

# Huxley vs Orwell: On the Matrix, and Slacktivism

I'm really tired of discussion, and [comics](#) that pit these two against one another. And almost every single time, it's some smug fuck who thinks he's more hip or intelligent or insightful to note that the less famous of these works is more accurate when the reality is - we have both.

Lets not forget, first off, that these works are largely shaped by the experiences of the two men. Orwell was part of the Indian Imperial Police. He fought in the Spanish Civil War. On the outbreak of World War II, Orwell's wife Eileen started work in the Censorship Department in London. Huxley didn't serve in war. Temporary blindness kept him out of WWI, he did farm labor and later immersed himself in education in medicine. he taught foreign languages and even taught Orwell himself at one point. And while he served a bit in the Air Ministry, he never really did see war. After the publication of 1984, to give you an example of how long this debate has been going, Huxley wrote Orwell stating: "Within the next generation I believe that the world's leaders will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging them and kicking them into obedience."

The comics, much like certain [books](#), draws the conclusion if one was to look at the prophetic works of George Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Huxley's work came closer to the truth than Orwell's. While the comics makes some correct and astute observations about most of America, some parts of Japan, Europe and a scattering of other places, I feel the book and comic author is in grave error. What fails to be taken into consideration is that methods of control differs with economic conditions AND in how much a person decides to buy in.

This is why the Matrix (movie) was so genius. The Matrix could be seen as Huxley's Brave New World. Little workers spending 40 hours a week in cubes so they could have money to overindulge and enjoy their lives. The Matrix was American life. But Neo represented "the one" who didn't buy into it and who fought back. And for him - the machines used deadly force and oppressive techniques that were much more overt.

Whether you get exposed more often to Brave New World or to 1984 really depends on what economic class you hail from and/or how undone you are with the state of things. My main three points here are as follows:

1. The lower class is more often to get Orwell's boot (boot - taken from the quote "If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever".) , since they mostly can't afford Huxley's spectacle to the fullest extent necessary for control.
2. Those of fragile middle class who buy into the spectacle, are made to blame the lower class for their ills, thus becoming part of the Orwell's "boot".
3. If you are part of the middle class who decides to protest and are no longer buying into the spectacle, you also, get the boot.

These things work in tandem. And while I'm sure it's not entirely like this by design, it is how

systems of power have come together.

### **The Poor**

In America, I guess one would be hard pressed to see 1 and 2 in action. Even a good portion of our working poor maintain enough income, combined with some misplaced priorities, to partake in the spectacle. Most poor people in America, have lives filled with “stuff”. Access to medical care, retirement, affordable transportation and so forth? Probably not. But they have tvs. They have Internet. And they are still sold “cool”.

But if any demographic cannot afford spectacle the way the middle class can that fills the suburbs and cities, it is the poor in this country and if there is any group that see’s the “boot” more often than not? It is the poor. Are the poor more likely to do drugs than the middle class? No. Yet police roam their streets like it’s a war zone and due to the pitfalls of poverty, sometimes it really is. Persons with even minor offences are often made an example of and have ‘the book’ thrown at them in the justice system, while suburban folks are given chance after chance to get their act straight. But often the poor are just a group of people to be kept in fear and under control. From Stop and Frisk that targets them, to getting pulled over for "being black on a friday night", we see those who are often identified as powerless (as race and economics are usually tied together) being harassed by government agents in uniform. But take this idea out to other nations. North Korea, the majority of China, dictatorships through the Middle East and so forth and what do you see? Orwell’s boot making it’s presence be known again and again

### **Middle Class Not Buying In**

One has to look no further than [Occupy Wall Street Protests](#), or the [WTO](#) protests, or the [NATO protests](#), to see what happens when the (mostly) middle class and working people stop spending their time at the mall or on the couch and start spending their time on the street. See how quickly the mirage of the spectacle fades away to reveal Orwell’s reality behind it almost immediately?

Huxley’s Spectacle is a product of improved economic conditions. That’s all. It’s simply a nicer, more pleasant way of control. It’s easier, nicer and more profitable to pacify than the shackle and beat. But spectacle requires buying power from the populace and a will to buy in. If either of those things falter, the ugly head of ruling by fear, by violence, by militant propaganda – does not take long to come out.

### **The Collusion of the Boot and the Spectacle**

The NSA spying debacle is a perfect example of these two aspects of prophetic dystopian fiction merging. Those in power created products to dazzle us. Facebook, Twitter, Google, Apple, Yahoo, Verizon, etc. While we’re engaged in games, online socializing (while disconnecting from our real life communities), while our entertainment has us isolated in our homes, the government is now able to request/demand the information - our GPS coordinates, our phone meta-data, access our emails, our searches, our calendar info, our Google Docs and Dropbox contents, our IMs and SMS messages. This is a perfect example of both ideologies happening to work completely in tandem. The all seeing Eye of Big Brother being fuelled by us buying into the spectacle, to mindless entertainment. Entertainment (both in media and online

interaction) that is self-forgetting and narcissist(as opposed to art and in-person interactions, that tend to be more self reflective and self-confronting), is the tool that enables corporations that distract us to give the government that oppresses us the information that it needs.

### **More on the Matrix**

The Matrix illustrates the 1984/Brave New World relationship beautifully, I think. While not literary like the previous works, the Matrix in a way, brings it all together. You can believe in the Matrix and live within it like a happy little sheep. The vast world the Matrix provides is the spectacle. It's filled with sensations and experiences to keep you passive and easily controlled. If you wise up to the spectacle? Well, they have agents (the boot) for you then. And anyone plugged in – can be an agent. Just like in this world, where those that buy into the spectacle either empower or become part of the boot willingly and possibly apathetically. This can go as much for the passive consumer or reactionary movements meant to uphold the status quo (Tea Party). If you don't believe the Matrix, they need to fix that situation with violence. The agents can attack you or the sentinels can end your physical life.

As a side note, I think one of the most interesting characters in the first Matrix movie is Cypher, the guy who sells them all out to the Agents. He is a person who wants to do what many, who have had the metaphorical veil of spectacle lifted from their eyes, wish was possible in real life; To go back, when it was simpler and more rewarding. Cypher remembers how that ignorance of the spectacle was bliss, how he's tired of reality and he's willing to help the agents of the Matrix be 'the boot' in order to have that back. How many of us liberals, greens, communists, libertarians, anarchists, socialists and other various forms of rabble rousers who supposedly care so deeply, get online, rant, argue over dinner tables, tune in to our pundits and journalists and at the end of the day end up indulging in the music, the tv shows, the consumer habits, the movies that define us? How many of us are never moved to action? How many of us are, see how much of an uphill battle it is and get discouraged? I think we all can relate to Cypher in that way. The desire to go back to indulgence.

For many of the slacktivists of this nation, I would assume, are people who at one time or another wish they never knew of whatever ills and problems they clearly see plague our society – regardless if our supposed solutions are sensible or not. They want to act, but can't bring themselves too and the government provides us pacifying measures at wh.gov. It's another means of control. that's all. We reflect on our childish ignorance and yearn for the day we could go back to those times when we didn't know such things. Back to immersing ourselves in distraction and ignorance. Cypher ultimately represents our internal struggles to chose spectacle over reality, to chose apathy and the path of least resistance. He represents the people who just want to do [their jobs](#), live their lives, enjoy their tv shows, and enjoy their juicy steak. How many of us participate in lifestyle habits that we know have an immoral effect on the world? We do it almost mindlessly. All of us. We know that by participating in the spectacle and purchasing sweatshop made trinkets and gadgets here to keep us entertained are funding 'the boot' through labor abuses abroad. Our silence and compliance allows the boot to do what it does to others, in an unobstructed manner. We buy entertainment and shrug the seriousness of it off. It's easier to just retreat back into the spectacle. Even for those of us who aren't entirely apathetic. We are made to feel powerless against organizations so ruthless, and then are handed comforts, bread

and circus to hide within.

This is really the genius of the Matrix. Unlike 1984 and Brave New World, this was no prophecy for the future but rather a metaphor for what we are today. It's illustrated with the real emotions that Cypher feels and what that says about us, the spectacle and the boot, among many other things. The Matrix joins together many of the themes we see in both literary works. It describes the variety within our submission so well and it does it in a way that really removes a lot of political language that would get people steamed over discussions of religion, class, government, and the market, etc.

Comics that try to dicksize the two works together are missing the point. When left wing protests occur that threaten the powers that be, they are tear gassed and beaten in the streets. Left wing, even peaceful and small, organizations are infiltrated constantly, peaceful protests are incited into riots by agent provocateurs. You don't see this in right wing protests because they maintain the status quo. They help keep those in power, in power. They are the "Agents" This is why the [Tea Party](#) or even Westboro Baptist Church are never infiltrated by law enforcement, it's why cops don't show up to those shindigs in riot gear ready to crack skulls. Because they uphold the system, they keep people down from making change. The skulls that need to be cracked are those who stopped buying in. Those who "unplugged". Those who gave up on Huxley's distractions - if even for a phase, and they need be opposed with Orwell's "boot" to minimize how much change they can really effect.

This isn't the Matrix. There's not going to be any hero story for us. It's an uphill battle - first against ourselves, our petty desires, our petty comforts, our petty narcissism and self indulgence and only after we can confront those internal demons can we stand toe to toe in the streets with those ready to hit us over the head with night sticks. Only when we start to reject entertainment and a lifestyle that helps us escape, that makes us look outward, that makes us self-forget, and start embracing art and human connection that makes us look within ourselves, confront ourselves, our fears, our ethics, the things that MEAN SOMETHING to us can we see reject Huxley's world, and start fighting Orwell's world. There's a reason Reality TV is promoted over poetry. While Twitter is considered a "community" that's better over your own local organizations. They help you forget yourself and encourage you to endless project your ego, rather than look inward. And until we stop doing that, until you "unplug", you can't fight the machines.

permalink, taken from [/u/tossacctherpderp](#)

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