

ALLNESS IN LANGUAGE AND POLITICS

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AT THE BEGINNING of this school year I was introduced to *ETC* [the journal of the Institute of General Semantics.] My assignment was to read and analyze articles. The articles that I read focused on varying causes of conflict as well as resolutions to the conflicts. After reading Charles G. Russell's "Allness and Public Policy" article, I was struck with a desire to explore allness thinking. I was amazed that the sources for our news, and the politicians that represent America were placing masses of complex individuals into simplistic groups. When a non-allness approach to addressing people is used, a clear recognition of human spirit is possible. George Orwell and Ayn Rand have both noticed the connection between language and politics. Both Orwell's *1984* and Rand's *Anthem* explore dystopias and the danger of governments using allness as a way to group and control their citizens. Not only in literature can allness be seen but also in my personal life have I come across situations where allness thinking is used.

Allness thinking was described by Russell as "Simply thinking and talking about the public without the linguistic reminders to designate some limits on a group of people as large and diverse as a total population...." The article also made very clear how one can identify when people are using allness and how to question the assumptions made in those statements. Russell suggests that we simply ask "how do you know that?" when we hear or read a statement that appears to include generalizations. This simple step can help a person realize when allness thinking has been used rather than specific personal identification.

The application of thoughtless assumptions upon complex masses of people done in any form is a generalized statement. That generalized statement might not have personal authenticity, thus making it untrue. Allness thinking is especially dangerous because those who influence our minds most frequently are the people

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who are constantly addressing groups using allness. These people soon display actions of allness so frequently that their intentions can be become lost by the public.

From my personal experiences I have gathered that I am addressed with allness thinking constantly. I am herded into verbal groupings and assumed to be like my fellow family members. In a situation where I am to be respected for my individuality; I find I am viewed as a group rather than an individual. I see myself as Alexander McGuinnis, while others see me as The McGuinnis Family. Sometimes when I am over at another family's house, speaking with them at the dinner table, the topic of college comes up. My mother, father, and brother all went to very prestigious schools. The question is posed to me, "as a McGuinnis, you are planning on going to a nice school, aren't you?"

This simple use of allness demonstrates how the people that I was with grouped me with my family, rather than focusing on my individual intentions. They assumed because I was a McGuinnis I must be going to a prestigious school. They used allness in thought and word because it's easier to assume about me rather than question me personally.

In George Orwell's *1984*, the Government uses allness as a way to maintain control of their citizens. The Party uses allness as a basis for their language, Newspeak: Newspeak is a modified expressionless language designed to limit thought. By using allness as a basis for the language, the Party was able to eliminate the personalities of its citizens, to keep the minds of many like the mind of one. "There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no employment of process of life" (Orwell, 267). This was said to Winston Smith by O'Brien, a representative of the Party. At this point in the book, O'Brien is explaining to Winston the intentions of Newspeak. The Party uses Newspeak as a way to prohibit Oceania's citizens from generating personal identities.

Ayn Rand's *Anthem* presents a similar dystopia, where the language used by the people is monitored by the various councils that govern every aspect of life: the Council of Vocations, the Council of Scholars, etc. Through the work of the Councils, all forms of individualism have been destroyed. Allness is the only way in which people think, or speak. Rather than be separate from one another, the citizens refer to themselves as "we" or "them" to prevent any instance of non-allness. For Equality 7-2521, being a classified object is unacceptable and rails against it. "My happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it...Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not a tool for their use. I am not a servant of their needs...I am a man." (Rand, 95)

The Councils constantly monitor the absolute egalitarian world they created. Equality 7-2521 has no choice in what he does; the Councils decide every aspect of his life. Yet some tingle in his mind motivates him to stand alone and discover

a non-allness approach to living. The oppression generated by the Councils' use of allness has constructed a place where all citizens must use the Councils' language, which prevents any expression of individuality. As an idealist, Equality 7-2521 cannot allow his life to be wasted by some limiting factor. He thinks there is something about each person that makes them unique. He thinks there is something the government is trying to hide. The only way that Equality 7-2521 can verify his thoughts is if he flees the city. Equality 7-2521's quest to discover what the Councils are hiding from the citizens under the curtain of allness allows him to realize answers in himself. His realization is that he is not the same as every one else, that he is his own person. Equality 7-2521 becomes self actualized. "I am. I think. I will. My hands...My spirit...My sky...This is my body and spirit, this is the end of the quest" (Rand, 84)

Consistent allness thinking presents dangers not only to certain individuals, but to societies as a whole. When a government tries to distance people from their individuality in order to group them, all personal ideals are thus eliminated. Establishing control becomes easy when originality is removed. In my personal life, assumptions are made as a way to group me with others. In *1984* and *Anthem* the ruling powers used allness thinking as basis for monitoring and maintaining power over their citizens. When individuals are noticed and respected, allness is not necessary. The use of allness comes about as a result of lazy thinking. If those who use allness as a way to address others would dedicate themselves to being honest and true, allness thinking would be impossible.

References

1. Orwell, George. *1984*. New York: Penguin Books, 1949.
2. Rand, Ayn. *Anthem*. New York: Plume Books, 1995.

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