Facharbeit im Fach Englisch

"1984" - dystopian fiction or vision of the future?

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Table of content

1. Abridged version of the work (summary)

In this work the focus lies on the question whether George Orwell's "1984" is just dystopian fiction or whether it can be seen as a vision of our future. It starts with a short introduction into dystopian literature in general as well as Orwell's biography, giving context to his inspiration for the novel. As next connecting its theses to today's world. Here, main reasons for a dystopia how Orwell imagined it, are explained. The main part focuses on how Orwell's ideas can be transferred to today, into our modern society. A special focus was propaganda, social media, algorithms and the use of private data, especially in connection with today's politics. Portrayed are these points on the example of USA and Germany, leaving out eastern countries and their politics due to the limited extend of the work. Additionally, the results of a survey will be presented, which is set up to evaluate how people of different age groups are aware about data protection issues and current political situation in the two countries.

2. Introduction

2.1 What is dystopian literature?

The interesting part of dystopian literature is that often parallels can be found to the world we are living in today. No matter if it concerns different social arrangements, politics or technological progress.

Dystopian fiction is a concept, that shows the future, pointing out its negative aspects in fictional narratives. It elaborates the darkest facets of the human mind, technological progress or depicts the "dystopian" result of a society's arranging. Dystopian literature often criticizes political topics like a totalitarian state and shows its consequences very clearly mostly throughout a protagonist, who lives through an apocalyptic scenario. This way the reader experiences the dystopian world directly. The protagonists of a dystopia usually must suffer in their world. Often, they believe or sense that something is wrong. For example, "Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins. It depicts the young girl Katniss Everdeen who rises against the cruel capitol in Panem. Her story is set in a postapocalyptic world and represents a typical dystopian novel. In the novel "1984", Winston Smith, the protagonist must survive under the totalitarian regime of Oceania.

2.2 Orwell 's biography

Eric Arthur Blair, better known under his pseudonym "George Orwell"[1] was born on 25th June in 1903 in Motihari, Bihar, India, which was a British colony at that time. He went to several schools in Sussex. Later he attended the St. Cyprian's School, as well as the Eton College in 1917. Then, he worked as an officer of the British colonial police in Burma from 1921 to 1927. During the 1930s he lived in Paris and London, later he fought in the Spanish Civil war on the Republican side. An event that also influenced his book "Homage to Catalonia" (1938). After that, he worked for the BBC as a journalist and wrote mainly political essays. Two years before he died in 1950 due to tuberculosis, he wrote "1984"

2.3 Historical context of "1984"

When "1984" was published in 1948, World War 2 had only ended a few years prior. Surely Orwell experienced a lot of it, since he was in London at that time. Due to his own experiences in the Spanish Civil war, he had already realised that a fascist government can be very dangerous and that an authoritarian regime shouldn't be the form of government people live under. Looking at Germany in the 1930's, Hitlers rise to power, affected the plot of the novel significantly. The consequences of the Nazi's in Germany were huge and Orwell probably realised the influence, that propaganda and especially media in that field has. All these aspects can be found in his book "1984". Especially the parallels to the media influence, through mainly election posters at that time or even the principle of a glorified leader (Hitler in Germany and Big Brother in "1984"). Also, the concept of controlling the people and influencing their opinion, like maintained by the "Ministry of truth" in "1984" appears very similar to the "Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda" of Joseph Goebbels in Germany, before and during WW2.

3. Main part

3.1 Orwell's main theses that make up a dystopian future in "1984"

Orwell's novel presents many concepts that make a dystopian world. The first thesis that comes to mind, reading the novel, is that the people are under a total surveillance. There is no time a day that they aren't watched by a telescreen or that a microphone listens to any conversation. Due to the so called "Thought police" the people aren't even safe in their sleep. If they dream negatively about the party while sleeping, they can get arrested for that. Orwell describes it as "Nothing was

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[1] Wikipedia (vita of George Orwell)

your own, except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull".[2] The next aspect that characterises Orwell's dystopian world of "1984" is manipulation. The main goal is to make the population docile which also comes along with surveillance. The easiest way is lying to the people and forcing them to believe, that what they are being "fed" is real. As an example, the three superstates can be mentioned, Oceania, where the novel takes place, Eastasia and Eurasia. The truth is that the alliances keep shifting, but the government claims that "We've always been at war with (current enemy)"[3]. This confuses the people and forces them to remain as a "unity" that is steered by fear. The "two minutes hate" is basically the same concept: it's a daily ritual, where the citizens of Oceania gather to watch a propaganda film about Emmanuel Goldstein. While watching the supposedly biggest enemy of the party usually a real hysteria breaks out. People scream or cry or just sit afraid in front of the telescreen. The complete chaos of emotion sometimes overtakes Winston too, but he doesn't really know why this happens. He feels like he's "loathing off" the hate he has towards the party or Big Brother.[4]

This totalitarian regime suppresses the citizens of Oceania and makes it impossible to escape or rise against the party. Even Winston, who knows that he is being manipulated, has no choice but to surrender in the end.

3.2 Transmission on today's world

3.2.1 Politics

Transferring the elements of "1984" on today's world is partially difficult, because many things have changed, especially in a world where technology made extreme fast progress. Even if some things didn't come the way Orwell has predicted, there are parallels that can be drawn onto today's society and global political systems. The following points will elaborate on how the party in "1984" and certain governments of today act in ways that fit Orwell's dystopic vision.

3.2.2 Propaganda

"WAR IS FREEDOM, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGHT"

This slogan is used by the party in the novel to justify their actions and treatment towards the citizens. The main goal is to create an unaware society in which the people follow the government without questioning it. Winston's job for example is to rewrite existing articles and book snippets, so they fit to the current statements of the party. Winston is supposed to constantly twist the truth and adjust the history into fitting lies. [5]

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[2] chapter two "1984"
[3] chapter three "1984"
[4] chapter one "1984"
[5] chapter five "1984"

Today media is one of the easiest ways to spread propaganda. For example, Fox-News in the USA - this media outlet supports the Republican Party and is openly against the Democrats. If people decide to watch Fox-News they will receive extreme right-wing content. Platforms that have millions of users like X (former twitter) turned into propaganda "hot spots". If a user can't distinguish and critically evaluate the content that appears on such platforms, the fake news can easily spread around the globe. Here it becomes important to mention Orwell's novel and particularly the slogan; "Ignorance is strength". The more unaware or maybe uneducated people are available, the easier it gets for the propaganda to put down roots. The citizen's ignorance is strength for the government. A usually common tool of today, the fact checks, don't exist anymore since twitter was bought by Elon Musk and became X. Now posts, whether true or not, can be spread without being validated.

3.2.3 Scapegoating

Blaming certain social groups for problems and grievances has been happening since humans live together in a society. In "1984" Emmanuel Goldstein is the biggest enemy of the party. The "daily hate" evolves around him and shows how in politics the people are often being "raised" to believe, that the "others" are the cause for all the problems.

Today, especially in politics, scapegoating is a big issue. Right now, in the US since Trump became president on the 20th of January, many immigrants already had to leave the county. Trump calls immigrants without a permission to stay in the US "illegal aliens"[6]. Whenever he gets the chance, he sharply criticises these people, saying that they steal jobs or that immigrants are responsible for more crimes. For the republicans this sounds true and often Trumps statements aren't questioned. Due to this "unconditional" believing, a real hate against immigrants has spread. Nevertheless, the US isn't the only country with such intolerance towards people with a migration background. Germany also currently works on "Abschiebungen" which means forcing foreign nationals to leave the country. Especially by the very strong party, the AFD (Alternative für Deutschland), which is extreme right, propaganda and lies have been shared. Unfortunately, many people believed these lies. Due to the fear the party created, they think these statements were true. If a problem occurs, immigrants are blamed and sadly, too few people question this system and tend to go with the majority. The populistic statements are often seen as the true ones. Going against the majority is not a usual behaviour for humans, therefore the hate some people receive for questioning those statements is extreme and results in fear.

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[6] newsweek.com

3.2.4 Creating fear

In "1984" the people are being controlled by fear. It's probably the most effective tool that the government has, to control the society. A fitting example might be the thought police, which has ultimate surveillance over the people and scares many of them. The slogan "Don't even think" is often used in the novel. This sounds really abstract at first, but it reflects the actual situation well, because the people can't even sleep normally. Dreaming negatively about the party is punishable and people get arrested or hanged. The common fear towards the current enemy is another example. This fear helps the government to suppress the society.

On media platforms, in politics, for example during pandemics or in questions of migration, fear is used to maintain influence and to constantly feed the anxiety of the people. Again, the system of uniting people with fear is being used.

A huge problem that finds use in politics a lot is that fear is used to justify laws. By saying and blaming issues on things the people are afraid of or worried about, like higher taxes or inflation, their fear is used as an argument for or against a decision. Unfortunately, this works well because in times of mismanagement and chaos, everyone is happy to be part of a simple solution that promises the best outcome. In "1984" fear is the main tool to keep the population "in line". They are forced to believe that the government wants the best for them. However, often there is no perfect solution for a problem, especially not in politics.

3.2.5 Social media

Even if social media as such is not present in "1984", it needs its own part, because in my eyes it changed the face of political campaigns completely and revolutionised the modern world. Every politician, or even any person, who wants to be recognised on a global level, needs social media. According to statistics of 2024,[7] the worldwide number of social media users amounts to 5.2 billion. Estimations are certain, that the number even goes up to 5.5 billion. This equals 64% of the global population. With that number social media is no longer a trend, but a solid part of the modern living standards. Nevertheless, there are enough dangers too, the internet is no place where everyone can just "play around". Careless behaviour leads to fake information, mass panic and unnecessary chaos. Social media is a great way to connect, to keep in touch, to get updated on the latest news or to spread information for yourself. But the problem our society faces today is, that compared to the 5.2 billion social media users, not all people are educated and mature enough to use these platforms responsibly, to question what they see critically, and to detect fake content. And it all starts in our schools: From generation to generation the use of social media grows and the children as well as their parents get comfortable and very confident with the use of new

[7] statista.de

technologies. This can be great but also very dangerous at the same time, because leaving personal data, your passwords and more private information is treated too lightly. Therefore, we need better education about topics like this in school, maybe even an own subject. Children should know, how to recognise fakes and fraud on the internet and on social media. "What happens to your data? Why do people try to trick you? How is social media used in politics? How should I behave, if I get hacked?" - These are only a few examples of questions every student should be able to answer to protect them from the possibilities and dangers media platforms or the Internet bare. If people understood, what's going on, they would know how to interpret what they consume. This could prevent from unjustified fear against migrants, or blunt faith in the government. Unlike in "1984" where the lack of knowledge made most of the people simply believe what the government wants them to believe.

3.2.6 Algorithms

An algorithm is a specialised process, that aims to solve tasks as easy and fast as possible. These days, mostly by computer programs. For example, programs which try to attract user's attention. Social media platforms like TikTok are known for their extremely fast learning and consistent algorithm. The "Foryou" page on TikTok works under such an algorithm. By liking, sharing or commenting one video to a certain topic, for example from a beauty influencer, there is a high chance that several videos like that will follow within seconds. The goal is to keep the user attached to their screen. If the TikTok algorithm can keep the user in their "bubble" of interest, the platforms have direct influence on the person behind the screen. Fake information has an easy way through that system. The following imaginary situation illustrates the danger within this well: A TikTok user in the USA doesn't know who to vote for at the next election. Therefore, he searches for "election and parties" on TikTok, knowing that he will get an answer quickly. He gets hundreds of videos by many different users concerning the upcoming election. A video of the Republican Party pops up. They are claiming that the climate change isn't real, because there are several bad snowstorms at parts of America right now. The user likes the video; it makes sense to him. The algorithm keeps feeding the user with videos of this sort. Then a video of the Democratic Party comes up, they warn about the snowstorms, claiming that these weather conditions are very extreme and that this isn't a normal situation. They appeal to the people to vote for them because the climate change needs to be stopped. The user is confused, he doesn't understand why this should be a sign of climate change. At this point the algorithm already secured much information about the user. At the same time, it is possible that his empathy for Trump and the republicans increased. Finally, he decides to vote for Trump. The user likes the easy and simple answers and plans the Republicans deliver. All this, because the TikTok algorithm noted the single like the user gave to a republican video when he visited TikTok at the beginning.

This scenario is of course very abstract and exaggerated, but it shows how effective small activities on social media platforms are. Especially the Republicans took great benefit of this in the election of November 2024. They relocated big parts of their campaign on TikTok, X and other platforms. They knew they would reach millions of people through this. Surely, this doesn't mean the Democratic party did not do that or they weren't successful with their online campaigns. However, in the 2024 election one third of the American society under 30 got their formation on TikTok. Quoting vox.com: "TikTok is making young voters more republican."[8]

In "1984" the people of course hadn't had social media and algorithms, but the influence and building of a "bubble" happened too. Mainly through the government that forced them to believe their propaganda. For example, trough the "two minutes Hate". People stopped questioning what the party told them and unconscious they started to ignore contradictions and uncommon beliefs. Party supporters kept meeting others of their kind, which made them stuck in their own visions and beliefs. Today it is the same, just that this indoctrination works its biggest parts online. People share their beliefs, and a real "community" raises which can benefit the creator of a movement immensely. Small circles of people can achieve great influence through this, anything can end up on a global stage, because the internet and social media are things which are accessible for anyone.

Another article[9] that revolves around Orwells novel and goes into further detail about the totalitarian system, surveillance as well as the question what Orwell wanted to achieve with his work. It is by Hans Joachim Lang, published in "1984" and now available on the website bpb.de. The very detailed analysis "1984 und Orwells Nineteen Eighty-Four- Anmerkungen zur Literatur, zum Totalitarismus und zur Technik.", starts with the argumentation that the title of Orwell's novel, meaning "1984"is getting detached from the book itself. Here he brings in a computer ad that quotes: „Orwell hatte Unrecht, da Computer toll sind." This add says that "Orwell was wrong because computers are great." The author says that the title "1984" is only a symbol by now and people are forgetting what the intend of it really is.

One of his most important interpretations is that technology, which is secondary in the novel plays an important role for the reader - then and today. The use of technology in totalitarian regimes is common nowadays but this control also happens in modern governments which can be seen today's world. The author says „Es sind andere, besser verkleidete Formen, in denen wir Macht zu fürchten haben." Here he explains that it's up to other things, maybe these we use or

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[8] vox.com
[9] bpb.de

include in our daily life, where we must fear surveillance or power. This point makes sense when looking at technical devices like our phones, because through them we actively work towards surveillance. Especially today the parallel becomes clear. As mentioned, social media and algorithms are things we are practically "holding in our hands". Today, surveillance is way easier because we "keep the methods closer" to our daily routines. To sum it up: the author warns about the inner logic technology comes along with, based on the example how it is being presented in the dystopia of "1984".

3.2.7 Language as a manipulation tool

Language is used for manipulation every day. Whether in schools or in politics, even if it's not wanted, it happens sometimes unconscious. It gets dangerous when people use it intently to achieve false interpretation of things to their own benefit. One example, that also happens in Orwell's novel, is the simplification of language. The government is constantly working on a language called "Newspeak". It works through replacing the synonyms of words. Meaning the word "good" becomes the only word to express a feeling for example. If you feel better than just good, you say "supergood" or "doubleplusgood". There are whole dictionaries published every year that include the newest language updates. A thing that Winston noticed is that they get thinner every time[10]. Thinking about, what impact this has on the people and how easy it gets for the government to control them, if they only have limited vocabulary, surveillance becomes easy. Resistance becomes nearly impossible.

The article "How does Language Shape the Way We Think? Read "1984" and You'll Understand"[11] published on the website "Medium", elaborates on the question, why language is so important in the Novel. The author lists examples. First the probably most popular quote of George Orwell: "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." Language is presented as one of the most powerful tools of manipulation. If it is used correctly, it makes it easy to twist truths and convince people to believe something that is not true. In "1984" language is weaponised to mislead the people directly, meaning limiting language and trying to achieve that the people stop thinking for themselves. This system minimised the opposition for the government and many citizens lost their ability to think, as seen through Winstons perspective.

The author also mentions "Doublethink", which is a very important aspect in the novel. It describes the capability to believe and accept contradictory beliefs. Despite the article argues that humans still have an intuition and there will always

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[10] chapter five "1984"
[11] medium.com

be the force to form ideas and have an independent thought, even with the strictest constrains. The author states that thought generally comes before language and stands independently of anything spoken or written. For example, the party in "1984" tries to erase certain words, like "freedom" or synonyms for great feelings, but that does not exclude that the people still feel like these words or think about it. Orwell describes it well; he shows the contradiction of this system. On the one hand, many people are "trapped" in the way the party acts and on other, others are being motivated to stat or join a rebellion like the reader experiences it along Winston throughout the novel.

In the modern world, language is still powerful, the simplification of it is still dangerous. Especially if fake information is "sold" as "alternative facts"[12]. This is just one example of how easy it is, to change a word's meaning by replacing it with some similar word that could still be accounted as the same. Hiding reality, twisting the truth and telling the people what they want to hear has never been easier than now. Simplified language is used to explain complex topics in a fast and catchy way, often aggressively, with the intention to attract people faster. Example: "The refugees are bad, their eating the cats and dogs", said by Donald Trump in 2024 in the presidential debate.

Looking at Germany, it's also noticeable that especially the very authoritarian or far right parties tend to use simple language "Windmills of shame" said by Alice Weidel (AFD) at a party conference. She claimed that the windmills would ruin the natures aesthetic and that a beautiful mystic forest got destroyed because of them. The forest she was talking about were 20 m2 of trees near a road. All the other formation that is clearly needed, to understand the topic is left out. Due to this, enough people just believe that she's right and don't bother thinking about how she is manipulating thousands of people every day. Also, buzzwords or memes are used online, as well as in real life, to steer people right into a trap of false Information. They find great use online. Again, questioning any peace of information and what you see online or read in newspapers is unbelievably important. Of course there are enough people, who don't do this, maybe because of their lack of knowledge. Others just like to stick to their opinion and account critique etc. as nonsense.

3.2.8 Use of private data

The use or misuse of private data in "1984" is certainly a big topic. The state monitors everyone. Either audibly or visually, or both. Of course, the life of a person and everything involving it, is known and documented by the government. Former life partners, family, friends, current relationships, latest purchases, everything until the smallest facial expressions. "There of course was no way of

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[12] duden.de

knowing, whether you were being watched at any given moment…you had to live-did live, from habit that became instinct…"[13]

Today, the collection of data happens too, but in most countries, it's not allowed that the government can access this information easily. But it should be clear that especially our phones and every website or social media platform we visit, collect our data and store it. The "cookies", that many websites have, safe user information locally, meaning that the language settings are set or any other data about browsing behaviour. The problem is that most people just click the accept-button, because it's annoying but without validating and informing themselves which of their data is being stored and how it is being used. At all, people rarely read the data protection policies and just consent. Overall possible consequences are handled too lightly. The lack of knowledge about how the digital world is working makes the people leave a huge digital footprint unintentionally[14]. Even if there is no default data storage in Germany, the amount of data you leave behind is very large. This data is accessible if necessary. Of course this is hardly like in the novel, but the way how people voluntarily spread their data, makes surveillance theoretically very easy.

3.2.9 Comparison USA vs. Germany

Comparing the USA and Germany is a bit challenging, since in the past 3-4 months many things have changed in both countries. Trumps policies lead to constant new development and the election of February 2025 in Germany promises a lot of change in the future too, as well as the upheavals in Germany. To maintain the connection to Orwell's "1984", this chapter will compare both countries in terms of how the dystopian vision of Orwell seems to becoming reality.

In Germany the forces are tending towards very undemocratic or even fascist ideologies. But not only Germany should be mentioned at this point, most parts of Europe are also affected by this sudden change. Casting minorities as scapegoats, spreading lies, engaging in panic-making, all these methods find place in the politics of today. These schemes were frequently used by the party in "1984". However, even if this is a serious threat for Germany and Europe, the democracy in Germany is remaining at a stable point, where fascist forces are in the opposition, for now! We should all actively work to ensure that they stay there.

Why this effort is worth making becomes clear, when looking at the USA. By the time this essay is finished, the situation might be worse than it was when I was writing it. I think comparing the two-party system of the USA to the multi-party system of Germany and the general function of checks and balances or "Gewaltenteilung" might had been useful at a certain point. Probably the

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[13] chapter one "1984"
[14] mcafee.com

conclusion would have been that these rules and laws succeeded in their function, to keep democracy intact. But the situation, the USA faces right now, has far to do with a working democracy. It changed significantly in the recent months. It is more an example of how to break a system. The current circumstances are that Trump was re-elected and started signing decree after decree. The Republicans now hold a majority in all chambers and govern with few restraints. It is in fact a very dystopian scenario building up in the "land of the free". First to mention, of course Trump and Musk, together they are spreading lies and promote common enemies at a pace, that the facts of yesterday are outdated by today. The courts can't keep up with them, doing whatever they want with authorities. Not to forget J.D.Vance's statements about courts and how they supposedly aren't entitled to control the president's power, comparing it to forbidden interferences to military operations[15]. If the people would think about this, the unseriousness and falsity of this statement would become clear. Another of his accusations was that highly valued universities like Harvard are very destructive for the politics. He wanted that the tools and the money to support universities, will be cut, to supress the statements that are being published. Trump and the government think of universities as too liberal and maybe account them as threat, because they usually have high value in science. No government should be able to tell universities what they teach, who they engage with or what they research and publish, since it is an independent institution. This strongly reminds again of how the kids in "1984" are beings raised to admire the party and how they grow up under total manipulation. These are only a few examples of how the democracy is being destroyed and dystopian attributes become reality.

3.2.10 The use of social media in politics

Social media is as already mentioned a very powerful tool. The main question is how social media is used in the political arena. What do politicians do, to reach so many people through online campaigns? A German podcast from the SWR[16] covered that question. From 2017 on social media grew more and more into the world of political campaigns. By now over 40% of the people that can vote in Germany are reached through online platforms. Keeping in mind, that this is a current number and there is a whole generation of people who grew up with this intense use of social media. Later they will be able to vote at the elections of the future and will add onto that number. Soon, most voters will be giving their vote based on what they saw from the party in their online campaigns. Actively watching TV or reading a newspaper with interviews, belongs more to the older generations. It's debatable, if this change is good or bad, but it's happening right now. Platforms, that are very strongly represented are TikTok and Instagram used

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[15] The Guardian
[16] SWR Leute

by very young voters and Facebook, used by people between 40-70 the most. A huge group of voters too. With social media it's also easier to target certain social groups and many groups at once. Based on the user's behaviour, he or she will be shown the fitting adds and topics that lie in the user's political interests, thanks to the algorithms. In the US, the past election already showed how effective online campaigning is. An issue, also happening in Europe but extremely common in the USA, is that a large amount of people only votes, based on what they saw on TikTok, X, Instagram etc. As already mentioned in the social media section, critical thinking is a skill that is required to understand what politicians do online and how political campaigning on the internet maybe bares more risks than the "old-fashioned" way. On the other hand, it brings politics to everybody and sooner or later everybody will be in contact with it. It raises the attention on important topics and perhaps increases the awareness of many people that voting is important. Social media connects the world and increases the chance of people getting in contact with politic. The fact, that parties like the "AFD or Die Linke" but also the Republicans in the US were so successful online, is justified, at least partially within the effort they put into social media. Social media is not only a communication tool, but also an organisation tool. Meaning that many accounts were created with many posts daily. Basically, raising the chance to be noticed by a user. This provides the chance to get in "contact" with the citizens and to actively see, what the people care about. And that's why the mentioned parties did a very good job at. To sum it up, it's not all bad and not all good. Therefore, social media campaigning is a chance, when being used correctly and if it is misused it's up to the people to notice and understand it. Parties or Governments will use social media more and more, since it is a very powerful campaigning tool. And the fact that the social media users do not care too much about their digital footprint, enables the marketers to target the users as potential voters more precisely.

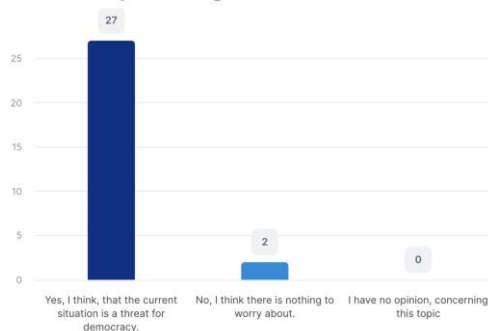## 3.3 Evaluation of my survey

3.3.1 Introduction

Questions asked:

1) Do you believe that current political events (USA & Germany) put our democracy in danger?
2) Do you think that a democracy is a sustainable government form?
3) What do you believe to be the best government form?
4) How pronounced is your social media usage?
5) How do you get information and news?
6) Do you sometimes fear that your online data is being misused?
7) How old are you? (optional)

A total of 32 people were asked, to do the survey. Due to my own beliefs and opinions, I knew, how my friends would answer the questions. Nevertheless, the was also some uncertainty, since I didn't know all participants personally. Still, I think that the outcome of the survey illustrates at least how some of the people think about our modern society.
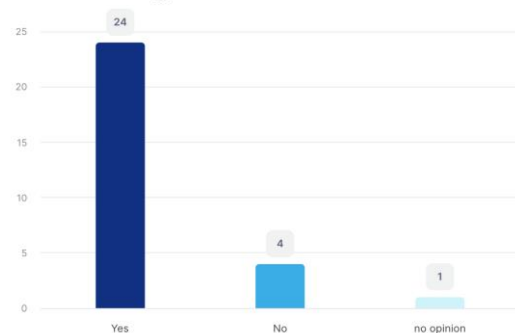
3.3.2 Findings about government forms

Most people think that a democracy is the best and most sustainable government form, which is currently in danger due to events in western politics, according to the first two questions. Here I would like to quote some answers from participants of the survey. "A strong democracy is the best...but the elected must be controlled to be sure they do not abuse their power." "Democracy with fact-based decision making (honouring science), with a vivid discussion culture and empathy for minorities." These answers to the question, how a good government form looks like, show, what is happening in the world right now and what is needed, to keep a democratic society "alive". Nevertheless, the worldwide situation is difficult and not everyone agrees with a Democracy, the reasons for that can differ, but mostly because people with power can abuse it too easily, as mentioned by someone in the survey. Many people are tired of how nothing changes, and it feels like we can just watch, how everything is going wrong.
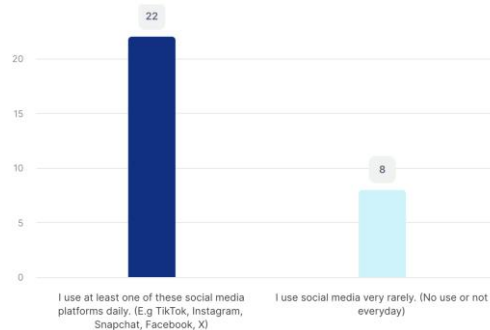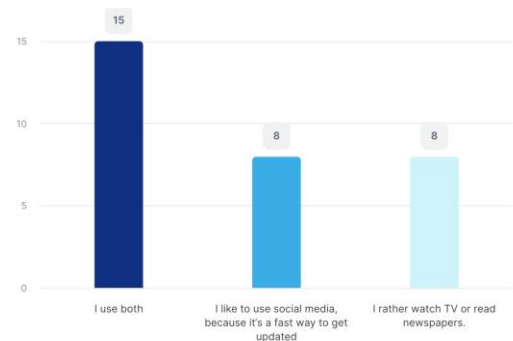

3.3.3 Findings about data protection

All 31 participants stated that they are worried about their safety and privacy online. But in contrast to that, over 50% of them uses social media daily, not only for entertainment but also for information and news. This is an interesting outcome, because of the lack of knowledge about the data restrictions and what happens with personal information, media is still used much. However, it fits to my previous theses, that social media gained a lot of importance in general in the past few years. No matter if politically or as a connection tool. Another reason for this outcome might be that some don't really know about the dangers, concerning data storage and how extreme platforms proceed with this. Giving away personal data online has become the norm and is therefore often a requirement that people

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need, to stay in touch or to work in different jobs. It has become more than just a useful tool, to utilize sometimes. Especially for the younger generation it is something that you can't imagine future jobs without.
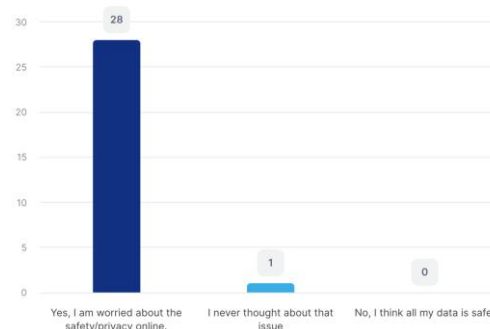
4. How pronounced is your social media usage?

Category	Value
I use at least one of these social media platforms daily. (E.g TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, X)	22
I use social media very rarely. (No use or not everyday)	8

5. How do you get information and news?

Category	Value
I use both	15
I like to use social media, because it's a fast way to get updated	8
I rather watch TV or read newspapers.	8

6. Do you sometimes fear, that your data is being misused? (e.g stolen passwords, stored personal data…)

Category	Value
Yes, I am worried about the safety/privacy online.	28
I never thought about that issue	1
No, I think all my data is safe.	0

3.3.4 Evaluation in context of the participant's age

Between the age of 13 to 50, everything is represented in the survey. But, when looking at the social media questions, the age difference is visible. The majority uses social media, around 25% do not use any kind of social media or only very rarely and 24.2% get their information exclusively from TV or newspapers, 30% use social media and 47.5% use both options. The gap is still clear, but surely a few years ago this outcome would not have looked like this, and in a few years, it will be different again, maybe more biased towards social media usage. As I mentioned in the chapter of social media in politics the younger generations, who are growing up with an intense use of media, will change the system completely and the influence of media will increase again.

3.3.5 General remarks

Lastly, I want to elaborate shortly on feedback I received. Someone suggested a question about AI, because it would fit to the Orwellian dystopia. I believe that this is very true. Not only when talking about new technology and growing up with it, AI already started this development towards smart technologies and how they are

and will be able in the future, to collect user data or replace humans in their jobs. This will be raising questions and concerns about how humans will control this and if it's maybe even too late for it. This question presents issues, that strongly connect to Orwell's dystopian ideas.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion of the work

In conclusion, 1984 is not just a piece of dystopian literature but also a strong warning, how easily democracy can be destroyed. Throughout the work it became clear that the mechanisms Orwell described still play a significant role in today's world. The aim with this work was to explain how important education, critical thinking, and media competence are. The people need to remain aware and while I learned many thinks for myself, while writing and researching, I believe this could be an appeal for every reader, to stay alerted and don't take our living standards for granted.

4.2 Until which extent was George Orwell right?

George Orwell's novel is a "prophecy" for today's world. He described many mechanisms so well, they seem so present, as if the novel was released in 2025. Surveillance, manipulation, controlling our language and limiting independent thought or common enemies in a permanent state of war, all these were warnings, of how a society can break and fall into a totalitarian regime very fast.
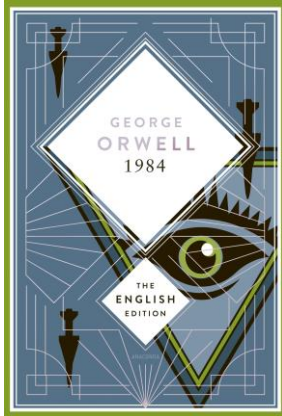
Still, it must be mentioned that not everything of today is as extreme as it is in the novel, but the parallels are very clear and should be a lesson to everyone, who reads it. In my comparison of the USA and Germany I tried to illustrate, how there are still differences between the countries but how thin the "line" is which separates Europe from the extreme situation in the USA.

Debating the question whether Orwell's novel is dystopian fiction or a vision of our future, it can be said that it predicted structures and hierarchies of modern society, in a very accurate way. However, due to certain fundamental laws, such an extreme way of losing control over the government appears not possible. Still, to keep things that way - please don't believe everything you see or hear, be brave and speak up if you must!
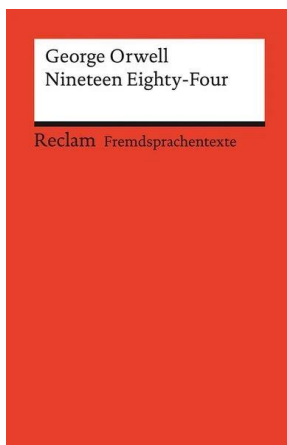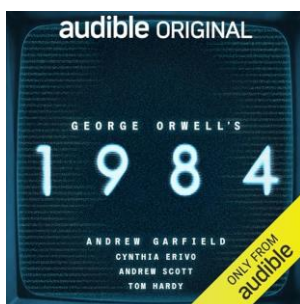
5. Attachments

5.1 Bibliography

George Orwell 1984 – The English edition, Anaconda Verlag

George Orwell Nineteen Eighty-Four – Reclam Fremdsprachentexte, RECLAMS UNIVERSAL-BIBLIOTHEK, Herausgegeben von Susanne Lenz

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5.2 Sources

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  https://www.amnesty.de/pressemitteilung/usa-donald-trump-praesident-amtseinfuehrung

- ChatGPT: (summary of current political situation in the USA)

- De.statista.com (statistics about social media usage worldwide)
  https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/739881/umfrage/monatlich-aktive-social-media-nutzer-weltweit/

- Definition "alternative facts"
  https://www.duden.de/sprachwissen/sprachratgeber/Alternative-Fakten#google_vignette

- The novel "1984" by George Orwell

- Instagram (posts from Tagesschau "Trump 100 Tage im Amt", Zusammenfassung von Trumps bisheriger Amtszeit)

- Instagram post New York Times (Tariffs US and China / "What rights do immigrants have?" - about the trump administration and how they are threatening the immigrants)

- LitCharts (summaries & analysis of certain chapters)
  https://www.litcharts.com/lit/1984/book-1-chapter-1

- Digital footprint https://www.mcafee.com/learn/digital-footprints-privacy-concerns/

- Trump about immigrants: https://www.newsweek.com/trump-immigration-illegal-aliens-tiktok-2022673

- New York Times (articles about new policies in the USA "Full on fight club – how Trump is crushing US climate policy")

- Secondary literature (German article about totalitarian regimes and technology)
  https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/archiv/532908/1984-und-

orwells-nineteen-eighty-four-anmerkungen-zur-literatur-zum-
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- Secondary literature "How does language corrupt thought?"
  https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/how-does-language-shape-the-
  way-we-think-read-1984-and-youll-understand-547cb5e52a0c

- SWR1 Leute (podcast about social media in politics, focus Germany)
  https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/12/us/politics/trump-tariffs-
  immigration-power.html

- The Guardian (J.D. Vance statements about executive powers and
  Universities) https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/10/jd-
  vance-judges-trump

- Vox.com (impact of TikTok on young voters)
  https://www.vox.com/politics/403364/tik-tok-young-voters-2024-election-
  democrats-david-shor

- Wikipedia (vita of Orwell) https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Orwell

7. Dokumentation der Begleitgespärche

First meeting: Topic Selection and Title (April 30)
In the first meeting, the topic and the main focus was defined. Following with the
question about how relevant Orwell's novel is for today in context of society,
politics and social media. Then the final title was chosen: "1984 - dystopian fiction
or vision of the future?". Furthermore, the use of secondary literature was
discussed with particular attention to texts, focusing language and technology.

Second meeting: Formal requirements (May 4)
This meeting focused on the formal structure of the paper. It was explained how
footnotes should be included. For the bibliography it was agreed that sources
should be separated by text and video and listed alphabetically. Tipps for citation
were also given concerning social media articles of Instagram or TikTok posts.

Third meeting: Text revision and Further Literature (May 16)
The current state of the text was reviewed. It was noted that the final correction
and one of two secondary articles are still missing.