

**TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL**

**ENGLISH B**  
**EXTENDED ESSAY**

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**Research Question:** To what extent Aldous Huxley's use of technology and science in Brave New World helpful to create a dystopian society and an applicable warning to today's world?

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the essay is to explore the usage of science and technology to create a dystopian society in the novel *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and to investigate the messages and warnings and the extent that they are applicable warnings to the present day. English writer Aldous Huxley portrays a dystopic world where people are controlled by the government through the medium of technology and science. The technology is used to make the life desirable for the citizens whereas the science is used to create a humdrum existence, instead of improving the quality of life.

In the society Huxley created people are deceived that they are living the best possible life for them and they are convinced the class they belong to in the caste system is better than the others. Even though Huxley presents this artificial world as a utopian one, we can see that he actually created a dystopic world, in which the people are not free to have their own ideas and free-will, or to act on their own. The government decides for everything in the name of the citizens and prevents awareness and perception of the society with the help of technology and inhibition of science for improvement of life quality.

Constant development of technology with the help of scientific discoveries enables the governments to control their citizens and regulate their lives similar to Huxley's world. Since I believe the artificial society created in the novel that is controlled with the erroneously use of technology and science might be the future of our own world, I decided to investigate the extent the control is achieved and what role does it play in the creation of a dystopic world.

Word Count: 285

## 1. Introduction

What can be considered as ideal? The word “ideal” is defined as; a conception of something in its absolute perfection, or one that is regarded as a standard or model of perfection or excellence.<sup>(1)</sup> Huxley’s ideal society is described as consisting of members that are ‘programmed’ to be happy consumers, through clever use of genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs. However, the concept of creating the ideal varies in each society, culture and time period. Each culture and community has its own definition of ideal, depending on several factors such as religion, moral values and culture. The society that is created according to the ideals of a specific culture is considered as a utopian society. In his book “Utopia” that was published in 1516, Sir Thomas More describes the word utopia, which is coined from a Greek word *ou-topos*, as ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere’.<sup>(2)</sup> The utopian society model differs due to the differences in perception of ideal. The sense of perfection commences to transform with the development of science and technology. This development leads to a change of what can be perceived as ideal.

As the scientific researches took us to a point in which the genetic code of an organism can be changed or replaced, the possibilities of creating a human being that can act as a perfect ‘robot’ has increased. It is inevitable for governments to use this chance of playing with an individual’s genetic code to control the society in a way that is beneficial for the heads. Therefore, the dictatorial managements of the government lead to a shift in the perception of perfection.

The technology, however, affects the members of the society in a different way than science. As we become more dependent on technology with every passing day, we are only capable of thinking within the limitations of technology and as a result of this our youths’ creativity and imagination diminish. Their capacity of individual thinking becomes limited,

due to the effect of virtual world they spend most of their time with. This situation causes the society to become unaware of the realities around them and live in an artificial world controlled and manipulated by the heads, making it easier for the governments to follow them via technology. Surveillance cameras, phone records, electronical bank accounts, identification numbers can all be given as examples for the usage of technology by the governments to take the society under control.

Leading to a creation of a dystopic world, these controls cause the society to accept whatever is told to be ideal and not to question. As people quit calling into question anything they are told to, it becomes easier to control and create a society which is made up of ‘robots’ that are all alike and easy to manipulate.

The novel “Brave New World”, written by Aldous Huxley, takes place in a futuristic dystopia, in which the society is fully organized and controlled by the government. Even though citizens perceive a utopian world, in which everybody has anything they would ever want, it can be seen, when compared to our world, that people do not have the right to think or act on their own will, and therefore can never be individuals, making the virtual world created by Huxley a dystopic one. The aim of this control is to keep everyone happy and maintain stability. To obtain this control, nearly all living organisms and the environmental factors around them, are artificialized. The motto of the government written over the main entrance of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre: “*Community, Identity, Stability*” (Huxley, 1) shows the importance given to the stability of the society, by the authorities. These words can be considered as a list of prime goals of the ‘utopia’. "Community" means that all persons must work together to obtain the greatest happiness for society. The solidarity of all individuals can be succeeded only if each one of them is happy with their “identities” and their class in the society: alpha, beta, gamma, etc... “‘*stability. The primal and ultimate need. Stability. Hence all this.*’ ” (Huxley, 36) "Stability" is the ultimate goal of society because

only through stability can happiness be maintained and all unpleasant feelings and emotions be eradicated. The desire for stability requires the production of large numbers of genetically identical "individuals," because people who are exactly the same are less likely to come into conflict. Stability means minimizing conflict, risk, and change.

As the dystopic society shows many resemblances with the modern world, it is important to underline that Huxley is giving a message and warns about the government control on the society. The overuse of both technology and science leads to the formation of a control system which eases the process of manipulation of the society by the government. Since many people are unaware of the situation, it may become inevitable to turn the modern world into a dystopic one.

## **2. Government Control On The Society**

Inequality between individuals both economic and educational can be named as the main cause of caste systems in societies, which seems impossible to be avoided, since the beginning. The structring of a caste system, in which the weak ones are working for the powerful ones, allows authorities to take control of the individuals in the society. The society in the novel is stratified by genetically-predestined castes. Intellectually superior Alphas are the top-dogs. Servile, purposely brain-damaged Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons toil away at the bottom. The lower orders are necessary in the society because Alphas, even soma-fuelled Alphas, could allegedly never be happy doing menial jobs.<sup>(4)</sup> Each group of caste has a significant duty in the society, to help maintaining the stability. *“Every one works for every one else. We can’t do without any one. Even Epsilons are useful. We couldn’t do without Epsilons...”* (Huxley, 64) Even the lowest caste, Epsilons, is needed in the society. The message also highlights the hypocrisy of the conditioning: it may be true that “every one works for every one else,” but it is also true that certain castes have a much better time of it

than others. The government controls this caste system by the help of technology and science. It is important to underline that there is a distinction between the ways that technology and science are used to obtain and sustain the control.

## **2.1 Use of Technology to Control Society**

In the created dystopia, technology is used in several ways to maintain stability. The government uses technology to create the caste system, made up of Alphas, Betas, Gammas..., by manipulating individuals' brains and control their thoughts and desires, and to distract them in any case that an individual starts to 'think'.

The control system in the novel, which turns the society into a dystopic one, is mainly maintained by a human creating process, referred as "Bukhanovsky's Process". This process consists of many stages to obtain a number of human beings that are all alike. By making babies and children listen different records according to their social groups, government aims to control people's minds and thoughts. " *'The mind that judges and desires and decides – made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are our suggestions!'* " (Huxley, 23) This expression proves that these recordings allow the government to make the members of the society think as how the rulers of the society want them to think. All individuals learn what they should be scared of, what they should hate and love, and what they should think about themselves when they are a child. Playing the recordings while children are asleep causes them to be unaware of the situation, therefore the control of the government on them. The lack of ability to think impedes questioning and seeing the truth. As nobody knows that they are being thought-controlled, it does not occur to them to wonder whether they are thinking on their own or they are thinking under the control of someone else.

The desires and fears of the members of the society are not controlled only with voice recordings, but also they are used as a kind of experimentals to learn what to love and what to

hate. Whatever they should be afraid of or hate is shown them as a damaging threat. This process is a part of the control mechanism that technology provides to the government. Since nearly everything in the community is attached to a technological system, it is a simple “hurt or reward” mechanism what makes people decide whether they are doing a good or a bad thing. If they are doing a mistake, they get harmed, and if they are doing the right thing to do, then they are usually crowned with a reward. This system causes a stimulus to be created in people’s minds. As a result, people start to stay away from what causes them to get hurt and classify them as a damaging enemy.

Use of complicated entertainment machines that generate both harmless leisure and the high levels of consumption and production that are the basis of World State’s stability, form the very bottom of maintaining the happiness in the society. It is a way of entertaining people when they are not working, so that they would always be too busy to think or act in a way that the World State would not approve. This prevention of spare time enables the government to overcome the difficulties of individuals questioning their lives.

The government uses the technology to censor the realities of life, in the society created by Huxley. The problems that are faced are hidden from the community and people are convinced that there is nothing to worry about in their lives. The human creating process enables the governors to create ‘robots’ that will comply to the rules of the dystopic society. People obey whatever is ordered by the government without thinking or considering, since they are taught not to question. In case that ‘faulty productions’ start to question in their spare times, they are distracted by artificial entertainers, therefore individual thinking is prevented. This prevention ease the process of building up the caste system in which the ‘creators’ are in the top level of the pyramid.



The technology, therefore, is basically used to control and change the human nature, both physically and mentally. The life of an individual is determined before he was even born, and controlling the lives of every member in the society helps maintaining stability.

## **2.2 Use of Science to Control Society**

The utilization of science is a bit different than the utilization of technology. It is generally used by the government to create a ‘false happiness’ state in the individuals mind and to maintain stability. Science is used to develop the technology used on the society to control every single step of the citizens, instead of increasing scientific exploration and experimentation. This situation is caused due to the awareness of the World State that if the scientific researches and explorations are permitted, people would find out about the human making process and how to change it. Therefore, to use science as a tool of development in researches is prohibited in the dystopic world created by Huxley. Still, it is used to improve the technological devices that are used in daily life, and also to keep people away from their problems and make them happy. "*A gramme is better than a damn.*" (**Huxley, 54**) This phrase signifies the maximization of happiness and good feelings in Huxley's utilitarian society. The greatest good for the greatest number of people, according to Huxley, is to minimize any negative emotions or feelings. To do this, individuals receive a gramme of soma, a narcotic that puts them into a state of unfeeling unconsciousness.

The use of “soma”, ‘*the perfect drug*’ (**Huxley, 46**), with all the benefits (calming, surrealistic, ten-hour long highs) with none of the drawbacks (no guilt, no hangovers), that is used to “*Take a holiday from the reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology.*” (**Huxley, 46**), is an example of use of science in the daily life of the citizens. The drug that is given to the citizens as a reward is used to take on an enjoyable, hangover-free ‘holiday’. Whenever someone has a problem or a question, they are

simply given soma, to forget about their issues. *“And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there’s always soma to give you a holiday from the facts.”* (Huxley, 209-210) It is seen by the society as soma solves one of humanity’s biggest problems, it offers a way to deal with unpleasant emotions that lead to inefficiency and conflict. The drug put the individuals in a ‘false happiness’ state in which they become unaware of their problems. Controlling a satisfied and problem-free society is way easier for the government to control; therefore the drug is used as a medicine to treat people’s problems. The problem with the drug, as one character identifies, is that the citizens are essentially enslaved by the drug and turned into mindless drones.

The state uses science as a means to build technology that can create a seamless, happy, superficial world through things such as the “feelies.” It is used as a tool to control what people do or feel at one specific time. Therefore the happiness of the society, which is the primary goal of the state as suggested, can be taken under control. The state censors and limits science, however, since it sees the fundamental basis behind science, the search for truth, as threatening to the State’s control. The State’s focus on happiness and stability means that it uses the results of scientific research, in as much as they contribute to technologies of control, but does not support science itself.<sup>(5)</sup> *“It isn’t only art that’s incompatible with happiness; it’s also science. Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled.”* (Huxley, 231) The phrase of Mustapha Mond posits that science cannot be the only factor in progress. Throughout the novel, the inhabitants of civilized society learn to regard scientific progress as the greatest good, but science often illuminates facts that do not profit an individual's happiness. Progress often makes life more difficult for some and easier for others. Science can thus be a destabilizing force in society. Therefore, it is prohibited for the individuals to talk about or work on scientific researches, in order to prevent the destabilization. The heads, as Mustapha Mond, are aware of the benefits that science can

provide the society, but from the reason of policy, science should be prohibited to maintain stability and happiness.

### **3. Similarities of Today's World to the Created Society**

Since the technological and scientific developments show some similarities to the ones that are held in today's world, it can be suggested that the novel Brave New World may serve as a warning to the modern society. With the help of technological and scientific discoveries, governments broaden the borders of control of their societies which may be considered as resemblance to Huxley's creation. It is considered as a dystopic society since people are not allowed to think or feel as they want and the 'happiness' that is tried to be obtained is a fake happiness. Although Huxley seems to use the most extreme examples and applications to portray the community, it still serves as a warning and interpreted as a message that Huxley gives to today's society. It is an example of a possible future we might face with if we continue living without thinking and questioning.

#### **3.1 Usage of Technology in Modern Society**

Today, the technology has become a vital part of our lives and it is nearly impossible to survive without technological devices. It is overly used by both the society and the governments, and the obsession with technology makes it simpler for the authorities to take control. Technology is taking control over the world. This situation allows everyone, including governments, to reach the information about anyone in the world and use this information against them. Being able to access the personal information of people enables governments to create a control mechanism over the societies. Overusage of technology in the society over years makes it easier for the governors to run this controlled system.

Not only the society, but also the governments overuse technology in the means of implementing their aims. Censorship is used to control what people watch or read. Nothing

that the government does not approve can be seen by the community. This kind of a control also allows the media to make changes in the reality, by showing the truth differently or hiding information. Therefore, the amount of information that an individual knows about the rest of the world can be limited and adjusted accordingly. Limitation of knowledge prevents individual's perception and thinking, so the possibility of having 'questioning individuals' in the society can be inhibited.

Governments can also collect information about every single person in the society, electronically. All the information come under the name "ID" and kept by the authorities. Nearly every data about a person, from his adress to his fingerprint, is stored in electronic form and can be reached by the government, whenever required. This situation can be considered as a necessity, since it helps to provide security in some cases; however it is also the perfect way for the authorities to trace and control the society. Surveliance cameras can also be given as an example of the spying system of the governments. Every step of the individuals in the society is being followed all the time and can be used against them, in order to maintain control.

One of the examples of how the usage of technology by the authorities can turn the modern world into Huxley's dystopia is the utilization of cloning technology. The resemblance has recently increased with the success of cloning a sheep in 1997, and the potential that that ability holds. Whether any groups have succeeded in cloning a human or not, it will eventually be a reality for animals and humans. The further steps of this cloning technology can lead to "Bukanovski's Process", not only creating every single member, but also creating a caste system in the society. Therefore, the distinction between the powerful and weak ones in the society would become more obvious than today. Also, the headmen would have the opportunity to control the thoughts and desires of the citizens, with the help of technological advancements as it is seen in the novel.

### **3.2 Usage of Science in Modern Society**

Use of science to help society control is one of the resemblances between the modern society and the dystopic society that is described in the novel. Science is mostly used to distract people when they have a problem or a worry, instead of helping the creation process of a human being. One of the similarities about science usage between our society and Huxley's artificial society can be given as the use of mind-altering substances to escape reality. In the modern world, people use illegal drugs, alcohol and even medicine instead of soma. Whenever something comes along that people cannot handle, people get one of these drugs to make their worries go away. The difference is that, the substance used in today's world show negative side effects afterwards, unlike soma. In Huxley's society, alcohol is consumed in the 'uncivilized' part of the world, but soma is preferred in the 'civilized' World State, since it does not have any side effects. This preference of soma to alcohol represents the constant contentment and satisfaction of the society. If something is not going how they like, they can avoid it without any negative emotions associated with it, which symbolizes their desire to be constantly happy and never experience any real emotions. Because the savages do not have such drugs at their disposal, they must eventually experience a negative counterpart to the positive drug-induced state, representing that they experience real emotions, both good and bad, unlike people of the World State. The life style of savages shows resemblance to ours. People in the modern world use drugs and alcohol as an escape from their problems and worries, yet they have to abide the negative side effects of these substances. Invention of a drug that does not have any consequences after usage would cause a high consumption of the drug all around the world, putting people in a state of unconsciousness, in which they can be much more easily controlled.

#### **4. Impossibility of Absolute Control**

Although the similarities of our world with the created one, Huxley also underline that it is impossible to create a completely controlled utopian society. There would be ones that are aware of the control that the controllers have on them, just like Bernard Marx, and would eventually rebel. The existence of an island that social outcast are sent to, in order to prevent them to cause problems in the society, shows the fear of the World State from the power of these people who are considered as a manufacturing defect. Some would deny the control and power of the government, like savages, and live according to their own cultures and beliefs. There would be many different groups that would like to keep living according to different cultures. They would resist to changing their decorous life styles and give up on their individuality. This situation would lead to world to split into countries and a central government can never be assembled.

In today's world, we can see conflicts come out between countries due to differences in perspectives and benefits. This situation indicates that it is nearly impossible to gather all the people under one World State, supporting the idea that it is impossible to build up a central government and provide absolute control. However, Huxley's Brave New World can still be taken as a warning to futuristic societies where they may leave present day's values for the sake of happiness and stability and to be able to create that they will definitely use science and technology. Therefore, we should be careful about our choices.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that a technological control can be obtained in one part of the society, even though some would resist to change their cultures and habits in a way that would be beneficial to the headmen and would not give up on their individuality. Others, however, would accept to live under the control of a central government. To obtain stability in the society everybody should be happy. The government would have to use a control mechanism similar to 'Bukonavski's Process', to maintain the happiness of the society. This kind of a control can only be maintained by implenting the ideas in people's minds and brainwashed when they are just babies. This control of the mind allows the government to decide whatever an individual would think or desire. As their brains are 'programmed' in such a way that they would be happy with their lives, their jobs and what they own. Their desires and wishes would defer due to the level they belong in the cast system and stability would be maintained only if they are happy with their place in the society. The invention of a drug with no undesirable side effect afterwards would be beneficial for the government so that people can 'take on a holiday', as mentioned in the novel, whenever they have a problem or an issue to worry about. If, by any chance, an undesired situation occurs, the drug would put the individuals in a state of 'false happiness' and make them forget about their problems and worries. Therefore, members of the society would always be happy and stability would be maintained. The development of technology and science in the modern society would lead the world in a way that is described in Huxley's artificial world and the foundation of a World State can become inevitable.

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