

Excerpt Chapter I – ‘Brave New World’ – Aldous Huxley (1932)

Tall and rather thin but upright, the Director advanced into the room. He had a long chin and big, rather prominent teeth, just covered, when he was not talking, by his full, floridly curved lips. Old, young? Thirty? fifty? fifty-five? It was hard to say. And anyhow the question didn't arise; in this year of stability, a.f. 632, it didn't occur to you to ask it.

‘I shall begin at the beginning,’ said the DHC, and the more zealous students recorded his intention in their note-books: *Begin at the beginning*. ‘These,’ he waved his hand, ‘are the incubators.’ And opening an insulated door he showed them racks upon racks of numbered test-tubes. ‘The week’s supply of ova. Kept,’ he explained, ‘at blood heat; whereas the male gametes,’ and here he opened another door, ‘they have to be kept at thirty-five instead of thirty-seven. Full blood heat sterilizes.’ Rams wrapped in thermogene beget no lambs.

Still leaning against the incubators he gave them, while the pencils scurried illegibly across the pages, a brief description of the modern fertilizing process; spoke first, of course, of its surgical introduction — ‘the operation undergone voluntarily for the good of Society, not to mention the fact that it carries a bonus amounting to six months’ salary’; continued with some account of the technique for preserving the excised ovary alive and actively developing; passed on to a consideration of optimum temperature, salinity, viscosity; referred to the liquor in which the detached and ripened eggs were kept; and, leading his charges to the work tables, actually showed them how the liquor was drawn off from the test-tubes; how it was let out drop by drop on to the specially warmed slides of the microscopes; how the eggs which it contained were inspected for abnormalities, counted and transferred to a porous receptacle; how (and he now took them to watch the operation) this receptacle was immersed in a warm bouillon containing free-swimming spermatozoa — at a minimum concentration of one hundred thousand per cubic centimetre, he insisted; and how, after ten minutes, the container was lifted out of the liquor and its contents re-examined; how, if any of the eggs remained unfertilized, it was again immersed, and, if necessary, yet again; how the fertilized ova went back to the incubators; where the Alphas and Betas remained until definitely bottled; while the Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons were brought out again, after only thirty-six hours, to undergo Bokanovsky’s Process.

‘Bokanovsky’s Process,’ repeated the Director, and the students underlined the words in their little note-books.

One egg, one embryo, one adult — normality. But a bakanovskified egg will bud, will proliferate, will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a full-sized adult. Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress.