



REIMAGINING SURVEILLANCE AND COLONIZED MENTALITY: ANALYZING ORWELL'S *1984* THROUGH BIO-POLITICAL EXISTENTIAL LENS

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Abstract

In today's world, power and surveillance significantly impact human behaviour and identity. George Orwell's *1984* paint a vivid and terrifying vision of how political control and constant surveillance affect individual freedom and existence. The goal of this study is to examine *1984* using Michel Foucault's Biopolitical Existential Theory. The objectives include investigating how biopower functions in the novel, how citizens internalize terror, and how continual surveillance and disciplinary control affect human existence. This study takes a qualitative approach, emphasizing attentive textual reading and topic analysis. The primary source is George Orwell's novel *1984*, while secondary sources include scholarly articles, periodicals, and theoretical writings on bio-politics and existentialism, all of which provide support to the view. The research reveals that Oceanian individuals limit their actions out of fear of punishment and constant surveillance, rather than out of personal desire. Continuous surveillance forces people to self-censor, control their feelings, and conform to the Party's expectations. Winston's experiences demonstrate how identity, love, resistance, and human expression are systematically undermined when bio-political power has complete control over both the body and mind. In a nutshell, the study explores that *1984* exemplifies how totalitarian organizations employ bio-political tactics to limit human existence and eliminate genuine freedom.

Keywords: *Bio-Politics, Discipline, Existentialism, Fear, Human Agency, Power, Surveillance, Totalitarianism.*

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1. Introduction

Orwell's (1949) dystopian novel *1984* depicts a society in which authority controls all aspects of life. The book was written after World War II, when the globe had previously confronted fascism in Germany, Italy, and a severe dictatorship in the Soviet Union. People were profoundly concerned about losing their freedom throughout those years, as propaganda, censorship, and fear swept across nations. The novel captures the same unsettled mood through the setting of Oceania, where nothing is private and even ideas are dangerous. Life on this planet is portrayed as a system in which rulers decide everything. History is modified repeatedly so that its statements appear accurate, even when they are false. Language is similarly confined to a limited form, with many popular words eliminated. When people are unable to articulate notions of inquiry or independence, they can't even imagine them. Constant surveillance keeps individuals under control because every movement is monitored, and even a suspicious look can be punished. Human emotions such as affection, trust, and connection emerge in the story, but they cannot last since authority outweighs human desires. At the end, inner power is broken, and people fully accept the system. This ending is exceedingly terrible because it demonstrates how fear and brainwashing can ruin the basic human spirit. The novel serves as a warning: if such control exists in reality, it will liberate memory and individuality, leaving only obedience.

1.1. Problem statement

This tale was written just after World War II, when the globe was filled with terror and uncertainty. Big countries attempted to gain power and control, resulting in mistrust and misinformation. People were unable to communicate freely because governments were extremely stringent about what they could say or share. Ordinary life was tense because everyone was frightened of being penalized for minor faults. This novel depicts almost the same type of universe. Each person's life is entirely under their control. People are constantly watched and are afraid to think freely. They initially follow rules out of dread of punishment, but this fear gradually becomes ingrained in their thinking. They begin to assume that this control is standard and to direct their own activities without being forced. This research focuses on the subtle changes that occur within individuals. It also demonstrates how fear and pressure limit freedom and force people to accept the system as if it were their own choice. This can also help us understand how modern technology and online tracking continue to influence people's behavior today.

1.2. Research Objectives

The aims and objectives of this research are;

- To explore how power quietly controls both, mentally & physically, normalizing the fear.
- To expose how people stop resisting against systems and adopt its rules as

their own decision.

- To find out how people's choices and decisions are continuously shaped by ever-present surveillance.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How does power operate indirectly to control individuals mentally and physically in *1984*, creating a normalized sense of fear?
2. In what ways do individuals internalize the rules of the Party and quit resisting, appearing to adopt them voluntarily?
3. How does constant surveillance influence and shape the choices and decisions of people?

1.4. Research significance

The relevance of my research is that this novel depicts a world in which people always feel watched, even when they are absolutely alone. Rigorous laws govern every aspect of their lives, and they believe that even their private thoughts are not safe. People are under constant strain and never feel free at any point in their lives. Earlier research has focused on how fear, punishment, and laws influence society from the outside. They primarily examine the Party's power system, tele screens, and public monitoring, demonstrating how these devices cause people to obey without question. However, they do not go into detail on how the persistent feeling of being watched gradually affects a person from within. It secretly monitors their thoughts, feelings, and daily activities. This work concentrates on the hidden psychological side. This research shows how people begin to regulate themselves and accept the system without using direct coercion.

2. Literature Review

According to Tyner (2004), Michel Foucault's conceptions of power, discipline, and surveillance can help us understand George Orwell's *1984*. He emphasizes that power in the novel derives not only from the government but also from everyday laws and institutions that shape people's actions. In *1984*, the Party used constant observation, discipline, and language control to force people to obey and even police them. This reflects Foucault's concept of a "disciplinary society," in which people internalize control and act as if they are constantly monitored. Tyner also demonstrates how Winston's modest actions, such as keeping a diary and loving Julia, become symbols of resistance. These activities allow him to proclaim the truth and protect his identity against the Party's fabrication of reality. Tyner links this to Foucault's theory that where there is power, there is always opposition. Finally, the study warns readers about the dangers of excessive political and societal control, emphasizing the need to defend truth, Freedom, and uniqueness (Tyner, 2004).

Ilyas (2024) sees *George Orwell's 1984* as a thorough examination of how authoritarian systems control not only people's actions but also their minds and emotions.

He explains that the story depicts the psychological agony of those living under severe political rule. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and Robert Cialdini's influence study, Ilyas connects political control and mental manipulation. The study focuses on how people gradually come to accept control as if it were their decision. Orwell's use of doublethink, Newspeak, tele screens, and guards reveals how fear and language shape human behavior. These are not simply means of political power, but also tactics to restrict independent thought. Ilyas also applies the innovative message to the present world, where technology, media, and online tracking continue to affect people's thinking and behavior. He warns that psychological manipulation has gotten more sophisticated yet still harmful. The interpretation reminds readers that *1984* is more than just a story from the past; it is a warning for the present, asking society to safeguard truth, freedom and individuality from concealed forms of power (Ilyas, 2024).

Sarkar (2022) investigates George Orwell's *1984* by comparing it to modern surveillance and control technology. According to the study, despite Orwell having authored the novel many years before the rise of contemporary technologies, his vision of total control and constant surveillance has become a reality. Sarkar describes how modern capitalist societies appear free and perfect on the outside, but in fact use covert forms of surveillance to monitor and control people. The research also relates the novel to Orwell's personal experiences with propaganda and authority, demonstrating how his own life influenced the world of *1984*. Lim (2006) contends that the book is not only about Orwell's time, but also a warning about the future, in which personal freedom erodes as surveillance expands. The concept of Big Brother in the novel illustrates how people lose their uniqueness and become part of a system that regards them as machines. This report reminds readers that technology and data tracking in the modern world pose similar risks. Sarkar's work demonstrates how Orwell's message remains applicable today and raises awareness of the importance of protecting privacy and human freedom (Sarkar, 2022).

Mohomed (2011) analyzes how George Orwell's *1984* relate the concepts of memory and history with control and truth. According to the study, both human memory and history are not entirely reliable, as they are influenced by how individuals interpret and explain events. According to psychologist Michael Gazzaniga, the human brain frequently alters memories to make life appear more critical or less unpleasant, even if this results in loss of accuracy. Similarly, history does not accurately capture every incident. Historians select facts and twist them into narratives that reflect their own perspectives or societal values. Mohomed connects this thought directly to Orwell's *1984*, in which the Party employs similar measures to maintain power. Winston's duty in the Ministry of Truth is to rewrite ancient documents, erase objective evidence, and persuade others to believe the Party's version of events. This control over memory and

history leads citizens to accept lies as fact. According to the researchers, Orwell's novel warns against enabling governments or systems to control the past. When history and memory are altered, people lose their sense of truth, and society becomes vulnerable to manipulation. Thus, *1984* tells us that true freedom requires protecting the truth (Mohomed, 2011).

Stephens (2004) explores George Orwell's *1984*, emphasizing the intrinsic connection between nature and human freedom. He argues that in the story, nature is more than just a setting; it signifies hope and a sense of liberation beyond the Party's authority. Orwell uses the "Golden Country" and the singing bird to represent calm, beauty, and escape from a fearful and rigid world. Stephens observes that these natural moments allow Winston to think freely and recall what it means to be human. The study concludes that, even though human life is intertwined with society and technology, nature remains a space resistant to control. When individuals lose touch with nature, their lives become mechanical and constrained, much like in *1984*. Small nature experiences, on the other hand, help humans replenish their creativity and emotional vigor. Stephens relates this idea to the novel's broader moral: true freedom includes the ability to feel, dream, and connect with our surroundings. Finally, the study reminds readers that nature serves as a type of peaceful resistance, defending human liberty and purpose in an Authoritarian world (Stephens, 2004).

Sabr & Jubair's (2024) research illustrates how George Orwell's *1984* depicts a dystopian world with contemporary social and political issues. The researchers say that in previous literature, writers frequently focus on utopia, a place of peace and happiness. Still, in current times, the focus has switched to dystopia, a world full of misery and control. They saw Orwell's novel as a warning about how power, corruption, and loss of freedom may ruin humanity. Orwell's *1984* depicts a society in which authority controls all aspects of life, including politics, religion, the economy, and morality. The study investigates how the combination of religion and politics can be as damaging as dictatorship, which turns moral principles into means of control. The writers further demonstrate that the dystopian scenario of *1984* is not only about the future, but also about our current reality, in which technology and politics can intrude on privacy. According to their findings, Orwell's novel continues to promote human rights and demonstrates how silence or acceptance of tyranny permits totalitarian societies to thrive. The study concluded that *1984* is a powerful reminder to safeguard freedom, Truth, and uniqueness in any society (Sabr & Jubair, 2024).

Curtis (2010) examines how Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* and *The Trial* present opposing viewpoints on justice and punishment. According to the research, the *Penal Colony* represents an old system of justice in which punishment is physical, and the body suffers directly. The odd punishment machine represents how power was

formerly gained via pain and physical domination. In contrast, *The Trial* depicts a more modern kind of power in which punishment is invisible but constant. People are not physically harmed, but they live in terror of being assessed, scrutinized, and controlled by unknown powers. Curtis relates these views to Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and how societies transition from open violence to hidden control via systems, laws, and institutions. From a biopolitical and existential standpoint, both articles demonstrate how power shapes and restricts human life. Individuals are torn between demanding independence and being compelled to obey. Kafka's writing expresses the fear of living in a world where justice is dubious and control is (Curtis, 2010).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Michel Foucault's Bio political Existential Theory, which describes how power manipulates human life in subtle ways. The goal of this theory is to demonstrate that authority need not resort to force or punishment; rather, it quietly governs individuals by shaping their lives, behavior, and even their thinking. The phrase "bio politics" refers to the politics of life, demonstrating how life itself becomes a target of control. According to Foucault, power in the modern world is exercised through institutions such as schools, hospitals, and the media. These systems force people to accept societal norms without recognizing they are being influenced. People feel they may act freely, but they are actually guided by concealed systems of discipline and monitoring. The existential component of this theory examines human freedom and the meaning of existence. It investigates how people struggle to establish their identity and purpose despite being constrained by authority. The theory explores the intricate link between power, freedom, identity, and control. Foucault argued that true power is invisible; it operates through knowledge, truth, and social systems that train people to think in specific ways. This makes Bio political Existential Theory an effective tool for understanding modern civilizations in which control appears normal but is essentially total.

This research aligns neatly with George Orwell's novel *1984*, which depicts a world in which political authority controls every aspect of human life. In *1984*, the Party continually monitors individuals via television screens, rewrites history, and even regulates language to suppress free thought. Oceania's residents have no private lives, and their emotions are dominated by terror. Winston Smith's struggle in the story exemplifies how a person attempts to achieve truth and freedom inside a system that seeks to control his entire being. The thesis demonstrates that power in 1984 involves more than just regulations; it is about controlling life itself, both physically and emotionally. As a result, the appropriate framework for studying this novel is Bio political Existential Theory, which explains how power alters the meaning of life, truth,

and identity under political rule. Many theorists have debated Foucault's concept of biopolitics and argued about how it can help us comprehend contemporary control.

Giorgio Agamben agreed with Foucault, claiming that governments have the authority to determine which lives are worthy and which are not. He argued that this type of power reduced people to mere living bodies under government, demonstrating how life had become a political matter. Judith Butler agreed with Foucault's idea, explaining that authority dominates people through language and identity. She stated that people follow social rules while believing they are making their own decisions. Nikolas Rose extended the conversation, claiming that modern authority does not operate solely through fear; instead, it steers people by influencing their goals and beliefs. All of these philosophers agreed with Foucault's claim that modern power acts softly, leading people to accept control as a regular part of life. Their theories contribute to the understanding that Biopolitical Existential Theory is about more than simply politics; it is also about how control systems impact human life. This is why the theory is ideal for evaluating *1984*: it explains how political power pervades every aspect of life, from language to emotions and even thinking. The novel serves as an excellent example of how people lose their uniqueness under covert disciplinary systems, as Foucault described.

According to Lemm and Vatter (2017), Foucault's concept of biopolitics emphasizes the link between life and power. They argue that modern institutions manage people through knowledge, discipline, and surveillance, turning life into a political issue. This perspective helps to explain how *1984* depicts the body and mind under severe government control. Lemm & Kristiansen (2013) also analyses Foucault's concept of biopower, describing it as a type of power that controls people's health, habits, and decisions in everyday life. His argument is consistent with Orwell's society, in which the Party shapes every aspect of the population's behavior, from their feelings to their thinking. Zimmer (2025) argues that biopolitics can even shape the concepts of life and death, determining who has the right to survive. This relates to *1984* because the Party decides who is useful and who should be removed from existence, a concept similar to Foucault's concept of governmental control over life. Wright (2013) discusses how biopolitics influences human well-being and how governments use the concepts of health and happiness to exert control. In Orwell's novel, the Party utilizes fake happiness and slogans such as "War is Peace" to deceive people into believing they are free when they are not. (Kristiansen, 2013; Zimmer, 2025; Wright, 2013).

4. Analysis and Discussion

This Section examines George Orwell's *1984* through the lens of Bio political Existentialism, emphasizing how power, authority, and surveillance impact human thoughts, feelings, and behavior. The Section revolves around three central research questions: first, how power operates indirectly to control individuals mentally and

physically, resulting in a normalized sense of fear; second, how individuals internalize Party rules and stop resisting, appearing to adopt them voluntarily; and third, how constant surveillance influences and shapes people's choices and decisions in *1984*. These questions examine how authority and observation shape freedom, identity, and thought, making fear seem natural in everyday life. This Section addresses a research gap discovered during the literature assessment by combining Foucault's bio politics with existential conceptions of freedom and choice. The argument is supported by textual evidence and specific passages from *1984* that demonstrate how Orwell's characters represent surveillance, internalized control, and normalized dread. The first study question discusses how power, in *1984*, indirectly controls individuals' minds and bodies, resulting in a normalized sense of fear.

This inquiry examines the hidden and mental mechanisms by which the Party controls people's lives. Orwell demonstrates power not merely through violence or punishment, but also by silent control, making terror a standard part of people's daily lives. The Party does not necessarily need to coerce people; instead, it convinces them that they are constantly being monitored. As a result, people begin to exercise control over their own actions and beliefs. They stop thinking freely and start accepting the rules as if they were correct. As a result, fear becomes so ubiquitous that people forget what true freedom is like. This demonstrates how power may exert control over both the mind and the body without resorting to open violence. At the beginning of the story, Orwell describes a poster with a giant face on each landing opposite the lift shaft, demonstrating this concealed power. It was one of those photos where the eyes follow you as you move. The caption beneath it read: "Big Brother is Watching You" (Orwell, 1949, p.03).

Through this sentence, Orwell demonstrates how power operates quietly but effectively. The large face and eyes tracking every movement convey the impression that someone is constantly observing. Even though it is merely a poster, it has a significant impact on people's thinking. It serves as a reminder that individuals are never truly alone and must exercise caution at all times. Because of this constant anxiety, people begin to regulate themselves and act in accordance with the Party's wishes. They do not need to be punished because the prospect of being observed is enough to make them comply. In *1984*, Orwell demonstrates that accurate control stems from mental terror, not physical force a fear that people carry with them at all times.

Orwell portrays the ever-present fear of monitoring through the television screen, which continually watches the residents of Oceania. "The television screens received and transmitted simultaneously. It would pick up every sound Winston made that was louder than a very low whisper. There was no way of knowing if you were being monitored at any particular time." (Orwell, 1949, p.4) The Party controls people not only through rigorous laws, but also by instilling a continual fear of being monitored. The television

screen becomes a metaphor of mental control, requiring residents to monitor their own actions because they never know when they are being watched. Orwell demonstrates how this fear pervades every aspect of life, leading people to avoid expressing their genuine ideas, emotions, or opinions. The unpredictability of observation makes freedom impossible; even in private, people cannot act naturally. This silent anxiety becomes so regular that people learn to regulate themselves without the necessity for open punishment. In this sense, the Party's authority is unseen yet total, shaping its citizens' minds and actions while demonstrating that terror alone can dominate a nation. Orwell brilliantly depicts how fear and surveillance mold the basic instincts of Oceania's population. "You had to live — did live, from habit that became instinct — in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized" (Orwell, 1949, p. 24).

Constant surveillance becomes part of people's daily lives, molding their beliefs and actions without coercion. According to Orwell, inhabitants like Winston live in constant anxiety, believing that every sound and movement they make is being observed. Over time, this dread becomes a habit and, finally, an instinct, allowing people to restrain themselves effortlessly. They do not require constant monitoring because fear is inherent in their behaviour. This demonstrates how the Party not only controls acts but also the minds, emotions, and instincts of its citizens. It stresses the Party's psychological strength, in which people live cautiously and discreetly, constantly conscious of being watched, destroying any sense of personal freedom.

Orwell demonstrates the inevitability of the Party's surveillance, illustrating how it infiltrates every aspect of citizens' lives. "The eyes are always on you, and the voice envelopes you. There is no escape, whether you are asleep or awake, working or eating, inside or outside, in the bath or in bed. Nothing was yours except the few cubic centimeters inside your skull" (Orwell, 1949, p. 23). Orwell underlines that humans are constantly being observed; every behaviour, whether awake or asleep, is monitored. Citizens cannot feel safe while eating, bathing, or sleeping, as there is no private space or moment of freedom. The only thing that remains entirely personal is a person's own thinking, the "few cubic centimeters inside your skull." Still, even this is jeopardized because the Party also seeks to influence minds. This continual scrutiny instills anxiety in people, forcing them to live cautiously at all times. It demonstrates how the Party exerts control not only over acts but also over thoughts and emotions, making privacy, independence, and a sense of self nearly impossible. The remark emphasizes the dreadful force of totalitarian authority, in which terror becomes a part of daily life, and individuals are stuck both mentally and physically.

Orwell depicts the fatal repercussions of independent thought in Oceania's authoritarian society. "Thought crime does not imply death; thought crime IS death.

He now identified himself as a dead man. It became critical to survive as long as possible. Two fingers on his right hand were soiled with ink. It was precisely the kind of detail that may betray you.” (Orwell, 1949, p.24) In *1984*, thinking against the Party was extremely dangerous. According to Orwell, "thought crime" refers to having rebellious or autonomous thinking, which is viewed as if a person has died. Winston recognizes that even thinking freely puts his life in danger; thus, he must exercise extraordinary caution to survive. The detail of his ink-stained fingertips demonstrates how even minor, everyday behaviours can be detected and used against someone. This illustrates how the Party controls not just actions but also thinking, causing individuals to live in continual fear. It indicates that existence in such a society depends on self-censorship and extreme caution, with even little facts becoming evidence of disobedience. The quotation emphasizes the Party's scary power, which transforms thought into a deadly act, leaving no place for personal freedom or safety.

The second research question examines how individuals internalize Party rules and appear to voluntarily adopt them. This question focuses on how the Party exerts control by shaping individuals' thoughts, beliefs, and emotions, making obedience second nature. People eventually stop questioning or rejecting the Party because their perception of reality, feelings, and even desires are influenced. The Party guarantees that fear, anger, and agony rule daily life, while nuanced emotions such as dignity, pride, or genuine sadness are eradicated. Individuals gradually learn to self-censor, conform, and act as if they are wilfully obeying the regulations, whereas in reality their minds have been conditioned to accept the Party's philosophy. Orwell demonstrates this control by writing, “Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Fear, wrath, and anguish were present today, but there was no emotional dignity, no deep or complicated sorrows.” (Orwell, 1949, P.27) This shows that the Party has purposefully eliminated the potential of independent, authentic emotions, replacing them with fear and hatred, which control behaviour and thought. Because individuals can no longer feel genuine pain or emotional depth, they internalize and accept the Party's regulations, making dissent nearly impossible. The Party's control grows so deep and widespread that obedience appears voluntary, and personal thoughts and feelings are transformed to correspond with its ideology, assuring perfect conformity without the need for ongoing physical enforcement.

Orwell describes doublethink as the Party's most efficient means of influencing thought. “To know and not know, to be conscious of total sincerity while telling meticulously planned lies, to hold two opposing beliefs simultaneously, knowing they are contradictory yet believing in both.” (Orwell's, 1949, P.31) The concept of doublethink, which is the Party's most powerful method of manipulating how people think. It implies that a person is supposed to tolerate inconsistencies and believe two

opposing beliefs at the same time, even if they are aware that neither can be true. People must be mindful of the truth while simultaneously accepting the Party's lies as real. This ongoing mental conflict makes it difficult for them to think rationally and question the Party's laws. By forcing individuals to accept contradictions, the Party gains complete control over their thoughts and actions. Over time, this influence causes people to take the Party's ideals and regulations naturally, so they stop opposing and happily comply. In this approach, the Party maintains power not only through fear and punishment but also by shaping people's thoughts and emotions. Orwell emphasizes the people's latent strength and how the Party hinders them from realizing it. "If they could only become aware of their own strength, they would have no reason to plot.

5. Conclusion

The novel *1984* by George Orwell presents a powerful critique of a totalitarian political system where the ruling Party controls every aspect of human life. The narrative shows how authority maintains its power through surveillance, propaganda, and the manipulation of truth and history. Through the perspective of bio-politics, the novel explains how the state regulates not only political actions but also the physical and psychological life of individuals. The continuous monitoring of citizens and the strict control over language and information demonstrate how political systems can dominate human existence and limit freedom. Moreover, the novel also reflects the ideas of existentialism through the character of Winston, who represents the struggle of an individual searching for truth, freedom, and personal identity. His resistance against the Party highlights the human desire to think independently and to question oppressive authority. However, the Party's overwhelming power ultimately suppresses this resistance, showing how difficult it is for individuals to maintain their identity and freedom in a highly controlled society. The analysis of *1984* therefore highlights the dangers of absolute political power and the consequences of a system that controls both the body and the mind of individuals. By examining the novel through the perspectives of bio-politics and existentialism, this study demonstrates how political structures can shape human behavior, thoughts, and identity. The novel ultimately serves as a warning about the loss of individuality and truth in societies where power remains unchecked.

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