

# Traces of Transhumanism in Michel Houellebecq's Novel *Elementary Particles*

## Michel Houellebecq'in *Temel Parçacıklar* Adlı Romanında Transhümanizmin İzleri

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### Abstract

Transhumanism sees the next step of the evolution of humanity in technology, together with the developments in the twentieth century and the influence of positivism. It desires to use technology as a tool for a stronger, smarter, non-sick, even immortal humanity. Transhumanists developed in an environment where the influence of humanism was reduced due to materialism and they aim to create a superhuman through technologies such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and cloning. In literature, which is a close follower mirror of social developments, transhumanist works are frequently encountered as they create a suitable environment for the development and discussion of transhumanist ideas. Therefore Transhumanism has become an important subject in world literature and has attracted the attention of French authors. Michel Houellebecq, one of the leading figures of contemporary French literature, is famous for deeply processing existential themes and bringing striking subjects such as religion, nudity and the human condition into his novels by reference. His novel *Elementary Particles*, published in 1998, problematizes the potential return of transhumanist ideas, human desires and technological advances, while depicting a modern society where life has lost its meaning with the advancement of scientific developments. This article aims to reveal the author's ideas for the future of humanity in a world driven by the increasing use of technology while critically investigating the traces of transhumanism in Houellebecq's *Elementary Particles*. After

**Keywords:** Transhumanism, Elementary Particles, Michel Houellebecq, cloning

### Öz

Yirminci yüzyılda yaşanan gelişmeler ve pozitivistin etkisiyle beraber insanlık evriminin bir sonraki adımını teknolojiye gören Transhümanizm; golem mitinin modern bir tekrarı olarak daha güçlü, daha akıllı ve ölümsüz bir insanlık için teknolojiyi araç olarak kullanmak ister. Materyalizm nedeniyle hümanizmin etkisinin azaldığı bir ortamda gelişme gösteren transhümanistler; biyoteknoloji, nanoteknoloji, yapay zekâ ve klonlama gibi teknolojiler sayesinde süper insanı yaratmayı amaçlayarak insanı daha üst konuma getirmeye çalışır. Toplumsal gelişmelerin yakından takipçisi ve aynası olan edebiyatta, transhümanist fikirlerin geliştirilmesi ve tartışılması için uygun ortamı oluşturması sebebiyle transhümanist eserlere sıkça rastlanır. Dünya edebiyatında önemli bir konu haline gelen transhümanizm, özellikle yirmi birinci yüzyıla beraber Fransız yazarların da dikkatini çeker hale gelmiştir. Çağdaş Fransız edebiyatının önde gelen isimlerinden olan Michel Houellebecq, varoluşsal temaları derinden işlerken din, çıplaklık ve insanlık durumu gibi çarpıcı konuları referans olarak romanlarına taşımasıyla ünlüdür. 1998 yılında yayımlanan *Temel Parçacıklar* adlı romanı, bilimsel gelişmelerin ilerlemesiyle hayatın anlamını yitirdiği bir modern toplumu betimlerken insan arzularının, teknolojik ilerlemelerin ve transhümanist fikirlerin potansiyel getirilerini sorunsallaştırır. Bu makale, Houellebecq'in *Temel Parçacıklar*'ında transhümanizmin izlerini eleştirel şekilde araştırırken yazarın giderek artan teknoloji kullanımına yönlendirilen bir dünyada insanlığın geleceğine dair fikirlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlar. Çalışma, transhümanizm kavramını anlamak adına bir çerçeve oluşturarak kuramın temellerine genel bir bakış sunduktan sonra eserde işlenen önemli temalar ve pasajlardan yararlanarak yazarın transhümanist fikirlerini ve insanın sınırlarının aşılmasının potansiyel sonuçlarını ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Transhümanizm, Temel Parçacıklar, Michel Houellebecq, klonlama

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## Introduction

Michel Houellebecq's novels *Les Particules Élémentaires (Elementary Particles)* and *La Possibilité d'une Ile (The Probability of an Island)*, which cover genetic studies and are a continuation of each other, focus especially on Neo-Darwinian and naturalist evolutionist ideas. These novels problematize the necessity of human cloning technology because of their existential difficulties and biological position at the point that humanity has reached in the twenty-first century. The works in question are included in the field of transhumanism as they have discourses that change the bodily perception of humanity as a result of biotechnologies. Transhumanism, which is a philosophical and cultural movement that advances towards the development of human abilities through the use of various technologies such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence etc., has also found an echo in the domain of literature in a critical context. Julian Huxley, one of the first scientist to use the word "transhumanism", defines the theory as "the human species transcend itself" (1968, p.76). Although talking about the aims and tools of transhumanism at the time of publication of the article was considered distant by societies due to the immaturity of technological possibilities, it has become an interesting topic for literature and auteurs who embrace human nature and new possibilities. In this context, the emergence of futuristic works primarily in literature has forms the starting point of the movement. As Foucault said, "man is an invention of recent date and one perhaps nearing its end" (Foucault, 1966, p. 538). But transhumanism proposes a future in which humanity does not end, it is built stronger from the beginning.

In science fiction works, the frequency of which has increased with the twentieth century and whose number is increasing nowadays, transhumanism is generally presented to the reader through worlds where humans become machines partially - or completely- and the world reaches as a dystopian or -less often- utopian future. These works, set in the future, are built on fictions in which the biological structure, mode of reproduction or bodily integrity of living things are modified through extensive genetic studies, and even immortality as achieved thanks to advances technologies. These narratives attempt to uncover the potential benefits or dangers of transhumanist ideas, by raising questions about identity, consciousness, morality and particularly the nature of being human. However, it is also possible to talk about novels that are based on philosophy and contain transhumanist traces, which are fictionalized to investigate the existential troubles that societies have begun to experience and the emerging new human condition, especially as a result of technological developments that have emerged recently. In these works, it is seen subjects such as change the traditional definition and nature of human due to technological developments but also individual identify and the meaning of life.

Roger William's novel *The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect* and Greg Egan's *Permutation City* are examples of this genre in world literature, while in French literature Houellebecq's *Elementary Particles* can be described as a novel that focuses on philosophical issues and contains transhumanist ideas. By analyzing the transhumanist discourses presented in *Elementary Particles*, this study aims to illuminate the author's perspective on the values of contemporary Western society and his ideas about the possible consequences of the transhumanist revolution that may change human values.

### Is Transhumanism a Self-Transcendence?

*This is the whole point of technology.*

*It creates an appetite for immortality on the one hand.*

*It threatens universal extinction on the other.*

*Technology is lust removed from nature.*

Don DeLillo

Transhumanism, while problematizing the definition of human, whose roots date back to ancient times and whose borders were clearly drawn with the Enlightenment Period, aims at a new and developed human being by using the advances that humanity can achieve in line with technological and biological development. Natasha Vita-More, published *The Transhumanist Manifesto* in 1983 and argued that aging is seen as a disease for transhumanists, therefore the human body and brain should be strengthened (2022, p. 138). The philosophical foundations of transhumanism are based on Nietzsche's concepts such as "will to power", "superman", "overman" and Auguste Comte's theory of social evolution. In addition to this, some of Michel Foucault's thoughts also feed or criticize the concept of transhumanism. For example, Maftai reports that the idea of liberating the human mind from mortal bodies will result in a standardized consumer society similar to the Nazi society (2020, p. 5). By emphasizing that transhumanism can be brought under control by homogenizing the masses, Maftai presents his ideas with the opinions in Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

The most important feature of the transhumanist movement is the evolution of a human being out of his current body into a more developed being. In order to bring this idea to life, it resorts to new technologies emerging at the end of twenty-first century, from regenerative medicine to nanotechnology, radical life extension technology to human consciousness raising systems and the science of body freezing to artificial intelligence. Transhumanist theorists, who came together with the idea of the evolution of human to superhuman through technology, initially expressed the movement as “the improvement of existing humanity at every stage including physical, mental, emotional and moral thanks to scientific developments, especially biotechnologies” (Ferry, 2023, p. 1). It is known that the transhumanism is the first social movement or current of thought that sees aging is a disease. In this context, being up against old age, prolonging human life and even reaching immortality by defeating death are some of the main objectives of transhumanist thought.

The concept of transhumanism, which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, was perceived as a community of utopian ideas, particularly due to the search for immortality. For this reason, its field of activity was limited however it aroused resonance among auteurs and futurist theorists. As the possibility of transhumanist ideas to be implemented increased with technological developments, the subject had attracted the attention of societies and scientists from all fields. In this way, the movement began to be defined as a viable movement over time and even it is described as a necessity of human evolution. In a world where capitalism is reproduced and the inequality of opportunity among individuals increases, it has become inevitable that the possible problems of transhumanist ideas advancing in parallel with technology. As a result of the technological development of humanity bringing ethical problems with it, transhumanism has brought together various social scientists such as philosophers, theologians and sociologists. In addition, for reasons such as questioning human evolution on a global scale and the dangers of using technology, various scientists including biologists, ecologists and engineers have been a part of this community. For the sake of the gathering of all these scientist and academicians, a platform called Humanity+ was established in 2004. This foundation has produced missions by considering all the existing risks and new situations, and it redefined transhumanism:

“The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical and psychological capacities” (Humanity+, 2006).

The first definition of Humanity+, seen above, focuses on making humanity superhuman through the use of reason and technology, in accordance with the traditional definition of transhumanism. On the other hand, it is seen that the aims seen below were taken in order to overcome the ethical problems that emerged with the twenty-first century and the thought that the movement would increase inequality among people.

“The study of the ramification promises and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies” (Humanity+, 2006).

Under the umbrella of transhumanism, there are movements that advocate the same view, such as libertarian transhumanism, democratic transhumanism and extropianism, but they criticize the problems that may arise as a result of the transhumanist evolution and present different ideas. Libertarian transhumanism, as the name suggests, considers the free market as the most important force for the realization of the transhumanist ideal. Therewithal, democratic transhumanism focuses on the inequality of opportunity that may cause from libertarian transhumanism and seeks equal access to technological development for all. Otherwise, it argues that some social groups cannot benefit from new developments and underline that some racial and sexual policies may emerge (Ferrando, 2013, p. 28). Extropianism, another sub-branch of the movement, is defined by its founder Max More as “boundless expansion, self-transformation, dynamic optimism, intelligent technology, knowledge-open society, rational thinking, self-management and direction” (1990, p. 6-7). The emphasis of this definition on rationalism and expansion, precedes that the movement is a kind of continuation of humanism while providing proof that the roots of transhumanism go back to the Enlightenment Period. In this context, transhumanism can be said to have stepped up the humanism movement and it can also be defined as *ultra-humanism* because it puts human in the center of the universe just like humanism (Onishi, 2011, p. 101). On that note, although transhumanism offers a rational and historically imperative proposal for the future of the human species within the framework of technological and biological advances, it repeats the previous thought systems and maintains the anthropocentric structure, offering an anti-egalitarian perspective not only on behalf of nature and environment but also on behalf of humanity.

The prefix trans- in the word transhumanism is defined in the Robert dictionary as *beyond, through, across* and *alter* (Rey and others, 1994, p. 1297). In this sense, transhumanism can be interpreted as beyond the humanist movement. Although the first use of the word is generally attributed to the famous biologist Julian Huxley in academic circles, as a result of the study by Dard and Moatti, it was revealed that the first person to use the word was a French engineer named Jean Coutrot on 28 May 1939 (2016, p. 6). However, in the same study, it was shown that the French clergyman named Teilhard de Chardin used a similar word, not in the sense that it was known but in the theological sense in the 1930s. Theological traces are also seen when beholding at the origins of the desire to develop a superhuman being, which forms the basis of transhumanism. It is known that the effort of man to create a being superior to himself is based on the golem myth in Jewish beliefs.

The first encounter of the literary world with the myth of the golem -and the primitive form of transhumanism- took place in Mary Shelley's famous novel *Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus*, written in 1818 (Shelley M. , 2016, s. v). Afterwards, with the technological developments in the twentieth century, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Richard K. Morgan's *Altered Carbon*, Masumune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* have become pioneering novels in the field of literature dealing with transhumanist ideas. In French literature, especially with the twenty-first century, auteurs such as Antoine Bello, Marc Dugain, Pierre Assouline and Michel Houellebecq have started to write novels containing transhumanist concepts. Houellebecq's series of novels *Elementary Particles*, published in 1998 and *The Possibility of an Island*, published in 2005 offers a deep critique of transhumanist ideas. However, these novels also accept that the use of technology on the human body is a historical necessity of human evolution. Especially in his work called *Elementary Particles*, the author, who problematizes the religious, ethical, philosophical and economic issues that may arise in a transhumanist world, engages in a profound philosophical investigation into whether a world where the known human species has come to end could be better.

### **What Happens if The Elementary Particles of Humanity are Transcended?**

*Elementary Particles* is a novel that focuses on the lives of two half-siblings, one a gifted and depressed molecular biologist and the other a writer experiencing existential difficulties. The work can be defined as a novel that deals with the philosophical dimension of transhumanist thought, since it is the concept of genetic engineering and the idea of reprogramming the human race. In this novel, Houellebecq deals with the human being, who started to be defined from ancient times and whose definition became clear with the Enlightenment. He presents the point that the definition of human has reached in the historical process to the reader from an existential framework. In this context, the novel has a plot that develops around topics such as biological roles, the secrecy of sexuality, the consumption that capitalism drives societies, emotional breakdowns, social anxiety and the loss of meaning of life due to the certainty of death. For these reasons, the novel deepens the philosophical dimensions of transhumanist ideas by mentioning about evolutionary biology, Neo-Darwinian views and a self-sufficient, autonomous humanity, apart from issues such as the reproduction of capitalist society (Sreenan, 2018, p. 2).

The molecular biologist character of the novel, Michel Djerzinski, prioritizes humanity's overcoming the problems it faces in the twenty-first century, thanks to his invention that herald eternal life through genetic cloning. Djerzinski tries to end the social and existential distress of individuals through immortality. In the preface of the work, via a poem, it is underlined that biological cloning is a sociological phenomenon and a historical necessity in the liberation process of humanity. However, while the novel presents a dystopian -or utopian- future, which results in genetic manipulation separating the human race into two different classes, it highlights the disagreements about the redefinition of human. In the novel, a class of genetically modified individuals, defined as Neo-humans, and individuals of the past, who are naturally born, are confronted. This new humanity, as its name suggests, recall Nietzsche's overman:

"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb this great flood, and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man?" (Nietzsche, 2011, p. 6).

In the novel, Neo-humans is similar to the creation of the overman proposed by Nietzsche because this new humanity was imposed by the existing humanity to be better than themselves. The novel is also a visionary of transhumanism by emphasizing the development of human abilities through technological tools by overcoming biological limitations. The aim of developing human through technology, which the novel also emphasizes, is clearly expressed by Bostrom, one of the contemporary thinkers who theorized transhumanism:

“The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities” (2003, p. 4).

The narrative proceeds within the framework of scientific studies, away from religious doctrines and the idea that there is a god. The characters of the novel believe that the universe is formed as a result of biological and physical interactions and develops thanks to the ability to reproduce. The emphasis on the ability to create and reproduce in the novel also reveals the anti-religious point of transhumanist ideas. In this context, *Elementary Particles* have a complex philosophical structure that includes the ideas of Auguste Comte, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche. Especially in the preface of the novel, it is seen that Comte’s theory of social evolution is mentioned. At the same time, it is stated that the social evolution of humanity, starting from the theological field and continuing with metaphysics, has also completed human emancipation thanks to positivism. However, the preface also prioritizes the issues that the novel problematizes.

By placing the individual in contemporary societies to its center, *Elementary Particles* emphasizes that life passes through difficulties and many periods of depression. The narrative focuses on the inner inquiries of individuals, especially in western society. At this point, Houellebecq states in the novel that the West is in the midst of a suicide process and there are not many chances left in his regard. He also states that the transhumanist revolution, who is the evolution of human race through science and technology, is a historical necessity. In the novel, while it is stated that the positivism tradition, which started with the Enlightenment, gave way to materialism over time, is a regression in terms of humanism (*because materialism was not essentially compatible with humanism*), however, it is completely natural to make a breakthrough that will make humanism live again in contemporary society (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 295-296). In this context, it can be interpreted that the necessity and birth of transhumanism, which can also be defined as ultra-humanism, is normalized. The main reason why the movement can be recognized as ultra-humanism is that it aims to develop, improve and turn into a superhuman by taking the human being at the center of the universe. And it also aims to make human race a superior position in the world where it is already the dominant species.

Michel, who started his studies with cows, succeeds in cloning healthy cows thanks to the genetic codes that cows reproduce to increase milk quality and productivity. As a result of studies conducted on fungus such as *saccharomyces* after cows. It has been revealed that organisms that reproduce by genetic replication evolve faster than species who reproduce sexually. This discovery made by the novel character gains importance especially as it shows that sexuality is a useless and regressive function. The first accusations of the implementation of the genetic coding project on humans were aimed at the elimination of sexual discrimination because it destroys the most important feature of human identity. Moreover, the steps taken by cloning are criticized by the society as an attempt to eliminate humanity, as it is through to remove human characteristics. In fact, Frédéric Hubczek, the creator of the Neo-human race, who took over his work after Michel’s death and applied it on humans, confirmed that these studies were indeed the end of humanity:

*“Humanity had to disappear; it had to give birth to a new species, sexless and immortal, transcending individuality, separation and evolution”* (Houellebecq, 2022, s. 304).

For Vita-More (2020), one of the leading proponents of Transhumanism, the movement is defined as a new perspective that will help humanity become more human. The Neo-humans encountered in Houellebecq’s novel, on the other hand, comes to the fore with the complete disappearance of human characteristics. Thus, the novel offers criticism against futurists who advocate the Transhumanist process. At this point, it is noteworthy that the transition to this utopian world, in which humanity progresses after a world based on Darwinian evolution, takes place “by the extinction of species that do not comply with suitable conditions, instead of the recovery of humanity” (Sreenan, 2018, p. 5). From this perspective, the novel questions whether transhumanism is a eugenicist movement, with the complete disappearance of ancient humanity.

In the novel, it is seen that the change and development of humanity with Transhumanist ideas is criticized not only by the part of the society under influence of religious doctrines, but also by the supporters of traditional humanism. This situation, which is surprising because Transhumanism is an anthropocentric thought system, becomes clear when it is seen that there is no trace of the old human race at the last page of the novel. Hubczek, for the propaganda of his project, emphasizes the human mind and consciousness by saying that *“change will be genetic, not mental”* and states that he walks in the light of humanist ideas, but he cannot prevent the society from being divided into two as the old race and the Neo-humans. From this point of view, it can be said that Houellebecq thinks that the point of transhumanism will reach, will be inhuman even though he has a vision of the future for the transhumanist revolution, which favors the human being.

Houellebecq shaped his narrative within the framework of the ideas put forward in the novel *Brave New World*, written by the famous auteur Aldous Huxley, the brother of Julian Huxley, one of the pioneers of Transhumanism. Bruno's sentence "*the extraordinary precision of the predictions in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World has always amazed me*" (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 155), predicts that human production will one day take place not biologically but by genetic technologies in the laboratory environment. The depicting of what is told in Huxley's novel as an achievable utopia -although a dystopia- by Bruno, and the characters of *Elementary Particles* yearning for the society depicted in *Brave New World* reveal Houellebecq's perspective on a society transformed by technology.

*"The society depicted in Brave New World is a happy society where tragedies and extreme emotions have disappeared... Brave New World in every way -genetic control, sexual freedom, warfare against old age, leisure civilization- is a paradise for us, a world we have so far unsuccessfully sought to achieve"* (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 156).

*Brave New World* has been constructed in a space where human evolution and techno-scientific developments intersect at one point. In the beginning of the novel, it shows a world where the egalitarian and merit system, which has difficulties in its execution today, works without any problems. In this way, it gives hope to humanity that looks to the future without hope. The main reason for the emphasis on Huxley's novel is Houellebecq's ideas for genetic studies. He believes that the obstacles to an equal world for all are classes that take on different jobs, shaped by genetic and physical characteristics. Therefore, transhumanist studies for the improvement of species seem promising for humanity.

He also emphasizes that the egalitarian world proposed by Huxley in his novel cannot be realized (just like in the novel) if the libertarian order, which is an outcome of the capitalist society, continues. Because in a world where technology is monopolized by certain institutions and people, only the powerful will be able to access the human improvements promised by transhumanism -no matter whether it is nanotechnology, biotechnology, AI or cognitive technology. Considering the free market as the most important force in achieving the principles of transhumanism, it is a fact that libertarian transhumanism is insufficient to present a world of merit and equal access to technology for all. To avoid these concerns, which cause a world picture that is completely opposite to the more equal worldview for everyone that transhumanism aims to realize, Bostrom has assigned a new mission to the theory:

*"The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies"* (2003, p. 4).

At this point, the author focused on the inequality of opportunity caused by the liberal market and explained that a more democratic transhumanist world could not exist. Since for Houellebecq, a rich society in which economic competition, economic flows and the market are strictly controlled is not possible, and even if it was, it would be no reason for existence in such a society (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 159). However, it should be noted that at the end of *Elementary Particles*, the ancient human race is almost completely destroyed, a world made up of Neo-humans produced by genetic engineering; and this world is without ruthlessness and selfishness, without anger and most importantly, without war.

*"Desire in itself -as opposed to pleasure-, is a source of pain, hatred and unhappiness."*

(Houellebecq, 2022, p. 159).

As seen in the novel, it is emphasized the inequality of opportunity that the free market can cause in a universe where the human body is improved thanks to technological developments. Another point the author made is the problems that may arise in a world where sexual competition has disappeared. Houellebecq is known to have written novels with striking scenes, especially in terms of sexuality. One of the main starting points in *Elementary Particles* is sexual activity, which allows people to both reproduce and enjoy life according to the author. The narrator stated that sexual life and fertilization were taken under control with the twentieth century, especially in developed western countries. Likewise, he predicts that with the advancement of science, people will be subject to more strict control over sexual intercourse. It is also estimated by Bruno that this situation will eventually come to end, just as in the novel, when the proliferation of humanity occurs as a result of genetic coding in laboratories. It is claimed that in a society where sexual competition fades and reproduction is carried outside of sexual activity, the reason for existence will disappear, just as in a society where the economy is completely controlled (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 159). At this point, it is underlined in the novel that the use of sexual intercourse only as a source of pleasure by detaching from the ability to reproduce will become *a source of narcissistic differentiation* among

people. It is also emphasized that individuation, vanity, hatred and desire will emerge.

*“Indeed, he thought, how can a society live without religion?”*

(Houellebecq, 2022, p. 161)

Another issue that is problematized in the novel is the existence of divine religions and the disappearance of traditional religions, especially with materialism. As a result of the metaphysical change and materialist determinism caused by the advances in scientific fields, the way of self-perception of human has changed. This change has led to a definition of human who considers himself superior to everything and is located in the center of the universe. The process of self-definition of human, which started with the Age of Enlightenment and humanism, was reconsidered with transhumanism. In this way it evolved into ultra-humanism and brought the idea that human is the ruler of the universe. While this situation a blow to the monotheistic religions, it gave rise to new techno-religions by encouraging religious imagination based on a new techno-theology on a changing focus of meaning beyond human subject (Antosca, 2019, p. 2). But despite of this new religions Houellebecq states that with the awareness of the inevitability of death, self-esteem and ruthlessness will increase in individuals whose hopes are destroyed. According to him, this situation will pave the way for the collapse of religions, and he also reminds the reader that a society in which the foundations of monotheistic religions has collapsed cannot exist (Houellebecq, 2022, p. 160). However, in the novel, neo-humans are in the majority in the society and a small number of individuals remaining from the old humanity constitute groups that have been under the influence of religion doctrines. While emphasizing the responsibilities that the author has placed on religions, the contrast between the Neo-human society that emerged through cloning studies and the fact that he has built a world where there is no place for pain and destruction compared to our contemporary society is striking.

In the light of all this information, it is possible to say that Houellebecq critiques a society focused on materialist and hedonistic pursuits, within the framework of transhumanist themes but also, he questions the technologicalization of human evolution and the broad social consequences of this process. Throughout the novel, the author focuses on thoughts on a world where the commodification of sexual satisfaction is dominant and accentuates the human characteristics that can emerge or, on the contrary, disappear when sexuality loses its purpose of reproduction. In this context, while questioning transhumanism in line with philosophical themes, the novel deals with existential questions such as nature of identity, the meaning of life and the limits of humanity. Thus, it constitutes a narrative that warns against the potentially dehumanizing effects of technological advances.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, *Elementary Particles* can be characterized as a literary work that delicately deals with the transhumanist ideas introduced with Aldous Huxley's famous novel *Brave New World*. By touching on molecular biology, genetic engineering, virtual reality and ethical problems that may arise on the way to immortality, the novel problematizes humanity's relationship with technology and its own physical transformation in this way. In the novel, Houellebecq deals with the human being, who situates at the center of the universe with the Age of Enlightenment and whose definitions have been restricted with transhumanism, which can be described as a kind of ultra-humanism. In this context, the author, while enquiring important questions about the potential consequences of the futuristic demands of the current age, also emphasizes that there can be no monotheistic religion in a world dominated by science and that life will be aimless. Thus, the work compels the reader to consider the consequences of a world in which humanity has transcended its elementary particles.

In the novel, it is stated that humanist thought, which started with the Age of Enlightenment, weakened with materialism after positivism, and it is seen that the transhumanist revolution is considered as a historical necessity and a natural process as it will revive humanist thought. From this point of view, it is stated that the way of deliverance of humanity from all social troubles and existential problems such as the departure or impermanence brought about by death, the consumer society created by capitalism, and materialist determinism will be realized not as a result of biological and natural evolution, but through science, genetic and biotechnological studies in the light of transhumanist thought. The novel, in which Neo-humans, created through cloning as the future of human evolution, come to the fore, depicts a world where there are no problems such as selfishness, cruelty and anger in the society. Moreover, it accentuates that libertarian transhumanism, which is the greatest opportunity for the realization of the transhumanist ideal, is also contrary to the idea of a better and egalitarian world advocated by transhumanists. Although transhumanism is an anthropocentric movement, it has been concluded that biological cloning studies play an analytical role in criticizing both nihilism and social despair for the author, who problematizes whether the final point of transhumanism to be reached will be non-human or not.

**Hakem Değerlendirmesi:** Dış bağımsız.

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