



35 YEARS LATER ...

Insights from George Orwell's dystopian
novel "1984"

THE AUTHOR

- Eric Arthur Blair, better known by his pen name George Orwell, was an English novelist, essayist, journalist and critic, whose work is marked by lucid prose, awareness of social injustice, opposition to totalitarianism, and outspoken support of democratic socialism.

THE AUTHOR

- Orwell's work continues to influence popular and political culture and the term "Orwellian"—descriptive of totalitarian or authoritarian social practices—has entered the language together with many of his neologisms, including "Big Brother", "Thought Police", "Room 101", "memory hole", "newspeak", "doublethink", "proles", "unperson" and "thoughtcrime"

THE NOVEL

- Nineteen Eighty-Four, often published as 1984, is a dystopian novel by English writer George Orwell published in June 1949. The novel is set in the year 1984 when most of the world population have become victims of perpetual war, omnipresent government surveillance and propaganda.

THE NOVEL

- In the novel, Great Britain has become a province of one of the three super-states named Oceania. Oceania is ruled by the "Party", who employ the "Thought Police" to persecute individualism and independent thinking. The Party's leader is Big Brother, who may not even exist.
- The protagonist of the novel, Winston Smith, is a rank-and-file Party member. Smith is an outwardly diligent and skillful worker, but he secretly hates the Party and dreams of rebellion against Big Brother. Smith rebels by entering a forbidden relationship with fellow employee Julia.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY

- Description of the current state of Oceania through the eyes of Smith.
- Description of the internal struggle that Smith is undergoing in trying to understand reality within the world controlled by the Party.
- Description of Smith's rebellion against convention and the Party.
- The capture and re-education of Smith.

THE WORLD OF OCEANIA

- Language re-defined
- History re-constructed
- The surveillance state
- Usurpation of autonomy and isolation of the individual
- Emotional management and the destruction of free will
- Perpetual war and material shortages
- Rigid cultural hierarchies and roles
- A culture of death

LANGUAGE RE-DEFINED

- “War is peace”, “Freedom is slavery”, “Ignorance is strength”.
- Newspeak: The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought and remove expressive language.
- Reality control = doublethink: victories over your own memories.
- “Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.”

IMPLICATIONS

- Political Correctness / revision of language and meaning / trigger warnings / microaggressions / social justice.
- The new language is expanded or re-purposed to create new meanings that support special interests;
 - Marriage → gay marriage
 - Abortion → reproductive rights
 - Sex → gender
- Aggression and name calling are intended to suppress or eliminate dialogue or opposing views.
- Compliance to re-defined social norms is becoming a requirement.

HISTORY RE-CONSTRUCTED

- The Ministry of Truth was responsible for news, entertainment, education and the fine arts.
- A Party Slogan was, “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”
- Smith wrote *“To the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, when men are different from one another and do not live alone—to a time when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone:...”*
- Memory holes: receptacles for the permanent disposal of information unsuitable for the present.

IMPLICATIONS

- Centralizing the control of information / reliance on biased resources
- Revisionism / educational content control / rewriting of history
- Relationships / relevance / persistent truths
- In Fahrenheit 451, the keepers of the books memorized them to retain the knowledge for the future.
- History is crucial to both the present and the future

THE SURVEILLANCE STATE

- The Thought Police
- Generations of monitoring
 - Spies
 - Youth League
 - Junior Anti-Sex League
 - Peers / neighbors / strangers
- Telescreens
- Street patrols

IMPLICATIONS

- Individual or group acts of thought policing; restaurant disturbances / campus demonstrations / Antifa / black lives matter / #metoo
- Google / Facebook / Amazon / Twitter / NSA / IRS
- Public shaming of individuals for non-PC thoughts.
- Boycotting of companies for their advertising on non-compliant media.

USURPATION OF AUTONOMY

- *“Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimeters inside your skill.”*
- The individual becomes irrelevant; The Party reigns supreme.
- Prevention of interpersonal loyalties that could not be controlled.
- Limitation of material resources to create dependency of the individual on the system.

IMPLICATIONS

- *“Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious.”*
- Information dependency prevents resistance. That dependency can be either elected by the individual or regulated by the source.
- Isolation of the individual prevents dialogue or the development of independent thought.

EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Two Minutes Hate
 - One was obliged to join in but, more than that, it was impossible to avoid joining in.
- Hate Week was a major annual event aimed at the enemy of the day.
- Romance was regulated; The Party decided who could marry.
- Sexual relations were looked upon unfavorably, and only as a means of procreation.
- Even facial expressions were monitored as a means to control people. The wrong expression at the wrong time could get one disappeared.

IMPLICATIONS

- Human passions need to be regulated in order to be controlled.
- Anger, hate, and rage can effectively be used as a means to regulate and/or redirect natural human passions. The community organizer uses them to motivate action.
- Divisiveness can be used to regulate emotions by re-focusing them from important issues to petty grievances.
- The destruction of moral foundations enables more effective emotional management by those in power.

PERPETUAL WAR

- The Ministry of Peace was responsible for war.
- War generally occurred at a distance, and was always being won.
- Occasionally, a rocket bomb fell on a local populated area to legitimize the reality of war.
- War regularly changed from being against Eastasia to being against Eurasia.
- War was used to justify scarcity. Scarcity may have been a product of ineffective production, or it may have been a way to dispose of excess production.

IMPLICATIONS

- War has always been used as a means to motivate. (e.g. war on poverty, war on drugs, etc.)
- War as a motivation loses its effectiveness in the absence of personal impact.
- New enemies must be created to retain the enthusiasm of the people.
- War can be used to shift the focus of a large number of people quickly, and to manage them.
- War results in residual and long-lasting angers and prejudices.

MATERIAL SHORTAGES

- The Ministry of Plenty was responsible for economic affairs
- Material dependency prevented rebellion. Adequacy, rather than plenty, resulted in effective control.
- The “free market” was a means to obtain goods that were not generally available, but accessing it could result in severe punishment.
- Production was always reported as being higher than expected, even when lower than expected. The standard of living was always reported as improving, even when the opposite was true.

IMPLICATIONS

- Limiting resources produces dependency.
- Dependency results in loyalty to the perceived source of goods.
- Long term dependency reduces expectations.
- Success produces independence and autonomy. This must be avoided in order for the elite to remain in power.

CULTURAL HIERARCHY

- The classes of man are the High, the Middle, and the Low
- *“In the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance.”*
- The Inner Party: the elite. The brain of the State.
- The Outer Party: the middle class. The hands of the State. Competent, industrious, and minimally intelligent, but still credulous and ignorant.
- The Proles: the dumb masses, the “useful idiots”.

THE PROLES

- Represented about 85% of the population
- Largely left alone by The Party as long as they were productive
- It was not desirable that they should have strong political feelings
- Primitive patriotism could be manipulated when necessary to make them accept the otherwise unacceptable.
- Without generalized ideas of politics and policy, they could only focus on petty specific grievances; the larger evils invariably escaped their notice.

IMPLICATIONS

- The aim of the High is to remain in power through control of the lower classes through controlled insanity.
- The aim of the Middle is to change places with the High.
- The aim of the Low is to abolish all distinctions and create a society in which all men shall be equal.
- Revolution is a temporary adjustment to the status of the classes, which eventually returns to a new equilibrium that is no different than the one before.
- History is a cyclical process, and inequality is an unalterable law of human life, the price of civilization.
- Nationalization of property is key to control.

CULTURE OF DEATH

- The Ministry of Love was responsible for law and order. There were no longer laws; right or wrong was determined by the ministry as expedient for managing the populace.
- The disappearance or vaporization of individuals had become accepted to the point of being expected.
- The Newspeak word for someone who is now gone is an “unperson”; they are not only not here, their existence is denied and removed from history.
- Extreme torture is the acknowledged fate of someone who disappears. Room 101.

IMPLICATIONS

- Enforcement of thought crimes and the *potential* for an individual to violate the principles of those in charge.
- Social outrage has the potential of becoming the new Thought Crime. Punishments are not currently physical, but are significant and potentially permanent (e.g. Nick Sandman, Brett Kavanaugh, ...)
- Abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide and euthanasia are all desensitizers contributing to a culture of death.
- The term *personhood* will be a tool used to reduce the significance of humanness: the *issue* will override the foundational *principle*.

THE RESISTANCE

- “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism” by Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People.
- The source of “The Book” is unknown: it is even proposed by the author to be created by The Party to entrap those who might consider rebellion.
- It is “The Book” that is the eventual downfall of Winton Smith.
- While significant to the context of the novel, it provides some insight into the nature of society in 1984, as described by Orwell.

WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

- The book is not a lens into the future. It might be a warning of what could be.
- Evaluate the current state of humanity, society, and politics in light of the observations in the book to perceive dangerous behaviors, trends or indicators.
- Strengthen those elements of human nature that are resistant to the elements of control.
- Build upon and rely upon a strong moral foundation to enable resistance to manipulation.
- Differentiate between foundational principles and issues that are designed to sway your thinking.

OTHER READINGS

- Want more? Here is a short list of other books with a similar dim view of the future;
- The Camp of the Saints by Jean Raspail (1973) is a powerful apocalyptic novel and a scathing political satire. Its target is liberal Camp of the Saintselites and their systematic perversion of Christian compassion into a civilizational death wish.
- The Wanting Seed by Anthony Burgess (1963) is a fascinating and deeply disturbing book, which imagines all Western history as a seesaw between those who imagine that human nature can be perfected, and those who consider it hopelessly depraved.

OTHER READINGS

- Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (1932) is a book that you probably had to read in high school, when you were too young to appreciate it. The society crafted by technocrats in this novel is in fact what too many high school students (especially boys) would find the perfect world: Sex is abundant, guilt-free, and offered with no strings attached. Work is easy, pleasant, and brief. All anxieties and unhappiness are dulled immediately with a quick dose of happy pills. The price of these happy times is that the state suppresses religion and bans great works of literature, such as the Shakespeare plays that high school students would rather not have to read anyway. What's not to like?

OTHER READINGS

- Love Among the Ruins, by Evelyn Waugh (1953), is a futuristic novella, by turns amusingly horrifying and darkly, sadly funny. It was Waugh's attempt to follow the logic of milk-and-water humanitarian socialism to its logical conclusion: a society where criminals are treated as wounded victims, where private property is seized by the state and used "for the common good," and every moral or character ideal is turned upon its head, in the name of a false, post-Christian humanism.

OTHER READINGS

- The Lord of the World, by Robert Hugh Benson (1908) is a long and psychologically insightful novel, a precocious instance of the genre that sci-fi fans now call “Cybersteam.” It was written in the wake of the Victorian era by the son of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, who had dabbled for some time in the occult before converting to Catholicism. The novel takes the strands of religious liberalism current around 1900 and projects them a hundred or so years into the future — to create a society perfectly ripe for the coming of the Antichrist.