This piece takes inspiration from a critical one who lived over a thousand star-cycles ago and was unearthed by several archaeologists examining the society of a people who called themselves “Britons”. The original document was taken by the corporation and destroyed; however, this report maintains the key parts of the original text.

Long before the corporation came to power and shaped us into the mighty world of Pangaea, there lived another people. A people who produced great thinkers who dedicated their lives to studying societies. We call them the “critical ones” however, in their time, what records remain show that they were called Sociologists.

The people of “Britain” loved to buy things. It was a society where one simply had to wish for something, and within a couple of clicks on a website, one could have whatever one desires. The items available were limitless and easily customised to a preferred specification. This was made possible by multi-skilled workers who worked flexible hours and were not hindered by barbaric practices such as “minimum work hours” or “contracts”. Instead, employees were free to work whatever hours were graciously given by employers. This type of employment was labelled a “zero hours contract” and according to Walby (2002: 17) a worker had a zero hours contract if they were, “not contracted to work a set number of hours, and [the employee] is only paid for the number of hours they work”. The great thinkers of that world called it “Post-Fordism” which gathered from historical records, was a model of production adopted around the decade of the 1970s, although scholars of that era disputed both the date of adoption of the system and whether Post-Fordism existed at all.

Although it seems strange to us in the present that there was not a single corporation who manufactured everything needed, Post-Fordism was largely based on a dense network of subcontracting (Kumar, 2005: 63). This meant that parts and specific tasks were outsourced to other companies or branches of companies, rather than large factories where everything was assembled in one place, a practice known as “Fordism”. Fordism was defined as “a system of mass produced standardised goods by highly repetitive mechanical methods” (Maller and Dwolatsky, 1993: 70).

Alongside Post-Fordism, another key concept that gained significance during this period of history was globalisation. After the agricultural and
Industrial revolution came the technological revolution in the time of the late second and early third millennia. Out of this was born the “internet”, a tool which completely changed the way the world worked. People could speak to others across vast distances with little delay. The thinkers of the time believed that the internet greatly sped up the process of globalisation.

Globalisation as a concept was much contested during the time of the critical ones. Writings from the period have argued that globalisation really began during the period 1875-1925 with a near global adaption of the Gregorian calendar (Robertson, 1992). Others, such as Guillen (2001: 237) argued that it began with the “dawn of human history”, as countless empires and peoples sought to conquer and expand their territories into other lands. A critical one who wrote during the time defined globalisation as “a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities” (Al-Rodan, 2006).

To the observer it would seem to be a utopian world in which needs and desires were met instantly. However, this comfort came at a price, and that price was privacy.

“They know things about us, but we often do not know what they know, why they know, or with whom else they might share their knowledge. What does this mean for our sense of identity, our life-chances, our human rights, our privacy?” (Lyon, 1994: 4)

In this world, the inhabitants are tracked at all times. Identities are checked multiple times throughout the course of a day and locations are tracked through various media, such as CCTV. The people of this strange world were somewhat subdued by the knowledge that they were being watched. They knew not when or by whom, but they knew that they were being watched. This method of surveillance was very similar to the concept of Bentham’s panopticon which was discussed by Foucault (1995). A panopticon was the concept in which prisoners were imprisoned in a circular pattern around a central tower. The tower would have opaque windows so prisoners would not know when they were being watched or by whom. The parallels drawn between the panopticon concept and the actual conditions of Ancient Britons’ society are chilling.

Another way that the Britons of old were surveilled was through the comical method of “cards”. Indeed, cards were issued to citizens for a variety of reasons, such as the ability to drive a motor-car or as a means of accessing credit. These cards also served the purpose of checking both a Briton’s identity and their current location. Lyon (2001: 171) wrote of this and on the subject of identification said; “Today, such tokens are often plastic ones, or rather they are coded within plastic cards, and connected electronically through networked databases”.

The issue of surveillance was brought to the attention of the public during the second decade of the third millennium. The star-cycle 2013 witnessed a great political upset as it was revealed to the world that the American National Security Agency (NSA) had been spying on citizens of the country of America and also had links to spying on foreign countries. This caused a stir to the pre-corporate power world. It made people realise that those with the resources could monitor all aspects of life without permission.

However, from history we learned that after this event, the masses of the world decided that they would rather carry on consuming placidly and thus what may have been an opportunity to alter the course of history was allowed to fade into the
annals of history. A news article written at the time showed that the ancient rulers of Britain, the “Government”, had also allowed the spying on their citizens by the NSA (Ball, 2013). This may indicate that this was the period that set the foundations for the rise of the corporation and consequently led to the world we inhabit today.

As a final note, it is heresy to mention but there are rumours of an island outside of Pangaea. According to several rebel spies, this island serves as a black market. This island is said to be the haven of the corporate leaders. The usual laws do not apply to them and it is said that money and illegal substances are manufactured and traded on this island and they do not have to pay the normal 95% tax. After reading over historical documents from the critical ones, one has to wonder how different we are from the ancient Britons. How far have we progressed?

Bibliography:


