



# Agency Of Objects And The Marginal Position Of Human Beings In Huxley's Brave New World: A Post Humanistic Analysis

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**Abstract:** Over the centuries, like many other authors, Aldous Huxley through his novel *Brave New World* tried to illustrate a futuristic society solely built upon the advancement of science and technology. The society seemingly appears idealistic, akin to that of a utopian society- where people are born in factories, where chemicals are used to do pre-birth class division, where children's who are conditioned in habituation centres have the opportunity to avail of artificial pleasures. But the reality is quite the opposite and is in fact a reflection of a dystopian society in a disguised form. The book paints the picture of an autocrat who obsesses with being in control over every aspect of the state, depriving freedom of people through various means and especially through the excessive use of the drug-Soma.

The book is particularly outstanding keeping in mind its farsightedness. In an age where technology and artificial intelligence have taken over, Huxley's futuristic book offers a deep insight. In this context, this study tries to argue if these innovations can materialize the dystopian concept into a reality. By interpreting the relationship between subject and object in their socio-political context this study outlines the importance of regulating emotions such as greed and hunger for power, and the necessity to grant and protect the freedom of human minds in a society.

**Keywords:** Post human, dystopia, science and technology, artificial intelligence, ethics.

## INTRODUCTION:

'Science is dangerous, we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled' – Mustafa Mond (HUXLEY 1932, 198)

Objects are everywhere. 'Our life in the midst of things, their lives in our midst' (BROWN 2020, 5) is a very complicated co-existence in society. It will not be an exaggeration to say that our society is filled with objects, especially technological objects. From dawn to dusk technology has become our twenty-four-seven companion. From administration to business to culture the role of modern technology is central. This is also an undeniable fact that technological innovations have made our lives easy and luxurious, but its excessive use and over reliance can lead to a situation where people are suffering from serious existential crisis. Unethical and unrestricted ways of using present technology like AI, Robotics, supercomputers etc. are dangerous and can lead to the technological singularity. A hundred years ago, Aldous Huxley, a novelist of English literature, might have foreseen the situation of the present society. He in his novel, *Brave New World*, shows that 100 per cent reliance on technology may extinguishes the humanistic quality and features of human being and can make them a puppet in the hands of someone else. With the advancement of Technology especially in the field similar to Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, there lies a probability that human beings will get dethroned from the central position. The faster and irreversible scientific movement in our world may force innovations to hold the positions of bureaucrats.

Objects are identified as the crucial participants in reshaping the world by constructivist materialism. Alexander Rodchenko claimed that “Our things in our hand must be equals, comrades”. At present, the world is experiencing a dramatically accelerating pace in the innovation and utilization of new technological tools. In these circumstances studying objects is extremely relevant.

In today’s materialistic world human beings are living in close interaction with objects. This society is stewing around the constant innovations in the field of science and technology, and becoming ever more complex in nature. This is the reason in present era humanism as a concept has undergone a dynamic shift. Initially, in the concept of humanism, human being used to occupy the central stage; they were the sole agents of the then modern as well as moral world. But currently, if we look at things like super computers, in terms of operations and working nature human beings do not command any autonomy anymore. Their actions are mired by the influence of various objects. Now this is what brings us to the concept of post humanism. Humans no longer hold the highest hierarchical position in the governance of the universe. My research paper is therefore trying to throw light upon such post human dimensions and the role of objects in it.

Several aspects of post humanism have already been discussed by researchers but not much has been spoken about the role of objects in a post human world, specifically about technological tools. But currently because of continuous upgradations in their nature, these objects play a crucial role in our lives. Human beings are revolving around the constant innovations that are taking place in the scientific world. This is gradually shifting our focus from humans to objects in the central position.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

For this study textual analysis of the 1932 novel ‘A Brave New World’ by Aldous Huxley has been done using Thing Theory by Bill Brown and Posthuman theory. This study utilizes both primary and secondary materials of research and have also followed by observation methods related to the inventions those are constantly occurring in the field of Science and Technology. The analysis of this study is based on the author’s farsightedness, the theoretical perspective of human-object dynamics as well as the technological revolutions of the present era.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Now before embarking upon a closer analysis of Huxley’s novel, I would like to illustrate the development of several theories that have tried to establish the fact that object has a value of its own, the constant interaction between humans and objects is inevitable in various spheres of life which further engender object as a highly influential element.

Starting from the preliminary stage of theoretical foundation, theories like Marxist theory to the material culture, thing theory to the actor network theory, and the vibrant materialism theory to new materialism theory- all have cognized subject-object relationships. Without getting into the depth of all these theories, I want to re-emphasize that active participation of non-human forces in various events in the world is a normal occurrence in the post human era.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Human beings are surrounded by objects. And the best way to learn about an object is to dive deep into the field of Thing Theory and object studies. Things have gone through a kind of evolution in the hands of theorists and scholars. It started with consumerism, materialism, and in present times, as the thing theory. This theory mainly deals with subject-object relation or human-non-human relations and urges us to recognize the value of objects. Following Bill Brown’s essay on ‘Things’ scholars started viewing objects from a different perspective. An object, as Brown explains, has its own agency, it can establish a relationship with human beings, can influence their aura, and can move their feeling. This Thing Theory changed the long-standing study of how beings make things to how things make beings. After learning this theory, the question about the objects’ role in literature and the curiosity to know more about things inspired me to apply this theory in dystopian fiction. Because in dystopian fiction objects/things remain as the central to everything. Here objects play the most crucial role, often helping the dictators to establish and run a dystopia and often helping others to end a dystopian rule. And we know dystopian fiction has a broad social perspective; On the one hand, it serves as a warning for the common masses about the totalitarianism of the state and on the other hand, few novels also warn about the fast-growing technological advancement and people’s dependency on technical objects. The application of this theory to dystopian novels like Brave New World by Aldous Huxley, reveals the special role of objects in this novel.

*Brave New World* depicts a futuristic society, called 'worldstate,' where technology holds the central position. Huxley presented a different kind of dystopia, as Margaret Atwood called it a 'softer form of totalitarianism, which differs from other dystopian novels like 1984, Fahrenheit 451, Anthem, etc. Huxley experimented with a new strategy by using technology and science to control the state without using any kind of force or tyranny. This new concept of ruling also echoes Michel Foucault's opinion in his masterpiece *History of Sexuality*-

'New methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus. (Foucault 1976, 89)

One can see how objects played the most essential role in establishing such a society. *Brave New World* represents a material world where objects are central. Technology and machines are used in world-state for human reproduction or human manufacturing. Govt. used its machine to enslave the people of the state. **Hatchery, conditioning machine, soma,** and other objects played a vital role in this novel. Here children are born or we can say produced in a hatchery, not from a woman's womb. This hatchery machine has an immense role in this novel. Again, the value of conditioning machines is undeniable. It conditioned people to think the way the government desires them to. Another important object is the drug soma. It is used to maintain peace in society. The people of the state consume soma to heal all kinds of mental issues to prevent untoward situations that may arise from the presence of unhappy people in society.

Now let's leaf through the content of the 1932 Novel 'Brave New World'. The novel opens in the year 632 A.F., where a great war has taken place and destroyed one third of the whole civilization and a new technologically advanced society has been formed, called the world state which is being governed by Mustafa Mond, one of the 10 controllers of the world. Cutting-edge technologies, bio-engineering, psychological conditioning, cloning, drugs and many other new kinds of apparatuses have been employed to establish a controlled and stable society. All kinds of humanistic qualities like freedom, love, emotions, fellow feelings, free choice and free will are eradicated in the name of maintaining stability. Even a vast vocabulary of language is also eliminated as it is considered as the source of emotions and thoughts.

Specifically, this novel engages the readers on how peace and stability can be ensured by the innovations in Science and Technology. There are multiple incidents, where the influence of objects over human being is highlighted within this novel.

In *Brave New World*, science and technology is used to force people towards promiscuity. The Feelies, a grandiose arrangement for pleasure, is created by the state. It is understood that monogamous relationships would arouse human feelings such as love and attraction for each other, which is prohibited because feelings are considered to destabilize society. So to prevent this, the state enforces promiscuity; a person is not allowed to develop a monogamous relationship for the sake of stability. So matter over mind, object over subject is reflected clearly. 'Surrogate cartridge belt' is also an important object and it play the role of 'pregnancy substitute'. By doing so it actually snatches away an important humanistic feature i.e. to become mother from people.

Another instance of losing individual identity through the use of objects that has been brought about in this novel is the use of hatchery. A Hatchery machine is a place where human beings are produced artificially. There is a use of human eggs in tubes and within the process the state uses chemicals that are injected into embryos to create five different classes of human beings. Each class is designated by the terms alpha, beta, gamma, delta, and epsilon accordingly. Epsilons and delta are considered as the lowest class, thus people belonging to these classes are relegated for their entire life. The emotional aspirations of human beings are natural. Everybody aspires to improve their lifestyle but that motivation has been robbed by the authority with the use of science and technology just to ensure stability and peace.

Again, the object's agency and influence are perceived in the relationship of the world state's people and the drug soma. The elimination of humanistic quality through the use of the drug 'soma' depicts the hard reality of the treatment of human beings like an object or a puppet. The Soma was invented and designed to keep people always happy so that they remain ignorant about their existential crisis. Experiencing any kind of mental imbalance by an individual is not allowed within the state. It is to be tackled by a quick-fix measure. That is the reason the state produces soma drugs; the use of this drug ensures the restoration of mental balance within the human mind and artificially lets them continue to feel pleasure in their lives.

The question also arises that as they are produced in factories with their pre-destined class structure, like a product with level, can we at all consider them as humans or objects? The main purpose of the controllers of world state is to destroy the humanistic qualities of its people and replace them as mere products of state, hatched and conditioned by machines. John, the only representative of the human world and the only one who has a real body commits suicide. This indicates the rejection of humans in that materialistic world.



A critical analytical point of view can reveal that Brave New World represents a dystopian post humanistic future of human beings, where everything is artificial. Quoting from Shakespeare John, the savage, ironically says that “oh brave new world that has such people in it”. He is not impressed with the shallow, superficial lives people live in that world state. He finds it tragic that the people in this futuristic society know nothing about love, hate, sacrifice, suffering, religion, literature or culture. He considers it a great loss that they have sacrificed their freedom and human quality for their security and artificial pleasure. There is also an unequal fight between the object world and the human world. Machines are trying to keep their products under its strict control and savage John trying his best to teach them the true nature of freedom.

Through this ambiguous content, we can notice how Huxley presented a different perspective of dystopia keeping its core meaning the same. Scientifically and technologically a seemingly perfect artificial society was shown in this novel where machine-made beings are conditioned to occupy a place in their social structure. Their conditioning removes emotions such as freedom, love, pain, sacrifice and fellow feelings and artificially injects servitude to keep them world state’s slaves forever.

Scientific and technological innovation is changing our long-standing understanding of ‘what it means to be human’ and glossing over the significance and role of objects in post human era. The blending of technological and biological elements blurring the man-machine barriers in post human world. The introduction of artificial intelligence, supercomputers, robotics, cyborgs, trans humans etc. are frequently linked to post human world. Human object relationships in the post human era can prompt a reassessment as objects can be perceived in some cases as equals and, in some cases, more than equals to human beings. Cary Wolfe rightly argues that posthumanism aims to:

‘Fully comprehend what amounts to a new reality, that the human occupies a new place in the universe, a universe now populated by what I am pretend to call nonhuman subjects.’ (WOLFE 2009, 47)

Another important question here is that, can we call Brave New World a post human novel? Apparently, it’s a seemingly utopian dystopian novel, but when the novel is critically analyses through the lens of post humanistic aspects it seems that the novel fulfills most of the criteria of a post human fiction. The story has a patent and latent meaning, depending on how deeply a reader reads. Huxley built a seemingly perfect artificial world solely depending on science and technology. Objects are central in building this post human futuristic society. The humanistic quality like freedom, love, beauty, truth and emotions are subtly removed to keep the utmost control over the whole world State. Posthuman is an emerging and speculative concept where, it is believed, that non-human entities will hold the central position and humans in a marginal position. This evolving and complex concept of human being’s marginal position in the post human discourse resurfaces several human centric concerns about losing personal autonomy and freedom to technology. There are worries about becoming powerless and vulnerable if technology continues to permeates more and more aspects of our daily lives. Human beings can feel helpless and ostracized if technology starts making decisions for humans through data collection and surveillance. In this shifting from human to posthuman objects’ role is important. In Huxley’s Brave New World science and technology are not glorified rather it is used as a tool to control and manipulate the lives of their subjects. Biotechnology is the main weapon here to keep people under its strict control not for human development. A highly hierarchical and conformist state is built through the use of advance science and technology.

After delving through the above-mentioned instances, we can observe how for the sake of peace and stability science and technology has robbed the core principles and values which make human beings humane. They possess qualities like emotions, love, kindness, fellow feelings, ethics, reasonable thinking, fear etc. This cannot be achieved by an object. Objects may become more intellectual and may outsmart human beings in different ways but the fundamental qualities of human beings always remain unattainable for science and technology. According to Huxley,

“A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude.” (HUXLEY 1946)

Scholars of post humanism often hope that post-human society can be an utopian one or better than the modern world but Huxley shows, through the content of Brave New World, that the reality is exactly the opposite one with so many DE humanistic aspects. In this regard, it can be stated that a post human era can never be an absolute desirable world for human kind.

Now let’s try to glaze upon the exact scenario of our society and try to understand the future of human kind.

Objects are everywhere. The complicated and dynamic coexistence of subject and object in society is continuing from the very beginning of the civilization. But as the nature and characteristics of objects have changed since then it has been noticed that objects have started to reveal their controlling power over human

minds. Especially in this modern era this controlling process is happening not through the forceful exercises of power, rather by becoming a major source of our entertainment and necessity. Innovations in the form of artificial intelligence are created for human benefits and luxury, and slowly from dawn to dusk people are getting obsessed with tools and gadgets like mobile phones, tablets, computers etcetera making them companions for twenty-four-seven. Several scientific studies have revealed that this obsession in one way or another is responsible for reducing the power of concentration and making them incapable of critical thinking, which in turn has deprived human beings of being able to live in reality. Another undeniable fact is that due to the technological revolution people are now living in a global village, they are constantly getting drowned by the flood of information. Social media and other related apps have become a vassal of communications, which has widened the reach of information for any human being.

All these things are created for the benefit of human beings to make their lives easier. But with the flow of time, people are becoming more dependent upon these technological objects and eventually, this dependency may lead to submission. Addiction, dependency and distraction are the common negative aspects of these objects. Psychologically we feel insecure and can't imagine a day without the usage of tech gadgets. Interpersonal relationships have dwindled in the modern age of capitalism, the dependence between humans and inanimate objects have actually increased and this is adequately reflected in various literature as well as in reality. Here lies the relevance of re-reading this type of novel in the light of 'Thing theory', which can facilitate to understand the upcoming future of mankind. Dona J. Haraway aptly outlines the situation-

'Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.' (HARAWAY 2013,152)

Further many renowned experts from the field of science and technology have also warned about the upcoming danger they pose to humanity. Scientists and techno experts like Vernor Vinge, Ray Kurzweil, Stephen Hawkins, Elon Musk, Francis Fukuyama and others have warned that such uncontrolled enhancement of technology, specifically Artificial intelligence could become a threat to humans in near future. This altogether may force us to believe in the manifestation of Huxley's futuristic society. So it is quite clear from the above discussion that there is a possibility of starting a post human era like *Brave New World* and people may be withdrawn from their central position. All kinds of humanistic qualities and values may get extinguished if scientists decide to empower gadgets like robots with an intellect equal to the power of human minds.

Technological singularity in posthuman era refers to a future point in time when technology may go beyond human control and may cause huge catastrophic damages to human civilization. The novel also bears proof of that kind of technological advancement. Boundless consumption and unchecked reliance on technology in present society may lead to that future point as predicted by many techno experts.

## CONCLUSION:

Post-human society is an integral part of science and technological development. The possible effects of techno chauvinism on human existence and identity are of great interest to post humanism. It explores how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and cyborgisation, could fundamentally transform what it means to be human. But for the sake of human civilisation to continue with all those existing human values and qualities, a balanced and stable way out is necessary. So, to negate the consequences of 'technological singularity' we have to find that subtle boundary which will perfectly balance the relationship between human beings and their new inventions.

Coming towards the end of this study it can be stated that objects, specifically technologically mediated objects are more powerful and more capable. Thus, a new theoretical approach is necessary to define these objects as well as their relationship with human beings and their role in upcoming future to maintain a harmonic balance within the society.

As conclusion, it can be stated that the analysis reveals the development of science and technology must not be uncontrolled and some ethical practices as well as legal actions should be put in place to prevent such 'technological singularity' or society like 'Worldstate' as depicted in *Brave New World*.

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