

Nineteen Eighty-Four or “Brave New World”?

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Theme: [History](#)

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*“In a properly organized society like ours, nobody has any opportunities for being noble or heroic. Conditions have got to be thoroughly unstable before the occasion can arise. When there are wars, where there are divided allegiances, where there are temptations to be resisted, objects of love to be fought for or defended – there, obviously, nobility and heroism have some sense. But there aren’t any wars nowadays. The greatest care is taken to prevent you from loving anyone too much. There’s no such thing as a divided allegiance; you’re so conditioned that you can’t help doing what you ought to do. And what you ought to do is on the whole so pleasant, so many of the natural impulses are allowed free play, that there really aren’t any temptations to resist. 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 mortality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears – that’s what soma is.” — Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World**

*“Now I will tell you the answer to my question. It is this. The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from 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 around the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know what 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. Now you begin to understand me.” — George Orwell, *1984**

Aldous Huxley’s 1932 megahit ***Brave New World*** (1) or George Orwell’s 1949 blockbuster ***1984*** (2)? Two daring novels in the first half of the 20th century that either fascinated or shocked their intrigued readers. It was the apex of an era—the reign of positivism—in the industrial civilization when modern science and technology were uniquely acclaimed as the final point of humanity’s cultural evolution. It was an exclusive period in human history when the strongest voice of modernistic erudition aimed to displace once and for all traditional as well as mystical religions was unilaterally pushed and dictated by the unopposed mechanistic and physicalistic science which later saw its most persistent and seemingly airtight exposition in B. F. Skinner’s highly controversial volume, ***Beyond***

Freedom and Dignity (3), published in 1971. It was that particular point in historic time known in social science as the “age of disenchantment” (Entzauberung in German)—a term appropriated from the German philosopher Friedrich Schiller by the sociologist and philosopher Max Weber in his **The Sociology of Religion** (4)—when modern western society had been drawn into the bandwagon of positivistic science whose chief objective was to devalue the traditional merits of the so-called religious, mystical and spiritual experiences.

In both paradigm-shaping novels, the central issue is the human person: Is s/he an autonomous being, that is a “*being-for-itself*” (with apologies to Jean-Paul Sartre) endowed with free-will and the inherent power to organize and hence determine her/his future? Or, is s/he solely a physicommechanical “object” whose ideas, thoughts, feelings, and decisions are just by-products of her/his physicochemical constitution, genetic configuration, and environmental conditioning? From where does s/he draw the meaningfulness of her/his life? Or perhaps the more fundamental question is: Is her/his life meaningful at all? Is humanity’s future predetermined by material limitations in a closed system of reality or it depends on one’s choices and decisions in a reality that is open to the unhindered operation of her/his free will? Or, given that there is human free will, could the problem lie in the condition that the majority of human beings conduct their lives like sheep in a flock whose course is stirred, regulated and determined by the strong, the tough and the powerful minority among them? Are manipulation and control an inherent dynamic to make society orderly and organized, well-coordinated, well-managed and properly governed?

In *1984*, free will is a given nevertheless a dangerous component of the human personality. Thus, it has to be curbed, controlled, muffled and finally subdued to give way to the uncontested importance of social values and personal virtues to strengthen and fully empower the State machinery. The State in this sense is deemed to be the paramount source of the citizens’ welfare and development measured in terms of social stability achievable only by way of economic productivity, institutional order, and national peace. *1984* is an exposition of how society under the iron hand of totalitarian rule operates. Totalitarian governance is the new power that forces traditional religion with its god(s) out of the sphere of society’s political system without throwing away the dynamic of fear which is always a pre-eminent factor in most religions.



In *1984*, a new “god” far more powerful than the nebulous “god(s)-in-heaven” of traditional religions is inaugurated and is now known as “Big Brother”. He is identified as the lead “conductor” in a symphony of fear that characterizes the new social order. His unbendable and unbreakable laws are administered by his loyal minions well-placed in various sectors and levels of the government bureaucracy. They are better described as severe taskmasters whose major importance in the hierarchy is in the area of reward and punishment, though

punishment seems to be their chief expertise. Common in a society conditioned by totalitarian rule is the ascendant factor of fear. In every area of life, citizens should get used to the stringent rules and regulations exacted by their leaders who represent in person the sovereign ideals of Big Brother. Citizens are in a state of continual apprehension and terror all the time as their movements and activities both in public and in private are constantly being monitored by ever-present cameras [very similar to the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras we usually find in public places and even on the streets as surveillance devices to capture and record untoward activities which in many cases could be criminal in nature].

Though not exactly in a totalitarian political milieu, this situation is now a reality in the present dispensation known as the “Age of Information”. The condition may not be as harsh as the tyrannical ambience in Orwell’s fiction but in our time, the constant flow of information via online monitoring even on the most guarded secrets of an individual person’s daily conduct of life may be accessed through the most sophisticated instruments and devices electronically connected/linked to computers and hand-held equipment we use and without which life doesn’t seem liveable to many of us on a daily basis. In other words, we denizens of the post-modern world are generally in one way or another being subjected to constant surveillance by the powers that be both in global and domestic landscapes. There may not be commensurate punishment yet at this point in time for every misdeed and misconduct people do but the fast-evolving information technology we have had in the post-modern reality could sooner or later be utilized by despotic and authoritarian regimes as a concrete tool to effect oppressive and onerous measures against their own citizens. If actual oppression is conceived as a real possibility in *1984* by sowing widespread terror even with all the technological limitations in the plot’s context, could such possibility be more highly conceivable in the present post-modern era with all the sophisticated technological devices the age of cyberspace has at its beck and call?

Huxley’s *Brave New World* is a different scenario in human manipulation and social control, or “social engineering,” if you will. Unlike *1984*, it presupposes the delusionary character of human free will. There is no free will at all and every human being is, in reality, an absolute captive of her/his physicochemical constitution, genetic configuration, and environmental conditioning. Hence, in the creation of a “brave new world” of functional and productive inhabitants predetermined in their talents and expertise, competence and readiness, certain indispensable factors must be realized such as the utilization of a reproductive technology where the birth of a human baby is artificially simulated in a laboratory; the application of psychological manipulation and mental conditioning; and the operationalization of psychosocial reinforcement. All of these are conditions in the successful formation of physically healthy individuals whose optimum contributions in the maintenance of a strong, well-balanced and well-structured society are absolutely necessary.

A “brave new world” is an effective and efficient social order where there is no confusion in its inhabitants’ respective social roles and responsibilities. A “brave new world” is a highly stratified society where the division of labor has to be effected at every level of the stratification. This social stratification is characterized by a caste system wherein the topmost level is occupied by the so-called *Alphas* who are not mass-produced and hence have the highest degree of individuality in terms of above average intelligence, exuberant personality and exquisite physical qualities. The *Betas* are likewise not mass-produced and have a high degree of individuality though some notches lower than the *Alphas*. The lower caste levels like the *Gammas* the *Deltas* and the *Epsilons* are mass-produced and have

lower-level intelligence. They are also much shorter in stature and less good-looking in physical appearance. The different levels in the caste system are the results of laboratory manipulation wherein the developing human organisms at their earliest stage of maturation are subjected to different chemical exposures. *Alphas* and *Betas* are very well taken care of. They are constantly provided with an optimum supply of oxygen and excellent nutrition. Such physiological reinforcements are however intentionally expropriated from *Gammas*, *Deltas*, and *Epsilons* so as to preclude high-level intelligence in them by stunting brain development. These mental function restrictions are a necessary condition for them not to get further educated and thus always remain happy and satisfied while efficiently serving the State through the specific menial tasks assigned to them.

In *Brave New World* and *1984* are two different models of a single intent: personality manipulation via human engineering—both psychological and physiological—to effect the formation of a social order where inhabitants are no longer aiming for higher life status as their present condition is all satisfying by the standards of material security measured in terms of economic stability. In *1984*, the general rule of the game is simply toeing the line of *Big Brother* and everything will be alright. The system—whose main feature is the omnipresent surveillance mechanism—is unconditionally airtight so that even a mere casual thought of staging a rebellion is non-feasible. In this social milieu, the omnipotent control factor is the overarching span of prevalent fear instilled in the cultural apparatus of every citizen. This method of manipulation is a playing-up of the Jungian archetypal presupposition whose main thesis is grounded in the theory of the collective unconscious. In this particular instance of our present discussion, such presupposition touches on the primitive religious impulse of the human species where fear of the unknown is the primal disturbance factor. Nineteen Eighty-Four is, therefore, an exposition of how this so-called religious fear may be politically appropriated to set the stage of an orderly and peaceful society populated by obedient citizens loyal to the State and the powers behind it.

In *Brave New World*, fear, along with the rest of human emotional tendencies, is generally non-existent in the lower rungs of the caste system. Emotional feelings are solely experienced by the *Alphas* and *Betas* since they are the only ones endowed with high-level individual personalities. However, there are always psychogenic drugs to neutralize and transform into positive their negative emotions. Society is so efficiently organized that peace and order are its inherent components. The positively conditioned *Alphas* are the ruling elites whose intellectual and emotional programmings are always exactly geared for the well-being and maintenance of society's institutional stability and productivity. In close comparison with Orwell's society, Huxley's "brave new world" is the better model. It is more sophisticated with all the trappings of modern science and technology and the air of satisfaction pervades the social atmosphere. Its denizens are more civil and cultured in an environment where there is no hatred, envy, and insecurity. The "brave new world" is a perfect society where there are no sicknesses, insanities, and problems due to emotional imbalance and ignorance commonly found in less-evolved societies represented in the novel by the "savage reservation".

However, putting aside all the theoretical considerations hitherto discussed and highlighted, something seriously ominous troubles the sanity of a thinking mind in further reflecting on the most fundamental aspects of Orwell's Big-Brother-managed State and Huxley's "brave new world". In the course of a clear-minded analysis, we want to examine not only the logical validity of Orwell's and Huxley's presuppositions but also the soundness of states of affairs that constitute the major premises upon which their respective presuppositions are

based. In the process, we ask the following basic questions: Would the dynamics of humanity allow the possibility of Orwell's and Huxley's societies? Isn't the continuing history of human civilization replete with defiance and struggles, destructions and violence, sacrifices and deaths which are sheer aggressive displays of humanity's assertive disposition when challenged and provoked in both small-scale and large-scale contexts? Seriously considering these questions leads us to doubt the realistic grounding of Orwell's and Huxley's presuppositions. The next question primed up by such doubt is: Do you think the citizens of a nation would just let people in power form an Orwellian society or a Huxleyan "brave new world" without putting up a reasonable fight?

Orwell's and Huxley's societies are founded on institutionalized dehumanization. We call them societies but can we still attach the term "human" to modify them? In Orwell's society, human free will is suppressed and denigrated. In Huxley's, it is obsoletized in the majority of the people who constitute the lower rungs of the caste system. In the final analysis, we question the humanity of a society where human freedom is non-existent for such freedom is the only guarantee that bestows dignity to humanity. The persistence of the drive of the human free will to preserve human dignity is the strongest defiant factor expected to aggressively and relentlessly challenge the legitimacy of either an Orwellian or a Huxleyan society.

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Notes

- (1) <http://www.idph.com.br/conteudos/ebooks/BraveNewWorld.pdf>
- (2) <http://www.planetebook.com/ebooks/1984.pdf>
- (3) <http://selfdefinition.org/psychology/BF-Skinner-Beyond-Freedom-&-Dignity-1971.pdf>
- (4) <http://ir.nmu.org.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/134984/9b765b0dda623b36ce1b928c9c3d8e4f.pdf?sequence=1>

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