We've seen it all before.

*Star Wars, V for Vendetta*, and George Orwell’s *1984*. The list goes on, but I only have about six pages, so you can Google the others. They all speak of a dark society, mainly dominated by an evil, brutishly efficient governing body. *1984* was the first to propose such a twisted view of the future, but Orwell neglected to include that which is so important, that it was so easy to miss because none of us ever think about it, because that’s just the way things have always been. The missing piece to *1984* is the human element. Whether or not Orwell actually realized it, people will undoubtedly bring about their own destruction, knowingly or otherwise. Aldous Huxley saw it, and described it perceptibly in his wonderful masterpiece, *Brave New World*.

The novel describes a world where people are not controlled by fear; they are controlled by bliss and sexual gratification. Their society is based on a wide-spread care-free attitude. It almost seems like no one even really cares what goes on around them, so long as they can still do whatever they want that gives them a buzz. Even reproduction is a process that is mandated by the government, leaving individuals with no say in their lives or social caste. Our own society is headed towards one frighteningly similar to *Brave New World*, where people are dominated by a combination of apathy, laziness, and luxury.

Soma is an escape in the form of a pill. After a long day that seems like it’s only getting tougher, soma can be a breath of fresh air that takes you away from all of it. In Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, soma is actually manufactured and distributed throughout the
populous by the very regime they live under. It is a recreational thing, and it is considered strange to not be taking soma regularly. "'Take a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology.' 'Stability was practically assured'" (Huxley). In our own present-day society, the issue of the legalization of marijuana is becoming more and more prevalent, and is currently gaining momentum. Weed provides a similar getaway to that of soma, with hallucinogenic and psychoactive effects. It is the most widely-used illicit substance, according to the United Nations. In the eyes of Joe Klein of TIME Magazine:

“It is estimated that pot is the largest cash crop in California, with annual revenues approaching $14 billion. A 10% pot tax would yield $1.4 billion in California alone. And that's probably a fraction of the revenues that would be available — and of the economic impact, with thousands of new jobs in agriculture, packaging, marketing and advertising. A veritable marijuana economic-stimulus package” (Klein).

It is only a short matter of time until the sticky icky becomes legal for recreational use. The frightening part is that the government will be the ones taxing and regulating its distribution, just like soma in Brave New World. It'll be used as a system of control, keeping us in an eternal state of euphoria and not even aware of what is going on around us. To me, that is scary, when we can't question what's going on, because we can't even understand what's happening.

George Orwell predicted a world where books are banned, and Ray Bradbury in Fahrenheit 451 predicted a world where books are burned routinely by fireman, and are also illegal. In Brave New World, Huxley saw something much more terrifying, and far more likely. He saw a world and time where books are not illegal: people just never want to read them. No one looks at a book at sees it for its intellectual stimulation, its captivating imagery, or its moving stories and characters. They see an object that causes social humiliation and damages their
standing among their peers.

“The children started, screamed; their faces were distorted with terror.
‘And now,’ the Director shouted (for the noise was deafening), ‘now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock.’ He waved his hand again, and the Head Nurse pressed a second lever. The screaming of the babies suddenly changed its tone. There was something desperate, almost insane, about the sharp spasmodic yelps to which they now gave utterance. Their little bodies twitched and stiffened; their limbs moved jerkily as if to the tug of unseen wires. ‘We can electrify that whole strip of floor,’ bawled the Director in explanation. ‘But that's enough,'”

(Huxley)

Much like Huxley’s vision, I’ve been hard pressed to find anybody that actually enjoys reading more than watching a movie, TV show, or playing a video game. Actually, forget about more than those things. People who like books as much as, no, even close to liking reading as much as those things are very difficult to find. The only time anyone is seen with a book, I ask them what they’re reading, and they just sigh and say, “Oh, it’s just something stupid for English class” (sorry, Mr. B-G). They’re not even interested in what they’re reading, and some people don’t even want to care. Huxley was right when he predicted a lack of interest in literature. It starts with the youth, and how they grow up without ever picking one up out of their own free will. The youth become the adults, passing the same attitude towards their kids. And it only continues, until the word “book” is ironically removed from the books of history.

George Orwell saw a world where people are controlled by fear and monitored by the Thought Police. This ominous presence keeps people in line by observing their subtle facial twitches for any signs of disobedient thoughts, and hiring people who listen in and talk to people
and report them for talk of rebellion.

“There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live -- did live, from habit that became instinct -- in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized” (Orwell).

It is something that Orwell saw just a little bit differently than Huxley, and his view of surveillance matches that of our present day. With our actions in the hallways being recorded, our streets observable, and our public places are now on the prowl for anyone that enacts what they call “suspicious activity”. In a recent article on tgdaily.com, David Gomez notes on a recent change: how Wal-Mart is now asking people to report any suspicious behavior, much like the Thought Police and Big Brother out of Orwell’s 1984. “That’s what the DHS’s ‘Minister of National Security Propaganda’ Napolitano is asking loyal Wal-Mart fans to do though. Spot out the ones who don’t act the way we command and drop the dime on them” (Gomez).

The fact that an average citizen is being asked to point out persons or peculiar interest is unusual in and of itself and it just makes it all the eerier that this is a direct warning sign of dystopia, if ever there was one. The fact that satellites are capable of viewing a nickel from a thousand miles away frightens me, and keeps me wondering when they’ll be able to see through the roof of my house just to see what I’m up to. It’s the first step towards full-time surveillance, but this step seems to be coming at a run, not a walk. Some call it paranoia, a while I call it a cautious awareness.
Technology is astounding. In a few short decades, we have seen what it is capable of, and where it’s heading for in tomorrow’s world. In *Brave New World*, that potential is brought over to the dark side, and even something as natural as reproduction is brought under the control of the World State.

"'Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines!’ The voice was almost tremulous with enthusiasm. ‘You really know where you are. For the first time in history.’ He quoted the planetary motto. ‘Community, Identity, Stability.’ Grand words. ‘If we could bokanovskify indefinitely the whole problem would be solved’" (Huxley).

Individuals are no longer born. They are made en masse by machines and people playing God watch over them. From the very beginning the lives of people are controlled, because from birth humans are created and conditioned to be what the World State needs them to be, from low level, working class Epsilons to the intellectual and upper-class Alphas. Modern science has revealed new methods, and has given us the keys to unlock our genetic algorithm. This means that slowly, we are gaining the ability to mass produce ourselves, and shape each one as we need. In this day, the World State’s reproduction method is not put to use mostly because of the outstanding moral issues it poses. But, in Huxley’s vision, the population of the world won’t care anymore, because they’ve got other things to worry about, like Feelies and soma consumption.

’‘Going to the Feelies this evening, Henry?’ enquired the Assistant Predestinator. ‘I hear the new one at the Alhambra is first-rate. There’s a love scene on a bearskin rug; they say it’s marvelous. Every hair of the bear reproduced. The most amazing tactual effects’” (Huxley).

A Feelie in *Brave New World* is a movie where people feel what is happening on-screen. Much like today’s 3-D movies, it supposedly enhances the viewing experience, and takes you away from it all. Today’s mediums of entertainment are becoming more and more life-like, so
much so that you forget you’re in a theater, or sitting in front of a TV screen with a hunk of plastic in your hand. Video game technology has progressed to the point where, to the inexperienced eye, a game cannot be differentiated from a movie, or a picture. New stories and techniques are designed to pull you away from reality, and make you forget about the outside world.

Other technological frivolities up the ante even more significantly by keeping our eyes on a screen much more so than the world around us by letting us browse the internet while mobile. When Apple’s iPad launched, it revolutionized the mobile device. It utilized a multi-touch display, and had the ability to go on the internet anywhere...even on the go. It keeps us in a constant daze, almost unsure of what’s going on around us. Even when we try to become aware of what is going on by reading articles on the internet, most of the information is skewed, or wrong entirely. Being misinformed is just as bad as being ill informed. Big businesses flash new, shiny things at us and most people can’t help but stop and admire. It may improve our lives, but Huxley saw it as it is: a dangerous invention that may well control is indirectly with its everlasting allure and ease-of-access, they won't take us over by force as other writers have predicting. We'll just sit back and let them do the taking over for us.

Technology, drugs, sex. These three things form an echelon of control by ignorance, and pleasure. Through these things it how the higher officials and political powers keep our strings invisible while still being able to pull them as they see fit. We have become oblivious to the dark course our history is taking, and no one seems to care. Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World was a near perfect picture to the future, and the only way he could have seen it more clearly was to borrow Emmet Brown’s Delorean.

While George Orwell did have some things right, those things are inevitably clouded by the human factor. People who don’t see any problem won’t give so much as an attempt to fix it, let alone speak up about their views if it means social disgrace. Aldous Huxley was most certainly a man of perception and forethought. He saw people for what they are, and created a
fiction based entirely in fact. Even in the process of writing this essay, I have stopped and stared at my computer screen, realizing that not only has Huxley seen the future for what it will be, I am contributing to it myself by typing this essay out on paper and using the Internet to submit it for a grade, for approval by both my teacher and family. It seems small to what most people are doing to egg on this horrifying dystopia, but the fact that I have been oblivious to it all up until this final paragraph that I see just how easy it is to get lost in the convenience of today’s world, and how wonderful ignorance really is. Huxley saw it, and I’m seeing it as I type these final words. I can only hope the rest of the world will before it’s too late and we’re all popping soma to forget about a horrible nightmare that will be known forever as the world that could’ve saved us all.
Works Cited


