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Investigating Digital Totalitarianism Dystopia

From the Commodification of Pleasure-Driven Behaviors in "*Brave New World*" to
Capitalism Surveillance in "*The Circle*"

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled "Investigating Digital Totalitarianism Dystopia From the Commodification of Pleasure-Driven Behaviors in *"Brave New World"* to Capitalism Surveillance in *"The Circle"* is my original work, completed as part of the requirements for the Master's degree in English Literature and Civilization under the supervision of Dr. Yasser Sedrati, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Department of English Language and Literature. I affirm that the interpretations and analyses presented in this thesis are based on my own examination of the original texts, with all sources properly cited. Additionally, I declare that this dissertation was not submitted for any other degree or diploma and has not been published in any form.

Sidi Athmane Maria Wiam

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my sweet, lovely, and caring mother, for always loving and supporting me through hard times and striving to provide me with a better life.

And to my dear siblings, for your encouragement, boosting my confidence, and being my rock.

I'm so grateful to have each of you in my life.

To the friends I made along in university. Thank you for being a part of my journey.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the phenomenon of digital totalitarianism and consumerism in the context of current digital platforms using behavioral viewpoints, Marxist theory, and the commodity of pleasure and human experience. The theoretical framework is based on the concepts of behaviorism articulated by John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner, as well as Marxist critiques of consumer society. Moreover, the research includes Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" and its substance soma as an analogy, and a case study approach of the film "The Circle" to demonstrate the real-world uses of surveillance, control, and societal manipulation. The analytical and descriptive examination seeks to understand how digital social media platforms use pleasure and surveillance to strengthen social control through consumption. The central focus of this research is What are the broader implications of digital totalitarianism on society and individual autonomy, and how these platforms benefit from user data and control behavior through specific mechanisms, similar to the effects of soma in "Brave New World." The study raises serious concerns about the ethical implications of digital monitoring, the erosion of privacy, and the commercialization of human experiences. The findings indicate that both "Brave New World" and "The Circle" as an allegories for modern digital dystopia, emphasizing the threats of compromising individual liberties and commercial pleasures. These works highlight the psychological and sociological implications of surveillance capitalism, underlining the importance of ethical considerations and critical participation in our current age.

Key terms: Digital Totalitarianism, surveillance capitalism, commodification of pleasure, consumerism, social media mechanisms, Marxist critique.

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General Introduction

The influence of technology, especially social media, touches every aspect of modern life. These platforms hold significant power, affecting not just our experiences but also our actions and notions of control and pleasure. This dissertation explores the interconnected worlds of digital totalitarianism as a brand new concept in relation to consumerism and the commercialization of human experiences, using principles of behaviorism (Reinforcement, Conditioning, and Stimulus-Response), and Marxist theory to critique the notion of consumption and how consumerism is influencing our behaviors, making it easier for big corporations to control us through our desires, using Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" novel as an analogy and contextualizing the research and the film "The Circle" as a case study.

Beginning with Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World." Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel "Brave New World" depicts a dystopian future in which human experiences are managed by modern technology and humans are pacified by the enticing effects of soma. This medicine, supplied by the state, acts as a powerful weapon of control, eliminating personal despair and dissatisfaction in order to preserve societal stability. While not a direct focus, "Brave New World" provides a rich tapestry of metaphors for examining modern digital platforms' methods of control, laying the groundwork for our investigation into the current situation with a special emphasis on the mechanisms applied by social media platforms to keep us engaged from a behavioristic point of view using the theories of reinforcement, conditioning, and stimulus-Response articulated by John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner. As Ursula K. Le Guin stated, "Brave New World is not just a work of fiction; it is a profound exploration of the human condition, exposing the dangers of allowing technology to dictate our lives and values." (*Electric Literature*)

Following this, we explore "*The Circle*," which takes us into the universe of a strong digital business that promotes transparency. Yet behind this facade is a monitoring system, similar to real-

world scenarios in which platforms benefit from and manage user data. And examining the pleasure-driven behaviors promoted by these platforms from a Marxist viewpoint, exposing ramifications for individual autonomy and societal systems.

The work is divided into three chapters, each with its subject matter. Chapter One entitled Exploring pleasure and soma : a Behaviorist perspective, is contextual one, laying the framework with a detailed historical examination of pleasure's history. It systematically documents the evolution of cultural ideas and manifestations of pleasure from previous civilizations to the present day. This historical context serves as a backdrop for investigating modern digitalized manifestations of pleasure, which are fueled by technological improvements and the expansion of social media platforms by adapting the results of John B. Watson and B.F in behaviorism such as reinforcement, conditioning, and stimulus-Response . In this setting, soma from Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" emerges as symbols of controlled pleasure and societal regulation, reflecting the complexities of pleasure within a dystopian narrative. The chapter scrutinizes soma's dual character, digging into its role as both an instrument for individual hedonism and a tool. Chapter One sets the framework for later theoretical and case study investigations by examining the relationship between pleasure and behavior, and how these desires are commodified in favor of capitalism.

In the second chapter titled "Digital Totalitarianism and Consumerism: Marxist Perspective," this chapter is the most important one as it introduces us to the core of our study "digital totalitarianism," which is essential for understanding the research. starting by defining digital totalitarianism and exploring how it operates and mechanisms in today's digital world. Then looking at how surveillance and manipulation work in digital totalitarian regimes, and how they affect power dynamics and control in society. Additionally, we discuss the ethical issues

surrounding consumerism and the pursuit of pleasure in the digital age, showing how they contribute to maintaining power structures. Using Marxist perspectives, we analyze how pleasure is commodified on digital platforms and its role in reinforcing societal control.

Finally, in Chapter Three: A Case Study - The Circle: An Allegory of Digital Dystopia, moving the emphasis to a practical case study, which provides a real-world example of the principles discussed in previous chapters. This chapter is crucial because it helps us to apply theoretical concepts to a specific case, resulting in a better understanding of digital dystopia. The film "The Circle" to understand how it works as a metaphor for digital dystopia. Additionally, to study the movie's core themes, including the illusion of transparency and its influence on people's lives, and we establish comparisons between "The Circle's fictional universe" and present sociopolitical reality. Also, a comparative study of "The Circle" and Huxley's "Brave New World" identifies parallels and similarities in their depictions of dystopia and societal control. Finally, the chapter addresses the question raised "Living Under a Digital Dystopia: Fact or Fiction?" This critical investigation invites readers to consider the possible realities of a dystopian future created by digital technology, stimulating contemplation on the blurring distinctions between fiction and fact in current digitalized reality.

This study investigates the dynamics between pleasure, digital totalitarianism, and the utilization of social media and entertainment platforms, with a particular focus on the case study of "The Circle." As our society increasingly engages with digital tools, the exploration of pleasure becomes a focal point that requires thorough examination. Drawing inspiration from Aldous Huxley's depiction of the Soma-driven world, this research seeks to uncover parallels between the pursuit of pleasure in the digital landscape and mechanisms of control portrayed in literature.

The research problem revolves around understanding how digital platforms, similar to the pleasure-inducing drug Soma, function as powerful tools in shaping and regulating human behavior, as exemplified in "The Circle." By critically examining the relationship between pleasure and digital totalitarianism within the context of this case study, the study aims to reveal the mechanisms of control used by big corporations by applying Marxist theory. It critiques consumerism and the commodification of human desire, driven by our pursuit of pleasure and fulfillment, and explores the broader socio-economic impacts of these practices.

This dissertation analyzes how digital totalitarianism and consumerism influence behavior and society. Major questions include the impact of digital control on social media and larger societal dynamics. While, minor questions focus on psychological theories, connections with dystopian literature, and the role of capitalism. These probes offer insight into the challenges of current digital authority.

Major Questions:

1. What are the broader implications of digital totalitarianism on society and individual autonomy?
2. How does digital totalitarianism shape and control behavior within social media platforms?

Minor Questions:

1. How do psychological and sociological theories explain behavior under digital totalitarianism, relating to themes in "The Circle" and "Brave New World"?
2. What parallels exist between digital totalitarianism and control methods in "The Circle" and "Brave New World," particularly regarding pleasure manipulation?

3. How do platform rules and algorithms restrict autonomy under digital totalitarianism, akin to surveillance themes in "The Circle" and "Brave New World"?
4. How do behaviors in digital platforms influence data collection and consumerism under digital totalitarianism, reflecting themes of pleasure-seeking in "The Circle" and "Brave New World"?
5. How does capitalism, from a Marxist perspective, contribute to the emergence of digital totalitarianism?
6. Are we living under a digital totalitarian dystopia?

The thesis aims to explore the dynamics and mechanisms of digital totalitarianism and consumerism. The fundamental goal is to investigate the interconnections of pleasure, power, and control. The study seeks to clarify the effects of living in a world dominated by digital technologies by employing both theoretical frameworks, such as Marxist perspective on power and control, and behavioristic concepts defining pleasure and reinforcement, as well as practical case studies drawn from contemporary digital platforms and literature such as Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" and Dave Eggers's "The Circle." The study attempts to deliver beneficial findings that might help us as individuals to understand more what the impact of living under an authoritarian dystopia.

The research will thoroughly examine relevant academic works, including "The Neuroscience of Happiness and Pleasure" by Morten L. Kringelbach and Kent C. Berridge (2010), which provide scientific insights into the physiological aspects of pleasure and happiness. Additionally, "Karl Marx and Digital Capitalism" by Christian Krell, Thomas Meyer, and Klaus-Jürgen Scherer (2018) offers a profound exploration of Marxist perspective within the context of digital capitalism, shedding light on the socio-economic dynamics of the digital landscape. "The Age of Surveillance

"Capitalism" by Shoshana Zuboff (2019) will also be examined, providing a critical analysis of the emergence and impact of surveillance capitalism in the digital age.

To explain why these studies are important for the current research, it is necessary to briefly discuss their implications. Kringelbach and Berridge's scientific insights can help us understand how people respond psychologically to things that make them feel good in digital environments. Similarly, Krell, Meyer, and Scherer's examination of digital capitalism provides a framework for understanding the socio-economic aspects of digital platforms, contributing to our understanding of how digital control affects what people consume and what makes them happy. Zuboff's analysis adds another layer by exploring how surveillance capitalism shapes user behavior and experiences through data collection and algorithmic control.

By combining and building on these studies, this research aims to better understand the mechanisms behind pleasure experiences in digital platforms, incorporating psychological, socio-economic, and behavioral perspectives within a multidisciplinary framework. The goal is to explore how digital platforms use control mechanisms to affect pleasure experiences, particularly in social media and entertainment contexts. This research seeks to uncover and explain these mechanisms in simple terms, expanding our understanding of how digital control influences pleasure experiences in today's digital world.

**Chapter One:
Exploring Pleasure & Soma: A
Behaviorist Perspective**

Introduction

This chapter examines the historical evolution of pleasure from a philosophical, psychological, and cultural perspective. The role of pleasure in shaping individual actions and societal rules will also be examined, with examples drawn from classic works such as "Brave New World" and modern issues such as social media. The combination of disciplines will lead to a better understanding of pleasure as a complex phenomenon that continues to influence human experiences deeply.

The first section examines the historical history of pleasure, from classical theories to present-day expressions, reflecting influencing views and values throughout civilizations. From Epicurean moderation to Freudian ideas, pleasure has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Pleasure was expressed in literature and art through storytelling, visual arts, and performing arts, all of which promoted emotional control and community experiences. The arrival of technology, particularly the digital revolution, has transformed how pleasure is experienced, leading to the domination of digitalized examples in modern life.

Depending on this historical basis, the second section investigates behaviorist perspectives on pleasure. It explains how pleasure acts as a primary motivator in influencing human behavior as well as cognitive processes, focusing on reinforcement, conditioning, and stimulus-response mechanisms.

The third part explores the current pleasure dynamics via the lenses of soma in "Brave New World" and modern social media platforms. By drawing similarities between these two tools of pleasure and control, it investigates how digital settings impact human behavior, social relationships, and cultural norms, evaluating the implications for individual well-being and societal unity.

In the final section, the chapter focuses on the parallels between soma and social media as dual weapons of pleasure and control, reflecting current dynamics in digital society. This study examines how social media platforms impact human behavior, social connections, and cultural norms, drawing similarities of Huxley's dystopian vision and today's world. This study uses a comparative analysis to critically analyze the influence of digital technology on pleasure-seeking behaviors and their consequences for individual well-being and society cohesiveness.

1. Historical Evolution of Pleasure

1.1. Definition of Pleasure

The concept of pleasure has evolved across the times, reflecting the beliefs and values of different eras. In ancient times, pleasure was about enjoying life's delights without excess. Thinkers like Epicurus suggested that while pleasure is good, it is best enjoyed in moderation. This ancient view laid the groundwork for understanding pleasure as an essential aspect of human experience, emphasizing balance.

Under the scope of psychology, Sigmund Freud's theories offered a deeper exploration of pleasure, focusing on the unconscious mind and early life experiences. Freud proposed that people are driven by a desire for pleasure and avoidance of pain (Britannica). He described different stages of development and how they shape our pleasure-seeking behaviors. Freud also introduced the idea of the mind being divided into parts—the id, ego, and superego—which influence our experiences of pleasure and how we act on it.

along with Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory in psychology offers a complex view of pleasure, integrating it with the notion of identity formation across time. Erikson proposed that humans pass through several psychosocial phases, each marked by a distinct conflict that must be resolved for

good development. Erikson believes that pleasure is inextricably tied to good conflict resolution. For example, during the infancy period, the tension between trust and distrust revolves around the infant's capacity to rely on caretakers for joyful experiences and fundamental needs satisfaction. Subsequent phases, such as autonomy vs guilt and uncertainty in toddlerhood and closeness versus isolation in adulthood, highlight the importance of pleasure in promoting psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships (Britannica).

In contrast, behaviorism took a simpler approach, focusing on observable behaviors and their causes. Figures such as B.F. Skinner suggested that pleasure arises from behaviors that lead to positive outcomes, emphasizing the importance of environmental factors (Skinner). When we engage in activities that result in favorable consequences, we are inclined to repeat them. This perspective underscores how our experiences and surroundings influence our perceptions of pleasure and subsequent behavior. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, as outlined in works such as *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971) and *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), provides a theoretical framework for understanding how behavior is shaped by its consequences. Through his research and experiments, particularly those conducted with animals such as rats and pigeons, Skinner demonstrated the principles of reinforcement and punishment, offering empirical evidence supporting his theories on the relationship between behavior and positive outcomes (Britannica).

From a neuroscientific standpoint, pleasure is often conceptualized as a neurochemical response in the brain. Berridge and Kringelbach highlight the role of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with reward pathways, in generating feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. This neurochemical process plays a crucial role in motivating behavior and reinforcing positive experiences (Berridge and Kringelbach 2015, 650).

While, Cultural perspectives offer diverse understandings of pleasure, shaped by social norms, values, and traditions. Lutz and White argue that cultural contexts significantly influence how pleasure is perceived and experienced, with some cultures prioritizing communal pleasures and collective well-being, while others may emphasize individualistic pursuits and personal satisfaction (Lutz and White 1986, 410).

finally, From a social perspective, enjoyment is frequently linked to social interactions, relationships, and shared activities. Social psychologists highlight the importance of interpersonal connections, group dynamics, and shared experiences in increasing emotions of pleasure and well-being. Engaging in social activities, attending community events, and developing meaningful connections are frequently identified as important sources of enjoyment and fulfillment.

In simple words "Pleasure" refers to a state of enjoyment, satisfaction, or gratification experienced by us as individuals. It can be derived from various sources such as engaging in enjoyable activities, experiencing sensory stimulation, fulfilling our desires or needs, or experiencing positive emotions like happiness, contentment, or excitement. Pleasure is complex and can differ widely from person to person; what offers joy to one person may not necessarily bring pleasure to another.

1.2. Historical Evolution of Pleasure

Throughout human history, the pursuit and expression of pleasure have been fundamental aspects of our existence, deeply tied to cultural, social, and individual experiences and psychological processes. From the earliest civilizations to the modern era, the means through which pleasure is expressed have evolved in response to technological innovations, shifts in societal norms, and changes in cultural values.

In ancient civilizations, pleasure was primarily derived from traditional forms of art, literature, and performing arts. Artworks such as sculptures, paintings, and murals not only served as aesthetic representations but also provided avenues for emotional regulation, catharsis, and self-expression. The psychological significance of these artistic expressions lies in their ability to activate brain regions associated with emotion processing, imagination, and empathy, eliciting pleasurable responses from viewers (Zaidel, 2014).

Similarly, in the realm of literature, epic poems, myths, and narratives transported individuals to imaginative worlds, offering escapism from the monotony of daily life. From a psychological standpoint, the immersive nature of storytelling engages cognitive processes such as mental simulation and empathy, contributing to the pleasurable experience of literary consumption.

Performing arts, including dance, music, and theater, served as communal experiences that fostered a sense of unity and shared joy within communities. Neuroscientific research indicates that participation in such activities can lead to the release of endorphins, dopamine, and oxytocin, neurotransmitters associated with feelings of pleasure, reward, and social bonding (Kreutz et al., 2014).

The Industrial Revolution marked a significant turning point in the evolution of pleasure expression. Technological innovations, such as the printing press, democratized access to cultural content, thereby expanding opportunities for intellectual stimulation and emotional engagement. Additionally, the invention of photography and motion pictures revolutionized visual storytelling, enhancing the immersive experience of entertainment and broadening its appeal to mass audiences.

However, the digital revolution of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries marked a significant shift in how pleasure is represented. Communication and entertainment underwent

enormous alterations as computers, the internet, and digital gadgets became more prevalent.

Social networking, streaming services, and online gaming have developed as important aspects of daily life, providing new avenues for enjoyment through virtual relationships and immersive experiences.

Social media platforms have transformed how we express and enjoy pleasure in the digital era, allowing people to share their experiences, hobbies, and creative expressions with a worldwide audience. Furthermore, technical breakthroughs in virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) have broadened the possibilities for digital fulfillment, resulting in more engaging and engrossing experiences across several domains. In conclusion, the evolution of pleasure throughout history reflects complex interplays between cultural, social, and technological factors. By integrating scientific insights from neuroscience, psychology, and cultural studies, we gain a deeper understanding of how pleasure experiences have evolved and shaped human behavior and societal dynamics over time.

1.3. The Shift Towards Digitalized Expression

The significant shift to digital expression in modern times has brought about a massive change in how individuals seek pleasure, fundamentally altering our interactions with the digital world that has become an integral part of daily life. This transformation, spurred by the proliferation of digital technologies and the widespread adoption of the internet, has immersed us in a vast digital ecosystem teeming with content and virtual experiences. As we navigate this digital landscape, we are confronted with a myriad of social dynamics, cultural norms, and psychological processes in our quest for satisfaction and enjoyment.

At the heart of this paradigm shift lies the democratization of content creation and dissemination, social media platforms, blogs, and video-sharing sites have democratized the process, empowering

individuals to easily create and share their own content. This democratization has fueled a surge in user-generated content, spanning from personal blogs and social media posts to viral memes. Through these avenues, individuals can express themselves freely and seek validation from peers through likes, shares, and comments, fostering a sense of connection and community in the digital sphere.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have evolved into virtual arenas for self-expression and social validation. These platforms serve as digital canvases where individuals showcase different facets of their lives, aspirations, and identities. Seeking approval from peers has emerged as a significant driver of online behavior, prompting individuals to meticulously curate their online personas to garner likes, followers, and engagement.

In tandem with the rise of user-generated content, the digital era has revolutionized entertainment consumption patterns. Streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Spotify offer unparalleled access to a vast array of media content tailored to individual preferences. Furthermore, digital gaming has emerged as a dominant form of entertainment, providing immersive experiences and avenues for creativity and social interaction.

However, the transition to digital pleasure-seeking is not without its psychological implications. Research such as by Garcia (2016) suggests that excessive engagement with digital media and devices can lead to adverse outcomes, including addiction, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem. Moreover, the algorithmic curation of content on social media platforms has the potential to shape users' perceptions and worldviews, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy and critical thinking skills in navigating the digital landscape.

Before delving into the behaviorist perspective, it is essential to grasp its fundamental tenets. Skinner (1971) emphasizes the behaviorist focus on observable behaviors and the influence of environmental stimuli in shaping them. Building upon this foundation, we can examine the phenomenon of digitalized pleasure-seeking through the lens of reinforcement and conditioning. Digital platforms leverage immediate rewards and reinforcement mechanisms, exerting a profound influence on individuals' pleasure-seeking behaviors and consumption patterns in the digital age.

1.4. Soma in Portrayal "A Brave New World"

In Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," glimpses into a future of a totalitarian state where everything is tightly controlled. People are created and conditioned to fit specific roles, and characters like Bernard and Lenina live in a world where being unique is discouraged to keep society in order. Huxley's profound observation, "actual happiness always looks squalid in comparison with the overcompensations for misery; and, of course, stability is not nearly so spectacular as instability," sheds light on the dichotomy between genuine happiness and the artificial pleasures provided by the World State (Huxley 221).

The government, known as the World State, keeps control by giving people soma, a drug that makes them feel happy and content. But even though everyone seems happy, they lack real emotions and connections. Characters like Bernard and John the Savage rebel against this control, questioning why everyone must be the same. They make us think about what it truly means to be free and human.

Bernard's dissatisfaction with the superficial happiness provided by soma is evident when he declares, "I'd rather be myself. Myself and nasty. Not somebody else, however jolly" (Huxley 94).

This sentiment reflects his yearning for authenticity and individuality, challenging the conformity enforced by the World State.

In the end, the author warns us about giving up our freedom and individuality just to fit in. It shows us how easily we can be controlled by things that make us feel good, even if they're not real, by using the substance of soma to enforce the concept of consumerism and control the people in the novel.

Digging deeper into the analysis of Soma in "Brave New World," to uncover its role in shaping not just individual lives but the entire society. At its core, Soma represents the trade-off between freedom and security, as individuals willingly surrender their autonomy in exchange for a false sense of happiness and stability.

One of the most noticeable things about soma is its ability to manipulate human emotions and perceptions. By making negative emotions less intense and increasing positive ones, it effectively hides the unhappiness and dissatisfaction among the citizens of the state. This manipulation serves to maintain the illusion of a utopian society, where everyone is content and fulfilled, yet beneath this facade lies a society devoid of genuine human connection and meaningful experiences.

Lenina's reliance on soma to cope with the complexities of life is evident when she remarks, "A gramme is better than a damn" (Huxley 75). This attitude reflects the pervasive mentality within the World State, where soma is embraced as a solution to all discomforts and challenges.

It also serves as a means of social control, reinforcing the hierarchical structure of the World State. The ruling elite manipulates the distribution of soma to ensure obedience and conformity among the lower social classes, effectively suppressing any disapproval or resistance. This control goes

beyond how people behave individually to shaping society itself, where Soma is used to oppress, keeping things the way they are no matter what.

Additionally, Huxley used it as a reflection of the dangers of a society driven by the notion of consumerism. In the pursuit of pleasure and happiness, people increasingly depend on soma, seeking refuge in its numbing embrace rather than confronting the harsh realities of their world. This addiction to soma mirrors our society's strong desire for immediate satisfaction and constant pursuit of happiness through buying things and seeking approval from others.

Soma prevents self-awareness and stops personal development. By blunting individuals to their emotions and experiences, it prevents them from confronting their fears, insecurities, and desires. This suppression of self-reflection and critical thinking keeps things the same, preventing any chance for change or improvement.

The use of the substance of soma in the novel embodies a much deeper symbolic meaning beyond its function as a drug. It represents the oppressive methods used by the ruling elite to control the population. Through the novel, we can perceive how those in power manipulate the public to benefit themselves, showing the tricky nature of societal control. By distributing soma freely and encouraging its consumption, the government in the World State limits individual autonomy and critical thinking, ensuring compliance and obedience among the citizens.

Moreover, the drug is considered a form of psychological manipulation and social conditioning, where individuals are led into a state of complacency and passivity. Through the effects of soma, citizens are encouraged to escape from the harsh realities of their existence and to embrace a superficial sense of happiness and contentment. This artificial happiness serves as a facade, masking the deeper issues of oppression and conformity that underlie the society of the World

State. It symbolizes the dangers of totalitarianism and authoritarianism, where the state exercises complete control over every aspect of its citizens' lives, including their thoughts, emotions, and desires. By teaching them to depend on soma for emotional needs, the government ensures reliance and obedience and prevents any form of rebellion against the system.

Huxley uses Soma as a warning about the potential consequences of sacrificing individual freedom and autonomy for societal stability and order. Through its depiction, he highlights the dangers of a dystopian future, in this scenario humanity is trapped by its desires and lack of motivation, stripped of real human connections and meaningful experiences.

2. Behaviorist Perspectives

2.1. Definition of Behaviorism

The term "behaviorism" originated from the word "behavior," which itself comes from the Middle English word "behaven" or "behaven," meaning "to manage or conduct oneself." The suffix "-ism" denotes a doctrine, belief, or principle.

According to American psychologist John B. Watson, behaviorism is the theoretical perspective that asserts, "Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness." (Watson 1913b)

The concept of Behaviorism, is known as a psychological theory introduced primarily by John B. Watson in the early 20th century, proposes that the study of behavior should prioritize observable actions over internal mental processes (Watson 1913). Rejecting introspection as a valid method of inquiry, behaviorism suggests that behaviors are learned through interactions with the

environment and are influenced by reinforcements and punishments. Watson's seminal paper "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (1913) laid the foundation for this approach, advocating for a scientific, objective analysis of behavior. Later, B.F. Skinner expanded behaviorism with his concept of operant conditioning, which emphasized the role of consequences in shaping behavior. This perspective dominated psychology during the early to mid-20th century, significantly influencing the field's understanding of human behavior and learning mechanisms.

2.2. Behaviorist Theories on Pleasure: Reinforcement, Conditioning, and Stimulus-Response

Before behaviorism offered a full explanation for pleasure-seeking behaviors, Freud's psychological perspective provided significant understanding. According to Freud, the Pleasure Principle posits that our actions are primarily driven by the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain. He proposed that fundamental biological needs like hunger and thirst are motivated by this principle, compelling individuals to seek enjoyment and reduce discomfort. Freud's framework suggests that pleasure-seeking behaviors are deeply rooted in our subconscious drives, shaping various aspects of human behavior and motivation.

Meanwhile, in behaviorism, pleasure shapes human behavior as a motivator influencing responses to stimuli. Behaviorists observe how individuals seek pleasure and avoid pain, analyzing how actions linked to pleasure are reinforced, leading to their repetition. Environmental factors and past experiences also contribute to associating pleasure with specific stimuli and responses. Behaviorism provides an understanding of how pleasure impacts behavior by observing actions and their consequences.

Behaviorist perspectives on pleasure provide a unique framework for understanding how individuals experience and respond to pleasurable stimuli (Watson 1913). Behaviorism, as a

psychological theory, focuses on observable behaviors and the environmental factors that shape them.

Reinforcement, a fundamental concept in behaviorism, refers to the process of strengthening a behavior by providing a consequence that follows the behavior (Skinner 1953). Positive reinforcement involves presenting a favorable stimulus after a behavior, increasing the likelihood of that behavior occurring again. In the context of pleasure, behaviorists suggest that pleasurable experiences act as positive reinforcers, motivating individuals to engage in behaviors that lead to such experiences repeatedly.

Conditioning is another essential concept in behaviorist theories of pleasure. It involves learning associations between stimuli and responses through repeated experiences. Classical conditioning, as demonstrated by Ivan Pavlov, involves associating a neutral stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus to evoke a conditioned response (Pavlov 1927). In terms of enjoyment, individuals may develop associations between neutral stimuli and pleasurable experiences through repeated pairings, leading to the conditioned response of experiencing pleasure in response to those stimuli alone.

Stimulus-response mechanisms are key in behaviorist views on pleasure, emphasizing how external stimuli trigger specific behavioral responses (Watson 1913). In behaviorism, the stimulus-response (S-R) model proposes that external stimuli evoke observable responses from individuals. Through repeated reinforcement and conditioning, individuals develop behavioral patterns aimed at maximizing pleasure and minimizing discomfort.

In short, behaviorists believe pleasure is a beneficial reward which improves actions tied to receiving it. Reinforcement helps individuals learn which activities give enjoyable consequences,

increasing the likelihood of repeating them in comparable situations. Conditioning is important in developing people's responses to enjoyable stimuli because frequent pairings build links between neutral stimuli and pleasure sensations. Stimulus-response systems influence a desire for pleasure behaviors by focusing on how outside factors cause certain behavioral responses.

3. Soma as a Pleasure-Inducing Agent

3.1. Soma: The Dual Tool of Pleasure and Control in Brave New World

Soma appears as a flexible tool, with enormous power as both a source of pleasure and a method of control inside a dystopian society. Soma is the ultimate form of instant pleasure, giving people a way to escape from life's difficulties. Huxley vividly illustrates Soma, a fascinating substance.

that brings euphoria and satisfaction, making it irresistible to the inhabitants of this tightly controlled world (Huxley 49). Its constant presence in the story serves as a constant reminder of society's focus on pleasure and the avoidance of discomfort. Moreover, Huxley employs vivid imagery to describe the immediate effects of Soma, portraying it as a "pleasant, golden haze" that envelops individuals in a blissful state, effectively transporting them away from the harsh realities of their existence (Huxley 55). The widespread availability of Soma and its promotion as a solution to all problems contribute to its success, reinforcing the idea that happiness is synonymous with consumption.

However, within its surface of pleasure lies a darker reality: soma is a powerful tool of social control, actively used by the governing authority to keep order and repress opposition. Citizens are conditioned to view Soma consumption as a standard practice, fostering a culture of dependency. By providing an easily accessible means of escapism, soma successfully quiets the masses, guaranteeing their obedience and suppressing any rebellious tendencies or questioning of authority

(Huxley 77). Furthermore, Huxley explores the insidious nature of Soma's control by depicting its normalization within society. As Lenina, one of the characters, remarks, "Everybody's happy nowadays" (Huxley 88), reflecting the common acceptance of Soma as a means to maintain social harmony and conformity. This normalization maintains the regime's control but also erodes individual autonomy and critical thinking, further entrenching the status quo.

The substance's role as a tool of control extends beyond its immediate effects on individuals to impact society's basic structure. It becomes essential to uphold societal stability and hierarchical power systems. Because of its extensive use, the regime can maintain its hold on power and keep the populace submissive and obedient. By robbing people of their sense of reality, Soma prevents any challenges to the status of order and strengthens the regime's hold on the public. As Mustapha Mond, one of the controllers, asserts, "Happiness has got to be paid for" (Huxley 173), highlighting the underlying cost of maintaining societal stability through the consumption of Soma. The novel thus presents Soma as a metaphor for the dangers of sacrificing individual freedom and critical thinking for the sake of societal harmony, raising profound questions about the nature of happiness and the price of compliance.

In Huxley's futuristic society, soma represents both the toxic tendency of control and the irresistible lure of pleasure in the novel. Its dual role highlights the fragile balance between societal stability and freedom of choice, posing profound questions about the ethical and moral consequences of surrendering liberty for happiness. Huxley uses Soma to tell an alarming tale about the risks of living in a society where control and pleasure coexist, leaving readers to ponder its implications beyond the book's end.

3.2. Applying Behaviorist Principles: Soma's Role as a Tool

Soma in "Brave New World" shows how rules about behavior and society's control work together. It affects both people and society. It works like a powerful tool for the government to control people's actions and keep order. People get used to feeling good when they take Soma, so they keep taking it. From when they are born, they learn that it is normal to take Soma when they're upset. If they feel bad, they automatically reach for Soma. This helps keep everyone calm and stops them from causing trouble. So, Soma isn't just a drug, it's a way for the government to control how people act and keep society in line in the book.

Firstly, soma's role in "Brave New World" is closely linked to the principle of reinforcement, impacting both individuals and society. As readers, we observe how citizens are taught to associate the consumption of Soma with pleasurable outcomes, reinforcing the behavior of taking the drug whenever they experience discomfort or dissatisfaction. This positive reinforcement strengthens the connection between consuming Soma and experiencing pleasure, leading individuals and society to repeatedly seek out the drug as a solution to their problems. By continually offering exciting outcomes, to create a pattern of addiction and submission to the characters, Soma reinforces its own consumption. As a result, soma not only offers immediate fulfillment but also reinforces its consumption, growing reliance on it, and social norm conformity (Huxley 49).

Secondly, it exists under the context of conditioning and has a major effect on people as well as social norms in "Brave New World". Citizens are taught from birth to view soma as a desirable and appropriate way to deal with stress or sadness. Through systematic conditioning techniques, individuals develop the automatic habit of seeking for Soma anytime they experience physical or mental distress. This conditioning shapes their behavior and responses. Consequently, soma becomes crucial to society and plays an important part in defining personal identity as well as

creating social cohesiveness. Aldous Huxley himself elaborates on this idea, stating, "The society described in 'Brave New World' is a world-state in which war has been eliminated and where the first aim of the rulers is at all costs to keep their subjects from making trouble." (Huxley 77).

In this regard, Lenina Crowne exemplifies the impact of reinforcement and conditioning on individual behavior. Throughout the narrative, Lenina consistently turns to Soma to alleviate any feelings of discomfort or unease, reinforcing the behavior of Soma consumption as a means of coping with adversity. This pattern of reinforcement perpetuates societal conformity and underscores the government's control over individual actions. Similarly, John the Savage's rejection of Soma serves as a challenge to the conditioned responses promoted by the government. By refusing to conform to societal norms surrounding Soma consumption, John asserts his autonomy and resists the pervasive influence of conditioning within the World State. His defiance highlights the tension between individual agency and societal control, illustrating the complexities of behaviorism in shaping human behavior (Huxley 88).

Lastly, its purpose can be comprehended via the lens of stimulus-response theory, shedding light on how it shapes citizens and authority structures in "Brave New World." In this world, the stimulus of discomfort or distress triggers the response of consuming Soma. This stimulus-response mechanism is reinforced through conditioning, as individuals learn to associate Soma with relief from negative emotions. This regular routine of actions allows the governing class to keep control over the people, securing loyalty and silencing criticism (Huxley 110).

In conclusion, the portrayal of Soma is a remarkable reflection of the complexity of society's connections and human nature. As a symbol of both pleasure and control. Throughout the novel, Soma offers characters a temporary escape from their troubles, but its pervasive influence also reinforces the authority of the ruling regime. This dichotomy raises concerns about the

compromises made between personal freedom and social order. We are reminded to consider our values and the power systems that influence our lives as we consider Soma's implications. Its presence in the narrative leaves a lasting impression, provoking thoughts long after we've closed the book. In essence, Soma's significance extends beyond the pages of "Brave New World," serving as a poignant reminder of the enduring tensions within human society.

4. Parallelism between Soma and Social Media nowadays as Dual Tools

When we look at Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" and compare the drug soma to social media today, we find a few crucial parallels. Both act as means to control people by offering them pleasure. They are also highly efficient manipulators, offering quick fulfillment and a distraction from reality. In Huxley's novel, soma is employed to control the public by minimizing their senses and suppressing critical thinking, allowing authoritarian leadership to maintain power. Similarly, social media platforms have addictive qualities, always attracting people with likes, comments, and notifications. This detachment from necessary social concerns and individual thought increases companies' and governments' power.

The two of them operate within larger systems of control, which are typical of oppressive governments. In the novel's dystopian society, the state gives soma to devotion and homogeneity among its citizens. As well as social media platforms are typically driven by algorithms designed to recognize data that meets agendas or produces the highest levels of engagement. The manipulation affects people's views and actions, resembling the control found in authoritarian societies in which we are living nowadays. Such centralizing power creates a dependency on outside forces for unreal reinforcement and fulfillment.

Throughout the novel, soma is employed to reduce any kind of unwanted feelings by giving an illusion of happiness that prevents rebelling against the established rules. Equally, social media is being accused of producing 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles. In which they may block genuine discussions and a variety of beliefs, therefore encouraging dictatorial goals. The rise of common views strengthens people in charge while damaging democratic and personal freedom principles.

Soma and social media both contribute to the breakdown of genuine human connections and closeness, consequently increasing tyrants' objectives. Soma becomes a replacement for true human connection, building shallow relationships lacking emotional depth. Similarly, social media networks push quantity over quality, encouraging consumers to develop virtual friends at the expense of real-life relationships. This emphasis on weak links lowers empathy and promotes selfishness, mirroring the dehumanizing elements of tyranny.

All in all, when we compare soma and social media as tools of control and manipulation in totalitarian systems, we see how pleasure is used to enforce oppression and limit personal freedom. It is crucial to analyze how both soma and social media influence modern society and take steps to avoid growing injustices and destroying the values of democracy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a broad assessment of pleasure, covering historical, psychological, and cultural components, from concepts of moderation to unconscious urges. The rise of behaviorism expanded our knowledge by proving how pleasure serves as a fundamental motivation in forming humans. The examination of soma in Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" provided an engaging lens to explore the complex interaction between pleasure and control in societal institutions. Parallels were established between soma and modern social media platforms,

illustrating the common effect of pleasure on individual actions and society standards in the digital era. This comparative research highlights the necessity of critical thought on the consequences of pleasure-seeking behaviors, as well as digital literacy and mindful use of digital tools.

Considering this, the next chapter will be focusing on digital totalitarianism and consumerism.

Investigating the relationships between digital totalitarianism, consumerism, and pleasure, exploring the role of digital platforms in commodifying pleasure.

Chapter Two:

Digital Totalitarianism and

Consumerism: Marxist perspective

Introduction

This chapter goes deep into the notion of digital totalitarianism, tracking its origins and growth in the context of modern society. It investigates the complex links between digital authoritarianism, consumerism, and pleasure, building on concepts from sociology, political science, and cultural studies. The thesis uses Marxist concepts to examine the power structures and ideological control that define digital authoritarianism. In addition, the chapter examines how pleasure and consumption contribute to keeping the regime and reinforcing current power relations in digital totalitarian regimes.

The first section of the second chapter investigates the concept of digital totalitarianism and its influence on society, with an emphasis on its application in surveillance, manipulation, and control of individual actions. It investigates the ethical consequences of massive data collecting, algorithmic filtering, and the consolidation of digital power among tech titans.

While the second part covers the monetization of pleasure on digital platforms, it explains how these platforms collect and analyze data to convert human needs, emotions, and preferences into commercial commodities. It also examines the design and functioning of these platforms, which are specifically designed to encourage continual involvement. Additionally, the section discusses the monetization of social interactions.

The final section of this chapter discusses the influence of technological monopolies on societal inequities, drawing connections with Marxist theory. It focuses on how these platforms shape public debate, exploit user data, and support capitalist ideals. In addition, it addresses ethical questions about privacy, autonomy, and individual agency in the digital era, as well as the role of

digital platforms in encouraging consumerism and worsening societal differences through misinformation.

1. Digital Totalitarianism and Consumerism:

1.1. Defining Digital Totalitarianism:

"Digital totalitarianism" is a concept that refers to the potential abuse of digital technologies by authoritarian regimes to control their populations. In such a scenario, governments could utilize advanced surveillance systems, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics to monitor citizens' every move, online activity, and communication. There is no exact date for when the term "digital totalitarianism" was coined. It probably became influential in the early to mid-2010s, championed by analysts such as Evgeny Morozov, known for "The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom" (2011), and Shoshana Zuboff, author of "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019). Even though these seminal works do not explicitly mention "digital totalitarianism," their analyses provide a critical foundation for understanding this concept.

According to sociological point of view the concept of "digital totalitarianism," represents a sociotechnical system where digital technologies and social institutions intertwine to concentrate power and control in the hands of state or corporate entities. This system is characterized by pervasive surveillance, extensive data manipulation, and stringent behavioral regulation. Advanced technologies, such as facial recognition, biometric tracking, and data mining, enable governments and corporations to monitor individuals comprehensively, gathering vast amounts of data on personal activities, financial transactions, and physical movements. The collected data is analyzed by sophisticated algorithms that predict and influence behaviors, shaping public discourse, consumer habits, and even political outcomes.

Their perspective suggests that understanding the motivations behind digital totalitarianism involves examining power dynamics, technical determinism, social control mechanisms, economic incentives, ideological hegemony, and historical contexts. At its basis, power dynamics govern how states and corporations use digital technology to consolidate control, affecting cultural norms and habits. This exploitation of technology is motivated by the deterministic belief that technical improvements inevitably drive societal change, providing fertile ground for more monitoring and influence. These technologies, in turn, constitute essential components of social control mechanisms, enabling the exercise of authority under the assumption of preserving order or security. However, financial benefits feed this development by allowing companies to profit from personal data, maintaining a cycle of monitoring and control. Ideological hegemony reinforces these behaviors, as dominant ideologies legitimize the repression of any kind of criticism. These sociotechnical dynamics are rooted in historical settings and reflect a continuity of surveillance activities, highlighting the intricate interplay between technology, power, and societal institutions in the digital age.

Shifting from a sociological to a psychological perspective, the analysis transitions from scrutinizing broader societal structures and power dynamics influencing digital totalitarianism to concentrating on individual experiences, cognitive processes, and psychological ramifications of surveillance and control enabled by digital technologies. These are influenced by control mechanisms and the pervasive presence of digital technologies. This viewpoint investigates how humans perceive, understand, and deal with the continual surveillance and manipulation that characterizes digital totalitarian regimes.

1.2. The Mechanisms of Digital Surveillance and Manipulation

The mechanisms of digital surveillance and manipulation have become increasingly sophisticated with the proliferation of advanced technologies, posing significant challenges to personal space. Where data has become the new currency and control over information is paramount.

one of the most crucial mechanisms employed by corporations, and social media platforms is the method of data collection. The process begins with corporations deploying various technologies and platforms to gather information from users across digital environments. For example, social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram utilize sophisticated algorithms to track users' interactions, habits, and preferences as they scroll through their feeds, interact with postings, and engage with content. These platforms capture a wide range of data metrics, including likes, shares, comments, and even how long users spend watching certain articles or videos. Similarly, mobile applications like fitness trackers or weather apps frequently require access to users' personal information, such as location, contacts, and device identifiers. Once permission is given, these applications continue to gather and transmit data back to the creators, helping to build massive databases.

Once collected, this data is aggregated, analyzed, and processed to extract insights and patterns that can inform business strategies and decision-making processes. Corporations employ sophisticated data analytics tools and techniques to sift through vast datasets, identifying trends, correlations, and predictive indicators. Corporations use data analytics insights to adjust their goods, services, and marketing activities to their target audience's requirements and preferences. This frequently entails developing tailored experiences and targeted advertising campaigns that engage and influence individuals based on their unique qualities and habits. Amazon, the e-commerce giant, is well-known for its use of such approaches. Amazon collects significant data

on consumers' browsing and purchase habits on a constant basis using sophisticated algorithms and rigorous user interaction tracking. This extensive data gathering allows Amazon to customize product suggestions and dynamically modify pricing tactics in response to market movements and individual preferences. In a similar manner, Spotify, the music streaming service, employs data collection and analysis to revolutionize user experiences and stay ahead in the competitive digital landscape. By tracking users' listening habits, playlist creations, and artist preferences, Spotify gathers extensive data to curate personalized playlists and recommend new music tailored to individual tastes.

Another significant mechanism is AI, which has gained popularity in recent years due to its revolutionary advancements in many fields. Artificial Intelligence (AI) works via using algorithms to analyze large amounts of data and learn patterns from it. These algorithms are trained on datasets that contain examples of the task they need to perform, such as recognizing images or understanding language.

In the context of digital surveillance AI can be used for surveillance and monitoring purposes, enabling governments and organizations to track and monitor individuals' activities and behaviors in both digital and physical spaces. Facial recognition technology, for example, utilizes AI algorithms to identify and track individuals' faces in real-time, raising concerns about privacy and civil liberties. Similarly, predictive analytics algorithms can analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns or anomalies indicative of potential security threats or suspicious activities, leading to increased surveillance and monitoring of individuals' behaviors.

Additionally, AI-powered algorithms employed by social media platforms for content moderation can inadvertently suppress the dissemination of truth and information by flagging and removing content that may challenge prevailing narratives or expose inconvenient truths. While these algorithms allegedly aim to maintain a safe online environment by targeting harmful content their application suppresses important information. For instance, after the 7th of October 2023, when social media platforms tightened their content moderation policies, posts related to the ongoing genocide in Palestine were often removed for violating community guidelines. This censorship extended to content depicting the suffering of innocent victims, silencing their voices and obscuring the realities of the situation from global audiences. As a result, vital information about human rights violations has become inaccessible (*Al- Jazeera*).

1.3.The Ethical Implications of Digital Totalitarian Practices

In today's internet-dominated culture there is a serious "social dilemma." This involves a variety of difficult concerns stemming from our reliance on digital technologies. From concerns about protecting our privacy in an era of continual data collecting to dealing with the distribution of disinformation, the societal challenge requires our serious attention and deliberate efforts to overcome.

One of the most pressing ethical concerns revolves around the erosion of individual privacy and personal autonomy. The continuous gathering and analysis of personal data without explicit consent raises significant ethical questions regarding transparency and accountability. According to a survey done by The Pew Research Center found that 79% of Americans are worried about how companies handle their personal data (Duggan & Smith, 2016). Younger adults and those who use social media or shop online are particularly concerned. Moreover, the issues go beyond just data collection. The digital domain is fraught with manipulation and distortion, with

algorithms and tailored information capable of changing public opinion, influencing practices, and even altering democratic processes. For example, during the 2016 US presidential election, Russian agents exploited social media platforms in favor of Trump's campaign to spread disinformation and create division among American voters (Nicas & Rosenberg, 2018).

Another question raised about the ethical implications of these digital tools is their potential to exacerbate existing biases and inequalities. Adding to the complexity are concerns about bias, fairness, and accountability in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Research by Buolamwini and Gebru (2018) revealed troubling biases in facial recognition algorithms, particularly in misidentifying people of color and women. These biases are deeply concerning as they can perpetuate systemic inequalities and erode trust in AI systems. For instance, the study found that these algorithms were significantly more accurate in recognizing the faces of white males compared to individuals from diverse racial and gender backgrounds. The error rates for gender classification were notably higher for darker-skinned individuals, with error rates of up to 34.7% for women of color, compared to just 0.8% for lighter-skinned men. Similarly, the error rates for classifying gender were much lower for men than for women across all skin tones, indicating a clear gender and racial bias in the algorithms.

In the present digital age, social media platforms and online platforms function as virtual gathering places where people may exchange ideas, engage in debate, and express their opinions. However, strong institutions, such as governments and tech businesses, frequently have the authority to restrict what material is permitted to circulate and what is prohibited. This control has consequences for freedom of expression since it can silence and suppress minorities and limit access to varied perspectives. Plus, the hidden algorithms and content moderation practices used by internet corporations aggravate these issues, as they may accidentally boost certain voices while

marginalizing others, molding public conversation in ways that may not reflect the entire range of societal perspectives. This suppression of dissenting voices in the digital space also raises broader ethical questions about the concentration of power and the potential for abuse by authoritarian regimes or other actors seeking to maintain control. Governments may exploit digital surveillance tools and censorship mechanisms to suppress political opposition, silent dissent, and curtail civil liberties under the guise of preserving national security or social harmony. Similarly, tech companies' content moderation practices, while aimed at combating harmful content, can inadvertently lead to the suppression of legitimate speech, particularly from marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Lastly, because of these immoral actions that exist in the digital world, fears are growing about the concentration of power in the hands of a few elites. In which a tiny group of powerful people holds excessive power over information, communication networks, and technical infrastructure. These digital wealthy individuals, who have privileged access to massive amounts of data and sophisticated algorithms, reinforce concerns about a growing power divide in society. They often wield power within tech businesses or governmental bodies, shaping narratives, influencing public opinion, and dictating cultural standards. This concentration of power not only stifles competition and innovation but also maintains existing hierarchies, restricting possibilities for smaller companies and disadvantaged voices. Also, the unrestrained influence wielded by these elites encourages a culture of impunity in which crimes such as data exploitation for profit in the name of maintaining order or sustaining market supremacy.

2. Digital Totalitarianism, Consumerism, and the Pursuit of Pleasure

2.1. the Relationship between Digital Totalitarianism, Consumerism, and Pleasure

The development of digital authoritarianism has far-reaching repercussions for the dynamics of consumption and pleasure in modern life. Digital technologies, surveillance capitalism, and algorithmic control mechanisms affect consumer behaviors, preferences, and wants, blending pleasure and consumption in novel ways.

According to Zuboff (2019), "surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data" (p. 5), emphasizing the monetization of human experiences and emotions in the digital age. In this quote She refers to surveillance capitalism as the extraction of personal experiences without consent or compensation. These experiences are then transformed into data that may be used to forecast and affect behavior. This method views human experiences as a resource to be exploited for profit, sometimes without people's knowledge or consent. Zuboff claims that this technique undermines personal autonomy and privacy by commodifying ordinary activities and interactions for the advantage of firms involved in surveillance capitalism.

Consumerism, motivated by the need for profit and growth, pushes the development of digital Technologies and platforms that enable monitoring, data collecting, and targeted advertising. Personal data commodification converts individuals into passive customers, with companies carefully tracking, analyzing, and monetizing their desires and tastes. The digital realm should be a space for inclusive representation and cultural expression, but it often replicates and exacerbates existing inequalities and power imbalances. The combination of consumerism with digital authoritarianism results in a feedback loop in which pleasure and desire are used to fuel spending. At the same time, surveillance technologies collect data to improve and maximize consumer experiences. Digital labor is defined as work that generates digital products and services, such as

data, information, and knowledge, demonstrating consumers' active participation in the production of digital commodities through their data and interaction.

On top of that, cultivating pleasure and satisfaction through digital consumption acts as a control and social regulating mechanism, encouraging consumer uniformity, apathy, and complacency. The ability of algorithms to alter and affect consumer tastes and behaviors is obvious in how digital platforms filter content and customize user experiences.

Pleasure-seeking behaviors and digital consumption foster a culture of rapid gratification, in which the pursuit of pleasure through digital interaction becomes a goal. This hedonistic approach to consumerism promotes a shallow and fleeting sense of pleasure, diverting consumers' attention away from critical thinking, introspection, and meaningful participation with societal concerns. The culture of digital consumption prioritizes immediate gratification over long-term well-being and societal values. Additionally, the commodification of pleasure and the encouragement of consumerism in the digital arena led to the loss of privacy, autonomy, and personal agency. Digital platforms' ubiquitous monitoring and data-gathering techniques harm people's capacity to make educated decisions, govern their personal data, and safeguard their privacy.

In this context, pleasure's influence on consumer behaviors and preferences becomes a strong tool for social control and manipulation. Pleasure-seeking becomes closely linked to consumerism, sustaining the cycle of want, consumption, and monitoring that defines digital tyranny. Pleasure, consumerism, and digital totalitarianism all pose fundamental ethical concerns about the nature of freedom, autonomy, and human agency in the digital era. It calls us to examine how pleasure is created, enjoyed, and commodified in a world controlled by digital technology and surveillance capitalism.

The deep connections that exist between digital authoritarianism, consumerism, and pleasure represent the complex interplay of power, exploitation, and control in the digital era. By critically exploring such connections, we may get a deeper understanding of digital technologies' social ramifications and advocate for ethical and fair digital practices that put human values ahead of profit and surveillance.

2.2. Digital Platforms: The Commodification of Pleasure

Digital platforms play a significant role in the commodification of pleasure, transforming individual experiences into marketable commodities that can be traded, sold, and consumed. These platforms capitalize on human desires, emotions, and preferences, turning them into data points that can be analyzed, and manipulated. As Zuboff argues, it involves using these platforms to extract personal experiences, packaging them as data for profit rather than for mutual exchange. Surveillance capitalism exploits individuals by using their personal data to create predictive products and services, emphasizing the one-sided nature of this relationship where users are sources of data rather than customers, reinforcing the cycle of consumerism and surveillance (Zuboff 2019). Here she is highlighting the commodification of human experiences and emotions in the digital age. In which Surveillance capitalism works by recording and exploiting people's online behaviors as a source of valuable data, without their explicit agreement or knowledge. This method sees human experiences, including browsing behaviors and interactions, as raw data that can be analyzed and turned into behavioral insights. These insights are subsequently used to affect and anticipate human behavior for commercial purposes, such as targeted advertising and tailored content distribution. This unilateral gathering and use of personal data raises serious ethical problems about privacy, autonomy, and the power dynamics of individuals and companies in the digital age.

In addition, the design and functionality of digital platforms are customized to engage users and elicit certain behaviors, creating a culture of perpetual connectedness and digital consumption. The user experience is precisely designed to increase engagement, stimulate long-term connection, and provide important data for targeted advertising and tailored content delivery. The digital realm should be a space for inclusive representation and cultural expression, but it often replicates and exacerbates existing inequalities and power imbalances, demonstrating the manipulative nature of digital platforms in shaping user behaviors and preferences. Also, digital platforms use advanced algorithms and data analytics to provide tailored content and suggestions based on user browsing history, preferences, and interactions. This tailored method to material distribution produces a filter bubble, reinforcing existing opinions, preferences, and interests while restricting exposure to other perspectives and competing viewpoints. Algorithmic screening tactics used by large digital corporations might unintentionally create ideological bubbles and propagate extreme viewpoints.

The commercialization of pleasure on digital platforms goes beyond targeted advertising and individualized content distribution, to include the "gaming" of engagement by users and the monetization of social connections. Gamification tactics, prizes, and rewards are used on digital platforms to increase user interaction, develop community engagement, and promote regular use. These gamified experiences establish a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and enjoyment, encouraging repeat participation and reinforcing platform loyalty.

These digital platforms enable the commercialization of social interactions through influencer marketing, sponsored content, and affiliate programs, transforming people's connections and interactions into valuable assets that can be utilized for commercial advantage. The blurring of personal and professional boundaries on digital platforms commodifies social interactions and relationships, reducing real ties to transactional transactions.

Likewise, it influences people's interactions with technology by encouraging dependency, addiction, and reliance on digital gadgets and online services. Digital platforms' continual connectedness, notifications, and rapid pleasure set off a cycle of reliance and obsessive involvement that interrupts offline contacts, face-to-face conversation, and real-world experiences. The culture of digital consumption prioritizes immediate gratification over long-term well-being and societal values, indicating the negative influence of digital technology on individuals' well-being and relationships.

It also undermines privacy, autonomy, and individual agency by controlling users' data, choices, and actions. Digital platforms' ubiquitous monitoring and data gathering methods harm people's capacity to make educated decisions, govern their personal data, and safeguard their privacy. The internet was intended to be a tool for liberty, but it has also become a device for control and repression.

The desire for fulfillment and enjoyment through digital consumption serves as a social control mechanism, encouraging users' compliance, apathy, and complacency. Digital platforms use algorithmic content curation, tailored suggestions, and filter bubbles to mold public opinion, influence behavior, and even affect democratic processes. Pleasure-seeking behaviors and digital contact foster a culture of quick satisfaction, with the happiness obtained from digital involvement being the primary aim. This emphasis on instant gratification promotes a shallow and transitory sense of satisfaction, diverting attention away from critical thinking, introspection, and deeper involvement with social concerns.

3. Marxist Perspectives on Digital Totalitarianism

3.1. An overview of Marxism

Marxism is a comprehensive socio-economic and political theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-19th century. It provides a critical analysis of capitalist society. While Marxism encompasses various dimensions of capitalist dynamics, this discussion will focus primarily on its critique of consumerism, a phenomenon deeply embedded within the capitalist mode of production.

Marxism is a comprehensive theory and method that emerged from the writings and ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Rooted in the historical materialist interpretation of society, Marxism offers a critical lens through which to analyze and understand capitalist societies. Central to Marxist thought is the emphasis on class struggle as a primary driver of systemic economic and social change. Marxists argue that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles, where the ruling class exploits and oppresses the working class to maintain its power and privilege. Marxism seeks to expose the underlying structures of exploitation inherent in capitalist systems, advocating for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a classless, socialist society based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. Beyond its economic critique, Marxism also encompasses a broader range of social, political, and cultural analyses, offering insights into power dynamics, ideology, and the potential for collective liberation and social transformation (Encyclopedia Britannica).

One of the most heavily critiqued notions by Marxism is consumerism, which is driven by the pursuit of profit in capitalist economies, transforms the act of consumption into a central measure of success and well-being. This relentless drive to consume is amplified by advertising, which manipulates desires and creates artificial needs, perpetuating a cycle of materialistic consumption. Where consumption becomes more than a personal choice; it is shaped and dictated by capitalist

structures that prioritize profit over human well-being, leading to overproduction, environmental degradation, and societal inequality.

Consumerism as a concept is a socio-economic ideology that promotes the purchase of goods and services in ever-increasing quantities as a fundamental sign of personal well-being and societal advancement. Rooted in the belief that consumption drives economic growth and prosperity, consumerism encourages individuals to prioritize material acquisition and consumption as essential aspects of modern life. This ideology is closely tied to capitalist economies, where consumption is a key driver of production and economic activity. Consumerism is often driven by advertising and marketing strategies that create desires and aspirations for new products and lifestyles, perpetuating a cycle of consumption and accumulation. Critics of consumerism argue that it fosters a culture of materialism, wastefulness, and environmental degradation, prioritizing short-term gratification over long-term sustainability and well-being. Additionally, consumerism has been linked to issues of inequality, as access to consumer goods and services often becomes a measure of social status and identity. Despite its criticisms, consumerism remains a dominant force shaping contemporary societies, influencing individual behavior, cultural norms, and economic policies on a global scale (Encyclopedia Britannica).

The culture of consumerism fosters alienation and commodification, where individuals are encouraged to define their identity and self-worth through material possessions. Marx's concept of alienation extends beyond labor to encompass a broader disconnection from genuine human connections and meaningful experiences. In a consumerist society, human relationships and social interactions are often reduced to economic transactions. Even personal connections can become commodities, valued based on market principles rather than intrinsic human value.

Additionally, the commodification of cultural products and experiences under capitalism transforms art, entertainment, and personal relationships into marketable commodities. This commodification not only reinforces the alienation of individuals from their creative potential and each other but also distorts cultural values and norms. It prioritizes profitability over authenticity, creativity, and human connection, reducing diverse cultural expressions to standardized and commercialized forms. The habit of consumption worsens economic inequality, as wealth and resources become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, while most of the population faces economic hardships and struggles to meet basic needs. Consumerist culture, with its emphasis on conspicuous consumption and status symbols, reinforces social divisions and disparities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and wealth accumulation.

Consumerism also contributes to environmental degradation as the relentless production and consumption of goods lead to resource depletion, pollution, and ecological imbalance. Capitalist economies, driven by consumer demand, prioritize growth and profit over sustainability, resulting in environmental crises that threaten the well-being of present and future generations.

Moreover, the commodification of goods and services extends to globalization, where capitalist enterprises exploit cheap labor and resources in developing countries to meet consumer demands in the global market. This globalization of consumerism further exacerbates economic inequalities on a global scale, perpetuating a system of exploitation and dependency between the Global North and South (Marx, "Capital").

Marxism offers a critical lens through which to analyze the dynamics of consumerism within capitalist society, highlighting its role in perpetuating exploitation, alienation, inequality, environmental degradation, and global disparities. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of economic structures, class relations, and cultural phenomena like consumerism, Marxism

advocates for a transformative social and economic system based on equality, cooperation, and human liberation. It challenges the exploitative nature of capitalism and calls for a reevaluation of our values and priorities, advocating for a shift away from a culture of consumption towards a more sustainable, equitable, and humane society.

3.2. Marxist Critique of Digital Totalitarianism

Marx's notion of a class struggle presents an important lens through which to evaluate the power dynamics that shape the digital world. The growth of electronic monopolies like Facebook, Google, and Amazon exemplifies the concentration of digital power and its ramifications for societal inequality. These monopolies control massive quantities of user data, influence public debate, and affect billions of people's online experiences throughout the world. This domination reflects the capitalist class systems attacked by Marxism, in which a tiny elite has disproportionate power and income.

These Tech monopolies have power not only economically but also politically and socially. Their algorithms decide what material is displayed or concealed, impacting public opinion and potentially undermining democratic processes. This concentration of digital power concentrates money and influence in the hands of a few, aggravating already existing disparities between the capitalist class (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat). Based on the Marxist theorist David Harvey who critiques the tensions inherent in capitalist system in his article "The Geopolitics of Capitalism," (2005) the class struggle is an active manifestation of the tensions that exist in the capitalist mode of production, which also applies to the digital economy. The digital proletariat—the users who provide data and content—often find themselves in a subservient position, contributing to the riches and power of tech monopolies while receiving unequal advantages. This dynamic reinforces the divide between the capitalist class, which owns the means

of production and digital infrastructure, and the working class, whose labor and data are exploited for profit. The concentration of digital power strengthens existing class distinctions, emphasizing the importance of critical analysis and possibly regulatory initiatives to redress these inequities.

Furthermore, these digital platforms have become effective tools for exercising ideological control by molding public discourse and spreading prevailing narratives that benefit corporate interests. These systems use algorithmic content curation, tailored suggestions, and filter bubbles to simplify information and content delivery. This standardization of thinking limits access to varied perspectives and opposing ideas, strengthening the capitalist class's dominant beliefs and narratives.

Tufekci's views on the tensions inherent in the capitalist mode of production emphasize the significance of digital technology in sustaining structural inequities and power imbalances. Tech monopolies' control over information flow and content distribution strengthens their impact, marginalizing dissident voices and alternative narratives. This sort of intellectual control is consistent with Harvey's findings on class conflict as a manifestation of capitalism's inherent contradictions, in which the ruling class attempts to preserve and expand its power.

Also, the exploitation enabled by digital technology goes beyond economics to include ideological control, with the distribution of certain narratives and views serving to legitimate and sustain the capitalist system. This ideological connection between digital platforms and capitalist interests leads to the reinforcement of existing inequalities and power structures, emphasizing the necessity for critical inspection and opposition to the monopolistic control of information and discourse.

Alongside class struggle and ideological domination, it sheds light on the exploitation inherent in the digital economy. The commercialization of personal data and user involvement converts

people's data and attention into commodities for corporate profit, mirroring capitalist exploitation of labor. This commercialization creates not just economic difficulties but also ethical questions about permission, transparency, and responsibility.

The collecting of profits from users' data without proper reward or consent exemplifies the power imbalance between tech monopolies and users. Individuals frequently inadvertently contribute to corporate wealth creation through digital contacts, whilst their personal information becomes an asset in the data-driven economy. This type of exploitation is consistent with Marxist criticisms of capitalism, in which the capitalist class obtains surplus value from the work of the proletariat without fair remuneration.

Further, the exploitation enabled by the digital economy raises larger concerns about privacy, autonomy, and individual agency in the digital era. Tech corporations' extensive collection of information violates customers' personal rights and weakens their autonomy, contributing to a culture of surveillance capitalism. This exploitation of personal data for corporate benefit perpetuates existing power disparities and begs for a reevaluation of the ethical implications of digital technology within the context of Marxist criticism.

In the framework of a Marxist criticism, digital technologies' encouragement of hedonistic spending patterns may be viewed as a mechanism that promotes capitalist beliefs and diverts people's attention away from vital societal concerns. Hedonism, defined as the pursuit of pleasure as the ultimate good, is consistent with capitalism principles that place individual consumption and instant gratification ahead of community well-being and social responsibility. This emphasis on rapid gratification and individual pleasure helps to soothe and divert the working class, inhibiting genuine engagement with systemic injustices and the larger socioeconomic challenges highlighted by Marxism.

Besides, encouraging hedonistic purchasing habits adds to the commercialization of desires and identities, transforming personal preferences and goals into marketable commodities. This commodification promotes capitalist accumulation by promoting continual consuming and reinforcing consumerist ideals that emphasize material acquisition over social justice and equitable resource allocation.

Finally, the dissemination of disinformation and polarization enabled by digital platforms may be viewed via a Marxist lens as processes that aggravate societal differences and weaken collective solidarity. The amplification of controversial information and the formation of echo chambers combine to split the working class, distracting attention from structural difficulties and increasing ideological obstacles that impede collective action.

Misinformation, propaganda, and extreme ideas are transmitted through digital media, contributing to the erosion of faith in democratic institutions and procedures. This loss reduces the capacity for collective mobilization and resistance to capitalist exploitation by undermining the common understanding and solidarity required for effective social movements. According to Tufekci (2017), "the algorithmic amplification of divisive content and the proliferation of echo chambers create fertile ground for the spread of disinformation and polarization of public discourse" (p. 45). The concept of "echo chambers" refers to the phenomenon where individuals are exposed primarily to information and opinions that align with their existing beliefs and preferences. This occurs because algorithms personalize content recommendations based on users' past behavior and preferences, creating a feedback loop where users are continually exposed to content that reinforces their existing viewpoints.

Tufekci argues that this combination of algorithmic amplification and echo chambers creates fertile ground for the spread of disinformation and polarization of public discourse. Divisive

content that is amplified by algorithms tends to reinforce existing ideological divides, while echo chambers prevent users from being exposed to diverse perspectives or fact-checking information. As a result, disinformation can spread unchecked within these echo chambers, leading to further polarization of public opinion and undermining the quality of democratic discourse.

Conclusion

To conclude the chapter, a comprehensive examination unfolded across three specific areas, each providing light on various aspects of digital totalitarianism, consumerism, and pleasure in the modern period.

First, the concept of digital totalitarianism was explored in depth, highlighting its broad impact on society and the moral questions it raises. The monitoring, manipulation, and control processes that support this digital regime were examined, all while drawing on Marxist theories.

Attention was also turned to the commercialization of pleasure on digital platforms. An examination was conducted on how these platforms commodify human needs, emotions, and preferences, turning them into economic assets.

Finally, technical monopolies and societal injustices were linked, applying them through the perspective of Marxist philosophy. Emphasis was placed on the platforms' ability to impact public debate to promote capitalist principles.

Overall, these parts come together to provide a thorough critique of the digital age, highlighting the importance of critical engagement and ethical awareness when navigating the intricate interaction of technology, power, and societal dynamics. This introduces the case study for this thesis, which analyzes digital totalitarianism from the point of view of the movie *'The Circle'*.

Chapter Three:
A Case Study The Circle: An Allegory
of Digital Dystopia

Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis, we present a case study aiming to establish a connection between digital totalitarianism and the film "The Circle." Addressing concepts such as surveillance and transparency, this chapter meticulously assesses the psychological repercussions of surveillance on individuals. Through the lens of "The Circle," we explore the company's desire to create a transparent society and draw parallels with real-world examples of digital dictatorship. Additionally, we undertake a comparison study of "Brave New World," considering if current reality reflects the predicted digital dystopia. Our purpose in this chapter is to critically examine the societal consequences of monitoring and technological control and how these themes relate to current challenges about the balance of power in the digital era.

The first section provides an overview of the film "The Circle," delving deep into its storyline complexities, character interactions, themes, and societal reflections within its dystopian backdrop. It meticulously tracks protagonist Mae Holland's journey within the colossal corporation known as The Circle, charting her evolution from a hopeful newcomer to a disillusioned rebel.

Moving on to the second part of the chapter, we explore The Circle's mission to establish a transparent society. Initially hailed as a noble endeavor promising accountability and connectivity, the company's quest for transparency gradually unveils darker intentions. Despite advocating for openness, The Circle manipulates it to assert control, undermine privacy, and enforce compliance. The portrayal of a homogeneous society overlooks cultural diversity while transforming personal connections into quantifiable data points empowers the company to exert influence. This critique underscores the paradoxical nature of The Circle's objective, where transparency is used for manipulation rather than empowerment.

In the third section, the focus shifts to the cautionary tale presented in the film, highlighting the consequences of sacrificing privacy and autonomy for corporate transparency and technological advancement. Drawing from the concept of surveillance capitalism, the film critiques the profit-driven exploitation of personal data, as well as the reinforcement of capitalist power dynamics and global inequalities. Additionally, protagonist Mae Holland's character vividly portrays the psychological toll of constant surveillance, illustrating the behavioral changes and psychological discomfort stemming from pervasive monitoring.

The fourth part compares "The Circle's" depiction of digital dictatorship to real-world cases from tech companies such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and YouTube. It demonstrates how these corporations utilize user data to have enormous influence over public debate, similar to totalitarian control over information delivery. These examples demonstrate the value of transparency and accountability in the technology business.

The fifth part connects the movie to "Brave New World," emphasizing the themes of dystopian societies ruled by tyrants or large corporations. Their stories underscore the value of privacy, openness, and critical thinking in the face of technological innovation and societal control.

The last section seeks to conclude the dissertation by addressing the ongoing discussion regarding whether we are genuinely living in a digital dystopia or if it is just fiction, taking arguments from both sides.

1. An Overview of "The Circle"

"The Circle," a film produced in April 2017 based on a novel by American author Dave Eggers, emerged as a prophetic investigation of the dangers of unrestricted technology growth. Set in the near future, the film engages followers in a world governed by The Circle, a massive digital Group

that represents the merging of social media, surveillance, and corporate power. At its core is heroine Mae Holland, played by Emma Watson, a character who starts on a transforming adventure when she joins The Circle, a powerful corporate firm. Mae is initially charmed by The Circle's objective of connectedness and openness, and she excitedly accepts her position inside the corporation. However, when she explores more into The Circle's operations, she encounters moral challenges and moral dilemmas that call her beliefs into question. Key characters besides Mae include Eamon Bailey, played by the renowned Tom Hanks, whose charm and influence impact Mae's experiences at the corporation. Karen Gillan plays Annie, Mae's friend and coworker, whose relationship with Mae declines as tensions rise inside The Circle. As Mae navigates the complexity of business culture and personal commitment, she must confront the real cost of her allegiance to The Circle and decide where her loyalties lie.

The film also features individuals such as Mercer, played by Ellar Coltrane, who embodies uncertainty about The Circle's objective and acts as a voice of dissent. Ty, another co-founder of The Circle, is portrayed by John Boyega, and his unhappiness with the company's path serves as a warning tale for Mae. As Mae struggles with the consequences of her acts and the implications of The Circle's global impact, the film explores topics of privacy, autonomy, and the ethics of technological progress.

From its opening scenes, "The Circle" provides a striking image of a civilization on the edge of technological disaster. The Circle's huge campus, with its modern design and constant monitoring, provides a disturbing background to Mae's voyage. As she involves herself in The Circle's society, attracted by its utopian ideal of absolute transparency, the spectator is transported to a world where privacy is a luxury and monitoring is the standard. Through Mae's eyes, we see the enticing appeal

of technological advancement mixed with the increasing sense of discomfort that comes with the loss of personal boundaries.

As Mae progresses through The Circle's ranks, her transition from wide-eyed devotee to hesitant collaborator unfolds with compelling intensity. Along the process, she faces serious moral and ethical quandaries, reflecting society's ambivalence over the rapid rate of technological advancement. Emma Watson's subtle portrayal brings Mae to life, expressing her inner anguish as she struggles to reconcile her principles with the brutal reality of corporate power.

consequently, the protagonist's worry expands, and so does her suspicion of The Circle's objectives and the entirety of surveillance machinery. Mae's journey highlights the difficulty of preserving moral integrity in business settings, challenging viewers to consider the consequences of unbridled corporate power in the digital era. In her search for clarity, Mae turns to her friend Annie for comfort in the moral complexity of life in The Circle. Together, they manage open debates about the ethical consequences of participation in a surveillance society, echoing wider public worries about privacy loss and corporate power. Mae and Annie struggle with the difficult decisions of living in a technology-driven culture, as the borders between public scrutiny and personal liberty become more blurred.

At the end of the film, Mae's dissatisfaction with the company's intrusive methods results in a brave act of rebellion against the infringement on human liberty. Mae confronts the Circle's executives, particularly Eamon Bailey and Ty, about the moral consequences of their acts and the disastrous impact on human privacy and autonomy, sparking a public debate over the ethics of monitoring and corporate control. Despite the criticism and pressure to comply, Mae stays solid in her belief, encouraged by supporters such as Annie and Mercer. As the tension rises, Mae's confrontation with The Circle's leadership, which includes Bailey and Ty, reveals the company's

flaws and sparks a larger movement for openness and accountability. Mae's legacy lives on thanks to her bold stand, as a symbol of hope for people who dare to question the current quo.

Additionally, this film discusses a variety of themes, including the difficult balance between security and privacy, the necessity of individual liberty, and the looming threat of corporate dominance. However, at its foundation, "The Circle" explores the concept of digital totalitarianism. As the protagonist deals with the challenges of life within The Circle, viewers are presented with a disturbing depiction of a society in which technology blurs the lines between public and private life, preparing the path for a type of digital tyranny. Also, symbolism is conveyed through figures such as Ty, one of The Circle's founders. Ty's early optimism and final disillusionment serve as an illustration of the consequences of giving up ethics for progress. His persona represents the moral sacrifices that frequently accompany technical growth, emphasizing the ethical difficulties of corporate dominance and the dire implications of sacrificing human integrity in seeking advancement. The company's motto, "Secrets are lies, sharing is caring, and privacy is theft," exemplifies its commitment to transparency, even at the expense of individual confidentiality. Characters such as Mercer and Mae, who oppose The Circle's invasive technology, represent resistance to its imposition on personal autonomy.

2. Critique of the Company's Mission.

The mission in the film "The Circle" is referred to as the "transparency initiative" or simply "transparency" throughout. The Circle Corporation's fundamental purpose is to establish comprehensive transparency in society through technical advancements and platforms. It focuses on the corporation's massive goal of achieving ultimate transparency in society. The Circle uses modern technology and social media platforms to abolish privacy and secrecy, arguing for a society in which every activity and contact is accessible to everybody. The objective appears to be

a noble attempt that promises improved accountability and connectedness. However, as this story progresses, the darker consequences of this transparency become clear, posing critical concerns about the future under the control of digital corporations.

According to the scriptwriters, the transparency project is a "bold and revolutionary concept" (Ponsoldt, James). wants to tear down borders and create a worldwide society in which knowledge may flow freely.

The corporation presents its mission as the ultimate good, highlighting stability and protection from external dangers. They declare that transparency promotes responsibility, trust, and honesty. It also encourages connectedness to bring people together and bridge divisions, break down barriers to promote inclusion and equality, and build a global community among different communities and cultures.

However, these statements often mask the Circle's true agenda, hiding its actual purposes by erasing the sense of individuality as a whole and weaponizing it for manipulation and control. By removing people's privacy, The Circle has unparalleled access to personal information, allowing them to capitalize on weaknesses and impose dominance over people's lives. This openness evolves into a surveillance system, with every move and thought analyzed, ultimately leading to a loss of autonomy and freedom.

It ignores the complex nature of human experience and the value of cultural variety. Rather than appreciating diversity, The Circle advocates for a homogenized view of society. The elimination of cultural barriers results in a loss of identity and tradition as people are driven to conform to The Circle's uniformity. The Circle's vision of a global community suppresses criticism and marginalizes opposing ideas. The illusion of unity hides underlying divides and injustices, creating

a false impression of harmony. Rather than welcoming variety, The Circle's worldwide network strengthens existing power structures, hence perpetuating global injustices and inequities.

Moreover, the mission aims to redefine human connection to control individuals by isolating them from one another. The Circle's concept of connectivity is superficial and transactional, relying on algorithms and analytics based on social media platforms rather than actual human engagement. The reliance on internet connections erodes the fabric of a community, replacing meaningful interactions with virtual ones. Individuals in this hyper-connected society are reduced to data points, their worth decided by their online presence rather than their inherent value as humans. For example, in the film, we discover how TruYou, The Circle's social media platform, combines individuals' online identities into a single, uniform profile. While this may appear handy at first look, it essentially reduces people to statistical points, removing their rich identities and personal experiences. This translation of personal connection into quantitative data enables The Circle to exercise influence over people's lives, influencing their online interactions to further the company's goals. As a result, individuals grow disconnected from the physical world around them, living largely within the boundaries of The Circle's digital ecology.

3. Surveillance and Privacy

3.1. The Illusion of Transparency

In the film, surveillance is maintained by a variety of technology tools and platforms, including "SeeChange" and "TruYou." "SeeChange" refers to a network of omnipresent cameras put across The Circle's campus and beyond, enabling continuous observation of people's activities and interactions. "TruYou" also functions as a surveillance tool, allowing The Circle to gather and analyze massive volumes of user data. "SeeChange" and "TruYou" are introduced by the

company's leadership, notably Eamon Bailey, one of The Circle's founders, and Tom Stenton, the chief operating officer.

Everyone in the corporation, including the protagonist, is captivated and brainwashed by the promises of openness and security that these tools provide, and they become slaves to the 'circles' agenda. Motivated by the concept of a society where all acts are transparent and accountable, she immediately embraces "TruYou" as a method of simplifying her online interactions while improving her feeling of connectedness. Subsequently, as Mae and other characters, such as her friend 'Mercer', dive deeper into The Circle's society and observe the implications of widespread monitoring, her excitement fades, replaced by a rising sense of disquiet. The release of "SeeChange" exposes Mae to the intrusive nature of monitoring, forcing her to question the ethics of foregoing personal privacy in the name of corporate openness. Mae's internal turmoil comes to a climax when she uncovers the actual depth of The Circle's monitoring methods. Which is controlling people and creating an authoritarian world, Surveillance is used not just to manipulate people, but also to abuse reality. The company's underlying objective is to establish an artificial consensus in which truth becomes fluid. The Circle seeks to build a world in which reality aligns with its goal, making dissent and opposition pointless.

Furthermore, this utilization of personal data for profit highlights a common trend where corporations exploit surveillance capitalism. In the film, surveillance is omnipresent, with the company using advanced technology to watch every move and interaction of the characters. According to Shoshana Zuboff, surveillance capitalism is "the unilateral claiming of private human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 5). In other words, it involves the extraction, collecting, and analysis of personal data without individuals'

explicit agreement in order to develop predicted behavioral patterns that may be exploited for commercial advantage.

From a Marxist perspective, surveillance capitalism, like traditional capitalism, exploits individuals by obtaining and monetizing personal data, reinforcing inequities and alienation. Concentrated control in technology companies, such as The Circle, allows them to influence language and standards, escalating societal imbalances. The prioritizing of corporate interests above individual rights weakens democracy and strengthens capitalist power dynamics. In essence, surveillance capitalism perpetuates the exploitation and oppression inherent in capitalist systems," as highlighted by David Harvey's assertion that "capitalism's intensification of inequality, its inherent tendency to monopoly and the formation of oligopolistic power, its relentless commodification of things and nature—these point to a dystopian future" (Harvey, 2010).

Surveillance capitalism also serves to solidify global inequalities and neocolonialism. Tech companies, mostly located in rich Western countries, collect massive quantities of data from consumers globally, including those in underdeveloped countries. This data extraction reinforces existing power disparities between the Global North and the Global South since companies in rich nations profit from the exploitation of people and resources in less economically fortunate areas. Also, it created and employed by these firms frequently benefit Western governments and multinational businesses, supporting neocolonial activities such as economic exploitation and political meddling in underdeveloped nations. As a result, surveillance capitalism not only maintains economic and social disparities but also strengthens mechanisms of global control and exploitation, eventually benefiting the capitalist ruling class.

Overall, "The Circle" portrays a disturbing picture of surveillance capitalism's ubiquitous impact, emphasizing its negative repercussions on human privacy, autonomy, and societal standards. The

film emphasizes the perils of giving up privacy for corporate openness by depicting modern technological tools such as "SeeChange" and "TruYou". Finally, the film serves as a cautionary tale on the importance of closely examining the implications of technology breakthroughs and protecting individual rights in an increasingly surveillance-enabled society.

3.2. Psychological Impact on Individuals Under Surveillance

In "The Circle," the psychological toll of constant surveillance is vividly depicted through the character of Mae Holland. With Mae rising through The Circle's hierarchy, she gets further involved in a culture of transparency and scrutiny, a phenomenon profoundly based on behaviorist training and reinforcement. The constant monitoring puts tremendous pressure on Mae's mind, causing increased tension and anxiety, in line with operant conditioning principles, which state that external stimuli change behavior through reinforcement or punishment.

This is described in a discussion between Mae and Mercer, in which Mae reveals the crushing weight of constant monitoring, stating, "Every time I did something, I could see it was being watched, reviewed, counted, measured" (The Circle). Here, Mae's response reflects the concept of observational learning, wherein individuals modify their behavior based on observed consequences, highlighting the continuous influence of surveillance on her actions. Consequently, Mae's behavior becomes increasingly influenced by the fear of surveillance, as she navigates the digital landscape of The Circle with a growing sense of tension and self-consciousness, a manifestation of behaviorism's emphasis on environmental factors in shaping behavior.

Moreover, Constant surveillance in the real world profoundly impacts individuals' psychology and behavior, as demonstrated by the Stanford Prison Experiment conducted by psychologist Philip Zimbardo in 1971. The study aimed to investigate the psychological effects of perceived power, focusing on the dynamics between prisoners and prison guards. Participants, who were assigned

at random as guards or convicts in a simulated jail, suffered severe discomfort, causing the experiment to end prematurely. The guards quickly embraced dictatorial and aggressive attitudes, while the detainees experienced sadness, anxiety, and learned helplessness. This study demonstrates how frequent examination may cause behavioral adjustments toward conformity and submission when people receive roles assigned by authorities. The experiment emphasizes the psychological cost of monitoring, demonstrating its ability to cause misery and change behavior in deep ways.

For example, In China, the government's massive use of surveillance cameras with face recognition technology allows for continuous monitoring of civilians. Furthermore, social media platforms let governments and companies monitor individuals by tracking their activity, interests, and connections. This instills fear and self-censorship, discouraging disagreement and encouraging compliance. The psychological consequences are profound, resulting in paranoia, distrust, and isolation. The integration of social media compounds these impacts, since online actions are actively monitored for signals of opposition. This combination of government and social media surveillance produces a culture of fear and obedience, in which people feel continuously watched and scrutinized, intensifying psychological effects and silencing dissenting voices. This continuing monitoring of people's online activities via collecting data from people's social by government agencies media and law enforcement creates an environment of fear and distrust. Individuals become acutely aware of their digital imprint and the possible implications of expressing opposing views or engaging in acts considered rebellious by the state.

As a whole, the film shows the significant psychological impact of ongoing surveillance on humans in real life molded in fiction. The film shows how openness may lead to a loss of privacy

and autonomy, and highlights the harmful consequences on mental health and behavior. The incorporation of social media increases these effects, promoting fear, and self-censorship.

4. Digital Totalitarianism: Real-World Parallels

The concept of totalitarianism in "The Circle" is linked to power connections within the business. The Circle, led by charismatic CEO Eamon Bailey, positions itself as a positive force. Yet as the story progresses, it becomes clear that the company's objectives go much beyond just progress in technology. The Circle's constant search for total information awareness mirrors a totalitarian state. Through the use of aggressive monitoring technology such as SeeChange, the company gains influence over every element of people's lives. The company's rigid devotion to its own ideology, imposed through social pressure and algorithmic manipulation, matches the oppressive tactics typical to authoritarian governments, This shown in the movie through the company's slogan "Sharing is caring, and we care about everything" (The Circle 2017), This line symbolizes the dystopian reality of digital totalitarianism, in which individual freedom is sacrificed for corporate interests.

Additionally, we might characterize this film as a warning tale about the dangers of giving too much authority to a single institution, whether it is a government or a company. Through the character of the CEO and his unrestrained influence inside the Circle who subconsciously tricks employees into believing that he and the organization are ethically pure. By overusing the phrase "Knowing is good, but knowing everything is better" (The Circle 2017), the film investigates how such leadership may be used to justify and maintain unlawful regimes. By the use of social media to manipulate public perception is similar to the function of propaganda in authoritarian governments, where information is weaponized to dominate the narrative.

Similarly, tech corporations such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and YouTube have faced criticism for their data-collecting techniques. These platforms collect significant user data, including browsing history, and location. information, and personal preferences, to create detailed user profiles for targeted advertising and algorithmic abuse.

In 2018, Facebook got caught in a serious controversy that centered on its relationship with Cambridge Analytica, a now-infamous political consulting company. The news that Cambridge Analytica had deliberately gathered the personal information of millions of Facebook users sent shock waves through the internet world. This data, collected via a scam of a benign personality quiz app called "This Is Your Digital Life," revealed a serious breach of privacy and trust. Notably, the application not only collected information from its direct users, but it also accessed the personal data of their Facebook friends without their explicit authorization. This includes a lot of sensitive information about individuals' demographics, hobbies, and online actions, resulting in sophisticated digital profiles. Cambridge Analytica weaponized the data to create political ads, using psychological manipulation tactics to shape the voters ' opinions, most notably during Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election, aiming to influence voters and swing the election in Trump's favor. The crisis highlighted Facebook's gaping data weaknesses and insufficient management, reviving long-running conflicts over digital privacy and regulatory compliance. Following the incident, Facebook's founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, was asked to testify in Congress, where he faced scrutiny and calls for responsibility over his company's management of user data and its larger social implications.

Moreover, Google has also faced a similar scandal over the years, most notably the antitrust action initiated against the company by the US Department of Justice in October 2020. The lawsuit alleges that Google used unfair techniques to preserve its dominance in internet search and

advertising. It is reported that Google pays large sums to smartphone makers such as Apple and Samsung to make Google's search engine the primary search engine on their devices, thereby limiting competition and customer choice. The lawsuit argues that Google's control over online advertising, notably amplified by its purchase of the advertising technology firm DoubleClick in 2007, cements its influence over the digital advertising landscape. Through the utilization of extensive user data and advanced algorithms, Google has erected obstacles for rivals, effectively monopolizing the online advertising sector (*The New York Times*).

In July 2017, Twitter became the center of a landmark lawsuit filed by the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University and several Twitter users against then-President Donald Trump. The lawsuit targeted Trump's practice of blocking critics from his @realDonaldTrump Twitter account, alleging that it violated the First Amendment by impeding individuals' right to engage in public discourse on a platform that served as a digital town square. The plaintiffs argued that Trump's use of Twitter as a tool for official statements transformed his account into a public forum, thus rendering his actions of blocking users based on their viewpoints unconstitutional. The case raised complex legal questions about the intersection of social media, public officials, and constitutional rights, highlighting the need for clarity in the application of free speech principles to digital spaces. Ultimately, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, declaring Trump's practice of blocking critics from his Twitter account unconstitutional and reaffirming the importance of preserving open channels of communication in the digital age. (*The Washington Post*).

Another lawsuit against oppressing freedom of speech is when Dennis Prager sued YouTube and Google in 2018, arguing that they were unfairly restricting and demonetizing conservative content, violating the First Amendment rights. He said that YouTube, a significant online platform, should protect varied opinions, characterizing acts as censorship and prejudice against conservatives. The

case sparked debate about platform obligations for content moderation and protecting free speech values. Despite YouTube's claim to be a private company free from First Amendment requirements, Prager highlighted the platform's crucial role in shaping online conversation. The lawsuit was first rejected, but the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated it in 2020, underscoring ongoing legal fights over digital platform free speech restrictions and internet companies' impact.

As a whole, these platforms, as digital titans, reflect authoritarian tendencies through their control over digital platforms and data. Facebook's dominance in social media enables it to police material and shape public conversation, therefore regulating the flow of information to millions of people. Similarly, Google's power over search engines and online advertising allows it to have a substantial impact on what information consumers receive and how they perceive it. The level of control over online settings parallels authoritarian control over information distribution, emphasizing the importance of openness and responsibility in the technology industry.

5. Comparative Analysis: The Circle vs. Brave New World

"The Circle" and "Brave New World" are more than just stories about technological advancement; they are warning tales about a future in which authority combines control and individual liberties are lost. They warn against power held by tech companies or a tyrant state. Within these dystopian settings, every aspect of life is strictly controlled. Both storylines explore themes of surveillance, technological control, and societal manipulation.

First and foremost, both "The Circle" and "Brave New World" are dystopian narratives, with the dystopian communities presented sharing parallels in their totalitarian rule and exploitation of humans. In "Brave New World," Huxley depicts a highly organized society in which inhabitants are conditioned from birth to fit into precise social positions dictated by the system. This is

replicated in "The Circle," in which individuals are constantly monitored and manipulated by a big tech business rather than the government itself. For example, in "Brave New World," the character Lenina Crowne demonstrates this conditioning by saying, "Everyone belongs to everyone else," representing the loss of individual liberty in favor of group compliance. Similarly, in "The Circle," the heroine, Mae Holland, is drawn into the company's culture of openness and monitoring, representing the sacrifice of personal privacy for the appearance of connectedness and social approval. In "Brave New World," technology is used to control and manipulate individuals from birth through methods such as the drug soma. While, in "The Circle," technology is wielded as a tool of surveillance and social control, with the company's invasive monitoring systems infringing upon the privacy of its users.

In addition, they share thematic parallels, such as surveillance and manipulation in the narratives. In "Brave New World," the World State has total control over its population, using monitoring and conditioning to keep society stable. Characters such as Lenina Crowne and Bernard Marx are constantly monitored and manipulated, and the state regulates their actions and beliefs. In a comparable manner in "The Circle," a strong digital company governs a society in which openness and monitoring are marketed as means for social progress. Characters such as Mae Holland negotiate a world where personal privacy is undermined for connectedness and transparency. Another important theme study is the clash between conformity and uniqueness. These stories explore the complexity of navigating a society where the need to adhere to established conventions mixes with the longing for honest self-expression.

Moreover, in Aldous Huxley's novel and the film adaptation of "The Circle," capitalism and consumerism are addressed critically, shedding light on the dehumanizing effect of economic systems. Huxley's story depicts a society in which capitalism has achieved its highest point, leaving

individuals to prioritize material things and conform to the new world's norms. The desire for financial growth has resulted in the commercialization of human existence, turning people into simple customers in a system that prioritizes efficiency above originality. While in "The Circle," the representation of the technological business emphasizes the superiority of capitalism concepts, with profit frequently taking place above ethical concerns.

Furthermore, there is an exploration of the dangers of blindly accepting technological utopianism. "The Circle" first positions itself as an opponent of development, promising a future in which connectedness and openness can alleviate societal issues. "Privacy is theft" captures The Circle's radical perspective, which eventually leads to a reality of continual monitoring and loss of freedom. In Aldous's novel he paints a picture of a future where technology controls everything, but it's not as great as it seems. In this society, people are conditioned to only care about pleasure and fitting in, while things like real emotions and freedom are ignored. The promise of a stable society sounds nice, but it comes with a cost: people lose their individuality and real connections with each other. "Brave New World" warns us that putting too much faith in technology can lead to losing the things that make us human.

Also, both of them delve into the theme of rebellion, portraying individuals challenging oppressive societal structures. In "The Circle," characters like Mercer and Mae confront the dominance of the tech giant, representing the resistance against the loss of privacy and autonomy in a highly interconnected society. Mercer's defiance, seen in his rejection of The Circle's intrusive technologies, highlights the significance of preserving personal boundaries in a surveillance-driven world. Despite his efforts, The Circle's immense influence ultimately proves overwhelming, underscoring the difficulty of opposing a deeply ingrained system. In a similar way, characters like Bernard Marx and John the Savage from the novel confront the strict social hierarchy imposed by

the World State, questioning the dehumanizing effects of conditioning and conformity. Bernard's disenchantment with societal pleasures and John's refusal to conform highlight the inherent challenges of rebelling against a system that values stability over individuality. Despite their defiance, both face opposition and alienation, illustrating the repercussions of challenging established norms. Through their portrayal of rebellion, both stories comment on the hardships of resisting oppressive systems and the personal sacrifices required for freedom and authenticity.

Lastly, both narratives tell an inspiring story of hope amid oppressive societies. Both tales follow characters navigating dystopian worlds dominated by authoritarian regimes or powerful corporations. In "The Circle," Mae's journey showcases her awakening to the company's invasive practices, leading her to challenge the established order for a more ethical and transparent society. Similarly, in "Brave New World," figures like John the Savage represent a desire for authenticity and individuality in a tightly controlled environment. Despite facing different obstacles, the stories converge in illustrating the resilience of the human spirit against oppression. Whether through rebellion or personal enlightenment, the characters embody a collective aspiration for a brighter future, urging audiences to believe in the potential for positive change even in challenging circumstances. They're encouraged to foster awareness, embrace privacy-preserving technologies, advocate for legal protections, and cultivate critical thinking skills.

6. Living Under a Digital Dystopia: Fact or Fiction?

In the world of books and movies, famous stories like "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley, "1984" by George Orwell, and movies like "The Circle" show us societies where everyone is watched all the time and controlled by a powerful system. But as we think about these made-up worlds, we must ask: is our world really like that, or is it just something people imagine? This question is about how much our real lives are like the scary stories we see in books and movies. It

makes us think about how technology and governments mix, and whether our lives today are as scary as the ones we read about or watch.

Living in a digital dystopia is an important subject in today's society when worries about control, surveillance, and privacy dominate talks about technology and government. While dystopian tales in literature and cinema paint vivid pictures of such realities, it is questionable whether our actual conditions genuinely reflect these fictitious descriptions. On the one hand, advances in technology have enabled a new type of monitoring and data collecting, prompting concerns about overreach by governments and companies' exploitation. On the other side advancements in technology have provided individuals with increased connectivity, access to information, and platforms for self-expression.

According to Shoshana Zuboff's seminal work, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," we are indeed living in a digital dystopia marked by observation and misuse of human behavior for profit and control. Zuboff argues that the growth of surveillance capitalism, driven by internet companies' constant striving for data collection and analysis, has indicated a new era of power imbalance between businesses and individuals. In this dystopian world, our personal information has become a valuable commodity, exchanged and sold in opaque markets where profit-driven companies' interests frequently override freedom of speech. Zuboff's study illustrates how surveillance capitalism works, from tracking online activity to controlling user behavior via targeted advertising and tailored content. She uses examples from businesses such as Google and Facebook to demonstrate how these corporate behemoths collect massive amounts of data about our tastes, habits, and social connections, which are then monetized through targeted advertising and other types of behavioral manipulation. They not only violate individual privacy, but they also threaten the integrity of democratic processes by affecting public debate and influencing election results.

In addition, surveillance capitalism has far-reaching societal results, including aggravating social inequalities, cultivating a culture of monitoring and self-surveillance, and maintaining oppressive and controlling regimes. The unregulated rise of surveillance capitalism compromises the foundations of democratic society, concentrating power in the hands of a few digital elites while excluding citizens and communities. As a reaction to these serious concerns, there is an increasing demand for a paradigm shift in our approach to technology and data governance. This transition requires putting human rights, ethical ideals, and democratic values over the never-ending chase of wealth and control. Advocates emphasize the need for more transparency, accountability, and governmental monitoring of technology businesses, as well as the investigation of alternative digital economy models that allow consumers to recover ownership and control over their personal data. This imperative emphasizes the importance of taking collaborative action to ensure a democratic future in the digital age.

On the other hand, the depiction of a digital dystopia in literature and movies frequently heightens anxieties and worries about the influence of technology on our lives. However, it is critical to remember that these images are molded by the creative imaginations of authors and filmmakers, not empirical observations of society. While monitoring, control, and manipulation are all valid worries in the digital age, they do not always constitute an actual dystopia. In reality, our digital world is complicated and multidimensional. While there are instances of evidence of monitoring, particularly by powerful organizations such as governments and corporations, they are rarely oppressive as depicted in fiction. Society functions under legal structures, ethical standards, and cultural norms that act as checks and balances against the most depressing possibilities. Plus, technology creates countless advantages and chances for individuals and society as a whole. The digital era has many advantages, including increased connectedness, access to information, and

inventive solutions to social concerns. It is critical to recognize and appreciate these beneficial improvements.

Based on Evgeny Morozov's paper, "The Myth of the Digital Dystopia," the notion that we are destined for a dark digital future is refuted. Morozov challenges common concerns about how technology influences society. He believes that these worries may stem from misconceptions and oversimplifications of how technology actually works. Morozov recognizes that worries about surveillance and control are genuine, but he believes they are often exaggerated. He argues that technology is more nuanced than just being good or harmful and that we must carefully consider how we utilize it. Instead of focusing just on the negative parts, Morozov encourages us to analyze both the dangers and advantages of technology. He believes that in order to manage the digital world properly, we need to engage in intelligent conversations and make informed judgments. Overall, Morozov's viewpoint urges us to think critically and take part in open debates concerning technology's role in society.

The prevalence of surveillance and the destruction of privacy are obvious. Huge tech companies continually gather and use our personal information, creating legitimate fears about the loss of human liberty and the development of digital monitoring. While these patterns conjure gloomy images symbolic of literary works, it may be premature to categorize our contemporary era as a digital totalitarian dystopia. However, the current path has enormous threats and, if uncontrolled, might lead to a future in which individuals are subjected to unprecedented levels of control and manipulation by powerful forces.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal moment we find ourselves in, where decisive action can influence the course of our digital trajectory. By advocating for greater transparency, accountability, and ethical standards within the tech industry, we can mitigate the

risks of sliding into a dystopian reality. Upholding fundamental privacy rights and ensuring robust data protection mechanisms are essential steps in safeguarding individual autonomy and dignity. It is only through collective action and commitment to these principles that we can shape a digital landscape where equitable access, personal freedoms, and democratic values prevail over surveillance and authoritarian control.

The debate of whether we are living in a digital dystopia is multidimensional and difficult to answer. It involves a complicated interaction of technical developments, cultural standards, and personal experiences. While some see dystopia in our loss of privacy, others see empowerment in unity and access to knowledge. We will not know for certain whether a digital dystopia exists until we watch how events unfold over time. So, it is critical to think carefully and have open debates about it, bearing in mind that there is no short answer.

Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, acknowledging the significance of the final chapter. It serves as a critical connection, linking the narratives of our case study "The Circle" and the timeless ideas of social control portrayed in "Brave New World," with real-world analogies. Our investigation has revealed the downsides of huge organizations seeking openness, demonstrating how it may compromise privacy and drive uniformity, as illustrated in "The Circle." We emphasized the importance of openness and accountability in our digital environment by comparing these findings to real-world instances from major corporations such as Facebook and Google.

The essence of our study focuses on the basic question: are we genuinely living in a digital dystopia, or is it a fictitious creation limited to literature and movies? While cautionary stories like "The Circle" and "Brave New World" provide glimpses into possible dystopian futures, the truth is more

complex. It needs sophisticated thought and an awareness of the intricacies inherent in our computerized culture. Through our thesis, an attempt has been made to contribute to this continuing conversation, stimulating debate and meaningful conversation about the difficulties faced by technological development.

General Conclusion

The main focus of this research was to introduce the concept of digital totalitarianism, shedding light on the ways in which tech businesses had participated in interpersonal propaganda for years by "brainwashing" the public for profits. The research problem was centered on understanding how social media platforms, much like the fictional "soma" in Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," used pleasure and consumption to control people's behaviors, employing mechanisms of surveillance, manipulation, and control. These mechanisms were transformed into tools that influenced individual autonomy and reshaped societal structures. By examining the historical evolution of pleasure and its digitalized expressions, the study explored the behaviorist principles underlying these manipulative strategies.

The study's initial key findings included an in-depth analysis of digital platforms, which exposed their role in exploiting human emotions and preferences for profit while building capitalist power dynamics through surveillance capitalism. Through a case study of the movie "The Circle" and real-world examples like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google, it showed that personal experiences and data were commodified, encouraging a one-sided interaction in which users unintentionally contributed to their exploitation. The research revealed how these platforms affected user behavior and personal beliefs while gaining revenue from continual surveillance and data collection. Additionally, the study revealed that constant surveillance had significant psychological impacts on individuals, including anxiety, paranoia, loss of privacy, and a feeling of helplessness.

Furthermore, it analyzed the commercialization of pleasure on digital platforms and how this commodification aligned with Marxist theories of exploitation and capital accumulation. Through a case study of "The Circle," the research aimed to draw parallels between fictional and real-world digital totalitarian practices, providing a critical lens to understand the implications of living under

such a society. Despite the illusion of openness and transparency, it also critiqued capitalism and its promotion of consumerism, highlighting the exploitative nature of greedy tech companies. These companies commodified the pleasures and desires of social media users, prioritizing profit over people's well-being. The findings underscored the paradox of digital transparency, illustrating how the promise of openness and connectivity often served as a cover for deeper manipulation and control.

The study contributed to the academic field by offering a critical lens through which digital totalitarianism could be understood as a modern extension of classical totalitarian regimes. The use of surveillance and data exploitation in digital regimes mirrored the control tactics historically employed by authoritarian governments, thereby bridging historical totalitarianism with today's world. This research also enriched the discourse on behaviorist interpretation of pleasure and Marxist theory by contextualizing digital commodification within capitalist frameworks. The alignment of pleasure commercialization with Marxist notions of exploitation emphasized the profound base of capitalist ideology in digital economies.

One significant limitation encountered throughout this investigation was the novelty and shortage of information on the topic of digital totalitarianism. As a relatively new topic in academic discourse, there was a lack of research on digital totalitarianism. The lack of current research material made it difficult to find reliable and varied scholarly publications to appropriately inform the investigation. Another obstacle was the constantly shifting nature of digital technology and social media platforms. Given the high rate of technological creativity, digital totalitarian practices might expand on an ongoing basis, bringing new means of monitoring, manipulation, and control. Consequently, the study's findings might have been constrained by the temporal limitations of the research, as they might not fully capture the trends or developments in the field.

The thesis significantly contributed to our understanding of digital totalitarianism by incorporating behaviorist theories, particularly focusing on pleasure reinforcement, conditioning, and stimulus-response mechanisms. Through an analogy with soma in "Brave New World," the thesis illuminated how tech companies maintained control by commodifying pleasure. Additionally, this dissertation made a significant contribution to the academic discourse on digital totalitarianism by integrating Marxist philosophy with contemporary digital issues. It highlighted the critical need for ethical engagement and awareness in navigating the complex interplay of technology, power, and societal dynamics. The originality of this work lies in its comprehensive approach, combining theoretical critique with real-world case studies to offer valuable insights.

The research enhanced the understanding of how digital platforms perpetuated capitalist power structures through surveillance and data exploitation. By contextualizing these practices within Marxist theory and analyzing the movie "The Circle," the dissertation provided a novel perspective on the commodification of pleasure and its implications for individual autonomy and societal structures.

In conclusion, we are on the edge of living in a world straight out of "Brave New World" or "The Circle." The growing power of social media and big tech companies given by the greedy capitalist system threatens to lead us into an era of unprecedented control, where our freedoms are sacrificed for profit. This study is a wake-up call, a warning from a world controlled by authoritarian and elitist people.

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الملخص

يتناول البحث ظاهرة الشمولية الرقمية والنزعة الاستهلاكية في السياق الحالي لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي الرقمية من خلال وجهات نظر سلوكية والنظرية الماركسية ومفهوم تسليع المتعة للتجارب الإنسانية. يعتمد الإطار النظري على أفكار السلوكية التي صاغها جون بي واتسون وبي إف سكينر، بالإضافة إلى النقد الماركسي للمجتمع الاستهلاكي. علاوة على ذلك، يشتمل البحث على رواية "عالم جديد شجاع" لألدوس هكسلي واستخدام المخدر الخيالي "سوما" كاستعارة، إلى جانب دراسة تحليلية لفيلم "الدائرة" لكشف حقيقة المنصات الرقمية التي تقوم بالتحكم والتلاعب بالأفراد. يسعى هذا الفحص التحليلي والوصفي إلى فهم كيفية استخدام منصات التواصل الاجتماعي للربح الإنسانية والمراقبة المستمرة لتعزيز السيطرة الاجتماعية من خلال الاستهلاك. يركز البحث بشكل أساسي على: الآثار الأوسع للشمولية الرقمية على المجتمع والحكم الذاتي الفردي، وكيف تستفيد هذه المنصات من بيانات المستخدمين والتحكم في السلوك من خلال آليات محددة، كتأثيرات عقار "سوما" في رواية "عالم جديد شجاع". تشير الدراسة مخاوف جدية بشأن الآثار الأخلاقية للمراقبة الرقمية، وتآكل الخصوصية، وتسليع التجارب الإنسانية. تشير نتائجنا إلى أن كل من "عالم جديد شجاع" و"الدائرة" يعتبران استعارتين للديستوبيا الرقمية الحديثة، اللتان تؤكدان على مخاطر المساومة بالحريات الفردية مقابل المتع التجارية. تسلط هذه الأعمال الضوء على الآثار النفسية والاجتماعية لرأسمالية المراقبة، وتؤكد على أهمية الاعتبارات الأخلاقية والمشاركة النقدية في عصرنا الحالي

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشمولية الرقمية، رأسمالية المراقبة، تسليع المتعة، النزعة الاستهلاكية، آليات منصات التواصل الاجتماعي.

النقد الماركسي