2. Signs of the T: Aldous Huxley, High Art, and American Technocracy

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Although the question of Aldous Huxley's attitude towards the state systems depicted in *Brave New World* (1932) remains the stuff of fierce debate, the technocratic features of that state have long been recognized by scholars, students, and general readers alike. Indeed, *Brave New World* is often grouped with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as one of the twentieth century's most compelling representations of 'the threat posed by technocracy and totalitarianism to civil society', Huxley's grey future reminding its readers of the power of technology and the allure it holds for those who seek to use technical expertise for political goals.¹ As this quotation indicates, scholars tend to interpret this future as a scenario depicting the systematic and objectionable purging of individual liberty. Evelyn Cobley, for instance, writing about *Brave New World* in relation to the Ford Motor Company, proposes that Huxley's text 'associates the assembly line with the utopian dream of the perfect society that devolves into the dystopian nightmare of the totalitarian state.'² Technocracy – rule or government by a class of technical specialists – is in these terms an object of Huxley's satire, something the text queries rather than celebrates. And yet at other times Huxley's support for illiberal sentiments comes to the fore. Hence David Bradshaw's claim that for 'all its hideousness, the hierarchical, aseptic, colour-coded world of A.F. 632 is not aeons away from the scientific utopia Huxley was promoting elsewhere before, during and after he wrote *Brave New World* in 1931' (*BNW* xxii). This approach foregrounds the text's ambivalence. It asks us to decide whether Huxley's apparent mockery of a politics based on scientific knowledge co-exists with an approval of technocratic authority. Different readings of Huxley's account of technocracy diverge on the nature of his response to technocracy, in other words, yet agree

that a response exists. *Brave New World* may analyse technocracy this way or that. Analyse technocracy, however, the text unarguably and unforgettably does.

The purpose of this chapter is to re-contextualize that analysis in relation to a little-studied corpus of historical materials, specifically by comparing *Brave New World* with Harold Loeb's *Life in a Technocracy: What It Might Be Like* (1933), one of the most fascinating documents to emerge from the early 1930s American Technocracy movement and an important inter-war statement of utopian principles. The 'soundly scientific' goal of American Technocracy, as H. G. Wells put it in *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), was 'to restate economics on a purely physical basis' and to implement 'a new social order in which social and economic life was to be treated as an energy system controlled by "experts".'³ Following the movement's fragmenting into opposed factions in January 1933, Loeb's *Life in a Technocracy* – a discursive 'fantasy', as he called it – drew up one version of that system in which the arts played a central role.⁴ Against Loeb stood Howard Scott, the thirty-year-old engineer around whom the movement first coalesced in New York circa 1919. Throughout the 1930s Scott and his allies, including the scientist M. King Hubbert, outlined an anti-aesthetic political system that saw the arts as a wasteful continuation of the capitalism that Technocracy sought to dethrone.⁵ Whereas Loeb was a committed supporter of the arts, a defender of Western cultural history, and a founder of the little magazine *Broom: An International Magazine of the Arts* (1921–4), Scott claimed that 'European culture and traditions [had] nothing of worth-while importance to offer America in [the] twilight period preceding the dawn of a new era.'⁶ The pamphlet *Technocracy: Some Questions Answered* (1934), which carried an enthusiastic 'Foreword' by Hubbert, stopped short of criticizing artists in this way, but noticeably did not include them among the 'intelligent, functionally capable' people engaged in 'socially useful' occupations whom American Technocracy welcomed with open arms.⁷ Loeb's distinctiveness as a contrasting Technocratic voice is well

established, particularly as one who provides a liberal perspective in contrast to Scott, Hubbert, and those with similarly anti-aesthetic tendencies, but the broad connections between *Brave New World* and *Life in a Technocracy* have yet to be recorded.⁸

Although it is a commonplace that Huxley took a qualified interest in technocratic ideas – among them scientific managerialism, Fordian industrialism, eugenicism, and Wellsian socialism – before, during, and after the composition of *Brave New World*, placing his work specifically in relation to the American Technocracy movement allows us to formulate a new perspective on the tension between art and technocratic control that Loeb and Huxley diagnosed as a key problem of post-Fordian modernity. *Brave New World* conceives the relationship between technology and the arts relationally. It suggests that if the machine age tends to subordinate aesthetic beauty to rhetorics of efficiency and central planning, such rhetorics may also be a necessary counterpart to more creative spaces hived off from, yet at the mercy of, technocratic systems (as those who are exiled to Iceland and elsewhere prove). *Life in a Technocracy* takes a comparable line, imagining technocracy as a means with which to make the arts flourish and thus to create a society that would transform ‘the gusto of competition inherent in man’ into regenerative ‘life values’ (LT 169). That viewpoint put Loeb at odds with Scott and brought him close to the Huxley who suggested in ‘Pascal’, published in *Do What You Will* (1929), that the ‘fine arts and the arts of life have flourished most luxuriantly in those societies in which a very sharp distinction was drawn between mechanic and liberal occupations’ (HCE2 369), a view that pithily anticipates the corporatist viewpoint elaborated more fully in *Life in a Technocracy*.

By the time Huxley made this remark he had long doubted the ‘mechanic’ as a criterion for socio-political engineering. In a 1926 letter to John St. Loe Strachey, for instance, he outlined his anxieties regarding the ‘prestige of science’ and the concomitant view that ‘the measurable’, rather than qualitative, ‘aspect of the world is [its] total reality’

(*AHSL* 186). Huxley had also by this point established many of his concerns about the ever-more rationalized qualities of machine-age society and the purpose of art within it. When he wrote *Brave New World* his disquiet at such issues was still evident. Yet he had also become convinced that the ethic of the machine called democracy into question. At this point in time, Huxley openly favoured caste-based social models that preserved intellectual aristocracies and embraced autocratic governance, and was increasingly drawn to eugenics (see *HH* vii–xxiii). He suggested in ‘Machinery, Psychology, and Politics’ (1929) that the age of the machine demanded an efficient ‘factory-like political organization’, but he remained uncertain about the long-term effects of such proposals upon ‘the psychology of the individual human being’ (*HCE3* 220), and, consequently, upon the creative spirit. Huxley was similarly torn about science, which after the Wall Street Crash he was keen to see ‘applied by humanists’ (*HCE* 155), as he put it in ‘Science and Civilization’ (1932), in order to bring civilization back from the brink of chaos, even though he suspected that science was more likely to be used by ‘economists’ to standardize the world and ‘to train up a race [...] of perfect mass-producers and mass-consumers’ than it was to be used to create a ‘deliberately progressive’ society, ‘consciously tending towards the realization of the highest human aspirations’ (*HCE3* 150). *Brave New World* dramatizes these antagonisms: it charts the systematic purging of finely wrought aesthetic forms in a society where benevolent dictatorship has generated political stability by jettisoning the ‘waste’ of art and liberal democracy, and by limiting the use of science to functional applications as opposed to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. As a fictional narrative, therefore, the text is profoundly unresolved. Indeed, the text’s formal contradictions imply that *Brave New World* designates the high arts as a source of value, and this gesture, as I will show, registers Huxley’s closeness to Loeb’s account of technocracy, a philosophy from which many modern commentators would want to distance him.

In the World State, A.F. 632, high art is an awkward, unwanted reminder of ‘gratuitous’ (*BNW* 18), non-utilitarian culture. Particular versions of socio-political stability and happiness that limit the prominence and attractiveness of such culture have been facilitated by machine systems, consumerism, anti-individualism, and mass entertainment. Under this post-Fordian regime, what used to be called high art – here symbolic of the judicious, rational, yet tortured world of the creative mind – has been replaced with cultural forms that satisfy the lustful needs of the glands, and which call to mind Huxley’s deep-rooted concerns, to quote him in ‘The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age’ (1927), about ‘go[ing] the American way’ (*HCE* 185). Where technocracy seeks efficiency and permanence, high art, at least in the eyes of Mustapha Mond, creates disorganization and chaos. For the intelligent, observant Mond, high art is a symptom of an unstable, self-destructive past that has been superseded by the better future of sex and steel. Ancient Egyptian, Harappan, Semitic, Greek, and Roman sculpture and architecture; continental philosophy; English literature; European classical music – all such forms have in A.F. 632 become the victims of anti-historical imperatives. Unlike the socialist future of *News from Nowhere* (1890), where the healing potential of art has been channelled into the labour of ‘every man who produces’, in the World State to create artistically is to interfere with the technocratic principles that make citizens ‘sane, virtuous, [and] happy’ (*BNW* 35), even if such sanity, virtue, and happiness come at the cost of many individuals’ psychological uniqueness.⁹ ‘Gratuitous’ art is a danger, a source of personal expression that threatens the standardizing logics of collective life. As such it must be destroyed, concealed, or adapted to other purposes. New, functional things are better than old, beautiful things, bluntly put, despite the fact that from its title onwards *Brave New World* heralds the moral relevance of old things – Shakespeare, in this case – as a possible counter to the technocratic undertakings that have so drastically transformed humankind.

How we understand Huxley's attitude towards these complexities depends in large part on how we approach the text's account of the cultural forms produced under technocracy and the high art to which certain characters, such as Mond, oppose it. And as with much else in *Brave New World*, here ambiguities proliferate. Mond states that the price paid for stability in A.F. 632 is the loss of all those cathedrals, Renaissance plays, requiems, and symphonies (BNW 29) that Mond himself seems to respect, but which, like the philosophical, religious, and historical tomes kept in the cabinet in his study, are forms of 'smut' (BNW 207) that must be hidden from a world with rather different scruples. Theoretical science has suffered the same fate, its abstractions jettisoned in favour of disciplines fixed on 'the most immediate problems of the moment' (BNW 200). Utility has taken the place of beauty, commercialism has deposed individualism, and here *Brave New World* arguably channels the Huxley who in 1930 bemoaned the influence of American culture upon its European counterparts, the latter falling prey, in his view, to the former's standardizing advance. Indeed, the 'religious respect for culture' that Huxley sought to save from an 'age of abounding rubbish' (HCE3 49) parallels Mond's dutiful preservation of high culture, both Huxley and Mond amounting in this regard to *cognoscenti* finding solace in art forms inaccessible to the common run of people. This is the reading of *Brave New World* offered by John Carey, who argues that the text implies 'that mass happiness is inherently inferior. Only the solitary individual can experience happiness that is significant or profound.'¹⁰ The physical remnants of high art are locked away to contain their harmful teachings and thereby to maintain the hierarchies upon which social stability depends, those same hierarchies rendering high art unintelligible in an ahistorical society in which most people feed on entertainments that do little to challenge the mind. Only an aristocratic World Controller such as Mond has the necessary refinement to appreciate truth, beauty, and knowledge. Yet this very privileging of a certain kind of culture makes more noticeable the value of the high art that is not to be had. And in this respect the

text queries the function of imagination and creativity in a world in which high art is dangerous enough to be put under lock and key but not so threatening as to be altogether obliterated.

So while on the one hand *Brave New World* presents an elitist viewpoint – high art is a thing of the past opposed to modern mass entertainments that can be treasured only by those intelligent enough to appreciate it – on the other it defensively suggests that under technocracy the fate of high art is to be something that can only be understood, but never openly revered, by a self-interested minority. High art is a sign of privilege (the elite lording it over the masses from their technocratic bastions) in the first instance, and a sign of besiegement (the elite being *displaced* by the masses) in the second. The only other option the text explores is for those who enjoy high culture or pure intellectualism, such as Helmholtz Watson, to be contained as exiles in places where the World State's priorities have been abandoned and people maintain civilization in less regimented ways (see *BNW* 209). Mond, as a former, 'pretty good' (*BNW* 198) physicist who once questioned the dominant theories upon which science rests, represents the type of inquisitive mind interested in things for their own sake. In this sense he is an envoy of the realm of pure creativity, that place where things are made or explored with no subsequent goal in mind other than to relish the creative act itself. Yet rather than enjoy such things in the margins, or in exile, Mond chooses to serve the World State as one of its controllers, and therefore to safeguard the world's collective, technocratic happiness despite the fact that such public loyalty negates his private contentment. Hence when Mond affectionately recalls his time as a physicist he sighs repeatedly at the memory (*BNW* 199–200), his attachment to the culture of the past echoing his fondness for his scientific training and the intellectual autonomy it facilitated.

Mond's predicament focalizes the text's broader investigation of the relationship between high art, 'pure' imagination, and technocracy. Of course, Huxley's response to

technocracy can, as we have seen, be construed divergently. *Brave New World* satirizes but is also something of a *billet-doux* for technocracy, a system of government to which Huxley was in many ways attracted during the text's composition. However, *Brave New World* seems less undecided when it addresses, implicitly or otherwise, the value of high art in the face of technological modernity. In the World State the language of Shakespeare is firmly out of place, its profound sense of difference confusing and ostracizing John the Savage, rather than helping him decode his surroundings. In this way the text invites us to debate whether Shakespeare has any relevance at the end of a modernity featuring 'the full flush of scientific utopia', and to ask, if we think he does: 'To whom does he speak?'¹¹ But even if *Brave New World* investigates the relevance of Shakespeare in a future that seemingly has no use for Renaissance-era moralities, the text nevertheless *invests* in Shakespeare as an allusive resource (or artistic point of comparison). Huxley thereby very clearly signals Shakespeare's appositeness as a cultural cipher with which to conceptualize the nature and potential problems of technocracy, despite the fact that the narrative queries at the diegetic level of its story the reliability of a Shakespearean moral compass. More interestingly, the very ambivalence of *Brave New World* on the matter of technocratic value might itself be read as a counter to technocratic utilitarianism, the lack of a snappily quotable moral message going against technocracy's striving for usefulness, and matching Shakespeare's lack of moral tub-thumping in his plays (a characteristic for which they are so often revered).

Or consider the role played by classical music, which in the World State appears to have been 'whisk[ed]' (*BNW* 29) into oblivion by those who, like Mond, have accepted the Fordian logics that proscribe its existence. Classical music is 'bunk', nonsense, incomprehensible to a world that no longer has any use for it. Synthetic music machines and scent organs manufacture the indulgences that classical compositions once facilitated, their imitation melodies 'reassuringly' (*BNW* 97) calming and 'delightfully refreshing' (*BNW* 145)

their audiences rather than evoking a problematic but superseded cultural yesteryear. Jazz provides similar fulfilments, the synthetic music played by Calvin Stopes and his Sixteen Sexophonists at the Westminster Abbey Cabaret exemplifying Huxley's aversion to what in 'Silence is Golden' (1929) he saw as jazz's 'loud vulgarity of brassy guffaw and caterwauling sentiment' (*HCE2* 20). Yet by means of a very precise linguistic strategy *Brave New World* contradicts, and implicitly rejects, such destructive 'whisking', again disclosing a tension between the diegetic and extra-diegetic levels of the text. When at the level of narrative plotting classical music is ostensibly side-lined, Huxley reintroduces classical musical terminology at the level of narrative vocabulary. As a result, he locates synthetic and olfactory 'music' in historical and lexical contexts that re-authorize the high artistic past at exactly those moments when it seems most thoroughly obscured. In the cabaret scene the gradual sounding of an erotically charged chord takes the form of 'a *diminuendo* sliding gradually, through quarter tones, down, down' (*BNW* 66), whereas later in the text a fragrant 'Herbal *Capriccio*' conveys its aromas with 'rippling *arpeggios* of thyme and lavender' (*BNW* 145, emphases added). Shortly afterwards a music machine emits a high note far above the most extreme capacities of the human voice, thereby diminishing the achievement of even Lucrezia Aguiari, who once famously impressed Leopold Mozart with her vocal dexterity (*BNW* 145). History is in such moments anything but 'bunk', anything but erased by the modern machineries with which it is said to have been replaced. Indeed, these formal conflicts foreground classical music and its vocabularies even as *Brave New World* registers their absence 'within' the story, repossessing high art from the technocratic doctrines that elsewhere claim its desuetude.

All of which is to say that the relationship between high art and technocracy in *Brave New World* is fraught with complexity, and that the connections between Huxley's thoughts on culture and society and the values he explored in this text are far from straightforward.

What seems clear, however, is that in the late 1920s and early 1930s Huxley was disturbed by the influence of the machine upon humanity in the postwar period, and that he was uncertain about what sort of role the creative individual might meaningfully play in a post-Fordian epoch. As Huxley's essay 'The Outlook for American Culture' demonstrates, he accepted the labour-saving benefits of the machine yet bemoaned the fact that a more leisured age meant a more passive, increasingly standardized, more easily manipulated, and generally less cultured world. During the Depression these problems had become even more distinct. As Huxley wrote in 'The Victory of Art over Humanity' (1931), the 'tragedy of the machine' was that it had liberated the world from 'the intolerable load of mere drudgery' while simultaneously depriving 'the overwhelming majority of men and women of the possibility, the very hope, of even the most modest creative activity' (*HCE3* 282). Humanity had become its own rival, 'staggering under the blows received in the course of this disastrous conflict with the organized forces of its own intelligence' (*HCE3* 283). *Brave New World* adopts a conflicted position in response to this scenario. Depending on how one reads the text (and here I am simplifying things somewhat), Huxley either seems to be satirizing such a predicament as a questioner of hierarchical models of society, inviting his readers to free themselves from the standardizing effects of the machine age in the process; or to be outlining a technocratic, profoundly hierarchical, and nerve-jangling solution to that same quandary in which, within certain predetermined limits, and to return again to 'The Outlook for American Culture', 'men and women are guaranteed a decent human existence' and 'are given every opportunity to develop such talents as they possess, and where those with the greatest talent rule' (*HCE3* 192). Yet however one reads *Brave New World*, in 1931 Huxley suggested that the solution to a disorganized, progressively more anarchic civilization lay in a centrally planned 'world-wide adjustment of production to consumption [...] – in a word, a general agreement to make

some universally valid sense out of our babel of separate and private achievements' (*HCE* 3285).

An 'adjustment' along these lines was exactly what American Technocracy promised to bring about in Depression-era America. Although the idea of technocracy can claim a lineage going back several centuries, the first stirrings of the American Technocracy movement occurred circa 1919 in New York's Greenwich Village, where Loeb happened to live in a flat above Scott.¹² That year, influenced by Thorstein Veblen's progressive economics and the scientific management philosophies associated with such figures as Frederick Taylor and Henry Laurence Gantt, Howard Scott established the Technical Alliance, whose purpose was to compile 'a mammoth statistical survey of energy sources in North America' that would identify causes of inefficiency in the industrial sector and project the impact of waste upon national living standards.¹³ Other members of the Alliance included Charles Steinmeitz, the head of the research laboratory at General Electric; Alice Burrows, deputy director of the U.S. Department of Education; and Veblen, whose ideas formed the foundation upon which Scott developed his analysis of America's industrial problems. Among the groups who became interested in Scott's activities were the Industrial Workers of the World, the so-called 'Wobblies', who employed him as their research director from 1920 until 1921, and under whose auspices he published articles exploring the links between industrialism, society, and machinic thought. He claimed that society could be better understood (and improved) by rooting social policy in measurements of energy usage rather than in capitalistic production for profit. The Technical Alliance dissipated in 1921, but the policies it advanced would return to public view in 1932 when Scott, in league with Walter Rautenstrauch (the chairman of Columbia University's Department of Industrial Engineering), Dal Hitchcock, Frederick L. Ackerman, M. King Hubbert, and others, formed the Committee on Technocracy, whose goal was to address 'the inability of businessmen to

curb their quest for profit in the interest of social harmony’ and to empower engineers to ‘take up the responsibility of reorganizing supply and demand.’¹⁴

The Committee on Technocracy lasted until January 1933, by which time it had claimed that the socio-economic planning of the day was backward-looking and unsatisfactorily scientific. More precisely, the Committee urged that the links between the market, labour, and social change should be understood quantitatively by charting patterns of energy consumption rather than by debating supposedly antiquated ‘principles of right, equity, propriety, duty, belief and taste as stabilized in the days of the handicraft guilds of Central Europe.’¹⁵ Scott’s ambition was to look past such archaic standards, as he saw them, in order to locate what he thought was a more clear-sighted and more equitable set of attitudes towards labour and social structures. He stated that the Committee offered ‘no solution’ to America’s economic crises, but nevertheless proposed that the way forward lay in abandoning the price-system, with its concomitant ‘wish-fulfilling thought and romantic concepts of value’, which would be replaced by a physicalist account of wealth as a conversion of ‘available energy into use-forms and services.’¹⁶ Put another way, energy consumption – rather than monetary exchange – was to become the basic measure of labour interactions, which would be reduced to a minimum. Such claims were inseparable from the Committee’s insistence that American society was inadequately calibrated to the labour-saving potential of modern industrial machines, whose deployment, for Scott and his allies, proliferated rather than eliminated waste, increased rather than reduced unemployment, and threatened a catastrophe that would dwarf the upheavals wrought by the Wall Street Crash. The answer was to calibrate technology more precisely in line with human needs and, so the logic implied, to place an engineering class in charge of the American nation, whose ailments would be cured by scientific judgement.¹⁷

Many commentators agreed that the Technocrats had identified several highly important problems. Scott certainly found his admirers. Theodore Dreiser, for instance, wrote in a 1932 letter to Scott that there was ‘something amazingly iron and powerful’ about him, and that he gave Dreiser ‘the feeling of a titan made of bronze.’¹⁸ At the same time, a substantial body of critics, including Ford Madox Ford and H. L. Mencken, formed around the movement and around Scott in particular.¹⁹ Attacks on Technocracy at this early stage ranged from accusations of unoriginality – Scott’s opposition to the price system, for instance, left him open to the charge that he had plagiarized the bulk of Technocracy from Frederick Soddy’s *Wealth, Virtual Wealth, and Debt* (1926) – to more straightforwardly satirical claims that the movement’s ideas were indecipherable.²⁰ Before long, filmmakers began ridiculing Technocracy in such films as Frank Lamont’s *Techno-Crazy* and the W. C. Fields comedy *International House* (both 1933). Gordon Phillips, appearing as ‘Lucio’ in *The Manchester Guardian* in January 1933, wrote in his comic poem ‘Abracadabra’ that it ‘would be hypocrisy’ to say he understood the ‘finer shades of meaning | In this term so newly heard’, and saluted Technocracy ‘as one leaning | On another bright boss-word!’²¹

Understanding the movement’s ‘finer shades of meaning’ was made even more problematic when Scott attempted to silence his critics in a radio address but instead delivered ‘a rambling, confusing, and most uninspiring address’.²² Scott’s performance prompted Rautenstrauch to leave the Committee on Technocracy and was a factor in the movement’s splitting into two opposed factions. The first group, the Continental Committee on Technocracy, was initially loyal to Scott but in time came to be dominated by Loeb, who published *Life in a Technocracy* in 1933 (having written it three years beforehand).²³ Scott formed Technocracy, Inc. in March 1933, at which point this branch of the movement started to adopt the grey-toned partisan regalia that later in the 1930s adorned its offices and many of

its publications, giving it a paramilitary, quasi-fascist temperament, and opened and closed its meetings with a gesture based on the hand salute used by the American armed forces.²⁴

Huxley had long been interested in comparable symbols of office, as his depictions of Everard Webley and the Brotherhood of British Freemen in *Point Counter Point* (1928) attest. From this perspective, it's not surprising that the civilization depicted in *Brave New World* has its fair share of official cryptograms and state-sanctioned gesticulations, including the 'signs of the T' – variously an emblem of maleness, a salute, a zipper fastening, a book stamp, and a representation of triumphant technocracy – that comprise many of its ceremonial appurtenances. One of the first qualities of Huxley's World State to be emphasized is its greyness. The very first line of the book introduces us to the Central London Hatchery, a 'squat grey building of only thirty-four storeys' (*BNW* 1), and subsequently we learn about the grey clothing worn by Alpha children (*BNW* 22) and the 'blank grey eyes' (*BNW* 56) of the attendants who take care of Bernard's plane. Indeed, we might add the text's emphasis on monochromatic self-fashioning to the list of Technocratic idiosyncrasies that Roger Luckhurst has argued *Brave New World* seems improbably to predict, along with Scott's gradual drift towards authoritarianism and his interest in Pavlovian behavioural conditioning.²⁵ By the end of the 1930s Technocracy, Inc. had been permeated by '[a] uniform gray', its pamphlets adopting the colour and individual members painting their automobiles in its tones, while '[g]ray [...] double-breasted suits, worn over gray shirts with blue neckties appeared in increasing numbers after 1937.'²⁶ Long before that time, Huxley had magnificently imagined a triumphant, monotone technocracy that critics would eventually see as having foreshadowed American Technocracy, warts and all.²⁷

However we construe the role of technocracy in general in *Brave New World* – as an object of satire or as something of which Huxley for a time questioningly approved, or both – the commitment to high art disclosed by the text's structural contradictions makes for a

revealing comparison with *Life in a Technocracy*, in which Loeb insisted that the ‘highest type of work’ is ‘the creative’ (LT 58); argued that the ‘control of anything of the appeal of which is subjective, such as the theater, or painting, should not be entrusted to the state’ (LT 127); and contemplated a utopian (albeit improbable) future wherein the artistic imagination has become so fully integrated into socio-economic life that the life of the artist (as a discrete specialism) is no longer necessary (LT 169). While Loeb insisted that *Life in a Technocracy* amounted to ‘merely a tentative sketch of the new heaven or ideal state’ (LT 192) that might be adopted by America to solve its economic and industrial problems, nevertheless he clearly hoped to use the text to convey his support for government by technical specialists and to oppose Scott’s rejection of culture. Loeb wrote in *The Way it Was* (1959) that Scott ‘disparaged the arts and expected technical men to take charge of society when the price system collapsed.’²⁸ *Life in a Technocracy*, by contrast, reconciles art and technocracy in a way that preserves the former within a technocratic future. Loeb’s fortunate position as a ‘wealthy man of leisure’ had a role to play here, but *Life in a Technocracy* can be read as a sincere effort to outline a technocratic vision of society within which the arts play a distinctive, ‘uplift[ing]’ (LT 141) part.²⁹ Loeb thus differed from Scott, who stated that ‘useless art forms’ could be supplied by machine-produced replacements (another link to Huxley’s World State, in which music is created synthetically), and echoed Huxley’s contemporaneous commitment to the high arts within the scope of a wider, yet short-lived, attraction to technocratic principles, a position with which he wrestled throughout his work of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and above all in *Brave New World*.³⁰

Loeb followed Scott by maintaining that capitalism should ‘make way for a more efficient and more just system of distribution’ (LT 30), one that would drop the profit motive, adopt a universal unit of work (the erg), force industry to utilize fully the principles of science, and eliminate the injustice of accidental and hereditary privilege.³¹ The system Loeb

had in mind would divide itself between a technocratic industrial infrastructure, on the one hand, and a sphere within which man's creative urges could be 'deflected to the production of non-essentials' (*LT* 52), on the other – the latter being dependent on, but not coterminous with, the industrial sectors that would allow its existence. Such a framework would force all citizens to work for a minimum of sixteen hours per week (just as Scott had suggested; see *LT* 37 and 62), and give them a guaranteed income and satisfy their material wants and needs (*LT* 84), in exchange for 'ample scope' (*LT* 60) to pursue self-bettering activities without allowing any one person to 'acquire more goods than everyone is entitled to' (*LT* 64). Certain individuals within the system would, on top of their minimum working week, opt to devote themselves to improving the industrial infrastructure. Others, by contrast, would be 'marvelously released' (*LT* 69) to 'seek self-realization outside the producing system' (*LT* 64) via imaginative and artistic efforts. The goal was to 'utilize man's egoism for getting the necessary productive work done, and his vanity for continuing the experimentation required if the technique of living is to go on developing' (*LT* 71).

Art in such a utopia of plenty would enjoy government protection but remain free from state control (*LT* 127). Its function would be to allow citizens to express themselves unhindered by capitalist logics ('the outrageous Mysticism of Money'; *LT* 138). Loeb acknowledged that capitalism generated art, but he was far from sanguine about the long-term benefits of such cultural and architectural forms as 'metropolises, jazz, advertisements, success epics, girl shows, comic strips, sporting pages, the movies, [and] the talkies' on the grounds that he deemed capitalism 'a hothouse' that 'fosters growth' while producing fruit that 'lacks taste' (*LT* 133). Although Loeb contended that the capitalist era had made possible innovations, such as the cinema and radio, that could be counted among 'the greatest boons' (*LT* 134) ever given to humanity, he argued that capitalism itself was not 'conducive to a good life' and thus that it was incapable of enabling 'expressions' that 'satisfy' (*LT* 137).

Indeed, he is likely to have had Huxley (and figures like him) in mind when he wrote that lowbrow arts were ‘sweeping across the world to the bewilderment and lament of every conservative disciple of the older cultures’ (*LT* 130). Implicitly addressing such disciples, Loeb assured his readers that via technocracy modern artists would find ‘other ideals to vaunt’ (*LT* 141) than those encouraged by capitalist protocols, and that artworks ‘of the older cultures’ would be preserved by the state (*LT* 129). The result would be a social edifice committed to spirit- and life-affirming values rather than to profit motives, and a world enriched by the best art of modernity and antiquity combined.

Put like this, *Life in a Technocracy* answered a range of Huxleyan anxieties, in particular his concerns in ‘Machinery, Psychology, and Politics’ about the subordination of artistic innovation to rationalizing tenets and the difficulties simultaneously involved in accepting ‘the ethic of the machine’ (*HCE3* 220), seeking ‘the material advantages which accrue to those living in a mechanized world’, and protecting the mental benefits of the pre-mechanical past (*HCE3* 221). In other respects, however, *Life in a Technocracy* differs substantially from the account of the future articulated in *Brave New World* and from the views about socio-political reform Huxley articulated in the years surrounding its publication. The most obvious difference is textural. *Life in a Technocracy* is a polemic; *Brave New World* is a literary fiction. Loeb’s opinions are easily read off the page; Huxley’s, by contrast, even when his opinions seem straightforwardly ‘present’ in *Brave New World*, are nevertheless problematized by its literariness, the text only ever yielding its ideological freight reluctantly, if at all. Even if *Life in a Technocracy* seems to parrot the narrative content of *Brave New World* in numerous ways – for example, as if to echo the sports-mad inhabitants of the World State, Loeb predicts that ‘[d]uring the first century of technocracy, sport will probably flourish as it never has before’ (*LT* 128) – the consumerist World State could not be any more distinct from Loeb’s technocracy, in which the ‘anti-social incentive

called profit would be abolished' (*LT* 131) and ending would most certainly not be better than mending (see *BNW* 42), and where no one would desire 'to replenish their equipment frequently and to expend it continuously' (*LT* 121).³²

Even more significantly, whereas Huxley argued in 'The Outlook for American Culture' that the ideal state 'is one in which there is a material democracy controlled by an aristocracy of intellect' (*HCE3* 192), Loeb disagreed with 'the system invented by the thinkers of conservative India, a system of stratified castes and wholesale renunciations', favouring instead a framework that would depend on 'specialization of function' yet enable individuals to possess 'equal and absolute economic security' rather than feel 'resigned to the lot into which [they] may be born' (*LT* 174).³³ On this central point Loeb and Huxley were fundamentally opposed, Huxley countering Loeb's liberal perspective with writings calling for a 'revolt against political democracy' (*HCE3* 191) and for power 'concentrated in the hands of intelligent and active oligarchies' (*HCE3* 192), two inclinations represented and arguably extolled in *Brave New World*. Likewise, Huxley and Loeb took very different stances on the problem of eugenics. Huxley later claimed in 'What is Happening to Our Population?' (1934) that 'a nation in which the number of halfwits is steadily growing is a nation whose potential efficiency is being steadily impaired' (*HCE3* 400), thereby echoing the more uncompromising rhetorics of productivity used by Scott and reiterating the eugenicism of the World State. Loeb went in a different direction, stating that 'breeding with specific individuals for specific purposes' would not be contemplated without a 'superman' to 'supervise the job', even though he felt that a technocratic abandoning of 'the false ideals promulgated by late social eras' would 'produce a race of man superior in quality to any [then] known on earth' (*LT* 178). Yet Huxley's commitment to the high arts – to what Loeb called those expressions 'fraught with meaning, the only meaning that matters' (*LT* 167) – aligns him with a technocratic defence of the aesthetic, in spite of the fact that Huxley was

not committed to the specific form of technocracy that Loeb defended in *Life in a Technocracy* and elsewhere.

And this leads me to repeat my fundamental point: namely, that Huxley's potential compatibility with Loeb not only establishes a parallel with the American Technocracy movement in particular, but also shows yet again how Huxley's interest in 'technocratic control over reproduction and social reform in the early 1930s' locates *Brave New World* in exactly those contexts from which commentators such as Niethammer have sought to distance it.³⁴ More recently, Ronald T. Sion has argued that 'of all the major commentators on the modern threat of technocratic arrogance, Huxley remains perhaps the most widely read and influential.'³⁵ This is undoubtedly true. It is also the case, however, that Huxley remains perhaps the most influentially *ambivalent* critic of technocracy, arrogant or otherwise, and that there are intriguing connections between his views on the links between art and technocracy and those espoused by Loeb (thereby forcing us to place historically his commentaries on 'the modern threat of technocratic arrogance' with greater care). Consider Huxley's and Loeb's views regarding those who choose, or are forced, to live outside technocratic systems. Loeb notes that 'a few zealots' may decide to end their contract with technocracy (*LT* 40) and the 'two main categories' (*LT* 60) of self-realization – scientific and imaginative – it facilitates. Doing so, however, would mean 'living by Stone Age standards except for borrowed tools and gifts, [and] would be disagreeable for most people' (*LT* 40). Leaving technocracy in Loeb's account means leaving the system as a whole. In *Brave New World*, by contrast, independence is available to those who "“have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life”" (*BNW* 200), as Mond puts it; is not unpleasant (though it appears so in prospect); and structurally supports the technocracy to which it is notionally opposed. The exile that Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson face represents not exile from the World State *per se* but signifies another form of containment *within* it, and which is,

presumably, still within the power of the World State as a governing agency. Artistic freedom is for Loeb a product of the system. For Huxley, artistic freedom comes about *despite* the system. Yet in both instances technocracy facilitates a realm in which imagination (and presumably the creation and enjoyment of high art) is possible, and in this sense the reciprocal distinction ‘between mechanic and liberal occupations’ that *Brave New World* examines approximates at least in part to the bond eulogized by *Life in a Technocracy*.

It’s worth reiterating that Loeb and Huxley wrote in very different ways, and that *Brave New World* could hardly be called a socio-political manifesto in the way that *Life in a Technocracy* more easily can be, despite Loeb’s insistence that the text was meant as a rough outline of a possible future. Huxley described *Brave New World* in a 1931 letter to G. Wilson Knight as ‘a Swiftian novel about the Future’ that would delineate the ‘strange and appalling effects on feeling, “instinct” and general *weltanschauung* of the application of psychological, physiological and mechanical knowledge to the fundamentals of human life’ (AHL 353), so it would be a strange reading indeed that sought uncomplicatedly to equate the text with a technocratic account of the human condition when technocracy is one of the very phenomena that *Brave New World* satirizes. *Brave New World* is certainly more nuanced in its questioning attitude towards technocracy than such texts as Michael Arlen’s *Man’s Mortality* (1933), in which technocratic systems that seek ‘to dragoon the nations of the world into a colossal scheme of tidiness’ are rebuked more candidly.³⁶ What is intriguing here is that in *Brave New World*, a text routinely characterized as one of the twentieth century’s most powerful invectives against technocratic thinking, we find a relationship between artistic-intellectual creativity and technocracy within whose terms the former can be preserved, rather than annihilated, by the latter.

A brief comparison of Huxley’s writings with those of the American Technocrats shows from a new angle how *Brave New World* appeared in the midst of an international

debate regarding the roles played by technology and by non-utilitarian high art in socio-political life, and that the similarities between Huxley's and Loeb's interventions into this debate – between their respective 'signs of the T', in effect – should prompt us more precisely to discuss *Brave New World* in relation to the American cultural-historical contexts with which it resonates. Despite Huxley's well-known concerns about Americanization, and notwithstanding their incorporation into *Brave New World*, the parallels between Huxley and Loeb suggest a more complex cultural-historical state of affairs than has hitherto been acknowledged. Given the timings, Huxley is unlikely to have based *Brave New World* on the activities of the American Technocrats in particular (though we know he corresponded with Loeb in the early 1920s), but it seems that he wrote the text partially to find some way to reconcile his interest in technocracy with his commitment to, and desire to preserve, the high arts from the more reductively quantitative ideologies of the period.³⁷ Huxley certainly didn't think that history was bunk. But like Loeb he would have disagreed with Scott regarding art's role in modernity, and thus would have relished the ending of Phillips's assault on Scott in 'Abracadabra':

Technocracy! Technocracy!

A horrid doubt breaks in;

For verbal aristocracy

Sometimes has humbler kin.

Is there, by chance, distillable,

If down, its weight were shrunk,

That baleful monosyllable

The older, brisker 'bunk'?³⁸

¹ L. Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?*, trans. P. Camiller (London: Verso, 1992), p. 33.

² E. Copley, *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 11. For an excellent overview of the Fordian sources for *Brave New World*, see J. Meckier, 'Debunking Our Ford: *My Life and Work* and *Brave New World*', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 78 (Autumn 1979): 448–59.

³ H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), ed. P. Parrinder (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 262–3.

⁴ H. Loeb, *Full Production without War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. vii.

⁵ W. E. Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocrat Movement, 1900–1941* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), p. 146.

⁶ H. Scott *et al.*, *Introduction to Technocracy* (New York: John Day, 1933), p. 43.

⁷ M. Adamson and R. I. Moore, *Technocracy: Some Questions Answered* (New York: Technocracy Inc., 1934), p. 15.

⁸ For an account of Loeb and *Life in a Technocracy*, see H. P. Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 141–5.

⁹ W. Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890), in 'News from Nowhere' and Other Writings, ed. C. Wilmer (London: Penguin, 2004): pp. 41–228, at 160.

¹⁰ J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 88.

¹¹ P. Smethurst, "'O brave new world that has no poets in it': Shakespeare and Scientific Utopia in *Brave New World*", in D. G. Izzo and K. Kirkpatrick (eds), *Huxley's 'Brave New World': Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008): pp. 96–106, at p. 100.

¹² For this lineage, see J. Meynaud, *Technocracy* (1964), trans. P. Barnes (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 194–206.

¹³ Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream*, p. ix. The rest of this paragraph is indebted to Akin's study.

¹⁴ G. Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 69 and p. 70.

¹⁵ Scott *et al.*, *Introduction*, p. 12.

¹⁶ Scott *et al.*, *Introduction*, pp. 48, 46, and 47.

¹⁷ For a more nuanced discussion of the Committee's claims see Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream*, pp. 64–79.

¹⁸ Dreiser to Scott (29 Sep. 1932), Theodore Dreiser Collection, 1897–1983 (number 4604), Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹⁹ For Ford's attacks on the American Technocrats, see my 'Technocracy and the Fordian Arts: America, *The American Mercury*, and Music in the 1930s', in S. Haslam and S. O'Malley (eds), *Ford Madox Ford and America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012): pp. 167–80. For Mencken's views see 'Old Dr. Scott's Bile Beans', *The American Mercury* (Apr. 1933): 505–7.

²⁰ See 'Technocracy Idea is Old, says Soddy', *The New York Times* (8 Jan. 1933): 23.

²¹ 'Lucio' [G. Phillips], 'Abracadabra', *The Manchester Guardian* (14 Jan. 1933): 9.

²² H. P. Segal, *Recasting The Machine Age: Henry Ford's Village Industries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), p. 102.

²³ See Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, p. 141.

²⁴ H. Elsner, Jr., *The Technocrats: Prophets of Automation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1967), pp. 95–6. A key Technocratic symbol was the *yīnyáng* monad, which epitomized Scott's drive to create harmony out of chaos

²⁵ R. Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p. 69.

²⁶ Elsner, Jr., *The Technocrats*, p. 95.

²⁷ See Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream*, p. 148 and p. 166. See also J. Essid, 'No God but Electricity: American Literature and Technological Enthusiasm in the Electrical Age, 1893–1939', unpublished PhD thesis (Indiana University, 1993), p. 256.

²⁸ H. Loeb, *The Way It Was* (New York: Criterion Books, 1959), p. 12.

²⁹ L. Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 210.

³⁰ Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream*, p. 146.

³¹ Loeb outlines these points in Chapter II of *Life in a Technocracy*, 'The Escape'.

³² For more on sport in *Brave New World* see Parrinder's essay in this volume.

³³ D. L. Higdon explores the influence of the Indian 'system of stratified castes' upon *Brave New World* in *Wandering into 'Brave New World'* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 44–58.

³⁴ J. Woiak, 'Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics, and Fiction', *The Public Historian*, 29.3 (Summer 2007): 105–29, at 128.

³⁵ R. T. Sion, *Aldous Huxley and the Search for Meaning: A Study of the Eleven Novels* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), p. 204.

³⁶ M. Arlen, *Man's Mortality: A Story* (London: William Heinemann, 1933), p. ix.

³⁷ The Huxley-Loeb correspondence is archived at Princeton University. Given Bernard Marx's surname, one wonders whether Huxley had heard of Guido Marx, an early associate of Scott in New York (see Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream*, p. 23 and p. 32).

³⁸ 'Lucio', 'Abracadabra', 9.