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ВО МЕЃУНАРОДНОТО НАУЧНО СПИСАНИЕ „ПАЛИМПСЕСТ“
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AI-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION: THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SHAPING CONSUMERISM AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD* AND *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

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Abstract: This paper examines the dystopian visions of Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* and George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, focusing on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) within the communication systems of these novels. Both Huxley and Orwell, writing in the early to mid-20th century, predicted the influence of media technologies on shaping modern consumer culture. Huxley's depiction of AI-driven advertisements and Orwell's portrayal of AI-powered surveillance highlight the potential dangers of mass media in manipulating thought and behaviour. Through these technologies, both novels present a world where communication systems foster a seemingly utopian, consumer-driven reality. This paper argues that AI and media technologies are not passive tools but active forces that manipulate populations and sustain capitalist ideologies: (1) Technology as Social Control: Advancements in AI and media technologies are used as tools for social control, pacifying populations and limiting critical thought; (2) Media and AI Reinforcing Commodification: These technologies create a consumer-driven society that reinforces capitalist dominance by commodifying human attention and interactions; (3) Digital Inequality and Social Stratification: The rise of digital communication technologies deepens social inequalities, dividing society into the "connected" and "disconnected".

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence (AI); Media technologies; Surveillance; AI-powered communication; Media influence.*

1. Introduction

This paper explores the dystopian visions presented by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* and George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with a focus on how these novels anticipate the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and media technologies in shaping societal control and consumer culture. Despite being written decades apart, Huxley's and Orwell's works provide valuable insights into modern consumer culture, highlighting the pervasive impact of media technologies, including AI, in shaping individual consciousness and as a dynamic

force within the communication systems of these novels. Huxley published *Brave New World* in 1932, and Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* between 1945 and 1948, but both works offer strikingly relevant insights into the role of media technologies in shaping modern consumer culture. Through AI-powered communication systems, Huxley and Orwell foresaw the dangers of mass media in manipulating and controlling individuals. In *Brave New World*, the omnipresent influence of media technologies, such as AI-driven advertisements, seeps into everyday speech, subtly influencing the thoughts and behaviours of citizens. Similarly, Orwell's introduction of "telescreens" reveals a world where AI-driven surveillance ensures constant monitoring and control over the populace.

Through a comparative analysis, this paper examines the shared themes between the two novels, with particular multidisciplinary attention to their distinct portrayals of societal control—Orwell's depiction of brutal repression through constant surveillance, embodied by the "telescreen", and Huxley's portrayal of seduction through pleasure and consumption, powered by media technologies and advertising. By integrating AI-driven communication systems into these analyses, the paper underscores the prescience of these works in predicting the ways media technologies can manipulate and control modern societies.

The study employs media and communication theory, sociology, and literary critique to examine how AI and media are not passive tools, but active forces shaping contemporary consciousness. The theoretical perspectives of scholars such as Erich Fromm, Douglas Kellner, and Jean Baudrillard provide a foundational framework for understanding the role of media, particularly AI-driven communication, in constructing a reality that perpetuates consumerism and strengthens capitalist hegemony. Orwell (1968) and Huxley (1998) offer foundational dystopian visions where technology serves not as a liberator, but as a means of social control, reflecting modern concerns about AI and media manipulation. Philippe Breton (2005) highlights the media monopoly over information, reinforcing the control of knowledge and discourse, while Postman (1986) explores how technology, particularly in the form of entertainment, has morphed into a tool for societal pacification. These critiques align with the arguments of Rifkin (2005), who discusses the commodification of human time and attention, and Vidović (2006), who describes "the flooding of individuals with irrelevant content that stifles their critical thought" "—the overabundance of images that suffocates critical thought. By situating these works in their historical contexts and connecting their warnings about technological advances to modern-day developments, this paper seeks to validate the premise that mass media and AI technologies create an illusionary consumer-driven world, reinforcing capitalist dominance and digital inequality.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes the enduring relevance of these literary masterpieces, urging a critical reflection on the role of media technologies, especially AI, in reshaping our consumer-oriented society. Thus, the three most prominent research objectives that the paper brings forward are as follows:

1. **Technology as a Tool for Social Control:** This objective suggests that rather than liberating or empowering individuals, advancements in technology, especially AI and media, serve as tools for social control.

Orwell and Huxley foresaw the rise of such control in their dystopian works, where technology is used to manipulate and pacify populations—Orwell through surveillance and language control, and Huxley through pleasure and distraction. Postman (1986) and Breton (2005) expand on this by highlighting how technology, particularly media and AI, creates an environment where critical thinking is stifled, and individuals are distracted from meaningful engagement with reality.

2. **Media and AI as Mechanisms for the Reinforcement of Consumerism and Capitalism:** This objective asserts that mass media and AI technologies are central to constructing a consumer-driven society, reinforcing capitalist hegemony. Orwell (1968) and Huxley (1998) envisioned societies where both totalitarianism and engineered contentment are used to serve capitalist agendas. Media theorists like Kellner and Baudrillard also argue that media, especially in its modern form, works to promote consumerist ideologies, framing the world in ways that benefit corporate interests. Rifkin (2005) and Vidović (2006) discuss how media and digital platforms commodify human interactions, time, and attention, thus deepening capitalist dominance.
3. **Digital Inequality and the Emergence of a Two-Tier Society:** This objective posits that technological advancements, particularly in the realm of digital communication and AI, are exacerbating social inequalities. Rifkin (2005) highlights the growing divide between those who are connected to the digital sphere and those who are not, creating a new form of digital exclusion. The rise of “digital spaces” or “cyberspace” has led to a separation between the “connected” and the “disconnected,” with the former gaining access to opportunities and power, while the latter are left behind. This inequality is seen as a new form of social stratification, one that is governed more by access to technology than by traditional forms of material wealth.

The research objectives together form the foundation of the argument that modern media, AI, and technological advancements, rather than being mere tools for progress, are contributing to the reinforcement of control, consumerism, and social inequality.

2. Of Communication and Control Through Engineered Contentment

The early 20th century saw modernist writers dismantling traditional narratives, favouring fragmented, stream-of-consciousness storytelling. Writers were less preoccupied with psychological character analysis or delving into the consciousness or subconsciousness of their protagonists (Claeys, 2010). It was in this literary climate that the works of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley were created. By the 1930s, however, English literature shifted back toward structured narratives, distancing itself from modernist introspection. It was in this evolving literary climate that Orwell and Huxley emerged, using speculative fiction to critique society's trajectory.

The primary characteristic of Orwell's and Huxley's protagonists is their complete powerlessness, while their enemies possess absolute, limitless authority. Resistance is impossible – even in thought. Individualism is a crime, thinking is a crime, justice is a non-existent concept, and love is a crime. In these bleak narratives, there is no joy in life; the main characters are helpless, and the ultimate outcomes are hopeless. Nevertheless, despite these characteristics and some critics' attempts to discredit *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* as worthless political horrors, these novels are among the most widely read works in modern literary history. Both authors foresaw a future where technology reshapes human experience – not through overt tyranny alone, but through seamless, self-reinforcing control. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* envisioned a totalitarian state where language and surveillance obliterate free thought. Huxley's *Brave New World*, however, depicted control through engineered contentment: AI-driven conditioning, endless entertainment, and a world where algorithms optimize conformity.

Their visions are no longer fiction. Today's algorithmic governance, media saturation, and data-driven economies mirror these dystopias, not through brute force but through digital sedation. Mass media and AI shape perception, turning reality into a fluid construct where critical thinking erodes. As Orwell warned, control thrives through fear. As Huxley predicted, it thrives through pleasure. In both cases, autonomy is at risk, unless society resists the seamless, automated lure of a world curated by unseen hands. Orwell explicitly emphasized that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was conceived as a warning:

“I do not believe that the society I describe will necessarily arrive, but I do believe that something resembling it could occur. The novel is set in Britain to underline that the English-speaking race is no better than any other and that totalitarianism could prevail anywhere if we do not fight against it.” (Orwell, 1968, vol. 4, p. 564)

Both Orwell and Huxley despised modern society with its technological advancements and longed for old-fashioned, non-commercial cultures. They used political satire as a means of expressing disdain for all forms of autocratic rule and the increasing bureaucratisation of society. In this sense, they were reactionaries—but reactionaries who sought to protect society from indoctrination, repression, tyranny, and conformity, all of which are still present in today's world. For them, falsehood was the greatest crime, one they could never accept under any circumstances (Meyers, 1975).

3. Artificial Intelligence Curates Desires

“Orwellian” has become a cliché, used to describe state surveillance, language distortion, and digital monitoring. Yet, as Erich Fromm noted, dystopian visions like Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Huxley's *Brave New World* reflect not just oppression but modern humanity's despair, where progress paradoxically leads to control, not liberation. Orwell's vision of a brutal and totalitarian state in

Nineteen Eighty-Four introduced concepts such as Big Brother, thoughtcrime, Newspeak, memory holes, the torture chamber known as the Ministry of Love, and the disheartening image of a boot stamping on a human face forever. Huxley's *Brave New World* offered a gentler form of totalitarianism—conformity achieved through technological progress. His vision includes test-tube children, hypnosis-based conditioning, limitless consumption, legally mandated promiscuity, a predetermined caste system that everyone is content with, and soma, a drug providing instant happiness without consequences.

In the context of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Fromm carefully considers Orwell's insights into the connection between militarism and totalitarian power. Against the backdrop of the world's division into blocs, Fromm expresses concern that the constant fear of personal and national destruction could obliterate humanistic society. Ironically, it is publicly advocated that values such as freedom and democracy can only be preserved through greater militarisation, which Fromm sees as a blatant example of "doublethink" in Western societies. This partly unconscious technique of simultaneously holding and accepting two contradictory beliefs has many other applications in the West, according to Fromm, such as considering Latin American dictatorships as part of the "free world" as long as they opposed the Soviet Union and China, regardless of their democratic governance or respect for human rights (Fromm, 1961).

The slogan of Orwell's *Big Brother*, "War is Peace", has found new life today in the complex interaction between individuals and the society they inhabit. People are no longer masters of a world they can control or fully comprehend. The dimensions we deal with are numbers and abstractions, far beyond the boundaries of concrete human experience. People are displaced from a point of reference where they could observe and manage their lives and society. Increasingly preoccupied with abstractions, they become estranged from concrete life. In this context, cultural studies have embraced such debates, notably through media theorist Douglas Kellner. Unlike others who labelled Orwell an inconsistent socialist or even an anti-left informant, Kellner argues that Orwell, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, precisely predicted the central role television would occupy in homes and its use as a tool for indoctrination and social control. He criticises Orwell's conservatism, reflected in yearning for what once used to be instead of the vision of a better and different future. According to Kellner, mass media in contemporary capitalist society operates in a subtler and more intricate way than the rigid propaganda machine depicted in Orwell's novel. In Kellner's view, Huxley's vision of a pleasantly manipulative society aligns more closely with the modern concept and functioning of mass media (Kellner, 1990).

In today's world, control is not imposed by brute force but embedded in algorithms that shape consumption and identity. AI curates' desires, mass media constructs reality, and people willingly surrender autonomy for convenience (Velkova, Kaun, 2021). Kellner argued that Orwell's vision of rigid propaganda is outdated; instead, Huxley's world of self-imposed servitude, where entertainment replaces resistance, better captures modern capitalism's subtle coercion. The novels do not signify a return to barbarism but rather the perversion of progress,

which has surpassed human dimensions and needs, becoming an end in itself (Howe, 1983). Huxley warned that true totalitarianism would not require force but would be engineered through stability and pleasure. Today, this is realized in digital consumerism, where AI-driven feeds dictate thought, and data-driven personalization ensures compliance. Unlike Orwell's 1984, where telescreens pose as unwelcomed intruders into private life, current digital surveillance technologies are promoted and often welcomed into daily lives with an overarching narrative of self-improvement. Yet similar to the voluntary nature of citizens of Huxley's *Brave New World*, the promise of the current AI technologies is that they will transform their users into a better version of themselves (Manh-Tung, Mantello, 2024).

The modern threat is not a party elite but the silent forces of automation, where truth is irrelevant, and servitude feels like freedom. It seems the smarter technologies are allowed to interact and dictate our feelings and behaviours, the more people turn to drugs and therapy and the wellness industry to become calmer, more focused, and less anxious. Hence, this is where unregulated smart technologies create the utopian/dystopian reality warned by Orwell and Huxley (Manh-Tung, Mantello, 2024).

4. Technological Advancements as New Totalitarianism

The world is divided into two separate civilizations; On the one hand, technological advancements have led to the improvement of existing and the creation of new media, bringing human communication to a new level. On the other hand, progress and improvement do not necessarily lead to an increase in the quality of human life. Orwell and Huxley describe technology used to establish new, more effective, and comfortable forms of social control, spreading even to less developed parts of the world (Landripet, 2004).

Thanks to tremendous improvements in communication and transportation methods, the global movement of people, as well as material and symbolic goods, continues to grow. News spreads rapidly and instantly. Mass communication media are rapidly evolving, becoming an indispensable and everyday part of life for many people. They both reflect and create the social and cultural world in which people live (Eco, 1996). The French researcher Philippe Breton (2005) argues that nothing in human history resembles the way media power has solidified in the modern world, a so-called media monopoly over the circulation of information. The image of humans as beings entirely dedicated to communication and subjected to the tyranny of images (both of themselves and those brought by the media) has become dominant.

The fact that all their power is concentrated on information transforms the media into a potentially powerful tool for extensive misinformation campaigns. Non-commercial content has practically disappeared from the media, replaced by light entertainment. The media eradicate critical thinking from public life by offering tele-directed spectacle, competitive shows, and propaganda, primarily focusing on low-grade entertainment for the masses (Katunarić, 2005). The media rule the world, but this is not where media totalitarianism comes from. The media destroy human thought. In the past, thought was persecuted by dictators and

regimes that sought to suppress it, yet it remained hidden or underground, waiting for its opportunity to emerge. If totalitarianism once enforced censorship, today we witness “the flooding of individuals with irrelevant content that stifles their critical thought” or the seizure of meaning. This involves a void filled with images instead of thoughts, creating an illusion of fullness and overflow of visual content into mental space, entirely occupying and pushing out the activity of thinking. This process reaches its maximum perfection as it occurs without the slightest resistance or coercion. It operates alongside democratic censorship, where an overabundance or saturation of contaminated information contaminates the very ability to think critically (Vidović, 2006).

Media critics, such as Neil Postman (1986), warned as early as the mid-1980s about the prevailing media ideology based on pleasure and entertainment. According to him, this is merely one form of social control over individuals, similar to what Huxley had already pointed out in *Brave New World*. Postman defines modern society as a “Technopolis,” a society dominated and governed by modern technology. This represents boundless progress characterized by the production of massive amounts of information without mechanisms to evaluate it. “Technopolis” is both a cultural condition and a state of mind, consisting of the deification of technology, meaning that culture seeks its authorization, satisfaction, and order within technology.

The pleasure television promotes as the ultimate principle can, in fact, destroy society by degrading and devaluing serious public discourse. Furthermore, depicting violence in an entertaining manner undermines many human moral and social norms, devaluing life itself (Longhurst et al., 2008). The “selling of culture”, in the form of an increasing number of paid human activities, rapidly leads to a world where monetary interpersonal relations become substitutes for traditional social relationships (Rifkin, 2005).

Orwell’s and Huxley’s books help us recognize that further advancements and the approach toward perfect technology also signify the rise of a technocracy in a productive and consumerist world imbued with complete computer control. Just as print media transformed human consciousness over the past few centuries, computers could have a similar impact over the next few centuries. While one-fifth of the world’s population moves into cyberspace and access relationships, the rest of humanity remains firmly in the grip of material scarcity. Their world is far removed from optical cables, satellite connections, mobile phones, computer screens, and the internet. The gap between those who have and those who have not is enormous, but the gap between the connected and the unconnected is even greater. The world is rapidly dividing into two separate civilizations – those living inside the electronic gates of cyberspace and those left outside. Precisely because they are so comprehensive, new global digital communication networks result in the creation of a new totalitarian social space, a second earthly sphere on our planet – a sphere residing in the ether of cyberspace. The concept of access and networks is becoming increasingly important, redefining the social dynamics of the postmodern era as profoundly as the idea of ownership and the marketplace did at the dawn of the modern era (Rifkin, 2005).

New communication systems are often presented as keys that open the door to a better life and a fairer society. The discourse surrounding new communication systems generally focuses on the upcoming technical increase in information exchange and how this advantage will affect individuals and institutions. Orwell and Huxley foresaw the emergence of this significant phenomenon in their novels. The “capitalist journey”, which began with the commodification of space and materiality, ends with the commodification of human time and duration (Rifkin, 2005). Life becomes increasingly commodified, and communication, social interaction, and the marketplace become indistinguishable. To avert this reality, it is increasingly important for individuals to become more mindful of how we interact with technologies and subtle ways in which we come to feel and act on the basis of interacting with these devices (Manh-Tung, Mantello, 2024).

5. Brand New Global Digital World

Technological advancements have elevated human communication, but progress does not always equate to greater freedom. Orwell and Huxley predicted that technology would refine social control rather than liberate humanity. Today, AI communication systems curate information streams, not only reflecting but actively shaping social realities. Philippe Breton warned that modern media consolidates information power, creating a media monopoly where endless content distracts rather than informs. This type of censorship replaces critical thought with a flood of images and data, which is an illusion of abundance that numbs resistance. Neil Postman’s concept of “Technopolis” is realized in algorithmic feeds, where entertainment and pleasure dominate discourse, echoing Huxley’s vision of a society pacified by indulgence.

Consumerism has evolved from the commodification of labour to the commodification of attention and social interactions. Digital platforms monetize every human activity, blurring the lines between communication, commerce, and identity. Those plugged into the global network experience a curated reality, while the disconnected are left behind, creating a new form of digital inequality. What Orwell feared through force, Huxley envisioned through desire: a world where freedom is traded for convenience, and information saturation silences dissent without coercion.

Today’s AI-driven communication systems embody this subtle domination, turning life itself into a marketable product. Technological advancements have propelled human communication into a new era, but progress does not necessarily lead to greater autonomy or a more just society. Orwell and Huxley foresaw technology’s role not just in surveillance and propaganda but in reshaping human behaviour itself. Today, artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithm-driven media dominate global discourse, shaping not only what we consume but how we think. Philippe Breton argued that modern media has created a monopoly over information, where a handful of corporations and AI-powered platforms control the flow of knowledge. Unlike the blunt censorship of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, today’s control is more insidious: an overabundance of information that overwhelms critical thought. This is what media theorists describe as “the

flooding of individuals with irrelevant content that stifles their critical thought” – a drowning out of meaningful discourse by an endless stream of images, headlines, and viral distractions. The result is a society that mistakes hypoconnectivity for awareness while struggling to engage with reality in a meaningful way.

Neil Postman’s concept of “Technopolis” – a culture governed by technology rather than human values – is evident in how AI-driven platforms function today. Social media algorithms do not merely present reality; they actively construct it, determining what information reaches individuals based on engagement metrics, commercial interests, and behavioural predictions. The result is a fragmented reality, where each person is trapped within their own algorithmic echo chamber, reinforcing biases and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. In this fundamental way, as sociologist Massimo Airoidi argues, machine learning systems such as search engines or recommender algorithms are socialized and constantly receive an influx of feedback from millions of users (Airoidi, 2022). This reflects Huxley’s fear: that people would not need to be censored because they would be too entertained and distracted to resist. Consumerism has also evolved in ways Orwell and Huxley predicted. If the industrial age commodified labour, the digital age commodifies attention, emotions, and even relationships. Every interaction—whether a casual conversation, a protest movement, or a moment of solitude—is monetized and optimized for engagement. AI-powered content feeds dictate what we see, while personal data is harvested and sold, ensuring that even human identity itself becomes a product. The distinction between communication, commerce, and self-expression has all but disappeared.

In this digital landscape, inequality has taken on new dimensions. As Rifkin observed, the world is splitting into two civilizations: those inside the digital sphere – connected, tracked, and integrated into global AI systems – and those left outside, disconnected from the benefits of technology but also free from its surveillance. The new totalitarianism of access does not rely on physical oppression but on economic and technological exclusion, where those without access to digital networks are rendered invisible. The world is rapidly dividing into two separate civilizations: those living inside the electronic gates of cyberspace and those left outside. Precisely because they are so comprehensive, new global digital communication networks result in the creation of a new totalitarian social space, a second earthly sphere on our planet—a sphere residing in the ether of cyberspace. The concept of access and networks is becoming increasingly important, redefining the social dynamics of the postmodern era as profoundly as the idea of ownership and the marketplace did at the dawn of the modern era (Rifkin, 2005).

What Orwell feared through force, Huxley envisioned through pleasure – and today’s AI-driven communication systems embody both. Surveillance is now voluntary, as people surrender personal data for convenience. Propaganda is no longer imposed but algorithmically tailored to each individual’s desires. In a world where AI dictates what we see, think, and buy, the line between participation and control has never been thinner. Freedom is not taken away, however, it is exchanged for hyper-personalized content, endless entertainment, and the illusion of choice.

6. Conclusion

The evolution of communication technologies has transformed society in ways that Orwell and Huxley foresaw, though perhaps even more profoundly than they imagined. Rather than imposing strict censorship or direct oppression, modern systems of control operate through an overabundance of information, algorithm-driven entertainment transforming everyday social interactions into profit-driven activities. The media, once a tool for reflection and critical discourse, now functions as a mechanism of distraction, reinforcing biases and shaping reality according to commercial and political interests. AI-powered platforms and digital networks have created a new form of totalitarianism, not through force, but through voluntary participation in surveillance, entertainment, and digital consumerism. The line between freedom and control has blurred—people are not forced into submission but are conditioned to embrace a system that monitors, influences, and profits from their every action. Attention has become currency, and culture has been fully absorbed into the marketplace.

It is naive to continue to think of humans as superbeings able to fully control themselves in the face of increasingly sophisticated online persuasion and manipulation tactics. Equally concerning, is the way mechanistic algorithms (the application of narrow or weak AI) influence complex human behaviour. Ethical and moral dilemmas have arisen in recent years due to AI usage in the public domain and the (un)intentional consequences algorithms have on economic choices and human well-being. AI development and deployment need to be governed by more human-centric principles, ones that are easily understood by all stakeholders and that benefit society. Addressing today's AI challenges is crucial if we want to build a more symbiotic relationship between humans and machines and to set a necessary foundation for its development based on human values and potential (Fenwick, Molnar, 2022).

At the same time, the world is increasingly divided between those with access to digital infrastructure and those excluded from it. The age of information has not democratized knowledge but has widened the gap between the connected and the unconnected, shaping a new global hierarchy. The commercialization of human time and thought—once considered the last domain of personal freedom—has become the final stage of capitalism's expansion.

Ultimately, technological advancements are neither inherently liberating nor oppressive; their impact depends on how they are used and who controls them. Orwell and Huxley's works remain vital warnings, urging society to remain vigilant against complacency in the face of convenience. The challenge is not just resisting overt oppression, but recognizing and countering subtle forms of manipulation, ensuring that communication remains a tool for empowerment rather than control.

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