

The Perennial Perversion: Selfness Writ Large in *Brave New World*

The fundamental question of the Perennial Philosophy is as follows: How does one transcend the separative self and realize its unity with everything? In his nonfiction work, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Aldous Huxley provides an answer by anthologizing numerous mystical writings across various religions. In his science fiction satire, *Brave New World*, Huxley provides a very different answer by discarding mysticism altogether. In the former, he stresses the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground as the final end of man. In the latter, he replaces this metaphysical Ground with decidedly man-made institutions, declaring that union is possible through social order alone.

Indeed, the *Brave New World* appears spiritually promising. The World State incorporates self-transcendence in all aspects of its social fabric. The beliefs and mantras recited by the World State are staggeringly similar to those of the Perennial Philosophy. Its rituals and ceremonies are embedded with religious veneration and succeed in facilitating interconnectedness among its practitioners. Its citizens appear blissfully happy, their apparent peace reflected repeatedly across the pages of *Brave New World*.

Can the Perennial question be answered by circumventing Perennialism altogether? Unsurprisingly, Aldous Huxley's answer is a resounding "no"; God is not mocked. The World State "self writ large" is very much intact. The purported self-transcendence of the World State is a lie, one of the many instruments used by the World Controllers to subdue its population into willing subservience. Though Huxley appears to imbue the World State ideology with self-naughtings and oneness redolent of the Perennial Philosophy, Huxley's World State actually idolatrizes selfness, which is spiritually and psychologically detrimental to its inhabitants.

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1. Apparent Perennialism of the World State

In the introduction to *The Perennial Philosophy*, Aldous Huxley defines the titular philosophy as “the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, Divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being” (Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* vii). To realize this unitive knowledge, practitioners must transcend their “selfness” and recognize their unity with the divine Ground. “As all exponents of the Perennial Philosophy have constantly insisted,” Huxley writes, “man’s obsessive consciousness of, and insistence on being, a separate self is the final and most formidable obstacle to the unitive knowledge of God” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 36).

In *Brave New World*, the dystopian World State appears to embody these Perennial themes by fostering the renunciation of individual self in favor of a collective identity. Using the World State ideology, Huxley conflates this collective identity with a seemingly-transcendent “oneness that is the ground and principle of all multiplicity” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 5). The World State motto, “Community, Identity, Stability”, juxtaposes “community” and “identity” and thus negates man’s individual identity by placing it firmly in relation to his fellow man (Huxley, *Brave New World* 3).

To realize this ideological emphasis on collective identity, the World State translates its ideology into social structures and institutions that facilitate self-annihilation. For example, Mustapha Mond explains, “people never are alone now . . . We make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so that it’s almost impossible for them ever to have it” (*Brave New World* 235). The World State biologically engineers dozens of Bokanovsky twins who characterize its inhabitants and reinforce its collective identity. Its racial and gender equality suggests an

advanced cultural oneness and interconnectedness among its members. Through institutionalized Pavlovian conditioning, it hinders cultivation of individual interests (e.g. nature and reading).

Moreover, the World State sanctions recreation that is always collectively-oriented, whether its members partake in Community Sings, Obstacle Golf, or Centrifugal Bumble-Puppy. When coupled with the ego-dissolving *soma*, such communal activities become supra-communal and highly suggestive of the self-eclipsing mortifications necessary for unitive knowledge. For instance, when Lenina Crowne and Henry Foster dance under “the perennially blue sky” on *soma*-holiday, “they might have been twin embryos gently rocking together on the waves of a bottled ocean of blood-surrogate” (*Brave New World* 76).

In addition to ideology, institution, and recreation, the World State perpetuates self-naughting through its ostensibly-transcendent rituals. For example, the Solidarity Service imbues the World State collective identity with religious fervor and Perennial themes of self-denial, death and rebirth, oneness, and love. During this ceremony, “Twelve of them [are] ready to be made one, waiting to come together, to be fused, to lose their twelve separate identities in a larger being” (*Brave New World* 80). Upon hearing the repetitive, mantra-like music, “it was not the ear that heard the pulsing rhythm . . . but the yearning bowels of compassion”. They “drink to their annihilation” and bear witness to the most explicitly-unitive language in *Brave New World*.

Ford, we are twelve; oh, make us one,

Like drops within the Social River;

O, make us now together run

As swiftly as thy shining Flivver.

Come, Greater Being, Social Friend,

Annihilating Twelve-in-One!

We long to die, for when we end,

Our larger life has but begun.

Feel how the Greater Being comes!

Rejoice and, in rejoicings, die!

Melt in the music of the drums!

For I am you and you are I. (Brave New World 81-82)

These excerpts share much in common with Huxley's conception of holiness, "the total denial of the separative self. . . and the abandonment of the will to God" (*The Perennial Philosophy* 98). They are also infused with deeply spiritual motifs characteristic of anthologized quotations in *The Perennial Philosophy*. For example, "When the Ten Thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been", or "Behold but One in all things, it is the second that leads you astray" (Sen T'sen, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 14; Kabir, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 10).

Taken together, the deceptive scope of *Brave New World's* self-eclipsing commonalities with the Perennial Philosophy seems to imply a Perennial Brave New World. In actuality, these superficial similarities comprise a self-augmenting and self-worshipping ideology that furthers the World State from true unitive knowledge. This "selfness writ large" is a perversion of the Perennial Philosophy—the highest idolatry of which Huxley warns.

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2. The Perennial Perversion: Idolatrous Self-Worship

Though the World State minimizes individual self in favor of a seemingly Perennial collective identity, it actually glorifies and worships the collective self over the unitive Self. Understanding the World State collective identity requires examining its identifications. As Huxley argues, “we are free to identify ourselves with an almost infinite number of possible objects” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 40). Whether these objects encourage separative selfness or union with God determine perceived identity and thus what can be known, since knowledge is a function of being (*The Perennial Philosophy* vii). Ironically, the World State’s identifications are perverted in favor of a “self writ large”, evinced by its reliance on instant gratification, consumerism, technology and progress, and social order as *ersatz* for genuine liberation.

Regarding instant gratification and consumerism, Mustapha Mond argues that “industrial civilization is only possible when there’s no self-denial. Self-indulgence up to the very limits imposed by hygiene and economics. Otherwise the wheels stop turning” (*Brave New World* 45). The *Katha Upanishad*, anthologized in *The Perennial Philosophy*, admonishes such self-augmentation: “He who has not given up the ways of vice, who cannot control himself, who is not at peace within, whose mind is distracted, can never realize the Self, though full of all the learning in the world” (*Katha Upanishad*, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 208). In his explanation of Buddhism’s Second Noble Truth, Huston Smith argues that the “cause of life’s dislocation is *tanha* . . . a specific kind of desire, the desire for private fulfillment” (Smith 102). Christmas Humphreys affirms that these desires “increase separateness, the separate existence of the subject of desire; in fact, all forms of selfishness” (Humphreys 91).

Similarly, the World State identifies with technology and progress, venerating them to divinity. In describing the Bokanofsky process, *Brave New World*’s omniscient narrator wryly

remarks, “Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress”, celebrating “the principle of mass production at last applied to biology” (*Brave New World* 6-7). Buttressed by the “Religion of Inevitable Progress”, the World State’s commodification extends to culture (*The Perennial Philosophy* 79). Mond recounts that “Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness. Mass production demanded the shift. Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can’t” (*Brave New World* 228). In response, Huxley writes:

At no period in history has cleverness been so highly valued . . . Because technology advances, we fancy that we are making corresponding progress along the line; because we have considerable power over inanimate nature, we are convinced that we are the self-sufficient masters of our fate and captains of our souls; and because cleverness has given us technology and power, we believe, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, that we have only to go on being yet cleverer in a yet more systematic way to achieve social order, international peace, and personal happiness. (*The Perennial Philosophy* 142)

According to Huxley, this “idolatrous” overvaluation of things in time is “the hope and faith . . . that one can get something for nothing” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 79, 95).

But men are not content to be merely kind and clever . . . They aspire to relate their actions, and the thoughts and feelings accompanying those actions, to general principles and a philosophy on the cosmic scale. When this directing and explanatory philosophy is not the Perennial Philosophy . . . it takes the form of a pseudo-religion, a system of organized idolatry. Thus, the simple wish not to starve, the well-founded conviction that it is very difficult to be good or wise or happy when one is desperately hungry, comes to be elaborated, under the influence of the metaphysic of Inevitable Progress, into

prophetic Utopianism; the desire to escape from oppression and exploitation comes to be explained and guided by a belief in apocalyptic revolutionism . . . (*The Perennial Philosophy* 201)

The consequences of such “apocalyptic revolutionism” are evident in the pages of *Brave New World*: the cancelled capacity to achieve the final end of man—unitive knowledge of the divine Ground.

The most separative, ego-ridden World State identification is also its most pernicious perversion: its deification of social order in place of genuine unitive knowledge. When explaining why the World State withholds books about God from its inhabitants, Mustapha Mond answers, “For the same reason as we don’t give them *Othello*: they’re old; they’re about God hundreds of years ago. Not about God now” (*Brave New World* 231). He emphasizes that “God isn’t compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness”, adding, “‘One of the numerous things in heaven and earth that these philosophers didn’t dream about was this’ (he waved his hand), ‘us, the modern world . . . we can be independent of God... What need have we of . . . something immovable, when there is the social order?’” (*Brave New World* 233-234).

In response, Huxley patently rejects the Controller’s proposition. He quotes St. John of the Cross: “All our goodness is a loan; God is the owner. God works and his work is God” (St. John of the Cross, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 168). We cover the sky and say there is no heaven, rejecting our metaphysical dependence and manufacturing false deities in the desperate hope that idols can save us.

How different is the case with the developed and more modern forms of idolatry! These have achieved not merely survival, but the highest degree of respectability. They are

recommended by men of science as an up-to-date substitute for genuine religion and by many professional religious teachers are equated with the worship of God . . . it sets up, as objects of admiration, faith and worship, a pantheon of strictly human ideas and ideals.

(The Perennial Philosophy 250)

Even man himself is not immune to World State worship, despite the State's purported minimization of the individual. For example, Henry Ford is the *de facto* World State deity and embodiment of all aforementioned identifications. Exalted 104 times in *Brave New World*, Ford is the revered mainspring of pseudo-religious worship in the World State. Mond is treated the same way: "His fordship Mustapha Mond! The eyes of the saluting students almost popped out of their heads. Mustapha Mond! The Resident Controller for Western Europe! One of the Ten World Controllers. One of the Ten..." (*Brave New World* 34).

Indeed, the World State may see to the death of the Perennial Philosophy, but not to religious zeal nor idolatry. Huxley notes that "every human being loves power and self-enhancement, and every hallowed ceremony, form of words or sacramental rite is a channel through which power can flow out of the fascinating psychic universe into the universe of embodied selves" (*The Perennial Philosophy* 269-270). Observing this "solarization of man", anthropologist Ernest Becker calls it "macrocosmization, [wherein] man simply takes himself or parts of himself and blows them up to cosmic importance" (Becker 18). Similarly, he describes microcosmization as the humanization of the cosmos, "projecting all imaginable earthly things onto the heavens". Through these techniques, "man entwined his own destiny with that of the cosmos by bringing the heavens into human affairs and by blowing himself up as the center of concern of the universe" (Becker 54). Both principles, insistent in the *Brave New World*, systematically mislead its inhabitants to false union with religious fervor.

The Solidarity Service, adorned in the finest idolatrous ornaments, typifies this phenomenon and provides insight into the extent that this perversion infects the World State. As well as idolatrizing self-worship, it posits that oneness and self-annihilation are sufficient to achieve salvation. Huxley disagrees in *The Perennial Philosophy*: “This self-naughting is never . . . regarded as an end in itself. It possesses merely an instrumental value, as the indispensable means to something else” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 96-97). This “something else” is unrealizable in the World State. Thus, the “rich and living peace” claimed by its participants is a lie; no purported consummation has been achieved (*Brave New World* 86). No amount of socially-sanctioned ego dissolution can change the unwavering “selfness writ large” of the World State, nor the consequent fact that “the more there is of self, the less there is of God” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 96).

In conclusion, each aforementioned identification does nothing to help World State civilians eschew their separate selfness, nor does it help them achieve the Perennial oneness promised of the World State. Instead, the opposite holds; taken together, they comprise a collective identity that cultivates a “self writ large”. Not only does this Perennial Perversion prevent them from attaining unitive knowledge, it destructively misleads as it cloaks itself in the most convincing Perennial clothing.

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3. Consequences of the Perennial Perversion

Of course, the chief ramification of the World State's Perennial Perversion is its failure to develop a society able to achieve unity with the Divine Ground, despite false promises of unitive liberation. Throughout *The Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley insists that "the nature of things is such that the unitive knowledge of the Ground which is contingent upon the achievement of a total selflessness cannot possibly be realized . . . by those who are not yet selfless" (*The Perennial Philosophy* 207).

Here it may be remarked that the cult of unity on the political level is only an idolatrous *ersatz* for the genuine religion of unity on the personal and spiritual levels. Totalitarian regimes justify their existence by means of a philosophy of political monism, according to which the state is God on earth, unification under the heel of the divine state is salvation, and all means to such unification, however intrinsically wicked, are right and may be used without scruple . . . All such negative emotions are fatal to the spiritual life. Only the pure in heart and poor in spirit can come to the unitive knowledge of God.

Hence, the attempt to impose more unity upon societies than their individual members are ready for makes it psychologically almost impossible for those individuals to realize their unity with the divine Ground and with one another. (*The Perennial Philosophy* 11)

Along with the self-augmenting identifications and idolatrous unity of the World State that render the Perennial Philosophy inaccessible, the State inhibits two salient mechanisms through which genuine deliverance can occur: grace and free will. According to St. Bernard, "Grace is necessary to salvation, free will equally so—but grace in order to give salvation, free will in order to receive it. Therefore we should not attribute part of the good work to grace and part to free will; it is performed in its entirety by the common and inseparable action of both;

entirely by grace, entirely by free will, but springing from the first in the second” (St. Bernard, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 173-174).

Regarding grace, Huxley writes the following:

Here we may remark in passing that mechanization is incompatible with inspiration . . .

Among the many and enormous advantages of efficient automatic machinery is this: it is completely fool-proof. But every gain has to be paid for: The automatic machine is fool-proof; but just because it is fool-proof it is also grace-proof. The man who tends such a machine is impervious to every form of aesthetic inspiration, whether of human or of genuinely spiritual origin. (*The Perennial Philosophy* 171)

The State’s deification of technology results in a “grace-proof” Brave New World, where “nothing is running naturally; everything is systematical, accurately planned, and totally mechanical; [and] there is no room left for human sentiments” (Dwikat and al-Khawaldeh 3). As a result, the World State society cannot be helped by this “powerful force . . . which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 166; Peck 260).

In addition to grace, free will “is that which has all the power; it makes heaven and it makes hell; for there is no hell but where the will of the creature is turned from God, nor any heaven but where the will of the creature worketh with God” (William Law, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 174). However, genetic engineering and Pavlovian conditioning render a “will-proof” World State. Its members are stripped of the ability to choose and consequently robbed of any chance for salvation. As a result, they fall victim to the nagging spiritual torment of which the *Theologia Germanica* warns: “Nothing burns in hell but the self” (*Theologia Germanica*, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 177).

In short, World State citizens live where neither grace nor free will exists. Without them, the State guarantees idolatrous spiritual control over its populace, rendering genuine unitive knowledge impossible. This systematic and deliberate obstruction of truth creates a spiritually and psychologically damaged World State, perhaps the gravest consequence of the Perennial Perversion.

How can we argue that the World State populace is psychologically damaged when it believes in its happiness and stability? Answering this question requires broadening the consequences of selfness beyond the external. Although these repercussions are not the traditional evils caused by idolatrous self-worship, Huxley sides with the Greeks who “believed that *hubris* was always followed by *nemesis*, that if you went too far you would get a knock on the head to remind you that the gods will not tolerate insolence on the part of mortal men . . . We wish pride to have a fall, and we see that very often it does fall” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 77).

Where does it fall? Huxley provides a partial answer: “Man’s capacity to crave more violently than any animal for the intensification of his separateness results . . . in moral evil and the sufferings which moral evil inflicts” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 229). In the World State, the *nemesis* is the inflicted moral evil and internal spiritual suffering that falls on its inhabitants as a result of their inability to realize their innate desire for salvation.

Suffering lurks beneath the state-sanctioned gratification precisely because such gratification is empty and insufficient. In *Brave New World*, Mustapha Mond asks, “Has any of you been compelled to live through a long time-interval between the consciousness of a desire and its fulfillment?” (*Brave New World* 45). Though the State’s answer is a resounding “no”, these instant gratifications do nothing to stave off the agitation faced by World State society. Huston Smith explains why: “Throughout each attainment seems to fan the flames of new desire;

none satisfies fully; and all, it becomes evident, perish with time . . . the problem stems from the smallness of the self they have been scrambling to serve” (Smith 18).

Furthermore, Smith argues that “pleasure is not all that one wants . . . it is too trivial to satisfy one’s total nature”. (Smith 14). According to William Law, “The separate creaturely life, as opposed to life in union with God, is only a life of various appetites, hungers and wants, and cannot possibly be anything else . . . cannot possibly be a good and happy life but by the life of God dwelling in and in union with it” (William Law, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 39). The *Chandogya Upanishad* echoes a similar sentiment:

This Self, when associated in consciousness with the body, is subject to pleasure and pain; and so long as this association continues, no man can find freedom from pains and pleasures. But when the association comes to an end, there is an end also of pain and pleasure. Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self as distinct from the sense-organs and the mind, knowing Him in his true light, one rejoices and one is free. (*Chandogya Upanishad*, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 206)

Since this freedom is unrealizable in *Brave New World*, its citizens cling to the belief that the State instead can grant them “rich and living peace”. To this, William Law asks rhetorically, “How many inventions are some people forced to have recourse to in order to keep off a certain inward uneasiness, which they are afraid of and know not whence it comes?” (William Law, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 182). St. Augustine agrees and declares, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You”.

The hearts of the World State are condemned to restlessness, “scampering from feely to feely, from girl to pneumatic girl, from Electromagnetic Golf course to . . .” (*Brave New World*

56). Although latent in all citizens, this uneasiness manifests most clearly in the characters of Lenina Crowne, Bernard Marx, and Helmholtz Watson. Each character, in varying degrees and unknowingly, yearns to realize their innate desire for Perennial truth. However, their world fails to offer them the sufficient vocabulary to understand what they yearn for and systematically prevents them from spiritual actualization. Consequently, they are doomed to the internal torment characteristic of an undelivered world.

Admittedly, Lenina Crowne is so inculcated by World State ideology that any vestiges of deeper yearning are invariably conflated with her conditioned desire for instant gratification. Despite exemplifying the World State's idolatrous self-worship in most respects, Lenina is restless and sees, to some extent, the inadequacy of selfness. For example, she is contentiously monogamous by *Brave New World* standards, expressing that she "hadn't been feeling very keen on promiscuity lately. There are times when one doesn't" (*Brave New World* 43). She wishes to see the Savage Reservation with Bernard Marx, in spite of the taboo reputation of both. Huxley never explains her desire to leave the comforts of the World State beyond that the "opportunity was unique" (*Brave New World* 88). Perhaps she seeks more entertainment; perhaps uneasiness and discontent gnaws at her, kindling a deeper spiritual yearning. If such a Perennial flame exists in Lenina, her conditioning and social order condemn it to be extinguished. Indeed, her limited awareness only goes so far, evinced by her fruitless attempts to repress her traumatic experiences with *soma*. By the end of the book, Lenina remains a predictably restless victim to the idolized social order.

Like Lenina and the majority of the World State, Bernard Marx is far closer to selfness than salvation. A resentful narcissist, Bernard possesses a Perennial longing for freedom that is inextricably tied to shallow egotism. Nonetheless, he sees through the State's lack of depth and,

on several occasions, demonstrates a yearning to transcend it. His work in the Psychology Bureau, rejection of *soma*, contempt for sexual objectification, and longing for solitude suggest a moderate understanding of the spiritual bankruptcy associated with “selfness writ large”.

For instance, he tells Lenina that he wants “to look at the sea in peace . . . It makes me feel as though . . . I were more me . . . Not just a cell in the social body” (*Brave New World* 90). Bernard’s attempt to reclaim his individuality seems to run counter to the unitive principles of the Perennial Philosophy. In actuality, Huxley dedicates a whole chapter of *The Perennial Philosophy* to the importance of self-knowledge and solitary contemplation. He writes, “without self-knowledge, there can be no true humility, therefore no effective self-naughting, therefore no unitive knowledge of the divine Ground underlying the self and ordinarily eclipsed by it” (*The Perennial Philosophy* 162). He quotes Eckhart: “Go into your own ground and learn to know yourself there” (Eckhart, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 162). Bernard pines for the freedom for which this self-knowledge is prerequisite. As they observe the sea, Bernard asks Lenina, “what would it be like . . . if I were free—not enslaved by my conditioning . . . wouldn’t you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everyone else’s way?” (*Brave New World* 91)

Despite these yearnings, Bernard is not an exponent of the Perennial Philosophy. As *Brave New World* progresses, Bernard forgoes them and clamors at every opportunity for social success. His awareness of the State’s spiritual bankruptcy vanishes as he succumbs to unbridled egomania and indulges in the very gratification he once criticized. After learning he will be sent to an island, Bernard begs to remain in State society. Mond muses, “if he had the smallest sense, he’d understand that his punishment is really a reward” (*Brave New World* 226-227). Mond is right; like everyone else, Bernard will always suffer in the World State. As pariah, his Perennial

yearnings are confused with selfish envy. As celebrity, he falls victim to the pseudo-spiritual entrapment of the Perennial Perversion. In both cases, Bernard is duped by the idolatrous lies of the State and thus condemned to restlessness.

Like Bernard, Helmholtz Watson sees through the shallowness of the “self writ large”, despite being an exemplary participant in it. From the very beginning, he expresses a spiritual yearning to forgo his esteem, escape his restlessness, and realize his full potential. As the most spiritually developed character explored in the World State, “this admirable committee man and best mixer had realized quite suddenly that sport, women, communal activities were only, so far as he was concerned, second bests. Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what? In what?” (*Brave New World* 67)

More than any other character, Helmholtz understands that the World State strips him of his capacity for self-actualization. Though he acutely understands the emptiness of the Brave New World and his material success within it, he cannot fathom how to transcend such emptiness. He tells Bernard, “I’m thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I’ve got something important to say and the power to say it—only I don’t know what it is, and I can’t make any use of the power” (*Brave New World* 69).

Rather than accepting restless damnation, he leverages art in a concerted effort to overcome it. He conceives a poem that favors the “empty night more solidly than that with which we copulate” (*Brave New World* 181). Then, he implores Mond to allow people to realize their Perennial yearnings, echoing the Savage’s desire for “something new that’s like *Othello*, and that they could understand”. The Controller dismisses the opportunity: “And it’s what you never will write. Because, if it were really like *Othello* nobody could understand, however new it might be. And if were new, it couldn’t possibly be like *Othello* . . . Because our world is not the same as

Othello's world" (*Brave New World* 219-220). With this, Helmholtz accepts that spiritual transformation is unavailable to the State; he must do it alone. He abandons his social success, resolves to write on an island with a "thoroughly bad climate", and courageously faces the challenging conditions necessary to apprehend Truth (*Brave New World* 229).

For Helmholtz and others, salvation is only possible outside the State's repressive idolatry. According to the *Theologia Germanica*, "that Eternal Good, which is God Himself, can never make a man virtuous, good or happy so long as it is outside the soul" (*Theologia Germanica*, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 206). Because of the "selfness writ large" underlying the grace-proof and will-proof World State, God will forever remain outside the souls of its inhabitants. For these reasons, the dystopian man is sentenced to a life of spiritual and psychological torment without a choice. Huxley emphasizes Shankara: "Talk as much philosophy as you please, worship as many gods as you like, observe all the ceremonies, sing devoted praises to any number of divine beings—liberation never comes, even at the end of a hundred aeons, without the realization of the Oneness of Self" (Shankara, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 208). Of course, Shankara is referring to the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, *not* the counterfeit spiritual wasteland enforced by the State. The Perennial Perversion always fails. God is not mocked.

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In summary, the World State methodically misleads its citizens by espousing a social monism that is false and spiritually bankrupt. Though the State claims to eschew self for community, its collective identity is indeed separative selfness comprised of idolatrous and self-augmenting identifications. This Perennial Perversion is an efficient tool for subjugating a population, for it appears to empower and fulfill when it actually inhibits and destroys.

When the Savage asks Mond whether it is natural to feel as though there is a God, the Controller retorts, “As if one believed anything by instinct! One believes things because he has been conditioned to believe them” (*Brave New World* 233-234). Through this conditioning, the State succeeds in controlling man by obfuscating his innate desire for unitive knowledge and eroding his spiritual psychology. What the State fails to do is fully overwrite man’s innate yearning for spiritual actualization, nor does it deliver its promise of happiness and stability. Such a feat is impossible when the restless soul is separated from God.

The parallels to our world are obvious. Our world is a “foul stinking lump of himself” that believes it can be independent from God (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, qtd. in *The Perennial Philosophy* 37). We may have more free will than the World State populace, but our own collective identity buys into the very same gratifications and idolatries. In the process, we have cultivated a “selfness writ large” equally inimical to our spiritual growth. Instead of rooting ourselves in the Perennial Ground, we fetishize the material world buttressed by the Metaphysic of Inevitable Progress. We believe the next dopamine hit will save us, blind to being deceived by the architects of our narcotization. Like the Controllers of the World State, they laugh and tighten their control over us, failing to understand that the *hubris* of their selfness is the *nemesis* of their damnation.

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