

# La culture anglaise pour se la ramener en khôlle

## FOR DUMMIES

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, ROBOTS, STRANGLEHOLD OF SCIENCE ON HUMAN PROGRESS

- *2001, A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick (USA), 1968. One of the topics the movie deals with is AI: on board a spaceship on its way to Jupiter, the self-learning machine **HAL 9000** degenerates and tries to kill the astronauts (one of them dies). The trick is that when it first starts to run out of control, they hide in a transparent capsule to formulate a strategy to disable it, but the AI learnt how to lip read and understands what they are planning anyway.
- *The Terminator*, James Cameron (USA), 1984: humanity almost becomes extinct after a war against the AI "**Skynet**" that took hold over its creators (they even have to go back in time to prevent the mother of the leader of humans from being killed by a robot sent by Skynet).
- "*Never send a machine to do a human's job*" says agent Smith in *The Matrix*, by the Wachowski Brothers (USA), 1999, starring Keanu Reeves & Hugo Weaving. Likewise, humans have been turned into lethargic bodies by AI that are connected to neuronal stimulation which makes them believe they are living their lives. — Cypher character's choice to life asks the same question as Putnam's **brain in a vat** thought experiment, a dilemma earlier evoked in Plato's *Theaetetus*.
- In January 2015, an **open warning letter on AI** is signed by Stephen Hawking and other scientists: "*AI could be the worst event in the history of our civilization*". The main fear is that scientists could create "something which cannot be controlled", due to pitfalls of progress of science on AI. Concerns of the letter touch both short-term issues, since self-managing automates are confronted with moral quandaries such as automatic cars, and long-term issues like the **existential risk** of a Superintelligence, being sketched out by DeepMind's Alpha Robot made to master human chess and Go champions in 2017.
- This year, the French engineering school Mines Nancy designed a robot that astonishingly resembles the killer dogs from *Black Mirror*'s episode "Metalhead". Those are inspired by Boston Dynamic's **BigDog** serving as pack mules for the US Army.
- "**Asimov's three laws of robotics**" are the principles of robots, especially "positronic robots", that Isaac Asimov invented in 1942 in his sci-fi novels. The first one starts with: "*a robot may not injure a human being*" and the second one is "*a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law*".
- *Brave New World*, a novel by Aldous Huxley (UK), 1931, notably is about **eugenics**: babies are all fertilised in vitro and grow in jars (Huxley's brother is a known theoretician of eugenics). Diseases and disparities are erased, but also people are classified by birth into social categories based on their genetic qualities. This world follows the principles of Malthusianism.
- Opposed to the biblical exhortation: "*As for you, be fruitful and increase in number, multiply on the earth and increase upon it*" (**Genesis 9:7**), **Malthusianism** is Thomas Robert Malthus' 1798 economic theory (UK) claiming that population growth may be exponential while food supply growth only is linear, then overpopulation (known as **Malthusian catastrophe**) has to be narrowed, based on *preventive checks* (birth limits, such as Chinese two-child (1969-1979) then one-child policies (1979-2015), or abstinence) rather than natural *positive checks* (plagues,

famines). Now it refers to all population control advocates. It was told to be misanthropic and countered by Ester Boserup showing that agrarian techniques were stimulated indeed, and it is the topic of the (dystopic?) world of the TV series *Sliders*, in the last and 10<sup>th</sup> episode *Luck of the Draw* in the first season.

### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*"The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race".*

T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*

- Transhumanism, whose symbol is a circled "h+", is a philosophical movement whose proponents advocate enhancing mankind with technology. The perspective of people becoming machines, hence a gradual lack of empathy or humanity, is depicted in Philip K. Dick's 1966 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, set on screen by Ridley Scott in the franchise named *Blade Runner*, where after a nuclear holocaust men of 1992 are feeling lonely on earth, if they did not migrate to off-world colonies, and are desperately seeking real life animals as pets or sinking into the **Mercerism**, for which they connect to "empathy boxes" to suffer a Christ-like martyrdom as "Mercer"'s. Androids can only be distinguished of men by either **bone marrow examination** (the protagonist Rick Deckard may sleep with the android Rachael Rosen) or a "Voight-Kampff's test" inspired of 1950 Turing's test to know if AI could imitate conversation.
- *The Time Machine*, by H. G. Wells (UK), is an 1895 novella. A time traveller stops in A.D. 802,701, where humanity has evolved into two different races: the **Eloi**, that live naked, eat fruits right from the branches but do not know the three R's anymore, and the Morlocks, that live in tunnels and attack the Eloi to feed. One idea is that progress is developed at the expense of culture, because when the time traveller goes into a library and grabs a book, it has turned to dust.
- In the movie *Alien*, 1979, Ridley Scott, the Nostromo spaceship has to land on LV-246 because signs of lives were detected. One member of the crew is then infected by a **Xenomorph** which decimates almost everyone aboard; at one point, one discovers that another member of the crew, **Ash**, is indeed **an android** which was made to study the alien instead of protecting the passengers.

## DISCRIMINATION: WOMEN, RACISM, MINORITIES

### 1. BLACK PEOPLE

- Not only racism takes root in American history, since slavery was abolished by Abraham Lincoln (16<sup>th</sup>) in every State at the end of **Civil War**, started in 1861, in 1865 (XIII<sup>th</sup> amendment), but in religion too. Groups such as Ku Klux Klan (KKK), founded in 1865, which dispends hatred on non-WASP communities, built their philosophies on an interpretation of the curse of Ham, **Genesis 9:25**. *"And he said, cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren"*, then *"Canaan shall be [their: Japheth's, Shem's] servant"*. Canaan, Japheth, Shem respectively will have Black, European and Jewish people as their offspring.
- The **"Civil Rights Movement"** is the designation of 1950-1960 actions to initiate and enforce racial desegregation in the United States. In 1955, Rosa Parks rejects the order to vacate her place in a bus. After that, Martin Luther King launches the **Montgomery bus boycott** that led to the Supreme Court decision that Alabama segregation laws in the buses were unconstitutional. With *de jure* desegregation in 1964, this relatively marks the end of **Jim Crow laws**, which make reference to means employed by Dixie to encroach upon constitutional rights of Afro-Americans.
- The divide between federal desegregation will and *de facto* segregation, like in Arkansas, is symbolised by 1959 **"Nine of Little Rock"** crisis, where 6 Black girls and 3 Black boys, accompanied by local journalist **Daisy Bates**, were prevented by governor Orval Faubus from

entering the Little Rock Central High School they were registered in. President Eisenhower (34<sup>th</sup>) had to send the army to enforce the law.

- The non-violent means of the Civil Rights Movement are contrasted by more active actions embodied by the **Black Panther Party**, which is a Black Power political organisation founded by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton in October 1966 in Oakland, California. It was told to be “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country” by FBI Director John Edgar Hoover, which developed the **COINTELPRO** extensive counterintelligence programme of surveillance, infiltration, perjury, police harassment and many other tactics to undermine Panther leadership, that led to the assassination of **Fred Hampton**. This revolutionary movement of Afro-Americans liberation and of Maoist and Marxist-Leninist ideologies inspiration is known to have raised the 1969 “**Free Breakfast for Children**” programme in order to address food injustice.
- The movement is inspired of **Malcolm X**’ preaches, a Muslim advocate of **Black nationalism** whose thinking was that Black and White union could not work out if the Blacks People’s Union were not complete first, that is why he founded the “Organization of Afro-American Unity” or **OAAU**.
- The expression “Long, hot summer of 1967” refers to the 159 race riots that took place this year. In Detroit, the **12<sup>th</sup> Street Riot** triggered by a police raid in a speakeasy frequented by Black people, lasts 5 days and ended up with 43 people killed. President Johnson (36<sup>th</sup>) declared that Detroit was in state of insurrection and deployed the army according to the *Insurrection Act*.

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*“I have a dream that one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers”.*  
M.L.K. on Aug. 28, 1962, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC.

## 2. WOMEN

- **Femininity** is looked at with a set of fresh eyes in the 8<sup>th</sup> episode of the 1<sup>st</sup> season of the TV series *Sliders*, “The Weaker Sex”, where the characters discover a parallel universe in which women made it to the top in class warfare since the Middle Ages and men are reduced to get menial jobs or to prostitute.
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933 – 2020) was a Justice in Supreme Court since 1993, when Bill Clinton (42<sup>d</sup>) nominated her. She studied in two (Harvard and Columbia) of the eight universities of the

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*“A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle”.*

Gloria Steinem, an American feminist journalist nationally recognised as a spokeswoman of the movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Ivy League, which were a male-dominated curriculum. Known to have participated to gender-related trials, such as **Lily Ledbetter** who

accused Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company of underpayment, or having fought in 1975 so that women can be jury members in courtrooms, she now is a pop icon, as her nickname underscores, “Notorious RBG”, after the rapper Notorious B.I.G.

- In 1928, all women in the United Kingdom were granted **the right to vote**, after the *New Representation Right* gave it to women over 30, after the war. It is partly due to the **suffragettes**, from the *Women’s Social and Political Union*, a movement launched in 1903 by Emeline Pankhurst with her 3 daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela, who went on hunger strikes, started arsons, when women were denied the most basic rights: only 4 countries granted it entirely, New Zealand, Australia, Finland and Norway. Yet a *National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies* existed since 1897 but was too peaceful. In 1913, **Emily Davison** is killed trying to put a scarf

around George V's horse, hence a growing number of people in favour of the movement, such as Winston Churchill who did not prevent the arrestations though.

- In 2018, a referendum in **Ireland** for an **abortion law** overturned a 35-year ban on terminations, which caused 4,5 botched abortions in every 1000 women. In the United States, abortion was legal in several states before the Supreme Court landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade* decriminalised it nationwide in 1973, considering it was under the right to privacy of the IV<sup>th</sup> amendment, "*the right of the people to be secure in their persons [...] shall not be violated*". In the United Kingdom, it is authorised by the Abortion Act of 1967.
- In 2015, Prime Minister **David Cameron** announced that graduate job applications to some of Britain's biggest firms such as HSBC or Deloitte will be anonymous in order to tackle racial bias.

### 3. MINORITIES: NATIVE PEOPLE, AGE GROUPS

- Climbing the social ladder upwards, hence breaking the *glass ceiling*, is the principle of picaresque novels, in which characters from poor social groups become rich and are given a title, often due to women or happenstances; for instance, *Barry Lyndon*, by William Thackeray (UK), 1884, or *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, set on the screen by Stanley Kubrick in 1975. This is very similar to Maupassant's *Bel Ami* or Woody Allen's movie *Match point*, 2005.
- Population history of indigenous people of the Americas starts with the difficult estimation of figures prior to colonization: as low as 10 million, maybe 100 million or more. The establishment of settler-colonial states and migration of millions of Europeans to the Americas after **Colombus' voyage** witness the plummeting of indigenous population due to the introduction of diseases such as influenza, pneumonic plagues and smallpox from what they did not have any immunity known as **XVI<sup>th</sup> century influx of disease in the Caribbean**. On the other hand, from the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1894: "*The Indian wars under the government of the United States have been more than 40 in number [Over the previous 100 years]. They have cost the lives of about 19,000 white men, women and children, including those killed in individual combats, and the lives of about 30,000 Indians. The actual number of killed and wounded Indians must be very much higher than the given... Fifty percent additional would be a safe estimate...*".
- *The Last of the Mohicans*, by James Fenimore Cooper (USA), in 1826, is a historical novel that takes place in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, during the French and Indian War. It has influenced popular opinion about American Indians and contributed to ennoble the image of native tribes.
- **Agism** is bias against the elderly. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde (UK), in 1890, is a philosophical novel that depicts the way the main character has sold his soul in order not to ever grow old and preserve his beauty. Although the picture ages instead of him, he starts to lose compassion for people and indulge in lewdness. Nevertheless, as it is written, "*some things are more precious because they don't last long*".

## GUN VIOLENCE, ARMS & ARMIES

- The **Second Amendment** is part of the first ten amendments of the American constitution, which constitute the Bill of Rights, the most inalienable rights of American citizens that were ratified in 1791. It consists in: "*A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed*". This is about ten years after the unanimous declaration of independence of the thirteen united States of America signed on July 4, 1776 at the beginning of the **American Revolutionary War**.
- The Columbine High School massacre is a school shooting that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado. 12 students and 1 teacher were murdered, with

24 more casualties. The two students who perpetrated the massacre then killed themselves. The expression “**to pull a Columbine**” turned to a byword for “to carry a mass shooting”.

- One of the first school shootings was a suicide bombing by dynamite, the **Bath School disaster** caused by Andrew Kehoe on May 18, 1927, in Bath Township, Michigan, United States. 45 people were killed. In April 2007, the Virginia Tech Shooting occurred on the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, in Blacksburg, Virginia, United States. An undergraduate student of South Korean origin killed 32 people and wounded 17 others with two semi-automatic pistols. After that, US gun culture was criticised by the *American Psychiatric Association* for instance.
- On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen, an Islamic terrorist, killed 49 people during the **Orlando gay nightclub shooting**. It was the deadliest terrorist attack right after September 11 attacks and the second deadliest mass shooting perpetrated by a single man after **Las Vegas shooting**, where 60 people were killed by a 64-year-old man, which especially raised the question of **bump stocks**.

Shooting	Date	Place	Fatalities
Bath School disaster	5/18/1927	Bath Township, Michigan	45
Columbine High School massacre	4/20/1999	Columbine, Colorado	12 students, 1 teacher = 13
Virginia Tech Shooting	4/16/2007	Blacksburg, Virginia	32 killed, 17 wounded
Orlando gay nightclub shooting	6/12/2016	Orlando, Florida	49
Las Vegas shooting	10/1/2017	Las Vegas, California	60

- In 1967, the **Mulford Act** in California was a bill that repealed a law allowing public carrying of loaded firearms and was signed by governor Ronald Reagan. The bill was crafted with the goal of disarming members of the Black Panther Party lawfully conducting armed patrols of Oakland neighbourhoods as a form of **copwatching**.
- The **National Rifle Association (NRA)** is an American non-profit association founded in November 1871 in the state of New York in order to enforce the second amendment of the Bill of Rights and the right to bear arms. With more than 6 million members in 2018, it is since 1968 a major part of political lobby in favour of firearms, and by fact often supports the **Great Old Party**. In 1986, Ronald Reagan, whose election was supported by NRA, permits the inscription in the legislation of the interpretation of the amendment as NRA does, with a law to protect the owners of rifles. It also defends a large spectrum of security programs, such as the *National School Shield* after 2013 **Sandy Hook primary school massacre**, and the famous video “*Eddie Eagle*”, with the catchphrases “Stop! Don’t touch!”.
- The English poet William Blake, within the *Songs of Innocence*, in 1789, and five years later, the *Songs of Experience*, — *Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*, stresses the fundamental ambiguity of human nature, that is consubstantial, multifaceted and devious. For instance, candour cannot be without violence, which is highlighted with the set of two poems *The Lamb* and *The Tyger*: “*Did he [God] who made the Lamb make thee?*”.
- *Full metal jacket*, Stanley Kubrick, 1987. The movie is made of two different parts: in the first one, soldiers are preparing for Vietnam War. One of them, “Gomer Pyle” reveals inept at army, and bullied; the more comfortable he gets, the more insane he becomes, ending by killing his superior and himself.
- *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, is a black and white satirical comedy taking place during the Cold War. USA accidentally pushes the red button of atomic missiles towards USSR, whose president currently is drunk and backfires. At the end, the

world explodes on *We'll Meet Again* music. One might remember: "*Gentlemen, you can't fight in here, this is the war room!*".

- *Paths of Glory*, Stanley Kubrick, 1957. During World War I, a General asks his subordinate to carry a suicidal attack that is not necessary and is only to guarantee him fame. Since the soldiers retreated, three of them are **shot for example** by a firing squad. This anti-war film raises the questions of heroism and patriotism.

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*"What is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence". Mahatma Gandhi, Nonviolent resistance, 1948*

- **9/11** is a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Wahhabi terrorist group Al-Qaeda, which carried the suicide of 19 hijackers and left **2,977 fatalities**, 25,000 injuries and at least 10\$ billion in infrastructure damage. It is the deadliest terrorist attack in human history. American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 destroyed the North and South tower of the World Trade Center complex which collapsed within two hours; another crashed into the Pentagon and another into a field after passengers thwarted the hijackers. George W. Bush then launched **War on Terror** (16 September 2001) against fundamentalism, invading Afghanistan to depose the Taliban. He said, in a speech to Congress: "*Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them*".
- Al-Qaeda extremist group rose in the 1980s when the United States gave weapons to mujahedeen during the Afghanistan war (1979 – 1989). Besides, the Iraq war (2003 – 2011) toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein which gave the power to guerrilla leaders, in this case, Al-Qaeda. On 14 December 2008, **Muntadar al-Zaidi** threw his shoes at George W. Bush (43<sup>d</sup>) during a Baghdad press conference, shouting "*This is a farewell kiss from the Iraqi people, you dog*".

## ADDICTION TO DANGEROUS PRODUCTS OR BEHAVIOURS

- In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (UK), published in 1719, the hero, at the beginning of the story, starts indulging in **mud baths**: there he begins to forget his essence of humanity while he turns hooked on unwinding with pigs in the mud all day long, losing all sense of time. He only returns to the human state when he realises to what depravity he has sunk.
- **Classical conditioning** refers to a learning procedure in which a biologically potent stimulus is paired with a neutral stimulus. It is 1897 then 1903 **Ivan Pavlov's** theory (portrayed in Huxley's novel), who conducted experiments with dogs, the basis of **behaviourism**, according to what behaviours are conditioned by passed scolding or reflexes, and theorising **operant conditioning** techniques: if one is battering you while you are eating strawberries, repeatedly during several weeks, you will end hating strawberries because they will be associated to suffering.

### 1. ALCOHOL

- *The Shining*, 1977, Stephen King (USA), is a horror novel which centres on the life of Jack Torrance, a writer and **recovering alcoholic**. The fuel of the novel is to put the reality of horror and murder components under the uncertainty of the inebriation of the main character.
- **Prohibition** is the period from 1920 to 1933 in the United States, when a XVIII<sup>th</sup> amendment prohibited distilling, selling, importing and exporting alcohol. It was meant to fight alcoholism and eradicate drunkardness out of the streets, and initiated by religious movements. The major backlash is the powerful upswing of mobs which developed speakeasies and liquor trade, e.g. the godfather Al Capone of the Outfit of Chicago.

### 2. DRUGS

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*"The first law of dietetics seems to be: if it tastes good, it's bad for you". Isaac Asimov*

- In *Brave New World* (whose title is ironic — it is from Shakespeare's *Tempest*), people are legally addicted to a drug called "**Soma**", that makes them euphoric as wanted. The main character, Bernard Marx, seeks happiness through other ways.
- *Requiem for a dream*, Darren Aronofsky (USA), 2000. This movie has become an object of psychological studies. It depicts the fall of four heroin/meth users living in the fool's paradise of drugs. They end a prostitute, and in prison with an arm cut because of an infection shots caused.

### 3. UNSAFE SEX, SEXUAL OFFENDS

- *A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick, 1971, starring Malcolm McDowell, is an adaptation of Anthony Burgess' titled novel. In a near future, the main character, Alex DeLarge, is addicted to **ultra-violence** and gang rape. He is arrested by the police, then the governments and scientists use him to carry psychological conditioning experiments the movie points out. At the end, as he declares that "[he] was cured", he still pictures violent scenes of exhibitionist rape.
- Wim Wenders' 1987 *Wings of Desire* (translated from the German "*Der Himmel über Berlin*"), starring Peter Falk in a complex mise en abyme, is a philosophical allegorical tale in which angels Cassiel and Damiel (Bruno Ganz) look upon a black and white Berlin strewn with Peter Handke's poems. Damiel falls in love with a trapezist and longs for being a desiring human while the movie finds its colours back in a soteriological meaning.

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*"The books that the word calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame."* Oscar Wilde

### 4. FOOD ABUSE

- In the developed world, eating disorders affects about 1.6% of women and 0.8% men a year. In the United States, 30 million people have an eating disorder at least one time in their lifetime. For instance, bulimia affects females 9 times more often than males. Approximately 3% percent women develop it in their lifetime. Currently, about 3% of women are currently affected in the United States. New cases occur in about 12 per 100,000 population per year. Aside from anorexia and binge eating disorder, one might remark EDNOS, which stands for "eating disorder not otherwise specified", such as anorexia nervosa, purging disorder or night eating syndrome. Prevalence of EDNOSs seems to be 11.5%. Such disorders have consequences in economics: it is estimated that annual healthcare costs are \$1,869 greater among individuals with eating disorders.
- 1/3 of American children and 2/3 of grownups are overweight. In the American documentary *Super Size Me*, by Morgan Spurlock, in 2004, the director carries an experiment in which he imposes to himself to eat only McDonald's' food for one full month with "supersize" formats under the supervision of 4 physicians. He puts on 24.5 pounds, damages his heart and liver and needs 14 months to recover entirely.

### 5. CONSUMERISM

- Gad Sad, in *The Evolutionary Bases of Consumption*, uses the neologism *Homo consumericus*, because the phenomenon of mass consumption can be drawn a parallel with Darwinian principles. Indeed, the widespread English idiom "**keeping up with the Joneses**", which comes from a 1913 comic strip by Arthur R. "Pop" Momand, where McGinis family climbs society trying to "keep up" with their (unseen) neighbours, the Joneses, refers to social comparison to peers and the accumulation of material goods in order to fit in a social class, i. e. "conspicuous consumption".

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*"We are stripped bare by the curse of plenty".* Winston Churchill

Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 novel *Fight Club*, adapted by David Fincher in 1999, is about an insomniac who co-founds the club with Tyler Durden to evacuate his malaise, due to the doldrums of everyday life he is in, being the perfect consumer, possessing fancy clothes and furniture.

- Likewise, Bret Easton Ellis (USA) 1991 novel *American Psycho* describes the life of the serial killer **Patrick Bateman**, 27, a 1987 Wall Street investment banker and model of the prime **yuppie**, which stands for *Young Urban Professional*,

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*“True happiness flows from the possession of wisdom and virtue and not of external goods”.* Aristotle

- obsessed with perfection and possession, amoral and extremely materialist. The crux of the novel is that one does not understand at the end if the murders are only part of his madness or real.
- Overconsumption within societies does not only impact on the consumer, but also on the blue-collar workers. Charlie Chaplin in his 1936 American silent film *Modern Times* plays the Little Tramp who struggles to survive in the industrialised world during the **Great Depression** after the Wall Street crash on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 1929. The movie is a satire of the ubiquity of assembly lines in mechanical companies that follows F. W. Taylor's theories (**Taylorism**, scientific management) on standardization of best practices, specification and automation, applied in Henry Ford's factories (Fordism).
- Andy Warhol's 1962 *Campbell's Soup Cans* which represents 32 lined up cans proposes an **aesthetic** vision of consumer society, with a shockingly mercantilist graphic piece of pop art.

### CCTV, RESTRICTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

- CCTV (which stands for **closed-circuit television**) refers to the system of video surveillance. In the United Kingdom, it was developed in response to terrorist attacks of the IRA (Irish Republican Army), such as the bombing in 1979 that killed Lord Mountbatten, Prince Philip's uncle. In 2006, United Kingdom hosted 4,2 million cameras and at least 62,000 in London, which made the average Londoner filmed 300 times a day. It is 70 times a day in the Cheshire.
- *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury (USA), 1951, set on screen by François Truffaut. This dystopian social science-fiction novel deals with an anticipated society where books are hunt down and burnt through public **auto-da-fes** for the benefit of global television. A fireman (whose job is to burn books) named Guy Montag keeps books at home and instigates a revolt, notably against the giant salamander that destroys the homes being books shelters.
- The **V<sup>th</sup> amendment** of the United States is manifold: it gathers guarantees inherited of *common law* juridical culture. The two most important facts are that the Constitution prevents any citizen from being forced to testimony against himself, that is “self-incrimination”, and on the other hand, from being judged two times for the same charge, that is “double jeopardy”.
- The social psychology 1963 **Milgram's experiment**, conducted by Yale University (USA) psychologist Stanley Milgram measured the willingness of participants to obey an authority figure while conflicting with their personal conscience (in parallel of **Eichmann's trial**). In the first set of experiments, 65% (26 of 40) of people from a diverse range of occupations and with varying levels of education administered the experiment's final massive 450-volt shock and all administered shocks of at least 300 volts, nonetheless every participant paused the experiment at least once to question it.
- *1984*, by George Orwell (UK) in 1948, depicts the world this future year. It is split into three totalitarian superstates, like Oceania, in perpetual war. It is ruled by Big Brother, a leader enjoying a cult of personality (cf. Two Minutes Hate) whose existence is thinly plausible and performing historical negationism. People are tracked down by the Thought Police which uses the widespread **telescreens**. Their particularity is to be two-way cameras that show political propaganda, whose noise cannot be cancelled and could always record the one

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*“The ideal totalitarian regime is one in which everyone consents”.* George Orwell



listening to it. Goldstein's manifesto (which nonetheless reveals to be fake) draws the Orwell's criticism of authoritarianism.

- *Animal farm: A Fair Story* is Orwell's 1945 apologue where farm animals embody Communist Party's members. Depicting the history of USSR, the initial motto "*All animals are equal*" turns to "*Animals are all equal, but some animals are more equal than others*". At the end, pigs and men (that is communism and capitalism) are no longer distinguishable, which symbolises Soviet bureaucracy.
- **Witch hunting** in the United States first refers to Salem in the 1660s when girls or servants were accused of witchcraft in the Puritan society, since they were made scapegoats as an outlet of social tensions. The myth was perpetuated until the XX<sup>th</sup> century when the Cold War started, and the senator **McCarthy** denounced with a list of 205 names of the governments and former members of the Communist Party, which was called "**the Red Scare**", and continued by JFK, his brother and J. E. Hoover. It was pointed out in Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible* which took place in Salem, and in which the Reverend Parris actually needs to name a guilt if he wants the village smoother. The **HUAC** (House Un-American Activities Committee) was a special police department to spot "betrayals of America".
- The **Indian caste system** gives an example of a form of discrimination perennially enshrined in the mores. **Dalits** are there considered as "untouchables", very exposed to violence, because they belong to the lowest religious caste (or "varna"), and are basically reduced to degrading jobs: butchers, fishermen, hunters, midwives, cemetery caretakers. In 2011, there were 201,4 million Dalits in India, that is 16,6 % of the national population. They often live under the poverty line, as they are denied access to water for instance. Nevertheless, since Gandhi called them "Harijans", *sons of God*, and the 1950 Constitution illegalised untouchability practice, they slowly entered society, thanks to quotas. In 2002, **Kocheril Raman Narayanan** became the first dalit president of India, such as the current, Ram Nath Kovind, elected with 65 % of the vote. Similar phenomena are witnessed in Japan with the **Burakumin** or the former **Cagots** in the Basque Country, related to the fear of leper and associated to given professions.

## NATURE, PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE

- People's awareness of climate change and environmentalism in general is witnessed with the British nature documentary series made for Netflix, *Our planet*. 25 million households watched the series during its first month of release.
- THE WORD WORKING WELL**  
"*What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?*" Henry David Thoreau, 1865
- The covid-19 pause revealed a staggering reality about pollution: with the pandemic, even if all means of transports were reduced at their lowest, global industrial greenhouse-gas emissions were only 8% lower than they were in 2019, and the world still has more than 90% decarbonisation left to do to get on track for the Paris agreement's most ambitious goal.
  - The **tragedy of the commons** describes a situation in economic science when "individual users, who have open access to a resource unhampered by shared social structures or formal rules that govern access and use, act independently according to their own self-interest and, contrary to the common good of all users, cause depletion of the resource through their uncoordinated action". It appeared in a William Forster Lloyd 1833 essay and makes reference to atmosphere, lands, rivers, ocean fish stocks with, say, overfishing. It is the justification of **sustainable development** theories and can only be coped with by either nationalisation, privatisation, or the gestion by local actors.

- **Shale gas** is natural gas which is found trapped within shale formations. In 2000 it provided only 1% of United States natural gas production but increased to 20% until 2010, and is predicted to be at 46% in 2035. China is estimated to have the largest reserves. Obama administration believed that this increase helped reducing greenhouse gases emission; indeed, American carbon dioxide emissions dropped to a 20-year low in 2012. Yet, environmental issues posed by fracking, pollution of aquifers or an expansion of earthquake hazard led some countries like France to declare a moratorium on research and production of shale gas.
- *Silent Spring* is an environmentalist science book by Rachel Carson published in 1962, documenting the adverse environmental effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides. Chemical industry was accused of spreading disinformation and public officials of accepting the industry's marketing claims unquestioningly. It spurred a reversal in the American policy, led to a nationwide ban on DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) for agricultural uses and inspired an environmental movement that led to the creation of the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* in 1970, an independent executive agency proposed in 1970 by President Nixon. Indeed, it is predicted that in the **Midwest**, in 2050, soja will take precedence over corn and only 1 region over 11 will continue to cultivate corn and maize.
- The **Clean Water Act** is an American federal law dealing with water contamination, adopted in 1972 by the Congress in spite of Richard Nixon's veto, in order to contain gastrointestinal disorders, reproductive problems or neurological illness. Each goal was meant to be completed until 1990, such as: "to make all U.S. waters fishable and swimmable" or "to prohibit discharge of toxic amount of toxic pollutants". For instance, the alluvial plain of the **Mississippi** is stricken by pesticides flood, even though **USGS**<sup>1</sup> considers that emitting waste water from agricultural activity upstream of Saint Louis was reduced since 1972 — they grow downstream of the Missouri confluence, draining grain production of **Grassland**.
- Developments of city and countryside goes in opposite directions. Cities sometimes are engaged in exponential growth, such as Beijing, the capital city of China, with 24,900,000 inhabitants in 2019, which covers 16,800 km<sup>2</sup> and counts **six ring roads**, knowing that a seventh is currently being built, and is to measure 1,000 km in circumference.
- The **fight for the Larzac** refers to a non-violent civil disobedience action by farmers resisting the extension of an existing base on the Larzac plateau in South Western France. The action lasted from 1971 to 1981, was initially against a project of Michel Debré, Minister of Defence in the Georges Pompidou administration, who would extend the base to 53 square miles, which meant that land would be expropriated to **103 landowners**, hence the oath, and ended when President François Mitterrand was elected. Heterogenous activism joined the protestation, numbering up to 100,000. This action was the core of what then became **Anti-Globalism** movement and served to bring to public attention leaders such as Lanza del Vasto and José Bové.
- The *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)*, whose mascot is a giant panda, is a non-governmental organization founded in April 29, 1961, by Aldous Huxley's brother and first director of UNESCO. One counts 6,203 members and around 16,000 volunteers acting for protection of nature and lasting development. Pavan Sukhdev, an economist, is its president since 2017. Areas of focus are fourfold: scientific studies in order to make propositions; restauration of ailing of shrinking wildlife sanctuaries; enforcement of national and international regulations; raising awareness vis-à-vis the environment.
- The **RSPCA** (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) founded in 1824 in the United Kingdom and the **ASPCA** (American Society for...) founded in 1866 in the United States

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<sup>1</sup> *United States Geological Survey.*

are both charities operating to promote animal welfare. The RSPCA is the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world. It owns 4 animal hospitals in Birmingham, Greater Manchester, Putney and another in North London. There are 17 RSPCA animal centres too. The ASPCA's mission is to provide "a humane care for animals".

- Living conditions in zoos. After the movie *Free Willy* (Simon Wincer) was released in 1993, which starred the captured Icelandic orca Keiko (1976 – 2003), an association was founded in favour of its liberation taking into account the living standard of captivity and diseases it has been exposed to. It was therefore the first orca to be freed to wildlife after it lived in a dolphinarium.
- Both hunting and poaching are often criticised. For instance, aboriginal whaling, with the **grindadráp** which is a dolphin drive hunting tradition practised in the Faroe Islands since approximately the 9<sup>th</sup> century and kills about 1,000 cetaceans every year. Animal rights groups consider the slaughter as "cruel" and "unnecessary", because most of the meat of the hunt cannot be eaten. On the contrary, the **Sea Shepherd Conservation Society** is an NGO founded in 1977 in order to protect undersea ecosystems. It also fights whale hunt for cosmetics and the Taiji dolphin drive hunt, where 22,000 cetaceans are annually killed, and was drawn attention to by the 2009 movie *The Cove*.

## HEALTH

- In 1948, Clement Attlee's Labour Party founds the **National Health Service** in the United Kingdom which was described by chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson as "state religion". Nevertheless, the system of health protection is weaker in the United States, and even for the insured, costs still are the highest rated cause of personal bankruptcies. In 2010, President Barack Obama (44<sup>th</sup>) *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, nicknamed Obamacare, aimed at avoiding 45,000 deaths per year due to inadequate health insurances.
- More than 7,000 papers on the pandemic had appeared in the three months before May in 2020, which is astonishingly fast. However, it was turbocharged by a lack of peer review that was fuelled by **pre-print servers**, where studies were nakedly published on the Internet stimulating misunderstanding and conspiracy theories. The two biggest for covid-19 are *bioRxiv* for general biological sciences and *medRxiv* focused on medicine, with 2,853 articles about SARS-CoV-2 at the time. Furthermore, on March 9<sup>th</sup>, the *South China Morning Post*, a newspaper of Hong Kong, published an article about research of *Practical Preventive Medicine*, reading "coronavirus can travel twice as far as official safe distance". It was shared more than 53,000 times on social media albeit the study was retracted one day after its publication.
- Epidemics could appear in both health and food scare. From 1986 to 2000, the United Kingdom was stricken by the **mad cow disease** killing more than 190,000 farming animals and the subsequent embargo over its meat. It was due to the use of animal bonemeal that was infected by contaminated corpses, which raised people awareness about such feeding. Moreover, scientists discovered in 1996 the possibility for the disease to be transmitted to humans. It engendered an agricultural crisis too, since farmers' livestock were systematically slaughtered, as only prophylactic measures could be taken.
- Junk food and **malnutrition** are now rampant. In the French movie *The Wing or the Thigh*, 1976, directed by Claude Zidi, starring Louis de Funès, a food industrial named Tricatel in reference to **Jacques Borel**, who developed the first "restoroutes" from 1968, spreads among the traditional restaurants the national guide removes stars of. The examiner of the guide is taken hostage by an angry chef, force-feeding him, saying: "Now I'm only the manager and I serve

### THE WORD WORKING WELL

"An apple a day, keeps the doctor away."

*crap all day long*” – “*But in Au relais des cigales it was crap already!*” – “*Yes it was, unless it was me who did it.*”

- *Sexual transmissible diseases* (STDs) often are burdened with **stigma**: first cases of AIDS in the late 1970s were attributed to gayness since it only affected homosexuals at the beginning. Until 1982, and since the first cases in San Francisco, it was called *gay cancer* or GRID which stands for *gay-related immune deficiency*. In April 1987, Princess Diana publicly held the hand of a HIV patient without gloves at London Middlesex Hospital when misinformation conveyed that the virus could transmit through touch. *Philadelphia*, by Jonathan Demme (USA), in 1993, stars Tom Hanks, playing a seropositive lawyer who is made redundant supposedly for being gay.
- The *Don't ask, don't tell* policy was an official American policy in order to relax the ban of gay or bisexual people from joining the army. Initially introduced by President Bill Clinton (42<sup>d</sup>), its application lasted from 1993 to 2011 — it consists in for gay people who have joined the army not telling their superiors about their sexuality neither for them asking anything about it. It is believed that 14,000 soldiers were forced to leave the army because of these halftone policies.
- The **Stonewall riots** that occurred on 28 June 1969 in New York in the Village were a series of violent and spontaneous demonstrations by gay community members, facing an anti-gay legal system, against police raids, considered as the rise of LGBT militancy at the end of the **counterculture of the 1960s** when police used to storm into bars in addition to the fact that very few welcomed gay people. A year after, the first **pride parades** took place in LA and New York to commemorate the riots.
- The **murder of Dee Dee Blanchard** brought into the daylight the psychological condition of *fictitious disorder imposed on another* or **Munchausen syndrome by proxy**. She was a Missouri mother who was murdered by her daughter and a boyfriend in 2015 after having claimed for years that this very daughter, Gypsy Rose, was sick and disabled, to the point of shaving her head, making her use a wheelchair in public and subjecting her to unnecessary medication or surgery, although Gypsy possessed no outstanding illnesses. A comparable comportment happened to the parents of the rapper Eminem.

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

*“When did you ever see a fag fight back?  
Now, times were a-changin’!”*. Anonymous rioter

## INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, ECONOMICS, SOCIETY

- The **English Civil War** begins in 1642 and ends in 1651 with the Battle of Worcester under the reign of Charles the First who is beheaded in 1649 in Whitehall next to Westminster, his son being exiled. It is mostly about political machinations between Parliamentarians (“Roundheads”) and Royalists (“Cavaliers”) over governance and religious freedom. The monarchy is abolished and a republic, the Commonwealth of England, is established with **Oliver Cromwell** as a head of state.
- The **Commonwealth of Nations** is a vast organization of 53 countries all around the world, trading in various fields (economy, politics, English language), spanning all continents with nearly 1/3 of global population. Born in the late 1940s, after India and Pakistan gained their independence, most of the countries within are **former colonies** (except for Mozambique and Rwanda), and USA and Ireland are the only one that did not enter it; they all show allegiance to the British Crown. Diversity is in the spotlight: Australia/Canada (weather), Singapore/Sierra Leone (richness), or Nauru, an island stretching on 8 square miles. Economically, India by itself represents 20% of global trade. Politically, half of the countries are republics. Summits fight against poverty, diseases, ignorance and prejudice. There is a common flag, a shining earth, and the inhabitants of each country are free to move from one to another; the second Monday of

March is the **Day of Commonwealth**, with a TV message of the Queen, and every 4 years, the “Friendly Games” are held, in which every country has a mascot. It often is an endangered species.

- On the other hand, the **European migratory crisis** since 2010, witnessed an increase of Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea seeking political asylum. Syrian civil war engendered a peak in 2015 with more than a million people landing in the Schengen area, before it plummeted to 122,000 in 2018. The path of migrants is quite dangerous, with at least 17,000 people who have died in the Mediterranean waters and 6,000 on the African roads. Albeit Angela Merkel and François Hollande support the **European Commission** to impose quotas of acceptance of migrants, Eastern Europe countries jib: Viktor Orban, in Hungary, considers the flux of Muslims as a danger to Christian identity.
- Many a country is filled with **multiculturalism**, and an **ethnic mix**. Two million Canadians are from Native peoples, then it was colonised by both British and French, that is why it is today a bilingual country. This diversity may become a source of conflicts the capital City Ottawa wants to fight against, for example by dividing the province of **Quebec** to give an exclusive new territory to the Aborigines. In 1977, French became the only official language in Quebec, after Ottawa decided to provide every official act in both tongues.
- On the other hand, English was assimilated by force during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century at the expense of mother-tongues to set Christianity, which is comparable to the phenomenon of **Stolen Generations** in Australia which lasted from 1869 to 1969, where Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their families by church missions and the federal state, as “half-caste” citizens. An official apology was presented on 13 February 2008 by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Now the indigenous vernaculars are wanted to be restored, it reveals to become extinct.
- From 1948 to its abolition in 1991, South Africa was ruled by a politics called **apartheid**, due the Afrikaans word for separation, which consisted in the legalization of an empiric segregation where social status depended directly on the race, Black people were banned from elections and marrying White people. During global decolonisation in the 1960s, international sanctions sprung, especially after the **Soweto uprising** (in the ghetto of Johannesburg) on 16 June 1976 where about 700 demonstrators were killed by a violent repression. In 1993, Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk were granted the Nobel prize for having fought this 43-year-long *de jure* segregation.
- The *New Deal* is the series of financial programs initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (32<sup>d</sup>) between 1933 and 1939 in order to cope with the consequences of the Great Depression. Three R's were sought: Relief for the unemployed, Recovery, Reform of the financial system. The first program for short-term action was named “FDR's Hundred Days”. The second one, for long-term action, witnessed the emergence of the first welfare structures in America, which also introduced interventionist economic policies based on **Keynesianism**. (Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace* begins with a critical portrayal of a Malthusian society.) For instance, the *Social Security Act* guaranteed insurance against unemployment and old-age pensions.
- *Atlas shrugged*, Ayn Rand (USA), 1957. — Considered as the second most influencing book in America after the Bible, this novel describes Rand's philosophy called **objectivism**. In politics, it implies libertarianism, a kind of lefty capitalism, composed with economic laissez-faire and anticommunism. The main idea, that is developed in the 90-page soliloquy of “John Galt” on the radio, a character whose condition is opposed to the altruist and egalitarianist bureaucracy of the society described in the book, is that business leaders carry the world over their shoulders (hence Atlas) and it would perish if they went on “a strike”: “*I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine*”.

- In 1976, through the article called *Alternatives to Monetary Disorder*, the post-Keynesian Austrian economist **Fred Hirsch**, theorised his ideology in which people are bound to seek for possession for the sake of having what other people do not possess, according to the “*neener-neener principle*” (« na-na-nère » in French). He also is especially known for his social criticism of economic growth, with the image of the **concert hall**: the small ones stand on tip-toe so as to see the stage, then the ones behind do the same in order to compensate, so that the entire hall is slaving away with no better view of the stage for anyone.
- The America TV series *The Office* is a sitcom aired from 2005 to 2013, based on the British series by Ricky Gervais with the same title. The show takes place in an American paper **phone sales company** called “Dunder Mifflin”, which is ran by an indelicate and distracted manager embodied by Steve Carrell; over the 9 seasons, whereas the company goes through 2008 market crisis and is taken over several times, the Scranton branch remains ironically both the most successful and the most messily and lazily managed one. The TV series was declined with another one, *Parks and Recreation*, which takes place in an office of the government.
- *The Sound of Silence* by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, written over several months in 1963 and 1964 after John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, is a folk-rock song about the **lack of communication** between people. It also deals with consumerism inasmuch as people idolise more and more big areas, depicting an obsessive image of halos of lights everywhere in cities.

#### THE WORD WORKING WELL

“People talking without speaking; people hearing without listening.” (lyrics)