

Candidate number: 9108

Word Count: 6029

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LENG370

28 May 2021

Orwell's *1984*: How Totalitarians Come to Power

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I. INTRODUCTION

George Orwell made his fears come true in his dystopian satire *1984*. Totalitarianism has defeated democracy and no rebellion is possible, because “all the beliefs, habits, tastes, emotions, mental attitudes that characterise our time are really designed to sustain the mystique of the Party and prevent the true nature of present-day society from being perceived (219)”. The Party is led by a brutal tyrant, Big Brother. With poverty, permanent wars, and no allowance for individuality, the world in *1984* is far worse than the world in the first half of the century. However, indoctrination and isolation make the citizens unaware of their situation. The anti-

hero Winston Smith tries to grasp how London became this nightmare, but it is not easy when all records are falsified, most memories are lost, and all suspicious behaviour makes you arrested by the Thought Police.

What is at stake in my reading of *1984*, is how it is informed by Orwell's understanding of the factors that led to the rise of totalitarianism in the 1930s and 1940s. My thesis is that the mental atmosphere; group affiliation; worship of power; and decreased desire for intellectual liberty were contributing factors. The attraction to totalitarianism comes from a need for fraternity and immortality, and from a desire for domination and suppression, which can be seen in *1984*. I argue that although Orwell wrote about his contemporary issues, totalitarianism is still appealing to humans. That is why it is important to understand Orwell's insights about totalitarianism.

In *1984*, we are presented to a book within the book, a geopolitical description of how the 1940s developed into the fictional year 1984, where London is a part of the totalitarian superstate Oceania. The book is written by the state's archenemy and a former leading figure of the Party, Emmanuel Goldstein. I will assume that the parts of Goldstein's book I am referring to in my essay are Orwell's warnings for political trends of his time. They might be oversimplified and exaggerated, since the novel is a satire. Nevertheless, Orwell said that if we do not listen, "something resembling it *could* arrive" (LRS 4:520)¹.

Orwell intended his novel to show "the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism" (LFAH 4:564)²; to "discuss the dividing of the world into three great superstates"; and to satirise "the intellectual implications of totalitarianism" (LRS 4:520)¹. He claimed that, directly or indirectly, all he wrote after the outbreak of the Spanish War in 1936 was "against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism" as he understood it (WIW 1:28)³.

I have divided the essay into five parts. In section II, I discuss how totalitarian systems resemble theocracies and falsify history. Section III is about why people choose totalitarian leaders and about power worship. Section IV discusses humans' emotional motivations and our need for groups. In section V, intellectual integrity is connected to free speech and to language. Lastly, in my conclusion, section VI, I will summarise and briefly discuss my findings. I will also provide examples from *1984* to support my arguments throughout my essay.

II. CREATING HISTORY TO SEEM INFALLIBLE

How do you turn a democracy into a totalitarian state? Firstly, you need the people to support you. The author and English professor Erica Gottlieb argues in “The Function of Goldstein’s book” that totalitarian systems – both Fascism and Communism – insist on scientific methodologies, but also predict the historical goal as "some kind of Paradise Regained" (14). In other words, totalitarians present an ideal world and convince the people to fight for it. In *1984*, Goldstein describes how history has repeated itself: the ruling class is always overthrown by the middle class, sooner or later. The masses help the middle class, because they are told lies about an "earthly paradise in which men should live together in a state of brotherhood, without laws and brute labour". But, we are told in the novel, once the new group become rulers, they thrust the masses "back into their old position of servitude" and the new hierarchy is formed (210). In *1984*, the new rulers became more brutal than any a tyrant before them. Why do people allow totalitarian rulers to grasp power and suppress individuality?

In 1940, George Orwell argued that "we cannot struggle against Fascism unless we are willing to understand it" (RTE 2:40)⁴. Orwell defined Fascism as "a form of capitalism that borrows from Socialism just such features as will make it efficient for war purposes". The underlying idea of Fascism, Orwell found to be the opposite of the Socialist one. Socialism took equality of human rights for granted and wished for a world-state of free and equal human beings. Fascism, on the other hand, assumed that the driving force is the belief in human inequality. The German Nazis thought themselves superior to other people and aimed for a caste system (LaU 2:102)⁵.

In 1937, Orwell fought for the Republican side in the Spanish war against the Fascists. The Soviet Communists helped the Republicans, but the inner struggles between the Socialist groups made it clear to Orwell that the Soviet Communists no longer strived for a class-free society (Rossi and Rodden 5). As Goldstein explains in *1984*: "in each variant of Socialism that appeared from about 1900 onwards the aim of establishing liberty and equality was more and more openly abandoned" (211). Fascism and Communism differed only in degree, not in kind, Orwell concluded (Rossi and Rodden 5).

In “Looking Back on the Spanish War”, Orwell argued that the Fascists, aided by Mussolini and Hitler, represented themselves as "Christian patriots saving Spain from a Russian dictatorship". That was far from the truth, Orwell argued, and he saw huge lies about the war frequently from both sides. The truth became untruth if uttered by the enemy, and atrocities

were not believed if they were of the own side. Furthermore, no one seemed to bother to examine the evidence. Orwell feared that in the long run, lies would pass into history as the truth (2:295). Orwell admitted that history is erroneous and biased, but "the abandonment of the idea that history *could* be truthfully written" was new and frightening to him. In the past, there had been a "common basis of agreement" that 'the facts' existed. Totalitarianism, Orwell argued, destroys that common basis of agreement and the concept of objective truth disappears with it (2:296).

A totalitarian ruler cannot admit any mistakes, because he must be seen as infallible. Thus, history is created to make it seem like an endless line of triumphs (PoL 4:86)⁷. In *1984*, all history books say that before the Revolution, "[t]here was the most terrible oppression, injustice, poverty" (93), which keeps their citizens content with their improved life (219). From the Party's point of view, the past is an enemy and must be destroyed in order to remain the myth about Big Brother as their Saviour. Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth is to alter historical records to fit the present facts, indicating the importance of destroying the past. Furthermore, Winston realizes almost instinctively that he must find "a fixed point in the ocean of lies" to resist complete indoctrination (Gottlieb 13).

If the Party can create history in their own favour, they can eventually erase concepts like freedom, individuality, and equality. Orwell thought that those concepts might be illusions, but they are powerful illusions, and if the people believed in them, they could be true (LaU 2:82)⁵. If, on the other hand, these concepts were erased from history, it would be impossible to think that they could exist. That is also why *Newspeak* will become the new official language in Oceania. Once perfected, all abstract words will have lost their meaning and it will be impossible to think individual thoughts and oppose the Party – so called *thoughtcrime* in *Newspeak* (55). "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (260). Perhaps one of the most well-known citations from Orwell's *1984*, and perhaps so because it contains some truth. Our access to information determines in large what we are capable to think and do.

Goldstein's book tells us that after the "Glorious Revolution" in the 1950s, the new rulers used all available communication technology to control their citizens. The printing press, the radio and Orwell's version of televisions – which could receive and transmit simultaneously – made it possible for the state to manipulate public opinion and keep them under constant

surveillance. "The possibility of enforcing not only complete obedience to the will of the State, but complete uniformity of opinion on all subjects, now existed for the first time" (214).

Orwell defined the highest stage of totalitarian organisations as "the stage when conformity has become so general that there is no need for a police force". In "gregarious animals" there is a tremendous urge for conformity, Orwell argued, and in a state where there is no law, public opinion is even less tolerant to eccentric behaviour (PvL 4:252)⁹. "The general temper in the country" determines how laws are carried out and how the police behave, Orwell thought. If many people fight for or defend freedom of speech, there will be freedom of speech, even if the law forbids it. If, on the other hand, there are laws protecting them, minorities can still be persecuted if public opinion tolerates it (FP 4:60)⁹. In other words, if the state can control the mental atmosphere in a civilization by controlling their access to information, public opinion might make way for a totalitarian ruler.

III. THE ATTRACTION TO TOTALITARIANISM

The people elect a leader "near to their mood", Orwell argued. Germany in the 1930s was in favour of a demagogue, providing a psychological need for a leader like Adolf Hitler (LaU 2:115)⁵. After the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was in great economic depth, they had to give up colonies and land territory, their army was downsized and forbidden to have either an air force or submarines. Hitler started the Nazi Party in a sense of rage and humiliation, and many patriotic Germans followed him. They wanted an authoritarian system where individual rights were to be sacrificed for the greater good ("How Did Hitler Happen"). Likewise, in 1984, "the handing-over of all power to a small caste" was "the natural, unavoidable condition of survival", due to "the consciousness of being at war" (200). In times of crisis, then, it seems reasonable to turn to totalitarian leaders who provides a solution.

Due to its war-efficiency, Orwell thought Nazism was "horrible but it *works*" (LaU 2:101)⁵. Furthermore, other countries did not oppose Nazism when it arose in the 1930s. The rich favoured Nazism and Fascism because they had less to fear than from Socialism or Communism. Private ownership was never abolished. The same people were capitalists and workers as before the Nazi Revolution, even though the state, the Nazi Party, was in control of everything (2:111). Leaders would either come to agreement with Hitler, as in France, or, as in Britain, ignore him as long as possible to avoid realizing their own incapability of fighting him,

Orwell argued (2:92). The only way to fight Hitler and Stalin was to understand their appeal (WHWS 2:170)¹⁰.

Hitler and Mussolini both understood the strength of national loyalty, which their opponents could not, and this understanding contributed to their successes (LaU 2:75)⁵. Orwell believed that under influence of a sense of national unity, the whole nation "suddenly swings together and does the same thing"; although, it could be "the wrong thing in perfect unison". The tendency of almost all citizens to feel alike and act together in moments of crisis, should not be underrated (2:85). "The energy that actually shapes the world springs from emotions – racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, love of war", Orwell believed (WHWS 2:168)¹⁰. Perhaps these emotions are stronger motivations than a concept like happiness?

Hitler's nation had been willing to overwork itself and fight for his sake for a long period of time, despite being a "criminal lunatic", Orwell argued. Hardly anyone would do the same for a rational and hedonistic worldview (WHWS 2:170)¹⁰. Hitler grasped the fallacy of the hedonistic attitude, that "human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain" which most western thinkers assumed. How to avoid this kind of Utopia became a motive for the Fascist movement: the desire to prevent too much rationality and comfort. People also want struggle and self-sacrifice, at least temporarily. The great dictators of that time had increased their power "by imposing intolerable burdens on their people". Psychologically, Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism were all better sounding than hedonistic conceptions of life, Orwell argued (RMK 2:29)¹¹.

Moreover, Hitler could not have succeeded was it not for "the attraction of his own personality". Orwell thought Hitler had "a face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs". Hitler saw himself as a crucified Christ: "the martyr, the victim" (RMK 2:28)¹¹. The attraction to such a person is enormous, Orwell argued. Every other film thematises a person fighting his destiny against all odds, making one feel that he *cannot* win but, somehow, he deserves to (2:29). If Hitler was the victim, who was his oppressor? I do not believe it matters, he only needed one enemy to blame for all miseries.

1984 is parodying how Stalin made Trotsky the state archenemy (Gottlieb 15). Big Brother, representing Stalin, came to power to save the people from the capitalists "with wicked faces", who "owned everything in the world and everyone was their slave" (Orwell, *1984* 76). Once the capitalists were defeated, Goldstein, representing Trotsky, became the "primal traitor", the collective object of hatred (15). This hatred, and the love for Big Brother, are

constantly reinforced during the daily ritual, the Two Minutes Hate. All Party members must watch a film of Goldstein denouncing the dictatorship. Winston feels that, although horrible, it is “impossible to avoid joining in”. Through the group flows a “hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledgehammer”. But the rage was “an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another” (16). So long as these emotions are applied to the same object, it seemingly does not matter which object.

The Two Minutes Hate ends with a portrait of their all-mighty leader Big Brother, changing the Party members' emotions into love and admiration. "My Saviour", someone murmurs and utters a prayer (18). These religious connotations indicate that Orwell thought totalitarian ideologies resemble religion; he even called a totalitarian regime a "theocracy" (PoL 4:86)⁷. Successful totalitarian ideologies seem to evoke strong collective emotions towards the sacred and the satanical. A ritual like the Two Minutes Hate reinforces the worship for the Divine Leader and the hatred for the Other, which had worked successfully in Hitler's Germany and in Stalin's Russia (Gottlieb, 15).

People seemed to be drawn to powerful leaders, who were also cruel and brutal. Orwell thought that “the new religion in Europe”, power worship, had “infected the English intelligentsia” (LaU 2:78)⁵. Moreover, there had been a remarkable increase in the worship of successful cruelty, Orwell argued in “Raffles and Miss Blandish”. The moral atmosphere in literature had been vulgarized the last decades. The concepts that “right is right and wrong is wrong, whoever wins” and “weakness must be respected” disappeared from popular literature. Instead, there were detailed descriptions of cruel, sadistic sceneries. This change in morality and attraction to cruelty was mirrored in politics. Fascism was often associated with sadism, but Stalinism was not. Orwell argued that “the countless English intellectuals who kiss the arse of Stalin are not different from the minority who give their allegiance to Hitler or Mussolini” (3:258). In other words, brutalities, whoever commits them, should not be praised and admired. But power worship was often connected to “a love of cruelty and wickedness *for their own sakes*”, Orwell argued (3:258).

The public intellectual Christopher Hitchens argues that Orwell understood "the thrill of domination ... and the thrill of being dominated" (EconTalk 3:17-3:24). These thrills normally lay latent in us but might be awakened by a shift in moral atmosphere. In 1984, Winston's intelligent comrade at The Ministry of Truth, Syme, talks about a public hanging: “I

like to see them kicking. And above all, at the end, the tongue sticking right out, and blue – a quite bright blue. That's the detail that appeals to me' (52)." Once brutalities like this are normalized, the morality might change and people will no longer judge a person for being attracted to sadism.

Furthermore, in *1984*, O'Brien tells Winston that the Party is creating a world based on hatred, and their aim is "power for power's sake", where "power is to make another man suffer" (275). O'Brien embodies the sadist, the cruel torturer whom Winston fears and admires simultaneously. "O'Brien had tortured him to the edge of lunacy" but it made no difference, "they were intimates", because O'Brien understood Winston (264). In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between the dominator and the dominated. Tyrants cannot command without the will to obey, Hitchens argues. Many people wish to be servants of power and, thus, be released from the responsibilities that come with freedom ("Why Orwell Still Matters" 204).

Orwell has been critiqued for ascribing all political motives to sadism in *1984*. For example, literature professor John D. Frodsham argues that totalitarian society is ruled partly by sadism, but envy, hatred and the other deadly sins are also motivations for power lust (147). However, the novel is probably a Swiftian satire (Crick 147), and Orwell wrote that Swift was "capable of picking out a single truth and then magnifying and distorting it" (PvL 4:261). I believe Orwell did just that in *1984*; he certainly knew there are several motives for power, but he chose what he found the most appalling – sadism –, and magnified it to prove his point, that sadism can attract and corrupt societies.

IV. NATIONALISM & GROUP AFFILIATION

The political theorist Bernard Crick points out that Orwell satirises the false fraternity found in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, by calling the dictator Big Brother. Instead of watching over you, as a big brother should, he is "watching you" and the positive family values becomes something threatening (149). Group affiliation is important for human beings, according to the philosophers Bard and Söderqvist. We try to figure out what our own group believes, and we try to defend those beliefs convincingly. This means that we relate to events and arguments according to what we believe are the wishes of our group-leaders and authorities (41). I argue that Orwell, by satirising fraternity, points to its importance for human beings and in extension for why totalitarianism could succeed.

For instance, in *1984*, Winston starts his rebellion quite uncertainly, all alone (28). In need for companionship, he convinces himself that the important Party member O'Brien – who later turns out to be his torturer – is on his side (85). When the young, beautiful Julia becomes his lover and joins his rebellion, Winston finds life much brighter (128). When O'Brien introduces Winston and Julia to (what they believe is) the secret resistance organisation The Brotherhood, Winston is empowered in his belief that Big Brother is a fraud and a tyrant. Both Winston and Julia agree to do the most horrible things, would they only be asked to:

'You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to encourage prostitution, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to disseminate venereal diseases – to do anything which is likely to cause demoralisation and weaken the power of the Party?'

'Yes.'

'If, for example, it would serve our interests to throw sulphuric acid in a child's face – are you prepared to do that?'

'Yes' (180).

Why would anyone in his right mind agree to do such things? This might be an example of horrors that ordinary human beings can do to each other in wartimes. A person who would never consider murdering in his private life, would not sleep worse if he bombed somebody from an airplane, doing it "for his country". Orwell argued that national loyalty has "the power to absolve evil", when evil is done for a 'greater purpose' (LaU 2:74)⁵. Winston finally feels that he is not alone; now, he belongs to a group, striving for a purpose. Winston and Julia are so convinced that the Brotherhood works for the better cause – to free the citizens of Oceania from Big Brother's cruel dictatorship – that they are willing to do whatever their admired leader O'Brien asks them to, except to separate from each other for ever (180).

Moreover, Winston believes every word of Goldstein's book, given to him by O'Brien, despite the fact that he has spent half the novel questioning the truthfulness in all records of history. "The best books", Winston thinks, "are those that tell you what you now already" (208). He is no exception to the influence of group loyalty and worship of its authority. Some feelings "unhinges the sense of reality [...] and the sense of right and wrong", Orwell argued. Even if one intellectually can admit the unjustifiable crimes committed by the own side, one cannot truly feel it. Pity "ceases to function" when "loyalty is involved" (NoN 3:430)¹².

Thus, we adapt incoming information to the worldview of our group. This worldview can come from religion, ideology, or any other grand narrative that unites the group. Since the world is too complex to understand, we need a fellow understanding that simplifies and makes us feel purposeful. For example, Orwell argued that the Christian belief in life after death is connected to the conception of good and evil; it motivates people to behave morally to be allowed entrance in God's heaven. When religious faith decreased in the western world, the faith in personal immortality decreased with it. But human beings have an existential need for believing in immortality, which makes individuals motivated to "salvage civilization", Orwell argued (AIP 3:127)²³. Without this belief, we could easily be fooled by totalitarian ideologies' promise of collective immortality. O'Brien explains that the individual must be willing to "make complete and utter submission", to "merge himself in the Party so that he *is* the Party". Only then can the individual become "all powerful and immortal" through the Party (Orwell, 1984 277). In other words, by behaving according to their ethics, a Party member lives forever since the idea of the Party lives forever.

Therefore, it is a privilege for Party members to become immortal, in contradiction to others, the non-Party members. Their group is the 'chosen one', making a clear distinction between 'them' versus 'us' and reinforcing the feelings of group affiliation, something larger than the individual (Gottlieb 17). In addition, all rebels in 1984 are "vaporized" and their "one-time existence was denied and then forgotten" (21), indicating how important it is for individuals to feel that they will live on after life. I believe that is why Winston starts his diary "for the future, for the past"; he wishes to leave behind a piece of himself, an evidence of his existence (29).

Due to the breakdown of religious belief and of patriotism (a positive devotion to one's own culture and customs), Orwell feared that nationalism was spreading rapidly in Europe (NoN 3:430)¹². According to Orwell, nationalism is to identify oneself with a single nation or other unit – Communism, Antisemitism, Zionism, Pacifism etc. –, where one's only duty is to advance its interests. While his definition of patriotism is defensive, nationalism is "power hunger and self-deception". A nationalist is convinced that his side is the strongest, even when the contrary facts are overwhelming. Serving his purpose, a nationalist persuades himself of always being in the right, and by doing so, justifies the most horrible lies and atrocities (3:411-412), much like Winston and Julia agrees to do in my earlier example.

Furthermore, according to Orwell, a nationalist finds certain facts intolerable, because their emotions are involved. Hence, the facts must be denied. Under influence of these kinds of feelings, "there is no limit to the follies that can be swallowed" (NoN 3:429)¹². For example, Winston wonders if his comrades at The Ministry of Truth really swallow the Party's announcement that the chocolate ration is raised to twenty grammes, when the week before it was *reduced* from thirty to twenty grammes:

"Yes, they swallowed it. Parsons swallowed it easily with the stupidity of an animal. The eyeless creature at the other table swallowed it fanatically, passionately, with a furious desire to track down, denounce and vaporize anyone who should suggest that last week the ration had been thirty grammes. Syme, too – in some more complex way, involving doublethink – Syme swallowed it. Was he, then, *alone* in the possession of a memory? (62).

Firstly, here, Winston has not yet met Julia nor joined the Brotherhood. He seems to look for a sign that he is not alone in perceiving the obvious: the Party lies to them. Secondly, "the eyeless creature" is a great example of a person capable of whatever his authority tells him, not completely unlike what Winston later promises to do for The Brotherhood. Here, however, Winston sees it more objectively, probably because he does not believe in the Party's worldview. Thirdly, Syme uses "doublethink" to swallow the state lies, one of Orwell's most famous concepts from the novel. Doublethink is based on a "schizophrenic system of thought" which Orwell found common in the nationalistic way of thinking (PoL 4:86)⁷.

In *1984*, every Party member knows "in which direction his memories must be altered", making him conscious that he changes reality. At the same time, by using doublethink, he represses it to his unconscious, and hence, does not feel guilty for falsifying reality; he does not know he has done it (223). Since a nationalist cannot accept facts not aligned with his beliefs, he must deny some facts. Otherwise, his whole worldview might collapse. Orwell argued that, for example, Communists could not see that Russia would have been defeated by Germany, without aid from Britain and USA; and Trotskyists could not see that the Russian masses accepted Stalin's regime (NoN 3:429)¹².

V. INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY & FREE SPEECH

The denial and self-deception in nationalism, caused Orwell to worry that the desire for individual liberty was declining. The "Russian *mythos*" had a "poisonous effect" on the truth, since defending Communism meant ignoring or excusing some of its horrors. To Orwell, freedom of speech was "the freedom to report what one has seen, heard, and felt, and not to be obliged to fabricate imaginary facts and feelings" (PoL 4:84)⁷. Intellectuals who thought that certain opinions should not be allowed a hearing because the truth could be "inopportune" or could "play into the hands of somebody", simply misunderstood democratic opposition and, thus, endangered the existence of free speech (4:85).

Individual integrity, Orwell argued, was "eaten away" by economic forces and undermined by "those who should be its defenders" (PoL 4:82-83)⁷. Daring to write truthfully became more problematic when a writer stood alone against consensus, both economically and socially. In past ages, a heretic stood by his moral standards. During Orwell's time, though, he saw his society drifting towards the use of writers for economic or political purposes, and rarely any writer opposed (4:82). Thus, conformity and self-censorship was favoured over truthfulness and individuality. I have earlier argued that Orwell thought public opinion is a strong force. If public opinion wants self-censorship, it might be difficult to resist. However, one single taboo could have "crippling effects", which might in the long run make all opinions but one acceptable, Orwell argued. Hence, self-censorship was a necessary tool for totalitarian systems aiming for complete conformity of opinion (4:88).

This intolerance for diverse perspectives, Orwell argued, led to the "growing indifference to tyranny and injustice abroad" (FP 4:60)⁹. In *1984* we are told that:

[I]n the general hardening of outlook that set in round about 1930, practices which had been long abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years – imprisonment without trial, the use of war prisoners as slaves, public executions, torture to extract confessions, the use of hostages and the deportation of whole populations – not only became common again, but were tolerated and even defended by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive (213)."

Here, Orwell refers to all horrors committed by the Fascists, Nazis, and Communists but which were denied or excused by their supporters; the "enlightened and progressive". Nationalists consider actions either good or bad according to who does them, not on their own merits. The example quoted from *1984* is similar to Orwell's argument in *Notes on Nationalism*,

where “torture, the use of hostages, forced labour” etc. could “change its moral code” when committed by the own side. Their moral was determined by political loyalty, Orwell thought (3:419). Moreover, these loyalties affected the English language, which was important to influence public opinion and put an end to the brutalities Orwell witnessed, he argued in “Politics and the English Language” (4:166).

To defend "the indefensible", political speech and writing must use brutal arguments that might be hard to face for most people, Orwell argued. The British rule in India, the atom bombs dropped on Japan, and the Russian purges and deportations, could be defended by writers who did not call the latter “*elimination of unreliable elements* [sic]” (PEL 4:166)¹⁵. Nevertheless, political language, Orwell claimed, consisted mostly of vague expressions and euphemisms, in order to avoid mental pictures of the real horrors in the discussed subject matter and to align with political loyalties (4:167).

Moreover, writers supporting totalitarian systems had to quickly change their opinions whenever the course of history changed, since totalitarian doctrines are changeable. As I earlier argued, the totalitarians must be seen as infallible and create history thereafter. That requires the orthodox writers to either lie about their true feelings or repress them altogether, Orwell argued (PoL 4:87)⁷. An 'orthodox' is either someone who has “more traditional beliefs than others in the same religious group”, or an idea, belief or activity “considered traditional, normal, and acceptable by most people” (Cambridge Dictionary). Orwell made a slightly different definition in *1984*: "Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (56). According to Orwell, an orthodox writer turns away from concreteness and uses ready-made phrases and slogans. This allows for the phraseology to do his writing for him, construct his sentences and in extension also his thinking, while hiding his meaning even for himself (PEL 4:157)¹⁵.

Orwell believed that this orthodox kind of phraseology might move towards turning the writer into a machine. If he constantly uses the same words and phrases, he might become unconscious of what he is saying. This state of consciousness seemed to Orwell favourable if not indispensable to political conformity (PEL 4:165-166)¹⁵. In *1984*, Winston hears this unconscious kind of speaking when a man utters a noise "in unconsciousness, like the quacking of a duck". Winston could not distinguish the actual words from "the stream of sounds that poured out of his mouth", except the phrase "complete and final elimination of Goldsteinism". It made no difference to Winston what the words were, he knew it was "pure orthodoxy", called

duckspeak in *Newspeak* (57). Although it had not yet become *duckspeak* in Orwell's time, he argued that the bad habits of language were widespread and might reinforce each other (PEL 4:157)¹⁵.

Political language can make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, why the English intelligentsia should simplify their English, make it more concrete, and express facts as truthfully as possible, Orwell argued (4:170). Winston in *1984* is an example of an orthodox writer, who becomes more clear-thinking as his writing develops. When he starts writing his diary, his writing is childish without any deeper thoughts. Then, he unintentionally writes "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" repeatedly, thus imitating the slogan style of the Party he is so accustomed to (20). Slowly and with effort, Winston develops a sense of self and begins to break free from his orthodoxy through the act of writing. His arguments become clearer and he starts to grasp his own attempts to resist his oppression. "Freedom is the freedom to say that two and two make four", Winston writes and realizes he is fighting for his right to speak freely (84). To get rid of the bad habits Orwell identified, especially in written English, we can think more clearly, which is a first step necessary towards political revival (PEL 4:157)¹⁵. Orwell believed that "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought" (4:167). In other words, what we think can be affected by word choice. Which language we use is important.

Our language can affect our thoughts, and our thoughts are partly determined by our emotions. The nationalistic feelings I have described earlier, are to some extent present in most of us. Orwell found it a moral effort to recognise the nationalistic emotions in oneself. It is a question of knowing oneself, making allowance for inevitable biases and daring to stand up for the truth. Emotions cannot vanish, but they can be prevented from infecting one's mental processes. Political action might even need emotional urges, but they should be able to co-exist with an acceptance of reality. (NoN 3:431)¹². That way, the important problems that were never discussed upon a reasonable level could be just that. If not, "the intellectual decencies can vanish, the past can be altered, and the plainest facts can be denied", Orwell predicted (3:428).

VI. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

From examining George Orwell's *1984* in light of his understanding of totalitarianism's emergence, I can say that the Party came to power largely due to their appealing promises of the future and their charismatic leaders in a time of crisis. The totalitarians managed to create a sense of fraternity, and the people voluntarily sacrificed their individual freedom for their

common cause. Feelings of belonging to a group are so important that anyone can deny facts and even commit terrors to others, for the sake of the group. My interpretation is that, in a sense, the totalitarian worldview is rather black and white, the sense of "you are either fighting for us or against us". In *1984*, this is exemplified by the immortality offered by the Party's collectivism.

According to Orwell, humans are social beings that want conformity. When public opinion allows for minorities to be exterminated, it is difficult to defend them. The acceptance and worship of cruelties and decreased desire for liberty occurred in *1984* and turned into a nightmare of tyranny. Yet, Orwell included Goldstein's book to make his readers alert to his warnings for the political trends. Should we tolerate atrocities committed by our side; should we accept the abandonment of egalitarian ideals; should we allow the worship of power and cruelty; should we let ourselves be deceived by the totalitarian propaganda; should we abandon the search for truth and the intellectual integrity; should we repeat what had already happened in Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, and Stalin's Russia? If not, we need to recognise our own biases, our own nationalistic feelings, and choose truthfulness over loyalty. Who are we taught to love and to hate according to our groups?

All these tendencies to accept and support totalitarianism remain in the human psyche, I argue. "Who controls the Internet, controls the people", might be a modern adaption of Orwell's famous quote. What we think and feel is still determined by our access to information, and our information today mainly comes from the Internet. With nearly limitless access to information, someone or something sort out what we read, watch and listen to. On social media, we can associate exclusively with like-minded and reinforce each other's beliefs, without ever having to listen to opposing arguments. However, hopefully Orwell's *1984* can continue to influence us and make us more alert to how totalitarianism easily deceives us. Orwell's final message seems to be that it is our personal, moral responsibility to resist totalitarianism and prevent *1984* from becoming reality. To quote George Orwell one last time: "Don't let it happen. It depends on you." (qtd. in Crick 154).

End Note

The acronyms I have used for Orwell's essays are the following, numbered in the order they first appear in the text:

1. LRS "Letter to R. Senhouse"
2. LFAH "Letter to F.A. Henson"
3. WIW "Why I Write"
4. RTE "Review of *The Totalitarian Enemy* by Franz Borkenau"
5. LaU *The Lion and the Unicorn*
6. LBSW "Looking Back on the Spanish War"
7. PoL "The Prevention of Literature"
8. PvL "Politics vs. Literature: An examination of *Gulliver's Travels*"
9. FP "Freedom of the Park"
10. WHWS "Wells, Hitler, and the World State"
11. RMK "Review of *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler"
12. PoL "The Prevention of Literature"
13. NoN "Notes on Nationalism"
14. AIP "As I Please"
15. PEL "Politics and the English Language"

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