



# Dystopia, Surveillance, And Political Control In The Writings Of George Orwell

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## Abstract

This paper explores the theme of dystopia, surveillance and political control in George Orwell's classic works, *1984* and *Animal Farm*. The research discusses how Orwell criticizes totalitarian regimes, manipulation of ideology, and institutional oppression through a comparative thematic analysis as in *1984* a dystopian society where people are continuously monitored, ideology is controlled, and history is rewritten, and in *Animal Farm*, the emergence of tyranny and distortion of the revolutionary ideals is allegorized. The methods of control that Orwell questions in the paper are propaganda, manipulation of truth, and comments on individual autonomy. Uniting the academic insights, the analysis focuses on the timelessness of the Orwellian thought in the interpretation of both past and present expression of the authoritarian power[1].

## Keywords:

Dystopia, Surveillance, Political Control, Totalitarianism, Propaganda, *1984*, *Animal Farm*, Thematic Analysis by George Orwell.

## 1. Introduction

George Orwell, one of the most authoritative representatives of the twentieth-century literature, is known due to his insightful analysis of the totalitarianism and the sociopolitical game on the human mind. His novels, *1984* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945) provide very valuable insights into how the mechanisms of oppression work, proving how power can corrupt thought and action of people to the point when the Party is omnipresent, and the concept of autonomy is completely eroded. *Animal farm*, in its turn, is dedicated to exposing how the pristine ideals of revolution and the venomous spirit of authoritarian concentration, allegorically recounts how the ideology can be addressed to control the masses consciousness[2].

Taking these two texts as a subject of study, this paper uses a thematic analysis to discuss themes of dystopia, surveillance and political control. The paper sheds light on the structural, psychological, and ideological processes of subjugation by contextualizing the accounts of Orwell in historical and ideological contexts. The study also includes critical views that analyze the topicality of the warnings of Orwell in a time when the world is already covered by digital surveillance, propaganda by the state, and political manipulation.

## 2. Literature Review

The critical study of Orwell focuses on the political and literary aspects of his work. Crick (1980) places the work of Orwell in the historical background of totalitarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century, in which the allegory of *Animal Farm* is the Stalinist Russia and the revolutionary ideals as insincere. According to Patai (2000), *1984* is a systematic examination of totalitarian rule, which emphasized on psychological coercion, historical revisionism, and inhibition of free thought.

According to contemporary scholarship, Orwell was well prophetic in foreseeing contemporary tools of manipulation. Gleason (2019) views Orwellian surveillance as an example of the digital surveillance and algorithmic regulation, and stresses that his ideas will always remain relevant. Also, the language and propaganda studies explain the importance of focusing on discourse as a tool of perpetuating power. Newspeak in *1984* is a form of control over thought by narrowing linguistic options, whereas the rhetoric of the Squealer in *Animal Farm* controls perceptions and gives an authoritarian regime the right to be. The current paper is based on these frameworks as it presents a comparative thematic analysis incorporating the textual evidence along with critical interpretations to examine the persistence of Orwell in his criticism of power, ideology, and social compliance[3].

## 3. Methodology

This paper utilizes a thematic analysis (qualitative) of *1984* and *Animal Farm*, as well as the themes of dystopia, surveillance and political control. Textual examples were coded and analyzed in detail in terms of the role they played in how Orwell criticizes authoritarianism. It is analyzed in terms of explicit representations, like Party slogans, propaganda, and rhetoric of revolution, and implicit mechanisms, like psychological conditioning, manipulation of language, and social hierarchies.

This approach, combining the literary analysis with the political and sociological approaches, makes it possible to have a more subtle perception of the narrative techniques and thematic concerns of Orwell. The comparative method identifies similarities between the allegorical and dystopian narrative of Orwell and offers information about the structural and psychological processes of oppression described by the author in his books.

#### 4. Dystopia: Building up of Repressive Realities

The dystopia that Orwell illustrates works both spatially and psychologically. Oceania, 1984 is a strictly controlled world in which surveillance, political brainwashing and revisionism of history all meet to produce conformity. The main character in the novel, Winston Smith, is a person who is exposed to the gradual process of depriving oneself of individuality at the cost of the Party. War is peace such is the paradoxical slogan. Freedom is slavery. It is strength through ignorance (Orwell, 1949, p. 4) portrays how logic has been maneuvered by the Party, which makes citizens perceive contradictions as true. The presence of Big Brother and the Thought Police is such that no one can rebel even in their thoughts without extreme repercussions[4].

*Animal Farm* is dystopian in allegory, showing how revolutionary ideals are turned into totalitarian rule. The early perception of the egalitarian society of the animal is distorted under the leadership of Napoleon and it is summarized in the statement that states that all animals are equal. Napoleon turns the farm into a miniature world of totalitarian oppression by slowly accumulating power and reinterpreting the rules of law. As opposed to the technological surveillance in *1984*, the dystopian world of Orwell appears because of ideological manipulation and social conditioning with strong focus on the power of subtlety and pervasiveness.

Critics have remarked that Orwell dystopias are also warning systems of how easy freedom becomes when it is in the presence of a high concentration of power (Patai, 2000). Showing literal and symbolic processes of suppression, Orwell shows that dystopia is not a physical state but a state of society, as well as a mental one[5].

#### 5. Spying and Mind Control

The concept of surveillance in works by Orwell is both an exteriorized and interiorized method of control. Constant observation is imposed by telescreens, hidden microphones and informers in 1984. Winston Smith inherits the gaze of the Party and, therefore, he checks his own behavior and thoughts all the time in order not to commit a thought crime (Orwell, 1949, p. 6). This surveillance within itself is a kind of an example of the psychology of domination as explained by Orwell, of how authoritarian states achieve obedience through the usage of fear.

Surveillance in *Animal Farm* is done by the use of propaganda and social ranking. The rhetoric of persuasion by Squealer speaks to the group memory, rewrites history and legitimizes the power of the pigs, establishing an atmosphere of fear and obedience. Regulating narrative and memory, Napoleon makes it cognitively impossible to think of dissent. The two texts reveal how Orwell realizes that genuine authority goes beyond physical coercion to the intangible plane of the psychological, ideological domain, influencing the belief, perception and behavior[6].

As some scholars including Gleason (2019) have highlighted, the aspects of surveillance that Orwell depicts are precursors to modern issues of digital surveillance, data protection, and algorithmic rule. These facts make Orwellian dystopia ever-relevant to the contemporary political rhetoric.

## 6. Political Control and Rigging of the truth

Orwell is more focused on the use of manipulation of truth as an aspect of authoritarianism. The Party also systematically rewrites the past in order to preserve the ideological primacy: Who controls the past controls the future; Who controls the present controls the past (Orwell, 1949, p. 37). Historical revisionism undermines the collective memory and is the means to make sure that the citizen perceptions are consistent with the Party directives.

On the same note, *Animal Farm* portrays the use of power of ideology as represented by language and social norms. The way Napoleon would change the Seven Commandments one by one, shows how a truth may be twisted to justify the rule of a superior. The quote is the following: All animals are equal, some animals are more equal than others (Orwell, 1945, p. 91) is an example of how Orwell can see how language can be used to defend oppression. Political control in both writings is based not just on coercion but also on the strategic reconstruction of truth and collective memory, which is where knowledge, ideology, and power come into being.

## 7. Propaganda, Language, and Ideological Indoctrination

In Orwell, one of the major tools of control is the language. In 1984, Newspeak removes the words which can help to think in rebel way, and the slogans of Parties brain-wash people that the contradictions are normal. The language structure is restrictive to the freedom of cognition revealing the fact that Orwell was correct in stating that whoever has control over the language has the control over the thought.

The rhetoric techniques of Squealer in *Animal Farm* can be discussed as propaganda that distorts the perception and justifies the power of Napoleon. By selective framing, distortion of facts, and fear and loyalty appeals, the pigs manipulate the story and strengthen the social pecking order. Both of the works demonstrate the close connection between language, ideology, and political power, as the ability to control the discourse allows systematically reduces dissent and critical thinking.

## 8. The Limits of Agency and Compliance and Resistance

Orwell explores the conflict between defiance and obedience, with human agency being limited by structural, psychological and ideological forces. The rebellion of Winston Smith in 1984 though morally bold is eventually suppressed by the Party, a situation that depicts the extreme superiority of totalitarian structures. Likewise, the earliest rebellion of the animals in *Animal Farm* is diluted by propaganda, fear and violence as the power of resistance is stressed[7].

The study of compliance by Orwell proves how fear, ideology and social conditioning interact in a complex manner. Both of the texts demonstrate that oppression is not only supported through overt coercion but also supported with subtle manipulation, internalized beliefs, and system support of the power. Such depictions provide a critical perspective of the social and psychological processes that dictatorial governments use in order to perpetrate their authority.

## **9. Relevance in the Past and Present**

Orwell bases his criticism of authoritarian regimes on the political environment of his era, especially Stalinist Russia and fascism. Nevertheless, the motifs of surveillance, ideological manipulation, and dystopia are applicable to the modern world, such as the digital surveillance, state propaganda, and algorithmic control. The works of Orwell are the means to consider the long-term mechanisms of political and social domination.

The novels are also the warnings on the slow loss of independence, the truth, and critical thinking. The analysis of how power and control are presented by Orwell can help the scholars and the readers to understand that human societies can be easily manipulated and it is vital that people are more alert, transparent, and resistant to the manipulations in modern governments.

## **10. Compliance, Resistance and Human Agency under Authoritarian Control**

There is always a relationship of resistance and submission in the works of Orwell, which discusses the boundaries of the agency of individuals in the face of overwhelming political authority. Winston Smith, in 1984, represents the fight of free will in a world where people are subject to the surveillance instituted by the state and monitored by the ideology. Although he briefly resists: by writing secret diary entries, having illicit affair with Julia, reading subversive books, etc, the Party gradually destroys Winston, step by step. The ultimate betrayal and mental reconditioning that he goes through, leading to his acceptance of Big Brother, underscores what the Party can control the action of also controlling the thinking: "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (Orwell, 1949, p. 301). As Patai (2000) points out, the fact that Orwell describes Winston in these ways symbolizes the internalization of the totalitarian control and psychological repression is more effective in this context as compared to physical intimidation.

The experiences of the animals in *Animal Farm* are more reminiscent of resistance and compliance dynamics, albeit in an allegorical way. The first revolution against human domination, marks a group act of the agency and self-determination through commandment that, All animals are equal (Orwell, 1945, p. 8). Nonetheless, as Nazi comes to power, opposition is suppressed by propaganda, terror and chosen violence. The manipulation of language by Squealer makes the animals believe that inequality is the only thing that will help the farm to survive: "No one is more convinced than Comrade Squealer that all animals are equal (Orwell, 1945, p. 32). Crick (1980) believes that Orwell explains that the

revolutionary ideals can easily be compromised by the authoritarian corruption, because the social hierarchies and propaganda subdue the collective opposition[8].

The compliance psychology of both texts demonstrates the fine perception of Orwell on human behavior in the face of oppression. 1984: Fear of being spied on, and personalized guilt make it impossible to think independently, and this leads to a society where rebellion is no longer psychologically possible. Likewise, in Animal Farm, the indoctrination on ideology and distortion of history do not allow the animals to imagine the real opposition. As Gleason (2019) emphasizes, they are the precursors of the modern issues of surveillance and manipulation, where a person can absorb the limitations of political, technological, or social systems without realizing it.

Moreover, Orwell introduces resistance as multidimensional - as it can be open and hidden. The little rebellions Winston commits like secretly defying Party doctrine or getting involved in illegal relationships are, in fact, as important as what the animals do as a community to preserve the memory of the commandments initially given. But in both instances, structural power, the knowledge control and ideological indoctrination restrict resistance. These stories indicate that compliance is not merely passive; on the contrary, it is constructed and created through fear, propaganda, and socialization, and thus, the complex relationship between the person and the system.

Lastly, what Orwell highlights in his works is the weakness of resistance in situations where ideological influence is intertwined with structural coercion. Comparing the tragic failure of Winston in 1984 against the slow domestication of the animals in Animal Farm Orwell demonstrates that success in authoritarian control relies as much on the attempt at creating a certain perception and belief as much as it relies on the achievement of obedience. Both works emphasize the paramount role of memory, language, and critical consciousness as the tool of opposing domination, and offer long-term comprehension of how authoritarian regimes maintain authority over both individuals and groups.

## 11. Thematic Element Comparative Analysis

In order to summarize the discussion of the dystopian, surveillance, and political control that Orwell examines, the table below contrasts the key themes, the means of control and resistance and the textual evidence of such in *1984* and in *Animal Farm*.

Academic views are incorporated to support the explanation[9].

Theme	1984	Animal Farm	Scholarly Perspective
<b>Dystopia</b>	Oceania is a highly regimented, totalitarian state where citizens live under constant fear and ideological control. Slogans like “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength” (Orwell, 1949, p. 4) exemplify the paradoxical control over thought.	The farm initially represents utopian ideals of equality, but gradually becomes dystopian under Napoleon’s leadership. The commandment “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell, 1945, p. 91) highlights systemic inequality.	Crick (1980) emphasizes Orwell’s portrayal of corrupted revolutions; Patai (2000) notes the psychological dimension of dystopia in <i>1984</i> .
<b>Surveillance / Psychological Control</b>	Telescreens, microphones, and the Thought Police monitor citizens constantly. Winston internalizes surveillance, demonstrating the cognitive domination of the Party (Orwell, 1949, p. 6).	Squealer manipulates the animals’ perception of reality, revising history and justifying inequality. Psychological surveillance is exercised through propaganda rather than technology (Orwell, 1945, p. 32).	Gleason (2019) argues Orwell anticipates modern mechanisms of psychological and technological surveillance.
<b>Manipulation of Truth / Ideology</b>	The Party rewrites history: “Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past” (Orwell, 1949, p. 37).	The Seven Commandments are altered to legitimize Napoleon’s authority and manipulate collective memory (Orwell, 1945, p. 91).	Patai (2000) highlights how control over truth reinforces authoritarian power; Crick (1980) shows allegorical representation of

			ideological corruption.
<b>Resistance and Compliance</b>	Winston attempts rebellion through secret acts but is ultimately broken by the Party. Psychological reprogramming ensures total compliance (Orwell, 1949, p. 301).	The animals' collective resistance is gradually neutralized through fear, propaganda, and hierarchical manipulation (Orwell, 1945, p. 32).	Gleason (2019) emphasizes the internalized nature of compliance in Orwell's works, showing how both overt and covert resistance can fail under authoritarian control.
<b>Language / Propaganda</b>	Newspeak restricts thought, while Party slogans condition cognitive obedience (Orwell, 1949, p. 52).	Squealer's rhetorical manipulation justifies authority and alters perception, demonstrating how language shapes ideology (Orwell, 1945, p. 32).	Patai (2000) notes Orwell's focus on linguistic control as a mechanism of ideological domination.

### Analysis of the Table

The table explains that although the structure of the narrative differs, dystopian novel and allegorical fable, both 1984 and Animal Farm arrive at the same place and represent the authoritarian control mechanisms. Orwell shows us that it is not only through surveillance or force that one can control the population but also through manipulation of language, ideology and collective memory. These structural and psychological constraints are proven by the text to limit resistance. The academic view levels up the analysis that Orwellian writings are applicable today in the realization of past and present regimes of authoritarianism such as present-day digital surveillance and ideological control[10].

### Conclusion

Orwell's 1984 and Animal Farm allow analyzing the mechanisms of authoritarian control in a deeper way through a thorough understanding of how power, ideology, and social structures interrelate to subdue freedom and control the perception. By portraying the dystopia of Oceania and the animalization of Animal Farm, Orwell shows that even totalitarian states use the external force, but also the internal one that is based on manipulation and control of the mind, on the ideology, and language. The final subordination of Winston Smith to the Party and the gradual submission of the

animals to the rule of Napoleon is an illustration of how weak resistance is under the influence of structural and cognitive pressure, which are pervasive (Orwell, 1949, p. 301; Orwell, 1945, p. 91).

Distortion of truth and language turns out to be one of the key control tools in the two texts. The Newspeak and Party slogans of 1984 are used to censor thought and apply contradictions as normal to make it impossible to think independently (Orwell, 1949, p. 52). Squealer also uses rhetorical techniques in *Animal Farm* to bend reality and solidify the hierarchical power by systematically rewriting the Seven Commandments (Orwell, 1945, p. 32). Patai (2000) points out that Orwell points out the linguistic control as a point which thus shows that communication, ideology and power are three inseparable, and thus dominance is not limited in the physical domain but in the cognitive domain as well.

Additionally, the mental aspects of obedience and resistance highlight the sensitive nature of human behavior during tyranny that Orwell had in mind. Internalization of Party surveillance in 1984 results in self-regulating obedience and in *Animal Farm* in 1980, fear and propaganda discourage collective opposition (Crick, 1980; Gleason, 2019). Such descriptions indicate that authoritarian power is best employed when people are made to believe that oppression is normal or necessary, which shows how ideology, fear, and social conditioning are subtle to each other.

Lastly, the works of Orwell have a timeless quality in the modern society. The messages of the surveillance, manipulation and ideological control find a reflection in such cases as digital monitoring and the impact of the mass media, as well as modern political propaganda, which all highlight the need to be watchful and be able to think critically and defend oneself against the power of a concentrated authority. Incorporating both textual and academic arguments, this paper highlights that Orwell in his exposition of dystopia, political domination, and human agency cuts across time and has invaluable information about how authoritarianism will continue to play off.

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