

## Intricacies of War and Distribution in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

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### Abstract

This paper presents the intricacies of war and distribution in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The paranoia drives them to unleash the wars. The upper class as well as the middle class adapts to the new set up resultant of war, but the lower class meets its ditch again. The incessant or the intermittent war, thus keeps on pulverizing even the smallest sharing of equality. To have it simplified, products are made but not distributed. The wheel of industry must go on, but the living standards of lower class should not be heightened. Thus is warfare. It keeps on destroying the surplus of a country so that the deplorable condition of the lower stratus becomes stagnant. It is pertinent to make oneself aware of the fact that the same milieu is intrigued in the current world politics.

**KEYWORDS:** war, upper class, lower class, equality

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Against the political backdrop of hawkish international policies and the overwhelming capitalistic onslaught on human existence in the twenty first century, it is relevant to read the prophetic and farsighted novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell. Though it is entitled so, the work is transcendently futuristic in the sense that it has foreseen the impending socio-political scenario in which are cut short the meaning and scope of freedom and rights of man into mere existence under an adverse ambience.

Orwell observes that from the days immemorial the oligarchy has been in existence, which could exert its power on the other two strata: the middle and the low. At times, the cyclic nature of exchange of power between these three (mostly between the first two) was witnessed. Either the aristocrats or the middle class put its arms on each other. However, the replacement nature of the rule ceased for good with the formation of the Superstates: Eurasia, Oceania and Eastasia. Between these super states, Oceania was the most powerful and always at war with the other two.

To this background, Orwell presents his character Winston Smith. Winston is a Party member of Oceania which controls even the private affairs of its people. The ultimate power of the party is the Big Brother. The party mansions are ironically named "The Ministry of Truth," "The Ministry of Love," "The Ministry of Peace" and "The Ministry of Plenty." Winston who is entrusted with the act historical negationism in favor of the Party has been working in "the Ministry of Truth" for years. A party member is always under the surveillance of the party to the extent of even minutiae of his private life are watched. He is not even expected to think of anything against the Party. If anyone

indulges in “doublethink” or “thought crime”, he will be vaporized. He has no right to pamper any of his personal emotions other than his love for “the Big Brother”. Everywhere in the street is present the large photos of the Big Brother with the caption “THE BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”. The one who is in the Party—be it the Inner or the Outer Party- has to carry out whatever the Party orders to.

As if to hold a mirror to the scenario narrated in the novel, each individual being in the current world is under the surveillance of a power, which if not visible, is felt. A code of discipline is imposed upon every human being in the latter-day world. Various state machineries and tools have gained a momentum in social operation unprecedentedly. Whereas the structure like panopticon was extant during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, most sophisticated gadgets of surveillance are used in the current world. Michel Foucault opines that,

Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested...Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. (178, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*)

Against the grain, Winston Smith, the protagonist indulges in “doublethink” and involves himself in the activities against the party. He falls in love with Julia, a supposed-to-be anti-sex activist of the party. They meet at rendezvous surreptitiously and lose in carnal pleasures. This is also forbidden by the party. Moreover, Winston and Julia read “the book” which calls for an uprising. The guards led by O’Brien, in whom they had confided the zeitgeist, catch both of them. Having undergone so many atrocities until Winston not only admits that he has committed “doublethink” but also asks O’Brien to inflict the punishments on Julia instead of him, he is set free. As a machine, Winston keeps on working according to his past wont. He is shot dead in the street at the juncture he realizes—as a reflection to the news from the war frontiers that Oceania has had its victory over Africa—that he is left with no other feelings than love of the Big Brother who overwhelms the world to the degree of annihilating everyone’s freedom.

The experiences of Winston Smith are similarly faced by the normal lots in the world. Each subject nowadays conducts herself or himself in accordance with the stipulated norms and even possible predilections of the state. Against the current socio-political affairs in the world in general, and in each state in particular, a reading of the novel shall reward the reader with so many insights into the draconian ways like historical negationism, vaporization, etc. Discipline is forced upon the subjects and they are always under the surveillance. Latter-day surveillance systems in public and identification means are more or less a means to effect control over the people. Foucault says of the system of control and discipline:

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation ... He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribed in himself the power relation in

which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (165, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*)

The current milieu that surrounds us prompts us to think that the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a sketch of existing reality. A reader who is socially and politically responsible finds a lot of sustenance to have a vivid viewpoint regarding the current system.

Orwell, in the novel unveils the hidden agendas behind the incessant war waged by anyoligarchial society. Orwell focuses on the minutiae regarding the topic while he undoes the inner weavings of wars waged by Oceania with Eastasia and Eurasia. It is always misunderstood by a common person that war is intended to occupy another one's territory. Orwell proves that it is a surface level reading of the fact; in actual sense it is not just a matter of thwarting or usurping, rather it is a capitalistic device of establishing inequalities.

Orwell's analytical genius is very conspicuous in "the book" in which he describes the intricacies of a capitalist rule or oligarchy. It is a given fact that with the advent of industrialization, it would have been possible to establish social equity as the large number of production of materials and comestibles could have eradicated poverty and scarcity from the world. Footing on such a platform, the lower class could have achieved integrity and social status. As "the book" reads:

From the moment when the machine first made its appearance it was clear to all thinking people that the need for human drudgery, and therefore to a great extent for human inequality, had disappeared. If the machine were used deliberately for that end, hunger, overwork, dirt, illiteracy, and disease could be eliminated within a few generations. (65)

As it is against the vested interests of oligarchy, deliberate attempts have been made in order to maintain the imbalance of power, which only could make distinguishes and thereby comparisons between the aforesaid three strata. As one progresses in reading of the novel, he could easily make out the painful fact that equality is celebrated or solicited by the proletarians only. The middle class as well as the ruling aristocrats dream of wielding the power or maintaining the social status quo. The middle class offers the much-cherished equality to the proletarians only in a circumstance in which they need additional support from the latter to usurp the power from the existing upper class. Achieving the goal, the same milieu is again present.

Another intention of war is destruction of materials produced so far which help increase the demand of goods –especially primary needs – by which the lines of comparison between the three categories are again set apart. Orwell opines that:

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, or pouring into the stratosphere, or sinking in the depths of the sea, materials which might otherwise be used to make the masses too comfortable, and hence, in the long run, too intelligent. (79)

Once the subject people are educated, the well-ensconced upper class may be dethroned. It should not transpire. The paranoia drives them to unleash the wars. The upper class as well as the middle class adapt to the new set up resultant of war, but the lower class meets its ditch again. The incessant or the intermittent war, thus keeps on pulverizing even the smallest sharing of equality. To have it simplified, products are made but not distributed. The wheel of industry must go on, but the living standards of lower class should not be heightened. Thus is warfare. It keeps on destroying the surplus of a country so that the deplorable condition of the lower stratus becomes stagnant. It is pertinent to make oneself aware of the fact that the same milieu is intrigued in the current world politics.

Written in the twentieth century, the novel forecasts the onslaught on freedom in the following days. To detail, the author has portrayed the Big Brother, the telescreens, hidden microphones, thought police etc., to show that if not then, in the near future, the activities of each will be controlled by intransigent rulers. To some or more extent, the novel seems to be a non-fiction when a reader dovetails the current politics of the world with the events revealed through the novel. O'Brien's statement has become prophetic: "Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia. Since the beginning of your life, since the beginning of the Party, since the beginning of the history, the war has continued without a break, always the same war" (202). Oceania is still at war with the then Eastasia.

#### **References:**

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