

**PARADOXICAL POLITICS OF POWER, LANGUAGE,  
AND TRUTH IN ORWELL'S *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR***

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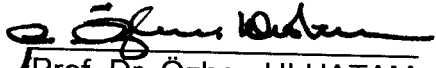
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## ABSTRACT

### PARADOXICAL POLITICS OF POWER, LANGUAGE, AND TRUTH IN ORWELL'S *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

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Thought to be revealing the features of “undemocratic” regimes, *Nineteen-Eighty Four* has been narrowly interpreted as a warning for future generations. Orwell, however, is not defensive or aggressive about any certain political system in the novel. In this respect, he solely uncovers the power relations that are central not only to all forms of political systems, but also to life itself. He analyzes power relations within the context of language, and

emphasizes the necessity of paradoxes which underlie these relations.

The relationship among power, language, and truth has always been a controversial subject. Reality is shaped by language, and this reality-constructing capacity makes linguistic systems integral to power relations.

Finally, by depicting a state called Oceania which uses paradoxes as a means of continuing its power, Orwell reveals the paradoxical nature of power politics. Through an analysis of power relations, Orwell brings under discussion the interactive relation among power, language, and truth.

## ÖZ

### ORWELL'İN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR* ROMANINDA PARADOKSAL GÜÇ, DİL VE GERÇEK POLİTİKALARI

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“Antidemokratik” rejimlerin özelliklerini göz önüne serdiği düşünülen *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, gelecek nesillere yönelik bir uyarı olarak dar kapsamda yorumlanmıştır. Ancak, Orwell, romanda belirli bir siyasi sisteme karşı savunucu veya saldırgan bir tutum izlemez. Sadece politik sistemlerin merkezinde değil, aynı zamanda yaşamın merkezinde yer alan güç ilişkilerini açığa çıkarır: Güç ilişkilerini dil bağlamında inceler ve bu ilişkilerin temelini oluşturan paradoksların gerekliliğini vurgular.

Güç, dil ve gerçek arasındaki ilişki her zaman tartışma konusu olmuştur. Gerçek, dil ile oluşturulur ve dilin gerçeği oluşturma özelliği, onu güç ilişkilerinin ayrılmaz bir parçası yapar.

Sonuçta, Orwell, gücünün devamını sağlamak için paradoksları araç olarak kullanan Oceania isimli bir devleti anlatarak, güç politikalarının paradoksal yapısını ortaya çıkarır. Orwell, güç ilişkilerini inceleyerek güç, dil ve gerçek arasındaki etkileşimli ilişkiyi tartışmaya sunar.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

British author and journalist George Orwell (25 June 1903 – 21 January 1950) is well known for his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which criticizes the rationale of power politics. Completed in 1948, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Orwell's masterpiece, and at the same time his most controversial work. The work has been approached from many points of view: As a product of Orwell's paranoia<sup>1</sup>, as an attack on Soviet Communism, as a prophecy for and warning against the dangers of totalitarianism. These approaches each have their value, but Orwell indicates something much subtler about political systems.

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<sup>1</sup> As Orwell was suffering from a deadly disease while writing the novel, it has often been deemed as the work of a dying man, written in despair for the future. Isaac Deutscher argues that the novel is not a product of a rational mind. According to Anthony West, "Only the existence of a hidden wound can account for such a remorseless pessimism." See A. West, "George Orwell," *Principles and Persuasions: The Literary Essays of Anthony West*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1957, 176.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written in the post-war era when communism was condemned, and when Stalin and Trotsky were alive. The work has long been regarded an attack against Soviet Communism and totalitarian regimes in general. In the novel, Orwell draws a picture of a seemingly totalitarian future. From the predisposed point of view of the Western readers, the world described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seems to parallel the Stalinist Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. This is not the case: The novel is not an allegory of the said systems. True, Orwell has brought totalitarianism under discussion. His purpose, however, is to attract the attention of the reader to the power relations in political systems, and demonstrate, by this way, that all organizations are built on paradoxical bases formed by the manipulation of language, and that history will come to an end through the formation of an atopian system.

Orwell's novel is not a criticism of a certain regime; it is beyond the political approaches of its time. Regardless of crude ideological leaning, the novel dwells on power relations, and the interplay between politics and language. Aware of the fact that the underlying fundamental element of all regimes is power, Orwell asserts that power comes to mean domination over language, thus domination over truth, and focuses on the relationship among power, language, and truth.

To analyze and explain Orwell's work, various critical approaches such as sociological, historical, deconstructionist, structuralist, and structural linguistic will be referred to. While Marxist (sociological) and deconstructionist approaches will be used to reveal the paradoxical nature of the work, structural linguistics will be applied to explain the Orwellian sign system in the novel.

In examining the paradoxical power relations among power, language, and truth, Marx's viewpoint concerning base and superstructure will be used to explain the system and the creation of individual in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Contrary to Marx's position, Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist viewpoint will be applied to reveal the nature of the conflict in the novel. Saussure's linguistic theory, which argues that language does not in itself carry a reality, will be used together with the hypothesis of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf to highlight the importance of language in its relation to truth and power. Finally, unstable and changing nature of power and power relations will be explained through Nietzsche's and Foucault's views concerning power politics.

In the First Chapter of this dissertation, the concepts of utopia and dystopia will be analyzed. These terms are not contradictory but interactive phenomena. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been considered for many decades a dystopia. It is, indeed, neither a

utopia nor a dystopia; it is an atopia<sup>2</sup>. Creating an atopia serves Orwell's purpose of making this work non-identifiable. He predicts that future political systems, as depicted in the novel, will not be brought down and displaced by others for these systems will be premeditated ones: They will be sustainable involving no revolutions or terror except the ones that are controlled. How the ideologically biased Western critics have misinterpreted the work, and how the novel has been used as a propaganda purpose for the policy of containment against communism in the Cold War era will also be observed. It will be argued that unlike what the common sense ideology indoctrinates, the novel is neither an attack nor a praise of political systems such as communism and fascism, but it just reveals the paradox that constitutes the core of these bodies.

In the Second Chapter, the relation between language and thought will be examined with reference to linguists and their theories. The coexistence and interdependence of the opposites will be studied as the strategy of rulers. Orwell asserts that the coexistence of opposites is essential for existence. Aware of this fact, the system depicted in the novel is built upon both internal and external conflicts to support its unity. In this context, the relationship among the three superstates; between Winston Smith and the state apparatus of Oceania; between the Inner Party and Emmanuel

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<sup>2</sup> In Greek, no place, or everywhere: "a-,not; topos, place" See *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992, 118.

Goldstein; and finally between Newspeak and Oldspeak languages will be examined. The two languages will be analyzed comparatively, and how the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction are carried out by the use of these languages will be explained. It will be observed that Newspeak and Oldspeak, seemingly two opposing languages, are indeed, complementary as all the other opposites in the novel.

In the Third Chapter, power relations will be analyzed with reference to Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. Power is neither an ability nor a thing to be possessed; it is a process. It gives the right to determine the truth, and truth in return grants power. There is an interactive relation between them. The concept of truth is variable and opposing truths may coexist. Each political system produces its own truth. No form of government, including totalitarianism and communism, then, can be deemed as wrong. Power needs paradoxes and contradictions to define and demonstrate itself. Power is collective, and thus, individuality, like other oppositions, is necessary for the system in Oceania and for the other states in the novel. These oppositions are encouraged within the limits defined by the Inner Party, which has understood the nature of power relations.

In the Conclusion, the arguments put forward in the chapters are reinforced and it is concluded that the common sense outlook

provides a blinkered approach leading to a narrow interpretation of the work. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell offers an objective analysis of power relations, and shows the interaction among power, language, and truth.

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## CHAPTER II

### ***NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR: UTOPIA, DYSTOPIA, AND ATOPIA***

Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent and our language -- so the argument runs -- must inevitably share in the general collapse. (Orwell;1975, 353)

Carrying the core of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in the essay "Politics and the English Language" (1946) George Orwell dwells upon the relationship between language and politics. The essay foreshadows Orwell's plans for writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1948, which has been understood by many critics as a warning for the coming of a totalitarian regime that would devastate the Western democracies. The critics, however, ignored the fact that Orwell did not intend to criticize a political ideology, that he described in the novel the interaction between language and ideology, and that the

future world would witness the manipulation of lexis to create “perfect” systems. Having already talked about the interaction between language and ideology in “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell further elaborated this discussion in his disputed work. His claim in the essay that “language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable” (Orwell;1975, 367) is revealed through a “dark” plot and an “apocalyptic setting” in the novel.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is considered an example of dystopian fiction. Being the anti-thesis of utopia, a dystopia is defined as “an imaginary or futuristic world in which the desire for perfection produces wretched or tortuous consequences.” (Carey and Snodgrass, 52) It is often characterized by an oppressive system of government such as an “authoritarian” or “totalitarian” one. Giving the definition of an imaginary “perfect” state, Orwell’s novel deserves to be labeled as such. The concept of perfection, however, which is claimed to produce “wretchedness” or “tortuous consequences” is a relative term and is worth discussing.

Dystopia and utopia are not new concepts: They have, in fact, fascinated mankind since the ancient times. These opposing systems have always existed side by side throughout history. Ancient philosophers cogitated about the nature of these governmental systems: Plato wrote *The Republic* (approximately in

360 B.C.) and Aristotle *Politics* (approximately in 340 B.C.). Renaissance thinkers were also concerned with the idea of government and produced works like *Utopia* (Thomas More) and *Leviathan* (Thomas Hobbes). In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital* to design a more modern version of utopia. In the twentieth century, there appeared in literature other examples of utopia such as H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

As seemingly two opposing systems, utopia and dystopia are, in fact, interactive phenomena. They are relative terms and each can take the place of the other. Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*, respectively depicting an "ideal" state and a "utopian" society, are, indeed, the portrayals of the regimes which fall into line with the Western definitions of dystopia:

In his *Republic* (4<sup>th</sup> C. BC.), Plato depicted a state in which rulers are philosophers, goods and women are communally owned, slavery is taken for granted, and the breeding of children is controlled on eugenic lines. There was to be no art or drama and next to no poetry. It was a Spartan utopia; indeed, the prototype of the totalitarian state. More's welfare state was also communistic. (Cuddon, 1017)

As mankind has given different names to the concept such as "communism" or "fascism," one person's utopia may be another person's dystopia. Within utopia one may find the dystopia, and within dystopia one may find the utopia. Essentially, utopia and

dystopia are one and the same: They both reflect the idea of a perfect state. The historian Lewis Mumford argues that regimes like Nazism and Communism also originated from the utopian ideals. Dystopia, as much as utopia, is an outcome of a quest for perfection:

Isolation, stratification, fixation, regimentation, standardization, militarism – one or more of these attributes enter into the conception of the utopian city, as expounded by the Greeks. And these same features, in open or disguised form, remain even in the supposedly more democratic utopias of the nineteenth century . . . In the end, utopia merges into the dystopia of the twentieth century; and one suddenly realizes that the distance between the positive ideal and the negative one was never so great as the advocates or admirers of utopia had professed. (277)

As works depicting the “perfect” states, dystopian (or utopian) fiction usually appears in the form of allegory to “satirize” systems and individuals that have existed within the socio-economic and socio-political structures man created. Like *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is considered a satirical allegory, which comes to mean a “device of presenting abstract ideas or moral principles in the form of symbolic characters, events, or objects.” (Halsey, 25) For many decades, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been seen by the critics of the Western capitalist world as a satirical allegory attacking the communist system in Russia, and a warning against the totalitarian regimes. Thomas W. Cooper, in “Fictional 1984 and Factual 1984,”<sup>3</sup> argues that Orwell depicts the worst aspects of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia in the Oceanian state. Philip Rahv, in “The Unfuture

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<sup>3</sup> See T.W. Cooper, *The Orwellian Moment: Hindsight and Foresight in the Post-1984 World*, eds. R.L. Sawage, J. Combs, D. Nimmo, Arkansas: Arkansas UP, 1989, 83-107.

of Utopia,”<sup>4</sup> regards the novel a satire on Stalinist nations, and maintains that Oceania’s design is based on Stalinist society. According to Patrick Reilly, “[The book] enacts a struggle between two religions: humanism, the religion of the past, . . . and totalitarian sadism, the religion of the present.” (270) The Western critics also include John Atkins, who, in “Orwell in 1984,”<sup>5</sup> considers the novel a triumph of totalitarianism, and Jeffrey Meyers, who, in *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation*, regards the novel an anti-utopia revealing the dangers of totalitarian ideas. These critics seem to be confined to the already existing political structures. They have missed the point that the book does not defend or criticize a political ideology, but is simply about paradoxical power relations. Some of these critics consider the novel a propaganda tool in the fight between communism and capitalism.

The ideological conflict between communism and capitalism began in 1917, following the Russian Revolution. The Cold War was the era of political struggle, tension, and rivalry between the two superpowers -- the United States and the Soviet Union -- and their allies from 1945 to 1990. It is “in reality only the most recent phase of a more general conflict between the established system of

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<sup>4</sup> See P. Rahv, *Modern Critical Views: George Orwell*, ed. H. Bloom, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987, 13-20.

<sup>5</sup> See J. Atkins, *Critical Essays on George Orwell*, eds. B. Oldsey and J. Browne, Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986, 30-38.

Western capitalism and its internal and external opponents.” (Williams, 10) The threat of Nazi Germany led to the alliance of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. However, the World War II alliance among the world's leading economic power, the world's greatest colonial empire, and the world's major Communist state was based on ideological discrepancy and mistrust. The United States and the Soviet Union, the two former wartime allies, fell in a controversy over how to reconstruct the post-war world. The United States and Great Britain pursued the policy of containment against communism which started the Cold War period.

Orwell's novel served a propaganda purpose for the U.S. policy of containment in the Cold War period. In this sense, the novel constituted a weapon for the Western powers seeking every opportunity to denounce the communist regime. As the author Bernard Oldsey put it, “The book did fulfill a need in the Western mind.” (16) The novel was thus used for political purposes: It was praised as a work against communism and was taken as an archetype of the system. This prejudiced approach of the West regards the novel a “dystopia” showing the “worst” human society and setting imaginable, and a warning against the dangers of a totalitarian society.

In the novel, Oceania is a “dystopian” society from the viewpoint of Winston, the main character, who is a common Outer

Party member. Thirty-nine years of age and suffering from varicose ulcer, Winston is a clerk in the Ministry of Truth. He is engaged in altering history and making propaganda to suit the ends of the Party. He has vague memories of the past and is not even certain about the current date. On the other hand, from the standpoint of O'Brien, the all-knowing member of the Inner Party, Oceania is an "ideal" society.

The novel describes the conditions of life in a seemingly totalitarian state and makes an analysis of such a rule and its mechanisms. Orwell indicates that such a system relies purely on language itself. The two political ideologies (those of the Inner and Outer Party members) exist within the two languages spoken in Oceania, namely the Newspeak and the Oldspeak languages. Having the motto that language *is* ideology, Orwell, in fact, creates an atopia which comes into existence through a linguistic and/or ideological conflict.

Orwell's purpose is not to describe a utopia or a dystopia, but an atopia which means "no territorial borders." In the novel, there appears, on the surface, a continuous warfare between the three superstates. "The frontiers between the three superstates, [however], are in some places arbitrary." (Orwell, 214) "The fighting, when there is any, takes place on the vague frontiers." (Orwell, 215) Though they seem to be three separate powers, the three superstates are, indeed, the same. The Ingsoc of Oceania, the Neo-

Bolshevism of Eurasia, and the “Death Worship, but perhaps better rendered as Obliteration of the Self” of Eastasia “are barely distinguishable.” (Orwell, 226) Their “vague frontiers” (Orwell, 215) always remain inviolate. Oceania is called a state, but, indeed, there is no state or nation. The citizens of Oceania are ruled by a governmental organization known as “the Party” embodied in the image of an omniscient and all-powerful leader called Big-Brother, which is no more than a picture. On purpose, Orwell creates such a “queer” political body: He shows that although the leader is just a picture, the polity behind it is solidly alive. This is atopia, and Orwell creates this atopian picture to explain what the future world will be like: There will be no territories, no borders, no nations.

Through the depiction of “nowhere” and “everywhere,” Orwell makes the work non-identifiable, and if any definition is made concerning the ideological basis of the novel, it is open to challenges. This is Orwell’s goal: To prophesy a non-identifiable system -- an atopia -- and to emphasize the significance of language in its formation. The work is, therefore, beyond ideologies. It demonstrates the global mechanisms of power relations. Never romanticizing the cause of Winston Smith, it shows the audience how power operates, and while doing so, how the “priests of power” (Orwell, 303) use language. Orwell’s point, however, has been

misjudged by the critics who held the novel as revealing “his deep interest in totalitarianism.” (Zwerdling, 2164)

According to common sense critical approach, the totalitarian systems are characterized by six basic features: an official ideology, a single mass party, a secret police, a communication monopoly, a weapon monopoly, and a centrally directed economy. These features have been determined by the ideologically biased Western philosophers who interpret the terms according to the norms of the West. The liberal internationalists of the West believe that “the people have a real interest in and desire for peace and that democratic regimes would, . . . allow these interests and desires to dominate.” (Brown, 26) From this viewpoint, the enemy of peace is formed by militarist, authoritarian, autocratic, anti-democratic regimes. There are, however, flaws in their account of how the world works and of the motives of human conduct. The liberal internationalists of the West consider their norms applicable to all societies regardless of the unique local norms and values that distinguish individual societies from each other.

To understand the world in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Marx's viewpoint concerning the production mechanism and the culture this mechanism creates should be taken into consideration. Karl Heinrich Marx (1818 - 1883), the German philosopher, explains the power of the capitalist class by setting up a basic framework of “Base” and

“Superstructure.” According to Marx, the basis of human life and history is mode of production. Social institutions are built upon the base of economy, entirely dependent upon material conditions. Institutions like marriage, religion, government, etc. can only be understood when examined with respect to economy.

In the social production which men carry on as they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society--the real foundation, on which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. (Marx, 51)

Orwell describes the processes depicted by Marx by referring to the base and superstructure of the Oceanian society. The production system depends not on the “welfare” of the individual, but of the state. Hence, the system has formed individuals who wholeheartedly devote themselves to the state. Even the philologist Syme is happy with his occupation of destroying the scores of words for he knows that he is serving the system: “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words” (Orwell, 59) says Syme. In “Two Minutes Hate,” a daily two-minute period which begins at 11:00 AM, people demonstrate their devotion to the Party and the system by chanting slogans like “Death to the traitors” (Orwell, 176) and shouting insults at Goldstein, the alleged leader of the opposing organization, the Brotherhood. The type of economic system (mode of production) plays a dominant role

in creating individuals and in shaping all other aspects of life in this society.

Winston is a specially fabricated self as there is no convenient base structure to form an individual like him. He is dissatisfied with the system. His physical weakness, his ill health, and his detachment from the others suggest that he does not belong to the superstructure of Oceania, but to the superstructure of the nineteenth century capitalist paradigm where diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, and typhus were common. Accordingly, his poor health makes him different from the others. He seems to belong more to the previous century. However, he is biased about the past. He has vague memories of those days when “everything [was] different.” (Orwell, 37)

The question arises here: How can an “individual” like Winston come into existence in such a society? An individual like him cannot exist unless being designed on purpose by the system which is aware of the need for oppositions and threats for its healthy survival. Winston seems to have been created by the Party itself as a controlled anarchist. “Winston Smith is a prototype of man deliberately being remade by political and technological forces, the state’s evidence that not only culture but human biology and psychology are its antagonists and its conquests.” (Feder, 2145) This opposition is necessary for the protection of the system, for the

sustainability of the collective body, and for avoiding stagnation. Abstaining from stagnation is essential to a “perfect” system for such a system requires adaptation to existing conditions, and thus, to continuous change. Stagnation, on the other hand, brings one-sidedness.

Marx held that capitalism produced two common classes of people: those owning the means of production (the bourgeoisie, capitalists) and those selling their labor in order to earn enough to survive (the proletariat, the working class). As the purpose of economic action is to gain profit, there is an inevitable conflict between workers and owners (the relations of production). Marx had faith in the revolutionary role of the proletariat. He argues in *The Communist Manifesto* that this working class will eventually bring down the capitalists:

[T]he development of large-scale industry cuts from under the feet of the bourgeoisie the ground upon which capitalism controls production and appropriates the products of labor. Before all, therefore, the bourgeoisie produces its own gravediggers. Its downfall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. (Marx and Engels, 41-42)

Winston, like Marx, believes that the proles (in Marxist terms, “proletariat”) will be victorious in the future. He assumes that the proles, who make up eighty-five percent of the population of the state, will overthrow the Party. Marx thought that the revolution would take place in England and capitalism would be replaced by communism. The proletariat in England, however, was not supplied

with the necessary education and linguistic basis that would enable them to revolt. In order to make them passive and unable to revolt against capitalist oligarchy, the state furnished them with alcohol and pornography. This is also the practice exercised on the proles by the Inner Party. In Oceania,

there was a whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama and entertainment generally. Here were produced rubbishy newspapers . . . sensational five-cent novelettes, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs . . . There was even a whole sub-section . . . engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography.” (Orwell, 50)

As opposed to what Marx and Winston believe, the future world will not be a communist utopia. Orwell shows that working class people will always be kept in check and at bay by the ruling class. The Inner Party in Oceania keeps the proles sedate with cheap pornography, beer and gambling. These people lack linguistic basis and thus lack consciousness. This is not a prediction; it is a description referring to the state of the proletarians in England in 1948 when the novel was written: “By creating a world in which the ‘proles’ still have their sentimental songs and their beer, and the privileged consume their Victory gin, Mr. Orwell involves us most skillfully and uncomfortably in his story.” (Symons, 380) As a result, the Party may ignore the proles as they pose no danger to its rule:

What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect. In a Party member, on the other hand, not even the smallest deviation of opinion on the most unimportant subject can be tolerated. (Orwell, 240)

The caption saying “Proles and animals are free” (Orwell, 83) shows the irony of the situation: Proles who are captivated with alcohol and pornography cannot be considered free. The Inner Party member O’Brien makes fun of Winston’s reasoning concerning the proles. He says, “perhaps you have returned to your old idea that the proletarians or the slaves will arise and overthrow us. Put it out of your mind. They are helpless, like the animals. Humanity is the Party. The others are outside.” (Orwell, 309) Hence, as O’Brien puts it, the proles of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* belong to the base structure of Oceania; they are monopolized by the Party and they can never revolt.

The superstructure, from the viewpoint of Marx, is the construction of the institutions that serve the economic and political interests of the capitalist class, and the base is composed of the working class. The capitalists always set up institutions (such as education, mass media, law, and values) that defend their interests. Through these institutions, the capitalists create “individuals.” Newspeak, doublethink, the Ministries, and media are among those institutions in Oceania, and by means of them, the Party creates individuals like Parsons, who is Winston’s neighbor, and who works with him in the Ministry of Truth. He is ambitious about all political and social activities. Even when he is kept in the cells of the Ministry of Love, Parsons is loyal to the Party and is pleased to be arrested.

He is “one of these completely unquestioning, devoted drudges on whom, more even than on the Thought Police, the stability of the Party depended.” (Orwell, 26) Thus, individuals who unconditionally commit themselves to the system are formed.

The Party is neither capitalist nor communist: It is a different sort of oligarchy which is a “form of government in which power is held by only a few people,” (Halsey, 703) and the elite segment of society is usually distinguished by wealth. There is a difference between the Inner Party and the Outer Party members in respect to physical comfort. When Winston visits O’Brien’s house, he is awed by the exceptional ambiance:

The whole atmosphere of the huge block of flats, the richness and spaciousness of everything, the unfamiliar smells of good food and good tobacco, the silent and incredibly rapid lifts sliding up and down, the white jacketed servants hurrying to and fro – everything was intimidating. (Orwell, 194)

The Inner Party members are provided with some daily comforts such as good tobacco, and razor blades. The Party, however, is “different from the oligarchies of the past.” (Orwell, 302) What defines the oligarchy in Oceania is not wealth but power. O’Brien is not a very rich figure; he is, instead, vested with power and authority. He says, “The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life happiness: only power, pure power.” (Orwell, 301-302)

The oligarchy in Oceania, moreover, is in collaboration with the oligarchies in Eurasia and Eastasia. These oligarchies are the same, and they are not distinguished by prosperity, family, or military heroism like the oligarchies of the past. They are distinguished by their power. "It is . . . an oligarchy of refined intellects that is running Oceania . . . it knows how to manipulate language and memory and, through these, the nature of perceived reality; it is totally aware of its reasons for wanting power." (Burgess, 35) For the Party in Oceania, the purpose of power is power. The Party wants power because it is aware that one who holds it holds the right to determine "reality."

Having established a system that only considers power, the Party relies on linguistic and cultural institutions. The controlling regime even goes to the extent of replacing the entire language with a new one called "Newspeak," the state's "official" language. It constitutes the main tool of the Party in achieving its goal of making "thoughtcrime" (unapproved thoughts) impossible.

This would be a very simplistic approach to the novel. Orwell, however, seems to be saying something much subtler. He suggests that language and politics are interactive phenomena: Language is used as an instrument to create political systems. The origins of this idea can be traced in "Politics and the English Language" where he refers to the close connection between language and politics. He implies that language does not follow a natural growth, but is an

instrument shaped according to political purposes. He illustrates this in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where Newspeak is constructed to serve the ulterior motives of the state.

In the next chapter, the relationship between thought and language will be examined through linguistic, social, philosophical, and historical contexts. The position that language heavily influences thought is realized in the novel where Orwell draws particular attention to linguistic systems as playing a vital role in the political strategy of the Party. Newspeak will be examined by analogy with Oldspeak, which is described as necessary as Newspeak to deconstruct and reconstruct the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In forming the argument that language constitutes the basis of all political systems, and that political systems give shape to language, the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Edward Sapir (1884-1939), and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) will be referred to. Orwell asserts that paradoxes constitute the necessary conditions for the sustainability of a political system. The oppositions that exist in the system of Oceania, particularly the ones among the three superstates, between Winston and the state of Oceania, and between Newspeak and Oldspeak are all calculated oppositions that work for the system.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COEXISTENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE OPPOSITES IN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

From the very beginning of his career as a writer, Orwell was passionate about the power of words. Orwell's work as a journalist nourished his ideas on the possible effects of language on politics. By putting emphasis on language in his books and essays, he attracted attention to the subject. In "Why I Write" (1947), he explains that when he was about sixteen he "suddenly discovered the joy of mere words." (Orwell; 1975, 437) In "Politics and the English Language," he deliberates on the decline of English language and its political causes.

Language, however, has always been a controversial subject as it has occupied philosophers, linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists for centuries. This is because “language is not merely a means of expression and communication; it is an instrument of experiencing, thinking, and feeling.” (Chomsky, 3) The fact that language has always been a disputed issue arises from the relationship between thought and language. Arguments concerning this relationship dates back to Plato. The Greek Philosopher refers to the said relationship in *The Republic*, and considers it necessary to remove all words related to fear and weakness:

[W]e must . . . throw out all those terrible and fearful names applied to this domain: Cocytus, Styx, “those below,” “the withered dead,” and all the other names that are part of this model and which make all those who hear them shiver, as is thought. (Plato, 64)

Plato asserts that the words “Cocytus” and “Styx,” which mean “wailing” and “hatred,” should be eliminated for the purpose of ensuring the bravery and strength of the citizens to prevent them from becoming weaker. Writing several thousand years before Orwell, Plato was concerned with how words might relate to thought itself.

Seventeenth century scholars Francis Bacon in *Novum Organum* and John Locke in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, also deliberated upon the relationship between thought and language. A German linguist and philosopher from the

eighteenth century, Wilhelm von Humboldt considered language and thought inseparable, as language entirely shaping thought, in a hypothesis called the *Weltanschauung* (worldview).

There are three positions concerning the relation between speech and thought: language heavily influences thought; language does not influence thought; language partially influences thought. The first position gained importance with the twentieth century linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf known for their Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis<sup>6</sup> in the 1930s which claims that language strongly influences thought.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an example that highlights Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, in which the people of Oceania are classified in accordance with the language they use: Newspeak and Oldspeak languages. Newspeak has been created with the purpose of thought control: "The purpose of Newspeak was ... to make all other modes of thought impossible." (Orwell, 343) Among the three classes (proles, Outer Party members, Inner Party members), the proles are kept in line with a very limited language, provided with cheap novelettes, films and newspapers. In the same way, the ruling class deprives the Outer Party members of a language of individual nature with the purpose of converting them to state-

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf developed a theory of linguistics which claims that language shapes thought. In linguistics, The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Whorfian Hypothesis) postulates a relationship between the grammatical categories of the language a person speaks and how that person perceives the world.

oriented activities only. In order to restrict their thoughts, the Party designedly restricts their language. The Inner Party members, on the other hand, use Oldspeak which is a thought-provoking language bestowing them the ability to think paradoxically.

One who cannot think cannot exist. French mathematician and philosopher Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) explains the relation between thought and existence with his famous words “Cogito ergo sum (I think; therefore I am).” Manipulation of language, thereby, results in the deprivation of conscious existence, and this idea is emphasized in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The Party has to destroy people’s conscious existence because there has to be a state of permanent war. The world in the novel is ruled by three similar superstates. “In one combination or another, these superstates are permanently at war, and have been so for the past twenty-five years.” (Orwell, 215) Continuous warfare is a necessary condition for collectivism. There is, indeed, only an artificial divergence between the three superstates: They are the counterfeit opponents of each other. Accordingly, different from the wars of the past, these wars have no material or ideological causes:

The problem was how to keep the wheels of industry turning without increasing the real wealth of the world. Goods must be produced, but they must not be distributed. And in practice the only way of achieving this was by continuous warfare. The essential act of war is destruction, not necessarily of human lives, but of the products of human labor. War is a way of shattering to pieces ... materials which might otherwise be used

to make the masses too comfortable, and hence, in the long run, too intelligent. (Orwell, 220)

Deprivation is a deliberate means in Oceania to secure the rule of the Party. In this respect, war has an important function: It prevents any improvement in the material condition of its population, which would give way to opposition.

The state of war also provides a justification for the Party's power and it "helps to preserve the special atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs." (Orwell, 228) Above all, however, war is necessary for the maintenance of the collective body: "The war is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects, and the object of the war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society intact." (Orwell, 228-229) This is true not only for Oceania, but also for the other superstates. Maintenance of the collective body is actually paradoxical in a state where there is no territory. As the practice of power politics is universal, there cannot be any borders separating these states. Since this practice requires large bodies to rule, there has to be collectivism.

Similar to the struggle between the three superstates, there is also a struggle between Winston and the state apparatus of Oceania. The novel tells the story of Winston Smith, a fabricated dissent from the regime of Oceania. His story consists of his rejection of and his revolt against the state apparatus, and his final

submission. In fact, characters (rebels) like Winston will always exist for this is an unending struggle. This ceaseless struggle, this vicious circle is a necessary condition for the survival of the ruling system. For, it is through oppositions that the system can define and assert itself.

The system represents a body and Winston's position in this system suggests that of a weakened microbe vaccinated to the body to activate the defense mechanism of the system. The system needs individuals like Winston and Julia for its immunization. Winston is made to struggle against the Party. "His existence as opposition has been necessary because the social structure of Oceania needs to define itself in relation to its opposite, i.e. -- in terms of what it is not." (Koç, 2) Meaning, thus, stems from knowing what a thing is not rather than from knowing what a thing is. Meaning is formed through difference, through "binary pairs". Claude Levi-Strauss<sup>7</sup> asserts that human thought and culture is formed and organized by binary opposites such as life and death, man and woman, good and evil.

Created as the binary pair of the state apparatus, Winston has a constructed identity, and has been under the observance of the Party from the very beginning. O'Brien reveals this truth to Winston after he is arrested: "For seven years I have watched over

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<sup>7</sup> A French anthropologist and structuralist who developed structuralism as a method of understanding social systems.

you.” (Orwell, 280) As a fabricated self Winston is provided with some memory by the Party. He “remembers” his past just to be different: He recalls his family, the death of his mother and sister, that once he was married with someone called Katherine. Although at present Oceania is at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia,

Winston well knew it was only four years since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia. But that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control. (Orwell, 39)

He, however, has a vague memory of the past. The shady memories of Winston are questionable. He thinks that at some other time in history, things must have been better. He, as a matter of fact, is not fully conscious of the present either. At the beginning of the novel, he starts to keep a diary, and marks the date as “April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1984.” The narrative voice, however, says that Winston “did not know with any certainty that this was 1984. It must be round about that date . . .” (Orwell, 9) The fact that he is provided with dim memories reveals the Party’s strategy to create a controlled threat against itself.

The idea of creating opposites to construct meaning also reveals itself in the imaginary figure Emmanuel Goldstein, who has been created by the Party itself as the binary pair of Big Brother with the intention of enforcing Big Brother’s status. Goldstein is allegedly

a former top member of the Inner Party from which he has later been drawn apart. He is said to have founded an organization known as “The Brotherhood,” committed to the fall of the Party. The question whether Goldstein, or the Brotherhood really exists is left unanswered in the novel. Members of the Brotherhood are required to read “the book” supposedly written by Goldstein, “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism.” Goldstein is the constant subject of the “Two Minutes Hate” sessions. The existence of Goldstein simply ensures continuous support and devotion towards Big Brother.

With a view to establish an infallible system, the Party makes use not only of oppositions like Goldstein but of all the institutions of the state. Language, however, constitutes the primary means of maintaining power. In the novel, Orwell shows the relationship between power and language through Newspeak. In the “Appendix” of the novel, Newspeak is defined as an instrument of totalitarian domination:

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism . . . The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. (Orwell, 343)

Newspeak is not a natural but a fictitious language based on the language called the Oldspeak. It has a greatly restricted vocabulary and grammar. The Newspeak term for the “discarded” language is

Oldspeak, which is intended to be completely surpassed by Newspeak before 2050. As philologist Syme asserts, "By 2050 – earlier, probably – all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared." (Orwell, 61) Oldspeak, or "Standard English," on the other hand, is indeed, an integral part of the system, and thus, will always exist together with Newspeak. Just as Newspeak is necessary for molding the minds of the Outer Party members, Oldspeak is essential to the continuity of the ruling class, the Inner Party. It involves antonyms and oppositions to create thought which is necessary for the Party. The Party's capacity to think, thus its survival, is provided by this language. Syme is not aware that the language used by the ruling class and by those who are ruled can never be the same. As the language of the Inner Party, Oldspeak is not only a means of communication, but also a mentality, a link with the history and the past of Oceania. Accordingly, when it is removed, a way of thinking, and the connection with the past will also be removed. Hence, it will always remain as the language of and constitute a way of thinking for the Inner Party members to continue the collectivist ideology of the state: It will exist so long as the Inner Party exists. Though Newspeak seems to be the prevailing language, it is only a by-product of Oldspeak, which actually constitutes the essence of the Party.

According to Orwell, what lies beneath the social systems is language. Once the linguistic system is settled, the governmental body, then, is founded on this system. In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, there are two different languages, and based on these two languages, the Inner Party carries out two missions: deconstruction and reconstruction. As O'Brien reveals, power lies in these two processes: "Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing." (Orwell, 306) Winston is aware of the reconstructionist policies of the Party. Yet, he knows nothing about its deconstructionist policies.

Deconstruction as a critical approach was created by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who coined the term to assert that in Western culture people are inclined to think and convey their thoughts in terms of binary oppositions. Through deconstruction, Derrida attempts to remove the boundary between binary oppositions. According to deconstructionist viewpoint, everything changes and nothing is certain. It questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth. Hence, it comes to mean adaptation to changing conditions.

Deconstruction is a must for evolution. In *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin uses the phrase "natural selection" (302) which was later replaced by the more popular term "survival of the

fittest,” meaning a struggle for life in which only the organisms “best adapted to their environment tend to survive.” (Halsey, 675) Adapting to existing conditions can be done by deconstruction (or doublethink) which is to believe and not to believe. Derrida says:

I confess that everything I oppose, so to speak, in my texts, everything that I deconstruct – presence, voice, living, voice and so on – is exactly what I’m after in life. I love the voice, I love presence, I love ...; there is no love, no desire without it. So, I’m constantly denying, so to speak, in my life what I’m saying in my books or my teaching. (8)

In parallel to what Derrida says, doublethink, one of the principles of the Party, lays the groundwork for deconstruction as it enables holding two contradictory beliefs at the same time. Doublethink is the way the Party controls “reality.” Through doublethink, people accept anything the Party tells them, even if it contradicts to what they have been told before. They suppress any thought that is against anything the Party says. They don’t even remember having used doublethink: In April 1984, Oceania is at war with Eurasia, and citizens must believe that they have always been at war with that state regardless of the fact that Oceania was in alliance with Eurasia only four years before.

Ironically, the protagonist Winston plays a key role in the process of deconstruction. He changes reports of the past so that every record of past is consistent with the current “reality” provided by the Party. He even changes records some of which are already

fictitious, and creates a new past which then takes the form of historical “facts” as in the case of Comrade Ogilvy:

Suddenly there sprang into his mind, ready-made as it were, the image of a certain Comrade Ogilvy, who had recently died in battle, in heroic circumstances. ... It was true that there was no such person as Comrade Ogilvy, but a few lines of print and a couple of faked photographs would soon bring him into existence ... Comrade Ogilvy, un imagined an hour ago, was now a fact ... Comrade Ogilvy, who had never existed in the present, now existed in the past, and when once the act of forgery was forgotten, he would exist just as authentically, and upon the same evidence, as Charlemagne or Julius Caesar. (Orwell, 53-54-55)

Winston creates a person named Comrade Ogilvy, and substitutes him for another person in the records. As a product of Winston’s imagination, Comrade Ogilvy is an ideal Party member. The Party creates a past serving its own ends; the past becomes completely forgotten and unrecorded. Like Winston, other workers in the Ministry of Truth “correct” the flow of history to make it consistent with the Party ideology.

The fact that the Party attributes importance to the principle of “mutability of the past” (Orwell, 243) for the continuity of its rule is also expressed in the Party slogan: “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” (Orwell, 40) As Winston knows through his own work of falsifying records in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, “mutability of the past” stands for continuous alteration of historical data. As the narrative voice reveals, this process of continuous alteration

was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, soundtracks, cartoons, photographs – to every kind of literature documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance . . . In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct; nor was any item of news, or any expression opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. (Orwell, 46-47)

The chief political reasons for this destruction are also given in “the book,” supposedly written by Emmanuel Goldstein. First, there must be no occasion of questioning the “reality” provided by the Party. Second, in a world without certainty, the Party can easily present itself as the only truth, and thereby continue its omniscience. “The deeper reason for changing the past continuously is, however, the destruction of the self.” (Klawitter, 86) As the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski explains:

People whose memory – personal or collective – has been nationalized, become state-owned and perfectly malleable, totally controllable, are entirely at the mercy of their rulers; they have been deprived of their identity; they are helpless and incapable of questioning anything they are told to believe. They will never revolt, never think, never create. They have been transformed into dead objects. (127)

Yet, they can be re-created. This is the aim of the Party: Creating a passive public ideal for a “perfect” system. In reaching this aim, the main tool of the Party is language, namely Newspeak.

Newspeak serves to the demands of the Party, whose aim is to make “thoughtcrime” impossible. The underlying goal is to continuously reconstruct people. This design of the Party gives way

to three main objectives of the language: lexical reduction, narrowing the links between lexis and semantics, and creation of new words.

Aware of the fact that “To expand language is to expand the ability to think,” (Myers, 353) the government in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* aims to cut back the Newspeak vocabulary. By manipulating the language, the government wishes to alter people’s way of thinking. Whorf asserts that “different languages impose different conceptions of reality.” (Myers, 352) Therefore, when words that describe a certain thought are removed from a language; that thought becomes more difficult to think of and convey.

After doing his usual job, Winston goes to have lunch in the canteen of the Ministry, where he comes across with Syme, who is working in the Research Department on the “Eleventh Edition” of the Newspeak dictionary. As they are having their lunch, Syme shares information on the Eleventh Edition of the dictionary, and sums up the regime’s policy on language as follows:

The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition. We’re getting the language into its final shape – the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else . . . We’re destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050. (Orwell, 59)

Syme’s work of destruction consists of the exclusion of adjectives, verbs, synonyms, and antonyms from the official dictionary. As he talks to Winston, he clearly states the purpose of the whole program:

“Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.” (Orwell, 60) Syme, however, is wrong. What he does not know about the system is that Oldspeak will always exist. Without it, there would be no Inner Party because Oldspeak means thought.

In the reduction of words, verbs are targeted because they imply the concept of self-determined action. In the new tenth edition of the Newspeak Dictionary, there will be a reduction in the number of verbs, hence a reduction in the number of actions of a person. Adjectives are targeted because they are used for such activities as differentiation and comparison, and synonyms because they imply alternatives, and are therefore useless in a state which aims to reduce diversity, and narrow the possible thoughts a person can have.

Unlike Newspeak, Oldspeak involves antonyms, and thus enables the Inner Party members, using this language, to think bilaterally. Outer Party members using Newspeak have a one-track-mind. With Newspeak, the purpose is to create passive people who do not think and who are devoted to one object only: the Party.

Apart from lexical suppression, the Party also aims to narrow the links between lexis and semantics. This aim is reached through the use of euphemisms, making the expression less offensive,

disturbing, or troubling by substitution of an agreeable and indirect word or phrase. Euphemisms are often used to conceal unpleasant or disturbing ideas. Where there is politics, euphemism is inevitable:

[...] political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers*. (Orwell; 1975, 363)

As expressed by Orwell in "Politics and the English Language," euphemisms constitute a part of a strategy to dissolve meaning. The four ministries that form the state apparatus and are concerned with propaganda, war, terror, and deprivation are, for instance, named respectively as "Ministry of Truth," "Ministry of Peace," "Ministry of Love," and "Ministry of Plenty." (Orwell, 6) Concentration camps are called "Reclamation Centres," (Orwell, 189) and forced-labor camps "joycamps." (Orwell, 350) By blurring the connection between words and the concepts they denote, the Party distorts the connection between what Saussure called the "linguistic signs."

The linguistic sign is for Saussure the fundamental element of language. It is composed of two parts which are linked to one another: "the signifier" and "the signified." The signifier is the "sound-image" (Saussure, 150) that correlates to a signified which is the "concept," (Saussure, 150) the meaning, the thing indicated by the

signifier. For instance, the word "tree" is the signifier, and the concept of "tree" is the signified. Combination of a signifier and a signified produces sign, i.e. meaning, and allows communication. According to Saussure's theory, any system of signs, made up of signifiers and signifieds, is a signifying system.

The government of Oceania creates a signifying system for the people to be ruled. This creation, however, brings together destruction. The Party aims to destroy the relationship between the signifier and the signified and thus destroy the sign itself. This aim is largely achieved by creating new words as well as removing and abbreviating them. Concepts become meaningless when words are taken away or destroyed. For instance, in Newspeak

Countless . . . words such as *honor, justice, morality, internationalism, democracy, science* and *religion* had simply ceased to exist. A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them. (Orwell, 349)

A "blanket word" for the above concepts is "Crimethink." In covering these words, it also abolishes them. All words associated with the concepts of objectivity and rationalism, for instance, are contained in the word "Oldthink," and thus abolished.

This policy of the Party is based on the structural theory which asserts that words exist mainly in relation to one another. This relation takes place in two forms: "association" and "difference." According to Saussure's theory, signs are saved in our memory in "associative" groups. The word "education," for example, may be

stored with other words that end in “-tion:” relation, association, etc., or with words that have similar associations: school, teacher, textbook, college. Likewise, equality is stored in the minds of the citizens of Oceania with other words such as democracy, justice, and liberty. By removing the word equality, the Party removes all the words associated with it, and thus removes the signifiers altogether.

Most of the Newspeak terms that can be found throughout the novel and constitute the regime’s technical and political vocabulary are compounds and abbreviations. As it is explained in the “Appendix,” this practice of using abbreviations was mostly observed in totalitarian organizations which produced abbreviations such as Nazi, Gestapo, Comintern, and Inprecor, but

in Newspeak it was used with a conscious purpose. It was perceived that in thus abbreviating a name one narrowed and subtly altered its meaning, by cutting out most of the associations that would otherwise cling to it . . . *Comintern* is a word that can be uttered almost without taking thought, whereas *Communist International* is a phrase over which one is obliged to linger at least momentarily. (Orwell, 350-351)

The Party is aware that signs are stored in people’s memory in associative groups, and, thus, it uses compounds and abbreviations with the purpose of cutting out the associations, and preventing further thinking.

The distortion of the connection between linguistic signs is easy for the Party which understands the arbitrary nature of the sign: The linguistic sign is arbitrary because “the bond between the

signifier and the signified is arbitrary.” (Saussure, 150) Which signifier is to be used for which signified is solely based on an agreement, or a kind of contract. There is no logic behind the assignment of a particular signifier to a particular signified, or vice versa. It is simply agreed upon by a community, and accepted without any reasonable relationship. “Language thus represents the mass mind.” (Whorf, 156)

This main characteristic of the sign makes it possible to separate the signifier and the signified, or to change the relation between them. The word “free,” for instance, continues to exist in Newspeak, but it is separated from its signifier. It can only be used in such statements as “This dog is free from lice . . . This field is free from weeds.” (Orwell, 344) It cannot be used in the sense of “‘politically free’ or ‘intellectually free’ since political and intellectual freedom no longer [exist] even as concepts, and [are] therefore of necessity nameless.” (Orwell, 344) The Party slogans which read “War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength” are other examples for the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified: People in Oceania easily accept the Party slogans, and do not hesitate to regard war as peace, slavery as freedom, and ignorance as strength.

Like Newspeak, Ingsoc might be acknowledged as a signifying system. As the words produced for Newspeak, Winston is created

for the system. Just like the words are dependent on each other for meaning, the Party depends on Winston-like figures for its existence since the coexistence and interdependence of opposites are the principal conditions for collectivism and a powerful state.

In the next chapter, how the novel has been misinterpreted as a work demonstrating the pathetic situation of an individual will be discussed. Contrary to the general viewpoint, the novel is simply an impartial analysis of power relations, and Winston is not the hero of the novel, but only a necessary piece in the power relations of Oceania. Winston's role as an opponent, his individuality is encouraged until the moment he is arrested because individuality, in the sense of an opposition, is indispensable to the power politics of Oceania. The nature of power relations will be examined, and power, language, and truth will be seen as not only integral to these relations but also integral to each other.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **POWER/LANGUAGE/TRUTH: THE INSEPARABLE PHENOMENA**

So far, the novel has been taken as a prophecy, an allegory, and a product of Orwell's paranoia. Yet, critics have also considered the story a tragedy, and Winston a hero. Philip Rahv, in "The Unfuture of Utopia," regards the vision in the novel "entirely composed of images of loss, disaster, and unspeakable degradation," (13) and refers to Winston as the hero of the novel. George Woodcock, in "The Crystal Spirit," considers human drama the heart of the book, and finally, Robert Welch asserts that there is a sense of "man's inhumanity to man" (35) in the novel, and Winston is "the hero who is outside society, who finds its values repugnant." (41) Winston could be a hero as long as he constituted an alternative

power against the collective power of the Party. Yet, his fake and poor rebellion is fabricated by the Inner Party itself, a situation which makes him a stereotypical character who can never show the required personality traits of a hero.

Contrary to what common sense critics think, Orwell does not depict a tragedy to show the fall of Winston because he has already been condemned from the very beginning. He just reveals how power relations function in any social system, and shows what lies beneath all socio-political bodies, and that man is a political animal. Orwell's interest in individuals in a political structure also shows his deep concern with the meaning of human existence. For him, life consists of the relationship of forces, and power is not only confined to political bodies. It is the essence of existence. Nietzsche explains that this world is

a monster of energy, without beginning, without end . . . force throughout, as a play of forces . . . a sea of forces flowing and rushing together . . . *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides! (214-215)

Foucault, too, refers to power relations among people as one wishing to conduct the behavior of another. “The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others.” (Foucault; 1988, 426) What is important in Foucault's description is that power does not affect directly others but their actions. The question is how this

modification is realized. Control over actions can only be obtained by control over truth, and truth is the output of power, and the meaning of existence. One who holds power holds the right to produce truth, and truth, in return, grants power. Power and truth are, then, interactive phenomena both feeding on each other, and making this life, past and present, meaningful:

[W]hoever holds power and is capable of repression has the right to change history, and in this way change the concept of truth. Truth, then, is the product of power; the truth of Oceania is derived from the power network or power organization of Oceania; and in turn, this truth creates a right to rule -- which cannot be opposed by any citizen, because the effect of repression by the Party is that there appears to be no option other than this truth. (Koç, 27-28)

“Mutability of the past” is necessary for the Party to control the production of truth. By holding the power, the Inner Party not only changes the actions of the present, but also the actions of the past. History, then, is also a product of power and cannot be considered objective.

The “will to truth” is a consequence of the “will to power,” and vice versa. The truth produced bestows power in the same way power bestows truth. Truth is not an established, verified fact or principle. It does not have to be approved or accepted; every statement of power constitutes a truth. It is, above all, variable: It is “[a] mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms.” (Nietzsche, 219) It changes depending on a given power situation.

Having already understood the nature of power, Orwell does not defend or attack any ideology; he is solely interested in power relations which produce temporary truths. According to him, what lies beneath power relations is language, and truth, which is the product of power, is constructed by language itself. Hence, language, or its control means power. This stems from the interdependent relationship between thought and language which

makes it clear that languages are not so much a means of expressing truth that has already been established as means of discovering truth that was previously unknown. Their diversity is a diversity not of sounds and signs but of ways of looking at the world. (Kerenyi, xxxi)

Language is not a reflection of an established truth but a means of creating truth. Different languages lead to different world perspectives:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages . . . all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar. (Whorf, 213)

Every society, then, is shaped by a language reflecting its ideology and truth. The system in Oceania cannot be deemed as manipulating language for tyrannical ends; Ingsoc represents a truth, and Newspeak and Oldspeak are the linguistic systems constructed with the purpose of imposing that truth.

Contrary to what the blinkered common sense outlook offers, “Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as

true.” (Foucault; 1980, 131) Political systems and ideologies, then, cannot be deemed as wrong; instead, there are various systems, and thus, various truths. There are no wrong forms of power: There are just different forms of power. Democracy, capitalism, totalitarianism, communism, and other examples solely offer different truths regardless of what prejudices they are attributed.

The Inner Party has its own regime of truth which Winston refuses to be a part of. From the beginning of the novel, Winston is in search of a truth, and looks for it in his vague memories and dreams. From these memories he attempts to reconstruct his own past, and thus his own truth. He is in a vain struggle of fighting against an organized power with his own disorganized truth. He is not aware that reality is not exterior to power; it is something embedded within, comprised by power. Hence, reality is the Party. This is what O’Brien tries to explain to Winston in the Ministry of Love:

You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right . . . But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind . . . only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party. That is the fact that you have got to re-learn, Winston. It needs an act of self-destruction . . . (Orwell, 285)

Winston holds reality to be consistent and universal, a separate entity; he does not understand the subjective nature of it. His defeat

is inevitable as the Party's power is well-established and organized. O'Brien tries to make Winston understand that power comes to mean collectivism by saying: "The first thing you must realize is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual." (Orwell, 303) Throughout the novel, Winston endeavors to get organized. His relationship with Julia and O'Brien, and his false hopes concerning the proles are all indicators of his wish to become an organized power.

The citizens of Oceania have no power as they belong to a collective body, and therefore, they identify themselves with the Party. Winston, who rejects the truth of Oceania, tries to become organized in his struggle against the state by acquiring a unique identity. Identity, however, is not something inborn; it is constructed by one's position in the relations of power. Winston's situation in the power relations of Oceania is that of an opposition. The reason the Party has constructed Winston Smith as an opposing identity is for creating an opposing truth. As power is the struggle of two forces, it is a relation of active and reactive forces:

Being composed of a plurality of irreducible forces the body is a multiple phenomenon, its unity is that of a multiple phenomenon, it is a unity of domination. In a body, the superior or dominant forces are known as *active* and inferior or dominated forces are known as *reactive*. Active and reactive are precisely the original qualities which express the relation of force with force. (Deleuze, 40)

Reactive forces are integral to power relations. Resistance is the reactive force that conflicts with the active force. Power demands resistance: It gets experienced, becomes organized, and acquires its identity through a resisting object. It is not something that can be gained: It is “a machine in which every one is caught, [including] those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised.” (Foucault; 1980, 156) Hence, it refers to a process, and must, then,

be analyzed as something which circulates or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth.” (Foucault; 1980, 98)

This idea that power is not discernible is endorsed in a dialogue between Winston and O’Brien. By regarding the Inner Party members “the priests of power,” (Orwell, 303) O’Brien replaces God with their priesthood, and thus, defines their mission as keeping power and power relations under control. He tries to make Winston understand that the Inner Party is the sole owner of power. The Party has abolished the concept of God, which also indicates that the Party does not want to share its authority with an abstract phenomenon.

Power does not lie in the Inner Party: It lies in its relationship to Winston and other oppositions. It is through a resisting force that the Party asserts and defines itself. The opposites, i.e. the reactive forces cannot be referred to as powerless or impotent. There is no

binary opposition between the active and reactive forces; they are complementary, and it is through their relationship that power emerges.

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power . . . [The] strictly relational character of power relationships . . . depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the network of power. (Foucault; 1990, 95)

Aware of the significance of resistance in power relationships, the Inner Party creates its own reactive forces. In this sense, as much as Eurasia and Eastasia are essential to the state of Oceania, rebelling individuals like Winston are essential to the state apparatus. Individuality, as long as it is controlled, is not a threat to power, but an essential condition for it.

In Orwell's Oceania, every act of the state seems to be aiming at eradicating individuality: Everybody is constantly being watched in this system, the solidarity of the family is weakened, marriages are subject to the approval of the Party, sex is allowed only as a means of procreation, and individual relations are prevented at all levels. Contrary to the view that "Orwell has imagined a world in which the self, whatever subterranean existence it manages to eke out, is no longer a significant value, not even a value to be violated," (Howe, 43) individual is of great value in Oceania. As constituting a threat, individuality cannot be held as devaluated in the novel: "The seven

years that O'Brien . . . spends in surveillance of Smith and the time and effort he invests in interrogating and torturing him until his ultimate surrender of selfhood indicate . . . [that] the self is the greatest challenge." (Feder, 2145) The Party encourages Winston's individuality from the very beginning. Winston has been given space to develop his selfhood, and consequently his opposition to the state. He is even allowed to stay outside the range of the telescreen: "For some reason the telescreen in the living room was in an unusual position. Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where it could command the whole room, it was in the longer wall, opposite the window." (Orwell, 8) This deliberate encouragement of the Party is implied throughout the novel. At this stage, when outside the range of the telescreens, impossible on normal circumstances, Winston begins to keep a diary and record his thoughts and memories, an action punishable by death. The implication of the deliberate encouragement of the state is also made concerning the antique shop and Mr. Charrington, who is also an agent of the regime like O'Brien:

[Mr. Charrington's] spectacles, his gentle, fussy movements and the fact that he was wearing an aged jacket of black velvet, gave him a vague air of intellectuality, as though he had been some kind of literary man, or perhaps a musician. His voice was soft, as though faded, and his accent less debased than that of the majority of proles. (Orwell, 107-108)

Mr. Charrington's outlook, his mode of speaking, and his manners all suggest that he does not belong to that part of the state. He rather

resembles the refined intellectuals of the Inner Party. That he offers Winston to take a look at the room upstairs again reveals the Party's strategy to lay the groundwork for Winston's rebellion.

The Party's need for rebels shows that the system in Oceania is not built on coincidences. Winston would, no doubt, be drawn to the antique shop where "anything old, and for that matter anything beautiful" (Orwell, 110) is sure to attract his attention. The diary, the coral -- which seemed to belong to a time quite different from the present one -- and particularly the room above which "awakened in him a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory" (Orwell, 110-111) are only baits provided by the system to encourage his opposition. The Party is aware of the necessity of challenges, and for this reason it is reluctant to destroy the copies of "the book," which is used by Inner Party members to encourage potential rebels like Winston. The blasphemous book seems to have all the answers concerning the nature of power. However, the irony of the situation is that though "the book" tells the story of revolution, and explains the present political process, Winston cannot make any sense of it. The last part he manages to read from "the book" before he and Julia are arrested questions the original motive, the instinct behind the will to power, and the concept of doublethink.

Here we reach the central secret. As we have seen, the mystique of the Party, and above all of the Inner Party, depends upon *doublethink*. But deeper than this lies the original motive, the never-questioned instinct that first led to the seizure of power and brought *doublethink*, . . . This motive really consists . . . (Orwell, 246-247)

What the motive really consists of is withheld. Yet, despite O'Brien's efforts to teach Winston what "doublethink" is, Winston has no capacity to understand the nature of power, and the instinct for power.

What O'Brien tries to teach Winston is that power has no goal but itself: It always demands its own increase and continuation. "[Power] has no end or aim but itself . . . power can be thought of as the never-ending, self-feeding motor of all political action that corresponds to the legendary unending accumulation of money that begets money." (Arendt, 137) Power is not stagnant; it is a process of constant self-creation. There is no end to power for it has no objective other than itself. As O'Brien tells Winston, their aim is a ceaseless one to gain more power which will never be satisfactory: "Always – do not forget this, Winston – always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler." (Orwell, 306-307)

What makes the Party in Oceania different from the oligarchies of the past is that it knows what constitutes the specific nature of power: "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely

in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life happiness: only power, pure power” (Orwell, 301-302) says O’Brien, and adds that maintenance of power depends on maintenance of oppositions:

The espionage, the betrayals, the arrests, the tortures, the executions, the disappearances will never cease. It will be a world of terror as much as a world of triumph . . . Goldstein and his heresies will live for ever. Every day, at every moment, they will be defeated, discredited, ridiculed, spat upon—and yet they will always survive. (Orwell, 307)

Aware of the dynamic nature of power, the Party perpetually creates opposing truths to avoid stagnation. For it is only by this continuous process of creating and destroying oppositions that power can be held indefinitely. There will always be figures like Winston, yet they will always be defeated.

After Winston is released from the Ministry of Love, he becomes a frequenter of the Chestnut Tree Café as other revolutionists before him. He spends most of his time in the Café drinking Victory Gin. He is also given a frivolous job. Having ultimately professed his gratitude and love for Big Brother, Winston no longer has a place in the state: He has played his part, and his role as an opposition in the power relations of Oceania is over. Therefore, he is to be vaporized. He, however, is neither the first nor the last of his kind: There will always be others like him. Hence, individuals like Winston are temporary. What is stable and permanent is the state of paradox that is integral to power relations,

and Orwell reveals the nature of this paradox in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

As the aftermath of World War II, regimes were brought down and changed, boundaries were redrawn. Written between 1946 and 1949, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a depiction of a stable and permanent political system in the post-war era. Orwell predicts that future political systems will be well-organized and indestructible. These systems will not be brought down and replaced by others for they will be calculated systems. They will be the systems of integrity and sustainability. There will be no wars, revolutions, or terror except the ones controlled by the powerful. Thus, if this novel is to be held as prophetic, it should be assumed as the prophecy of a state of power with no territories.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell draws the picture of a well-organized, powerful state. However, the critics of the Western capitalist system, who cannot break free of their assumptions, beliefs, and prejudices, have judged the novel as a prophecy of a future totalitarian state. These critics, who could not help observing the novel in terms of a stereotyped view of the world and who could not abandon their clichés, have been unable to see that Orwell merely disclosed power relations existent in life. It is through power relations that truth is produced. Political systems man has created may assume different names and change in time; that which is constant and steady is the power relations constituting everything that belongs to man and producing truth.

Although “truth” in the Western connotation of the word does not allow for diversity, it is, indeed, variable. There is an arbitrary relationship between the word truth and its implication. There is no single truth, but many. Yet, there will always be a struggle between them, and consequently there will be a prevailing one. What lies beneath the clash between different political systems is that each system wishes to exert its own truth through a linguistic system constructed for this purpose.

Orwell shows that in power relations; power, language, and truth are inseparable phenomena. Truth which is a product of power is constituted by language. Different languages impose different

truths: In the power relations of Oceania, Newspeak and Oldspeak are mediums through which the truth of Oceania is imposed. Newspeak language creates one-sided people accepting one truth only. Its purpose of making all other modes of thought impossible is, in other words, a purpose of monopolizing the truth. As long as there is will to power, and thus will to knowledge, there will always be the manipulation of language. Besides being considered revealing the dangers of a totalitarian state, the novel has also been considered a warning against the dangers of linguistic manipulation for tyrannical purposes. Manipulation of language is integral to power relations, and it is inevitable considering the relationship between language and ideology which reveals that our perception of the world is shaped by the language we speak. It is, therefore, a natural process resulting from the emergence of different truths.

Power is the only objective of the Party, and the means to attain this end, i.e. manipulation of language, is of no significance. "The ends justify the means" is the philosophy of the Inner Party, and power is its own justification.

Besides truth and language, the existence of oppositions is also inevitable in power relations. Far from being a hero, Winston, as the reactive force, is only a necessary piece in the functioning of these relations which require opposing forces for its sustainability. The Inner Party sees that the coexistence of oppositions is in the

nature of the universe, and reconstructs this paradox in the state of Oceania: It brings into life, reinforces, and finally destroys its oppositions.

Orwell neither depicts a tragedy nor makes a criticism of a certain regime in his work; he offers an objective analysis of power relations which are central to life itself. He shows that systems are built on paradoxical bases as paradox constitutes the complex mechanism of power politics. In the nature of power politics, there is no place for a "center," a "locus" because the world is "a monster of energy, without beginning, without end," (Nietzsche, 214) and Orwell predicts this atopia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to show that history is about to come to an end.

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