

# Aldous Huxley, Brave New World The Good Savage – Rousseau

Ana-Maria TORKOS\*

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## Abstract

*The Noble Savage is an idealized concept of the uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. It is a romantic conception of a man enjoying a natural and noble existence until civilization makes him a slave and corrupts him. John the Savage is the son born of parents from the Brave New World, but raised in the Savage Reservation, John represents a challenge to the dystopia. He is the character closest to being the hero of the novel. John is labelled a savage in Brave New World because he rejects society's values and prefers to live as people did in older times. Even though he rejects the society tells him is civilized John is closest in mindset and experience to what we consider civilized today. John is the only character in the novel born naturally of a mother, as opposed being born in a laboratory from a test-tube procedure. John maintains a familial relationship with his mother, while the other characters never know their parents. John reads Shakespeare as a hobby, while the other characters use drugs and sex as their only sources of recreation. And finally, once in London, John abhors society and claims that freedom and individuality should never be sacrificed for the sake of stability.*

**Keywords:** Rousseau; Huxley; John the Savage; the outsider

In my essay I focus on the idea of the Noble Savage – Good Savage of Jean Jacques Rousseau, I pinpoint the terms of utopia and dystopia, I highlight the main character of Aldous' Huxley – *Brave New World* – John the Savage.

The Good Savage represents the Noble Savage, which, in literature is an idealized concept of the uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. It is a romantic conception of a man enjoying a natural and noble existence until civilization makes him a slave and corrupts him.

The glorification of the noble savage is a dominant theme in the romantic writings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

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\* University of Craiova



Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), a Swiss-born writer, philosopher, political theorist, and education reformist was one of the most influential thinkers of the Enlightenment, who inspired the leaders of the French Revolution and the Romantic generation. His ideas had an impact on the development of the popular novel and the discovery approach to education.

Moreover, he took political and ethical thinking in new directions. His reform revolutionized taste, first in music, then in other areas. He had a profound impact on people's routines; he taught parents to take a new interest in their children and educate them differently; he promoted the expression of emotion rather than polite restraint in friendship and love.

He introduced the cult of religious sentiment among people who had abandoned religious dogma. He opened people's eyes to the beauties of nature, and he made liberty an object of almost universal aspiration.

In 1755, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. It was widely read and solidified Rousseau's place as an intellectual figure. He affirmed that the original man, while solitary, was happy, good by nature, and free. The vices dated from the formation of societies, and the complex historical events corrupted the people.

He highlights that man lives a life free of all cares in a state of nature. He experiences no wants other than food, a female, and sleep, all of which are easily satisfied. Rousseau imagines his savage:

Let us conclude then that man in a state of nature wandering up and down the forests, without industry, without speech, and without home, an equal stranger to war and to all ties, neither standing in need of his fellow-creatures nor having any desire to hurt them, and perhaps even not distinguishing them one from another; let us conclude that, being self-sufficient and subject to so few passions, he could have no feelings or knowledge but such as befitted his situation; that he felt only his actual necessities, and disregarded everything he did not think himself immediately concerned to notice, and that his understanding made no greater progress than his vanity. If by accident he made any discovery, he was the less able to communicate it to others, as he did not know even his own children. Every art would necessarily perish with its inventor, where there was no kind of education among men, and generations succeeded generations without the least advance; when, all setting out from the same point, centuries must have elapsed in the barbarism of the first ages; when the race was already old, and man remained a child. (Rousseau, 2018: 37-38)

His proclamation that „Man is born free and everywhere he is chains” is the opening sentence of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*.

Written in 1762, *The Social Contract* continues the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, and it defines the natural man as being free and happy and living in the forest.



Rousseau explains how man went from this state of autonomy to the modern conditions, dominated by inequality, dependency, violence, and unhappiness. He admits that there are positive aspects: the creation of families, the discovery of tools, and technology, and the building of cities and social organizations.

Unfortunately, this also gives way to what Rousseau called the right of the strongest, where a reign of inequality destroys man's original state of happiness.

Rousseau believed that the original man was free from sin, appetite, or the concept of right and wrong, and those deemed to be savages were not brutal but noble.

Aldous Huxley was inspired by Rousseau's philosophy. The society he depicts is on the opposite end of the perfect peaceful world, Rousseau was imagining. It demonstrates once again, that, while being different philosophic views on how the perfect society would appear and work, they are nearly possible to materialize because there is always something, even the tiniest detail, that could turn everything around.

*Brave New World* is a dystopian social science fiction novel by Aldous Huxley, an English author, and it was published in 1932.

In a futuristic World State, the novel opens in London, nearly six hundred years in the future (after Ford). Human life has been almost entirely industrialized; the citizens are environmentally engineered into an intelligence-based social hierarchy. Genetic engineering and psychological conditioning have created a society of contented and happy citizens.

Because each person in the World State has been programmed to be perfectly suited to his or her position and to pity members of various social groups, drives like ambition, dissatisfaction and envy have vanished. Strong sentiments of love and jealousy are presented by frequent, indiscriminate sexual activity, and any temporary feelings other than contentment are relieved with drugs.

The people of the World State are happy, but their lives are meaningless, and most of the main characters have a faint sense that their way of life is not as idyllic as they have been taught. The lack of any art, history, religion or familial ties shows us that their lives while pointless, are also empty. The need for the drug soma to make citizens obedient and submissive shows us that their utopia is an artificial condition that requires ongoing maintenance and that if mankind were left to their ways, they would quickly revert to conflict, crime, war, and suffering.

The only truly content characters are those who blinded themselves to the reality of their situation by taking drugs.

*Brave New World* offers huge scientific advancements in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation, and classical conditioning that are combined to make a dystopian society.



Huxley contributes to a long tradition, the utopian fiction, which first appeared in English in Sir Thomas More – *Utopia*, a fictional portrayal of a faraway country whose aspects invite comparison with More's England. More utilized his fictional *Utopia* to highlight the weaknesses in his real society.

In precise terms, Huxley novel's *Brave New World* is not a utopia. Huxley coined the term „negative utopia” to describe his reality, which is the absolute opposite of the classic utopia. Readers also used the term „dystopia”, which means bad place, to describe Huxley's and other fictional worlds.

Huxley's attempt to construct a futuristic world and then present John the Savage as an outsider in *Brave New World* necessitated a different kind of unusual structure. To achieve his objective, Huxley breaks the novel into three parts.

The dystopia – the London of the future, is established in the first section of the story, with enough information and background to encourage the reader to accept the world as it is.

The first scene presents a tour of a lab where human beings are created and conditioned according to society's rigorous structure, offering a dehumanized life. Birth, aging, and death are all depicted as horrors in the novel.

In a world where material comfort and physical pleasure are given by the drug soma, as well as recreational sex, Bernard Marx, an Alpha-Plus psychologist, appears as the single discounted person.

Despite being rejected by the women, Bernard manages to convince Lenina Crowne, a pneumatic beauty, to spend a vacation week with him at the isolated Savage Reservation in New Mexico, far from London's controlled technological world.

Before Bernard's departure, his superior confesses that he has visited the Savage Reservation.

The second section transports the reader to a completely different environment – the Savage Reservation, to witness the astonishment of London inhabitants visiting it as tourists.

Moreover, the central part introduces the true protagonist, John, in the only world he has known since birth.

While being in the Savage Reservation with Lenina, Bernard encounters a woman from London who gave birth to a boy approximately 20 years ago. The man returns to London with Linda and John, and he introduces them to the D.H.C. (the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning).

Thomas (Tomakin) Grahambell leaves in terror, shocked and humiliated by the confirmation of his awful connection with natural childbirth.



The third section describes John's existence in London and his struggle with dystopia.

Bernard enjoys incredible success, due to his affiliation with John, referred to as the Savage.

John's anger and brutality are sparked by Lenina's unsuccessful seduction, and subsequently, Linda's death enrages him even more.

Finally, John's effort to dissuade a crowd of Deltas from getting their soma dose results in a conflict, which leads to his imprisonment, along with Bernard and Helmholtz Watson, an engineer who aspires to be a poet.

The three men are judged by Mustapha Mond, the judge of World Controller, who recognizes the problems in this brave new world, but declares that the sacrifice of freedom and individuality is a modest price to pay for stability.

Bernard and Helmholtz are exiled to Falkland Island, while John is forced to remain in London.

When his two friends go to their banishment, John plans to seek refuge in an isolated lighthouse outside of town. There, he uses ritual whippings and vomiting to purge himself of civilization.

Reporters and spectators are drawn in by the spectacle of John's outrageous penances, and he becomes a public curiosity, a kind of an animal in a zoo.

When Lenina joins the group, the violence escalates into a sexual orgy in conformity with their social training. John wakes up the next day from the soma's effects. He realizes what he has done.

The novel ends with the image of John's lifeless body hanging in his lighthouse retreat.

John the Savage is the natural-born son of Brave New World parents. In the novel, he represents a unique human being with an identity and family relationship, unlike any other character.

He grows up in poverty and misery on the Savage Reservation, despite being the son of two upper-caste Londoners. John is not a part of Malpais or London because he feels disconnected and rejected. Shakespeare's imagined universe is his sole civilization, which he embraces with energy and misguided idealism.

Although Bernard Marx is the main character in Brave New World until his excursion to the Reservation with Lenina, after that he fades into the background and John takes over as the main character.

John first enters the story by expressing his interest in joining an Indian religious ritual, which Bernard and Lenina find repulsive.

Because he is not allowed to participate in their ceremony, John's desire makes him an outsider among the Indians. It also reveals the vast cultural gap between him and the culture of the World State.



John is the most important and intriguing character in *Brave New World*.

On the Reservation, where Indians still practice marriage, natural birth, family life, and Religion, John is an intruder, as well as in the civilized World State, built on the principle of stability and happiness.

John is intensely moral according to a code that has been taught by Shakespeare and life in Malpais but is also naïve. Because he is unwanted in Malpais, he accepts the invitation to travel to London and he is initially astonished by the comforts of the World State. He asserts that its technological wonders and consumerism are poor alternatives for individual freedom, human dignity, and personal integrity.

John remains committed to the values that exist only in his poetry. He rejects society's values by turning down Lenina's proposals. He takes risks by encouraging Deltas to revolt and throwing the soma.

Despite John's disdain for conditioning, Huxley shows that he, too, has been conditioned. John links sex with humiliation, pain, and character suffering because of his life in Malpais, and his damaging perception receives even more power in John's response to Shakespeare's poetry.

John's conditioning limits his ability to act freely, making him a deeply flawed potential hero. His death is the result of his imperfect understanding as well as the inhuman forces of the brave new world.

John is the ultimate outsider in the World State because he grew up on the Savage Reservation, where none of the World State's technologies or forms of social control have been introduced. John feels that the objective of life is to seek the truth, rather than to be happy.

John becomes the central character of the novel because rejected by the savage Indian culture and the civilized World State culture, he is the ultimate outsider.

The physical description of the Savage reveals the conflict within him, he is dressed like an Indian, but his straw-coloured hair, pale blue eyes, and light-coloured skin betray his origin: „The dress of young man who now stepped out on to the terrace was Indian, but his plaited hair was straw-coloured, his eyes a pale blue, and his skin a white skin bronzed.” (Huxley, 1998:50)

His life on the Reservation is miserable because he is not accepted by the other savages and cannot understand the way of his own mother, as a result, he is isolated and longs for something better. He is repulsed by the sterility and rigidity of the new world.

John becomes a symbol of the primitive pitted against utopia, the old pitted against the new world order he is not accepted, he still values human emotions, art, literature, and family ties. Unable to accept the cold conformity and promiscuity of the new world, John really has no place.



The novel contains many references to Shakespeare, including quotes from several plays, likening the futuristic concerns of the book's character and the timeless human struggles depicted by Shakespeare centuries ago.

As an outsider, John gets his values from William Shakespeare. John's extensive knowledge of Shakespeare's work advantages him in several ways: it allows him to express his complex emotions and reactions, it gives him a framework from which to criticize World State values, and it provides him with language that allows him to hold his own against the formidable rhetorical skill of Mustapha Mond during their confrontation.

John's insistence on seeing the world through Shakespeare's eyes, on the other hand, occasionally blinds him to the reality of other characters, particularly Lenina, who is alternatively a heroine and a strumpet in his opinion.

The act of sex is controlled by a system of social rewards for promiscuity and lack of commitment. John, an outsider, is tormented by his passion for Lenina and her inability to return his love as much. He is attracted by Lenina but is repulsed by the promiscuous sexuality she's been conditioned to practice, and he turns on her when she tries to seduce him, repeatedly hurling the Shakespearean insult *strumpet*.

The conflict between John's desire for love and Lenina's desire for love exemplifies the enormous value differences between the World State and the humanity represented by Shakespeare's work.

Shakespeare embodies all the human and humanitarian values that have been abandoned in the World State. John's rejection of the shallow happiness of the World State, including his inability to reconcile his world and desire for Lenina, as well as his eventual suicide. The Savage's suicide is an extreme type of protest against the mechanical life in the mass community.

When John comes into real contact with the World State, his naïve optimism about it expressed in the words from Shakespeare's *Tempest* that form the novel's title, is crushed: „O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are those here! / How beauteous mankind is! / O brave new world, / That has such people isn't.”

As he learns more about the State, the phrase *brave new world* takes on a more ironic and pessimistic tone. John's involvement in the final orgy, as well as his suicide at the novel's end, can be viewed as the consequence of insanity brought on by a fundamental conflict between his values and the reality of the world around him.

The words and phrases of the World State are propaganda, in that they contain no actual truth, and are tools of repression rather than enlightenment.





Although most of the characters regard John as primitive and his actions uncivilized, Huxley suggests that John is the single civilized character.

When Linda is dying, for example, John is wracked by contradictory childhood memories: „there was only a hateful resurrection of jealousies and ugliness's and miseries ... He tried to think about times when he sat on her knee ...". (Huxley, 1998:88)

John's attempt to reconcile conflicting sentiments makes him completely human. Near the end of the novel, John's fight to overcome human instincts like lust and the desire for comfort grows more intense.

In Linda's hospital room, John was reminiscing about his youth, and her description of London made it sound like heaven or paradise. John demonstrates that despite the fact that real London is considerably different, he still considers the place in his memories to be heaven:

And long evening by the fire or, in summertime, on the roof of the little house, when she told him those stories about the Other Place, whose memory, as of a heaven, a paradise of goodness and loveliness, he still kept wide and intact, undefiled by contact with the reality of his real London, these actual civilized men and women. (Huxley, 1998:87)

After Linda's death because of soma addiction, John started a brief revolt in the hospital entryway. When he is arrested, he has a discussion with Mustapha Mond about the importance of truth versus happiness and stability, explaining that he would be miserable and free than be enslaved by the World State. As a result, he decides to move into a remote lighthouse where he can be alone and self-sufficient, practicing austerities such as whipping himself whenever he becomes too happy or daydreaming about Lenina. When the World State media and curious spectators start flacking to the Lighthouse, including Lenina, he ends up sparking a massive orgy. The next day, he hangs himself in shame.

Huxley indicates that John's decision to kill himself is tragic, but comprehensible, by juxtaposing the thoughtless cruelty of the photographer, who hopes to get a good shot of John whipping himself.

## Conclusions

The Noble Savage is an idealized concept of the uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. It is a romantic conception of a man enjoying a natural and noble existence until civilization makes him a slave and corrupts him.

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