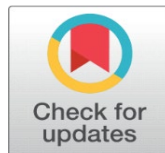
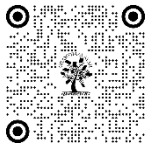


NUMBED BY PLEASURE: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DEEP LIVING IN BRAVE NEW WORLD AND MODERN WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) has been so widely accepted and studied that the title has gained popularity as a metaphor in scholarly discourse. This novel depicts a dystopian future in which the global government controls people's lives, employment, and leisure activities. We are shown a striking image of people living in harmony and comfort, but the reason for this is that they have sacrificed their uniqueness, autonomy, and emotional complexity. Artificial means are used to keep people happy and pleased all the time in this world, so they don't question anything that happens in their lives. Affecting people's lives with manufactured joy, capitalists keep them from thinking critically and logically. The novel reflects how the relationships, emotions, and experiences of people are shallow and fake. In this paper, two worlds are compared. One is the real world we live in, and the other is the one that Huxley created. The world we are living in today is not controlled by the government, but there are many ways through which our lives are somehow shaped and controlled by digital media, consumer culture, and entertainment. The individuals of the present day, like the characters in *Brave New World*, also avoid uncomfortable emotions and critical thinking. This paper argues that when society's primary goal is to be comfortable and content, it somehow eliminates the essential elements that give life greater meaning, such as creativity, hardship, introspection, and love. In conclusion, this essay argues that while technological progress and entertainment are important parts of our lives, they shouldn't take the place of the values that people have given us.

Keywords: Happiness, Emotional Numbness, Surveillance Capitalism, Digital Distraction, Humanism

1. INTRODUCTION

Huxley's *Brave New World* depicts a world in which the definition of happiness is substantially different from what we are familiar with. Happiness is not something people find through experiences of life and personal growth, but it is something that is controlled and planned by the government. In this science fiction novel, we observe that people are created in laboratories, given a drug known as soma to keep them calm and delighted, and are trained to enjoy the superficial pleasures of life. They are kept entertained through casual sex, games, and a drug called soma. People are given the drug Soma to take away all their worry and sadness. As one character in the novel says, "Christianity without

tears- that's what soma is" (Huxley, 1998, p.238). Although this drug gives a feeling of peace to the people, it takes away their ability to grow and feel deeply as humans.

After being created in laboratories, the people are sorted into different castes, which are somewhat similar to social classes. Some are intelligent and strong, like alphas, while others are simple and repetitive, like Epsilon. They are taught not to feel emotions like love, sadness, and anger. The government's power over the people takes away some of their emotional pain, but it also takes away things like their uniqueness, their ability to feel deeply, and their freedom (Huxley, 1998). Emotional closeness is seen as a dangerous thing in the novel. People are unable to experience true feelings since they are not permitted to develop familial ties or fall in love. Happiness like this is phony and fleeting. Mustapha Mond, a leader in the novel, explains: "You can't have a lasting civilization without plenty of pleasant vices" (Huxley, 1998, p.220).

Happiness in *Brave New World* is more like emotional silence than real happiness. Instead of living a creative and wonderful life, people are being managed, like parts of a machine. Scholars like Claeys (2017) argue that human beings who follow order, enjoy entertainment, and avoid thinking are turned into machines by this system. This world doesn't have room for faith, philosophy, arts, or literature, because these things will make people feel emotions deeply and will also change the way they think. Booker (1994) explains that the novel depicts the citizens as "infantilized adults." He says that the system keeps them in a childish state so that they are always dependent on the system for their pleasures. While the world may seem calm and peaceful on the surface level, underneath it, people have lost the powers that made them human.

The world we live in is not the same as the world in *Brave New World*, but there are some trends that are the same. In the modern world, we often think that we are free and have many choices around us, but this is not the case. We are surrounded by a majority of things around us, like social media, games, videos, and streaming shows. We initially believed that having all of this gives us freedom and enjoyment, but as time goes on, we see how these services have hampered our emotions and have taken up our vital time. Bauman (2005) calls this a "liquid life," where people are moving from one moment of pleasure to another without finding a deeper purpose and meaning.

The activities enjoyed today by people are generally controlled by companies and technology. To provide us with content we want to watch or enjoy, they use algorithms that adapt to our preferences. Zuboff (2019) explains this as "surveillance capitalism," where companies monitor our behavior, collect the data, and sell it for profit. Therefore, what we like about the internet is not something we choose, but rather something that has been selected for us. These days, leisure is also linked to consumer society. Advertisements and people with a lot of followers tell us all the time to buy more because it makes us happy. This somehow indicates that people are under pressure to purchase items that are unimportant to them in order to follow trends and spend more. As Schor (1999) points out, consumer culture connects happiness with ownership instead of experience.

In both *Brave New World* and modern society, pleasure is used to keep people from asking hard questions. In the novel, people were given soma (a happiness drug), casual sex, and much more to distract them and keep them busy. In the novel, people are trained to be happy with their place in society. This statement is quite evident when a character from the novel proudly announces, "We also predestine and condition" (Huxley, 1998, p.13). The concept of pleasure is somewhat similar in the modern world, as people have endless entertainment from social media, online shopping, and streaming platforms. These things hinder our productive thinking and stop us from asking important questions about freedom, life, and meaning.

Freedom in both worlds is also not what it seems. People are conditioned from birth to accept their roles in society and not to think for themselves, therefore, there is no freedom in the novel. But in our world, despite being free, many of our choices are limited by social class, money, or the influence of digital systems. As McGuigan (2010) puts it, we are offered freedom while being silently governed by the system around us. The idea of happiness is somewhat similar to the idea of freedom in both worlds. People are regularly told that they are happy in both places. But this happiness is often shallow.

There is one big difference, though. In our world, we still have the freedom to choose and think. In Huxley's universe, however, individuals are unaware of what is lacking. In our world, we still have access to real relationships, education, books, the arts, and spiritual practices. We still remember ideas like emotional depth, critical thinking, and personal growth. The only problem people are facing is that they are too distracted to pursue these ideas. Postman (1985) advised us that we must be cautious in our interactions, or we would end up liking things that limit our critical thinking and emotional stability.

We can witness the concept of happiness in both our world and Huxley's world. In both these worlds, people are encouraged to avoid pain and chase happiness. In *Brave New World*, people fake happiness with the help of a drug called soma, which keeps them from feeling lonely, angry, or sad. This drug is a way to cover up real feelings. Booker (1984) explains that these people are like "infantilized adults," kept in a state of mental and emotional immaturity. These people can't feel, think, or grow, so they act like obedient children instead of adults who can make their own decisions.

The same thing is happening in the present time. We may not use the soma drug, but to escape pain, we use other things such as shopping online, scrolling on phones, and binge-watching shows. Due to these activities, we are easily able to avoid uncomfortable emotions. Nussbaum (2010) reminds us that being human means feeling pain, caring deeply about others, and thinking critically. He believes that a society that only values pleasure and comfort will, in no time, lose its soul. Another important thing about happiness is that it makes people stop caring about the essential things in life. Huxley's world has no one who fights against wrongdoing because no one feels the pain. Similarly, the people of today are so distracted by temporary comforts and entertainment that they don't pay heed to real-life problems like climate change, inequality, and loneliness. As Postman (1985) warns us, we are becoming a kind of society that is "amusing ourselves to death." He argues that we have lost sight of what matters because we are too preoccupied with entertaining ourselves and finding enjoyment in it.

We can see that the idea of happiness is often seen as an easy path in both *Brave New World* and the modern world. Happiness can come from taking a pill, watching a movie, or buying something, but this happiness is short-lived. This happiness somehow restricts us from knowing what actual happiness is. Huxley, after writing *Brave New World*, realized that the novel was completely hopeless and dark, and suggested a better path in *Brave New World Revisited*. In *Brave New World Revisited*, he discussed the potential for building a society in which individuals are secure, at ease, and free to develop and think as they see fit. The risk, in his opinion, comes when we begin to use science and technology to control people rather than to use them for good. Bauman (2005) says that to live a meaningful life, we have to slow down.

According to Huxley, true happiness requires responsibility, awareness, and personal choices. Connecting with others, with ourselves, and with something more than comfort is the source of it. According to Nussbaum (2010), when a person uses his imagination, feelings, and reasoning to comprehend the world and care about other people, he feels fully alive. To find real happiness, we should stop running after instant and temporary pleasures. Instead, we should focus on spending time in stillness, real connections, and reflections. Schor (1999) argues that happiness should be a natural part of being human, not something that can be bought.

To induce real happiness among people, several changes will have to be made in the current system. We ought to support education, the arts, conversations, and time for rest. Similarly, we have to use technology and science very wisely. Instead of using them as an escape tool, we can use them to create, learn, and build communities. Additionally, we must be mindful of preserving time for true leisure. Leisure time shouldn't be used to escape from real life but to do greater things. The last step is to realize that we can only begin to construct deeper lives if we stop avoiding unpleasant emotions. True happiness is only possible when people have time and space to connect, grow, and reflect.

2. CONCLUSION

The consequences of a society that prioritizes comfort over the truth are illustrated in *Brave New World*. We see that people in Huxley's fictional world are always happy, calm, and entertaining because they are kept away from pain, problems, and feelings. Their pleasure is artificial and strictly regulated by the system. This artificial behavior is comparable to our contemporary society, where we use social media, internet shopping, and streaming services as an alternative to soma as a way to decompress and cope with stress. These things are just a temporary alternative as they do not provide long-term happiness. Twenge argues that many people feel lonely, distracted, and emotionally unstable, even after their exposure to entertainment (Twenge, 2017).

This paper shows that both *Brave New World* and modern society use distraction and comfort to stop people from thinking logically and rationally. However, this paper contends that it is important to understand that true pleasure is more than just feeling good; it is about feeling fully human. This means having the freedom to face difficult emotions, the courage to think for ourselves, and a chance to build emotional bonds with others. Additionally, the paper discusses how technology does not need to be rejected; instead, it needs to be used carefully. Huxley's message is not just a warning, but a reminder to choose a better path. If we want to live a better and meaningful life, we have to look beyond the short-

term pleasures and build a world where people are free to think, love, feel, and grow. The happiness that leaves a deep mark on our hearts and minds is the one thing that genuinely defines us as humans.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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