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Excerpts from

George Orwell's *1984*

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The state says: "War is PEACE. Freedom is SLAVERY. Ignorance is STRENGTH."

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"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." George Orwell

Neil Postman, the author of **Amusing Ourselves to Death**, understood today's socialist strategies. To illustrate today's manipulation of our minds, he drew an interesting contrast between two familiar totalitarian visions: Aldous Huxley's [Brave New World](#) and George Orwell's *1984*:

"Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the *feelies*.... [In *1984*] people are controlled by **inflicting pain**. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by **inflicting pleasure**. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us."^[7]

The spiritual war against Christ and His Church is being waged on both fronts. The assault on religious freedom fits Orwell's vision. The flood of images and suggestions that distort traditional beliefs, twist Biblical values and trivialize Christian words, fit Huxley's vision.

While Orwellian oppression intimidates many into silence and conformity, it also awakens faith and stirs resistance. But Huxley's "feelies" simply dull our thinking and distract our attention until trivia becomes the norm and Biblical conviction becomes -- under the new [UN Mental Health standards](#) - - an intolerable expression of deviance and extremism.

The beginning of 1984 (Pages 5-7)

"Winston [*a young man with personal convictions who resisted totalitarian control*] turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The instrument (the **telescreen**, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was **no way of shutting it off completely**. ...

Behind Winston's back the voice from the **telescreen** was still babbling away about... the over-fulfillment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The **telescreen** received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it. There was... **no way of knowing whether you were being watched** at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the **Thought Police** plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork.... You had to live -- did live, from habit that became instinct -- in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized." George Orwell, 1984

"Winston kept his back turned to the telescreen. It was safer; though, as he well knew, even a back can be revealing. A kilometer away the **Ministry of Truth**, his place of work, towered vast and white above the grimy landscape. ... It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, three hundred meters into the air. From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party:

"War is PEACE. Freedom is SLAVERY. Ignorance is STRENGTH."

This double-speak reminds me of (1) a sign we saw at the entrance to [Auschwitz](#), the Nazi death camp near Krakow, Poland: *Arbeit macht frei* -- or, in English: *Work makes (you) free*.

(2) President Bush' [mental health plan](#) titled "*President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health*." It calls for standardized assessments for all -- based, in part, on **mass psychology and the**

"right" kind of thinking. See [Mind Control, Part I](#) & [Part 2](#)

Nearing the end (Pages 200-207)

Winston's handler (or coach or mentor) throughout his re-education process was O'Brien, who knew well how to create a dialectical tension between a "safe place" and the threat of utter rejection and pain.

The first section could have been a Communist interrogation cell almost anywhere in the Soviet Union or China from the 1940s through the 1980s. See [Brainwashing and "Education Reform"](#), [When Iron Gates Yield](#), and [God holds the key](#)

"When his nerves were in rags after hours of questioning, even this appeal could reduce him to sniveling tears. In the end the nagging voices broke him down more completely than the boots and fists of the guards....

"[Winston] confessed to the assassination of eminent Party members, the distribution of seditious pamphlets, embezzlement of public funds, sale of military secrets, sabotage of every kind.... He confessed that he was a religious believer, an admirer of capitalism, and a sexual pervert. He confessed that he had murdered his wife, although he knew, and his questioners must have known, that his wife was still alive....

"It was true that he had been the enemy of the Party, and in the eyes of the Party there was **no distinction between the thought and the deed....** [*Was it a hate crime to think contrary thoughts?*]

"He was strapped into a chair surrounded by dials... The man in the white coat did not turn round. He did not look at Winston either; he was looking only at the dials.... With him were the guards, the other questioners, the men in white coats, **O'Brien**, Julia....

All through his interrogation, although he had never seen him, he had had the feeling that O'Brien was at his elbow, just out of sight. It was O'Brien who was directing everything. It was he who set the guards onto Winston and who prevented them from killing him. It was he who decided when Winston should scream with pain, when he should have a respite, when he should be fed, when he should sleep, when the drugs should be pumped into his arm.... He was the tormentor, he was the protector, he was the inquisitor, **he was the friend**. And once—Winston could not remember whether it was in drugged sleep, or in normal sleep, or even in a moment of wakefulness—a voice murmured in his ear:

"Don't worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning point has come. I shall save you, **I shall make you perfect.**" ...

He did not remember any ending to his interrogation... He was almost flat on his back, and unable to move. His body was held down at every essential point.... O'Brien was looking down at him gravely and rather sadly.... He was older than Winston had thought him; he was perhaps forty-eight or fifty. Under his hand there was a dial with a lever....

"I told you," said O'Brien, "that if we met again it would be here."

"Yes," said Winston.

Without any warning except a slight movement of O'Brien's hand, a wave of pain flooded his body. It was a frightening pain, because he could not see what was happening, and he had the feeling- that some mortal injury was being done to him. He did not know whether the thing was really happening, or whether the effect was electrically produced; but his body was being wrenched out of shape.... The wave of pain receded almost as quickly as it had come. ...

O'Brien's manner became less severe. ... When he spoke **his voice was gentle and patient. He had the air of a doctor, a teacher, even a priest, anxious to explain and persuade rather than to punish.**

"I am taking trouble with you, Winston," he said, "because you are worth trouble. You know perfectly well what is the matter with you. You have known it for years, though you have fought against the knowledge. You are mentally deranged. You suffer from a defective **memory**. You are unable to remember real events, and you persuade yourself that you remember other events which never happened. ...You have never cured yourself of it, because **you did not choose to**.... Even now, I am well aware, you are clinging to your disease under the impression that it is a virtue.

Now we will take an example. At this moment, which power is Oceania at war with?"

"When I was arrested, Oceania was at war with Eastasia."

"With Eastasia. Good. And Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia, has it not?"

Winston drew in his breath. He opened his mouth to speak and then did not speak. He could not take his eyes away from the dial....

"Another example," [O'Brien] said. "Some years ago you had a very serious delusion indeed. You believed that three men, three one-time Party members...were not guilty of the crimes they were charged with. You believed that you had seen unmistakable documentary evidence proving that their confessions were false....

"It exists!" he cried.

"No," said O'Brien.... It does not exist. It never existed."

"But it did exist! It does exist! It exists in **memory**. I remember it. You remember it."

"I do not remember it," said O'Brien.

Winston's heart sank. That was **doublethink**. He had a feeling of deadly helplessness.... Perhaps that lunatic dislocation in the mind could really happen: that was the thought that defeated him.

The intentional result of such interrogation is today's postmodern thinking: **no certainty, no truth, no absolute moral standard.... Any new or evolving "truth" is determined by group consensus** -- through the Media or through small groups led by a trained facilitator (a nicer version of O'Brien) who creates a safe place and becomes your friend and confidante as well as trainer. **Individual thinking is out! Group think is in!** Only its synthesis is acceptable!

O'Brien was looking down at him speculatively. More than ever he had the air of a teacher taking pains with a wayward but promising child.

"There is a Party slogan dealing with the control of the past," he said. "Repeat it, if you please."

"**Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past,**" repeated Winston obediently.

"Who controls the present controls the past," said O'Brien, nodding his head with slow approval. "Is it your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence?"

"Again the feeling of helplessness descended upon Winston. His eyes flitted toward the dial. He not only did not know whether 'yes' or 'no' was the answer that would save him from pain; he did not even know which answer he believed to be the true one....

O'Brien smiled faintly. "...I will put it more precisely. Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?"

"No."

"Then where does the past exist, if at all?"

"In records. It is written down."

"In records. And—?"

"In the mind. In human memories."

"In **memory**. Very well, then. **We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?**"

"But **how can you stop people remembering things?**" cried Winston, again momentarily forgetting the dial....

O'Brien's manner grew stern again. He laid his hand on the dial. "On the contrary," he said, "you have not controlled it. That is what has brought you here. ...you have **failed in humility**. You would not make the act of **submission which is the price of sanity**. You preferred to be **a lunatic, a minority of one**....

Humility as used here, could be the equivalent of the postmodern meaning of "authenticity." In our times, the pain that produces the changed mind is inflicted through group rejection and exclusion, not through physical pain.

"You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. **Reality exists** in the human mind, and nowhere else. **Not in the individual mind**, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; **only in the mind of the Party, which is collective** and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth. **It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party.**"

Many Church Growth leaders claim that spiritual growth and maturity is impossible without a group. Growth comes, not by personal prayer, study and obedience, but through group dialogue and acceptance of its evolving consensus.

"That is the fact that you have got to relearn, Winston.... You must **humble yourself before you can become sane.**"

He paused for a few moments, as though to allow what he had been saying to sink in.

"Do you remember," he went on, "writing in your diary, 'Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four'?"

"Yes," said Winston.

O'Brien held up his left hand, its back toward Winston, with the thumb hidden and the four fingers extended. "How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?"

"Four."

"And if the Party says that it is not four but five—then how many?"

"Four."

The word ended in a gasp of pain. The needle of the dial had shot up to fifty-five. The sweat had sprung out an over Winston's body. The air tore into his lungs and issued again in deep groans which even by clenching his teeth he could not stop. O'Brien watched him, the four fingers still extended. He drew back the lever. This time the pain was only slightly eased.

"How many fingers, Winston?"

"Four."

The needle went up to sixty. "How many fingers, Winston?"...

"Five! Five! Five!"

"No, Winston, that is no use. **You are lying. You still think there are four. How many fingers, please?**"

"Four! Five! Four! Anything you like. Only stop it, stop the pain!"

Abruptly he was sitting up with O'Brien's arm round his shoulders. He had perhaps lost consciousness for a few seconds.... He felt very cold, he was shaking uncontrollably.... For a moment he clung to O'Brien like a baby, curiously comforted by the heavy arm round his shoulders. **He had the feeling that O'Brien was his protector, that the pain was something that came from outside**, from some other source, and that it was O'Brien who would save him from it.

"You are a slow learner, Winston," said O'Brien gently.

"How can I help it?" he blubbered. "How can I help seeing what is in front of my eyes? Two and two are four."

"Sometimes, Winston. Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once. You must try harder. It is not easy to become sane."

He laid Winston down on the bed.... O'Brien motioned with his head to the man in the white coat....

The pain flowed into Winston's body. The needle must be at seventy, seventy-five. He had shut his eyes this time. He knew that the fingers were still there, and still four. All that mattered was somehow to stay alive until the spasm was over....

"How many fingers, Winston?"

"Four. I suppose there are four.... I am trying to see five."

"Which do you wish: to persuade me that you see five, or really to see them?"

"Really to see them."

"...How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?"

"I don't know....Four, live, six—in all honesty I don't know."

"Better," said O'Brien.

A needle slid into Winston's arm. Almost in the same instant a blissful, healing warmth spread all through his body. The pain was already half-forgotten. **He opened his eyes and looked up gratefully at O'Brien....** If he could have moved he would have stretched out a hand and laid it on O'Brien's arm. He had never loved him so deeply as at this moment, and not merely because he had stopped the pain. **The old feeling, that at bottom it did not matter whether O'Brien was a friend or an enemy, had come back.** O'Brien was a person who could be talked to. **Perhaps one did not want to be loved so much as to be understood....** In some sense that went deeper than friendship, **they were intimates**; somewhere or other, although the actual words might never be spoken, there was, a place where they could meet and talk.

O'Brien was looking down at him with an expression which suggested that the same thought might be in his own mind. When he spoke it was in an easy, conversational tone.

"Do you know where you are, Winston?" he said.

"I don't know. I can guess. In the Ministry of Love."...

"And why do you imagine that we bring people to this place?"

"To make them confess."...

"No!" exclaimed O'Brien. His voice had changed extraordinarily, and his face had suddenly become both stern and animated. "No! Not merely to extract your confession, nor to punish you. **Shall I tell you why we have brought you here? To cure you! To make you sane!** Will you understand, Winston, that **no one whom we bring to this place ever leaves our hands uncured?** We are not interested in those stupid crimes that you have committed. The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about. **We do not merely destroy our enemies; we change them.** Do you understand what I mean by that?"

Everyone must conform to the new way of thinking. None can be allowed to resist re-education. Individual thinking undermines the envisioned unity and control. Group thinking brings everyone into the collective fold.

He was bending over Winston..... Then he continued less vehemently:

"The first thing for you to understand is that in this place there are no martyrdoms. You have read of the religious persecutions of the past. In the Middle Ages there was the Inquisition. It was a failure. It set out to eradicate heresy, and ended by perpetuating it. For every heretic it burned at the stake, thousands of others rose up....

"Later, in the twentieth century, there were the totalitarians.... There were the German Nazis and the Russian Communists. The Russians persecuted heresy more cruelly than the Inquisition had done. And they imagined that they had learned from the mistakes of the past; they knew, at any rate, that one must not make martyrs. Before they exposed their victims to public trial, they **deliberately set themselves to destroy their dignity. They wore them down by torture and solitude until they were despicable, cringing wretches, confessing whatever was put into their mouths, covering themselves with abuse,** accusing and sheltering behind one another, whimpering for mercy. And yet after only a few years the same thing had happened over again. The dead men had become martyrs....'

"O'Brien was looking down at him speculatively.... 'There is a Party slogan dealing with the control of the past,' he said. 'Repeat it, if you please.'"

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See also [Brainwashing and "Education Reform"](#) | [Communist Psychological Warfare](#)
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