

Aldous Huxley: Brave New World

The World Controller and John the "Savage" are discussing the concept of the Brave New World society that wants to free people of all unhappiness. The world government wants to achieve this by prohibiting art, history and religion; instead they give the people drugs that keep them in a state of non-thinking overall happiness so that they do not criticize anything. In this passage at the end of the novel John questions this concept.

"Isn't there something in living dangerously?"

"There's a great deal in it," the Controller replied. "Men and women must have their adrenals stimulated from time to time."

"What?" questioned the Savage, uncomprehending.

5 "It's one of the conditions of perfect health. That's why we've made the V.P.S. treatment compulsory."

"V.P.S.?"

"Violent Passion Surrogate. Regularly once a month. We flood the whole system with adrenin. It's the complete physiological equivalent
10 of fear and rage. All the tonic effects of murdering Desdemona and being murdered by Othello, without any of the inconveniences."

"But I like the inconveniences."

"We don't," said the Controller. "We prefer to do things comfortably."

15 "But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."

"In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."

"All right, then," said the Savage defiantly, "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy."

20 "Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind."

25 There was a long silence.

"I claim them all," said the Savage at last.

Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders.

"You're welcome," he said.

From *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, pp. 218f. Published by Chatto & Windus.
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Task:

This text may well be used for a lively discussion in the "30 Minutes" Talk Show or any other panel discussion on the pros and cons of a "stable" society.

1 **isn't there something in living dangerously?** isn't there a good side to it? • 4 **uncomprehending** not understanding • 8 **surrogate** substitute (*Ersatz*) • 10 **tonic** something that makes you feel stronger and more cheerful • 10 **Desdemona** is murdered by Othello in the Shakespearean tragedy *Othello* • 11 **inconvenience** discomfort • 22 **apprehension** feelings of worry and fear about the future • 23 **typhoid** infectious disease (*Typhus*)