



“The Nature And Mechanisms Of Power In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*”

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Abstract

In this study it deals with the theme of power in George Orwell’s post war novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The species of power depicted in these two novels is an exact exposing of the control of power over individuals. This study concentrates on the after effects and harmful nature of power. In this novel, it can visibly see that the love for power is the ultimate motive for all political activity. The novel bear the disillusionment after the post war with ideology, leader worship and military adventurism. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the strong reminiscent of the nuclear threat during the cold war. On the other hand Orwell’s another novel; *Animal Farm* depicts the changes that power can bring about through the life of some animals who craves for their freedom.

Key Words:

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I. Introduction

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* stands as a timeless exploration of power and its corruptive influence on society. To fully grasp the significance of Orwell’s post-war novels, particularly *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is essential to understand Orwell's personal and political evolution. His participation in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) as a member of an anarchist militia solidified his belief in socialism while simultaneously exposing him to the dangers of totalitarian power. This experience sharpened his critique of totalitarianism, which he saw as a force infiltrating every aspect of society—including intellectual life, literature, education, and even sports—leading to blind worship of authority without concern for its devastating consequences.

Orwell's satirical focus on Stalinism, more so than fascism, stemmed from the aftermath of World War II, where Stalinist communism, following the defeat of fascism, emerged as the most alarming form of totalitarianism in Europe. However, Orwell did not spare fascism from criticism; he viewed both ideologies as oppressive systems that sought to dominate every facet of individual life. As Orwell himself declared, "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it."

Totalitarianism, as Orwell saw it, was an extreme form of authoritarianism that demanded absolute control over both public and private life. Inspired by Benito Mussolini's declaration, "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state," totalitarian regimes aimed to reshape society entirely, in contrast to authoritarian systems that maintained control without seeking to alter human nature. This theme of absolute power and its consequences is central to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where Orwell examines the aftermath of war, ideological disillusionment, and the dangers of leader worship and military adventurism.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell masterfully depicts the exploitation of power through the oppressive surveillance state and the manipulation of truth. The novel captures the pervasive control exerted over individuals, illustrating how the lust for power supersedes wealth or material gain. Orwell critiques the human tendency to seek dominance, a theme he linked to broader social issues. He argued that political behaviour is often irrational, driven by an insatiable desire for control. This idea is poignantly expressed in his claim that "human beings only started fighting with each other in earnest when there was no longer anything to fight about."

Orwell's dissatisfaction with the Marxist interpretation of power, which emphasized economic motives, led him to challenge its limitations. In his review, *Prophecies of Fascism*, Orwell criticized Marxian socialists for their failure to foresee the rise of fascism, arguing that their mechanistic interpretation of history overlooked the psychological drive for power. In response, Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not as mere satires or dystopian fantasies, but as urgent warnings against the unchecked abuse of power.

Through *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell urges readers to recognize the inherent dangers of totalitarianism and the human susceptibility to power's allure. By dissecting the mechanisms of control, the novel remains a profound critique of political systems that prioritize dominance over human dignity, a warning that continues to resonate in contemporary society.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Work Analysis: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* serves as a powerful critique of totalitarianism, exposing how power can corrupt and manipulate truth. Orwell's intent, as he explained, was to parody the intellectual implications of totalitarian regimes, reflecting his disillusionment with the atrocities committed in the name of ideologies such as racial supremacy and proletarian dictatorship. Orwell believed intellectuals should prioritize truth over power, a theme embodied in the protagonist Winston Smith. Winston's unwavering pursuit of truth and reality, grounded in empirical observation, sets him in conflict with the oppressive state. Ironically, despite his passion for truth, he works for the state, distorting facts to maintain its control.

Winston's search for truth leads him to question the official narrative of life before the revolution. He discovers conflicting information: while records depict a harsh capitalist past, there is no verifiable evidence to confirm this. His interaction with an elderly man, who can only recall vague memories, underscores the state's systematic erasure of historical truth. Ultimately, Winston faces the bleak reality of life under Big Brother, where personal identity and truth are annihilated by surveillance and propaganda.

Life in Oceania is defined by total alienation and forced conformity. Citizens act under constant surveillance, creating a façade of uniformity while losing individuality. Even thoughts are policed through Newspeak, a language designed to limit free thought. Orwell emphasizes this through characters like Syme,

who explains that Newspeak's ultimate goal is to abolish concepts like freedom, reducing thought to unconscious orthodoxy.

1984 aligns with the tradition of dystopian fiction aimed at critiquing social and political conditions; drawing inspiration from works like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia*, Zamyatin's *We*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*. Orwell's novel portrays a dystopia where truth and individuality are suppressed by an omnipotent state, echoing themes of power, control, and the erosion of human freedom. Through *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, Orwell delivers a stark warning about the dangers of totalitarianism, showing how power, when misused, leads to oppression and the obliteration of truth.

2.2 Exploitation of Power

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have been extensively analysed as two of the most significant critiques of totalitarianism in 20th-century literature. Both novels parallel historical totalitarian regimes, particularly Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany, presenting thematic similarities such as betrayed revolutions, subjugation of individuals to authoritarian power, and hierarchical class distinctions. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell draws upon a variety of influences, from totalitarian political regimes to religious dogma, with scholars noting parallels between the Party's indoctrination techniques and the rigid enforcement of Catholic dogma. Orwell's 1945 essay *Notes on Nationalism* provides further insight into themes of nationalism-positive, negative, and transferred that permeate the novel alongside sexual repression and Orwell's vision of dystopian futurism.

The genesis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be traced to Orwell's experiences in the Spanish Civil War, where he witnessed the corruptive potential of power detached from social ideals. Set in Oceania, a totalitarian state governed by the omnipresent Party led by the elusive Big Brother, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* presents a society where individual thought is suppressed through relentless surveillance and language manipulation. Newspeak, the Party's language, exemplifies the control of thought by limiting expression and promoting ideological conformity. Through slogans like "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength," Orwell highlights the Party's ability to distort reality. Winston Smith, the protagonist, embodies the values of human dignity and intellectual freedom, his eventual defeat underscoring the vulnerability of such values under oppressive regimes. Scholars have observed that Big Brother, though never appearing directly, represents an omnipresent authority whose public persona blends benevolence with brutal control, symbolizing totalitarian power's psychological and physical dominance over society.

In contrast, *Animal Farm* offers a political allegory tracing the trajectory of revolution from its idealistic inception to the eventual corruption of its leaders. Published in 1945, the novel critiques the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, illustrating how power shifts can lead to the emergence of a new oppressive hierarchy. Orwell's inspiration reportedly came from witnessing a boy mistreat a horse, leading him to draw parallels between human exploitation of animals and class oppression. This allegory of the Russian Revolution features characters representing historical figures: Napoleon as Stalin and Snowball as Trotsky. Their initial alliance mirrors the early unity of the Bolsheviks, with Napoleon's rise reflecting Stalin's consolidation of power through intimidation and violence. Critics have noted that Napoleon's actions, including public executions and manipulation of information, highlight how absolute power corrupts, instilling fear and enforcing obedience. The corruption of Napoleon's rule serves as a powerful commentary on how revolutionary ideals can be subverted by authoritarian leaders.

Orwell's thematic exploration of power in both novels demonstrates a clear warning about its dangers. In *Animal Farm*, power evolves from a shared revolutionary goal to a tool of oppression, as Napoleon becomes indistinguishable from the human tyrants the animals initially overthrew. Similarly, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the pursuit of power supersedes all ethical considerations, leading to the dehumanization and suppression of society. Scholars have consistently noted Orwell's argument that power, rather than wealth or ideology, becomes the ultimate goal in totalitarian regimes, with fear playing a crucial role in maintaining control.

Both novels, despite their differing approaches, converge on the central theme that absolute power leads to corruption. Orwell's portrayal of dystopian societies-whether through the entrenched tyranny of *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four or the gradual betrayal in *Animal Farm* serves as a lasting critique of political systems that prioritize control over justice and human rights. Scholars continue to explore these works as vital warnings against the dangers of authoritarianism and the moral degradation that accompanies unchecked power.

2.3 The Power Play: *Animal Farm*

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a powerful allegory that critiques the corruption of revolutionary ideals and the exploitation of power. Orwell's inspiration for the novel originated from witnessing a boy whipping a cart-horse, leading him to reflect on how humans exploit animals similarly to how the powerful exploit the working class. This incident sparked Orwell's idea to use animals as symbols of societal classes, particularly the proletariat, in a political satire.

Orwell described *Animal Farm* as his first attempt to merge political purpose with artistic storytelling, creating a beast fable that critiques authoritarianism. The novel mirrors the trajectory of the Russian Revolution, with characters symbolizing key figures: Old Major represents Marx and Lenin, Snowball represents Trotsky, and Napoleon represents Stalin. The story begins with Old Major's vision of a utopian society where animals overthrow human oppression and live in equality. His speech rallies the animals to revolt against their master, inspiring hopes of freedom. However, Old Major's death marks the beginning of power struggles among the animals, particularly between Napoleon and Snowball.

The pigs, portrayed as the most intelligent animals, assume leadership, but their rule quickly devolves into tyranny. Snowball's idealism and innovative spirit contrast with Napoleon's cunning and manipulative tactics. Assisted by Squealer, a master of propaganda, Napoleon consolidates power; gradually betraying the revolution's founding principles. Orwell demonstrates how revolutionary ideals are corrupted when power becomes concentrated in the hands of a few, leading to the very oppression the revolution sought to eliminate.

Animal Farm remains a poignant critique of the dangers of absolute power and the cyclical nature of tyranny, resonating with readers as both a political satire and a timeless allegory of human nature.

2.4 Conclusion

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* serve as profound critiques of the corrupting influence of power in totalitarian regimes. Both novels depict revolutions that result in oppressive leadership, where power is wielded not for the collective good but to secure dominance. In *Animal Farm*, Napoleon exemplifies how power can corrupt even those who initially seek liberation, while in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother represents the ultimate form of control, exerted through fear, surveillance, and the suppression of individuality.

Orwell illustrates that power, when concentrated in the hands of a few, leads to the exploitation and suffering of the masses. Through these narratives, he highlights the dangers of unchecked authority and the ease with which leaders can abandon moral principles once power is attained. Ultimately, Orwell warns that power can either be a force for collective benefit or a destructive tool, depending on who wields it. His novels serve as timeless reminders of the importance of vigilance, accountability, and the responsible use of power in society.

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