2nd Place Winner, National High School Essay Contest
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"'History is bunk… History' he repeated slowly 'is bunk'" (Huxley, *Brave New World*, 35). In *Brave New World*, Huxley paints a society where science has come to a pinnacle of progress: aches, pains, illness, and old age no longer exist; there are no disruptions to the status quo of society, and everyone is "happy" even. Progress yields comfort and stability but at what price? Anything traditional or intellectually stimulating is locked away in the office of "World State Controller." No religion, no art, no literature, no philosophy. History has been executed at the hand of progress, scientific development, and a totalitarian regime.

An alarm bell should go off in the mind of any critically thinking individual. The price is individuality, tragedy, depth, and meaning. An extreme society such as Huxley's dramatizes and satirizes the danger of what Hannah Ardent describes as the "natural growth of the unnatural," where processes of life and efficiency devour the higher realms of political action and intimacy (Human Condition, 47). In the World State, at the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Center, human beings are grown in test tubes, manipulated, conditioned to create the perfect worker for a given job in a certain social caste (Huxley, *Brave New World*). American citizens of all persuasions will agree that such scientific progress is a horrifying absurdity. The absolute disgust that such an inhumane world engenders is what unites seeming political opponents. This is representative of the American instinct to defend justice, dignity, self-mastery, from whatever threatens it most. Thus, to yell "Stop" today is not to reject change itself, but to resist the reduction of human life to pure utility, in ignorance of these core ideals.

"Progress" itself is a loose term. If progress is to be measured by the objective benefit that it brings to human-kind, it may seem positive. Yet when measured by efficiency or market expansion, it risks turning humans and values into commodities. As Sandel describes in What Money Can't Buy: "the most fateful change that unfolded during the past three decades was… the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong… but not all goods are properly valued [as commodities]. The most obvious example is human beings" (7, 9). In hindsight, the immorality of slavery is obvious, yet its endurance rested on the same prioritization of efficiency and utility over human dignity. Such fallacies are not bound to America alone, but appear across history. Thus, when modern developments result in the same ideals, even under the guise of a different name, such as "progress", should there not be an outcry of opposition? According to Ardent, modern science and technology "have carried irreversibility and human unpredictability into the natural realm, where no remedy can be found to undo what has been done" (Ardent, 238). Taking this idea into consideration, it would make perfect sense for society to take on a preventative approach. Yelling "Stop" before people become commodified could not only save the lives of thousands of people, but could prevent our global society from descending into the world of Huxley's imagination.

However, simply avoiding the dangers of unrestrained progress is not enough; resistance must be proactive. To set forth momentum of preservation, it is crucially important to ground ourselves in the enduring values that progress alone cannot provide. According to Plato, there are two necessary qualities that a state must have: self-discipline and justice (Republic, 134). These core, abstract ideas are tested during times of upheaval. That being said, Kierkegaard, in Either/Or, reminds us that "Every historical development takes place within the embrace of [tragedy]… however much the world has changed, the concept of the tragic remains essentially unchanged, just as weeping comes no less naturally to man" (139). In *Brave New World*, the World State abolishes this tragic dimension by erasing grief, longing, and sacrifice. But a society that refuses to acknowledge tragedy has already hollowed out the very ground on which justice stands. To yell "Stop" today, then, is not only to defend justice at the level of institutions, but to preserve the tragic and moral depths of human life at the personal level, where self-discipline and reflection safeguard against shallow optimism.

Despite apparent polarization, Americans share core principles that demand protection. If the human experience becomes interchangeable and functional, then parties, despite disputes, recognize that some aspects of life must remain outside of pure instrumental logic. Thus, as so eloquently put by Plato, “we must stand like hunters round a covert and make sure that justice does not escape us and disappear from our view” (Republic, 136).

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