalism, of course, was dead of anthrax, but all the same you couldn't do things by force.'

'Not nearly so pneumatic as Lenina. Oh, not nearly.'

'But old clothes are beastly,' continued the untiring whisper. 'We always throw away old clothes. Ending is better than mending, ending is better than mending, ending is better...'

'Government's an affair of sitting, not hitting. You rule with the brains and the buttocks, never with the fists. For example, there was the conscription of consumption.'

'There, I'm ready,' said Lenina, but Fanny remained speechless and averted. 'Let's make peace, Fanny darling.'

'Every man, woman and child compelled to consume so much a year. In the interests of industry. The sole result...'

'Ending is better than mending. The more stitches, the less riches; the more stitches...'

'One of these days, ' said Fanny, with dismal emphasis, 'you'll get into trouble.'

'Conscientious objection on an enormous scale. Anything not to consume. Back to nature.'

'I do love flying. I love flying.'

'Back to culture. Yes, actually to culture. **You can't consume much if you sit still and read books.'**

'Do I look all right?' Lenina asked. Her jacket was made of bottle green acetate cloth with green viscose fur at the cuffs and collar.

'Eight hundred Simple Lifers were mowed by machine guns at Golders Green.'

'Ending is better than mending, ending is better than

mending.' ”

Traditionally, mending and stitching were ways of practicing frugality. Rather than always buying a replacement, you simply fixed what you had. In our culture of disposable and dated things, such thinking seems quaint.

Eerily enough, we live more like the characters of *Brave New World* than our relatives of the old world that has since passed by. It's not necessarily that we don't want to mend or reuse, but rather so many things are built to be disposed. Either the thing becomes dated from a fashion or technology standpoint or it is simply not built in such a way that makes it friendly to repair. And even if something is built in such a way to be repaired, most Americans lack the know-how to do it or it is actually more costly to repair than to replace.

The implications for our thinking and purchasing habits are obvious. Corporations have been taking advantage of a fertile field for quite some time to drive consumption and increase sales.

What the materialism does to our spirit, though, is something that isn't often considered. We might start by asking ourselves about our forms of “soma” and how much we need to get through it all.

(Image: allthingsd.com)