ALDOUS HUXLEY'S
BRAVE NEW WORLD (1932)

The theme of Brave New World is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals.
—Aldous Huxley (1946 foreword)

Brave New World, written in the post–World War I period of industrialization and the rise of fascism, derived from Huxley's fascination with science, medicine, and technology as well as from his concern for problems arising from their unchecked advances. The novel is set in a dystopian future of the World State. From birth, people are genetically designed to fit into one of five castes. Fetuses chosen to become members of the highest castes, "Alpha" and "Beta", are allowed to develop naturally and are given stimulants while maturing to term in "decanting bottles." Fetuses chosen to become members of the lower castes of "Gamma", "Delta" or "Epsilon" are subjected to in situ chemical interference to cause arrested development in intelligence and physical growth. All children are educated with caste-appropriate subconscious messages to mold the child's lifelong self-image and social outlook to that chosen by the leaders and their predetermined plans for producing future adult generations.

Huxley drew from several past influences and projected them into an imagined totalitarian World State. First, he drew on the work of his outspoken grandfather, T. H. Huxley (1825–95), a biologist, educator, and medical doctor who dared to embrace Charles Darwin's unpopular theory of natural selection. T. H. Huxley inspired his grandson to courageously assert within the theme of Brave New World that our individual freedoms must be carefully guarded, even if the stance we take is unpopular. A second influence was geneticist-psychologist Francis Galton (1822–1911), the father of eugenics, who believed science could increase human happiness through improving breeding patterns. He favored genetic determination over environmental influences (i.e., nature over nurture).

Writing Brave New World was his way to address a fear that the world was becoming spiritually bankrupt and settling into an abhorrent conformity. How we choose to advance humanity through breeding techniques is the novel's main concern, casting a cautionary eye on eugenics. Brave New World was evoked again in 1996 when Dr. Ian Wilmut of the Roslin Institute in Scotland cloned Dolly the sheep through somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT). As an embryologist, Dr. Wilmut said his primary objective was therapeutic (to help mankind); subsequently, he produced a human protein in Dolly's milk, creating transgenic or cross-species organisms from cloned genes.

Related to today, Huxley's brave new world of genetically engineered humans shows us what might happen when measures are taken to control and to condition us. The family unit is obsolete; chemicals keep people happy. While appearing as a utopia without disease and warfare, free will is lacking. Consumption of goods that boost the economy, promiscuous sexual interplay that keeps emotional attachments from forming, and the redefinition of religion and the banning of history and art are all elements that keep society intact. Huxley's novel predicts the eugenics issues we currently face. In summary, Huxley's caste system includes manufactured, conditioned, and conformed human beings.

Questions:

1. Unlike Huxley's setting, our democracy gives power and responsibility to each of us to decide where we want technology to take us. If we were genetically determined through science and

technology rather than born freely through natural selection, how might that change our society?

2. Describe the ethical issues surrounding human cloning. Could it ever be justified?
3. Growing concerns in the area of psychopharmacology, the use of drugs on mood, behavior, and, and thinking, has lead to criticism, such as that of Edward Shorter, PhD of University of Toronto, who wrote, "American psychiatry is headed in . . . [a] direction [of] defining ever-widening circles of the population as mentally ill with vague and undifferentiated diagnoses and treating them with powerful drugs." What harmful consequences and ethical questions could arise from this scenario?

We Are Still Flying Over the Cuckoo's Nest

The ward door opened, and the black boys wheeled in this
Gurney with a chart at the bottom that said in heavy black
letters, MC MURPHY, RANDLE P. POST-OPERATIVE. And
below this was written in ink, LOBOTOMY.
—Ken Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

By H. Steven Moffic, MD

At the recent annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, I had the opportunity to be on a panel to discuss a screening of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. What I hadn't anticipated was how eerily well it paralleled my career and the evolution and devolution of community psychiatry.

The book *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, written by Ken Kesey, who had worked in a VA hospital, was published in 1962. In the novel, an Oregon state mental institution in the 1960s is the scene for a contest of wills between the staff and the inmates. The catatonic Native American Chief Bromden (Chief Broom) narrates *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* even though he appears deaf and mute. Diagnosed with delusional paranoia, while in a fog and feeling helpless, he fears the Combine controls everything. The driving force in the mental institution is the militaristic Nurse Ratched (the Big Nurse), who wields her authority severely over everyone, including the professional medical staff, the black boy aides, and the patients. The patients are divided into the incurable Chronics like the big half-breed Chief, who is a flawed product of the Combine, and the curable Acutes who Nurse Ratched eggs on, attacking them where they are most vulnerable. A patient may come in as an Acute and then be turned into a robotic Chronic (Walker, Wheeler, or Vegetable) after being punished in the Shock Shop with electroshock treatments or with the permanent disfiguration of psychosurgery (lobotomy). Threats with these therapies enforce cooperation while keeping the two groups separated. In combating the authority of the staff, the results turned out to be mixed: a patient suicide, violence to the staff, and a mercy killing after a lobotomy.

Whether President Kennedy was familiar with either the book or play is unclear, but he pushed through the landmark Community Mental Health Act in 1963, paving the way for the deinstitutionalization of the state hospitals like the one portrayed by Kesey. In 1966, I spent some psychology class time at a state hospital in Michigan—one even worse than that depicted in the book. In 1975, I started my psychiatric career at a community mental health center at an army base in rural Alabama. In many respects, this was the heyday of community mental health—there were hundreds of federally funded centers across the US, well on their way to providing comprehensive services in the

communities instead of in the state hospitals.

Around 1988, two different societal trends affecting psychiatry gained traction in the US: the recovery movement and managed care, emphasizing consumer empowerment and management control of treatment, respectively. Earlier, those same patients might have been hospitalized. From 2008 to 2012, I worked part-time in a medium-security prison in Wisconsin. To my surprise, because of federal funds from lawsuits —I had more resources and time to help patients than I did in the public outpatient clinic in Milwaukee.

Today we face a similar ethical challenge. To what extent should patients and consumers manage their treatment versus following the expertise of clinicians? At its extreme, we have anti-psychiatrists who desire the end of psychiatry. At its best, we have therapeutic alliances. Cuckoo's Nest continues to be a prototypical depiction of mental illness by describing various mental disabilities as well as the legal and ethical issues arising from them. The novel's publication brought to the American consciousness what a slow and arduous process it has been to define and to devise treatment for mental disorders.

Questions:

1. In the satire Cuckoo's Nest would the electroshock therapy and lobotomy administered as therapy and/or punishment be ethical now?
2. How has our view towards psychiatric institutions and mental hospitals shifted over the past decades?
3. How does the novel portray topics relevant to assisted suicide and euthanasia, and what are the ethical concerns about those issues?