

Political Philosophy of the Information Society

by Alan N. Shapiro

I want to thank the organizers of the International Conference on the Information Society (i-Society 2012) here in London for inviting me to be a keynote speaker. My favorite British writer is George Orwell, and one of the questions that I will ask in my lecture is: if he were alive today, what would George Orwell think of the Information Society?

My topic is Political Philosophy of the Information Society. So far in our history there is no Political Philosophy of the Information Society. We have had a Political Philosophy of liberal democracy, a Political Philosophy of capitalism, a Political Philosophy of the various historical forms of totalitarianism: Nazism, Stalinism, fascism. But we have not yet had a Political Philosophy of the Information Society. How do we develop and elaborate this? Of course we need to have a lot of in-depth knowledge from the inside about the Information Society. But first and foremost we need to re-read the great political thinkers of the twentieth century. We need to understand what they thought and said about politics and society and then apply their political and social theory insights to the new situation. I am not talking about the ideas of thinkers who were liberal or conservative Watchdogs of the Established Order, and I am not talking about the ideas of thinkers who were the Official Revolutionaries and Heroes of the Young with their faces printed on T-shirts like Mao Zedong or Che Guevara. I am talking about the rebels, the truly independent political thinkers. Thinkers like George Orwell, Albert Camus, Hannah Arendt, Claude Lefort, Arthur Koestler, Primo Levi, Manès Sperber, Louis Althusser, and André Gorz. Most of these thinkers are discussed in the book published in 2008 by the great British historian Tony Judt called *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*. As a prerequisite to starting to devise a Political Philosophy of the Information Society, I will briefly reexamine the Political Philosophy ideas of two of these thinkers: the democratic-socialist George Orwell and the existentialist-Marxist André Gorz. What were the key ideas of Orwell and Gorz during the earlier times in which they wrote, and how are their ideas relevant to the Information Society of today?

George Orwell is, of course, best known for his great novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Growing up in the American school system, we read *Animal Farm* already as children, and both books are taught and discussed in educational contexts ranging

from junior high school English curriculae all the way up to Ph.D. programmes in sociology, political science, and literature. *Animal Farm*, as is well known, is a political satire of the history and ideas of the 1917 Russian Revolution, and of the Stalinist totalitarian system that historically emerged from it. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is more ambivalent about the historical roots of the nightmarish social-political fiction-reality that it portrays. The novel depicts in a science fictional dystopian way a projected future totalitarian society of total societal-state control and surveillance over the population, the end of individualism and individual freedom, the power of television and the mass media, the manipulative and propagandistic use of language, and the implementation of methods of physical and psychological torture which seems to extrapolate and project into a catastrophic future existing socio-political tendencies of both the twentieth century Soviet Communist system and the Western European and American advanced capitalist-technological society.

So the first and most obvious dimension of the question of what would George Orwell think of the Information Society of today if he were alive relates to his passionate concerns about totalitarianism and the control-surveillance society as depicted in the political-satiric novel *Animal Farm* and in the science fiction dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The word Orwellian in the English language has come to mean the social tendency of totalitarian or unscrupulous political practices. And, of course, the phrase Big Brother, which comes from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, has become a part of the English language. In the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother is a fictional character, the enigmatic dictator of Oceania, a fictional country where the ruling Party wields total power over the inhabitants. To quote from Wikipedia: “In the society that Orwell describes, everyone is under complete surveillance by the authorities, mainly by telescreens. The people are constantly reminded of this by the phrase ‘Big Brother is watching you,’ which is the core ‘truth’ (truth in quotes) of the propadanda system in this state.”

I think that Orwell would have a double-vision of the Information Society. He would find some aspects of the Information Society to be totalitarian – he was intensely opposed to totalitarianism – and he would see some aspects of the Information Society as being supportive and potentially supportive of the growth of democracy and freedom. Orwell, in my opinion, would make a plea for us to engage publicly as intellectuals, Information Technology professionals, and social-political activists in exploring how can New Technologies be

developed in ways that would strengthen democracy and individual freedom against the totalitarian trends.

George Orwell had a great sensitivity to and awareness of social injustice. As a young man, he intentionally lived among the poor, the unemployed, low-paid labourers, vagabonds, and the working class of Paris and London, and of Lancashire and Yorkshire counties in northern England. He participated and threw himself into difficult working and living conditions, and then wrote extensively about these experiences in his early books *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). Orwell was an independent democratic-socialist, and he was critical of most of the established left-wing political parties and trade unions in Great Britain. In the second half of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell made a defense of socialism, but at the same time he fleshed out a detailed analysis of how the organizations officially propounding and representing socialism were explaining socialism in ways that had the effect of turning large segments of the public against socialism.

Like the great mid-twentieth century French writer Albert Camus, Orwell sought a third position in politics: a perspective that was critical of both Oligopolistic Capitalism and State Socialism. Like the great mid-twentieth century American writer Ernest Hemingway, Orwell personally fought in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and then wrote a book about it. Hemingway fictionalized his experiences in the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), which tells the story of Robert Jordan, a young American teacher of Spanish who voluntarily enlists in the International Brigades attached to a guerilla unit on the Soviet Union-supported Republican side of the war. Orwell chronicled his experiences in a non-fictional mode of writing in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), where he expressed sympathies with and made an interpretation on the side of the anarchists. The anarchists in Catalonia in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War fought against both Franco's fascists and the Soviet Union-supported Communist Party. The European political conflict among three forces converged in Catalonia.

George Orwell was also a critic of the decline of the English language. He wrote about this subject brilliantly in his essay "Politics and the English Language" (1946). We should seriously consider what Orwell wrote in this essay and apply his insights to the decline of the English language that is taking place today in the Information Society and on the Internet. My position is an ambivalent one that there are both good things and bad things happening to the

English language on the Internet. I believe that Orwell's critical analysis should be integrated as a component of a larger perspective that is both critical and affirmative. "Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way," writes Orwell at the start of his essay. "But it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it." Many people believe that "any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes." What is happening to the English language is that it is becoming "ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration."

Orwell presented a number of examples of poor writing taken from books written by professors, essays in prominent intellectual magazines, political pamphlets, and letters to well-respected newspapers, and then deconstructed the lack of clarity in their articulation. "Two qualities are common to all of them," wrote Orwell. "The first is staleness of imagery: the other is lack of precision. The writer either has a meaning and cannot express it, or he inadvertently says something else, or he is almost indifferent as to whether his words mean anything or not. This mixture of vagueness and sheer incompetence is the most marked characteristic of modern English prose, and especially of any kind of political writing." Writing consists less and less of words, and more and more of ready-made phrases tacked together "like the sections of a prefabricated hen house." The real work of prose construction is habitually avoided through a series of standard linguistic practices which Orwell systematically catalogued in his essay. These lazy tricks include worn-out metaphors, verbal "false limb operators" (too easy paddings of sentences which save the trouble of appropriate word selection) like the phrases "deserving of serious consideration" or "brought to a satisfactory conclusion," pretentious diction, and "meaningless words."

Our task today would be to compile an updated catalogue of misapplications similar to the one that Orwell made of habitual bad practices which stem from and contribute to the deterioration of the English language in the academic and political writing of his time, but a

compendium focused in our time on the use and abuse of the English language in the Information Society and on the Internet. I will return to this task later on in my lecture. I want to say for now that I do not view what is taking place with Global English or Globish in the Information Society and on the Internet as being something entirely negative. Contemporary developments do not represent only the debasement of language. In “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell goes on to say that a speaker or writer who employs ready-made or clichéd terminology in his statements has already “gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine.” One of the artists of the twentieth century whom I most admire is Andy Warhol, and it can be said in a paradoxically positive way that Warhol “turned himself into a machine” (Jean Baudrillard). So I wonder if, somewhat contrary to Orwell, there is not a good way – an ironic way – to turn oneself into a machine. And if this could be a fruitful strategy for tactical media in the Net.

Next I will speak about the ideas of the French existentialist-Marxist thinker André Gorz as being a possible contributory stream towards the development of a Political Philosophy of the Information Society. André Gorz was one of the principal thinkers of the French New Left in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, and he was a thinker of the New Working Class. Gorz tried to understand the ways in which technology workers are in fact members of the working class – experiencing alienation and exploitation – although they tend to not think of themselves as such and instead adopt a corporate and techie identity. According to the theory of the New Working Class, technology workers are involved in a sort of “false consciousness” or ideology of believing themselves to have been liberated by technology from the proletarian condition. This is all paradoxically expressed by Gorz in books like *Farewell to the Working Class* (1980) and *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (1999). Gorz wrote about liberation from Work, liberation via the transformation of Work both in the present and in the future, and liberation via technology and automation. Technology and automation have the potential to liberate Work in the direction of creativity, but this has happened thus far only in partial ways under the current regime of how technology and automation are designed and implemented. Yet there is the beginning of a positive trend towards making Work more meaningful and self-organizing that needs to be pushed through in a more conscious and concerted fashion.

In *Reclaiming Work*, Gorz says that it is Abstract Labour that is disappearing. Work that can be done interchangeably by any qualified person carrying out a defined role is giving

way, both actually and potentially, to a more individualized kind of Work. Parametrization expands the range of self-expression. It is information technologies which make this possible, since they push intelligence to the leading edge of capital. “The most important form of fixed capital,” writes Gorz, “is now the knowledge stored in, and instantly available from, information technologies, and the most important form of labour power is brainpower.”

Society no longer exists, if by society we understand there to be a coherent whole that assigns positions, functions, and modes of social belonging to its members. Gorz wants to build a new political ecology that takes into account new modalities of Work that emerge from technology and automation, yet that, as a political ecology, is simultaneously more grounded in Free Time in the era of the Information Society – as opposed to the grounding in Wage Labour that the political ecology of the past has historically had in the era of the Industrial Society.

Develop new forms of Work empowered by technology and automation that are closer to the circumstances of private life and the opportunities of leisure. Political ecology combines the study of environmental issues with political, social and economic concerns. The objects on which, and the contexts in which, technology workers work today are less physical and less “material” – and more intellectual and conceptual, more about language and communication – than the objects and contexts of purposive-rational manipulation in the classical Industrial Society. This transformation in what it is that our Work modifies when we work has led to a crisis of Work, according to André Gorz. Wage-based Labour in its traditional arrangements is now obsolete in the new era of intellectual-oriented production.

The Work-based Society is over. We still need to precipitate and accelerate the demise of the Work-based Society, so that out of its disappearance something new and better can appear. We need to act socially to loosen the grip of Work and to decenter the centrality that Work has in people’s minds, and in their assumptions about how society is and should be organized. Gorz writes: “We have to free up people’s minds and imaginations, to cast off those unquestioned assumptions which the dominant social discourse latches on to. We have to think through those exemplary experiences which explore other forms of productive co-operation, exchange, solidarity and living.” Culture and ideas are the true battlegrounds. The domain of everyday life must come more into contact with the domain of business organization and management. The attitude of individuals and of society towards Work needs

to open up to the possible advent of new practices of Work. With respect to questions of economics, New Technologies, according to Gorz, can lead to the creation of alternative cooperative networks on a micro-economic scale, establishing cybernetic feedback loops with the operations of the dominant macro economy. This converges with the political and economic ideas of other thinkers and activists in radical technology circles.

Gorz defines Work – as it is under the current mainstream system – as the performance of a socially specified and normalized function serving in the production and reproduction of the social whole. The mainstream society engenders something that we call jobs. Jobs are circumscribed around socially stipulated skills which are deployed according to socially determined procedures. Gorz points out that Work under a more liberated paradigm would be something that we do; it is not something that we have, and it is not something that we are. Work does not belong to us, we do not possess it. And we should not think of Work as being identical to ourselves. This “socially enumerated” Work in the neo-liberal or post-Fordist conception is merely a simulation of what would be a “true” Work. Truly Creative Work would not be socializable in the extant sense. Truly Creative Work is not, paradoxically, something that can be separated from the individual by a “simulated” social sphere, nor is it something that can be “not separated” from the individual by a more organic, sustainable and pragmatic-utopian social sphere. The new form of Work is the multi-activity and organization of our disinterested social bonds.

Gorz writes of a pragmatic-utopian society, “a society which shifts the production of the social bond towards relations of co-operation, regulated not by the market and money, but by reciprocity and mutuality. A society in which all individuals can measure themselves against others, gain their esteem and demonstrate their value not mainly by their occupation and earnings, but by a range of activities deployed in the public space and publicly acknowledged in other than monetary ways.”

The new varieties of intrinsically meaningful Work would mark a major historical departure from the Fordist assembly production line, where Work was sold as labour in exchange for a survival wage, holistic craft processes were broken down into their smallest most manageable parts, and conditions and contracts of the human-organization interface were politically negotiated to try to ensure a decent income and permanent employment.

Wage-based labour is increasingly obsolete in the era of high technology and the Information Society.

The socio-economic-corporate system of “permanent jobs” is not consistent with the blossoming social potentiality of New Technologies. What would make much more sense and be consistent with the emancipatory promise of the Information Society would be something like a true freelancer economy. This is, of course, the opposite position about “the flexible man” in the hyper-modern economy than the position taken by the prominent London School of Economics sociologist Richard Sennett – who turns out to be surprisingly conservative and nostalgic – in his book *The Corrosion of Character* (1998), which was translated into German under the title *Der Flexible Mensch*. Unlike Sennett, I regard the skills of flexibility and continuous reinvention of the self that one acquires in a true freelancer economy as being a positive advance for the life quality of workers. I also connect this practical flexibility that Sennett unfortunately views negatively to the extreme flexibility of consciousness that is recommended by much of Buddhism and Buddhist-inspired psychologies.

André Gorz is much more in agreement with my position, I think, and he suggests the adoption by society of an unconditional guaranteed minimal income as a support to the freelancer economy and a new positive flexibility, a new orientation towards a multi-activity mode of Work, emphasis on free time, and investment by society in the formation of new interpersonal bonds and new social relationships. So someone like Richard Sennett appears to be merely a negative critic of the new capitalism, whereas André Gorz made concrete and positive proposals for improvements. Gorz is much more in tune with the younger generation of today who are enthusiastic about technology and its potentials for human liberation. One could make a project, in solidarity with Gorz, of promoting the situation of the high-tech freelancer to such an eminent position that, rather than freelancing being a condition that one reluctantly bears, it would unfold into a pattern of working and mode of life that one chooses and desires, a lifestyle that is regulated and valued by society, a lifestyle that is a source of new culture, freedoms and sociability, and which proceeds for those concerned without drastic discontinuities in income.

In the true freelancer economy, the individual creative-technological worker can go continuously back and forth between selling his work on the market in exchange for money, and cultivating his own creative work in a way which can also lead to making money and

acquiring other things of value. There is a social environment, writes Gorz, “which enables all citizens to decide on an ongoing basis between the use-value of their time and its exchange-value: that is to say between the ‘utilities’ they can acquire by selling their working time and those they can ‘self-provide’ by using the time themselves.”

Work of the old kind, according to Gorz, was measurable, quantifiable, and detachable from the person. This kind of Work could be bought and sold in the labour market. It was monetarily exchangeable Work or commodity Labour, invented and forcibly imposed by manufacturing capitalism from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.

In *Reclaiming Work*, Gorz writes about “work which is abolishing work.” “The ideology of selling oneself clearly could not prevail if post-Fordism did not of itself create the macro-social conditions which both mask the liberatory potentialities of technical change and enable that change to become an instrument of reinforced domination.” There is a potential liberation and there is a system of domination. On the liberatory side of things, writes Gorz, workers have the chance to “make work their own and assume responsibility for it as subjects ... they ought to be the subjects of – and also the actors in – the abolition of work, the abolition of employment, the abolition of wage labour, instead of abandoning all these macro-economic and macro-social dimensions of their productive activity to market forces and capital. They ought, therefore, to make the redistribution of work, the diminution of its intensity, the reduction of working hours, the self-management of the hours and pace of work, and the guarantee of purchasing power demands inherent in the meaning of their work.”

Employment today in the framework of the “permanent job” no longer integrates the individual into a community, according to Gorz, no longer structures the stages of life, and is no longer the basis for a life project. We desire something that no longer exists: the “permanent job” which provides for social and personal identity and gives meaning to life.

In the chapter of *Reclaiming Work* called “The Lost Magic of Work,” Gorz writes: “The new protagonists [of social change and hope for the building of a pragmatic-utopian society] are those people who, instead of passively putting up with the insecurity and discontinuity of most jobs [or accepting the boredom and over-security of some other jobs], try to use these [various jobs and projects] as a springboard for their self-affirmation and for a richer, freer, more solidary life.” I would say that these new protagonists are neither in the

system nor out of the system. They are beyond the binary opposition of inside or outside, and they are of the system. These new social actors have “the possibility of creating an organization for oneself and others which promotes autonomy.”

In *Reclaiming Work*, Gorz writes that we are on the verge of a society “in which all individuals can measure themselves against others, gain their esteem and demonstrate their value not mainly by their occupation and earnings, but by a range of activities deployed in the public space and publicly acknowledged in other than monetary ways.” This does not mean to believe naïvely in a stance of opposition towards work and money, which would itself amount to the construction of a ridiculous binary opposition, but rather to socially invent new forms of money and new forms of Work that expand the possibilities of how value can be received in exchange for useful activity. The idea for secondary and satellite forms of money comes from the chips that represent money, yet transform money into play- and game-money, inside gambling casinos.

In *Reclaiming Work*, André Gorz mentions an historical idea that is similar to this: “[According to] Jacques Duboin,” writes Gorz, “the distribution of means of payment must correspond to the volume of wealth socially produced and to the volume of work performed. As René Passet so succinctly puts it, ‘What we regard today as secondary distribution will become primary distribution.’ Because it is the product of integrated, ‘man-machine organization’ systems in which ‘the contribution specific to each person is no longer measurable’ ... The distribution of means of payment will no longer take the form of a wage, but of what, even in his day, Duboin called a ‘social income.’ This no longer reflects the ‘value’ of the labour done (that is to say, of the products necessary to reproduce the labour power expended), but the needs, desires and aspirations society chooses to meet. It requires the creation of another sort of money, which cannot be hoarded and which Passet, following Duboin, calls ‘consumption money.’”

In the second half of my lecture, I will now begin to apply the Political Philosophy ideas of George Orwell and André Gorz which I have thus far enumerated to the contemporary situation of the Information Society. Following Orwell, I think that we need to have a double-vision of the Information Society with respect to both the dangers of totalitarianism and the hopeful possibilities for the progress of freedom and democracy.

The biggest danger of totalitarianism stemming from the use of technology, I think, is the use of the Internet for gathering data and collecting information about citizens. And almost all of us are now voluntarily providing this information to large corporate institutions of every kind. And we are choosing to do our socializing and our so-called “networking” at large corporate Social Media websites like Facebook, rather than trying to build up decentralized and alternative social media networks where it would be much more difficult for Big Brother to collect our information.

To resist the power of Facebook, we need to develop alternative decentralized peer-to-peer networks for social media, and we need to understand how Facebook can be resisted from within. I admire the academic work that Geert Lovink is doing in this area at his Institute of Network Culture at the University of Amsterdam. I found it very interesting to read the Masters’ Thesis written by one of Dr. Lovink’s students Marc Stumpel which is called “The Politics of Social Media, Facebook: Control and Resistance.” Stumpel asks the question: how do social media exercise control, and how can this control be resisted? I quote here several passages from Marc Stumpel’s thesis:

“One way to exercise counterpower is reprogramming, which imposes new goals and operating logic onto a network, or networks, by engaging in discourse. For example, in the 1990s there were many networked social movements who collectively protested against corporate globalization by utilizing electronic media networks to spread their message. Their exercise of counterpower not only put pressure on corporations and governments but also reinvigorated the anarchist ideal of autonomous communes and the goal to reorganize society through self-organized and self-managed networks.

“By advocating the liberating power of electronic networks of communication, the networked movement against imposed globalization opens up new horizons of possibility in the old dilemma between individual freedom and societal governance. These social movements affected the image of globalizing governments and corporations by using the Internet as an effective tool for their protest ...

“Another way of exercising counterpower, next to reprogramming, is what [Manuel] Castells describes as blocking the switches of connection between networks that allow the networks to be controlled by the metaprogram of values that express structural domination.

For instance, a class-action lawsuit may result in a temporary or permanent disconnection between powerful cooperating networks. These mechanisms of resistance instigate discourse in various media communication networks and are used by social actors who contest the actions of power-holders. This triggers the question: How effective are these mechanisms in resisting the network-making power of social media corporations?”

Next I will examine the question of how George Orwell’s critique of language can be applied to the contemporary Internet. I will briefly mention three examples of trends which are reminiscent of what Orwell observed about the deterioration of the English language when he wrote his essay “Politics and the English Language” in 1946.

The accelerated propagation of global digital technology and global media culture has brought with it the accelerated predominance of English. The result is a two-tiered system, with English as the master code. This system no longer entails a relationship of domination of one of the system’s elements by the other. It is rather a relationship of virus-like infiltration by the stronger element of the weaker. Taking the situation of German as an example, there is an implosion stemming from the epidemic proliferation of English terms in the interior of the German language. When a German speaker talks in an advertisement, movie, TV program, or on the Internet, she sprinkles her utterances liberally with English words. When a German speaker talks about business management, computer software, digital technology, telecommunications, financial markets, fashion, music, sports, shopping, consumer objects, or “personalized” emotions (*Ich habe ein Happy Feeling*), she supplements her speech with substitute or designer words taken from English. English words are used in the German language in any domain where the speaker wishes to enhance the prestige of her discourse by holding up a sign of globalized professional, technical, or consumer knowledge. But since the word is outside its living English context, and is not integral to any German context, it is like a fish out of both waters in a hybrid language called Denglisch.

The second example that I will mention of George Orwell’s critique of language – which he made in an earlier era – being spot-on in its relevance to an analysis of a major aspect of the contemporary Information Society is Wikipedia. Many Wikipedia articles reproduce accepted clichés. This is related also to the tendency to make a fetish of information as opposed to knowledge. What is mere information and what is real knowledge? To get beyond the clichés, we need something like a renewed Marxist ideology critique.

Gustave Flaubert did this very well about 140 years ago in his “Dictionary of Accepted Ideas.” We don’t need to compile a new “Dictionary of Accepted Ideas,” because Wikipedia, considering one major element of its complex cultural constellation, already is such a dictionary. The best way to support my argument is to provide concrete examples, which I have done extensively in my lectures and previously published writings on Wikipedia.

I made revisions at Wikipedia to the many articles about *Star Trek*. The *Star Trek* articles at Wikipedia are full of clichés and simplifications. The first sentence of their version reads like this: “*Star Trek* is an American science fiction entertainment series.” My revised version reads like this: “*Star Trek* is an American science fiction television and film series that has transcended its context of entertainment. It has shaped and formatively influenced culture, ideas, technologies, sciences, and even race relations.” Their version then reads like this: “The original *Star Trek* is an American television series, created by Gene Roddenberry, which debuted in 1966 and ran for three seasons, following the interstellar adventures of Captain James T. Kirk and the crew of the Federation Starship Enterprise.” My revised version reads like this: “The original *Star Trek* was created by Gene Roddenberry. It debuted in 1966 and ran for three seasons. Like the Bible and Shakespeare, *Star Trek* is increasingly understood as being a great text of Western Civilization, and it is now studied in this way by literary criticism and literary theory. The original pilot film of *Star Trek*, “The Cage,” was made in 1964, starring Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Christopher Pike of the Federation Starship Enterprise. It elaborates many of the major literary and technological themes that are hallmarks of the entire *Star Trek* franchise. Roddenberry was very influenced in his creation of *Star Trek* by the 1956 science fiction film *Forbidden Planet*. After saying no to *Star Trek* in 1965 because it was too cerebral and not suited to serial production, NBC Television Network executives asked that a second pilot film be made. Hunter then turned down the leading role, and it was given to William Shatner as Captain James T. Kirk. Following the release of other series in the franchise, the Kirk-headed series was retroactively referred to as *Star Trek: The Original Series*. These adventures were continued by the short-lived *Star Trek: The Animated Series* and six feature films.

Star Trek transcends entertainment! It formatively shapes our culture and science! Cell phones, personal computers, and portable computer memory were largely inspired by *Star Trek*. *Star Trek* is a great text of Western civilization. One cannot underestimate the

importance of the original pilot film *The Cage*. Nor can one underestimate the importance of *The Animated Series*, and of animation generally.

Now, as a third example of George Orwell's critique of language being relevant to the Information Society of today, I will briefly consider the new language known as Globish which the Internet has spawned. Globish is not the same thing as English. It is a simplified version of English. Globish is a subset of the English language formalized by Jean-Paul Nerriere and David Hon. It uses a subset of standard English grammar, and a list of 1500 English words. It is the common ground that non-native English speakers adopt in the context of international business and for communication on the Internet, Twitter, SMS and Facebook. People who speak Globish use that part of the English language that enables understanding between non-native speakers and English native speakers.

Does Globish represent the decline and deterioration of the English language, or is Globish the new and necessary common world language for all people, a language which English, since it is dominated by native speakers, cannot be? Or is Globish, by implementing a restricting and dumbing-down of language, preparing the way for new forms of totalitarian manipulation, of brainwashing and mind control of citizens? In Chapter 15 of their book, Nerriere and Hon express pride in the fact that Globish is a closed system. They list the following basic principles of this closed system:

- Globish is limited to 1500 words.
- Globish uses words in a restricted way.
- Globish has sentences of a restricted length.
- The goal of Globish is understanding, and not self-expression.
- Globish has no limitations related to the use of the hands, face, or body.

I think that Globish is an idealist fantasy. It does not and cannot really exist. The reality of the abbreviated English used on the Internet and in chat rooms does not conform to

the standardization of 1500 words that Nerriere and Hon believe in. An example of this abbreviated English in reality is provided by them in Chapter 22 of their book:

hi jack, check ur mails. I hv sent smth to u. just got a mail from italy. remember? Stephano? d guy who spent 2 yrs here in d states, gr8 news, blv me! ull luv it ... ttyp

hi joe, r u talking abt d guy w d american girlfrn? yeap, I no him. I thought he hd gone bk to italy. I don't hv time rght now to check my mails but will. hv to go now. Cu

hi jack, y r u so busy? r u still working? im sorry, once u hv read d mail ull forget all of ur probs ... its btr than anything else, and yes, u r rght, stephano hs gone bk to italy, any guess?

hi joe, OMG! I cnt blv this. u r rght. thats gr8! so stephano hs invited us to go to italy this summer! cool. and it means we cd visit many other countries and all of our frnds over there. im so excited. lets meet and talk abt it asap.

hi jack, u see? lets meet 2nite, we dnt hv time to waste. lets make a gr8 plan and get bk w it to stephano so he cn prepare eg. i cd b at ur place by 7.

hi jack, I hv ordered pizza 4 2nite, we r gonna fix eg and hv a gr8 time in italy. till then ciao.

Nerriere and Hon then present the speech known as the U.S. Presidential Inaugural Address made by President Barack Obama on the occasion of his being sworn in as President of the United States on January 20, 2009, and make a translation of the text of this speech from English into Globish. What we see is that the operation of Globish consists of the systematic elimination of the expressive words of the English language which are less likely to be known to a non-native speaker who is in the process of learning the language.

President Barack Obama in English: "I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors."

Globish translation: “I stand here today full of respect for the work before us. I want to thank you for the trust you have given, and I remember all the things given up by the people who came before us.”

Humbled, task, grateful, trust, bestowed, mindful, sacrifices, borne, and ancestors are all eliminated. All the words which express subtlety of meaning or have poetic resonance are eliminated. All the words that we studied so hard in high school to learn are eliminated. George Orwell would have found this to be a fulfillment of his prophecy of the totalitarian turn in language.

Now what can we say about André Gorz’s ideas about the New Working Class and his proposals for new, more creative, forms of work in the context of contemporary IT workers in the Information Society? Here are three ideas of mine for new, more creative, forms of work:

(1) Within the field of software development, there should be a job role of “creativity in software” specialist. In some European countries, a certain percentage of the money spent on a large industrial project – something like 1% – is required to be spent on an art project related to the industrial project. A similar principle could be instituted for creativity in software. Creative aspects – like music, stories, and poetry – should be integrated into small and large software systems.

(2) There should be a recognized profession known as “social choreographer.” The job of a social choreographer is to choreograph meetings among people from different sectors of society who otherwise would never come together.

(3) There should be a job role in large corporations known as the “remote locations job enhancement” specialist. This person encourages and supports all office workers in adding things of value to their jobs which are gained by being at other places which are not their office. All of the New Technologies of telepresence that we have now make this possible. This will be part of a general project of promoting the development of hybrid work-leisure realities, and hybrid online-offline realities.

To conclude, I want to say something about the connection between George Orwell’s concern with totalitarianism and André Gorz’s proposals for new, more creative, forms of

work. The totalitarian tendencies of the Information Society derive from the fact that we have created, and are in the process of creating, an entirely online world. We are making the improper use of online technologies in a fundamental way. Online technologies should be developed in partnership with the offline world, offline life, and offline reality. We need to rethink, redesign, and reimplement the Information Society and the application of New Technologies and New Media as a hybrid online-offline situation.