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THE SPACE OF POWER – THE MYTH OF MODERNITY – THE VISION OF THE NEW MAN

PRZESTRZEŃ WŁADZY – MIT NOWOCZESNOŚCI – WIZJA NOWEGO CZŁOWIEKA

Abstract

The need for myth – the strongest watchword these days – the need for *Remythologisation* begins to affect man himself more and more, as he is the only one who changes the slowest. But will the society of the future respond to this contemporary demand? What kind of space will the *man of tomorrow* build for this new myth; will it be a space of dialogue and acceptance? The authors of this article will seek an answer to such questions by analysing three contemporary dystopias that have arisen on the basis of changes resulting, on the one hand, from the spontaneity of the attitudes of the first avant-garde and, on the other hand, from the totalitarianisms revealed as a consequence of the two world wars. These are: *Victory Over the Sun* by Mikhail Matyushin, Kazimir Malevich, and Aleksei Kruchonykh, *A Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and *1984* by George Orwell.

Keywords: avant-garde, space philosophy, space theory, myth

Streszczenie

Potrzeba mitu zaczyna coraz bardziej dotyczyć samego człowieka, bo tylko on zmienia się najwolniej. Ale czy społeczeństwo przyszłości odpowie na to współczesne zapotrzebowanie? Przestrzeń władzy, czyli przestrzeń nowego mitu – jak będzie wyglądała ta wizja zbudowana przez człowieka jutra, czy będzie to przestrzeń dialogu i akceptacji? Odpowiedzi na tak postawione pytania autorzy niniejszego artykułu będą poszukiwać, analizując trzy współczesne antyutopie, które powstały na bazie zmian wyrastających z jednej strony ze spontaniczności postaw pierwszej awangardy oraz z drugiej strony totalitaryzmów ujawnionych w konsekwencji dwóch wojen światowych. Będą to: *Zwycięstwo na słońcem* N. Matiuszyna, K. Malewicza i A. Kruczonycha, *Nowy wspaniały świat* A. Huxleya i *Rok 1984* G. Orwella.

Słowa kluczowe: awangarda, filozofia przestrzeni, teoria przestrzeni, mit

1. INTRODUCTION. THE PRIMACY OF “MODERNITY” OVER “CONTEMPORANEITY”

The word *modernity* comes from the Latin *modernus (modo)*, which means *right now*. It is a term which, in everyday language, will always refer to current events in the context

of a certain “current” added value, as opposed to *contemporaneity*, understood much more broadly as a conglomeration of events occurring within a certain time interval, specific variously, which may encompass several decades or, in some cases, even multiple centuries.¹

The term *modernity* has also been used for centuries – especially in propaganda and socio-political discourse – to identify and dichotomise the social space into the domains of the supporters (the search for one’s own subjectivity, consolidation) and the opponents (rejection, stigmatisation) of proposed changes, whatever those changes may be. Thus, *modernity* cuts itself off from the past in favour of the permanent present. At least, that is how it should be by design. Often, however, *modernity* transforms itself into *crypto-modernity*. This happens on many levels, including in the visual arts; for example, in 21st-century architecture, many still consider the modernist form as “modern”, even though it is about to celebrate its 100th birthday.

Among other things, it is this nostalgia for creativity and the search for new things that keeps the avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s alive. That avant-garde broke with the traditional academicism of the visual arts. However, it did not depart from Western European artistic heritage in its historical continuity. Until today, the awareness of *New Art* – the art of the breakthrough – has accompanied us primarily through the presence of abstraction and then through modernism itself. Although contemporary artists tend to no longer create in the abstract, they remain faithful – sometimes subconsciously – to the contemporary neo-constructivism that grows out of it, as to the elements of suprematism that are common in our everyday lives. This awareness is also present in emerging new artistic trends and disciplines, such as the media arts. This awareness is precisely an avant-garde myth. An example of this is the aforementioned return of modernism after 80 years as the very result of the relativisation of myth, in this case the myth of modernity. This modernism, although already devoid of the dogmatism of its great prototypes,² has been marked by a contemporary elitism. The *remythologisation* of existence is still needed most of all by man himself, since he is the only species living on Earth that manifests self-destructive attitudes, as the avant-garde masters noticed nearly 100 years ago.³

2. THE MYTH OF MODERNITY – THE VISION OF A MODERN MAN

Paradoxically, the word *myth* is extremely similar in meaning to the word *modernity*. It has a similar emotional charge, which escapes unambiguous value judgement, especially as regards its substantive content. As we know, the word *myth* comes from the Greek *mythos*, meaning a story, legend, or history passed down orally from generation to generation, which, beyond the sense of a fairy tale, also contains numerous elements of historical truth. Within the framework of legend, Greek myths in particular idealize and sometimes even

¹ In the literature on the subject, there are several “milestones” which we may consider as the beginning of the modern era in the visual arts, including architecture. These are, for example, the emergence of the Futurist movement in Italy, the Chicago School in the USA, or the erection of Lord Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace in London.

² Le Corbusier, *W stronę architektury*, Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2012, p. 70.

³ J. Kwiatkowski, *Oko pod kontrolę dotyku duszy... Suprematyzm we współczesnym dyskursie intelektualnym*, Wydział Geografii i Studiów Regionalnych UW, Warszawa 2013, p. 123.

deify the personality traits and attributes of their characters, who are most often constructed so as to emphasize the uniqueness of the ancient heroes. However, these stories were not complete fiction. Though they idealised their heroes, the ancients did not confabulate events. At this point it is worth recalling that the events of the Trojan War were separated from Homer's epic by almost 400 years, and yet the fidelity of the description was so accurate that it allowed Heinrich Schliemann to find the lost city of Troy using only Homer's text.⁴ This is the power of myth, to unite cultures and bind civilisations together.

Various areas of human life, science, and art are being mythologised, and that includes architecture. It goes without saying that there are objects and buildings which have long since ceased to exist, yet which still play an important role in our European culture, both in our literary and verbal traditions. These include, for example, the wonders of the ancient world, six of which, as we know, have not survived to see the modern era,⁵ as well as Solomon's great temple in Jerusalem, which, had it existed as a built structure at the end of the ancient world, would certainly have become one of them. Architecture is thus a reflection of human thought, formed and realised in order to manifest that thought and to commit it to memory. Architecture thus permeates buildings not to satisfy purely functional needs, but to represent our intellectual values in solid form. The modernists themselves were not free from this phenomenon, although they formally denied this thesis, sloganising the idea that *function determines form*⁶ and that *ornament is a crime*.⁷

Paradoxically, perhaps the most important myth which still defines the concept of modernity is the myth of how the world began, as some understand it, or the description of how the world was created, as others understand it. Let us note that all the fiercest conflicts, including those affecting our modern world, are rooted in this age-old, fundamental dispute. It is hard not to notice that the element of salvation of the world, or, in modern terms, *liberation* of the world, is strongly outlined throughout the history of mankind. This is no less so nowadays, both in geopolitics and in entertainment – examples can be found in the whole plethora of American stories – myths – about *Superheroes* (Batman, Superman, Spider-Man, Captain America, etc.). The figures of contemporary heroes, as defined, for example, by the contemporary religious scholar Prof. Andrzej Szyjewski,⁸ are supposed to be examples for people in their everyday lives, stimulating their awareness of the uniqueness of our place in the universe, as this awareness is one of the foundations of our civilisation.

⁴ C.W. Ceram, *Bogowie, groby i uczeni*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987 pp. 49–53.

⁵ The Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, and the Statue of Zeus in Olympia.

⁶ A. Loos, *Ornament i zbrodnia. Eseje wybrane*, Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2013, pp. 190–192.

⁷ M. Pawluk, *Forma podporządkowana funkcji* [in:] LivingRoom24.pl, 2.09.2015, <https://livingroom24.pl/artykul/design/modernizm-w-architekturze-i-wnetrzarstwie> (access: 11.06.2021); W. Gropius, *Pelnia architektury*, Wydawnictwo Karakter, Kraków 2014, pp. 94–95, 97–119.

⁸ A. Szyjewski, Rola mitu i mitologii w kulturze. „Mitologie próbują ukazać nam sens rzeczywistości” [in:] Polskie Radio 24, <https://www.polskieradio24.pl/130/5557/Artykul/2106104,Rola-mitu-i-mitologii-w-kulturze-Mitologie-probuja-ukazac-nam-sens-rzeczywistosci> (access: 14.06.2021); A. Szyjewski, *Mityczny model świata w The Story of Kullervo J.R.R. Tolkiena* [in:] Z. Kopeć, P. Matusiak, M. Michalski (eds.), *Tolkien mit, historia, literatura*, Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza; Poznań 2016, pp. 41–72.

3. CREATION OF SPACE AS THE LANGUAGE OF NEW ART

In the language of *New Art*, the creation of space responds to the enthusiasm for change and the new possibilities of man, which seemed unlimited in the age of the avant-garde. This myth was based on the aforementioned myth of *modernity*, whose attributes were strongly connected to space; it was that new space that defined the new image of man, in order to make him realise the scale of new possibilities, in order to mentally “construct” him – speaking in the language of the avant-garde – completely anew, in a completely different place and time. However, the avant-garde space was bound by the realities of political life and dependent on the relatively weak position of *New Art* in general.

This was why first the *Будетляне* (*innovators of the future*) parted company and practically all chose their own paths as new groups: productivists, constructivists, elementarists, colourists, and suprematists.

At the moment of separation, each interpreted space as the language of New Art in their own way, and thus their unified message was lost. Only the language of the futurist, cubist, and cubo-futurist space remains, and this is the only common language we can interpret. For this, according to the authors, we have to go back to the first futurist opera from 1913, Mikhail Matyushin, Kazimir Malevich, and Aleksei Kruchyonykh's *Victory Over the Sun*,⁹ staged in St. Petersburg's Lunapark. Only two performances took place, as that was all the organisers could afford. The production provoked protests from audiences who had expected a traditional play; despite the gigantic scandal (or perhaps because of it), when the house itself became a part of the scene, unwittingly playing host to an additional narration of the work – the play went down in history. Today it is staged practically all over the world.

The futurism of the Opera is manifested most fully in its contradictory and perverse meanings, its characteristic inverted message. The fundamental superiority of the Opera over any other contemporary theatrical work lies in the fact that its authors introduced personified figures from non-figurative realities drawn from a non-personified future. All characters are able to travel back in time, which is the element that ties everything together and allows the narrative's setting in place and time to remain ambiguous. Thus, real historical figures, such as the Roman emperors Nero and Caligula, who are able to travel in time, are mixed with forms of, for example, *Созерцобен* the male name for a place of forced seclusion. The name comes from the combination of the Russian words – for *meditation* and *prison* or *constraint* as used in the prologue. According to Velimir Khlebnikov, this combination was not accidental, as this neologism also contains the element of “voluntary choice” in an “involuntary cell”. There are, of course, many more such neologisms in the prologue and in the body of the opera; we may find, for example, such expressions as *Созерцавель* someone who informs on themselves, and *Силебен*, a *powerless-strongman*, whose phonetic pairing may be understood as a planned oxymoron. Similarly, there appears in the first act a stamp authorising silence; as we know, it is not silence that requires a seal, but a secret. Without a secret, silence is simply the absence of noise.

Interestingly, all historical and contemporary figures and all personified figurative artefacts of the future are of the male gender. The opera is famous for heralding the abolition of

⁹ А.Е. Крученых, М. Матюшин, *Победа над Солнцем* [*Victory over the Sun*], ЕУЫ, Типография т-ва «Свет», СПб 1913, <https://ruslit.traumlibrary.net/book/kruchenih-pobeda/kruchenih-pobeda.html> (access: 14.07.2021).

the female element in the world of the future; this is important and provocative insofar as this female element is strongly present in Russian mythology, where the play originated. It is generally accepted, for example, that Russia itself is precisely the feminine form – *Мать Родная* (*Mother by birth*) does not only refer to the River Volga, as goes the title of the famous patriotic song. Similarly, this element is strongly emphasised in Russian literature, fairy tales, and fables, as well as in the traditions surrounding the cult of the Mother of God in Russian Orthodoxy.

Most interesting, however, is the language of *New Art* as the language of the space outlined therein. What emerges from the opera is a rather bizarre, perhaps even frightening picture of the world of the future, as befits a dystopia. The ambiguity of some scenes resembling the reality of the October Revolution is surprising, given that the opera was written 5 years earlier, though it should be added that it was written after the Revolution of 1905. This futuristic vision is based on two contrasting messages.

The first is a general vision of the world as experienced by all inhabitants. It is completely de-urbanised, and while its natural environment – fields, forests, lakes, rivers – does exist, it exhibits physical as well as biochemical characteristics opposite to those we know from experience. There, for example, water takes on the consistency of steel. This world, it must be presumed, as in the biblical account of creation, undergoes a repeated process whereby the names of each object are determined; this is done, as in the Bible, by a man, yet he introduces only masculine names, as these, in his opinion – he notes with amazement – the attributes of all these entities and objects are masculine. Thus, this represents a kind of certain pragmatism in response to the objective course of events, rather than the deliberate exclusion of women. This world has no specific place on the map of the globe and no specific place in the universe and is inhabited by anarchised communities consumed by the permanent flame of revolutionary zeal – communities filled with aggression, as if hypnotized, devastating everything they encounter on their way, and what remains of the old image of the world. Femininity and women have ceased to exist; they are also systemically erased in the nomenclature, syntax, and grammar of the language. As is to be presumed, successive generations of men are produced only as fruits of an artificial process of procreation. At the same time, the dominant individual attitude of the aggressive community living in this world is one of overwhelming cowardice.

There is, however, a second world – the world governing the former world, called the *10th countries* by the authors in the main character dialogues. It takes the shape of a huge house reaching into the clouds, thus resembling the mythical Tower of Babel, full of labyrinths, deprived of the rhythm of time, physically suspended in the emptiness outside of time, but not outside of space, because it is a real building – the narration of the work, that is, the narration of time travel, allows this. The decision-making centre – the head of this house – is its upper floors. Finding himself there, one of the characters is surprised by the emptiness of the decor of the rooms there. The whole piece is saturated with numerous deliberately imposed contradictions. It is a figurative vision of a world ruled, it seems, by a golem or a corpse; the uninhabited house is a ghost house. No doubt this is the sad end of a civilisation built by man and, one might say, abandoned by man of his own choosing. This is clearly stated in the words of one of the protagonists – the Traveller – “...I was in the 35th [century] where there is power without violence and rebels fight against the sun and even though there is no happiness there, everybody looks happy...”¹⁰ In this gloomy picture of the space of decay, in the ending of the

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

play, there appears the key motif – a kind of morality play – the victorious strongmen from the future gain immortality (by killing time, that is, the sun) but lose everything for which it is worth living – love, happiness, joy, closeness, hope, put simple, their home, but a living home, full of inhabitants, not a house inhabited by a golem. They part with the words: *The world will die but for us there is no end!*, and with this sentence the play ends.

The opera is, for the most part, very difficult to translate, and in some places even untranslatable, as the author of the libretto, Aleksei Kruchyonykh, used beyond rationality a new, futuristic, non-understandable language (Замный язык), consisting of only consonants; as such, many global productions of the play are far from faithful to the literary original, instead adopting a quite liberal interpretation of it.¹¹

It is worth asking ourselves how the two most famous dystopias of the 20th century, i.e., *A Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell, find themselves in this reflection of caution over the world. How much do they draw from it, and where do they differ? Both were written long after the Opera – Aldous Huxley's science fiction novel was written in 1935, while George Orwell's *1984* was written in 1949, just after the Second World War. The question is legitimate insofar as they both grow out of the same myth – the myth of the new man who will change the world – and in that both also use space as the new language of art. Both refer to avant-garde heritage, and both are based on the tragic experiences and trauma of the two world wars and the revolutionary upheavals that accompanied them.

Unlike the Opera, both narratives have a specific place on the map of the future world, while neither reorganises the solar system or the movement of the planets. Orwell's *1984* describes the London of the future, just as the old utopianists of the social idea had done (W. Morris). In Orwell's vision, individual states are absorbed into larger, quasi-multinational continental organisations (Eurasia, Oceania, Eastasia) which are in war with each other. The continent in which the main characters live – Oceania – is ruled by a single totalitarian party whose regime is based on the cult of an individual called Big Brother (*Big Brother is watching*). The entire community is divided into two castes – party members and *Proles*. They are not equal. Party members are the privileged caste, making up the ruling apparatus at all levels of government, while the *Proles* do manual labour and other jobs that have no significant impact and do not give them the opportunity to control society. Hence the party apparatus' lack of interest in them. The party has two fundamental objectives for its rule: it wants to capture the entire globe by defeating the other continental empires. In order to achieve this objective, it first wants to eliminate every hint of insubordination in its inhabitants, that is, to eliminate freedom of thought once and for all – its second objective. To achieve it, it develops modern techniques for extracting a person's thoughts against their will. The pursuit of independent thinking is prosecuted as *thoughtcrime* (itself a neologism). This totalitarian aberration goes even further, as even the display of unhappiness by residents is subject to prosecution. The party is also working to develop a weapon capable of exterminating millions of lives in a few seconds, for its first objective, intercontinental war.

This overwhelming image of a totalitarian dictatorship is not far from the quasi-religion and its rituals present in many aspects of the inhabitants' lives in Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World*. Huxley also uses neologisms, such as *Fordism* (suggesting a clear religious

¹¹ The music and costumes have been well preserved and are no longer so controversial.

context). The new utopian state is ruled by a corporation (the Ford automobile corporation is literally – though unjustifiably – evoked here), including via a cult of personality (the *Feet of the Greater Being*), where Henry Ford is revered as a deity by the society of the new state. This new religion is the opposite of the old faiths – it is a religion à rebours, as we understand it. It suppresses deeper feelings in favour of the cultivation of temporal pleasures. *Never put off till tomorrow the fun you can have today.*¹² Women and men are brought up from childhood to embrace free love, according to the principle that *everyone belongs to everyone*.¹³ From childhood, it is women that take the initiative in disseminating pleasure, understood as the distribution of bodily pleasures, that is, the distribution of free sex in place of tender love, which the “Brave New World” either does not know or abhors. Everything is subordinated to the growth of consumption, all signs of old age have been removed, and people live for production and pleasure. All thinking oriented towards the search for meaning in the human existence is repulsed, and the world of free love is the idyllic formula for happiness. This is reflected in all aspects of everyday life; the old Christian greetings connected with divinity – “God bless” – are replaced by stimulation of the erogenous zones. Specifically, what was once an expression of respect becomes a slap on a woman’s buttock, that is, a humiliation... but, exciting... that is, pleasurable. The search for higher feelings is considered downright harmful – *When the individual feels, society reels*.¹⁴ The notions of a mother and father and of natural parenthood have been relegated to a group of abhorrent, primitive, and disgusting attitudes, as has natural motherhood. There is a clear reversal of symbols here, an affirmation of a kind of anti-Christianity, that is, the negation of the God born into the family and the purity of childhood – the opposite of the Christian cult of the virgin and the martyrs. This negation of God goes even further – people reach for the creator’s mission, designing who should be born, and with what characteristics. In Huxley’s dystopia, people are produced like robots in a factory, in various different models, named like products: alpha, beta, gamma, epsilon, with a plus or minus added. This production process created individual models with various skin colours, aesthetic elements, character traits, levels of intelligence, fitness, and strength, and endurance in terms of their later suitability for various jobs. Widespread sterilisation is being promoted under the slogan *Civilisation is sterilisation*,¹⁵ from which a few higher models are excluded. There is only one caste left unchanged, maintained in the system of old values and meanings, where natural procreation is still maintained. It is the caste of savages, pushed to the brink of existence (with limited access to energy sources, livelihoods, water, etc.), occupying carefully guarded reserves in the worst of territories. The novel’s narrative consciously leads to a confrontation between the world of the “savage” and the *Brave New World* of the future, a world of anti-values precisely in terms of reflections on faith in God. The author introduces these reflections using the language of Sigmund Freud from the position of an *alter ego*, deliberately uttered by a representative of the “savage” world. This defence of higher values, intended by the author to be spoken from the position of a conquered and lost community, represents a *de facto* defence of our *super ego*, all the more so when we, as readers, locate our sympathies on the side of “intelligence and modernity”.

¹² A. Huxley, *A Brave New World*, Vintage, London 1994, p. 62.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

3. SUMMARY – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The basic, and perhaps most important, plane of comparison is – recalling the title of this article – the creation of space as the language of the winners. In Huxley's novel, the higher models of artificially created human beings enjoy significantly more living space; the lower the model, the narrower its living space becomes. Labourers and workers responsible for simple reconstruction works live in the eternal crush of narrow city streets and endure crowded conditions on public transport.

Each one of us, of course, goes through live inside a bottle. But if we happen to be Alphas, our bottles are, relatively speaking, enormous. We would suffer acutely if we were confined in a narrower space. You cannot pour upper-caste champagne into lower-caste bottles.¹⁶

A similar relationship is presented in George Orwell's *1984*, where the Proles are the spatially discriminated caste. In turn, the office of a senior party official is correspondingly larger than the mid-level staff in the party structures. The winners' space in the Petersburgian Opera is unquestionably the largest. The victors not only take everything, but at the price of immortality they bring about the disintegration of a world they no longer need, remaining alone in the allegorical emptiness of space.

Turning to the urban and regional space, unlike the Opera, both later dystopias sustain and even modernise the urban environment. They depict traditional buildings with windowed walls and ceilings. Huxley's work also includes a crematorium with little balconies for recovering phosphorus from human corpses. There are, of course, also huge production and storage halls, but not everything in the corporation has been subordinated to production. New public buildings appear to reinforce the message of universal happiness. *The Feely Studio buildings in Hounslow covered seven and a half hectares*, or fields for outdoor games:

The green was maggotty with fore-shortened life. Forests of Centrifugal Bumble-puppy towers gleamed between the trees. Near Shepherd's Bush, two thousand Beta-minus mixed doubles were playing Riemann-surface tennis. A double row of Escalator Fives Courts lined the main road from Notting Hill to Willesden. In the Ealing stadium a Delta gymnastic display and community sing was in progress.¹⁷

Orwell's Oceania is devoid of such "waste" of resources. The world in 1984 changes little in terms of consumer goods or entertainment from the world of the first half of the 20th century, when the novel was written. Apart from cinema, theatre, and interactive television (which follows everyone in the house), the only mass "entertainment" is to be the demonstrations and rallies in support of the party, which are deceptively similar to the reality of Stalinist Russia at the time.

Like *Victory Over the Sun*, Orwell's dystopia also addresses the world of men and women. There are a number of similarities here. In the totalitarian world of *Big Brother*, natural procreation was completely forbidden for party members as a primitive, abhorrent activity, unworthy of the enlightened minds of the ruling caste. It is acceptable only for subjugated and despised caste of Proles. It is also a place where fornication and all kinds of social pathologies flourish, pathologies which, by strange coincidence, have not been eradicated, and to whose presence

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

among the Proles the totalitarian state turns a blind eye. At the same time, the woman, as a representative of the party, has an important propaganda role. The dominant social attitude is widespread denunciation, while the dominant activity of the state is ubiquitous surveillance. There is another play on space in the novel – the space of “forced” forgetting, aided by the total destruction of the memory of everything that is inconvenient for the party. The space of memory is ruthlessly exchanged for the space of lies; as the main character of the novel says:

Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? (...) Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.¹⁸

Finally, the space of power appears in Orwell’s novel, similar to the space of destruction in *Victory Over the Sun*; here, power is an end in itself, a goal of domination of one over the other. Interestingly, the author himself indicates the inspiration of the systems of enslavement with which his narrative is indeed compared and relatively very close:

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.¹⁹

Huxley’s novel takes place in a familiar geographical space, a space we can identify with degrees of latitude and longitude, where only the continents (Western Europe) and some cities have been renamed. At the same time, some country names remained unchanged (China, Iceland, and the Falkland Islands). The action includes cities such as Amsterdam, London, and New York, whose names have not been changed. The solar system, the planets, and the universe itself have not been changed, just as in Orwell’s novel. There are, in fact, many more similarities, even though the books grow out of opposite assumptions. While the aim of dictatorship in Orwell’s Oceania is the absolute power needed to win a planned war and conquer the world, in Huxley’s Corporation the reigning quasi-religion aims precisely to maintain an unshakeable peace. Correspondingly, in Orwell’s text, happiness is enforced by a system of punishment, while in Huxley’s, it is maintained only by criticism and imitative practice instilled from childhood. “He laughed. ‘Everyone’s happy nowadays.’ We begin giving the children that at five.”²⁰ Both also ruthlessly fight the past, but for different reasons. In one, out of fear of the threat of an independently thinking man, and on the other, out of fear of man losing his idyllic, carefree state imitatively termed “happiness.”

Accompanied by a campaign against the Paste; by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments (luckily most of them had already been destroyed during the Nine Years’ War); by the suppression of all books published before A.F. 150.²¹

¹⁸ G. Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Collins Classics, London 2021, p. 130.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

²⁰ A. Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp 34–35.

It turns out, however, that all these means of ensuring happiness – both coercive and imitative – fail. In order to maintain a good mood among the inhabitants in both dystopias, drugs are distributed and made freely available. In *Victory Over the Sun* this is not necessary, as this role is assumed by time travel.

And on that optimistic note, let us conclude. Perhaps this age-old human dream of time travel will one day triumph, putting an end to scenarios of domination and annihilation, which seem increasingly – disturbingly – close to the world we live in. The path in this direction may prove to be the genuine liberation of man to a state of true freedom and greatness, directing his energy and potential towards the conquest of space, space flights to distant planets, joining everyone in the search for what unites rather than what divides.

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