Three Phases of Aldous Leonard Huxley's Approach to Modernity and Modernization

Hilal Kaya

Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey
hkaya07@yahoo.com

Abstract

Traversing disciplinary boundaries between literary studies, cultural studies and sociology, this study claims to be distinctive because it explores Huxley's writings in relation to the issues of modernity and modernization. The study aims to foreground Huxley's changing engagement with modernity and modernization that informs his novels, *Point Counter Point* (1928) and *Brave New World* (1932). That is, when he wrote *Point Counter Point* his idea of the modern was closer to the liberal narrative of modernity: *Point Counter Point* idealizes "the West" and equates it with modernity. From *Brave New World* on, however, Huxley started to make a criticism of this understanding of the modern and re-conceptualized his attitude to modernity and modernization. He challenges the limits of conventional time and deconstructs the binaries between "the West" and "the East:" his novel, in other words, reconfigures modernity and modernization in ways that foreground multiple experiences and practices of modernity.

Key Words: Huxley, Eurocentrism, modernity, modernization, Multiple Modernities.

I.   Introduction: Theorizing Modernity and Modernization

The idea of the modern is highly ambiguous and this becomes most apparent in the impossibility of specifying a single definition of it. The modern is associated with many other terms such as pre-modern, tradition, post-modern, hypermodern, modernization, modernity and so on. According to Ali Mirsepassi, in order to theorize modernity and modernization and to understand "whether modernity is a totalizing ideology and inherently hostile to 'local' social and cultural experiences […] or whether there is any possibility for different paths to modernity," (2004, p. 4) one needs to "explore the genealogy of the Western modernity and its dichotomizing representation of non-Western cultures and societies" (2004, p. 1). Ali Mirsepassi's categorization of the Western narratives of modernity in *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization* (2004) – in which he aims to "lay out a story of Iranian modernity and to explore this troubled and troubling situation" (2004, p. 1) – provides this study with a set of working definitions of the terms central to this study. To begin with, he argues that

"modernity as both an intellectual and a political project has a long history of differentiating, excluding and dominating the non-Western parts of the world" (2004, p. 4). He accordingly claims that one can talk about two major narratives of the Western modernity: "the liberal tradition of modernity" and "a more radical vision of modernity" (2004, p. 1, 2). In this categorization, he states that

> the liberal tradition of modernity (Montesquieu, Hegel, Weber, Durkheim, Orientalism) privileges Western cultural and moral dispositions, defining modernity in terms of Western cultural and historical experiences. The liberal vision of modernity […] considers Western culture an essential part of modernization, viewing non-Western cultures and traditions as fundamentally hostile to modernity and incompatible with modernization. (2004, p. 1, 2)

As a part of the liberal vision of modernity, modernization is also positioned against the traditional, or "the new" is posed against what "pre-existed." Modernity's temporality takes only one understanding of time, the history of the West, having a linear, progressive movement from past to future. The modern which allegedly emerged distinctively and exclusively in the West claims to be universal and to represent the world history. In this respect, the conception of historical time renders modern history singular and uniform, and modern history refers to the advancement of modernity in "the West." The idea of a single historical time either ignores the possibility of more than one history or tends to fit the other histories in to the historical time of the West. Furthermore, modernization describes the conflict between the modern and the traditional qualitatively; that is "the modern West" is taken as superior to "the traditional non-West." As Timothy Mitchell points out, "modernization continues to be commonly understood as a process begun and finished in Europe, from where it has been exported across ever-expanding regions of the non-West" (2000, p. 1). Theorizing modernity is conventionally made up of studying the development of Western bourgeois socio-economic and cultural-intellectual formations. It presumes the existence of the dualism between the West and its exterior. In this respect, modernity is defined not just spatially but temporally or in historical stages.

Mirsepassi names the second narrative of modernity as "the radical vision of modernity (as articulated by Marx, Habermas, Giddens and Berman) [which] envisions modernization as practical and empirical experience that liberates societies from their oppressive 'material' conditions" (2004, p. 2). So the difference between the liberal and radical visions of modernity is related to the latter's emphasis on modernity as a material condition, and thus it provides the existence of the likelihood of a more locally explained formulation of modernization. However, since the radical vision of modernity, like the liberal vision, tends to overlook ethnicity, the legacy of imperialism and colonialism, it is open to be appropriated by the Eurocentric theories of modernity and modernization. In other words, according to Mirsepassi, what both visions of modernity ignore is "the colonial terrain of modernity and universalism," (2004, p. 4) and in this respect, both visions of modernity can be considered Eurocentric because they exclude the non-Western part of the world and they do not conceptualize modernity from a universal perspective. For these visions, modernization means industrialization of the West. In the non-Western context, modernization can only refer to a project of "'development' or 'catching up' with, and homogenizing into, the economically, politically and culturally modern West" (Mirsepassi, 2004, p. 6).

These visions of modernity have three fundamental assumptions: first, they define non-West as a singular, essentialized entity. In addition, Mirsepassi contends, they "frame the West as having an unchanging cultural essence, and 'East' and 'West' as disconnected, static, and ontologically separate 'things' […] an endless logic of reductionist binaries springs from these obscure and essentialized categories" (2004, p. 8). Second, they define contemporary conditions

in non-West in the sense of conditions of Western experience. And third, they make the assumption that there is only one fundamental route that leads to modernity in the world, and "the West" lived through this route in advance of "the non-West." A critical exploration of these assumptions thus reveals that these visions of modernity are Eurocentric and are conceptualized to consolidate Western domination.

To the categorization of the Western narratives of modernity provided by Mirsepassi, we can add two more approaches to modernity that are informed by the qualities which the liberal and radical narratives lack or ignore: the third one is the critical discourse of modernity (as articulated by Huxley in the nineteen twenties and the Frankfurt School) and the fourth one is the Multiple Modernities approach, which will be used to explain Huxley's (specifically after the nineteen thirties) approach to modernity and modernization.

The critical discourse of modernity as produced by Huxley (throughout the twenties) and later such Frankfurt School thinkers as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse is similar to the liberal vision of modernity in that both narratives argue that modernity is a Western paradigm and for the non-West modernization means Westernization. In their depiction of modernity, "'the West' is the ideal model while the non-Western world's existence can be summed up in terms of what it *is not* in relation to this ideal" (emphasis original, Mirsepassi, 2004, p. 8). Yet, while the critical discourse of modernity agree with many important intellectual hypotheses of the liberal vision of modernity, its emphasis on (Western) culture and subjectivism renders the critical discourse of modernity articulated by Huxley, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse different. In other words, Huxley and the Frankfurt School theorists criticized the liberal tradition of modernity for not taking "culture, values, morality, and religion" as "the first issue" (Mirsepassi, 2004, p. 9). Placing priority on culture (even it is on the Western culture) and criticizing progressivism, the critical discourse is thus engaged with the paradigm of modernity. During the last century, the Frankfurt School thinkers produced a critique of both the liberal and radical visions of modernity in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). This study refers to the critical terminology – mass culture, progress, instrumental rationality, labor-leisure, pleasure and culture industry – produced by Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse for two purposes: to foreground how Huxley's ideas in his novels and essays became influential on the thinkers of the Frankfurt School in developing their theoretical concepts later, and to show that this connection between their ideas becomes instrumental in this study since it enriches our reading of Huxley's novels. Therefore, finding parallelisms between Huxley's ideas in his novels and the Frankfurt School thinkers' terminology is not an anachronistic approach. On the contrary, it indicates that Huxley and the theorists produced a critique of Western modernity in similar terms, and in this respect it can be argued that Huxley's arguments of modernity influenced the Frankfurt School thinkers' conceptualization of modernity and both Huxley's and the thinkers' arguments concerning modernity and modernization belong to the same critical narrative of modernity.

The failure to adequately theorize colonialism leaves both the liberal and radical visions of modernity close to the Eurocentric tendencies of prevailing narratives of modernity and modernization. Likewise, the modernization theory claims that its aim is to make non-Western societies closer to the modern West; that is, in this equation, modernization means Westernization. However, as contemporary debates in postcolonial scholarship have revealed, the European "other" was functional in Western self-definition of its modernity. These debates re-contextualized the meaning attached to "modernity" and "modernization." In addition, against the dominant forms of modernity, the idea of recovering the local or turning to the "authenticity" of the local is recognized. But by "local" resistance, Mirsepassi argues, what is meant is the "'local' politics based on local 'identities' in the 'Third World' as the invention of resistance against Western power, but not for this reason as anti-modern" (2004, p. 11). So, the

weaknesses in the logic of the Western narratives of modernity and modernization theory paved the path for what we know today as the Multiple Modernities approach which aims to dismantle the Eurocentric beliefs of the Western narratives of modernity. The idea of Multiple Modernities also aims to deconstruct the conventional binary oppositions such as modernity vs. tradition, the developed/civilized vs the undeveloped/primitive which were instrumental in the self-explanation of "the West" and in the formation of the modern. According to the Multiple Modernities approach, there can be more than one path to modernity and every society may offer its own unique response which will spring from its specific cultural-traditional inheritance. That is, societies can experience modernity on their own terms; this is an actualization of a modernity which is based on national, cultural experiences and historical knowledge. In this respect, the Multiple Modernities approach aims to reconcile the modern with the traditional/the local/the cultural for the purpose of exploring the possibilities of plurality in defining the modern.

Huxley's critique of the modern presents affinities with that of Multiple Modernities in that Huxley specifically after the thirties formulated the modern not in terms of geographical spaces (east, west, Europe, non-Europe) nor did he approach the modern in historical stages (past, present, future, the new and traditional). Although he does not criticize the idea of the modern, modernity and modernization *per se*, he adopts a critical approach to an understanding of the modern that sees the modern as a rupture, or in terms of dichotomies such as the west and the east or the modern and the traditional.

II.   Modernity and Modernization in Huxley's Fiction

Huxley's critical approaches to the understanding of modernity and modernization are often reflected as uneasiness in his satirical novels. In other words, he criticizes the modern not because it is "a stage of history but because history itself is staged by it" (Mitchell, 2000, p. 1). In *Point Counter Point* the liberal and radical visions of modernity are criticized not because they are Eurocentric but because, as the novel reflects, they preach a modern life that merely foregrounds mindless pleasure, instrumental rationality, developmentalism and the materialistic approach to life; they ignore the cultural approach. In his *Brave New World* a new conceptualization of modernity and modernization is presented and thus the modern is set free from the confines of the binary oppositions like the modern vs. the traditional. His idea of the modern as implied in *Brave New World* proposes a new temporal formulation that transcends not only what Bergson calls "mathematical time" or "homogeneous empty time" but also the geographical signifiers.

In Huxley's novels, this approach to the modern in time-related terms manifests itself as a critique of the modern world that mechanizes time and thus dehumanizes the individual because the mathematical/mechanized time eliminates creativity and leaves the individual with the repetitive work and alienation. There is an affiliation between Huxley's thoughts and the theories developed later by the Frankfurt School thinkers; that is, Huxley's novels can be taken as a satire on what Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse call mass production, progressivism, and the Enlightenment myths.

III.   Three Phases of Huxley's Approach to Modernity between the 1920s and the 1930s

Huxley's work between the 1920s and the 1930s exemplifies three different phases of his approach to modernity: first, his fascination with the Western narrative of modernity in the early twenties (his early writings such as *Antic Hay* - 1923 and *On the Margin* - 1923 can be mentioned here*)*; then, his critique of it from a Eurocentric perspective in the late twenties (*Jesting Pilate* - 1926 and *Point Counter Point* - 1928) ; and finally, his critical approach to the

liberal narrative of modernity and progressivism starting from the early thirties on (*Brave New World* -1932 and *Island* - 1962).

As mentioned earlier, parallelisms between Huxley and the Frankfurt School thinkers' ideas concerning mass culture, progress, labor-leisure, pleasure and culture industry bring them together and cause them to be handled under a similar category of narratives of modernity. Adorno and Horkheimer, like Huxley, criticized the Enlightenment in order to rescue it in an increasingly instrumentalized world. In other words, neither Huxley nor Adorno and Horkheimer were intent on reason's complete destruction but they remained critical of it. Adorno and Horkheimer wanted to reveal the discrepancy between the Enlightenment's promises and the way of the world in the twentieth century by claiming that the human mind and knowledge had been reduced to instruments of domination and enslavement in the twentieth century. Working in the shadow of the Great War and prophesying WWII, Huxley puts forward in "Science and Civilization" (1932) that "our civilization, as each one of us is uncomfortably aware, is passing through a time of crisis" (p. 105). He thought that it was "a time of crisis" because he believed that the cause of the crisis was the rationality of the modern individual. In the same essay, he claimed that unlike the past, when the worst enemy of human beings was nature, in the modern age troubles stemmed from human beings' application of science and technology for their own egotistical purposes. He went even further in his fiction by "turn[ing] science and technology into suspects in a crime against humanity" (O'Har, 2004, p. 482). He believed that in the modern age science, democracy and universal education were likely to be applied by people who pursued more economic than humanitarian ends. Therefore, he believed that inventions, which he called "art," not Nature, brought the modern age into chaos: "[t]he very arts and sciences which we have used to conquer Nature have turned on their creators and are now conquering us" (Huxley, 1932, p. 107). What Huxley wanted to emphasize was that pure science in itself is morally neutral; it becomes good or evil depending on its application. Briefly, to Huxley, the modern world became a more deformed, authoritarian and technology-driven society due to a lopsided and partial application of scientific methods; and it was "culture" which was severely injured by the consequences of instrumental rationality: "culture – once a refuge of beauty and truth – was falling prey to tendencies toward rationalization, standardization, and conformity which was interpreted as a consequence of the triumph of the instrumental rationality that was coming to pervade and structure ever more aspects of life" (Kellner, 2002, p. 87).

In the same manner, Adorno and Horkheimer produced a well-developed theory of what they call "the culture industry" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 95) during their exile in America. In America they had the chance to observe American culture, and as a consequence they came to the conclusion that the cultural industry is a principal tenet of a new formulation of modernity based on capitalism. They argue that capitalist modernity in modern times takes advantage of culture, using advertising and mass communications to manipulate human beings; that is, these modern forms are used as an "apparatus" of social control and contribute to the maintenance of capitalism. Their theory of the culture industry is in fact an analysis of both the fundamental traits of the "totally administered society" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 161) and a critique of capitalism.

Although several essays of Huxley influenced Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse in the shaping of the ideas expressed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Huxley's essay "The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age" (1927) is the one which most explicitly shows his impact on the conceptualization of modernity by this "inner circle of the School" (Honneth, 1987, p. 362). At the very beginning of the essay Huxley claims that "studying the good and the evil features in American life, we are studying, in a generally more definite and highly developed form, the good and evil features of the whole world's present and immediately coming

civilization" (Huxley, 1927, p. 185). The idea that the future of all civilized societies depends on America indicates his fear of America's influence on Europe, particularly England; he fears "the Americanization of the world" (Huxley, 1927, p. 186). Like Huxley, the Frankfurt School theorists had American culture in mind when they criticized mass culture. In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that popular culture resembles a factory that produces standardized cultural goods such as movies, radio programs, magazines, and suchlike, which are used as tools to manipulate mass society into consumption, passivity and contentment. They claim that the culture industry that is particularly powerful in American society creates false needs that can only be satisfied by the products of capitalism (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944, p. 135).

"Progress" is another concept theorized in a similar way by Huxley, Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. In his essay "Progress" (1928), Huxley holds that progress is "a modern invention [and what] made it possible [was] the enormous expansion of man's material resources during the age of industrialism" (1928, p. 293). Although, Huxley believed that nature could be controlled by science and technology, that is, by human intelligence, he also had bleak thoughts about the future of the industrialized and "progressed" nations. He believed that material progress does not automatically entail spiritual progress because "there is no necessary relation between quantity and quality of human activity, or between wealth and virtue" (1928, p. 294). Briefly, Huxley's approach to the notion of progress is hesitant, because although he admits the significance of technological progress, he fears its harmful effects on the "true values" of human existence. His fear comes from his idea that progress turns against its creator, so as to harm and destroy the creator. In other words, he participates in the classical debate about progress by engaging in the question of the relationship between knowledge and moral conduct. In 1934 essay, "Reason Eclipsed,"[1] Huxley states that "[p]rogress is not, as some pessimists proclaim, a leap out of the frying pan into the fire; but, alas, it is only too often a passage from one frying pan into another frying-pan" (1934, p. 399).

In the late nineteen-twenties Huxley, then, was an anti-progressivist thinker with what might be called Eurocentric tendencies.[2] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's definitions of the intellectual and political tendencies underlying Eurocentric discourse are as follows:

> 1. Eurocentric discourse projects a linear historical trajectory leading from classical Greece (constructed as "pure," "Western," and "democratic") to imperial Rome and then to metropolitan capitals of Europe and the US. It renders history as a sequence of empires. […] In all cases, Europe, alone and unaided, is seen as the "motor" for progressive historical change: it invents class society, feudalism, capitalism, the industrial revolution. 2. Eurocentrism attributes to the "West" an inherent progress toward democratic institutions. 3. Eurocentrism elides non-European democratic traditions, while obscuring the manipulations embedded in Western formal democracy and masking the West's part in subverting democracies abroad. 4. Eurocentrism minimizes the West's oppressive practices by regarding them as contingent, accidental,

---

[1] It should be mentioned here that the parallelism between Huxley's and Horkheimer's works is first signaled by their titles: Huxley's essay is "Reason Eclipsed" (1934) and Horkheimer's book is *Eclipse of Reason* (1947). Like Huxley, Horkheimer in this work showed that action in the name of and for the sake of progress instead leads to "social oppression and exploitation [which] threatens at every stage to transform progress into its opposite, complete barbarism" (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 134).

[2] At this point, it should be emphasized that when this study takes a critical attitude to the universalization of Eurocentric norms, it aims to focus on the institutional discourses and historically configured relations of power, and these institutional discourses and power relations are pertinent in this study because it takes that Huxley until *Brave New World* (1932) grounded his understanding of the modern in the historically situated discourse of Eurocentrism.

exceptional. 5. Eurocentrism appropriates the cultural and material production of non-European while denying both their achievements and its own appropriation thus consolidating its sense of self and glorifying its own cultural anthropophagy. (1994, p. 2-3)

As indicated above, the discourse of Eurocentrism is a means of constructing a European history in ways in which Europe's relationship with the rest of the world throughout history is justified while non-Western cultures are represented in a condescending way in keeping with such a historiography. Huxley's essay "Dangers of Diversity" (1932) exemplifies the point number 1 in the list above by the statement that "[h]istory shows that societies tend to develop in the same sort of the way. Tribalism gives place to national unification and then to imperialism" (1932, p. 346). Similarly, the point number 2 is illustrated in Huxley's statement in the same essay that "[w]e are justified in hoping that, at some not too distant date, *our descendants* will agree to manage their international affairs *peaceably* […]. But though this happy consummation may be realized in *the West*, is there any reason to believe that it will be simultaneously realized *else-where*? Alas, there is not" (1932, p. 346). In addition, the point number 5 in the list above is exemplified in Huxley's essay when he claims that "[e]verything indicates that India, China, and the newly conscious peoples of Africa are entering upon that phase of intense nationalism which the European peoples entered at various times between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. […] As *we* begin to think internationally and disarm, *they* will be bursting with jingoism and spoiling for a fight" (1932, p. 347).

Huxley is biased in assuming that all countries will follow the same historical trends and that non-Western countries are "behind" the Western ones. Moreover, according to this vision of the development of societies within a linear understanding of history, it is also obvious that for Huxley non-Western countries would one day inevitably threaten Western ones which developed before them. His wording reveals that Huxley tends to hierarchize the West and the rest of the world, and he is inclined to universalize Eurocentric norms: he seems to identify "our descendants" with peace, "we" with "the modern," "the West," "the superior" and "they" with "the pre-modern" or "non-modern," "the East," "the inferior." Also, the way he sees anti-colonial nationalist movements as depicted in the quotation – "the newly conscious peoples of Africa" and "bursting with jingoism and spoiling for a fight" – reveals his biased attitude towards independence movements in the colonies. His attitude is thus regarded as Eurocentric and it is significant for this study to the extent that his early ideas of the modern are characterized by his Eurocentric tendencies. As mentioned, Huxley's having Eurocentric tendencies in the twenties is a significant part in this discussion because this part of the study aims to reveal how Huxley's understanding of the modern in *Point Counter Point* was shaped by his Eurocentric leanings.[3]

Huxley's conceptualization of modernity in *Point Counter Point* relies on the liberal narrative of modernity that sees modernity as a distinctively and exclusively Western notion. That is, *Point Counter Point* is structured around an understanding of modernity which equates the modern with the West. His formulation of the modern and its implied definition in the late twenties were founded on a Eurocentric perspective and this idea is manifested by several characters, which function as tools to reflect the writer's/narrator's ideas in the novel. In the novel Huxley, in Marcusean terms, condemns "the horrors of modern 'pleasure'" (Huxley, 1920-25, p. 356) or the prevalence of mass produced, widely accessible entertainment, and

---

[3] Yet, as will be shown, Huxley constantly had evolving attitudes to the concepts of "the East," "the West," modernity and time; therefore, his writings starting from the early nineteen-thirties indicate that he began to grow more critical of his Eurocentric view, which identifies "the West" with the modern and "the East" with the non-modern, and therefore, he started to re-conceptualize his understanding of the modern and modern time.

"compulsive good-timing" that dull the mind (Huxley, 1926-29, p. 85). An exploration of the role of "the house party" in *Point Counter Point* reveals that Huxley takes the house party as a fictional laboratory to experiment on characters as representatives of the modern individual and to demonstrate how they try to fill the void with organized activities and ready-made distractions. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is presented with the musical party at Lady and Lord Edward's house. One example of the way in which Huxley depicts the foolishness of the repeated and monotonous behavior in such house parties is one of the house-party guests, John Bidlake's teasing of a late comer:

> [h]e [John Bidlake] was looking in the direction of the door, where the latest of the late-comers was still standing, torn between the desire to disappear unobtrusively into the silent crowd and the social duty of making her arrival known to her hostess. … Bidlake was in ecstasies of merriment. He had echoed the poor lady's [the late comer's] every gesture as she made it. […] He had repeated her gesture of regret, grotesquely magnifying it until it expressed a ludicrous despair. …He turned to Lady Edward in triumph. 'I told you so,' he whispered, […] 'It's like being in a deaf and dumb asylum. Or talking to pygmies in Central Africa.' (1928, p. 26-7)

John Bidlake, who was once Lady Edwards's lover and is a famous painter makes fun of the other guests and calls the whole event a "pantomime" (1928, p. 22). Huxley here emphasizes that a house party as a form of "effortless pleasure" induces passivity and uniformity; therefore John Bidlake calls it a "deaf and dumb asylum." Interestingly, Bidlake likens all other guests to "pygmies in Central Africa." He uses the word "pygmy" as an insult. Here, then, the underlying tone of Bidlake's words suggests his Eurocentric perspective. Also it is possible to pinpoint another problem of his use of this word: he uses the name of some ethnic groups of Central Africa in order to humiliate and insult a group of Westerners, that is, the party guests are positioned as Africans, which is a means of criticizing them. Also, Huxley highlights his negative ideas about modern pleasure manifested in such parties by stating that "the horrors of modern 'pleasure' arise from the fact that every kind of organized distraction tends to become progressively more and more imbecile" (1920-25, p. 356). The most explicit criticism targeting such gatherings is supplied by the narrator when he conveys, John Bidlake's son, Walter Bidlake's ideas:

> [a] jungle of innumerable trees and dangling creepers - it was in this form that parties always presented themselves to Walter Bidlake's imagination. A jumble of noise; and he was lost in the jungle, he was trying to clear a path for himself through its tangled luxuriance. The people were the roots of the trees and their voices were the stems and waving branches and festooned lianas - yes, and the parrots and the chattering monkeys as well. […] And all these voices (what were they saying? '... made an excellent speech ...'; '... no idea how comfortable those rubber reducing belts are till you've tried them ...'; '... such a bore ...'; '... eloped with the chauffeur ...'), all these voices are […] here, in the jungle.... Oh, loud, stupid, vulgar, fatuous. […] 'A refined and perfumed imitation of a savage or an animal. The logical conclusion, so far as most people are concerned, of having money and leisure.' (1928, p. 60)

As in the old Bidlake's narration, this criticism is raised in a way in which images from Africa are used in a derogatory way.[4] Aiming to portray the traumatized effects of the enforced sociability on Walter, the narrator uses the jungle imagery to emphasize these parties'

---

[4] Although this point is about very long-held and well-attested prejudices, it is worth mentioning here because, as will be indicated, it helps us see how Huxley in the twenties formed his understanding of the modern and of the dichotomy between "the West" and "the East."

superficiality and imbecility because, in the narrator's understanding, the "jungle with its animals" has negative associations like "savagery," "noise," "stupidity" and "vulgarity." He opposes the notion of "jungle" to civilization, organization, and intellectuality. In other words, when jungle is concerned, the implied author seems to have strong reservations against wild nature in the form of jungle. The text privileges cultivated and domesticated nature. Thus it is evident in the novel that that according to Huxley, enforced sociability manifested through parties became a representation of the alienation of the individual from the social. In many instances in the novel the implied author adopts a critical role towards his "modern" society, yet to pinpoint their "non-modernity" or "primitivism" he uses terms and images that are associated with "the East." As underlined before, Huxley and the inner-circle thinkers of the Frankfurt School criticize the way the modern is experienced in the west but they formulate the concept of time as a linear, progressive movement from the past to the future, and modernity as moving from the West to the East.

Yet, *Brave New World* manifests a paradigm shift in Huxley's understanding of the modern because the novel is structured around a conceptualization of the modern not in terms of space but of time. This shift is significant because Huxley's attempt to conceptualize the modern in terms of time indicates that he is discontented with the ways in which the modern is imagined. A progressive ideology which argues that society will develop until utopia was attained is criticized in this text because, according to him, the means (industrialization) does not justify the end (utopia). On the contrary, *Brave New World* shows that the means makes the end impossible because technology has started to mechanize linear time and dehumanize the individual in the modern age. The progress offered by a linear view of time/a mathematical time and progression is denounced because it brings a new kind of slavery. Seeing the loophole in this system, he was concerned with the idea that the mechanization of time has rendered human beings cogs in a machine and sentenced to endless repetition. It is the world view represented by this human-made machine (clocks and watches as the symbols of the mechanization of time) that dominates human beings in the modern age.

As a political satire in the form of a dystopian novel, *Brave New World* seems to underscore the concerns and problems regarding totalitarian ideologies, uncontrolled science and over-consumption, which constitute a large part of his overall criticism of modernity. The society depicted in *Brave New World* is very much like the embodiment of the aspects of modernity that would later torment the theorists of the Frankfurt School. That is, what connects *Brave New World* with the ideas of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse includes the novel's concern with the misuse of science, instrumental rationality and the Enlightenment faith in universalism. As mentioned before, Adorno briefly discussed Huxley's satirical dystopian novel in *Prisms* (1955) and he shared with Huxley "a deep distrust of instrumental rationality, that is, the ascendancy of a technologically exploitable knowledge that asserts itself without grounding itself in something broader, more fundamental" (Baker, 1995, p. 246). Written in the interwar period, *Brave New World* is a narrative of historical regression that is disguised as historical progression and in many ways it corresponds to a very dark picture of the world depicted in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer produced a very dark vision of the Enlightenment agenda, or dialectic of Enlightenment because they aimed to criticize the Enlightenment's estimation of reason as the universal and objective representative of reality. Likewise, Huxley's novel provides a critique of the totalizing assertions of reason, science and technology. As Baker claims, "*Dialectic* is an important intertext […] that connects Huxley's critique of science and the instrumental ethic of positivism to the theoretical debate on modernity and modernism" (1995, p. 248). Huxley's critique of the totalizing claims of reason, science and the instrumental rationality in this novel is a way in which he engaged in the question of modernity: as we have seen, he had become increasingly critical of modernity as

failing to justify Enlightenment reason; therefore, he criticized the dark side of modernity, or the things it brought about.

Throughout his writing career, Huxley emphasized the dual character of modernity in the West; that is, it does harm as much as good. In his *Jesting Pilate* (1926), Huxley compared people living in the Eastern and Western parts of the world, and he prioritized the Western world over the Eastern on the basis of his observation that the Eastern parts of the world lack sanitary conditions and they lead science and technology-deprived lives. In a Eurocentric manner he categorizes the West as the ideal and the pioneer compared to the "primitive" and "religion-inflicted" people of Eastern societies. To him, these social conveniences and comforts are the positive and beneficial aspects of modernity through which, he assumes, one can judge societies as "primitive" or "advanced." However, as mentioned previously, it is the same Huxley who in *Point Counter Point* criticizes modernity for wasting the West's human resources, ignoring the Western heritage of scientific outlook and spoiling the culture with cheap means of entertainment. Seeing "the dark side of the Western experiences of modernity" (Mirsepassi, 2004, p. 18) in the early thirties – such as the use of technology and science to control society, instrumental rationality, the Enlightenment faith in universalism, the emergence of a consumer society and of an authoritative state and the West's fabrication of a dichotomy between itself and the notion of a non-Western "Other" and so on – Huxley seems to have begun deviating from his temporal and spatial formulations of modernity which previously, in *Point Counter Point* for instance, made him formulate time as a linear, progressive movement from the past to the future, and modernity as moving from the West to the East. In *Brave New World* possible dystopian outcomes of Western societal modernization are imagined. The Western societal modernization indicates the prioritization of economic and scientific progress as a result of the primacy of instrumental rationality, and the emergence of bureaucratically administered states and mass media. All these combined together gave rise to a very pessimistic picture of the present and future, about which Huxley was deeply concerned. In his fiction, he challenges the limits of conventional time and manages to heal the breach between these dichotomies: neither the concept of the past nor the present is elevated or idealized.

In *Brave New World* the breach in the flow of time, that is, the rupture between the past and the present is emphasized through the use of the counterpoint technique. In the novel "the primitive" John the Savage is placed in opposition to "the modern" Mustapha Mond and the novel criticizes both positions equally. The idea of condemning the World State and the Savage Reservation as two examples of failed societies in the novel is elaborated when John the Savage is arrested and taken to the World Controller Mustapha Mond's office. John argues with Mond and states his reasoning as follows:

> '[b]ut I like the inconveniences.' 'We don't,' said the Controller. 'We prefer to do things comfortably.' 'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.' 'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.' 'All right then,' said the Savage defiantly, 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.' 'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen to-morrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.' There was a long silence. 'I claim them all,' said the Savage at last. Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. 'You're welcome,' he said. (Huxley, 1932, p. 219)

This lengthy quotation indicates the stalemate between John the Savage and Mustapha Mond. It illustrates the fact that humankind cannot "go forward" with Mond's World State which

supports material comforts and precludes inspiration, intuition, liberty and creativity, or the fact that humankind cannot go "backward" with John's world, which offers a less artificial life but puts restraints on its people by limiting them through religious and social rituals and prejudices. Huxley places the World Controller Mustapha Mond, the representative of the dark side of the Western societal modernization, opposed to John the Savage, the symbol of the pre-modern and tradition in order to challenge and criticize the liberal tradition of modernity's tendency of defining the modern in terms of the west and the pre-modern in terms of the east. So, it can be argued that Huxley whose earlier writing, such as *Jesting Pilate* (1926), illustrates his critique of Eastern religiosity comes to emphasize in *Brave New World* that unrestricted materialism in the West, which he likens to the unrestricted power of religious leaders in the East, eventually leads to the loss of freedom and creativity. The climactic discussion scene between Mustapha Mond and John the Savage proves the neither world-view righteous or ideal, but it points out a stalemate or a huge dilemma. The novel suggests a way out of this dilemma by introducing a third character, Helmholtz Watson, who represents an alternative world-view to the philosophies of Mond and John. Therefore, it seems that *Brave New World* advocates a new kind of direction, a third alternative, which is embodied by Helmholtz Watson, who unites intellectual motives of both Mustapha Mond and John the Savage. Watson stands for the hope to set both "the modern" and "the primitive" people free from their loop because he has the potential to transcend these constructed notions.

IV.   Conclusion: Huxley's Re-configuration of Modernity

With such an argument, Huxley's novel opens itself for a reading of a reconfiguration of the modern defined in terms of time rather than space. The society of the brave new world seems to live in a frozen future time, while the people in the Reservation are seen as backward in time by the World State. In this binary opposition, Helmholtz has the potential to be an individual who can lead a mode of existence which contains both the past and present, and transcends these categorizations of time. In other words, *Brave New World* suggests that the problem of breach/rupture/dichotomy is solved by opening and widening the concept of time so large that it is able to accommodate both the traditionally-defined concepts of the past and those of the future. Huxley's reconfiguration of the modern indicates the denial of binary oppositions and the prioritization of the concept of time, and in this respect it implies that Huxley after *Brave New World* abandoned his tendency to formulate the modern in Eurocentric terms and it paved the way for a new understanding of the modern that embraces plural experiences of modernity. Therefore, Huxley's critique of and discontent with the modern as exposed in *Brave New World* presents affinities with that of Multiple Modernities in that he specifically after the thirties formulated the modern not in terms of geographical spaces nor did he approach the modern in historical stages. Since Huxley challenges the limits of conventional time and deconstructs the binaries between "the West" and "the East:" his novel, in other words, reconfigures modernity and modernization in ways that foreground multiple experiences and practices of modernity.

Works Cited

Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer (1944). *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. New York: The Continuum Publishing, 1994.

Adorno, T. (1967). *Prisms*. London: Neville Spearman.

Baker, Robert S. (1995). "The Nightmare of the Frankfurt School: The Marquis de Sade and the Problem of Modernity in Aldous Huxley's Dystopian Narrative" in *Now More Than Ever: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium*, *Münster 1994*, ed. Bernfried Nugel. 245-60. Frankfurt, Berlin, New York: Peter Lang.

Honneth, Axel. (1987). "Critical Theory" *Critical Theory Today* eds. A. Giddens and J Turner. Cambridge: Polity.

Horkheimer, Max. (1947). *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: OUP.

Huxley, A. L. (1926). *Jesting Pilate: The Diary of A Journey*. London: Chatto Windus.

_____ . (1928). *Point Counter Point*. London: Modern Library.

_____ . (1932). *Brave New World*. London: Chatto Windus.

_____ . (1920-63). *Aldous Huxley Complete Essays Vol. I-II-III-IV-V-VI, 1920-1963*. Baker, Robert S. and James Sexton, eds., Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

Kellner, Douglas. (2002). "Theodor W. Adorno and the Dialectics of Mass Culture" in *Adorno: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Marcuse, Herbert. (1955). *Eros and Civilization: Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Mirsepassi, Ali. (2004). *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran.* Cambridge: CUP.

Mitchell, Timothy. (2000). "The Stage of Modernity" in *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis, the Uni. of Minnesota Press.

O'Har, George. (Apr., 2004). "Technology and Its Discontents" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 45, No. 2 pp. 479-485. The John Hopkins University Press.

Shohat, E. and Robert Stam. (1994). *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge.