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Psihologija kapitalizma u djelu Mark Fishera te književnim distopijama

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The Psychology of Capitalism in Mark Fisher and Literary Dystopias

MA Thesis

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1. Introduction

The world functions today through the language of capitalism. It is a type of ideology that prioritizes the least meaningful aspect of people's lives. The neglect of the individuals and the focus on the capital (money) is what is gradually contributing to the distortion of the humanity itself. The effects of such a system remain hidden to those who are only participating in it without realizing its negative impacts. However, shifting one's perspective can help in revealing the invisible mechanisms of capitalism that make people act according to its negative side which in turn impedes personal fulfilment and environmental sustainability. By addressing the anomalies of the system, people can initiate changes for a better and more positive future. That humans are the creators of their reality and can aid in the transformation of the system is a liberating, although daunting cognition. Whether the creation will be something positive or negative solely depends on personal and collective choices. Through the lens of one of the most prominent dystopian novels, the contemporary society is seen as its reflection. By presenting the negativities, the novel predicts what the future may hold if people continue to conform and succumb to systemic manipulation. Understanding the dynamics of the 'Brave New World' is what can motivate people to redirect their attention to what is truly beneficial on the path towards wholeness and a more harmonious and meaningful existence.

This thesis aims to explore the psychology of capitalism through the prism of the contemporary world presented by Mark Fisher in his book *Capitalist Realism*. This is juxtaposed with the cognitions from the dystopian novel *Brave New World*, written by Aldous Huxley, in order to highlight the parallels in how capitalism affects individuals. This thesis will be supported by the theoretical approaches of Mark Fisher and other theorists and their ideas on the capitalistic society. This will then be regarded from another point of view by the approach of Aldous Huxley in his novel *Brave New World*. Lastly, the theoretical approach of Gabor Maté will serve as an endorsement for all the previous premises that will encapsulate the essential positive and negative features of the present society.

The main methodological approaches used in this thesis will be comparison and contrastive analysis. Comparison of the contemporary world with the psychology behind the main system, capitalism, following the approaches and ideas of various theorists, will be corroborated by a contrastive analysis of the dystopian novel with the psychological approach of a distorted

reality presented in the book *The Myth of Normal* by Gabor Maté. Additionally, the fictive reality of the novel is compared with the actual state of the world, explored through Maté's book, in order to associate the similarities and the differences between the two realms. All of this serves as an insight into the ways certain situations damaging to the people could be evicted in the future if the right action towards improvement is taken in the present. The right action implies healing of the individuals themselves as well as of the entire system. The significance of the main terms mentioned in the title will be the first concern this thesis will delve into. Understanding the terms will serve as the basis that reveals their hidden interconnectedness. The second part touches on the reality of today's capitalism and the ways it influences the individual behavior and their quality of life. The third part dives into *Brave New World* and *The Myth of Normal*, both of which aim to obtain the same effect - awaken individuals and raise awareness. While Huxley achieves this through a story about a dystopian future acting as a warning about the reality that could manifest itself if people fail to react, Maté uses examples from everyday life about the dysfunctional system in order to enlighten the public. These works share the same goal, which is to encourage people to cultivate their own reasoning without blindly conforming to the system and to inspire personal healing. Ultimately, this thesis advocates that reclaiming a sense of human nature and alignment with the fundamental needs of individuals can lead to personal and collective harmony.

2. BASIC PREMISES

2.1. Human psychology

To understand the world, one must first understand the people that inhabit it. Being human and understanding the processes it takes to be one is one of the most complex things in the world. Every day is a clean slate allowing different outputs as well as different inputs people choose. Their decisions and deeds strongly influence the surroundings, meaning other people, community, environment and ultimately themselves. All these effects create a need for understanding humans, their behaviours and patterns, psyche, mental processes, thoughts, their past, society and environment they live in. A thorough research of all these fundamentals that create a person allow insight into their present reality and its influences on the outcomes in the future. The present depends on the things done in the past whereas the actions taken in the in the now shape the future. This all depends on humans, who are forces, capable of transforming their lives as well as the world itself. Those unaware of their strength will never grasp the full meaning of life and will give space to those who are capable of abusing the power that they carry within.

All these phenomena are interconnected under the field of psychology. It is the field that deals with everything considering one's psyche, mind and its effects on the body and the behaviour. The scientific study of the human psyche and the inner world of humans can help with seeing what is behind all the happenings in the world. This study underlines how the external world reflects the inner reality of people, emphasizing the connection between microcosm and the macrocosm. The lack of awareness of the power people carry within does not permeate them to be conscious about how their actions contribute to the world they live in and how they can generate both positive changes and improvements, as well as problems and hardships. Being unconscious of how people as individuals impact the world, meaning other people and in the same way the environment, they give these actions immense power.

The significance of the main terms mentioned in the title of this thesis will be the first concern it will delve deep into. Understanding these terms will serve as the basis for understanding the invisible connection between them.

Psychology is the first term that will be examined. According to the Oxford dictionary, it has three closely related meanings and those are:

1. *“The scientific study of the mind and how it influences behaviour”*
2. *“The kind of mind that somebody has that makes them think or behave in a particular way”*
3. *“How the mind influences behaviour in a particular area of life”*.¹

What cannot go unnoticed is that the words *mind* and *behaviour* occur throughout all three definitions. Biologically, the brain is the master that commands and dictates all other actions. *“Freud believed that much of our behaviour is the result of unconscious, biological urges that are mediated by our conscious mind. This is the basis for what is known as a tripartite personality, which consists of the Id, the Superego, and the Ego”* (Ralls, Riggs 2021; 28).

The research of the brain’s biology helped to map out the centres in the brain responsible for different behaviours that humans execute. The brain can undergo certain physical injuries that can impede its functions. In today’s world there are much more brain damages caused not by a physical injury but by having traumatic experiences that can seriously affect one’s emotional and physical wellbeing. All of the unconscious stored data manifests in the conscious mind. It is not something that is ‘within the arm’s reach’ and the root and the cause of the conscious actions needs to be searched for in the hidden parts of human psyche (Ralls, Riggs 2021: 28).

All people have a memory that consists of their personal data. The data that people collect throughout their lives may not be accessible all the time because the memory is not unlimited. Some data is easily reachable while other demands a lot more effort and energy to be brought to the surface. Certain data gets stored in the unconscious and might appear insignificant to some or even forgotten but exactly that is the missing piece to the puzzle, hard to find but indispensable to create a complete picture.

“Freud was one of the first to highlight the relationship between childhood experiences and adult behaviour, and one of the first to connect our behaviour with innate, biological drives” (Ralls, Riggs 2021; 37). Childhood is the crucial period for the development of an individual. It has valuable data that can help understand behaviours and patterns in an adult’s life. Many people remember only a fraction of their childhood experiences which makes it harder for them to reach the forgotten parts of their psyche. Many never even get themselves to connect to all the parts that make them who they are. Stored data of all humans represents their unconscious

¹ (Psychology Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com)

side including all of their bygone information and suppressed memories (Ralls, Riggs 2021: 36).

Alongside, Jung sensed that there was even more to humans than their personal unconscious which he explained by presenting archetypes i.e., the collective unconscious between humans that is comprised of data that carries all ancestral thoughts and memories innately influencing the psyche of humans. Human biology, previous experiences as well as the suppressed ones that rest in the subconscious, determine the way people are (Ralls, Riggs 2021: 34).

The way humans behave is not only a result of their biology, but an outcome of their experiences as well. The surroundings, the circle of people, the content that is consumed, the happenings and experiences that the individuals go through shape their behaviour. All of these factors are apparent but need a thorough research and deep reconsideration for their impact to be understood. What rests as not so apparent is the subconscious level of the human psyche that is highly influenced by the factors humans are not aware of. Unwillingness and having a surface-level capacity for turning inwards and discovering the afflictions of the subconsciousness results in the complete self-unconsciousness of both the individual and the collective. Not knowing oneself or how the system functions leave the individual susceptible to manipulation (Ralls, Riggs 2021: 21).

The knowledge that humans possess has been conditioned before. Associating things and their meanings depended on the teachers. Teachers are people, experiences that humans go through, the bright days and the dark ones, the society, the content that is consumed, etc. People look at the same things but see them differently based on their personality and the teachers they were surrounded by. Their vision is deeply affected by the surroundings they grew up in. That is why there are no universally right or wrong ways since what people see depends on their reality, influenced by a lot of things that go by unnoticed if there is a lack of awareness. Everybody's vision of the world is valid and to be accepted but that does not mean other people will resonate with it. If one thing is wrong to someone, it might be right to somebody else.

Is the human nature determined by the environment that humans are surrounded by, is it influenced by genetics, or is it the combination of the two rests an omnipresent and ongoing debate. The topic of nature versus nurture belongs to the field of epigenetics and is perhaps one of the most important matters that deals with explaining what actually makes people the way

they are and why. Many experiments dealt with such a concern but there was still no exact answer to what the reason behind certain behaviours and personality traits was. The complexity of the human psyche creates this dissonance amongst nature and nurture. Both concepts coexist in an individual and the results of that collaboration could manifest in two ways – an individual whose psychological and behavioural development is normal or abnormal. Each individual has a genetic code that acts differently depending on the context that influences its execution (Gottlieb 1997: 8). *“In other words, genes do not make behavior happen, even though behavior won't happen without them”* (Gottlieb 1997: 8).

By realising the power that people carry within themselves, the change they are capable of doing, they could provide significant impact on improvement of both self and others. The famous quote *“the change starts with and within you”* starts to take on more importance than ever and ceases to be considered a cliché. A deeper understanding of that simple but misunderstood yet powerful and truly transformational game of words is what might be needed to jumpstart change. The change is to be witnessed only by acting according to the force within.

It is said that the relationship that people have with themselves is the factor that will determine all other relationships in their life and everything that happens around them. By becoming masters of oneself, people will be able to deal with any situation that stands on the way called life since the hardest task in life is not to defeat others but to defeat oneself. By choosing how to act internally, people choose the outcome in reality. Seemingly simple but extremely complex since it involves getting rid of limiting beliefs and traumas which is a demanding task necessary to achieve mastery.

When things accumulate for a long period of time, it starts to boil and reveals itself in the most unpredictable places. Today's society is the primal ground for that. The human population has access to more information than ever, things happen instantly and most of the things that people wish for can be manifested in a matter of seconds. This can be the explanation behind the reason why so many people lead unhappy lives, not knowing how to find a way out of their situation, feeling stuck with the thought of not knowing better and feeling incapable. Perhaps all of this instance is the cause of the distance – the distance from oneself. There have never been more self-help books that focus on the connection between the mind, body and spirit and overall wellbeing yet so many people are still not able to act upon their situation. People do not see a way out, everything around them feels unnatural. In appearance, everything seems to be

holding together really well but inside, people are falling apart. The inside shows that the hope in the system, society and others has been lost. From the other point of view, these low points are not as bad as they might seem. The human population might have needed this in order to find hope within themselves. Mistakes and hardships are just a redirection and a great teacher. The only way up is if the start begins at the bottom and there is no other way. The bottom has been reached already and is perhaps something that needed to happen in order to return back to the real human nature – a body connected to nature, developed spiritually, mentally and physically.

2.2. Capitalism

Capitalism is the main social order of today's world. It rules the world as though it is some utopic way of making every country better for its citizens. Opposed to that perfection, there have never been as many dissatisfied people with their lives and the system as now. Capitalism is just a means to reach a certain end, it is here to enchant people and lead them astray in order to be able to present its real story to the humanity. Everybody has a weak spot and capitalism seems like a master at hitting all the 'right' spots to catch people in its net and leave them trapped. It is by no means entirely negative, it also has positive sides but its leaders have obviously decided to take advantage of the capitalistic system so they could benefit from the power it will bring them. There is always the good and the bad in everything but the key that will make anything work is balance.

In theory, capitalism does not appear that bad, in fact, it seems as a very beneficial system. Overuse of everything, be it good or bad causes imbalance that creates unwanted outcomes. There are ways of improving the capitalistic system but seeing the power it can bring to individuals willing to take advantage of its dark side is much more present and harder to evict. The evidence of trying to create a utopian place for living reflects in the various social and economic systems and organizations created for a better life in the future. Socialism, communism, capitalism, democracy, totalitarianism and many others are the evidences that people fought for something, not necessarily better. All of these systems are very different one from another in the sense for whom the 'utopia' is being built – for the people or for its authorities.

By definition, capitalism is “*an economic system in which a country’s businesses and industry are controlled and run for profit by private owners rather than by the government*”.² Essentially, capitalism seems like a complete freedom from the government and its rules. People are allowed to either own and lead big companies and country’s industries or own their own business or company while taking the reward deserved for the work they put in (capital), with risk as its indispensable characteristic. But the reality of that ‘freedom’ is completely opposite.

In reality, capitalism is the act of making money investments and expecting a profit in return. It offers a great possibility of making imposing profits by continuous application over a longer period of time. Oversaturation of the market either creates more and more needs or reaches a point of stagnation with only certain ones that stay ‘in the game’. Capitalism can be defined as a strict but just teacher that demands for its rules to be obeyed. In effect, it seems as a very straightforward way of making money and depending on oneself. Seeing the examples, people are susceptible to believe that the system works like a form of instant gratification for what has been put out which is not always the case. The acceleration of time, although biologically not possible, only made this more prominent. Instant offers and solutions create instant needs which creates the air of not having enough time to manoeuvre everything. Everything in life has a good and a bad side yet the one that gets nurtured the most, grows the most (Fulcher 1997: 2).

“Capitalism is essentially the investment of money in the expectation of making a profit, and huge profits could be made at some considerable risk by long-distance trading ventures of this kind. Profit was quite simply the result of scarcity and distance. It was made from the huge difference between the price paid for, say, pepper in the spice islands and the price it fetched in Europe, a difference that dwarfed the costs of the venture. What mattered was whether the cargo made it back to Europe, though market conditions were also very important, for the sudden return of a large fleet could depress prices. Markets could also become saturated if the high profitability of the trade led too many to enter it. A glut of pepper eventually forced the East India Company to diversify into other spices and other products, such as indigo” (Fulcher 1997: 2).

This definition is capitalism in its core, including the risks that could damage the work that has been done and the investments. In order to make this system work, people have to put in a certain capital, including risks, to get the capital back. This ‘formula’ is the basis that needs to

² (Capitalism Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

be obeyed to participate in the capitalist system, but there is more to this formula that determines its outcome. Competition, the amount of time to get from the starting point (investing) to point b (earning), popularity or recognition, audience, consistency, relevancy and engagement with customers are secondary to this capitalist formula but just as indispensable in starting a successful business. Customers are the ones keeping the business functioning so their needs are what the business should cater to. The only capitalist matter is earning money no matter the kind of activity involved. Fundamentally, a capitalist society is a system in which the economy is based on the activities that offer the possibility of gaining money from the amount invested initially. It can either be a sum of money ready for making an investment or whichever possessed asset whose value can be converted into money, i.e. house, car, land etc. This system is not something new, as it was put to use throughout the history, especially its beginnings when merchants would invest money into goods and would then sell them to gain profit. Both production and trade are financed by investing capital which is what the economy in capitalism proper depends on (Fulcher 1997: 13-14).

The issue of capitalism is when people start to earn more. Money gets in the way of everything and the owners want to keep it to themselves while investing as little capital as they can to earn as much as they can. This causes various problems because investing includes putting money into quality, into workers, their education and wages, into different machines to help with the work, into promoting the company, into systems that do not harm their surroundings nor their workers. Today's society is very consumerist-oriented. The system is focused on making people spend their money so that it profits from it. Some reasons are justified, but the majority of them are tricking people into thinking they will be happy when they consume the solution that was offered to them. The capital gained is seen as a passage to happiness that acts as an instant mask which will keep people away from any hardships.

Wage labour is the basis of capitalist production which is divided between those who own the capital, i.e. means of production (the machinery, the workplace, the raw materials), and those who work for a wage. *“Just as a capitalist will invest money in any activity that brings a profit, a worker can find employment in any activity that pays a wage”* (Fulcher 1997: 15). This quote seems like a vicious cycle that is hard to get out from. A capitalist sees the opportunity to make money out of other people's weak spots by offering a very tempting, hard to resist solution since that is the only pleasure in their free-time which will make them happier, considering the strenuous and unfulfilling lives they lead and jobs they do (Fulcher 1997: 15).

The time when laborers are not working is used for leisure, which is the product of capitalism. Leisure time was the period when workers could spend their salaries and that is when the capitalist system had the freedom to cater to the needs of people and offer them something that they would spend money on in order to gain profit from their free time. The need for food, clothes and activities during leisure time demanded new industries to be created. Commercialization of almost every aspect of human needs is just the fertile soil that capitalism needs to bloom. A vicious capitalistic cycle manifests in the fact that investments in production, i.e. giving out wage to its laborers means that they will put out that same wage back into the system since their need for consumption, meaning providing themselves with needs for living and surviving in such a society, is necessary. The wage put back into the system is equivalent to profit for production owners and demand for new enterprises (Fulcher 1997: 16).

Dynamism is also one of the most important characteristics of capitalism since both the workers and capital owners can decide on the activity that brings them the most value. This seems like a very optimistic and positive outlook on capitalism since workers can choose whether they want to work or not and whom they want to work for. Freedom is what capitalism offers, but it is only an illusion. Survival in a capitalist society is not possible without getting paid for the work done. Another downside is that capitalism demands discipline and continuity from its workers which is the reason behind a more rigid control from the employers. To stay afloat in such a society means staying up to date with all the novelties which is not an easy job if there is a lack of discipline in the society of instant fulfilment of needs (Fulcher 1997: 15).

Many new enterprises saturate the market which then creates competition. This is a threat to all the companies since it contributes to changes in their economy and the profit may not have consecutive rises. The necessity is to make changes which will motivate the associations to merge together and agree on prices, same salary rates and concentrating the production. Speculation is another by-product of price mutation that keeps the capitalist system revving. It is nothing more than reselling what has been bought for a higher price and evicting adding value to it by making changes to the product (that could change its worth). Looking like 'easy-money' in its essence, since it avoids risk and makes profit, it may do more harm than good to the production systems since it does not give anything out but only takes in the profit (Fulcher 1997: 17).

The instability of the markets carved out a path for the creation of stocks and trading. They help to ensure protection to traders and producers and stability to the ever-changing prices that are a threat to profit and the disappearance of enterprises. Trading currency contributed exchange rates to not remain fixed anymore. Not having fixed exchange rates meant uncertainty about the value of currencies. Ensuring more certainty was possible by buying currency futures. This type of trade assimilates to speculation but it was the reality of what the economy demands. Buying and selling company shares also belongs to the speculative part of economy yet it is a core value of capitalism since the need for connecting people with ideas and those willing to invest in such activities is highly necessary. The stock market holds place for speculating the possibly attainable profit out of the companies' price mutation that the future holds. Being the byproduct of a capitalistic society, speculation is the imminent part of its essence (Fulcher 1997: 17-18).

Overall, capitalism means putting in money to gain more of it. This way or the other, it has been a practice dating way back. The enterprises produce and simultaneously use wage labour to supply the consumption of its products and services. The mediators of the entire capitalist economy are production and consumption. The word capitalism contains its main focus in its name. Capital is the core of the word and therefore the focal point of this societal arrangement. Since something so artificial like money is the focus, it is not surprising that everything else seems to be out of order. Neglecting every other aspect of life while focusing solely on money and the 'false' abilities it provides may be the reason why the situation in the world seems worse than ever. What needs to be done to save the world is in process and yet to be uncovered (Fulcher 1997: 18).

2.3. Utopia and dystopia

Literary dystopias and utopias belong to the subgenre of science fiction. The main thing they are exploring is the functioning of the entire system which acts as a mirror of the humankind. The inclination towards these literary devices may give an insight to both the author's and the reader's ethos. These types of fiction can give its readers and insight into where certain choices may lead the humanity to. They address the modern issues that can impede the human life experience and can help to raise awareness on what is happening. It serves to motivate people to act upon their lives if they want to evict the outcomes that neglecting the

issues may bring forward. Depending on the period they were written in, they can reflect the problems of the society of that time.

There are as many utopias as there are people living on this planet and simultaneously just as many dystopias. Every single human being has an approximate vision on how the most perfect version of their life should look like. On the contrary, the dystopian lenses that each human possesses portray the imperfect, negative form that their life can take on. Both of these terms manifest themselves by coexisting in people's minds.

Thomas More was the first person to think of a name for an imaginary country that he presented in his book entitled *Utopia* in 1516. The new word 'utopia' was used as the name of the book, as well as the name coined by the author to describe the ideal country. The word 'outopia' derives from Greek and consists of two parts, the prefix 'ou' that stands for no and *topos* that means a place. Its literal meaning states there is no such place. Later with the author's addition of a poem entitled 'Eutopia', the word started to take on the meaning of a good place but non-existent. Utopia carries the connotation of being too good to be true, almost unrealistic (Tower Sargent 2010: 31).

Thomas More, although being the first person to give a name to the concept of a perfect place, is not the starting point of the history of utopia. The history of this concept dates a long time before the coinage of the word. The reason for this rests in the fact that envisioning a better life and future has and will always be a part of people's lives. Harmony that people long for is usually comprised of idealist premises for a better world. The various attempts throughout history are the evidence that ideas were researched so they could contribute to a better world (Tower Sargent 2010: 36-37).

Utopia may seem as a place where there are no rules and everybody is living according to their own beliefs and wishes but actually it is much more structured and planned. Regardless of the how structured it is, it is not rigid since the plans are working in favour of the citizens living in such a society. All of that is needed to provide a possibility of living a great life. The world always gravitates towards progress, which shows that a certain type of utopia is always strived for. Real utopias are not entirely fictive but rather a transformation of the daily life and the place people live at. Improvement of the everyday life will contribute to the satisfaction of the residents in such a place (Rothstein, Muschamp, Marty 2003: 3-5).

Utopia's connotation is perfection of life, the ultimate sublime but maybe humans distorted the real image of how a utopian place should look like. Utopias are maybe places where everybody lives their truth but where there are some rules that have to be respected. Wanting a utopian life would mean having all the rights to do that as long as it does not harm others and as long as it follows the moral principles of living. Coming up with solutions on how to reach such a utopian way of living is just as demanding as carrying all that out and continuously repeating the actions that could contribute to its longevity. Meticulously planning a perfect place that can satisfy the needs of everyone holds just as much importance as thinking of how to keep it functioning for a longer period of time regardless of the hardships that may arise. Utopias contain the ideas for the best possible outcomes but they also have to take into consideration the worst scenario that might happen and prepare the solutions that could possibly make future happenings more susceptible to resolution.

All social constructs and systems are someone's vision of a utopia. Whenever picturing a utopia, it involves the society and changes that need to be made in order to embody that ideal. Utopian envisions of a better world include reforms in terms of the social and political order. The decisions of the authorities of the system directly impact the lives of the people living under their governance. Where the problem occurs is when one or a couple of individuals on top of the hierarchical order set rules that others should abide by. Their utopic vision of life counteracts with everybody else's vision, causing dissatisfaction. Leadership positions arouse the feeling of power, intoxicating the individual upon seeing the possibilities it offers. That power stems from the ability to manipulate the situations and take them to one's personal advantage. These states cannot last forever and there will always be individuals fighting against this in order to arrive to a state beneficial to the masses rather than only to the leaders misusing their own power.

People are the bearers of utopias' inception. The seed they decide to grow depends on the environment it flourishes in and the nurture it receives. The idea and thought they choose will be the one that will bloom. People have the ability to choose their output which directly affects others. The output manifests itself as a form of energy which people receive and give out. Energy is not visible but it is omnipresent and powerful. It flows where it is directed to. Each individuals' energy can be described as a pebble thrown into a body of water creating a ripple effect that profoundly impacts the surrounding reality. When envisioning a utopia, maybe

people should not be focusing solely on how everything around them looks and feels like but on who they are and what kind of behaviour they would want to exude to contribute to a utopian-like society.

The two main characteristics that have been used when trying to define and analyse dystopia or utopia are time and space. Upon thinking about what the word 'utopia' represents, many refer the meaning firstly to some kind of an imaginary place organized just like a town (space). Secondly, it also connotes either a place of the past or future (time). The same connotations are also applicable when thinking about the term 'dystopia'. Defining these terms acts as a constraint by not giving their significance the ability to be explored beyond space and time (Gordin, Tilley, Prakash et al. 2010: 10).

Understanding the true meaning of both utopia and dystopia demands the answer to be searched for beyond space and time. They need not be regarded surface level but more in depth so to understand why there was the need to come up with the concepts of utopia and dystopia as well as what message they are trying to convey. Space and time are regarded not just as a single explanation and significance of both utopia and dystopia but mainly as the means through which they can be reached. The existence of these markers makes utopias and dystopias possible. Both terms should be examined by researching the concerns that led people to even come up with a concept that could transcend the problems they are facing. Their way out was creating utopias and finding the best solutions to make the world a better place for living and to fulfil the purpose that each individual has been given. Time and place are also specific characteristics that the utopian thinking depends on and transforms accordingly. Imagining a utopia is not just a random idiosyncratic idealization but it is rather something that stems from reason that contributes to define the desired outcome (Gordin, Tilley, Prakash et al. 2010: 12).

Both utopian and dystopian pieces of literature have the same desire which is to improve the future by altering the fundamentals of the system. Many answers can be found in such literature since it acknowledges all the faults in the system and provides different solutions which is what their standout feature is. Only when dystopia and utopia are taken into consideration as a whole can their similarities be seen.

The name ‘dystopia’ derives from Ancient Greek in which ‘*dus*’ means bad whereas ‘*tópos*’ means place.³ The definition according to the Oxford dictionary states that a dystopia is “*an imaginary place or state in which everything is extremely bad or unpleasant*”.⁴

When comparing the two seemingly opposite terms, it appears as though they are a mere contrast of one another in which one is good and the other is implied to be bad. In theory, this explanation and comparison is true but in reality, the complex and profound characteristics of each genre intertwine and make it difficult to describe the meaning of one without mentioning the other in some way. As already mentioned, utopia was the term that was coined first while the term dystopia later appeared to be used as its opposite. Both of them act as warning signs for the humanity and its future. They represent both the reality of the world and the critique of the system. Being a part of speculative fiction, it represents something far from reality and imaginary. On the other hand, it can also describe future realities where if people continue acting the same and not introducing improvements something negative could happen. It is a form of a warning sign in literature and shows the distorted reality that people could experience and many routes it could take.⁵

Many centuries have passed and each and every period brought its own problems which accumulated throughout the years. The accumulation just exploded in the twentieth century when all of these problems came to surface after being repressed for a long time. The new restructure of the economy that leans onto capitalist premises, social, political and cultural changes during the 80s and the 90s opened the doors for dystopian writing. The sequence of these bad events paved the way for the fruition of the literary subgenre of speculative fiction - dystopia (Moynan 2000: 7).

Dystopian reality can be compared to the act of gaslighting. The people that live inside such a society are brain-washed and gaslighted into thinking that their reasoning is completely wrong and the authorities know what is best for them. Somebody is distorting their reality and making them believe their thoughts and feelings are not valid. Dystopian citizens live somebody else’s vision of how life should be lived while the real life is passing them by. What is masked behind

³ (Dystopia | Search Online Etymology Dictionary)

⁴ (Dystopia Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

⁵ (Marc’hadour, Germain P. “Thomas More | Biography, Beliefs, Books, Utopia, Death, and Facts.” Encyclopaedia Britannica)

their reality is the fact that they are in the middle of a matrix⁶. The ones on top of the hierarchical order do not want their citizens to find any other way of living. If that would happen, people would stop conforming, they would start living according to what they believe in and would become aware of the endless possibilities that life offers to any human being. Escaping the matrix and revealing the secrets of the system would mean the loss of control, which is not what the highly positioned governors would be keen on. Depriving people of knowledge and common sense is a way for the leaders to flourish since that implies that they can hold the power in their hands and keep receiving personal benefits. People finding out the truth would signify the end of their government and cessation of their control.

When dystopias are thought of, it is usually a very bad place, dark, filled with problems, where people lose their sense of self, live under the control of someone else and do not have individuality nor independence. It looks like their whole individual authentic self is taken by someone in control of their whole life. Dystopias are usually places where people have no rights nor freedom, they are almost slave-like and are deprived of knowledge about a better life. They are very cunning and hard to grasp for its citizens because it is usually masked behind a utopia. By giving people the living conditions that resemble a utopia, the system is mastering the art of masking the truth of what is really going on and blurring the vision of a true dystopia people are actually living in. Conditioning of humans is what is happening in a dystopian world.

According to Prakash, both utopias and dystopias can be analysed through the usage of terms *anima* and *artifice*. The theme of *anima* is related to human life and its limitations. Dealing with actual limits of human life and the spiritual ideas (human as a living being with physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the anima). Anima tests the weak points of the human beings as well as their moral and how they are interconnected and in a constant relationship of unpredictability. The theme of *artifice* researches the artificial qualities of both utopian and dystopian way of thinking and practicing it. This does not include the person as an individual

⁶ Matrix - a controlled environment or situation in which people behave in ways that conform to pre-determined roles / refers to the systems and structures in society that keep us bound to the traditional ways of living and working. These systems can include societal norms, cultural expectations, educational institutions, and corporate structures that often prioritize profit over people; the set of conditions that provides a system in which something grows or develops (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/matrix>)

but rather everything around it that can contribute to the dystopian reality of a person (Gordin, Tilley, Prakash et al. 2010: 6-12).

The dystopian vision is a distorted form that blurs the impact of the social system on its people. Due to its fictive nature, dystopias often present a reality that is a lot worse than the actual one. The structure of the dystopian society and the way it works is presented in the beginning. The narrative then introduces the dystopian protagonist that starts to notice the real functioning of the system and how it profoundly impacts the individuals' experience on Earth. There are two possible outcomes the storyline could take. The first one is that the storyline finishes with the culmination of the protagonist defeated by the system. The second one is more proactive where the dissenter forms a like-minded group which opposes to the system and on that path uncovers all the truths that the system has been hiding. The protagonist may end up defeated but leaves behind all the truths that can propel others into fighting for better lives. The individual could also end up contributing to the creation of an organization or a zone that acts as an obstacle for the power structure. The story could also end on a note that results in the creation of a social or political movement that advocates the complete transformation of the system. Some of these endings present true dystopian outcomes, whereas other ways of ending present the utopian features by demonstrating how it integrated and infiltrated itself in its opposite concept (Moylan 2000: 8).

Although a worse reality to be living in, dystopia is much more attainable with less efforts. Not making any efforts means leaving everything to the case and not caring about the consequences. Just as glass can be easily broken, it is much more difficult, sometimes even impossible to return it to its primary state. If it can be recovered, then marks, scars and cuts stay imprinted forever and the question is if they will ever fade. Utopias demand much more effort and its value is measured from the number of people willing to sacrifice everything for change.

3. CAPITALIST REALISM

Something that is so deeply rooted in human nature demands significant time in order for it to be brought to the surface and transformed from its core. This idea parallels the concept of capitalist realism that deeply entrenches people which results in finding it difficult to even imagine an alternative. The pervasive nature of capitalism is encapsulated in a striking, thought-provoking and a slightly frightening statement by Slavoj Žižek and Fredric Jameson who argue that it is easier to envision the world ending than the cessation of the capitalistic regime. One may think about how such a thing can be possible in an ever-changing world where every end gives rise to a new beginning and where the human tendency for improvement constantly seeks out the new and the undiscovered (Fisher 2009: 2).

Capitalist realism commodifies every aspect of life by turning everything into an opportunity for trade and by viewing the world solely through the lens of monetary gain. The inherent vitality of all living beings has been dimmed and destroyed by such an egoistic and exploitative nature. The rapid evolution of capitalism accelerates the dehumanization of society by pushing people towards a robot-like existence that measures human worth solely in monetary terms. While complete perfection has a high likelihood to be unattainable in this mortal world, capitalism is portrayed as being an attempt to create a better, more perfect society. Despite the fact that it has its flaws, it is often considered much better than the previous social systems and regimes, such as totalitarianism or dictatorship. However, being a better solution does not justify subjecting humanity to desensitizing conditions that are gradually eroding their well-being and adding up to their detriment, often without their awareness (Fisher 2009: 4-5). *“People, he was beginning to understand, are at once the beneficiaries and the victims of their culture”* (Huxley 2009:154).

In a capitalist society, every move is planned with foresight by anticipating and shaping the next couple of steps in human lives before they even know it. What today’s world lacks and is in desperate need of is authenticity. Standing out is more difficult than ever since nowadays it feels as though everything has already been invented with contemporary culture merely recycling and imitating past styles. Reality seems devoid of ‘the real’, implying something authentic and uncompromised and not something that is just a reflection of society's current state (Fisher 2009: 9-10).

The paradox of capitalism lies in the ironic fact that it is one of the most pro-social systems but at the same time it is also one of the loneliest. Capitalism is mostly shaped by our actions and decisions, as well as by the ones we succumb to, and starts with individuals and expands outwards. In order for change to occur, enough people must be willing to take the first step. Despite the fact that it is a thoroughly and cunningly planned social system, capitalism is also highly mutable since it is influenced by subjective visions. *“What needs to be kept in mind is both that capitalism is a hyper-abstract impersonal structure and that it would be nothing without our co-operation”* (Fisher 2009: 15). Unknowingly, people often contribute to its negative aspects by participating in and perpetuating a system they believe is highly flawed. The negative side of capitalism thrives on the discrepancy between what people believe and how they actually act. For instance, while many people view money as just paper, they simultaneously attribute immense value to it, which in turn only fuels capitalism's growth (Fisher 2009: 13).

The reality people live in often makes hope for a better future seem naive, which is akin to the concept of utopianism. If the flaws in capitalism or any social system are hidden or masked behind things people tend to perceive as beneficial, the desire for improvement diminishes. People fall into the abyss caused by staying in their comfort zone and not desiring anything beyond what already is, solely because where they are feels good enough, comfortable and safe. Such state makes them incapable of perceiving that remaining in that zone does not inspire any improvement nor brings meaning to their lives. Conversely, if a social system, in this case capitalism, reveals anomalies or impotence, it will encourage people to seek alternatives. When reality does not feel genuine, it signals that change is imminent. The reality of capitalist realism is what people perceive but it is only superficial. The true nature, i.e. “the real”, is hidden and suppressed beneath this façade of superficiality. It can only be uncovered by recognizing the inconsistencies hidden under the illusion of reality. These anomalies act as portals by offering glimpses into the underlying truth (Fisher 2009: 16-18).

Over the years, an unwritten ‘rule’ has emerged within capitalism, manifesting the fact that everything is viewed through the lens of business and profit, even sectors that should be separated far from commerce, such as healthcare (Fisher 2009: 17).

Nature and humanity are sectors that are the ones most affected by the excesses of capitalism. As capitalism pushes boundaries to unsustainable extremes, the environment and human spirit

suffer. The true image of nature reveals the inconsistencies of capitalism by exposing the flawed beliefs it is built upon. For instance, the assumption that nature provides endless, undamaging resources so as to fuel capitalist ambitions is fundamentally wrong. Boundaries exist for a particular reason but capitalism is continuously testing nature's as well as its own limits, often to destructive ends. It is a system willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of constant growth and the realization of business goals. Understanding the beliefs that underpin capitalism leads to the conclusion that nothing within such a society is coincidental. The fetishization of growth by those 'powerful' few who lead this system is what ultimately damages the entire structure (Fisher 2009: 18-19).

3.1. The true cost of capitalism: an invisible burden

Capitalism conceals its impact on the population using subtle yet insidious ways. It has a snide way of manipulating individuals who are made to believe that their struggles are related only to personal failings rather than being a major result from systemic influences. That the surge of mental health issues to unprecedented levels is a direct consequence of the capitalist paradigm is what many people fail to recognize. An imperative for such a society is that it needs to start engaging in serious discussions about these issues as it is getting clearer that the problem does not only lie in human nature but in the very structure of the system itself.

There is not a single person immune to the effects of capitalism. In today's world, conditions like anxiety, depression, PTSD and bipolar disorder are more prevalent than ever before. Particularly depression and anxiety have become so normalized that they are often dismissed as mere facts of life in spite of their alarming nature. This modern plague affects everybody but nevertheless takes a particularly heavy toll on the youth because of which they are deprived of the carefree experiences and moments of joy that should define their young lives. Instead, they are trapped in an incessant struggle with their emotions since they are unsure about how to cope with them which significantly hinders their ability to function normally.

“Marvelous antibiotics-but absolutely no methods for increasing resistance, so that antibiotics won't be necessary. Fantastic operations-but when it comes to teaching people the way of going through life without having to be chopped up, absolutely nothing...Apart from sewerage systems and synthetic vitamins, you don't seem to do anything at all about prevention. And yet you've got a proverb: prevention is better than cure. “But cure,” said Will, “is so much more dramatic than prevention. And for the doctors it's also a lot more profitable” (Huxley 2009: 77).

This idea from Aldous Huxley's utopian manifesto *Island* perfectly describes how capitalism makes money. They see disease as an opportunity to earn money by coming up with different solutions to be offered to people, but always at a cost. They make profit out of people's ignorance because awareness and knowledge about prevention would not ensure them the ability of gaining as much money.

Today's capitalistic society demonstrates a tremendous focus on health and on the promotion of an active lifestyle. Considering this sector's constant growth and improvement, it tends to neglect a crucial component welfare which is mental health. What the system emphasizes the most is the need to constantly look and feel good by sharing advice on everything from diet and exercise to fashion, home décor, etc. In general, most of these suggestions are accepted by the masses but when the offered advice touches on more personal topics, such as personality, culture or politics, then it is suddenly labelled as oppressive (Fisher 2009: 74).

This situation is exacerbated by the harsh judgments and insensitive remarks from the people that surround the individuals which only pushes them deeper into despair. The state of the population directly reflects the core of capitalism, which is a system that is not designed with the collective well-being in mind but with the interests of its creators. A capitalistic system is beneficial to its creators but not to its participants which results in a harmful environment being created for the majority. Such a profound systemic flaw emphasizes the fact that the current organization of the society is detrimental because of which people are paying a steep price. Unfortunately, the system's pervasive influence often blinds individuals to what is really at play. By the time people become aware of the reality of their situation, it is often quite late considering the fact that at that point the accumulated damage requires years or even decades to repair.

What the price of capitalism itself is might be a question that individuals contemplate due to capitalism being a system that revolves around money and capital. A possible perspective might be that it is the most expensive social order that has ever existed. Paradoxically, this cost is not measured in monetary terms but rather in the invisible price people pay which turns out to be a burden that may follow them for the rest of their lives.

Capitalism's illusory nature convinces people that they have the power to make decisions and that they live in a liberal and democratic system despite this being far from their reality. Bureaucracy persists but now under a new disguise which subtly influences the everyday lives of citizens within capitalist societies. People are fooled into believing that they have a choice, but realistically speaking, these choices are often predetermined to benefit the state rather than its citizens (Fisher 2009: 19).

The pervasive power and manipulation of system such as capitalism often cause people to deeply suppress that the path to a challenged system is collective action. If individuals begin to resist the system one by one, that act can create a ripple effect that inspires, motivates and connects everybody which can ultimately turn the system to their advantage. The problem is that many people feel powerless to act against the system in spite of their belief that they are in control. Such a resignation which is rooted in the belief that they are incapable of encouraging systemic changes is what paralyzes them and allows the political status quo to persevere without being challenged. This kind of mindset is prevalent especially among the younger generation facing numerous obstacles in this modern world. Living in an environment of that kind demands immense courage, persistence and willingness needed to confront the system (Fisher 2009: 20).

Capitalism has a tendency to deny any connection between its system and the rise of mental illnesses while instead preferring to attribute these issues to individual biology, particularly the chemistry of the brain. Placing the blame on the individual means that capitalism can then offer solutions through creating markets (such as the pharmaceutical industry) that claim to solve these problems in exchange for money. The fact that mental health problems originate in the brain is absolutely true but the crucial factor is understanding the underlying reasons that cause these conditions which are usually rooted in the pressures and the demands imposed by the capitalist system (Fisher 2009: 37).

An injustice is at bay when individuals are blamed for their struggles, especially when larger, systemic factors remain unaddressed. A problem in itself is failing to recognize the social system as a factor significantly contributing to individual difficulties. The psychological states of the population have to be understood in regard to the context of the society people inhabit and not solely through the lens of genetics, individual personality or human nature. Increasingly common conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder offer a reflection of the profound

impact the capitalism has on the individual. It is impossible to attribute the constant shifts in mood, energy and concentration that characterize such disorders solely to personal factors because external influences also demand to be considered (Fisher 2009: 35).

The creation of a fertile environment from which it reaps its harvest is what capitalism wants and is creating by manipulating human moods. It produces something, whether it is anxiety, discontent or some kind of desire only to feed on it which in turn fuels its own growth. This cyclical process works in favour of sustaining the system and makes it even more entrenched inside the society.

3.2. Perspectives on production and value – capitalist vs. craftsman

A capitalist's main focus is creating a product primarily for financial gain. Its primary goal is to identify which product will attract buyers and generate profit, disregarding the product's intrinsic value or considering how useful it will be to others. The concern of a capitalist is profitability and market demand which usually suffer at the expense of quality or personal satisfaction from the product itself. In contrast, a craftsman is willing to invest in the quality and the integrity of their work. Its motivation stems from a deep care for their craft which they regard as a reflection of their personal values and skills. Producing high-quality work that fulfils both personal pride and external needs is the primary aim of craftsmanship. Revenue is viewed as a by-product of pursuing a passion and maintaining high standards. The focus of capitalism on the maximization of profit can lead to excessive production and exploitation. When financial needs that begin to escalate and the pursuit of wealth become insatiable, the capitalist ethos forces individuals to produce even more than what is considered necessary or humane. The genuine needs of people start to become overshadowed by such a relentless pursuit and lead to an abyss in which material acquisition becomes an end in itself (Lanz, Sale, Sharpe et al. 2008: 69-70).

Capitalism's tendency to prioritize profit over process and quality is the main thing that leads to the exploitation of workers and forces life to be totally subordinated to economic activity. A capitalist views wealth as a solution for endless desires whereas the craftsman's approach finds fulfilment in the quality and purpose of their work.

“Material things exist to satisfy reasonable human needs, not unlimited human wants” (Lanz, Sale, Sharpe et al. 2008: 70). The purpose of material goods is to meet human needs which can often times be concealed by the accumulation of wealth in a capitalistic society. In general, pursuing unlimited wealth results in an excessive production that unnecessarily exceeds the actual needs of the consumers and creates a scenario of material wealth becoming the goal rather than a means to an end. For that reason, economic activity is transformed into a pursuit of wealth with the minimal interest for the quality of the products or the well-being of individuals (Lanz, Sale, Sharpe et al. 2008: 70-72).

Capitalism’s commercialization of life aids in reducing the human existence to mere economic activity while simultaneously neglecting the broader spectrum that the human needs possess. The focus on profit and production can obscure genuine human needs which in turn result in a society where work and financial gain become cardinal and compromise the essence of human fulfilment and welfare. Diverse approaches to value and production are contrasted by portraying the differences between a capitalist and a craftsman. While capitalism’s emphasis is put on profit and market demand, the craftsman focuses on quality and personal satisfaction which presents a more dimensional perspective on work and the role it takes on in human life (Lanz, Sale, Sharpe et al.2008: 72-73).

3.3. The impact of capitalism on education

A crucial area to analyse the effects of capitalism on the society is the educational environment. It functions like an independent system that tests the conditions imposed by capitalism and observes their impacts. Students are becoming increasingly passive and they are struggling to maintain focus for extended periods of time. The demand for instant gratification has distorted the sense of time and has caused distress. Losing focus repeatedly is not only a symptom caused by demotivation but it is also the result of the perception of time being distorted. Time has always been the same, it remains unchanged, but a shift happened due to the factors that influence how people perceive it. Nowadays, time feels fragmented into slots that seem to have their own level of focus. Children and young people are constantly bombarded with bursts of social entertainment which severely affects their ability to concentrate for longer durations (Fisher 2009: 23)

Attention deficits happen when things are slower comparing to the pace one is used to or when the information presented does not succeed in capturing interest. The entertainment culture has completely altered the profile of its consumers which led to the creation of a generation that struggles with continuous attention. New, fast, attention-grabbing and visually appealing content with minimal text is what the new users crave. Their cognitive processes have adapted to work best under these conditions. This change in attention span and more time spent in typing than writing may help to explain the rise of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia as prominent challenges of our time. The activities that the society neglects manifest as the diagnoses that dominate the modern era (Fisher 2009: 24-25).

Schools have always served a role of an institution that provides knowledge together with a lot of aspects of upbringing that are included as well. Teachers are required to take on more roles than ever before. Apart from teaching, they often need to assume parental duties. Survival in a capitalistic society demands earning a sufficient income, which often implies that both parents need to work which reduces the time they spend with their children. Consequently, teachers are faced with an extremely high demand to cater to the needs of every student by guiding them in proper behaviour and offering emotional support (Fisher 2009: 26).

Capitalism has shown significant changes regarding the roles of parents, particularly the paternal role which has impacted children profoundly. In this day and age, children often feel detached from themselves and unable to understand their own interests, behaviour or the consequences of their actions. This detachment is not a consequence of any inherent flaws in their character but it is rather a lack of proper parental guidance that was once provided naturally but has been changed due to capitalism's demands. As a result of such change, children are experiencing childhoods that may cause problems in adulthood (Fisher 2009: 71).

In today's society, the focus of parents has shifted away from their children and towards their jobs. The pursuit of better job positions and higher incomes is what both parents are consumed by which only causes further alienation from their children. Reduced time together and the absence of a structured and supportive environment equals children missing out on the crucial guidance they biologically need. Traditionally, the father took on the central role in the household acting as a bond that holds the family together. Nowadays, the nucleus of the family has been disrupted due to the fact that both parents are preoccupied with work and no one is

left to support the healthy development of the child. The attention of parents is diverted from their children to an incessant focus on work and the pursuit of money (Fisher 2009: 73).

Higher education is another thing capitalism thrives on. Hope that a degree will open doors to better opportunities is what constrained students to take on significant debts considering the high costs associated with obtaining them. However, society often does not welcome the decision to forgo higher education in order to pursue a different path, which tends to navigate the individuals towards a system that needs them so to sustain its growth. The goal of this idea is not to diminish the value obtained by earning a degree, which is undoubtedly challenging, but rather to offer an objective perspective that compares the outcomes of choosing different life paths. A lot of pressure and negative feelings young people face as they begin their adult lives can be alleviated if various possibilities that life can take after high school are normalised. Choosing independence from the dominant system instead of pursuing a degree is not inherently right or wrong, the same way chasing a diploma is not the only path to success. The variety of life paths reflects the diversity of individuals. There is no path that is necessarily better or worse. Everyone should be able to have the freedom to choose their own path without encountering undue negativity regardless of whether it aligns with societal expectations or not.

Education is the example that highlights how the system may use educational structures to keep its influence alive. Degrees are usually sought for validation, respect and a sense of academic accomplishment. People believe that a diploma will ensure them a higher position in the society. A degree is associated with more opportunities, higher earnings, skill development, career advancement, personal confidence and job security which is the main aspect that attracts people to continue education. However, graduation does not guarantee these outcomes. A diploma definitely has its advantages but it does not always guarantee success, especially when comparing it to a person who has used the years to gain practical experience. This reality vividly presents the gap between theory and practice.

Due to the rapid change of interests during youth, it is not uncommon for graduates to find themselves in jobs that are unrelated to their fields of study. Taking time to explore the world, discovering what truly engages them and gaining practical experience while their peers are still studying does not make them any less capable. Quite the contrary, it can be incredibly valuable. Upon finishing university, graduates often need several years of practical experience in order

to catch up and gain confidence in their field of choice which can detract from time spent pursuing their passions.

Routine and societal expectations often convince people to take the conventional path, while believing it is the right thing to do. This approach may be beneficial to an extent but nothing is more valuable than learning through the process of trial and error, through exploring interests and through working hard on something people are passionate about while still being fuelled by youthful energy. Progress, appropriate feedback and support can be more rewarding and motivating than waiting for academic grades, which are not a reflection a person's true intelligence or potential. School knowledge significantly differs from life knowledge but not everyone is inclined toward both. Freedom of choice and the ability to pursue an authentic path are essential for personal growth and fulfilment (Fisher 2009: 26).

Work generates money and money in turn creates work. The reason why money has become one of the most important aspects of modern life is because capitalism is centred around it. Whether motivated by the desire to fulfil dreams and aspirations or by the pursuit of affluence, which is often attained only through excessive and hard work, hustle culture is more prevalent than ever. Due to its prominence, a significant portion of the day is consumed by work which becomes completely integrated into daily life. The borderline between work and personal life is completely blurred, causing people to be available anytime. This notion causes inability to perceive time in a healthy or linear manner. The concept of time ceases to be linear and instead it becomes chaotic since it reflects lives that are increasingly influenced and manipulated by work demands (Fisher 2009: 34).

The shift in the operation of the system requires restructured nervous systems of the individuals. New challenges and lifestyles demand new capacities to effectively adapt. In this day and age, apart from the usual challenges posed by life, people have to be prepared for a new range of challenges, such as dealing with more and more uncertainty, unpredictable events, the acceleration of time and constant availability. These times present a decrease in long-term employment which is being replaced by short-term jobs, considering that people continually seek new opportunities to improve their circumstances and to earn more money. However, the moment a job becomes boring or unfulfilling, feelings of depression and anxiety start to set in. The individuals are prompted to start seeking change in order to attempt to escape these

negative states. Due to their unawareness, they become slaves to a system that is fuelled by their anxiety and dissatisfaction (Fisher 2009: 36).

The constant job-hopping causes difficulties when planning for the future, further complicating the ability to live a stable and fulfilling life. Capitalism is a system of endless possibilities. However, that fact does not imply that all of them are beneficial to the individual. Everyone has the right to pursue their chosen career and to be whoever they wish but such a freedom comes with requirements not everybody is willing to give in to. The drive, the will and the discipline needed to succeed have the ability to lead to complete freedom, but if they are not in balance, just like everything, it can also cause significant distress and anxiety.

Affluence is a core idea promoted by capitalism while often being considered as the key to a happy and fulfilled life. However, affluence is only accessible to those having enough drive to be willing pursue it constantly. Since money which is considered something artificial is considered the foundation of happiness in a capitalist society, it comes as no surprise that the well-being of people suffers while they chase something that does not genuinely aid in improving their mental, physical or spiritual health.

3.4. Media, PR and marketing in capitalism

What capitalism thrives more on is the perception and the way a company performs on the market than on the actual values the businesses present. The functioning and the survival of the system relies on maintaining an illusion that keeps the population susceptible to manipulation. The actual human experience usually significantly diverges from what is officially presented and accepted by the system. If this illusion was absent, capitalism would find it hard to conceal its inhumane and greedy aspects behind seemingly appealing ideas which make people believe that this system benefits them. The illusion helps to mask the darker side of capitalism by making it appear more favourable than it truly is (Fisher 2009: 44).

This may aid in explaining why capitalism is so heavily invested in marketing, public relations (PR) and branding. These tools are important because they help create perceptions, images and illusions around certain concepts, ideas or products. This strategy works well when the product, idea or concept genuinely aligns with its description and fulfils the promises it has made to its

consumers. However, the reality often falls short of the image presented, creating a state of hyperreality which is an environment where the boundaries between reality and fiction blur.

In this hyperreality, people find themselves caught between the real world they are experiencing and the fictional world that is presented by the capitalist society. This discrepancy prevents them from distinguishing right from wrong and reality from fiction. The media amplifies this state of hyperreality which serves as the primary platform for presenting “real” life. People often question the truthfulness of what they see despite the fact the media is often portrayed as transparent, truthful and unmediated. The media presents an altered reality that transforms and shapes the perception of its audience. Ultimately, individual choice is the resolution of this dilemma. What people choose to believe in becomes their reality (Fisher 2009: 45-47).

Capitalism can be seen as a new form of centralized leadership that controls citizens through various forms of feedback. Unlike ancient centralized power, today’s system allows people to believe they are making their own decisions while they unconsciously contribute to the centralization of power. The real shift in mindset occurs when people realize that in spite of all the manipulation, the real power is in their hands.

People have desires they want to fulfil and capitalism has a cunning way of discovering and targeting these desires by reshaping them to fit the capitalist mould. These desires are then reshaped and presented back to the individuals as if they were their own but tailored to what is acceptable and profitable within a capitalist society. Everything is transparent but it is up to the individuals to decide what they choose to consume and what they want to uncover (Fisher 2009: 47-48).

Emotions, essentially being energy in motion, are highly mutable and susceptible to change and manipulation. This aspect makes individuals vulnerable to external influences. Manipulating the energy, meaning emotions, can give power over the person that is being manipulated. Television and media have shifted from telling people what to think to guiding them on what to feel. Turning to the subtle manipulation of emotions is what makes individuals more susceptible to the system's control. What is essential is the mastery over feelings of the individuals considering the fact that uncontrolled emotions can trap people in a vortex of vulnerability. In such a state, individuals are most prone to being hurt and manipulated. Any tool that helps people escape this emotional imprisonment is welcomed even if that means

becoming addicted to the feelings offered by television or any other seemingly 'soothing' medium (Fisher 2009: 74-75).

The realization that the offerings of capitalism are only valid if individuals choose to accept them can be both liberating and disturbing. What the mind projects, the reality embodies. People can be whoever they want to be which is similar to childlike states in which the manifestation of endless fantasies seems within reach.

However, the anxiety brought on by this new era demanded a strategy to help those who struggled to survive in such a world. This strategy requires minimal resistance but ultimately comes at a higher, more lethal cost. Resisting to submit to this world and to its functioning demands something much greater than simply letting go, forgetting or suppressing feelings which will eventually resurface. A more difficult path involves facing the problems by discovering what is fuelling their negative mental, spiritual and physical conditions. The absence of this self-discovery causes people to remain stagnant and to conform to the comfort of old, familiar habits (Fisher 2009: 55-57).

Pinpointing the central responsibility of capitalism is challenging because no single element can be identified as the main problem but rather a combination of all its core beliefs. Many individuals entering managerial positions in large corporations do their job with a strong appetite to change and improve something. However, sustaining these changes is difficult because of the power of the system itself which often consumes the individual who once had a vision and desire to bring forth positive change. This resignation to power benefits the system, as it helps to divert attention from the system's flaws. It creates the illusion that the system is functioning ethically, even as it keeps alive many of the issues that individuals are blamed for (Fisher 2009: 60).

Today, there are anomalies that even the system cannot avoid being held accountable for and the blame is beginning to shift away from individuals alone. True freedom from these impositions can be found only by acknowledging the power of human actions and being aware of their causes.

Capitalism will probably remain the dominant social system due to the absence of a better alternative. However, an anti-capitalistic system should not merely be created as a reaction to capitalism. Such a system must be an authentic rival that is capable of effectively addressing

and erasing the negative effects of capitalism. Creating a new social regime would demand a complete restructure of the system that encompasses the economy, politics, government and industry (Fisher 2009: 80-81).

Despite its many hidden flaws, capitalism may also be seen as beneficial in some aspects. Perhaps a total collapse is what the world needed in order to create opportunities for a better future. Major changes are welcome but even the smallest shifts can propel the society forward and offer hope for a brighter future. The grey areas of capitalism, meaning its weak spots, remind us that anything is possible even when it seems there is no way out.

3.5. The psychology of money

If capitalism is synonymous with money, then it is crucial to examine the relationship people have with money and the psychology behind it. We may live in a world that appears highly developed, where life standards have seemingly improved and where material possessions and wealth have increased for a certain percentage of the population. From one perspective, these changes may look like significant progress. However, if they are observed over a longer period of time, it becomes evident that these improvements may not be beneficial in the long term. Usually, they do more harm than good in many cases.

In a world that values efficiency and predictability, there is a growing reliance on robots due to their ability to be programmed. Contrary to that, humans should strive to program themselves so to develop their own minds and not lose their individuality to the machinery of capitalism.

Investing has become an industry most favoured by capitalism, particularly because it revolves around money and capital which are at the core of the system. Regardless of how anyone can learn how to invest, becoming a successful investor requires more than knowledge itself. Its requirements are the development of certain soft skills which are crucial for navigating the industry. Among these skills, understanding the psychology of money is one of the most important ones.

Overly focusing on money provokes all kinds of situations because of which people can lose their health. Upon realising that their well-being reached an unhealthy point, people start to reach out for solutions which usually demand a lot of money and time in order to retrieve what

was lost. This highlights the paradox of the system in which health is not one's main priority since money is often placed on a pedestal as being the most important thing in the world. In spite of that, the health industry has made significant strides by discoveries that have improved overall health and functioning of the body. Paradoxically, more and more people are becoming ill due to the culture that poisons them if they lack the strength to resist the countless impositions forced upon them. While many aspects of life have improved, others have been worsened because of such an unwavering pursuit of wealth (Housel 2020: 11-13).

To survive in this world, the primary necessities are health and money. No matter the perspective on money one has, it is undeniably essential for living in the society of today. Perhaps hardly imaginable, but there are definitely ways to survive without money. When the psyche of a person is shattered, no amount of money will be of much benefit. The power of money is its possibility of revealing true human behaviour. It acts as a magnifying glass that highlights the motivation and actions of people. Therefore, there needs to be a more flexible and holistic psychological approach to money, the one that goes beyond just focusing on its laws and rules. More accurate answers can often be found in psychology and history than in rigid legal frameworks that often fail to completely understand financial themes (Housel 2020: 15).

Nowadays, opportunities are not that high for the ones who focus only on one skill. The demands of modern life require the mastery of multiple skills just to keep up with its pace. Multitasking and the ability to juggle various competencies often provide the competences needed to succeed. Familiarization with more skills lead to greater opportunities and business prospects.

According to Morgan Housel, understanding the psychology behind debt does not actually require the deep study of the economic sector. Instead, it should be explored through the lens of history which connects debt to insecurity, greed and exaggerated optimism. Most money-related problems are not about the money itself but are rooted in human emotions and psychology (Housel 2020: 15).

There are as many realities as there are people. Everyone perceives and experiences life in their own unique way. Truly understanding life comes from completely experiencing it and not just learning about it. Experiences carry deep emotions that leave lasting imprints on the memory

of people by making them hard to process and let go. People navigate life while carrying beliefs, out of which some are helpful, some inherited, some self-created while others are detrimental. Thoughts about various concepts, including money, are influenced by the beliefs in people's minds while simultaneously influencing their actions (Housel 2020: 19).

To be able to discern the meaning and value of an experience, one must live through it. Understanding alone may not be enough to change a behaviour considering that action and experience are often necessary elements of the equation. Experiencing something first-hand is far more impactful on the psyche and mind than merely reading or learning about it, even though learning and understanding still remains important. Only direct experience can provoke real understanding of a situation in some cases. Investing involves learning through doing which is similar to life itself. Investment decisions need alignment with the goals and the characteristics of the chosen investment. Factors like risk and luck significantly impact the outcomes of both investing and life. These elements act as veiled forces that can manoeuvre the results of people's actions in different ways. The effort one puts into any endeavour does not always determine success since life is far more complex (Housel 2020: 41).

Taking risks, relying on luck and applying skills is what investing money involves. Financial gain is more about the actions and management strategies than about the pursuit of money itself. The problematic of the capitalistic system is the incessant pursuit of more and more money by those who already possess significant wealth. Individuals are hooked on taking extreme risks due to their ceaseless and insatiable desire for more. The accumulation of wealth in itself is not what the core issue is but rather the inability to recognize when enough is truly enough. The obsession to constantly increase personal wealth in spite of already having more than sufficient is what often puts a fulfilling life in jeopardy just for the sake of acquiring even more money (Housel 2020: 48-58).

As Warren Buffett famously said, *“To make money they did not have and did not need, they risked what they did have and did need. And that is foolish. It is just plain foolish. If you risk something that is important to you for something that is unimportant to you, it just does not make any sense”* (Housel 2020: 59). This sentiment underscores the folly of sacrificing crucial aspects of life, such as family, friendships, love and happiness just to attain wealth that will never be enough to make up for the invaluable things that have been lost.

Obsessive focus on money is a problem because of which the individual remains completely blinded to the priceless aspects of life. No amount of money has the ability to be compared to the value of genuine relationships, personal happiness and a good reputation. To protect these treasured elements requires understanding when enough is enough and appreciating the inherent value they are abundant with. Significant regret can be caused by a failure to recognize what this can lead to. These intangible treasures are incredibly hard to regain once they are lost (Housel 2020: 63).

The functioning of life, both in terms of personal relationships and self-awareness, can be understood if a person delves deep into the underlying issues so to explore the aspects that hold significant importance but are often overlooked. This can be challenging due to time and patience needed for this process but it provides profound and long-term benefits. Personal growth and understanding demand time and reflection (Housel 2020: 65).

The key to success in investing does not lie in one-time high returns but in achieving consistent and steady gains over time. Large, immediate profits are strongly alluring but what ensures sustainable success is the careful management of investments and allowing compounding to work its magic. Occasional high-risk ventures are often times less achievable and not as reliable as moderate but consistent returns.

Lessons about money reflect life lessons in various ways. The notion that consistent returns of investments are more preferred in comparison to rapid high gains mirrors the same way in life circumstances where consistent happiness and fulfilment are built on steady and long-term efforts rather than temporary gratifications. Being a challenging environment, capitalism makes earning large sums of money possible but requires different skills to maintain it. While earning money often involves taking risks, optimism and networking, the act of preserving the accumulated wealth demands humility and awareness considering the fragility it comes with. Managing money effectively requires a balance between seizing opportunities and recognizing that significant success usually implies having a bit of luck. Individuals can navigate the demands of capitalism while simultaneously maintaining their welfare and happiness just by acknowledging that wealth is precarious and that one-time successes have a rather low possibility of being repeated (Housel 2020: 80).

3.6. Attributing the right value to things

Often times the most undervalued skills are the most crucial ones. They are underestimated because they seem simple but they actually demand significant effort and dedication. Some of those seemingly simple but crucial skills are consistency and discipline which are actually among the hardest skills to master. True hard work and incessant commitment is what they demand. Remarkable resilience and strength are cocooned in the ability to remain consistent and disciplined in spite of the ups and downs of life. An important cognition is that growth rises from navigating the everlasting challenges of life and emerging stronger from them. Such a revelation is something that is not for the faint of heart but a necessity that is essential for success (Housel 2020: 81-82).

Capitalist societies strongly emphasize positivity and optimism, although both concepts are commonly misperceived. The reason behind such a misconception is that people mistakenly believe that optimism means being positive all the time and avoiding negative emotions. True optimism, in fact, involves maintaining faith in a positive outcome even upon facing struggles and adversities. It actually implies the belief that difficulties will ultimately serve a greater purpose and contribute to a positive resolution, however challenging the present moment is. Such a nuanced view of optimism requires immense effort, courage and change in mindset in order to accept the fact that some things might not always go in accordance to plans. Cultivating hope in a positive ending, resistance in times of hardship and acceptance will be a favourable skill (Housel 2020: 86-89).

A distorted perception of what is achievable can often be cultivated by being continuously surrounded by appealing success stories. People can be misled into thinking big successes are common or easily attainable since high-profile achievements and glamorous events that attract considerable attention are invading the present. 'Tail events', as they are often described, are very rare and their alluring nature can obscure the extensive groundwork, risks and failures that precede them which leads to a distorted perception of success. It is easy to see the end result and assume it happened 'overnight' which underestimates a significant amount of effort and perseverance that have been invested in order for such a milestone to be reached. The elements that are hidden behind all the success are the actual contributors to the success story itself. What is crucial in understanding the true value of such grand successes is the recognition of what it actually takes to succeed, which implies an extensive journey permeated with

persistence and setbacks. Even though most people often associate success with having money, the reality is that true success concerns other, more valuable things apart from money (Housel 2020: 95-105).

Many people believe that money is the key to happiness but what this belief reflects is a complete misunderstanding of what true happiness entails. Happiness is a subjective concept which varies from person to person and is shaped by individual visions and personal aspirations. The real measure of success does not merely imply accumulating wealth but rather achieving a state where a person can do what they want, when they want it, with whom they want it and for as long as they want it. If pursued ethically and without harming others, this type of freedom is the highest dividend money can pay (Housel 2020: 109).

Possessing a constant desire for money often stems from its ability to grant some type of control whether it implies having the power to influence others or having the ability to pursue personal desires. Having money is deeply tied to the concept of control since people usually believe that they will be able to manoeuvre every situation in life just by possessing enough money. Money permeates almost everything in life and the lacking of it can prevent individuals from fulfilling their wishes. However, money does not possess the ability to replace or justify unethical actions. There are some aspects of life that remain beyond its reach which confirms the notion that even the power that money holds has its own limits.

Having an abundant reserve of money offers freedom and independence by allowing the individuals to escape the pressures of capitalism, work demands and ownership constraints. A person can make choices based on personal preferences rather than financial necessities by ensuring a stable personal financial situation. That stability enables them to focus on their own interests and well-being without constantly fearing financial insecurity. Even time is greatly impacted by external factors in the modern culture. How people spend their time is dictated by gadgets, apps and all sorts of other distractions dictate which frequently aids in blinding them to alternate lifestyle options and fosters a sense of inferiority. Since time is a limited resource, happiness can be significantly impacted by one's capacity to manage and control it (Housel 2020: 110).

In these times, happiness seems to be in decline despite the standards that have risen. Such an observation raises the question about whether happiness is determined by time, money or a

combination of both. In the hope that expensive possessions will bring joy, recognition or a sense of superiority is the reason behind why people invest in them. However, material wealth cannot ensure true inner happiness and respect since they often derive from the character of a person and the way someone treats others (Housel 2020: 122).

Greater empathy, kindness and humility are what the entire world could benefit from. What people are remembered by in the end are not possessions but by the impact they have made on others and the values they cultivated.

“Money has many ironies. Here's an important one: Wealth is what you don't see” (Housel 2020: 125). People often base their assumptions on what they see. There are individuals who spend their money on items that attract attention in order to project an image of wealth despite the fact that such purchases do not necessarily aid their financial status. The book *The Psychology of Money* highlights a thought-provoking lesson which states that true wealth is not defined by spending but by saving. That wealth is best understood by the money people do not spend is what the book argues. A statement like this might seem counterintuitive but it becomes clearer when examined in detail (Housel 2020: 127).

This idea is followed by the discomfort that derives from the pressures imposed by the society and norms that encourage people to spend as a symbol of success. People frequently justify the fact that they use their money on pleasures and luxury items under the guise of sentences like ‘life is too short’ or ‘you only live once’. Enjoying some luxuries is a completely acceptable thing but what characterizes true wealth is the ability restrain from overspending so to retain sufficient savings that will offer more freedom and control over a person’s life. Pursuing luxury assets often times attracts cycles of constant spending and striving whereas wealth is what ensures independence and the freedom to make choices without financial constraints. This idea is thoughtfully articulated in the book *The Psychology of Money*:

“The danger here is that I think most people, deep down, want to be wealthy. They want freedom and flexibility, which is what financial assets not yet spent can give you. But it is so ingrained in us that to have money is to spend money that we don't get to see the restraint it takes to actually be wealthy. And since we can't see it, it's hard to learn about it” (Housel 2020: 129).

Savings provide a form of flexibility that offers protection against stress caused by finances and allows individuals to pursue their values and interests without compromising them for mere

survival. The asset associated with savings that is the most crucial one is time. More opportunities in the future are made possible solely by nurturing patience and endurance during challenging periods. People can feel obliged to accept undesirable situations due to insufficient time and lack of financial security which mostly leads to anxiety and dissatisfaction. The phrase '*time is money*' sounds true in this context. It signifies that the accumulation of money over time is able to grant more freedom and control. Both time and money become intertwined and elusive when people spend their last penny which is what traps individuals inside the endless cycle of earning and spending. Time is money and money is time. Time is necessary to get money and the more money people get, the more time they are able have (Housel 2020: 139).

As it is commonly known, money obtains a significant role in everyone's life. It carries the potent ability of teaching valuable lessons if approached with the right mindset. All aspects of money, even short-term difficulties related to it can metamorphose into enduring lessons that offer guidance regarding future decisions. Experiences of that kind can serve as valuable reminders that guide individuals to make wiser choices, instead of being bitter memories.

3.7. Embracing the present amidst uncertainty

Being unpredictable is what inherently defines life. To rely solely on the experiences from the past or on predictions for the future is utterly limiting on human experience. People constantly make plans and anticipate what lies ahead but it is a vital thing to remember that no one can certainly predict the twists and turns of life.

The true focus should lie in the present moment. Unlike the fixed past and the uncertain future, the present is a reality that is constantly unfolding. People permanently live in the present in which each moment offers an opportunity to adapt and respond to new challenges on the rise. The undivided attention of people is demanded by the present because it is the only time they can actively shape and influence it (Housel 2020: 161-167).

The actions of people that are solely based on historical data or future projections which can lead to missed opportunities and stagnation. The past should be viewed as a resource for deriving useful insights that can aid in adjusting the approach used in the current context. History can provide valuable lessons for the present and the future but it should rather serve as a guide than a rigid template. The strategies from the past that no longer serve people should

be discarded in favour of the ones that are more relevant to the present reality (Housel 2020: 169).

Making plans for the future is essential but to leave room for flexibility is equally important. *“A plan is only useful if it can survive reality. And a future filled with unknowns is everyone’s reality”* (Housel 2020: 85). Life is naturally unpredictable which means that no plan can ensure the manifestation of every possible outcome. What people need in order to build resilience and maintain motivation even when things do not function as anticipated is to make room for unexpected events and errors. This kind of approach is needed because it helps to prevent discouragement and permits people to stay focused on their goals despite experiencing setbacks (Housel 2020: 174).

A significant lesson about resilience can be learned through money since uncertainties and risks which cannot always be predicted are an omnipresent phenomenon in the financial world. What can lead to greater endurance and success is to embrace uncertainty and to prepare for it rather than trying to be in complete control (Housel 2020: 176).

Controlling every aspect of life can instantly lead to frustration and failure, especially upon dealing with challenges that are unpredictable. Certain risks can be anticipated but many events are beyond people’s imagination and power. Being prepared to face whatever comes on the way is the key to maintain flexibility and perseverance regardless of the circumstances (Housel 2020: 182).

History and plans for the future are important but the primary focus of a person should be to navigate and to make the most of the present. Handling the unpredictability of life and achieving a more fulfilling experience can be made possible by integrating lessons from the past, plans for the future and by embracing the flow of the now.

3.8. The key to financial success and resilience

Living paycheck to paycheck, spending the entire income on immediate needs and failing to save for future expenses is the reason behind why many people struggle with being financially stable. This cycle often continues because of their non-inherent inability to find an alternative and because many primary life expenses cause them to be unable to save for unpredictable events or any specific goals. Keeping something in saving for the unknown is

just as crucial as it is to save for something specific because it helps in being preparing for life-impacting unpredictable circumstances (Housel 2020: 184-188).

“In fact, the most important part of every plan is planning on your plan not going according to plan” (Housel 2020: 185). This quote underlines the need for flexibility in financial planning. It is not just about having a certain plan but preparing for deviations and surprises in life.

To see progress in how individuals have evolved demands from them to reflect on past experiences. It is an important step towards self-improvement but it does not equip people with the ability to predict future changes regarding their desires or circumstances. What success often depends on is the consistency and discipline which imply repeating successful behaviours over time despite the challenges. The evolution of an individual can make such a repetitive process challenging, especially if they feel that they have outgrown or changed their goals. Those feelings can sometimes add a sense of regret which can be paralyzing towards new goals. Time is one of the most valuable things people get in life. In some cases, regret over lost time can even outweigh the disappointment of a plan that has failed. That is why adapting to the situation and making room for unpredictability can help in making those feelings less overwhelming and paralyzing. This approach can be applied universally whether in personal finance, relationships or career development (Housel 2020: 190-191).

“The worst thing in life is to base all new decisions on the past and previous failures” (Housel 2020: 192). Such a demeanour can be paralyzing considering people allow past disappointments to dictate future actions. This mindset cunningly makes people stuck in a cycle of inaction and self-sabotage. Focusing too much on past failures is the reason behind why individuals risk missing opportunities and why their potential gets suppressed. Learning from previous mistakes is valuable, but dwelling on them can hinder growth and constrain future possibilities. Instead, focus should be on adapting and evolving, allowing room for new strategies and opportunities. This mindset will prevent being held back by past failures and facilitate progress toward becoming a better version of oneself (Housel 2020: 194).

In conclusion, financial success and overall life satisfaction are dependent on a balanced approach to planning, saving and adapting. Embracing flexibility, learning from the past without being imprisoned by it and recognizing that resilience and consistent effort are crucial elements in achieving long-term success.

All aspects of life have its inherent value, even those that cannot be obtained by money. What often becomes apparent only through personal experience is that such a value cannot always be clearly defined. The sacrifice the individuals are willing to take varies depending on the extent to which they value what they seek, while the exact cost is frequently unknown until faced first-hand.

A crucial element in how people understand the worth of experiences is the perception they have. It is a very unique concept and not a universal thing since it differs based on the experiences of the individual and leads to diverse interpretations of the value and the difficulty of something. What appears easy to one person may be challenging to another and the true nature of an experience is often uncovered only through being directly involved. Such a discrepancy between theory and practice is what emphasizes a widespread issue that shows how people tend to underestimate what it takes to attain certain goals. The difference between theory and practical reality is not meant to dissuade the individuals but to prepare them for complex experiences of the real world. Realizing that the journey called life is permeated with both positive and negative outcomes allows for a more grounded approach when it comes to making decisions.

“Beware of taking financial cues from people playing a different game than you are” (Housel 208). This reminder highlights the importance of correctly aligned financial strategies with personal objectives and the kind of context they are for. What works for one person may not be suitable for another because their goals, values or experiences can differ significantly (Housel 2020: 197-198).

In the realm of finance, this principle is considered true. The psychological aspects of money reflect broader life experiences. Financial decisions are something which is deeply personal and varies for each person. It is essential to understand that financial advice or strategies that work for one person may not be suitable for another, especially if their goals or life circumstances differ. Finally, acknowledging and adapting to the innate nature of experiences can lead to improvement in making decisions no matter if it concerns money or any other aspect of life. What is necessary to survive in this modern society is to embrace the complexity, to prepare for unforeseen challenges and to be mindful about the fact that success is a subjective thing.

The following statement can aid in concluding the thoughts on capitalism: “*Capitalism is failing to produce what was promised, but is delivering on what was not promised - inequality, pollution, unemployment, and most important of all, the degradation of values to the point where everything is acceptable and no one is accountable*” (Maté, 2022: 283). Capitalism is not what it was supposed to be but in order to improve, it needs action taken.

4. THE MYTH OF NORMAL IN A DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY

The question the majority of people find hard to answer is - what is the purpose of life? Contrary to the beliefs promoted by capitalism, life does not revolve around affluence, possessions, power or control which are often imposed as the central goals. Instead, life centers around spiritual and soulful abundance which allows individuals' lives to have meaning. Leading a good life and finding one's own purpose requires rethinking the values to which the most importance is assigned.

The contributors that are taken as a key to a meaningful life demand a holistic approach that will consider the humane aspects of existence—spirituality, emotions, social connections, community, intellect as well as relationships with family, partners and friends. Embracing these aspects creates a strong foundation for experiencing the true essence of life. Once this foundation is established, material possessions become secondary yet helpful additions. For instance, owning land or having a home can support the already established foundation by providing stability and safety for family life. However, if such possessions are pursued solely for monetary gain, the stability of this set foundation can be significantly undermined. The omnipresence of this theory is proven by its possibility of being applied across all areas of life. Human existence is intricately connected to and dependent on the land and its products that serve as something that should enhance and support life, not contribute to its detriment. Anything beyond the core elements of human life should exist to improve well-being, not to dominate or to control it.

4.1. *Brave New World* – a silent dystopia

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is the main literary work used in this thesis to illustrate the parallels between its dystopian vision and the contemporary society. Despite the fact that the novel is set well over 600 years in a speculative future, it serves as a lens to reflect the realities of the present and to reveal the hidden problems that persist even to this day. Even though the two worlds differ in many ways and 'Brave New World' is considered as far more radical, the underlying similarities are striking. The novel takes on a role of a cautionary tale about how a distorted vision of a utopia can easily morph into a dystopia.

Brave New World, published in 1932, is a dystopian novel. It portrays a culture that is established on secular ideals that promise the humanity a “bright” future. It envisions a society resemblant to an isolated system whose hierarchy set an elite ruling class in order to control the system. The controllers try to engineer a utopia through the application of science and technology, specifically by manipulating the genetic makeup and psyche of its citizens. To those in power, this vision of utopia is logical, even superior to all other alternative models such as those that promote spiritual fulfillment, equality or class harmony. These models are dismissed as unattainable and irrational ideals. The most damaging problem in such a system is not so much that those in power impose their utopian vision on others but rather that they capitalize on the population’s susceptibility to give up their freedom and humanity. Driven by the desire for stability and comfort, people are easily manipulated into relinquishing their rights by placing control over their own lives into the hands of governing authorities. This surrender, led by a misplaced trust in technology and authority, ultimately erodes the freedom that such a system constantly promises to protect (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 61).

Such a subtle type of control is quietly infiltrating people’s lives, all while rendering them unaware of the deeper forces secretly acting beneath the surface of reality. The conformity that fuels the need for power is subtly achieved through the conditioning of citizens and the gradual reshaping of their beliefs. Mind control carried out by those in power is not a distant threat to be dismissed and disregarded but more of a present reality that demands to be extensively observed.

Brave New World is more than a novel since it serves as a profound exploration of the damaged society and a prophetic vision of the way the real future of humans could look like. It acts as a warning against totalitarianism and scientism. The beginning is what sets the tone for the rest of the novel as Huxley infuses it with the feelings of dehumanization by describing a world where unborn babies are “cultivated” in bottles, fed chemical mixtures that ensure their predetermined place in future social hierarchies. Once “decanted” (born), these babies undergo Pavlovian conditioning⁷ and hypnopedia⁸ which aids in shaping their thoughts and eventually

⁷ “Also known as classical conditioning; a behavioral procedure in which a biologically potent stimulus (e.g., food, a puff of air on the eye, a potential rival) is paired with a neutral stimulus (e.g., the sound of a musical triangle). The term classical conditioning refers to the process of an automatic, conditioned response that is paired with a specific stimulus.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning)

⁸ “Instruction of a sleeping person especially by means of recorded lessons; also called sleep-learning, sleep-teaching.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/hypnopedia>)

their behavior. Different conditioning processes have ensured high intelligence for “Alphas” who become scientists and governors whereas “Deltas” and “Epsilons” are positioned below them and are created to do physical labor. This concept mirrors insights from authors like Gabor Maté, who has explored the connection between prenatal experiences and generational trauma that can shape individuals before birth. Both Huxley’s fictional world and Maté’s research highlight the profound impact of early conditioning on human development (Morris, Kross 2009: 45-46).

The students chosen by the Director get paid a visit from the World Controller named Mustapha Mond who starts to explain history and manages to introduce concepts such as wars and families which are completely foreign to them. Mond presents the Controllers’ standpoint by advocating for the belief that conditioning, rather than force, is a more effective way used to suppress powerful human emotions. In the novel, citizens Lenina Crowne and Bernard Marx decide to visit a Savage Reservation in New Mexico considering their dissatisfaction with the society they are in. There, they want to observe the culture of its citizens considering the fact that they come from a completely different world. They meet Linda and her son John, who feels like an outcast due to his mixed heritage and his mother’s promiscuity. It is later revealed that John’s father is the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning. When they return to London, John confronts the Director by calling him “father” which is a concept foreign and uncomfortable in their society.

4.2. Science & technology, control and dehumanization

Technological inventions with its primary role of serving humanity, often reveal a darker side causing the mankind itself to become the victim. In *Brave New World*, technology completely overtakes humanity because of which control over technological advancements is entirely lost. The society in the novel is entirely oblivious to the urgent need to reestablish human dominance over technology. Utilitarian happiness and social conditioning become deeply ingrained inside the community which creates a sense of artificial contentment that is difficult to escape. This novel functions as a warning, cautioning readers about the potential dangers of governmental abuse, control and over-reliance on science and technology. It emphasizes that a lack of awareness is what allows these tools to be used to manipulate and control humanity, rather than to advance its well-being.

The central focus of Huxley's social critique is primarily on the dangers of a society that controls both the population and the economy. This collective stability that is attempted both in history and in the novel's fictional world, is presented as dystopian. In *Brave New World*, the absence of suffering and the pursuit of happiness are achieved through relentless psychological conditioning which eradicates human traits that are considered undesirable (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 89).

In *Brave New World*, the function of the focus that is put on science and technology is not to showcase their development but to explore the possibility of how these advancements can or will impact humanity. The primary concern of the author lies in how all forms of life are shaped and influenced by these changes. Disciplines like biology, psychology and physiology contain the potential to bring about revolutionary shifts in humanity that fundamentally affect both the body and the soul. The novel presents the idea that a truly successful totalitarian regime does not rely on coercion or violence to make people comply. Instead, the government controls the population in such a way that people willingly become slaves. They serve without feeling compelled to do so and without questioning or resisting authority. This manipulation leads to a society where citizens love their servitude. Huxley illustrates how the government manipulates and designs its ideal society, showing the profound effects such control has on individuals. He invites readers to question whether these measures truly benefit people or simply serve the interests of those in power (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 65-66).

The primary goal of those in power throughout *Brave New World* is to desensitize and to strip the new state of its spiritual and intellectual capacities, all while amplifying its dehumanized, robotic aspects and making citizens more vulnerable to manipulation. This goal is achieved with the aid of science and technology which the ruling class eagerly embraces. By replacing essential human qualities (such as the connection between mind, body and spirit) with an obedience that follows orders without questioning authority, the leaders pave the way for the success of their totalitarian state. A submissive population is created through two key techniques: conditioning and control.

The regime's conditioning begins early in life, enabling the exertion of its strong control over individuals. Citizens are conditioned to love their servitude while the hierarchical division of society plays a central role. People are classified based on their social and economic status which reinforces their place in the new state. Genetic manipulation and lifelong conditioning

that start before birth and continue afterward, ensure that the population develops in accordance with the government's goals (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 66).

The alteration of the human genetic makeup is carried out through eugenics which is a system designed to enhance desirable traits in the population by pairing embryos with superior genetic matches. Embryos that are considered inferior are prevented from developing into individuals capable of undermining the state's aims. Embryos are divided into superior and inferior caste groups: the Alphas and Betas form the upper classes, while Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons make up the lower classes. For the system to function smoothly, only superior embryos are allowed to reproduce with others of their caste by receiving top-quality prenatal treatment which will enhance their natural abilities. In contrast, embryos of the lower castes are deliberately subjected to poor treatment. Inferior genetic groups are subjected to prenatal maltreatment which includes alcohol and poison injections that will guarantee their subordination. These embryos are often cloned into multiples using the Bokanovsky Process, meaning that it produces large numbers of identical twins. This process ensures social stability by creating a hierarchy where a limited number of elites lead and an endless supply of inferiors serve without question. Strict surveillance of embryo development and treatment is crucial, as the leaders' greatest fear is that someone may slip through the rigid caste system. Any deviation from these categories could disrupt the carefully designed social order, potentially creating unrest that threatens the regime's control (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 67-68).

The path toward establishing a society of servitude is built on the intentional use of autosuggestion which is primarily applied to infants. This process resembles the act of hypnosis because infants are conditioned and brainwashed to adopt behaviors and beliefs that will serve the leaders' purposes. The society's core principles (community, identity and stability) are ingrained in children from a young age only to ensure their conformity to these ideals. To maximize its efficiency, the leaders condition them even during sleep using a method known as hypnopedia (sleep teaching), which allows individuals to effortlessly internalize the state's motto. The state's core values and moral beliefs are instilled through hypnopedia which is considered the most effective tool for embedding social and moral principles. This method ensures the population's unwavering loyalty to the government's vision of a perfectly functioning society. Through hypnopedia, children are taught mantras such as "*Everyone belongs to everyone else*" (Huxley 2006: 34), "*Everyone works for everyone else*" (Huxley 2006: 50), "*Everybody's happy now*" (Huxley 2006: 51) and "*All's well with the world*"

(Huxley 2006: 32). These phrases become intrinsic beliefs that aid in convincing them they are indispensable members of the community. The sense of belonging is so deeply ingrained that it creates a superficial contentment, meaning that citizens accept their shallow lives, believing everything in their world is right and nothing is amiss. This systematic deprivation of reason permeated throughout the entire system ensures the leaders' vision can manifest without resistance.

“Environment does not begin at birth; environment begins as soon as you have an environment” (Maté 2022: 140). Life happens even before birth and remains stored deeply in the unconscious. Even though intrauterine experiences may not be consciously recalled, they still leave an emotional and neurological imprint. Even before birth, people record experiences at a cellular level which explains how important prenatal experiences are in making an impact on emotional health. In recent years, evidence has emphasized the significant influence of a mother's environment, health and emotional well-being on a developing fetus. This coincides with rising rates of mental health issues among young people, which cannot be fully explained by genetics alone. To address these occurring issues, people must consider the prenatal environment's role, as well as post-natal one (Maté 2022: 140).

Needs can be both internal and external but no matter the type of need, it is the environment that is a crucial and essential means for them to either flourish or to ruminate. It may seem that genetics plays a big part since it is regarded as the most important factor but due to the adaptability of humans, environment plays an imminent role that can completely defy genetic predispositions. The manifestation and expression of human biology is determined by the environment. Maté proposed a concept from Jean Liedloff that gives an explanation for this environment theory which states that life happens according to the environment it expects. For instance, organs expect oxygen in order to develop which is what helps to prove this theory and shows the core of evolution. All of these expectations are the needs that need to be met and determine the quality of one's physical, mental and social health (Maté 2022: 118-119).

It is challenging to define the needs necessary and beneficial for the development of a human being. However, this ambiguity can be clarified by taking a look at a set of social commons that are essential for healthy development of human nature, defined and formed by the ancestral social-gatherer groups. The essential social commons are the following:

1. Appropriate prenatal experiences, helping to promote physical and emotional well-being for the child and the mother
2. Prompt prevention of distress, for emotional stability
3. Physical touch and presence, for fostering connection and safety
4. Breastfeeding, lasting for the period of two to five years and ideally child-initiated
5. A community of healthy and caring adults, for emotional and social support
6. Positive social surroundings, to encourage interaction, cooperation and secure relationships
7. Time spent in nature, with mates of mixed ages so to develop adaptability, curiosity and resilience (Maté 2022: 166-167).

Examining this set of ‘rules’ makes people aware how the current development system of humans misses a lot of elements that are essential to establish someone’s full potential. This destabilization begins even before birth, when the baby is still in the mother’s womb, recollecting and absorbing all the emotional and physical inputs coming from the information from the mother. Everything that the mother feels and experiences gets transmitted to the infant and forms the foundation of its early development. This destabilization is intensified when compounded by the medicalization of childbirth, the weakening of natural parenting instincts and the neglect of children’s developmental needs. What adds up to this are the social and economic pressures affecting the parents, and the decline of community connections and support systems. This issue is further exacerbated by disseminated misleading information given to parents about raising their children. Reinforced by educational systems that impose competitive pressures on students, the process ultimately culminates in the exploitation of children and youth for the benefit of the consumer market (Maté 2022: 169-180).

Identity formation is another key aspect of hypnopedia. From an early age, children begin to be conditioned to understand their place within the caste system which deepens their connection to their prescribed roles and simultaneously limits the desire to question their status. Sleep teaching also instills the state’s motto of stability. Economic stability is maintained by programming citizens to constantly spend money on new products, discouraging repair or reuse. Slogans like “*The more stitches, the less riches*” (Huxley 2006: 35), and “*Ending is better than mending*” (Huxley 2006: 35) are embedded in their minds so as to promote continuous consumption. Physical wellbeing is also one of the main focuses which is promoted through hygienic standards taught by the use of hypnopedia and slogans such as “*A doctor a*

day keeps the jim-jams away” (Huxley 2006: 125), which aids in motivating individuals to prioritize health. By repeating certain phrases, the leaders manipulate the thoughts of the populace and embed ideas that serve their political agenda. For instance, the slogan “*When the individual feels, the community reels*” (Huxley 2006: 63) promotes the suppression of personal emotions in favor of collective stability as a part of their indoctrination. Emotional stability is crucial to maintain order, ensuring citizens do not act out in ways that threaten the state’s carefully controlled world. Drug use is another tool for suppressing negative emotions. Phrases like “*A gramme is better than a damn*” (Huxley 2006: 34), and “*A gramme in time saves nine*” (Huxley 2006: 78) encourage citizens to use drugs so as to eliminate sadness and discomfort which in turn reinforces emotional control even further. Citizens are kept in a constant pursuit of work or pleasure, believing they are fulfilled. The slogan “*Never put off till tomorrow the fun you can have today*” (Huxley 2006: 63) captures this mindset that ensures the population remains distracted (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 68-69).

The discovery of the self happens only when it is deeply felt and truly recognized within. Emotions are much more significant than people may realize because feeling them can offer insight into the subconscious and provide answers inaccessible to the conscious mind. This idea is not just a philosophical assertion but a scientific fact rooted in the biological evolution of humans. According to the biology of the evolution, the emotional structures of the brain and the body developed long before the cognitive structures. This forms the foundation for human experience since it started even before birth and continues after it. These emotional structures make up the earliest memories of people’s unconscious thoughts and feelings that in turn cause conscious action. As such, they make up the formative role in human development as a determiner that shapes the individuals’ emotional, behavioral and belief patterns in future life. The early life is a blueprint that makes the biggest impact on the rest of people’s lives and at the same time sets the tone for how they will perceive and navigate the world. This idea is well comprised in the following statement by Gabor Maté:

“The architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth, continues into adult-hood, and establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all the health, learning, and behavior that follow” (Maté 2022: 124-125).

The novel’s central theme is not focused on how science advances over time but more so on how scientific advancements affect humanity. Huxley is more concerned with the consequences of technological and scientific progress on people all while tracking these changes over time to uncover their true impact. Scientific innovations have subtly infiltrated daily life in ways so

discreet that the society does not notice the manipulation at play. The progression of science can be observed mostly through shifts in politics, psychology and marketing which are areas where its influence is often concealed. *Brave New World* is a reflection of Huxley's critique of the gradual dehumanization of the society disguised as "progress". Since such a scientific progress leads to the erosion of human essence, it can hardly be called progress at all. True advancement should happen in order to enhance people's well-being and spiritual growth while nurturing their psyche and humanity at the same time. It is only then that science can be deemed successful, considering that it would contribute to a society built on authentic human values (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 80-81).

4.3. Escapism

According to Huxley, the only future that matters is the one rooted in the present. The present determines the path of the things to come and in 'Brave New World', Huxley uses the future as a lens to expose the issues of his contemporary world. The future is merely a prism, revealing the problems and challenges that are already emerging in the present (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 79).

The government relies on scientific knowledge from fields like psychology, biology and technology so to ensure the servitude of its people. Methods such as hypnopedia, eugenics, use of soma and encouragement of self-indulgence trick the population into believing they are happy and they live in a perfect world. However, this is far from the truth. People are deprived of their ability to perceive what is good and what is not and the value of the human spirit is diminished. As their impulses become more automatic and unnatural, humanity is reduced to robotic compliance (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 71).

People no longer asked questions or sought change in such an automated world. Their minds were heavily conditioned and brainwashed which resulted in making them incapable of imagining anything better than the controlled existence they lived in. They were fed with beliefs that got deeply ingrained while effectively blinding them from the reality of the government's oppression. Constant distractions were provided so they escape their nature that does not benefit the state and to prevent any room for contemplation or dissatisfaction which will aid in ensuring that the citizens remain oblivious to the truth of their situation.

All intoxicating substances in *Brave New World* are replaced by a powerful drug called soma, the most valuable tool of the Controllers. Soma allows them to maintain control over people's thoughts and emotions. Its promotion ensures that the drug is always available and free in order to encourage widespread use. By intoxicating the citizens, the leaders create a society that aligns with their desires. Soma becomes the portal through which all negative emotions are eliminated, offering the illusion of a perfect world. It took on the role of the ultimate tool in achieving the goal of the Controllers which is a society that never thinks of rebellion, remains comfortably subdued in its servitude and finds solace in submission. People were addicted to the use of soma and were not even able to picture normal functioning without it. The citizens found themselves imprisoned in a state of passive contentment, deprived of emotions and critical thought which resulted in them being unable to envision or desire anything beyond their narrow reality (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 70-72).

The happiness and stability that the citizens experience has a role in blinding them to the fact that true happiness cannot exist without suffering. In nature, happiness and suffering are interconnected and dependent on one another. The citizens of 'Brave New World' experience a superficial and artificial type of happiness which is induced through conditioning and technology rather than letting it arise naturally from human experience. True happiness is something that cannot be mass-produced because it must be earned through life's struggles and challenges and found within oneself. By forcefully avoiding suffering, the society makes the citizens unknowingly push away their capacity to experience genuine, fulfilling happiness.

Citizens are treated like children and are susceptible to manipulation and conditioning which allows for their personalities to be shaped from an early age. The moment these slogans become obsolete is when they are replaced with new ones so to ensure the conditioning remains effective. Examples of such slogans include: "*Ending is better than mending*" (Huxley 2006: 35), "*A gramme is better than a damn*". (Huxley 2006: 78) These statements only hold psychological value by tricking the mind into accepting them with no real-world context. Despite the fact that they are artificial, these phrases represent the reality of the citizens in Huxley's dystopia. They exist solely to serve the state and to fulfil its desires and demands. Although surrounded by others, people live isolated and synthetic lives which warns readers about the potential consequences of such a future. Such a prophetic vision of a faraway future seems closer than ever considering the reality of today's real-world people find themselves in (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 87-88).

Addiction carries a way deeper message than just mere consumption of something that can aid in feeling better. It is not the genes that provoke addiction but rather the environment and the individual's way of interacting with it. Addiction is nothing more than a clear sign a person is suffering and lacks the tools or knowledge on how to endure the situation and effectively cope with it. Their addictive behaviors are the result of wanting to escape the self. The wish to escape arises when individuals suffer and feel trapped inside the confines of their own bodies. The overflow of feelings of hopelessness, faithlessness, isolation, unworthiness and meaninglessness creates immense pain which makes the individual desperate to numb all the pain these states cause. This is clearly defined in the definition of addiction provided by Gabor Maté:

“Addiction is a complex psychological, emotional, physiological, neurobiological, social, and spiritual process. It manifests through any behavior in which a person finds temporary relief or pleasure and therefore craves, but that in the long term causes them or others negative consequences, and yet the person refuses or is unable to give it up. Accordingly, the three main hallmarks of addiction are short-term relief or pleasure and therefore craving; long-term suffering for oneself or others; and an inability to stop” (Maté 2022: 224-225).

What describes the new state is having dead souls in perfectly healthy and living bodies. Making them love the destiny deprived of emotions and anything different than that they predetermined for their citizens is what keeps it going and ensures its leaders a dream-like utopia. This story gives an insight into how a controlled society would look like. The entire Brave New World population can be summarized in an explanation provided by Harold Bloom:

“The people were always in a state of euphoria because the human spirit had been prisoned and confined in a perfectly conditioned healthy cadaver. ‘And that’, put in the Director sententiously, ‘that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you’ve got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their inescapable social destiny” (Bloom 2004: 76).

Promoting self-indulgence is another means of control. Hypnopedia remains the primary method for instilling the desire for leisure activities, particularly through the constant barrage of entertainment approved by the state, like movies, games and other distractions. A significant aspect of this self-indulgence promotion is sexual freedom. Citizens are encouraged to engage in sexual activities as a part of their leisure but only if they omit the idea of family. Again, science here plays an important role by inhibiting pregnancy and sterilizing certain women,

known as “freemartins”. Contraceptives and music facilitate promiscuity as well. The music itself carries subliminal messages that encourage intercourse which is considered to be as pleasurable as soma. However, these activities are carefully regulated as a way of preventing the emergence of love or emotional attachment since this could significantly disrupt the stability of the state (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 71).

Nowadays, children are regarded as something that can be turned into prey for profit-driven market forces. Such a mindset deliberately undermines childhood as a crucial period intended for emotional growth, empathy, creativity and learning to connect with others. All that the society is offering to children is detrimental to their health – from video games, television programs and gadgets to internet platforms and appealing yet unhealthy foods. Children are not the only targets as even adults fall into similarly presented traps which cunningly identifies all their desires in order to offer seemingly irresistible solutions. All of this keeps the population, especially the younger one, fixated onto screens and lured by the rush of dopamine upon consuming such content. Dopamine represents the crucial and most important component that provokes addiction to something, whether it is a behavior or a substance. It is the primary reason why people get addicted since a rush of dopamine suppresses their negative and uncomfortable emotions and states they might be going through by replacing them with feelings of happiness, excitement and aliveness. This leads to the prevention of healthy development and enhances dependency patterns that impede children’s personal growth but benefit the consumer market (Maté 2022: 189-190).

Despite many scientific advancements that could help in improving life, such progress is rejected because it threatens the social stability that wants to be preserved by the leaders. Scientific discoveries are unwelcome in such a closed society since they mostly help people live better lives. If science carries that much power and possibility then why are people still divided into caste systems? Theoretically speaking everyone could belong to the Alpha and Beta classes but this would result in a destabilized society. Each caste has been conditioned to fulfill its specific role so any attempt of shifting people into different roles would create chaos. Change equals instability in this society which is why innovation is treated with suspicion and novelty is viewed as an enemy (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 74).

Huxley argues that a society’s priority must be its people’s humanity, the result of which would be fostering real individuals who are spiritually alive and not robot-like people devoid of soul

and purpose. As the novel declares, “*No civilization without social stability. No social stability without individual stability*” (Huxley 2006: 31). This statement from the novel can be interpreted from two contrasting perspectives. Regarded from the context of *Brave New World*, it implies a society whose stability is achieved through deliberately manipulating the individuals by presenting their methods as something beneficial. Such a dystopian framework masks its detrimental effects on personal development and autonomy and puts societal control into a superior position over genuine and authentic individual well-being, freedom and growth. In contrast, the same statement gains a more positive connotation when dealing with the theme of journey to stability if viewed through a more natural, pro-individualistic lens. In this sense, individual stability implies fostering environments that give space for people to reach their full potential, without being suppressed. The foundation of such a healthy, harmonious and stable society lays in promoting the growth and well-being of the individual in an ethical and sustainable way.

‘Brave New World’ sees the individual as a means only to get to the goal. Its stability is maintained through conditioning with the help of nursery rhymes, jingles, pseudo statements and proverbs. These forms of discourse are deliberately chosen for their repetitive and memorable nature which makes it easier for the Controllers to indoctrinate the population.

Human beings are far less autonomous than it is commonly believed. In essence, a person’s character and personality are shaped by the environment in which they grow up. The roles people are assigned or denied, their inclusion or exclusion from society and the beliefs instilled by the culture is what heavily influences the well-being and susceptibility to illness. In this way, both health and disease are reflections of a larger context. Today’s context is a hyper materialistic society that focuses on consumerism which is the essential force that the capitalistic world is based on. It seems like there is a systemic mechanism that conditions people into accepting harmful behavior to them and to the world around them as normal, which is not something they would innately do. The truth is that such a conditioning is not innate but rather a systemic influence. The main problem is that all the values and expectations of the system infiltrate individuals so deeply that they end up mistaking them for their own. This way, people become followers of the system and act accordingly by serving the purpose imposed by the culture rather than their own genuine desires and beliefs. This phenomenon is depicted and permeated throughout the entire novel *Brave New World*, where citizens are heavily conditioned to the point of escaping themselves and behaving only in ways dictated by the

system rather than in alignment with their true selves. Their actions are not intrinsic and do not come from the core of their being but are instead extrinsic, shaped and predetermined by the culture. The culture is merciless towards people as it causes a separation from self, hunger for consumption and passivity (Maté 2022: 198-201).

4.4. Loss of individuality, erosion of relationships and detachment

To conform is the quickest way to lose one's identity as it stems from the desire to be accepted by others. Conformism exerts a powerful force that draws people in and makes it difficult to be resisted. In contrast, nonconformism often involves enduring hardship and facing negativity from both society and oneself. Not everyone has the capacity to withstand these challenges as they provoke deeply uncomfortable feelings that are difficult to process or overcome. Defying societal rules can lead to ostracism which is a form of exclusion that profoundly affects those that are left out.

In a fragmented, materialistic society, people are led to internalize their mental and physical suffering, viewing it as personal misfortune or failure, rather than recognizing broader systemic influences. The major problem of today's society is alienation that manifests in depression and loneliness. Society makes people alienated by excluding them from any decision-making process and induces despair into them upon realizing the lack of control over their own lives. This ongoing stress fuels fears that disrupt hormonal balance, weaken the immune system and affect overall health. Such a society that underestimates communality, connection, belonging, love and trust becomes estranged from the very essence of what it means to be a human being. Disconnection is infection, it is a disease from which all other illnesses, whether mental, physical or social, originate from (Maté 2022: 285-287).

Primary human needs have remained unchanged since the beginning. Today's culture presents the way it destroys the development of humans and leads to atypicality by helping to manifest the fact that people stay disconnected from themselves and disregard the entire remaining specter of their human needs. The culture's reality has created a new normal that is highly aberrant when compared with the history of human needs and evolution (Maté 2022: 122).

According to Maté, apart from the primary needs that keep a person alive, the ones that are widely consented to be the core humans consist of and depends on for proper development are:

*“- belonging, relatedness, or connectedness;
- autonomy: a sense of control in one's life;
- mastery or competence;
- genuine self-esteem, not dependent on achievement,
- attainment, acquisition, or valuation by others;
- trust: a sense of having the personal and social resources needed to sustain one through life;
- purpose, meaning, transcendence: knowing oneself as part of something larger than isolated, self-centered concerns, whether that something is overtly spiritual or simply universal/humanistic, or, given our evolutionary origins, Nature” (Maté 2022: 287-288).*

Weak familial and community bonds result in children trying to find a replacement for the primary connection whose establishment sets the base for healthy personal development. The human biology fundamentally demands and thrives on connection and attachment, which if not fulfilled early in life will be sought elsewhere. In absence of a more reliable model figure, humans will struggle to properly develop the capacity for learning, regulating emotions and social interacting. Inexistence of a guiding figure may result in the child attaching themselves to someone they encounter whose patterns coincide with the ones that the child longs for. In order for emotional maturity to unfold, emotional health and secure attachment must be formed in early childhood within healthy and supportive environments that provide a sense of worthiness and safety to the child and its lifelong development (Maté 2022: 181).

In ‘Brave New World’, the entire population has been so thoroughly conditioned to conform so that no one dares to rebel. Helmholtz is the only one daring enough to not go against his nature. Being an advocate for individuality, Helmholtz is punished with exclusion for daring to stand apart. Since the majority shares the same thoughts, actions and beliefs, their collective power is overwhelming and leaves little room for nonconformists to resist. The voices of individuals who think differently are ignored and they are unable to gain traction in a society that is so deeply brainwashed. This society which is stripped of independent thought, has become subservient to science and technology because of the fact that they have brought material benefits such as healthier lives, greater pleasures and increased comfort. However, these gains come at a steep cost. As the society has acquired these comforts, it has lost one of its most vital qualities, humanity. The suppression of emotions, the rejection of creativity and the abandonment of religion and art have caused the complete disappearance of the individual self. The ultimate success of such a society, as depicted in the novel, equals the death of the human spirit (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 75-76).

Being one of the World Controllers, Mustapha Mond expresses the core principles of this society in which history is dismissed, individuality is replaced by the community while art, culture and families are eradicated. Such a rejection of the essential elements of human nature degrades the mind and its capacities. Characters like John the Savage and Lenina Crowne represent the outsiders in such an apathetic world because they value things the state has discarded. The only thing ensuring existence of 'Brave New World' is people stripped of their emotions and humanity (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 90-91).

John the Savage is another example of non-conformism. In the end, his disgust of the system manifests in a suicide committal. His decline began after he was no longer called by his full name but when he was referred to as exclusively 'The Savage'. By being labeled as such, he was dehumanized by the system. The fact that he was not raised, or better to say "cultivated", in a "civilized" system but rather in a reservation immediately constrained him to the dehumanization of the system. John is also an example of how media and the brainwashed community can provoke complete insanity in a person. The lifestyle that he led completely differed from everyone in that community, which attracted great interest. He isolated himself in a lighthouse after being completely repulsed by the community and the society he witnessed. In order not to let the system infiltrate and poison him even more, he decided to spend the rest of his life constraining himself to solitude by deciding to spend the rest of his life far away. Feeling completely intoxicated from the community he frequented, provoked his voluntary decision to purify himself. Television reporters found his lighthouse and filmed him punishing himself with whips. The situation escalated because the reporters dismissed his demand that they leave. This created a frenzy, provoking him to the point of rage and complete loss of control. Upon realizing that he succumbed to the provocation, he felt ashamed. This was a crucial moment that, unfortunately, caused him to commit suicide. All that was left of him was the lifeless body, which can be regarded as a symbol of what succumbing to the system does to a person. John was disgusted by himself because losing control for him signified an aberration of personal principles, morals and discipline. Giving in to the principles of the shallow and spiritless society according to Ford meant a death of his inside, a death of his soul, which is the ultimate sin for him (Bloom 2004: 66-69).

In this Huxleyan world, sacrifice of emotional expression, artistic creativity and religious practice is necessary in order to maintain social stability. Upon visiting this society, John the Savage is astonished by the complete absence of art and culture. This deprivation stops people's

ability to express themselves, to contemplate new ideas and to initiate change. The closest thing to literature in their world is the repetitive hypnopedia slogans that subliminally work on instructing them how to live. As a result, people lose the capacity to understand or remember anything beyond these programmed phrases. Their obedience is masked under these slogans which serve to maintain the status quo. What posed the greatest threat to the stability of the society in *Brave New World* is emotional instability. Emotions represent the most complex aspect of human nature considering their major influence on all actions, whether good or bad. Recognizing their powerful potential for disruption, the state developed soma to suppress and neutralize the power of emotions. By depriving people of emotional depth, the state could ensure an easier life, devoid of challenges, struggles or intense feelings. Whenever a problem arose, soma was readily available to cancel any negativity and to maintain the illusion of stability.

The high price society pays to maintain its superficial stability is the absence of art, scientific progress and religion. What is particularly considered as a threat is religion. Faith in God is considered incompatible with the state's goals because it encourages individuals to seek deeper truths about themselves. In a society where people are numbed by drugs and distractions, the presence of God would inspire nonconformity and emotional depth which would go against the state's wish for control. What John the Savage precisely rejects about this world is its artificial happiness. He refuses to sacrifice his personal freedom that comes together with faith and genuine human experience.

The society of God is a complete contrast to the sterile, controlled happiness of the new world because it embraces both good and bad emotions, sin and lastly art. It is raw, real and filled with the depth of human experience. In such a society, happiness is not something that can be measured because it acknowledges imperfection as a part of life's essence. This quasi-utopia of the new world dehumanizes its people by depriving them of the true experience of life which includes both joy and suffering. Being human means accepting both perfection and imperfection and the beauty of life is realized only through this balance which is something the new world utterly lacks (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 74-75).

Such a society offers no hope for a better future which mirrors the disillusionment many feel even in modern times. Despite looking back on the past and acknowledging all the progress that has been made, there is still a pervasive sense that improvement is elusive and that the

future is completely not promising. This is a parallel to the capitalist system of overproduction where the ever-growing population creates more consumers that are being conditioned to obey the leaders' rules without question. More people mean more potential consumers and a larger population is a perfect foundation that allows the system to mold them into a mass that follows orders without ever questioning the beliefs that have been instilled in them.

Brave New World demonstrates how individuals are shaped by predetermined environments for growth and preordained genetic characteristics. Their fates are determined and sealed from the start since the state's control over heredity and conditioning does not leave much room for individuality or change. Such a system ensures that people remain trapped in a cycle of consumption and conformity which reinforces the leaders' power while diminishing any possibility of hope or rebellion (Haugrud Reiff 2010: 75).

An insight into the world of *Brave New World* population is essentially described by Bloom:

“Standard men and women in uniform batches. Electric shocks when babies, crawl towards pretty flowers or pretty pictures: saved from books and botany all their lives. Erotic play in children encouraged; they will be young for all the sixty years of their lives and enormously potent, and in this will lie their natural happiness. The women will never conceive and everyone can and should be completely promiscuous. It would be unnatural and unsocial to go steady. There are no families and there is no mother love. What we call friendship develops only between the misfits. Average citizens lived under the influence of soma all their lives and therefore without individuality or integrity” (Bloom 2004: 77).

An interesting aspect of the novel lies in how shifting perceptions can unveil different interpretations of reality. Whether *Brave New World* is viewed as a utopia or a dystopia depends on the role one takes on. There are two perspectives, that is two roles: that of the reader as an observer and that of the characters inside the plot. The reader is provided with a broader view and understands that the world the characters believe to be a utopia is actually far from it. The characters are immersed in their world, remaining oblivious to its flaws which allows the reader to recognize that their utopia is a carefully constructed illusion. The perceptions of the characters are blurred by the overwhelming influence of their society which makes it impossible for them to realize the deeper issues hidden beneath the surface.

The well-being of any living organism is dependent on whether their essential needs are met. Therefore, truly understanding the kind of individual each person is helps them identify what are the requirements to fully thrive. People's perception of themselves majorly shapes the way

they design their lives, both individually and collectively and ultimately participates in deciding whether the influences of the culture they live in can fulfill the conditions necessary for optimal health and functioning. Understanding human nature is a rather complicated and ongoing thing to grasp. Human nature depends on a lot of factors and influences which are sometimes so unnoticeable that one might not even think it can possibly affect one's nature. As the renowned physician Gabor Maté describes it in his book *The Myth of Normal*, the optimum human nature can be achieved by certain realizations:

“The relative health of any life-form is a function of its essential needs being met, or not met. Thus, to know what kind of beings we are is to know what we need in order to be those beings to the fullest. Who we take ourselves to be dictates how we set up our lives, individually and as a collective, and determines the extent to which a culture does or doesn't meet the requirements for optimal health and functioning” (Maté 2022: 115).

The willingness to heal and master all the components of the self is the most important thing needed to be able to function in today's society and to make the best out of the rare chance to experience life that was given to everybody who is in this world. This can be supported by an excerpt from the famous work of Robert Greene, *The Laws of Human Nature*:

“You like to imagine yourself in control of your fate, consciously planning the course of your life as best you can. But you are largely unaware of how deeply your emotions dominate you. They make you veer toward ideas that soothe your ego. They make you look for evidence that confirms what you already want to believe. They make you see what you want to see, depending on your mood, and this disconnect from reality is the source of the bad decisions and negative patterns that haunt your life. Rationality is the ability to counteract these emotional effects, to think instead of react, to open your mind to what is really happening, as opposed to what you are feeling. It does not come naturally; it is a power we must cultivate, but in doing so we realize our greatest potential” (Greene 2018: 28).

In simple terms, the more meaning people find in their lives, the better their mental and physical health tends to be. Connecting with, helping others and finding one's purpose, all while working on exploring and healing both the individual self and the collective is what makes people fulfill their potential and makes them happier and fulfill.

Conclusion

Mankind is led by a capitalistic society that depletes the individual, strips it from itself and from the way nature has determined it to work. Capitalism has the potential of being a good system, beneficial to its citizens but the present shows that this is far from the reality. The current state of the society is reflected in the role that money took on – it is the master and people are its slaves. Money is a means, it can be a beneficial ally but nowadays it deviates from that. The conscious individuals who noticed the inconsistencies of such a system try to escape the ordinary by playing the game against the non-beneficial rules presented to them. To those unaware of the hidden consequences of capitalism, a capital-oriented system is a heavy burden that does not allow them to experience the true essence of life.

From birth, people in *Brave New World* are engineered to fulfill the role that maintains the smooth functioning of society. Their sense of meaning and purpose is denied from them while being hidden behind a facade of perfection which leads them to blindly follow societal norms without questioning anything. The inherent human drive to improve, to set goals and to seek a unique purpose is completely absent in this dystopian world where everything is readily available. This lack of desire for something greater results in a stagnant society in which people are imprisoned by their ingrained pursuit of stability and perfection.

Uniformity is a “quality” highly valued in this society, which contrasts the fact that true uniformity can never be achieved. Humans may be connected by their shared humanity but that does not make them uniform because each individual has unique characteristics, abilities and experiences that shape them and make them resistant to complete conformity. The society in *Brave New World* imposes a brutal and direct form of conditioning, whereas in today’s world, similar conditioning processes are much subtler but still potent enough to affect an easily-targeting individual. Modern society uses quieter but more insidious methods of control, which work slowly to embed themselves into people’s lives without drawing attention, making them just as deeply implanted as those in the novel.

Even though dystopias have a negative connotation, they are very beneficial in the disillusionment of people and warning about actions that need a stop and the ones that need to be done more in order to evict a dystopic future. All utopias carry the potential of becoming dystopias, and vice versa. Being disillusioned may be hurtful but it is the only correct way that

can inhibit change. Constantly living in an illusion will never cause action but leave the individual passive, in suffering without knowing why. To this day, there has not been a system that proved it can work and properly benefit the humanity. The reason behind that may be hidden behind the fact that no system had the individual as their primary focus.

People cannot think they could have a positive future if they deplete nature and if they lack the awareness that they are doing the same thing to themselves. Everything in life is a cycle, meaning what you put out you receive. Going against mother nature and the human nature is surely a path to destruction. Projecting a utopia or any social change must not contradict the real laws of nature. Improving the society and the individuals cannot involve an opposition to nature and the depletion of its non-infinite resources by overproduction and overconsumption. The nature is to be respected, not depleted or destroyed for the sake of benefiting the greedy human desire for money and power. Such people do not have others nor the environment in mind, only their hunger for more, thinking it will fill out their empty selves. They are not aware that they live in that same environment and system which means that everything they intend for others will boomerang into their life in the same way.

One of the most important things on the healing path is to master one's emotional self. Everybody has this ability if they actively work on it, since healing is a non-finite process that leads to wholeness. The reason why it is vital to master the emotional self and to strive for wholeness is because it focuses on fixing and retrieving the lost parts of the self. This can ground people and make them remember who they truly are before the world dictated who they should be.

It is very daunting to form a conclusion on a topic as profound as researching the negativities that impact the today's world. To decide what is the optimal way of the world functioning in order to benefit every single human is a path full of questions, paradoxes and obstacles, which is the same as trying to imagine a utopia. It always seems as something hardly reachable, but perhaps utopia can be more attainable if humans would stop imagining it as a state where everything is perfect. After all, perfection is finite, leaving no room for betterment. Utopia does not have to imply the absence of the bad but the importance in how the bad is dealt with and approached. Utopias do not need to exist as a destination to be reached, but a direction towards which people need to strive, regardless of if its manifestation. It can serve as motivation to eliminate the things that do not serve humans, even though this idea is dual in its nature since

every challenge and situation serves a purpose by forcing people to seek solutions. The closest to utopia people can get is by making the best of this place and the now, without reaching out for some other place, time or universe. Perhaps it is an ideal world similar to the present one but different in the modus operandi, which implies handling and approaching everything with care, by prioritizing the individual and the interconnection of the whole community that shares the same goal, which can benefit the well-being of each individual and its environment. Cultivating emotional intelligence and the right mindset, getting to know oneself, being more mindful about relationships and understanding people, respecting and helping one another by being friends not foes as the community is an interconnected circle, broadening our horizons by building sensitivity, compassion, understanding and tolerance towards all situations, however incomprehensible they may be is what can get people closer to making the current world a better place. Daring to understand the incomprehensible and not dismissing it, is a courageous and remarkable thing everyone should be doing, but simultaneously one of the most difficult ones since giving up seems easier than persistence in comprehension. Such a realm poses this as its main priority which in turn opens the doors to infinite possibilities.

No panacea exists to cure the complexity of the system. A holistic approach is the closest people can get to panacea. There is no single aspect of life that is the main priority or one thing that will assure improvement since the real betterment lies in a holistic inclusion of all the aspects that affect humans, their development and their life. All things are equally important and the absence of only one cannot ensure the start towards the path of improvement.

The point of being what you believe in, rather than merely speaking about it or discussing it, is the only action that can change the world. The most important thing regarding this thesis is not the themes that were discussed but the action that will be taken to turn the theoretical realizations and ideas into practice. Every person is a world by itself, people can motivate others and be besides them in times of suffering but to make a change, they have to start on their own since nobody can take action instead of them. People can choose to react to the outside, or to approach it creatively by trying to come up with a solution to the problems. Maybe not everything can or needs to be changed, but it is definitely possible by becoming conscious of the things that do not function, healing oneself, introducing systemic changes that will focus on educating the citizens and promoting emotional intelligence. If people do not contribute to the world, to people, to the environment and eventually to their own selves by

being the best version of themselves, is it righteous to say they truly lived? To enlighten, both themselves and the world is what should be the guidance on the path of life.

To change the surroundings, the primary change has to start with and within us. Change demands a community, but only one person to initiate it.

Summary

To understand the world, one must first understand the people that inhabit it and the system that they live in. Researching what is hidden behind the stage of the world, society and humans is a complex yet necessary path that can provide knowledge compulsory for planning change. Delving into the reality of capitalism and the environment that shape people's identities can uncover the hidden reasons behind a malfunctioning society. Seeing how people's actions affect them and their environment makes them aware of the immense power they have within. Carrying such ability, possible to change the world for the better, in collaboration with the rest of the community, can be frightening but eye-opening at the same time.

Through the prism of a famous literary dystopia, *Brave New World*, the functioning of the entire system acting as a mirror of the human kind is explored. The parallels between its dystopian vision and the contemporary society reflect the realities of the present and the hidden problems that impede the human life experience. This offers an insight into where certain choices may lead the humanity to and help to raise awareness on the current situation. The paradox of such negativities in both real and fictional worlds is in the disillusionment they carry, which can be a powerful omen to encourage change within oneself, and therefore within the world.

Key words: capitalism, society, environment, change, psychology, dystopia, utopia, humanity

Sažetak

Da bismo razumjeli svijet, prvo moramo razumjeti ljude koji ga nastanjuju i sustav u kojem se nalaze. Otkrivanje onoga što se skriva iza kulisa svijeta, društva i ljudi je složen, ali neophodan put koji može pružiti znanje neophodno za planiranje promjena. Zadubljivanje u stvarnost kapitalizma i okruženje koje oblikuje identitete ljudi može otkriti skrivene razloge iza lošeg funkcioniranja društva. Kada ljudi vide kako vlastiti postupci utječu na njih i njihovu okolinu, postaju svjesni goleme moći koju imaju u sebi. Nositi takvu sposobnost za promjenu svijeta na bolje, uz suradnju s ostatkom zajednice, može biti zastrašujuće, ali u isto vrijeme prosvjetljujuće.

Kroz prizmu poznate književne distopije, *Vrli novi svijet*, istražuje se funkcioniranje cjelokupnog sustava koji djeluje kao ogledalo ljudske vrste. Paralele između njegove distopijske vizije i suvremenog društva odražavaju realnost sadašnjosti i skrivene probleme koji sprječavaju da se život iskusi na pravi način. To nudi uvid u to kamo određeni izbori mogu dovesti čovječanstvo te pomaže u podizanju svijesti o trenutnoj situaciji. Paradoks takvih negativnosti u stvarnom i fiktivnom svijetu je ta da razotkrivanje istih može snažno utjecati na poticanje promjena unutar sebe, a time i u svijetu.

Ključne riječi: kapitalizam, društvo, okoliš, promjena, psihologija, distopija, utopija, čovječanstvo

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