

## Essay on the book "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley: a contemporary critical proposal

### Ensaio sobre o livro "Admirável Mundo Novo" de Aldous Huxley: uma proposta crítica contemporânea

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**ABSTRACT** | In times of great technological advancement and setbacks regarding human aspects, the "Homo" described by Biology as "Sapiens" evolves into "Homo Machined". This new configuration of man governed by Science, Technology, Capitalism and Globalization is reflected in a new human paradox: the overvaluation of the economy at the expense of life, impacting the relationships / configurations of living. Thus, the present essay aims to make a critical analysis of the book "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley, which discusses the relationship between man who creates a system, and which, when crossed by its creation, becomes its own product in the cycle of producing. The book "Brave New World" is a parable that romanticizes the dehumanization of human beings. It is identified that, since its first publication in 1932, the world has sunk so far in the wrong direction sowing the commercialism of life and the culture of competitiveness that it erodes sociability and destroys the intrinsic feelings of human society that, if the author wrote the same work today, fiction would not be six hundred years from the present. And the consequence of freedom, or rather, of simple humanity, would have turned out to be inhuman.

**KEYWORDS:** Humanity. Capitalism. Globalization.

**RESUMO** | Em tempos de grande avanço tecnológico e retrocessos no que se refere a aspectos humanos, o "Homo" descrito pela Biologia como "Sapiens" evolui para "Homo Maquinizado". Essa nova configuração do homem regida pela Ciência, Tecnologia, Capitalismo e Globalização se reflete num novo paradoxo humano: a supervalorização da economia em detrimento da vida, impactando nas relações/configurações do viver. Dessa forma, o presente ensaio tem como objetivo fazer uma análise crítica do livro "Admirável Mundo Novo" de Aldous Huxley, que discute a relação homem que cria um sistema, e, que, quando atravessado pela sua criação, torna-se seu próprio produto no ciclo de se produzir. O livro "Admirável Mundo Novo" trata-se de uma parábola que romantiza a desumanização dos seres humanos. Identifica-se que, desde a sua primeira publicação em 1932, o mundo afundou-se a passos tão largos em direção errada semeando o mercantilismo da vida e a cultura da competitividade que corrói a sociabilidade e destrói os sentimentos intrínsecos da sociedade humana que, se o autor escrevesse hoje a mesma obra, a ficção não estaria a seiscentos anos do presente. E a consequência da liberdade, ou melhor, da simples humanidade, teria se revelado desumana.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Humanidade. Capitalismo. Globalização.

## Introduction

Are we wild or civilized? A "moral-ethical-human" dilemma that makes us think about the extent to which beings are biologically innate or socially conditioned (Pinheiro, 1994; Carvalho Neto, 2003; Zuanon, 2007). In "Brave New World", a book written by Aldous Huxley, we discuss the standardization of the human product – the relationship of man with the world, from the perspective that man used to create machines. However, today, he has become enslaved by them.

Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894 – 1963) was an English writer and philosopher. A graduate of Oxford University, he produced scripts for films, poetry, essays and books. His influences began from childhood with his grandfather, biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, and his mother, novelist Humphrey Ward. At university, Aldous Huxley had contact with British writer Lytton Strachey and philosopher Bertrand Russell and produced other works, such as "The Door of Disappointment", "The Island" and "The Perennial Philosophy".

In his book "Brave New World", launched in 1932 in England, a year of great social consequences in the crisis of the great depression that weakened economic structures and consequently productive life in Europe. The Story is told in the not too distant future, near the year 2500 or, more precisely, "in the year 600 of the Fordian Era", alluding to the positivist scientific faith and to Henry Ford, creator of the automobile industry and inventor of a method of work organization for the mass production and standardization of parts. The result was a satire to the capitalist culture and its movement that sought to make consumerism subjective ways of living life.

As a result of industrialization and its exacerbated means of production, society has acquired new operating structures, particularly in a commercial sense. With the evolution of major technologies, we move from the industrial system and begin to think about a new format of man: individual man, from a globalized society endowed with excess of technology (Bauman, 2009, p.7). Such a political-economic format is not restricted to trade and money only, but establishes, as a new format of life, the productive-consumerist logic (Medeiros, 2004; Fleury, 2018).

It is the result of the system of capital that generates individuals who, in a cycle, mistakenly seek what they don't know how to obtain, but the search puts them in motion, responding in a sick way. Capitalism and globalization create new forms of belief, that acquiring a happy life is based on acquiring good in the "here and now", and this change is subjectively reflected in society (Han, 2015). The influence of capitalism-mercantilism-positivism in science is such that it has transformed the capacity to expand human rationality and critical reflection into formatted patterns of thinking of life, as if it were machines with few human emotions (Hugo Dias, 2011; Corbanezi, 2018; Viapiana, 2018; Marinho, 2019; Gurgel, 2019; Ferraro, 2019).

The man who worked in excess to survive the world of consumption does not bear the advantages of neoliberalism, accompanied by the triumph of rationalization at expense of the subjective, the predominance of reason: cultural, technological and scientific, and the new way of living a life of consumption (Han, 2015). Otherness has been culturalized in the cancellation of the other and the models of extremist, competitive and violent functioning superimpose the collective-cooperative movements and their effects on subjectivity in a new socio-political-cultural scenario, which causes, in parallel, inequality, segregation, intolerance, alarming growth of pollution, harmful climate changes, centralization of capital and incentive to social inequalities (Bauman, 2001; Han, 2015).

As a result, the system collapsed (Calderón Gómez, 2017), as Botelho (2019) points out, it is a structural crisis, and the castrating and coercive measures put in place to humanity to make happiness the fruit of power, linked to the acquisition of goods. This forces individuals to work exhaustively in the name of the pursuit of happiness and quality of life, creating slavery in a salaried manner, which is reflected in excessive demands for work and reduced time to live life (Foucault, 1987; Deleuze, 1992; Han, 2015; Calderón Gómez, 2017; Botelho, 2019).

Contextualizing this method, name "Fordism", it subjectivized workers into something inferior to automatons, robots that repeated, throughout the working day, a single gesture (Moraes Neto, 1986; Moraes Neto, 2009). In the book, what is called Social

Stability consists of "Standardized Men and Women, in uniform groups. All the personnel of a small plant consisting of the products of a single bokanovsk egg" (p.10). This is a criticism of the positivist cult and experimental science, at a time when the social consequences affect society and the belief in progress and democratic regimes seem to disappear in order to elect totalitarian militias. In premeditation format, its preface is dated thirty-five years after the original writing of the book. This makes us think that the author, in satirizing "Oh Ford!" (p.22) throughout the writing, referred to the construction of a system constituted to shape life into a human product, making the book visionary at that time.

However, in times of great technological advances, in a post-globalization context, the brave world remains new? Thus, this study addresses the effects of capitalism and globalization in 2020, contrasting with a book that narrates such events, under the gaze of 1932. To respond to the problem in question, this critical essay aims to analyze Aldous Huxley's book "Brave New World", bringing a critical-reflexive look from the new molds of today's society. The work does not focus on the transcription of exact facts, but, the scientific and social relevance is assumed from the critical point of view, describing patterns of macro and microsocial functioning. It is hoped that from the reflection, new horizons will open, allowing us to look at things differently and, thus, change the meaning of things.

### Methodological Aspects

This theoretical essay makes a critical analysis, under the contemporary time cut, having as object of investigation the book "Brave New World", by Aldous Huxley, published in 1932. As it is a qualitative methodology, under the methodological cutout of a theoretical essay, it seeks to present the interaction between theoretical objectivity and the analytical subjectivity that makes up critical analysis (Meneghetti, 2011). Scientific knowledge is organized, based on multiplicity, whose objective of science is to elaborate modes of reading and discourses of reality (Daltró and Faria, 2019). From this perspective, the work stops at presenting a set of knowledges apprehended by the eye of the researcher, who instead of writing

truths, seeks to describe reflections so that new flows of knowledge can be built. The process of critical analysis is a process of interpretative re-reading that reorganizes narratives in the light of the new theories developed, giving possibilities to weave new configurations of knowledge and, consequently, to produce other historical marks.

### Outcome and Discussion

Following the planetary motto of the "Brave New World": - "Community, Identity, Stability." (Huxley, 1931, p.8). Resulting in a totalitarian society, fascinated by scientific progress and convinced that it can offer its citizens mandatory happiness. The society, or rather, the system tends to operate schematically bases on castes.

*We decant our babies in the form of socialized living beings, in the form of alphas or ipsilons, of futures, bearers or future World Directors – Incubation Directors (Huxley, 1931, p.13)*

In this way, man is built in a standardized way, in a machined way, through methods that will make him be. The romanticism and individuality of motherhood is lost – a biological and physical process that involves the "mother-baby diadem", assuming that social interactions are important factors for human development (Vygotsky, 1984), in order to have and ideal human construction process, which produces in an endless cycle, in order to build a productive society. As Huxley (1931) points out, the process of maturation in the form of production makes man-man social (not very socializable) to meet the demands of life. Science and technology would be used as if they had been made for man, however, it occurs as if a man had been enslaved by them.

In view of this, the book conveys the idea that society is pragmatically shaped. There is no free will. In fact, there is a conditioning that makes people what they are. This allows society to function, yet its functioning is artificial, hierarchical and unequal. The castes limit individuals from their inherent potentiality, it's human. Humanity has become a reflection of the Fordist model of production, and the specificities that should be improved become completeness.

*As political and economic freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends to increase in compensation". [...] "Our Freud was the first to reveal the astonishing dangers of family life. The world was full of fathers – and consequently full of affliction; full of mothers – and therefore full of all kinds of perversions, from sadism to chastity; full of brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts – full of madness and suicide (Huxley, 1931, p.7)*

Michel Foucault in his book "Discipline and Punish" (1987), addresses that institutions were created for social control. According to Ramos & Nascimento (2008), the family is the first social institution – as he would say in "Brave New World", a room of "social predestination" that prepares the individual for society.

*Every institution is a socialization tool created by man himself with the function of managing his interpersonal relations. The institution normalizes, legalizes, legitimizes the behavior of the individual in society. It also generates stability and security in social exchanges with which the individual has contact in his life (Ramos & Nascimento, 2008).*

According to Elisabeth Badinter, in her book "Myth of Mother Love" (1985), such responsibility is imposed historically-culturally on the female sex. In this way, the construction of the individual in "Brave New World", dis-romanticizes the affective family ties, giving full responsibility to the State for them, which treats in a machined way, the effects that the social taught in relationships. What is new about being admirable? In Foucault (1987) and his theory of the "Docile Bodies" a denunciation of a system that creates a controlled society is identified, and the remedy for a society that is not controlled, therefore, is madness, quoting the book "Savages".

*You can't teach skills to a rhinoceros – he explained in his concise and vigorous style. – There are men who are almost rhinos, they do not react adequately to conditioning. Poor wretches! Bernard is one of those (Huxley, 1931, p.53)*

However, the dialogue between Bernard and Lenin presents itself as a break from conditioning, "a free thinking" of what society imposed on both to think, "a thinking just for thinking" that was different from what the conditioning brought as normality, because Bernard questioned the system that for Lenin

presented itself as natural – it was the only model and considered normal. Plato, in his "Myth of the Cave", believed that everyone could only see what his own reflection allowed (2001), that is, both became reflex-identify, machines, of what society gave as utility.

*"The feeling of being more me, if you know what I mean. To act more for myself, and not as completely as part of something else. Of not simply being a social body cell." [...] "How can I? No, the real problem is this: How can I not, or rather – because I know perfectly well why I can't – what would I feel if I could, if I were free, if I were not enslaved by my conditioning? (Huxley, 1931. p.55)*

However, is it not the case that without the conditions – hitherto used in experimental psychology, such as Pavlov and Skinner, it is not a question of cessation and freedom?" ...and that it was the expression of the censorship of the society itself (Huxley, 1931. p.59)

Based on the book, the following question arise: was this the path that the characters liked to follow with their own lives? Are we free? To that extent are we not conditioned, by the social, to be what we are? Freedom of expression? Military intervention? Bullying? Discrimination? Are we critical thinking beings, or do we reflect what "globalization", i.e. social networks and the big media, subjectivizes us to think? The book "Brave New World" (Huxley, 1931. p.59) answers that we must abolish any kind of freedom because it brings chaos.

Free will, when associated to the concept of individuality that has a structural function for modernity, brings with it the individual interest in superposition of the collective good, the culture of competitiveness and, consequently, the war (Calhau, 2016). In the book, it is mentioned that not everyone can be "Alphas" or only "Ipsilons" and reflects on the importance of otherness and social roles for the functioning of the society. However, are we placed to think: in unequal societies, to stratify between Alphas and Ipsilons solves social instability? (Karl Marx, 2007).

Zygmunt Bauman in his book "Liquid Modernity" (2001), describes that exacerbated capitalism and its entire form of mass production will bring consequences to humanity. Consequences that, since the Industrial Revolution, as elucidated in Charlie Chaplin's films, show how they molded humans to work as if they

were machines, to consume as if they were products, functioning as food in the capitalism cycle.

In the light of Huxley (1931), we walk steps toward the dehumanization of society and its individualistic – competitive way of living. Characterized by being centered in themselves, in their own caste, without the capacity to see inferior castes, without outlining any feeling for the poverty and misery of other castes. For, according to "Brave New World", society has been conditioned to deal with the human suffering of those who are different with inhumanity.

Coincidentally, society is faced with the increasing and alarming use of substances that increase productive capacity (Ortega, et al., 2010). According to data from the National Health Surveillance Agency, in 2010, 2.1 million were sold and in 2013, there were 2.6 million methylphenidate boxes (Anvisa, 2013), a central nervous system stimulant substance used to improve intellectual performance. In this way, the substances, that is, the remedies whose primitive ideals are to "cure," work at the service of the "Control Society" (Foucault, 1987), to produce more producers - a cycle of capitalism that has no end, leading the human to a sick but medicalized society (Han, 2015).

With the forms of control, this time subjective, that authorize the State as the one that protects life; and from medical knowledge as the one that assures life, the creations of laws and diagnostic manuals function as a "know how" before society (Foucault, 1987). That in partnership with the great structures of mass marketing, such as the pharmaceutical industries, they capitalize life to answer, functioning under the logic of production. Manufacturing subjects, standardized humans, sick people, but who work in the fight and eradication of what cannot be profitable.

Thinking that antidepressants and anxiolytics do not solve the complexity of the effects of human conditioning in production machines. However, due to the large quantity of toxic substances, and consequently their too negative effect on production, the "totalitarian state" uses prohibitionist policies - control strategies, whose objective is again to commercialize human freedom. However, in the book, the author thought beyond, ironizing the man

designed to meet the demands of the market, when he recommends to contemporary scientists the idea of "Soma," the drug that, according to "Brave New World," brings the exact amount of happiness, adding to productivity.

*You can't make a tragedy without social instability. The world is stable now. People are happy, they have what they want, and they never want what they cannot have. They feel good, they are safe; they never get sick; they are not afraid of death; they live in the blissful ignorance of passion and old age; they are not overwhelmed by fathers and mothers; they have no wives, no children, no lovers, for whom they can suffer violent emotions; they are conditioned in such a way that they can hardly fail to behave as they should. And if anything goes wrong, there is the sum (Huxley, 1931. p.127)*

Lipovetsky in his book "Paradoxical Happiness: Essays on the Society of Hyperconsumption" (2007), addresses the paradigm of man in search of the purchase of happiness. Man - Consumption - World (Bourdieu, 2001), a perspective that believes that man as a social being has been subjectivized, that is, conditioned to behave in a cycle of producing to consume and being happy is associated with the possibilities that capitalism offers. In this way, the reason for human life is limited to the frontiers that the local currency can offer, thus creating a cruel and reductionist system, since it limits the sense of existence to what the positivist-capitalist functioning can offer.

## Final Reflection

In "Brave New World", the sum is the drug of happiness that makes you sleep. It does not diminish productivity and brings no consequences to man. From this, we discuss the contemporary conception that in life happiness is placed as a goal, under a meritocratic ideology that only needs to be strived for and after abdication and long work, it will be rewarded in which the reward is being happy. For, in this cycle, life is set as an objective to be conquered and knowledge/money are potentiators. Updating the theory of "virtue" in Plato's "The Republic", power will consequently bring happiness.

However, in a society where "hours cost money" and information overloads life, the man who studied for centuries for Artificial Intelligence made the mistake of doing little in-depth study about himself. In view of this, "Man is overburdened to perform his multitasking condition commanded by overwork in the form of self-exploitation. The ideals of individuality bring individualistic consequences for contemporaneity: from so much intelligence, man has become cold, as the book by the author Aldous Huxley describes he has become - not in the sense of uncivilized, but in the sense of inhuman. And the fiction described in "Brave New World" became real in "Brave New World". Discussed in chapters of daily newspapers, we see in the television media the growing violence, fruit of dictatorial politics and the logic of caste mercantilist life, under the "blasé" format in "Brave New World" - but real. The harassment of the human at the expense of the system has evolved so far that the concern is with the effects on humanity. The discourse of the Savage that closes the book makes us think that even the - rational - thinking beings, conditioned by the strategies of control of social marketing, brought us to Greta Thunberg's discourse at the United Nations. "The brave new world of the now" is ending and nobody does anything. Oh Ford.

### Competing interests

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