



Nineteen Eighty-Four: Orwell's Warning Against Totalitarianism And The Destruction Of Human Freedom

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Abstract

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) is perhaps one of the most prominent political novels written in the twentieth century. Having been written after the Second World War, this political novel explores the problems of totalitarian regimes, government surveillance, propaganda and oppression of human individuality. The author describes the dystopia in which the Party holds the total control over truth, history, language and consciousness of people. It is shown in the biography of the main character – Winston Smith. Oceania's institutions, for example, Ministry of Truth, Thought Police, and Newspeak system are some ways through which political power can control all aspects of people's lives. This paper highlights the author's criticism of totalitarianism in relation to Nineteen Eighty-Four being very relevant in today's world when talking about surveillance, propaganda, and freedom in democracy.

Keywords: George Orwell, Totalitarianism, Surveillance, Newspeak, Political Power

Introduction

The central ideas of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four are based on Orwell's philosophical beliefs regarding freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and defiance of authoritarianism. Orwell always emphasized the need for freedom of the writer and intellect as the basis of literary life. In his essay "The Prevention of Literature," he pointed out that where there is no freedom of thought, there will be no literature and that writers who defend persecution and lie about the nature of reality will bring about their own end (Orwell, Collected Essays 95). The political concerns of Orwell have been influenced greatly by the emergence of Fascism and Stalinism and the strengthening of centralized powers throughout the

twentieth century. In response to James Burnham's "The Managerial Revolution," Orwell noted how people aiming at freedom could very well be fooled by elites with hunger for power to subjugate them under some other form of domination (Orwell, Collected Essays 210). It was this kind of thought process that led him to create Oceania.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative approach to text. The principal text under examination is *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by Orwell, and the supporting text is Orwell's essays and letters found in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*. The secondary texts used in this study are *George Orwell* by Laurence Brander and *The Crystal Spirit* by George Woodcock.

Discussion

Totalitarianism and Political Power

1984 is essentially a cautionary tale about totalitarianism. Indeed, Orwell himself believed that the depiction of this society in his novel was not a prophecy but a potential outcome under certain political circumstances (Orwell, Collected Essays 564). In this story, governments try not only to make people obey them but to take control of their minds completely. In the words of Laurence Brander, the intention of Orwell was to make people aware of the risk posed by an oppressive regime that "penetrates into the most secret recesses of the human spirit, with total corruption of the soul as its threat" (183–84). The Party in Oceania aims at exercising control in all walks of life. As noted by George Woodcock, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is "satire of the contemporary political scene, with its overtones of propaganda, bureaucratic regimentation, and ideology," and its author has greatly magnified certain tendencies existing in his time (218). Moreover, as the novel is set in a renamed England, the warning can be addressed not only to Soviet Communism but to any other society.

Oceania and the Machinery of Control

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the world is split up into three superpowers, namely Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. The superpowers are continuously at war with one another, thus causing fear and insecurity. In Oceania, power is held by the Party, which retains its control through surveillance, propaganda, and fear.

The Party rules using four ministries which are named oppositely to what they really do. The Ministry of Peace is the ministry for waging wars, the Ministry of Love runs the programs for torture, the Ministry of Plenty controls the shortages of goods and the Ministry of Truth produces propaganda.

Thought Police and Telescreens create continuous surveillance. Individuals remain under observation all the time, and even their independent thoughts become punishable actions. Orwell has thus managed to prove how technology may turn into an effective tool for exercising political power.

Winston Smith and the Manipulation of History

Winston, the protagonist, works in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth, where he has to modify the historical facts to make them fit the Party's version of truth. Contradictory documents are burnt through the "memory hole," where they are sent to secret furnaces (Orwell 38-39).

The political manipulation of history shows Orwell's concern with the political manipulation of truth. Winston notices how historical records keep changing to make the Party appear as the embodiment of infallibility. As an illustration, Big Brother's speech is modified to coincide with what happened and not with what he had predicted (Orwell 39-40). In this way, the reality itself vanishes.

The demolition of history is, according to Orwell, an indispensable part of the regime of a totalitarian state. In case people are allowed to modify the past, they would not be able to analyze the statements of their rulers. Hence, memory turns out to be the field where the battle is fought.

Newspeak and Demolition of Language

The theory of Newspeak has become one of the major contributions of Orwell to political science. The system created by the Party demolishes language and narrows the sphere of thought through the elimination of words. Syme notes that words are being abolished every day since the ultimate goal is the impossibility of independent thinking (Orwell 51-53).

The Party understands the power of language. Through restricting vocabulary and getting rid of the nuances in expression, Newspeak limits intellectual liberty. Things that cannot be expressed through language become hard to think about. O'Brien explains later on that thoughtcrime will no longer be possible since no words will exist for it (Orwell 53).

Newspeak and Doublethink are directly linked because one must believe two opposite propositions at the same time. Party slogans like "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength" help to explain the concept. By using linguistic manipulation, the Party manages to break logic and turn language into a tool of manipulation.

Power, Fear, and Human Relationships

Domination by the Party is not limited to the political realm but encompasses even personal relationships as well. Love, friendship, and loyalty of family members are considered to be dangerous since such emotions form connections outside the government's control. The Party member O'Brien says, "Our future society will be founded on love or justice but fear, hatred, and submission."

Marriage is solely for the purpose of producing offspring, but love is frowned upon. Children learn to keep an eye on their parents, and trust between people erodes slowly. Humans turn into isolated entities whose only allegiance lies with Big Brother.

The relationship between Winston and Julia becomes an act of rebellion in the face of such a society. Their love makes them temporarily free of any external control of the Party. But their betrayal in the end through torture proves just how powerful a totalitarian government can be.

Conclusion

1984 continues to stand out as one of the strongest novels critiquing totalitarianism in modern literature. Through the example of Oceania, Orwell shows us how political power exploits history, language, memories and individual identity in order to sustain its complete dominance. It is said that freedom cannot be preserved when the truth is constantly twisted and dissent is considered illegal.

Surveillance, propaganda, Newspeak and doublethink – all of these concepts remain relevant in modern society. Orwell's observations on the connection between power and knowledge have never lost their relevance in an era of mass media and digitalization.

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