

Text 31

Brave New World

“Once upon a time,” the Director began, “there was a little boy called Reuben Rabinovitch. Reuben was the child of Polish-speaking parents.” The Director interrupted himself.

“You know what Polish is, I suppose?”

“A dead language.”

“Like French and German,” added another student, officiously showing off his learning.

“And ‘parent?’”

There was an uneasy silence. Several boys blushed. They had not yet learned to draw the significant but often very fine distinction between smut and pure science. One, at last, had the courage to raise a hand.

“human beings used to be...” he hesitated; the blood rushed to his cheeks. “Well, they used to be viviparous.”

“Quite right.” the Director nodded approvingly.

“And when the babies were decanted...”

“Born,” came the correction.

“Well, then they were the parents – I mean, not the babies, of course; the other ones.é the poor boy was overwhelmed with confusion.

“ In brief,” the Director summed up, “the parents were the father and the mother... These are unpleasant facts; I know it. But, then, most historical facts are unpleasant.”

He returned to Little Reuben, in whose room, one evening, by an oversight, his father and mother happened to leave the radio turned on.

While the child was asleep, a broadcast from London suddenly started to come through; and the next morning Little Reuben woke up repeating word for word a long lecture by that curious old writer (“one of the very few whose works have been permitted to come down to us”), George Bernard Shaw, who was speaking, according to a well-authenticated tradition, about his own genius. Imagining that their child had suddenly gone mad, they sent for a doctor. He, fortunately, understood English, recognized the discourse as that which Shaw had broadcasted the previous evening, realized the significance of what had happened, and sent a letter to the medical press about it.

“The principle of sleep-teaching, or hypnopaedia, had been discovered.”

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932

