

# **Orwell and Huxley - Architects of Anti-Utopian Worlds**

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Maggio 2009

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## 1. Orwell's vision of the future

### 1.1 Animal Farm (1945)

Widely read throughout the world, this book strikes the reader with its potent imagery, both as a popular children's story and as a gloomy vision of a crushed revolutionary dream.

The heterogeneous group of animals living on Manor Farm symbolizes the facets and inclinations of the human race:

- the inspiring leader who moves the audience's consciences and calls people to battle for freedom and a better life (Old Major);
- the second generation of leaders (Snowball and Napoleon) who need to tackle the practical aspects and the consequences of the revolution and inevitably start fighting against each other, thus creating the necessary antagonism to justify security measures and a police squad (the dogs);
- the propagandist of the party doctrine (Squealer) who catches the audience's attention with his eloquence and seemingly incorruptible orthodoxy;
- the faithful believer in the goodness of the revolution (Boxer), who's never tired and who believes that *Napoleon is always right*;
- some intelligent and educated animals - at least to a certain extent - who became sceptical (Muriel, Benjamin and Clover) but always lack the strength and insight to challenge the pigs;
- the common "people", easily persuaded by effective speech, who provide a supporting chorus to the regime and effectively silence protests, outnumbering the party's "opponents" (the sheep).

Orwell's opinions on the effectiveness of what looks like a Socialist revolution are well expressed in the novel. What was supposed to be power to the people turns out as a nightmarish life, with longer working hours, tinier supplies of food, in a word more hardship. The new leaders soon resemble human beings, in a crescendo of actions and decisions that favour the leading class only, while pretending to be taken for the sake of the happiness and the well-being of everyone. The pigs corrupt when they get in touch with the world of man, his bad habits (drinking, gambling ...) and conventional practices (money,

commerce...). In the end pigs and men looked so alike that it was *impossible to say which was which*.

The novel contains some elements which will be better emphasized and organized in 1984, namely:

- the rewriting of the past, i.e. the role of Snowball in the Battle of the Cowshed and the “war” against the two neighbouring farms;
- the representation of the present through the endless repetition of the truths of the party, i.e. production percentages and earnings of the farms;
- the slogans, especially the Seven Commandments, which were supposed to embody the doctrine of Animalism but were continuously cut down and in doing so, their very spirit was reversed;
- the picture of Napoleon watching everyone.

If there is a moral teaching in this “fairy story” – as its subtitle defines it – is that no socialist society will ever see the light when the rules it lives by are the same as capitalism. Violence, famine, corruption, deceit and inequality will always exist.

### 1.2 1984 (1949)

When George Orwell published this novel, the world had just lived through a few decades of tragedies: the First World War, Fascism, Nazism, the Spanish War, the Second World War, to name some of the most tragic.

Eric Arthur Blair was a man of his time and his disillusionment about the future came from a very deep knowledge of human nature and its failures, as well as troubled personal experiences, such as his service in the Burma police and times of poverty. His mind conjured up a dreary image of the future, which he conveyed powerfully in his best-known work of art: 1984. The symbolism contained in the title refers to 1948 and the Second World War – Stalin, Hitler, Communism and Nazism, two extremes of the same evil.

Orwell thought the world was heading towards a time of dictatorship and lack of personal freedom. Individuals seemed to lose importance more and more in favour of the State and were regarded merely as cells of a larger entity.

*The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible, and glittering — a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons — a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting — three hundred million people all with the same face.*

What kind of state did Orwell depict? A state dominated by a very strong Party (IngSoc), whose leader was an overwhelming figure, Big Brother, *infallible* and *all-powerful*. Posters with Big Brother's face and the caption *BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU* were hanging everywhere.

The state was technologically advanced. Telescreens (equipped with both monitors and video cameras) were installed in the flats where members of the Outer Party lived, to keep them under control. In fact, not only could they be seen, but also heard. Telescreens transmitted news and political propaganda, served as wake-up signals and called to the various activities.

Power was in the hands of very few, the Inner Party, a political oligarchy.

The country Winston lived in (Oceania) was a dictatorship, always at war with either one or the other of the two opposing nations, Eastasia and Eurasia. It was not important who you were fighting against, it was fundamental to keep the level of hatred high. Hangings, executions, bombings held a social significance.

Also, in becoming continuous, war ceased to exist. Continuity of war guaranteed the permanence of the current order. Continuity of peace would have guaranteed the same. In other words, *War is Peace*.

The key concept to maintain power was fear. Everyone lived under the constant terror to be caught by the Thought Police and taken to prison or be tortured in Room 101, where everybody's deepest inner fears came to life.

Psychologically, Winston was afraid of betraying Julia, his secret lover, even though he was well aware of the fact that everyone betrayed everyone else. They could make you say anything they wanted. Yet, his worst fear was much more mundane: rats.

*Of all horrors in the world – a rat!*

The ultimate motive of the Party was power for the sake of power.

*The Party, explained O'Brien, seeks power entirely for its own sake. [...] Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes a revolution in order to establish a dictatorship.*

There were no lies here, the Party was not promising a better world, a utopia. The aim was to dehumanize the human race, to annihilate every emotion and instinct except loyalty to the Party and the best way to achieve this was through terror.

*If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping a human face.*

Terror was power and power was the end. Oceania was unstable, as the fear of war was part of this scenario. There was progress, as O'Brien said, *progress towards pain*.

*Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers*

*imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress toward more pain.*

Why was the police force called Thought Police? Because crimes – as the main character of the story, Winston Smith, soon discovered – happened in your mind (*crimethought*).

*There was of course 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. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. 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.*

Orthodoxy to the values of IngSoc entailed total and unquestioning belief in the slogans of the party, even when this meant holding two contradictory beliefs at the same time (*doublethink*). The Party would try and impose its regime through slogans as well as through fear and hatred and distrust of everybody: *War is peace, Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength*. These slogans were the true embodiment of *doublethink*.

The manipulation of the past was an effective way to do away with any elements that might instil doubts in unorthodox minds. *Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past*. For instance, when one political opponent or one member of the party was imprisoned and executed (in other words disappeared, *vaporized*) all instances of his existence had to be cancelled and the past rewritten – rather, *rectified* to use the Party's expression - to completely erase him.

*Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date.*

This was Winston Smith's job.

Sometimes, small relics from the past reappeared, remnants, evidence of a past epoch the Party had not cared to destroy. One of

these symbols was the paperweight that Winston bought in the old junk-shop. It stood for the fragile little world that Winston and Julia had made for each other. They were the coral inside of it. As Orwell wrote: *It is a little chunk of history, that they have forgotten to alter.*

Social rules were strict, no promiscuity, no sex outside marriage, community work on a regular basis, social activities and attendance to political events.

It was Julia who helped Winston understand the sense of this.

*Unlike Winston, she had grasped the inner meaning of the Party's sexual puritanism. It was not merely that sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside the Party's control and which therefore had to be destroyed if possible. What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship.*

How and why did Winston rebel?

His awareness of things past put him in trouble. His love for history, his memories of past times made him ask questions and investigate.

All party members were orthodox at least apparently, although there were rumours of a Brotherhood of patriots who wanted to fight Big Brother. This was what eventually caused Winston's annihilation.

O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party, feigned to belong to the brotherhood and afterwards turned out to be Winston's torturer.

*We are not content with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us; so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him. It is intolerable to us that an erroneous thought should exist anywhere in the world, however secret and powerless it may be. Even in the instance of death we cannot permit any deviation . . . we make the brain perfect before we blow it out.*

In fact, at the end of the book Winston Smith was totally broken and, intoxicated by Victory Gin, really thought he loved Big Brother.



*He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.*

Why would Winston Smith want to rebel in the first place?

His consciousness was not in line with "collective consciousness", he still retained individual - therefore unorthodox - thoughts.

O'Brien described this very well:

*We control matter because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull. [...] There is nothing I could not do. Invisibility, levitation - anything. I could float off this floor like a soap bubble if I wished to. [...] We make the laws of Nature.*

Winston was not a mediocre man who could accept life as it was like in his time, without any chance to really live, merely survive until the Party decided to vaporize you.

*He felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster. He was alone.*

He wanted to recover a sense for his life, he wanted to use his free will. He just could not believe that  $2 + 2 = 5$ .

*Freedom is the freedom is to say that two and two makes four.*

He held hope in the poorer people, the proles, who did not have telescreens and were less conditioned by the Party. If life became too hard, the proles might rebel.

*If there is hope, it lies in the proles.*

What Winston failed to understand was what in the end caused his destruction. His sense of rebellion originated in his brain, "inside his skull", in spite of and regardless of telescreens, IngSoc propaganda and his fear for Big Brother.

*Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull.*

The proles would never be able to organize as an unified body against a dictatorship because they would never be completely aware of the

evils of that dictators. Moreover, they'd never be aware of their strength as a organized force. They would never have the culture and the social awareness to conceive such thoughts.

That is why there were no telescreens in the proles' quarters: there was no need for them.

In 1984 Orwell drew a picture of a totalitarian future. Although the action took place in the future, there were some elements and symbols taken from the present and past. So, for example, Emmanuel Goldstein, the main enemy of Oceania, was, as one can see from the name, a Jew.

Orwell drew a link to other totalitarian systems of our century, like the Nazis and the Communists, who had anti-Semitic ideas, and who used Jews as so-called scapegoats, who were responsible for all bad and evil things in the country.

Another symbol that can be found in 1984 is the fact that Orwell divided the fictional super states in the book according to the division that could be found during the Cold War. So Oceania stood for the United States of America , Eurasia for Russia and Eastasia for China. Other, non-historical symbols can be found, i.e. the "Golden Country" which stood for the old European pastoral landscape. The place where Winston and Julia met for the first time to make love to each other was exactly like the "Golden Country" of Winston's dreams

## 2. Huxley's vision of the future:

### 2.1 Brave New World (1932)

Aldous Huxley wrote *Brave New World* before the Second World War wrought havoc in the Western World. Hitler and Fascism were already an appalling example of what the world might become but England was still a relatively nice place to live in, untouched by Nazi & Communist extremes alike.

Huxley's imagination contrived a really modern world, where science and technology succeeded both in answering man's deepest felt desire - perpetual happiness - and most dreaded fear - loss of individual freedom.

Science and technology succeeded where many others had failed, mainly religion and philosophy, thanks to a combination of unconscious manipulation and conscious suppression of negative feelings.

As Mustapha Mond explained to the Savage: *People are happy; they get what they want and they never want what they can't get.*

This created perpetual mock-happiness and a sense of fulfillment, which served both to social and individual stability.

One postulate of this, however, was to give little or no information at all about the Outer World. Only Alpha pluses could read at leisure. The past and literature depicted alien worlds which would foster scandals and instability. In fact, when the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning mentioned monogamy, love and "viviparous mothers" to his students, they blushed at the idea.

Of course, the strongest and most effective means to achieve this was conditioning. The system of casts was based on this, to cite an example: *The members of each cast are bred and educated to be blissfully content with their pre-destined role.* As the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning says: *All conditioning aims at that: making people like their inescapable social destiny.*

On top of the social pyramid, there were ten World Controllers. Mustapha Mond was the most intelligent and the most knowledgeable - he had read and studied the Bible, Shakespeare, history, philosophy

(all forbidden books). As a young Alpha-plus, his own unconventionality necessitated a choice between life on an island (reserved for those who were *too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life*) and life in the World State (being *taken on the Controller's Council with the prospect of succeeding in due course to an actual Controllership*.) Because the Controller had freedom of choice - a freedom which conditioning normally inhibited or destroyed - he was one of the few real individuals in this novel who were not misfits. He used his intelligence and power for the sake of the World State. In the end he was the one who sentenced Bernard Marx to exile.

His vivid intelligence and widespread culture helped him understand John the Savage. In this instance, he showed the apex of his orthodoxy, his total adherence to the ideals and the dogmas of the World State.

This hedonistic Brave New World was based on consumerism.

*Ending is better than mending; The more stitches the less riches;* stated the slogans that compelled people to buy new clothes.

Consumerism was induced by a sort of Pavlovian conditioning children were submitted to. For instance, members of each cast were conditioned to engage in different leisure activities, thus consuming transport, sport facilities and activity centres. In Huxley's words in *Brave New World Revisited*, *non-stop distractions of the most fascinating nature*.

As mentioned earlier on, whenever there was a voice raised against the status quo, it was an individual voice.

The Savage & Bernard Marx were alone in their struggle. Their voices were single voices raised above the commotion of everyday life. They stood out of the crowd and were regarded as outcast. Indeed, they did not integrate. To a certain degree, their lack of integration was an act of free will: they consciously chose not to accept the rules and regulations of the society they had to live in, they tried to find their own ways to do things in a world where every need was carefully created to reciprocate a "socially acceptable" behaviour.

The Savage lived his life in the Reservation. It was appalling for him to see what “real life” was like in the Other Place. Even though Linda, his mother, had tried to depict the outer world to him, what she talked about was so different, so far away from acceptable social standards in the Reservation that he had no parameters to understand.

One example of this was sex: *everyone belongs to everyone else* was the exact opposite of the monogamous relationships that were the rule in the Reservation. And Linda discovered that to her own expense.

When Lenina and Bernard found them, the Savage was faced with a cruel fate: he could no longer live where he had grown up and followed his mother back into civilization. At the same time he could not find a way to live in a civilized world he did not understand, couldn't approve of and wouldn't accept.

His beliefs and values were a curious mixture of Christianity and heathen, of *Jesus and Pookong*. Most important, he had a strict moral code. His “old-fashioned” beliefs about God and right and wrong contrasted sharply with the values and beliefs of the citizens of the Brave New World.

*God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness.*

John was different. He did not even belong to the Reservation. His mother was the “white bitch” despised by the Savages. He felt attraction and repulsion for her – he loved her but found her promiscuity revolting.

The arrival at the Reservation of Bernard and Lenina and the Savage's subsequent arrival in London contributed to exacerbate his emotional conflict. John was attracted to Lenina but felt that such lustful feelings were wrong and had to be repressed. Lenina was attracted to him and could not understand the Savage's reticence and unwillingness to show any interest in her. Finally, when John professed his love and expressed his desire to marry her, Lenina considered such an engagement absurd and rejected him. Her rejection was instrumental to the Savage's suicide, even though she could not be held responsible for it. She embodied the contented and well-adjusted citizen of the World State and accepted its teachings

and values without questions. When she was frustrated (for example in her attempts to seduce the Savage), she simply turned to soma.

In the end the only possible solution for the Savage was suicide, which put an end to his predicament. I do not know whether he really thought or hoped to set an example, to raise at least a small doubt in somebody's mind. His death happened under the eyes of the world. Journalists and televisions made a real show of the event, however it probably meant nothing at all to anyone. Alpha-pluses would probably even be relieved at it: one disturbing voice finally silenced, no more talking against the subliminal teachings everyone held in the minds, a disturbing voice indeed, however feeble, however weak.

Bernard's was a different story.

He was a man of his time, born and raised in civilization - his birth had not been *viviparous*, he was subjected to *Bokanowskification* and hypnopaedia. But he was an Alpha. He was supposed to become a ruler of society, a preserver of its principles, not to question them, which is precisely what he did.

He read extensively - as only Alphas could do.

He spent time alone, while everyone spent their time always in company. Loneliness was looked upon as a deviance. The aim was the same as in Orwell's 1984: to integrate the people into one community.

*Community, identity, stability*, as the slogan went.

In this case *identity* was taken to the extreme: not only did it mean physical identity, thanks to the Bokanowsky process, but also mental identity, because of hypnopaedia.

Bernard Marx had a steady relationship with a girl (Lenina Crowne) and wanted to "talk" to her, instead of practicing sport or attending events.

He would not take his gram of soma, he suffered and tried to learn from his sorrow. He did not comply to the accepted rule: *A gram is better than a damn*.

He tried hard to be a good member of society, i.e. he duly took part in *orgy-porgy* ceremonies.

He was disturbed by his diversity. He was the source of considerable speculation and suspicion. Many believed that alcohol was accidentally put in his blood surrogate when he was still *in the bottle*.

His dissatisfaction, however, seemed to stem out of the fact that he was not accepted for what he was. Deep inside he wanted to integrate, not to reform society.

The turning point was when he returned from the Reservation and exposed its dirt, blood and emotions to the whole world. He showed off the Savage as a trophy and became a kind of hero. Girls who formerly ignored him started looking for him. He attracted the attention of important people in the World State and was suddenly happy and enthusiastic about his new life.

In the end the Savage refused to be used as a toy in the hands of Bernard and Bernard lost his appeal and went back to his old dreary life. Eventually he was deported to Iceland for ever as a punishment for his non-conformity.

## 2.2 Brave New World Revisited (1958)

Huxley entitled his collection of essays on freedom, *Brave New World Revisited*. These comments on the contemporary scene (1958) were defined as a "revisitation" to emphasize that in some ways the *Brave New World* he had envisaged in 1931 was already upon us.

In his introduction to these essays Huxley said, "*The subject of freedom and its enemies is enormous, and what I have written is certainly too short to do it full justice, but at least I have touched on many aspects of the problem.*" In his novel he employed satire to warn mankind; in his essays he employed reason to discuss what could and should be done since "*without freedom, human beings cannot become fully human.*"

In his first essay Huxley warned that overpopulation could lead to economic insecurity and social unrest which, in turn, fostered greater government control. The greater the population, the greater the work force, and so also the greater the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of stronger industries and stronger governments.

*This Power Elite directly employs several millions of the country's working force [...], controls many millions more by lending them the money to buy its products, and through its ownership of the media of mass communication, influences the thoughts, the feelings and the actions of virtually everybody.*

Huxley warned us that the concentration of power in the hands of few may lead eventually to the regimentation and exploitation of many. *Too much organization transforms men and women into automata, suffocates the creative spirit and abolishes the very possibility of freedom.*

Newspapers, magazines, radio and television made possible a wide dissemination of information and propaganda. Those who controlled mass media and propaganda exercised tremendous control over the individual.

*Mass communication, in a word, is neither good nor bad; it is simply a force and, like any other force, it can be used either well or ill.*



In his discussion of the various forms of persuasion, Huxley included chemical persuasion, subconscious persuasion, and sleep-teaching. The World State provided Soma to ensure happiness; in his time tranquilizers offered release from tension and emotional stress. Huxley warned that these forms of persuasion were effective and had the potential for good or evil.

He advocated an *education for freedom (and for the love and the intelligence which are at once the conditions and the results of freedom)*. Though freedom still existed in the world, the forces menacing it were very strong, *perhaps too strong to be resisted very long*. Huxley still believed in the power of mankind, despite pessimistically assuming that evil forces were much stronger. We may not be sure of the final outcome but *it is still our duty to do whatever we can to resist them*.

### 2.3 Island (1962)

Huxley wrote this book late in life. If compared to *Brave New World*, written 30 years before, this could be read as a utopia, in that Pala - the island the book is named after - was a small confined world enjoying a relatively rich and easy life. The Palanese lived happily and the values society was based on were apparently “conventionally positive values” according to our standards: education, the family, spirituality, friendship, ecology ... but all of them were twisted to an unconventional turn.

Huxley was influenced by Eastern philosophy and mysticism. His portrayal of the Palanese beliefs included principles of Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Confucianism.

The Palanese culture started with the mingling of western science and oriental philosophy, in the characters of the Old Raja and the Scottish physician, Dr. Andrew MacPhail. The Raja had hired Dr. MacPhail to remove a tumour from his face during the early nineteenth century. The Raja and Dr. MacPhail and their descendants worked together *to make the best of all the worlds - the worlds already realized within the various cultures, and beyond them, and the worlds of still unrealized potentialities*.

Will Farnaby, a journalist whose boss also owned Southeast Asia Petroleum, found himself shipwrecked on this island. Genuinely interested in learning Palanese culture, his personal quest helped him find out more about himself. In the end he reconciled with painful memories (his father, his aunt's illness and death, the death of his dog Tiger) and with his sense of guilt - for the death of his wife Molly and for his love affair with Babs. However he also had a second selfish motive to stay in Pala, i.e. to negotiate a deal (an oil concession) between Southeast Asia Petroleum and the Palanese government, for which he would earn a large sum of money.

At several points throughout the novel Farnaby felt guilty about betraying his guests and eventually confessed his conspiracy to Susila.

Dr. Robert MacPhail, the grandson of Dr. Andrew, made friends with Will and suggested he should *have a better understanding of what*

*was actually done to develop the Palanese culture, [...] by knowing what had to be done, what always and everywhere has to be done by anyone who has a clear idea of what's what."* So Farnaby started reading the *Notes on What's What*. The Palanese were described as Mahayanists Buddhists *shot through and through with Tantra*. The first principle *Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there* showed an element of Taoist philosophy.

The Mahayanists Buddha philosophy of the Palanese aimed at the passage beyond suffering into the Clear Light of the Void of all living beings, Nirvana, a blissful state or freeness of mind where you could see the true essence of things and Reality.

*"What's a not-sensation?"*

*"It's the raw material for sensation that my not-self provides me with."*

*"And you can pay attention to your not-self?"*

*"Of course."*

*Will turned to the little nurse. "You too?"*

*"To myself," she answered, "and at the same time to my not-self. And to Ranga's not-self, and to Ranga's self, and to Ranga's body, and to my body and everything it's feeling. And to all the love and friendship. And to the mystery of the other person---the perfect stranger, who's the other half of your own self, and the same as your not-self. And all the while one's paying attention to all the things that, if one were sentimental, or worse, if one were spiritual like the poor old Rani, one would find so unromantic and gross and sordid even. But they aren't sordid, because one's fully aware of them, those things are just as beautiful as all the rest, just as wonderful."*

*"[...] It] is contemplation."*

The Palanese were taught to understand and appreciate life by being constantly aware of who you were in relation to all experiences. Over a thousand birds (called Mynah) inhabited the island mimicking the word, *Karuna. Attention, here and now*, reminding people to be aware of everything they did.

*"Listen to him closely, listen discriminatingly. [...]"*

*Will Farnaby listened. The mynah had gone back its first theme.*

*"Attention," the articulate oboe was calling. "Attention."*

*"Attention to what?" he asked, in the hope of eliciting a more enlightening answer than the one he had received from Mary Sarojini.*  
*"To attention," said Dr. MacPhail*

From the beginning, children were taught to do things with *the minimum of strain and maximum of awareness*, to get the best objectively and subjectively out of any experience.

Following this line, the Palanese had an original approach to food and taste, an act of devotion in the very act of eating.

*We do not say grace before meals. We say it with meals. Or rather we don't say grace; we chew it. [...]*

*Grace is the first mouthful of each course – chewed and chewed until there's nothing left of it. [...]*

*Tasting is not-me doing something for the whole organism. And at the same time is me being conscious of what's happening. And that's the point of our chewing-grace – to make the me more conscious of what the non-me is up to.*

One of the means of becoming aware of yourself in relation to the universe (i.e. being enlightened) was through *meditation*. Meditation was considered as *Destiny Control* since it opened your mind to an intuitive level, to a greater understanding and awareness. The Palanese believed in the Buddhist philosophy that suffering was universal, but one-third of it was sorrow inherent to the human condition and two-thirds came from human life, social conventions and man's inability to control his life, which was full of *changes and chances...beauties and horrors and absurdities*. Destiny Control could not take away all the pain of suffering in bereavement. However thanks to meditation you managed to understand that *man is infinite as the Void*.

Mary Sarojini, a very young Palanese girl was intrigued by Will's attitude to life. She commented:

*You never saw anybody dying and you never saw anybody having a baby. How did you get to know things?*

Will retorted: *In the school I went to, we never got to know things, we only got to know words.*

In his journey around the island and inside his soul, he witnessed the death of Lakshmi, Dr. Robert's old wife. Susila, her son's widow, helped her live death as a passage to *the peace of Clear Light*.

*The light [...] It's here again. Oh, how wonderful. [...]*

The pain, Lakshmi continued [...] *would be bad if it were really my pain. But somehow it isn't. The pain isn't here; but I'm somewhere else. It's like what you discover with the moksha - medicine. Nothing really belongs to you. Not even your pain.*

It was certainly an enlightening experience: it was not the experience of an individual dying alone, it was a shared experience of ultimate love. As Dr. Robert said:

*All that laughter and desire, all that uncomplicated happiness! It's all here, like an atmosphere, like a field of force. Their joy and our love – Susila's love, my love – all working together, all reinforcing one another. Love and joy enveloping you, my darling; love and joy carrying you up into the peace of the Clear Light.*

It was Susila's mission "to help people die". In the case of Will Farnaby, she tried to help him reconcile with the idea of death and with painful past experiences.

*[...] 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" He screwed up his face in an expression of disgust.*

*"And yet," said Susila, "in a certain sense the advice is excellent. Eating, drinking, dying---three primary manifestations of the universal and impersonal life. Animals live that impersonal and universal life without knowing its nature. Ordinary people know its nature but don't live it and, if ever they think seriously about it, refuse to accept it. An enlightened person knows it, lives it, and accepts it completely. He eats, he drinks, and in due course he dies---but he eats with a difference, drinks with a difference, dies with a difference."*

*"And rises again from the dead?" he asked sarcastically.*

*"That's one of the questions the Buddha always refused to answer. Believing in eternal life never helped anybody to live in eternity. Nor, of course, did disbelieving. So stop all your pro-ing and con-ing (that's the Buddha's advice) and get on with the job."*

*"Which job?"*

*"Everybody's job---enlightenment. Which means, here and now, the preliminary job of practicing all the yogas of increased awareness."*

The young Palanese had to take a formal initiation, they climbed a dangerous rock precipice to be reminded of the presence of death and the essential precariousness of all existence. Then they were introduced to the *moksha* medicine, an organic drug inducing a psychedelic trance. During the *moksha* ceremony, the Lord of the Dance, Shiva-Nataraja, danced in all worlds, the world of the senses, the world of matter, the world of endless coming and passing away and the world of Clear Light: *One in plurality, the Emptiness that is all, the Suchness totally present in every appearance.*

In line with the teaching that man's destiny was communion with the universe, in a different dimension, the *yoga* of every day life, everyone was taught that worshipping symbols did not get prayers answered. To demonstrate this idea, the Old Raja made the scarecrows in the fields look like Buddha and the Christian God the Father. If prayers were answered, it was because in this *odd and psychological world, ideas have a tendency if you concentrate your mind on them to get realized.*

The Palanese believed goodness was not to be sought in heaven, but in fellow human beings. Pala was created based on this ethics, *a federation of self-governing units, geographical units, professional units, economic units with room for initiative and democracy but no place for a dictatorship.* Since balance was the rule in nature, the Palanese only manufactured enough products to maintain their community with just enough exports to get what they needed from the outside world. All aspects of society were based on human satisfaction first.

This clashed with the values of the world outside Pala: ecology & responsible use of natural resources vs. the exploitation of oil, mass production, consumerism.

*"Whereas we," said Dr. Robert, "have always chosen to adapt our economy and technology to human beings---not our human beings to somebody else's economy and technology. We import what we can't make; but we make an [sic] import only what we can afford. And what*

*we can afford is limited not merely by our supply of pounds and marks and dollars, but also primarily---primarily," he insisted---"by our wish to be happy, our ambition to become fully human".*

In fact the Rani, a princess of Rendang married to the last Raja, detested the life on Pala and influenced her son, Murugan, so that when he came of age and became the new Raja, he took on the militaristic philosophy of the neighbouring Rendang. Murugan worshiped Colonel Dipa. At some point of the story it was even suggested that they had a homosexual relationship. Murugan took up all values of the outer world, i.e. love for powerful cars and motorbikes, which he could never have in Pala, as these goods were not imported as they were deemed unnecessary. The world of technology and progress had tempted him and he had betrayed Palanese values. *"The serpent tempted me and I did eat"* was just one of the cynical analogies Huxley made to Christianity.

In the end, the Taoist "non-interference" philosophy was one of the reasons for the doom of their society, in fact the Palanese were pacifists with no army. Ironically, by the time Pala was invaded, thanks to his experiences with these beautiful people, Will regretted his betrayal and became convinced that Pala was the ideal society. His redemption came too late to change Pala's fate, greed had prompted him to betray his new friends.

The evils of militarism and capitalism won over humanism and rationality. In Pala population was under control, over consumption and mass production was not the key of industry; science was used to better mankind rather than destroy it. Nobody was richer than anyone else.

Nonetheless, Huxley's pessimism and cynical attitude towards mankind won out.

*Progress, Values, Oil, True Spirituality.*

*The work of a hundred years destroyed in one single night.*

### 3. Life in anti-utopian worlds

#### 3.1 Literature & Culture

Literature and culture flourish in freedom and social stability.

Palanese culture and literature fused philosophical Buddhist tradition and “imported” advanced scientific knowledge, reconciling different approaches to life in an effective way.

Following are two examples of Palanese poetry.

*All things, to all things  
perfectly indifferent,  
perfectly working together  
in discord for a Good beyond  
good, for a Being more  
timeless in transience, more  
eternal in its dwindling than  
God there in heaven*

(From a religious ceremony preceding the use of Moksha medicine:)

*O you the creator, you the destroyer, you who sustain and make an end,  
Who in sunlight dance among the birds and the children at their play,  
Who at midnight dance among corpses in the burning grounds,  
You Shiva, you dark and terrible Bhairava,  
You Suchness and Illusion, the Void and All Things,  
You are the lord of life, and therefore I have brought you flowers;  
You are the lord of death, and therefore I have brought you my heart---  
This heart that is now your burning ground.  
Ignorance there and self shall be consumed by with fire.  
That you may dance, Bhairava, among the ashes.  
That you may dance, Lord Shiva, in a place of flowers,  
And I dance with you.*

Culture and literature enlightened the reading public, encouraged individual thinking and rationality.

Not surprisingly, there was no place for literature and culture outside the dominant State doctrine in dystopian worlds.

In Animal Farm literature simply did not exist. There were no written works of any kind except the Seven Commandments painted on the walls of the barn. Barely any animal could read, aside from the pigs. The hymn “Beasts of England” belonged to the oral tradition, but at a certain stage it was regarded as subversive and substituted by



“orthodox” poetry composed by one of the pigs, endowed with the gift of the gab.

Both in 1984 and Brave New World, there existed a sort of “State literature”, carefully written to guarantee orthodoxy in subjects and terminology.

The whole idea behind Newspeak, for example - i.e. the constant reduction of words, the “purification” of the language to make it fit to express orthodox concepts only - clashed with literature, past and present.

*By the year 2050 - earlier probably - all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron - they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of The Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking - not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.*

Even without these extremes as regarded language itself, the Brave New World did not approve of literature. Only Alpha-pluses were allowed to read whatever they chose, because they possessed (or were supposed to possess) the intellectual and emotional strength and training not to suffer from or be shocked by the unorthodox teachings they found.

It was what Mustapha Mond tried to explain to the Savage.

*“Because our world is not the same as Othello's world. You can't make flivvers without steel - and you can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help*

*behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's soma. Which you go and chuck out of the window in the name of liberty, Mr. Savage. Liberty!" He laughed. "Expecting Deltas to know what liberty is! And now expecting them to understand Othello! My good boy!"*

### 3.2 Science, Religion & Moral Values

Science held a central role in Orwell's and Huxley's visions of the future.

In *Brave New World* *decanting* was the name given to the procedure of artificial and mechanical stimulation of the embryo resulting in what we would call "birth". Huxley detailed this process to emphasize the tremendous advancement of scientific knowledge and practice and to show the complete control of the individual from the time of conception. It referred to the technique of in vitro fertilization (IVF), which was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be used on animals first and then on human beings.

Artificial insemination (AI) was extensively used also in *Island*, to spread the best genes of the best individuals, thus improving society. However good the end may be, one cannot shake off the uneasy feelings experiments on embryos and human cloning conjure up. Genetics is a very powerful weapon in the hands of highly unreliable individuals and states.

The present scientific, philosophic and moral debate over these sensitive issues is clear evidence of this.

*Conditioning* could be carried out at various levels.

It was defined as the training of an individual to respond to a stimulus in a specific way. The great Russian scientist Pavlov conducted experiments to determine how this conditioning took place.

In *Brave New World* individuals were conditioned to think, act, feel, believe and respond the way the government wanted them to, by using genetic manipulation and sleep teaching.

In *1984* terror served the same aim.

Individuals were conditioned not to behave in certain ways for fear of punishment. Terror proved to be the driving force in dictatorships.

Hitler and Stalin rose to world power through their use of fear and through the forced loyalty of their people.

*The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.*

In Island children were conditioned, in the sense that they were taught how to exploit their mental abilities to achieve a target, i.e. to react to a situation in an acceptable way. For example they drilled how to face sudden surges of violence and violent feelings in general and drilled the Rakshasi Hornpipe: *So stamp it out, so stamp it out.*

*Pavlov purely for a good purpose. Pavlov for friendliness and trust and compassion. Whereas you prefer to use Pavlov for brainwashing, Pavlov for selling cigarettes and vodka and patriotism. Pavlov for the benefit of dictators, generals and tycoons.*

In Palanese society, science and religion were combined to reach the inner self. For example, the Palanese found there were two types of children who would become dominant adults. Pills were used to control the personality of one type and the other was taught to engage in tasks that enabled him to work off his aggressions. A Taoist appreciated the value of scientific knowledge about the universe and believed it increased his understanding of the "Tao." However, a

"Taoist" would not use science to change a person, nor as a means to change the intelligence of society, as the Palanese did - that would be interfering with the laws of nature.

As already remarked, in dystopian societies there was no room for individuals, i.e. intellectual freedom.

Hamlet's doubts no longer existed.

It was neither *nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune* nor to *take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them*.

Dystopian Hamlet would simply take a gram of soma and never contemplate any dilemma.

*And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there's always soma to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always soma to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering. In the past you could only accomplish these things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training. Now, you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears - that's what soma is.*

*There is always soma, delicious soma, half a gramme for a half-holiday, a gramme for a week-end, two grammes for a trip to the gorgeous East, three for a dark eternity on the moon.*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are daily exposed to conditioning. TV commercials make us talk and behave as programmed individuals when we go shopping. Election campaigns try to condition our behaviour in the election booths. Like the dog in Pavlovian experiments, we respond in predictable ways to specific stimuli.

Science has advanced tremendously. GMOs and genetically modified human beings, the search for physical perfection and beauty according to socially acceptable canons, the rejection of the very idea of growing old, consumerism taken to its extremes... all these elements were present in Huxley's Brave New World.

For those who fear that the next step will be mind-control, it's worth mentioning that extensive studies are being conducted on a drug called propranolol, a beta blocker, which could be used to help people avoid post-traumatic stress in that it is said to "erase" bad memories.

Science counterpart was religion.

In *Animal Farm* we listened to tales of Sugarcandy Mountain, but it was just a vague idea of a heavenly place, of future happiness to come. There was no religion as such, it looked more like a socialist reward to good citizens, like the patch of green the pigs promised to reserve to retiring animals.

In 1984 Winston dreamed of a heavenly place, where there was no darkness.

*We shall meet in the place where there is not darkness.*

In spite of the inevitable religious reference to heaven, darkness represented the horrors of IngSoc and light was more akin to the concepts of freedom and democracy.

In *Brave New World* the life, work, and teachings of Ford are the sources of inspiration and truth, as the life, work, and teachings of Christ would be in a Christian society.

Even time was reckoned according to Ford. A.F. 632 was the year when these events took place. Since Huxley had projected his fantasy six hundred years into the future, by our reckoning the year would be approximately 2532 A.D.

Huxley chose the figure of Henry Ford because he had revolutionized manufacturing with his assembly-line technique. The introduction of the Model-T Ford was used as the opening date of the new era.

This change in emphasis was symbolized by the changing of the Christian Cross to the Ford T. In the words of the World Controller, *God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness.*

Predestination was an act of God in Christian societies. It became a function of a government bureau in *Brave New World*.

The new social setup influences the concept of morality and socially acceptable behaviours.

In 1984 sexual pleasure (i.e. the lack of it) was used to crash the individual and to deprive citizens of any enjoyment. In Brave New World sexual pleasure was used to emphasize a sense of community, of enjoyment and physical pleasure.

In 1984 Julia, the girl Winston fell in love with, used her youth and sex appeal to corrupt members of the Inner Party.

Her illegal love affair with Winston was an act of revolution.

Julia worked in a special department of the Minitrue, producing cheap pornography for the proles. She was a rebel in that she wanted to choose how to live her own life, she did not want to overthrow the existing government, she did not care. If Big Brother said black was white, fine. If he said two and two made five, no problem. She might not buy the Party line, but it did not trouble her. She even fell asleep over Winston's reading the treasured book by Goldstein.

However, *unlike Winston, she had grasped the inner meaning of the Party's sexual puritanism. It was not merely that sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside the Party's control and which therefore had to be destroyed if possible. What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship.*

Or, to use the explanation provided in the Appendix on the Principles of Newspeak:

*[...] Sexual life, for example, was entirely regulated by the two Newspeak words sexcrime (sexual immorality) and goodsex (chastity). Sexcrime covered all sexual misdeeds whatever. It covered fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and other perversions, and, in addition, normal intercourse practised for its own sake. There was no need to enumerate them separately, since they were all equally culpable, and, in principle, all punishable by death. In the C vocabulary, which consisted of scientific and technical words, it might be necessary to give specialized names to certain sexual aberrations, but the ordinary citizen had no need of them. He knew what was meant by goodsex -- that is to say, normal intercourse between man and wife, for the sole purpose of begetting children, and without physical pleasure on the part of the woman: all else was sexcrime.*

In Brave New World sex meant promiscuity: *everyone belongs to everyone else* and *orgy-porgy* ceremonies, Malthusian drills and Malthusian belts, *feelies*... all practices connected to the sexual sphere – however vaguely - indicated that sex was a community affair like everything else. Monogamy or even a steady relationship were frowned upon.

Thomas Malthus was an English political economist who propounded a doctrine on the theory of overpopulation. He stated that, unless famine or war diminished population, in time the means of life would be inadequate. In Brave New World mandatory birth control measures were used to regulate the growth of population. Also in Island we find birth control rules. In fact the issue of overpopulation is central and was often the subject of philosophical discussions and literary works, i.e. Swift's A Modest Proposal.

In 1984 the subject of birth control was treated marginally. In fact sexual intercourse was tolerated within the boundaries of marriage precisely to bear children, the *longa manus* of the Party inside families, born and bred to become good Party members, loyal to the Party, not to their parents.

*We have cut the link between child and parent and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a friend any longer. But in the future there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth [...] There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother.*

In the Palanese culture, the interpretation of love and compassion for all was achieved through *maithuana*, the art of love making. Adolescents were taught the *yoga of love* as an attempt to regain paradise by awareness of your self and not-self. According to the Palanese culture, there was no such thing as sacred love or profane love. Sexual pleasure was a positive and desirable feeling.

Families were regarded as very useful to raise responsible children but they were not the confined communities we know. In fact, Palanese society invented Mutual Adoption Clubs (MAC), institutions made up of approximately 20 assorted couples, with or without

children, of assorted age groups. MAC would give children freedom from their parents and vice versa, supporting them all the time, with no need to rebel or fight.

*"Escape," she explained, "is built into the new system. Whenever the parental Home Sweet Home becomes too unbearable, the child is allowed, is actively encouraged---and the whole weight of public opinion is behind the encouragement---to migrate to one of the other homes."*

*"How many homes does a Palanese child have?"*

*"About twenty on average."*

*"Twenty? My God!"*

*"We all belong," Susila explained, "to an MAC---a Mutual Adoption Club. Every MAC consists of anything from fifteen to twenty-five assorted couples. Newly elected brides and bridegrooms, old-timers with growing children, grandparents and great-grandparents---everybody in the club adopts everyone else. Besides our own blood relations, we all have our quota of deputy mothers, deputy fathers, deputy aunts and uncles, deputy brothers and sisters, deputy babies and toddlers and teen-agers."*

*[...]*

*"Nothing," she assured him, "could be less like a commune than an MAC. An MAC isn't run by the government, it's run by its members. And we're not militaristic. We're not interested in turning out good party members; we're interested in turning out good human beings. We don't inculcate dogmas. And finally we don't take the children away from their parents; on the contrary, we give the children additional parents and the parents additional children. [...]"*

This was an attempt to propose a positive model of community living, supporting the intellectual and emotional growth of stronger individual members.

### 3.3 Politics & Propaganda

In Animal Farm, the political doctrine was called Animalism. The pigs succeeded in reducing its principles to Seven Commandments, which *"would form an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal*



*Farm must live for ever after*". In the end it turned out that all commandments had been slightly altered in their form, but very deeply in their spirit, to accommodate the pigs' new habits. When it became evident that practically no animal beside the pigs could go beyond learning a few letters of the alphabet, the commandments were taught by constant repetition. Sheep were very good at that, their chorus of *"two legs good, four legs bad"* was also used to silence any opposing voice during public meetings. When teaching the commandments they inevitably had to be reduced to make them simpler, thus thwarting their original meaning to some extent.

The same process of reduction happened in 1984: the Ministry of Truth became Minitrue, the Ministry of Peace Minipax, the Ministry of Love Miniluv.

Animalism resembled socialism in its most visible features, such as the presence of a strong leader (Napoleon vs. Snowball), systems of propaganda (Squealer), Animal Committees, celebrations, parades, plans to build the windmill which resembled the 5 Years Plans of Soviet Russia.

Work was a key value, in fact Boxer's motto was *I will work harder*. The pigs - the ruling class - did not work in the fields and justified themselves by saying that they were already very busy taking decisions to rule the farm. Those who did not work (the cat, the mice) were frowned upon because they were a burden for the community.

No animal actually retired, even though retirement was foreseen at a certain age and the pigs had promised to reserve a patch of green to retired animals.

Work, both intellectual and physical work, was a positive value in Pala, too.

*"Aren't you supposed to be intellectuals?" Will asked when the two men had emerged again and were drying themselves.*

*"We do intellectual work," Vijaya answered.*

*"Then why all the horrible honest toil?"*

*"For a very simple reason: this morning I had some spare time."*

*"So did I," said Dr. Robert.*

*"So you went out into the fields and did a Tolstoy act."*

*Vijaya laughed. "You seem to imagine we do it for ethical reasons."*

*"Don't you?"*

*"Certainly not. I do muscular work, because I have muscles, and if I don't use my muscles I shall become a bad-tempered sitting-addict."*

*"With nothing between the cortex and the buttocks," said Dr. Robert.*

*"Or rather with everything---but in a condition of complete unconsciousness and toxic stagnation. Western intellectuals are all sitting-addicts. That's why most of you are so repulsively unwholesome. In the past even a duke had to do a lot of walking, even a moneylender, even a metaphysician. And when they weren't using their legs, they were jogging about on horses. Whereas now, from the tycoon to his typist, from the logical positivist to the positive thinker, you spend nine tenths of your time on foam rubber. Spongy seats for spongy bottoms---at home, in the office, in cars and bars, in planes and trains and buses. No moving of legs, no struggles with distance and gravity---just lifts and planes and cars, just foam rubber and an eternity of sitting. The life force that used to find an outlet through striped muscle gets turned back on the viscera and the nervous system, and slowly destroys them."*

*[...Vijaya explained,] "If you'd been shown how to do things with the minimum of strain and the maximum of awareness, you'd enjoy even honest toil."*

In *Animal Farm* all stories were related orally and all news were listened to. This was a powerful instrument of propaganda in that on the one hand you could not shut off the messages being related, on the other there were no written records except in the hands of the pigs.

Through propaganda the ruling party wanted to convince all animals that they were in fact living better lives than they used to during Mr. Jones' times. They did so by spreading all sorts of figures and statistics on crops, etc... that changed constantly and that everyone chose to believe, even against reality because they did not have any way to oppose them.

Incidents occurred in the past were modified over and over again according to actual needs, i.e. the battle of the Cowshed (the roles of

Snowball and Napoleon changed according to the needs) or the collapse of the mill (it was attributed to an act of terrorism, even though some rumours said its walls were not strong enough and in fact the second time walls were built thicker).

The Seven Commandments changed over time, in an effort to chastise those who started commenting on the pigs' behaviour: No animal shall sleep in beds *with sheets*; No animal shall kill another animal *without cause*. This was especially important: some animals seemed to remember that one of the principles of animalism was that no animal should kill one of his brothers. In the end they found that the commandment was not as they remembered. They never had the strength to question the righteousness of the doctrine taught by the pigs, even when they ruled ruthlessly and violently, thanks to the dogs trained as a police squad.

The central motive of the manipulation of the past was one of the key features of 1984, where IngSoc was based on the principle that *those who control the past, control the future: who controls the present controls the past*.

By relentlessly modifying the past to suit its immediate needs, the Party could strengthen its power by enhancing the sense of instability and terror and keep society constantly under control.

Even in Brave New World the past had to be moulded to present needs. Actually, it was not modified, basically it was ignored, almost erased from everybody's existence except for the deeds of *our Great Ford*, who was worshipped as the creator of the new world. All information and written words circulating among the people suited the specific needs of specific social classes.

On the contrary, the Palanese were exposed to the dangers of propaganda from Rendang and the lure of the luxuries and comforts of the outer world, precisely because there was no system of control on the circulation of news and information.

Palanese society was based on ethical principles which worked very well inside, where they were not contaminated. There was a strong layer of society - probably the vast majority of people - truly believing, living and practising what they thought and preached. Children were

brought up with the same principles and in general they exercised their free will and adhered to the doctrine of their fathers.

Some rules were in force as regarded the exchange of goods with the outer world, i.e. goods not deemed necessary were not imported, resources regarded as non essential were kept and not exploited.

However, the first seeds of corruption were planted in the young Raja by his own mother, who came from Rendang and strongly disagreed with some of the moral principles taught in Pala (*maithuana*, the *yoga of love*, physical love vs. spiritual love).

She was half convinced, half lured into the business of an oil concession. She declared she would use the money earned from that not for her own sake, but for a *Crusade of the Spirit*.

## 4. The role of language

### 4.1 The invention of new languages:

While reading Orwell and Huxley extensively, the central role of language as a means to enforce reason of state as against individual freedom becomes apparent.

In their literary efforts, both authors invented a new language, Newspeak in 1984 and Palanese in Island.

The world of imaginary languages has been explored in a very interesting book, *Aga magéra difúra Dizionario delle lingue immaginarie*, published in Italy in 1994. The book argues that all imaginary languages – defined as “non natural” languages, i.e. not learned by oral transmission in a specific environment – have some distinctive features, as regards vocabulary, grammar, syntax, morphology although the degree of invention varies greatly. The purpose of the language should also be considered. In fact, in the book a preliminary distinction is made between sacred and non-sacred languages.

The study of imaginary languages, a sort of *language simulation in virtual worlds*, is instrumental to understand the vices and virtues of human communication. Projects to create an ideal and perfect language paved the way to philosophical theories and scientific investigations.

Although the authors of imaginary languages come from very different cultural backgrounds, it is undoubtedly in the field of literature that one finds the most outstanding examples.

#### 4.1.1 Newspeak

Newspeak was the language created by George Orwell in 1984.

Its principles were listed in an Appendix to the novel.

*Newspeak was the official language of Oceania, and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of IngSoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing. The leading articles of the Times were written in it, but this was a tour de force which could only be carried out by a specialist. It was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050. Meanwhile, it gained ground steadily, all party members tending to use*

*Newspeak words and grammatical constructions more and more in their everyday speech.*

The idea behind Newspeak was the control of the mind by governing the language.

*The purpose of Newspeak, Orwell wrote in the Appendix, was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of IngSoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible.*

The whole aim of Newspeak was to narrow the range of thought.

Vocabulary was reduced so that only orthodox views could be expressed. Grammar was standardized and simplified. In the end there would be one word only for one clearly understood concept. Newspeak was unsuitable for literature, but this was a benefit for the state, as literature might reveal undreamed-of worlds and foster doubt and unorthodoxy.

*To give a single example - The word free still existed in Newspeak, but could only be used in such statements as "The dog is free from lice" or "This field is free from weeds." It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free," since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless. Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself, and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to diminish the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum. Newspeak was founded on the English language as we now know it, though many Newspeak sentences, even when not containing newly created words, would be barely intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day. Newspeak words were divided into three distinct classes, known as the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary, and the C vocabulary. It would be simpler to discuss each class separately, but the grammatical peculiarities of the language can be dealt with in the section devoted to the A vocabulary, since the same rules held good for all three categories.*

*The A vocabulary consisted of words needed for the business of everyday life [...]. It was composed almost entirely of words that we already possess -- words like hit, run, dog, tree, sugar, house, field -- but in comparison with the present-day English vocabulary, their number was extremely small, while their*

meanings were far more rigidly defined. All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them. [...]. It would have been quite impossible to use the A vocabulary for literary purposes or for political or philosophical discussion. It was intended only to express simple, purposive thoughts, usually involving concrete objects or physical actions.

The grammar of Newspeak has two outstanding peculiarities. The first of these was an almost complete interchangeability between different parts of speech. Any word in the language (in principle this applied even to very abstract words such as *if* or *when*) could be used either as verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. [...]. Adjectives were formed by adding the suffix *-ful* to the noun verb, and adverbs by adding *-wise*. Thus, for example, *speedful* meant "rapid" and *speedwise* meant "quickly." [...].

In addition, any word -- this again applied in principle to every word in the language -- could be negative by adding the affix *un-*, or could be strengthened by the affix *plus-*, or, for still greater emphasis *doubleplus-*. Thus, for example, *uncold* meant "warm" while *pluscold* and *doublepluscold* meant, respectively, "very cold" and "superlatively cold". [...].

The second distinguishing mark of Newspeak grammar was its regularity. [...]. Thus in all verbs the preterite and the past participle were the same and ended in *-ed*. [...]. All plurals were made by adding *-s* or *-es* as the case might be. [...].

The B vocabulary consisted of words which had been deliberately constructed for political purposes: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them. Without a full understanding of the principles of IngSoc it was difficult to use these words correctly. [...]

The B words were in all cases compound words.

They consisted of two or more words, or portions of words, welded together in an easily pronounceable form. [...]

The B words were not constructed on any etymological plan. The words of which they were made up could be any parts of speech, and could be placed in any order and mutilated in any way which made them easy to pronounce while indicating their derivation. [...]

Some of the B words had highly subtilized meanings, barely intelligible to anyone who had not mastered the language as a whole. Consider, for

example, such a typical sentence from a Times leading article as *Oldthinkers unbellyfeel Ingsoc*. The shortest rendering that one could make of this in Oldspeak would be: 'Those whose ideas were formed before the Revolution cannot have a full emotional understanding of the principles of English Socialism.' But this is not an adequate translation. To begin with, in order to grasp the full meaning of the Newspeak sentence quoted above, one would have to have a clear idea of what is meant by IngSoc. And in addition, only a person thoroughly grounded in IngSoc could appreciate the full force of the word *bellyfeel*, which implied a blind, enthusiastic acceptance difficult to imagine today; or of the word *oldthink*, which was inextricably mixed up with the idea of wickedness and decadence. But the special function of certain Newspeak words, of which *oldthink* was one, was not so much to express meanings as to destroy them. These words, necessarily few in number, had had their meanings extended until they contained within themselves whole batteries of words which, as they were sufficiently covered by a single comprehensive term, could now be scrapped and forgotten. The greatest difficulty facing the compilers of the Newspeak Dictionary was not to invent new words, but, having invented them, to make sure what they meant: to make sure, that is to say, what ranges of words they cancelled by their existence. [...]

In Newspeak it was seldom possible to follow a heretical thought further than the perception that it was heretical: beyond that point the necessary words were nonexistent.

No word in the B vocabulary was ideologically neutral. A great many were euphemisms. Such words, for instance, as *joycamp* (forced-labour camp) or *Minipax* (Ministry of Peace, i. e. Ministry of War) meant almost the exact opposite of what they appeared to mean. [...]. But in addition there were great numbers of words which at first sight appeared to be mere abbreviations and which derived their ideological colour not from their meaning, but from their structure.

So far as it could be contrived, everything that had or might have political significance of any kind was fitted into the B vocabulary. The name of every organization, or body of people, or doctrine, or country, or institution, or public building, was invariably cut down into the familiar shape; that is, a single easily pronounced word with the smallest number of syllables that would



preserve the original derivation. [...]. Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, telescoped words and phrases had been one of the characteristic features of political language; and it had been noticed that the tendency to use abbreviations of this kind was most marked in totalitarian countries and totalitarian organizations. Examples were such words as Nazi, Gestapo, Comintern, Inprecorr, Agitprop. In the beginning the practice had been adopted as it were instinctively, but in Newspeak it was used with a conscious purpose. It was perceived that in thus abbreviating a name one narrowed and subtly altered its meaning, by cutting out most of the associations that would otherwise cling to it.

The words *Communist International*, for instance, call up a composite picture of universal human brotherhood, red flags, barricades, Karl Marx, and the Paris Commune. The word *Comintern*, on the other hand, suggests merely a tightly-knit organization and a well-defined body of doctrine. It refers to something almost as easily recognized, and as limited in purpose, as a chair or a table. *Comintern* is a word that can be uttered almost without taking thought, whereas *Communist International* is a phrase over which one is obliged to linger at least momentarily. In the same way, the associations called up by a word like *Minitrue* are fewer and more controllable than those called up by *Ministry of Truth*. This accounted not only for the habit of abbreviating whenever possible, but also for the almost exaggerated care that was taken to make every word easily pronounceable.

[...]. Relative to our own, the Newspeak vocabulary was tiny, and new ways of reducing it were constantly being devised. Newspeak, indeed, differed from most all other languages in that its vocabulary grew smaller instead of larger every year. Each reduction was a gain, since the smaller the area of choice, the smaller the temptation to take thought. Ultimately it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain centers at all. This aim was frankly admitted in the Newspeak word *duckspeak*, meaning 'to quack like a duck'. Like various other words in the B vocabulary, *duckspeak* was ambivalent in meaning. Provided that the opinions which were quacked out were orthodox ones, it implied nothing but praise, and when *The Times* referred to one of the orators of the Party as a *doubleplusgood duckspeaker* it was paying a warm and valued compliment.

*The C vocabulary was supplementary to the others and consisted entirely of scientific and technical terms. These resembled the scientific terms in use today, and were constructed from the same roots, but the usual care was taken to define them rigidly and strip them of undesirable meanings. [...]. There was, indeed, no word for 'Science', any meaning that it could possibly bear being already sufficiently covered by the word Ingsoc.*

Unorthodox thinking would eventually be *literally impossible*. If a word for a concept was destroyed, the concept itself was destroyed.

As Syme, one of Winston's comrades and a specialist of Newspeak pointed out, *We shall make thought-crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.*

*"The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition," said Syme. "We're getting the language into its final shape - the shape it's going to have when nobody speaks anything else. You think our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words - scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. In the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. The great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take 'good', for instance. If you have a word like 'good', what need is there for a word like 'bad'? 'Ungood' will do just as well - better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of 'good', what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like 'excellent' and 'splendid' and all the rest of them? 'Plusgood' covers the meaning; or 'doubleplusgood' if you want something stronger still. In the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. The whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words - in reality, only one word.*

*When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. In the future such fragments, even if they chanced to*

*survive, would be unintelligible and untranslatable. It was impossible to translate any passage of Oldspeak into Newspeak unless it either referred to some technical process or some very simple everyday action, or was already orthodox(goodthinkful would be the Newspeak expression) in tendency. In practice this meant that no book written before approximately 1960 could be translated as a whole. Pre-revolutionary literature could only be subjected to ideological translation -- that is, alteration in sense as well as language. Take for example the well-known passage from the Declaration of Independence:*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government. . .*

*It would have been quite impossible to render this into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word: crimethink.*

*A full translation could only be an ideological translation, whereby Jefferson's words would be changed into a panegyric on absolute government.*

One example of Newspeak/Oldspeak translation from Orwell's novel:

Original Newspeak : *Times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unperson rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling.*

Oldspeak Translation: *The reporting of Big Brother's "Order of the Day" in the Times of December 3rd 1983 is extremely unsatisfactory and makes reference to nonexistent persons. Rewrite it in full and submit your draft to higher authority before filing.*

Newspeak was an extension of what Orwell saw happening in the use of English in his own time: lying and deceit for political purposes.

*Doublethink* was perhaps the epitome of these concepts: it was defined as a method for holding two contradictory beliefs at once and regarding both of them as true.

However by 2050 when Newspeak was to be used by everyone, even Doublethink would lose its meaning, because there will not be two conflicting concepts any more.

*War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength.*

People would enjoy living in terror. People would love Big Brother.

#### 4.1.2 Palanese

In *The Doors of Perception* Huxley stated that *every individual is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he has been born.*

In *Brave New World* Huxley did not find it necessary to create a new language. The use of the existing language was regulated by hypnopaedia. Words – slogans, which contained the principles society was based on - were uttered automatically due to conditioning but were devoid of meaning. Language had been divested of any intrapersonal function.

To Bernard's suggestion to go for a walk and talk, Lenina asked confusedly: *Talking? But what about?*

Lenina's and Fanny's conversation in the dressing room demonstrated that the brave new world was dominated by words without reason. Whenever the discussion reached a crucial point, a slogan was there to provide a ready-made solution, to decide a dispute.

*After all, a gram is better than a damn.*

Bernard was one of the few people to realize this was a fallacy. He thought ironically: *Sixty-two thousand four hundred repetitions make one truth. Idiots!.*

On Pala, language enriched the individuals' experiences.

Huxley provided his islanders with a rich linguistic tradition and a deep cultural heritage.

Palanese language had *the richest erotic and sentimental vocabulary in Southeast Asia*. It was used in everyday life, to report funny episodes, to discuss about love or during love making.

English was used for discussions regarding business, science and speculative philosophy. Sanskrit was used in some religious ceremonies.

#### 4.2 Language & Politics

If I were to choose a catch phrase to summarize Orwell's opinions on language, literature and politics I'd use his famous sentence *All art is propaganda*.

The leit motif of many of his essays was the close relationship between artists and politics. It is worth quoting a few key sentences, which help clarify the writer's opinion and mission.

In *Why I Write* he indicated *political purpose* as one of the four great motives for writing.

*Political purpose.--Using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples' idea of the kind of society that they should strive after. Once again, no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.*

And again, talking about himself:

*Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, AGAINST totalitarianism and FOR democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity.*

In *Writers and the Leviathan* he tackled the issue of historical events and their effects on literature and writers, by stressing the fact that history intruded on literature and the writer couldn't possibly remain impassible in front of it, nor on the other hand could he become a mere instrument of a political party, however good its doctrine was.

*To suggest that a creative writer, in a time of conflict, must split his life into two compartments, may seem defeatist or frivolous: yet in practice I do not see what else he can do. To lock yourself up in an ivory tower is impossible and undesirable. To yield subjectively, not merely to a party machine, but even to a group ideology, is to destroy yourself as a writer. We feel this dilemma to be a painful one, because*

*we see the need of engaging in politics while also seeing what a dirty, degrading business it is.*

In *The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda*, Orwell talked about literary criticism and again pointed out that in 1930's-1940's Europe criticism that was really *judicious, scrupulous, fair-minded, treating a work of art as a thing of value in itself* had been impossible, because of *external circumstances*.

After 1930 the feeling of security which fostered art did not exist any more. The old scheme of values did not exist any more.

*Literature had to become political, because anything else would have entitled mental dishonesty.*

This period destroyed the illusion of pure aestheticism, of *art for art's sake*.

In his essay *Politics and the English Language* Orwell discussed the bad state of the English language, disagreeing with the general opinion that *our civilization is decadent, and our language [...] must inevitably share in the general collapse*.

*The point is that the process is reversible*, he argued.

*Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.*

He carried on by pointing out examples of prose, full of dying metaphors, pretentious diction and meaningless words.

*In certain kinds of writing, particularly in art criticism and literary criticism, it is normal to come across long passages which are almost completely lacking in meaning. [...]*

*Many political words are similarly abused. The word FASCISM has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies "something not desirable." The words DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM, FREEDOM, PATRIOTIC, REALISTIC, JUSTICE, have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like DEMOCRACY, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides.*

The impression was that writers did not choose words for their specific meaning, rather chose ready-made strings of words which in the end constituted political jargon.

*In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing.*

*Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line."*

*Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestoes, White Papers and the speeches of under-secretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases--BESTIAL ATROCITIES, IRON HEEL, BLOODSTAINED TYRANNY, FREE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER--one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy.*

*In our time, Orwell continued, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.*

If we change the examples and use separation of powers, conflict of interest, illegal immigration, we realize that present day politics is exactly the same.

*I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought. [...] One ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end. [...]*

*Political language [...] is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase--some JACKBOOT,*

*ACHILLES' HEEL, HOTBED, MELTING POT, ACID TEST, VERITABLE INFERNO or other lump of verbal refuse--into the dustbin where it belongs.*

I would like to ask one question then. Were we to deplete 21st Century political language - of all political parties - of all the trimmings, ready-made phrases, imagery and metaphores, what would be left?

In other words, is there any real meaning behind the words of politicians?

#### 4.3 Language & Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Obama & McCain campaigns

In 1984 Orwell theorized that *the invention of print [...] made it easier to manipulate public opinion and the film and the radio carried the process further. With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end.*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the internet is such a powerful medium that Orwell himself could not even have imagined. With such instruments as Wikipedia, which can be accessed and modified by users, you can never be sure if what you are reading is the truth. The first step is always to find a reliable source.

The internet is now a resource for approx 30% of the population in Italy, while in Western Europe and the US even a higher percentage access the net.

TV, commercials, the internet, the radio, posters in the street, all these media are heavily exploited during election campaigns.

Slogans and their constant repetition are often the key to a political victory. They are certainly instrumental to making a strong impact on the public opinion.

Let's quote the world famous slogans Mr. Obama and Mr. McCain used during their campaigns.

Mr. Obama chose

- "Yes We Can": short, to the point, positive, all inclusive, very effective;
- "Change We Can Believe In": a longer message, including the word change, referred to the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq; it served to differentiate his position from that of his Democratic opponent.

Mr. McCain used

- "Reform, Prosperity, Peace": all positive values, but all in all a lame message, the slogan did not strike the public; it might just as well be



substituted by the slogan “Community, Identity, Stability” of Brave New World, words devoid of real meaning;

- “A Cause Greater Than Self”: this motto came almost naturally to McCain who had served almost all his life in the US Navy – Fight for a greater cause was innate in him but this was now connected to a very sensitive issue – the US troops in Iraq;
- “Country First”: this back lashed because all loyal citizens should put their country first, even though they are not the President of the United States;
- “A Leader You Can Believe In”: McCain took the Obama slogan and used it to attack him – not so effectively, as we have learned.

Our domestic leaders Mr. Berlusconi and Mr. Veltroni imitated their foreign counterparts in their latest campaigns.

Mr. Veltroni merely translated Mr. Obama’s “Yes We Can” into Italian, i.e. “Si può fare”. His failure proved that effective slogans are a plus for a campaign but a powerful leader cannot do without a sound political program.

Mr. Berlusconi invented “Rialzati Italia”, which would sound like “Italy, Get up” in English. In my mind it echoed Bob Marley’s “Get up, stand up. Stand up for your rights”.

In Brave New World Revisited, in the essay “The Arts of Selling” Huxley wrote that *the survival of democracy depends on the ability of large numbers of people to make realistic choices in the light of adequate information*. he warned us that political candidates were *merchandized [...] by the same methods that business has developed to sell goods, including scientific selection of appeals and planned repetition*.

He pessimistically concluded that *the methods now being used to merchandise the political candidate [...] positively guaranteed the electorate against ever hearing the truth about anything*.

If we hold his postulate to be true, we cannot but assume that, since the majority of people lack (are not given and very often do not even try to get) adequate information to make realistic choices, the very existence of democracy is at stake.

## 5. Conclusion

Both Orwell and Huxley had a vivid imagination, an exceptionally good understanding of the society they lived in and of their times and a potent writing style they used to create their masterpieces.

Whether or not you decide to side with one or the other, it has to be recognized that *the idea of an earthly paradise in which men should live together in a state of brotherhood (i.e. utopia), without laws and without brute labour, had haunted the human imagination for thousands of years.*

To close this evaluation of Huxley's and Orwell's dystopias, I would like to quote Margaret Atwood's article "Everybody is happy now", published in The Guardian on 17th November, 2007.

*Meanwhile, those of us still pottering along on the earthly plane - and thus still able to read books - are left with Brave New World. How does it stand up, 75 years later? And how close have we come, in real life, to the society of vapid consumers, idle pleasure-seekers, inner-space trippers and programmed conformists that it presents?*

*The answer to the first question, for me, is that it stands up very well. It's still as vibrant, fresh, and somehow shocking as it was when I first read it.*

*The answer to the second question rests with you. Look in the mirror: do you see Lenina Crowne looking back at you, or do you see John the Savage? Chances are, you'll see something of both, because we've always wanted things both ways. We wish to be as the careless gods, lying around on Olympus, eternally beautiful, having sex and being entertained by the anguish of others. And at the same time we want to be those anguished others, because we believe, with John, that life has meaning beyond the play of the senses, and that immediate gratification will never be enough.*

*It was Huxley's genius to present us to ourselves in all our ambiguity. Alone among the animals, we suffer from the future perfect tense. Rover the Dog cannot imagine a future world of dogs in which all fleas will have been eliminated and doghood will finally have achieved its full glorious potential. But thanks to our uniquely structured languages, human beings can imagine such enhanced states for themselves, though they can also question their own grandiose constructions. It's these double-sided imaginative abilities that produce masterpieces of speculation such as Brave New World*

*To quote The Tempest, source of Huxley's title: "We are such stuff / As dreams are made of." He might well have added: "and nightmares".*

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