

## From 1984 to One-Dimensional Man: Critical Reflections on Orwell and Marcuse

### Section One

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Occasionally literary and philosophical metaphors and images enter the domain of popular discourse and consciousness. Images in **Uncle Tom's Cabin** of humane and oppressed blacks contrasted to inhumane slave owners and overseers shaped many people's negative images of slavery. And in nineteenth century Russia, Chernyshevsky's novel **What is to be Done?** shaped a generation of young Russian's views of oppressive features of their society, including V.I. Lenin who took the question posed by Chernyshevsky's novel as the title of one of his early revolutionary treatises. In the twentieth century, George Orwell's vision of totalitarian society in his novel **1984** has had a major impact on how many people see, understand, and talk about contemporary social trends. {1} Subsequently, Herbert Marcuse's analyses and images of a "one-dimensional man" in a "one-dimensional society" shaped many young radicals' ways of seeing and experiencing life in advanced capitalist society during the 1960s and 1970s --though to a more limited extent and within more restricted circles than Orwell's writings which are among the most widely read and discussed works of the century.

There are, in fact, both some striking differences and similarities between the visions of totalitarianism in contemporary industrial societies in the works of George Orwell and Herbert Marcuse. A contrast between Orwell and Marcuse seems useful at this point in time since they both offer insights that illuminate various features of the contemporary social and political world. In the light of the growth of repressive governments of the communist, fascist, and democratic capitalist systems in the contemporary epoch, it seems appropriate to re-read Orwell's novels and essays and Marcuse's writings since both contain concepts and analyses that provide sharp critiques of the mechanisms and power in institutions which practice socio-political domination and oppression. Moreover, both raise the question of the proper theoretical and political response toward current trends of social irrationality and domination, as well as the possibilities of emancipation.

In this paper, I shall compare Orwell's and Marcuse's visions and critiques of totalitarian societies with current features of contemporary societies -- capitalist, fascist, and state communist --, and shall re-appraise the politics and ideological effects of Orwell's and Marcuse's thought. My arguments will suggest that political thinkers must be read historically and contextually, and that it is problematical to apply texts intended to criticize conditions of one epoch and society to another. Accordingly, I shall argue that Orwell's articles on totalitarianism and his widely discussed novel **1984** project an image of totalitarian societies which conceptualizes his experiences of fascism and Stalinism and his fears that the trends toward this type of totalitarianism would harden, intensify, and spread throughout the world.

I shall refer to this vision of totalitarian domination as "Orwell's Nightmare." Against the many recent attempts to celebrate Orwell as a prophet who anticipated the fundamental trends of contemporary civilization, I shall argue that his vision of totalitarianism has limited application to neo-capitalist societies, and that the writings of Huxley and Marcuse provide more useful theoretical and political perspectives on contemporary capitalist societies. {2} Furthermore, I shall argue that Orwell's perspectives on the state, bureaucracy, and power are highly flawed and that the positions of Weber, Gramsci, and Foucault on these phenomena are preferable. Consequently, I shall carry through a rather systematic reappraisal of Orwell as a political thinker and prophet while attempting to delineate the contributions and limitations of his political writings. Similarly, I shall interrogate the legacy of Herbert Marcuse's social and political theory and will appraise its contributions and limitations. At stake, therefore, is coming to terms in the present situation with the respective legacies for radical social theory and politics of two of the salient social critics of the twentieth century.

### **Re-Reading 1984: Orwell's Critique of Bureaucratic Communism**

Orwell's **1984** is surely one of the best known novels of the century. It projects a negative utopia, or dystopia, of a future totalitarian society which uses terror, surveillance, and a repressive bureaucracy to exert total power over the individual. The text has been widely adopted in high schools and colleges, no doubt in part to attempt to inoculate young people against the horrors of totalitarian communism. Indeed, from the 1940s to the present, **1984** has been used in the Cold War struggle against communism, and Orwell has been celebrated by many as a critic of the Red Menace. Conservatives thus primarily read **1984** and Orwell's other popular fantasy **Animal Farm** (1946) as attacks on communism and use the texts to warn people against its evils.

Orwell's reception and use by the Left, however, is more complicated. Whereas communists and some orthodox Marxists tended in the past to villify Orwell in the most blatant terms -a trend that continues to the present in some quarters of the Left -- Orwell also has been claimed by some on the democratic socialist Left as an exemplary political writer whose long-term principled and militant agitation against, particularly, British imperialism and for democratic socialism have been widely admired. {3} And since the 1960s, I would suspect that Orwell became attractive to the New Left because his bohemianism, individualism, and opposition to all forms of orthodoxy and totalitarianism tapped into these same tendencies within my generation.

In the following reading, I shall propose ways that the democratic Left can use Orwell and shall also point to some of the limitations of his work. From this perspective, **1984** is most appropriately read as a critique of a specific form of state communism, namely Stalinism, and not as a condemnation of socialism **tout court**. Orwell himself explicitly stated after the publication of **1984** that: "My recent novel is NOT intended as an attack on socialism or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been realized in Communism and Fascism." {4} But despite this disclaimer, because **1984** is such a powerful attack on state communism, there is a danger that it can be used by rightists to identify socialism with totalitarianism -- a chief ideological strategy of both liberals and conservatives throughout the Cold War epoch. Against this ideological reading, I would suggest that **1984** be read as an attack on a quite specific social formation: Stalinism.

Although **1984** can easily be read as a more general attack on totalitarian government where the state controls all aspects of life (i.e. at the end of the novel, there is a detailed discussion of uses of totalitarian power in ways which suggest how any sort of oppressive totalitarian state could maintain their power

indefinitely), the political allegory and the techniques described in the novel most readily suggest the social and political structure and the forms and techniques of domination actually employed by Soviet communism during the Stalin era. Moreover, Orwell himself invites reading **1984** as a critique of Stalinism, for clearly the political leader of his projected society, Big Brother, is modelled on Stalin, while the state's "enemy," Emmanuel Goldstein, is modelled on Trotsky. More crucially, the world and atmosphere of **1984** reproduce the world of the Soviet Union in the 1930s with its political trials, torture-extracted confessions, secret police, labor camps, Lysenian science, rewriting of history, and cult of Stalin. Thus while some of the atmosphere and features of Orwell's dystopia were reminiscent of Hitler's and Mussolini's fascism, the infrastructure of the society derives most basically from Orwell's vision of Stalinism and critical views of the betrayal of the revolution in the Soviet Union -- which also provides the infrastructure for **Animal Farm**.

Consequently, I would propose that one way for the Left to read **1984**, which is the way that Orwell proposes that we read it, is to take it as a critique of Stalinism which points to the deformation of socialism in the Soviet Union and which presents a grim warning about the type of socialism that democratic socialists should definitely avoid. In this way, Orwell's critique can be used by democratic socialists to specify precisely what sort of socialism we do not want; i.e. a socialism based on terror, coercion, and surveillance with a repressive administrative bureaucracy, a lack of civil liberties, human rights and democracy, and a rather grey and depressing everyday life without diversity, freedom, or commodity comforts. From this perspective I shall now offer aspects of a (re)reading of **1984**.

**1984** uses the form of the dystopic novel to present a nightmare vision of a future in which techniques of political terror and repression, coupled with propaganda and indoctrination, have created a totally administered society. {5} The society in **1984** is "totalitarian" in that a centralized party state and its bureaucratic apparatus totally controls every area of life from labor, to culture, to thought, to language, to sexuality and everyday life. The novel opens with evocations, frequently repeated that "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU." Then it quickly plunges the reader into an oppressive environment where omnipresent television sets not only incessantly broadcast government propaganda but actually serve as instruments of surveillance. Although television has not (yet) taken on such functions, Orwell presciently anticipated the centrality of television in the home and the use of the then most advanced media of communication as an instrument of indoctrination and social control --though, as I shall argue later, in fact, television actually performs quite different functions in contemporary capitalist societies.

Orwell proceeds to sketch out the features of a totally oppressive society and plays on his readers' fears of powerlessness and own experiences of oppression. The social environment of the novel draws on Orwell's experiences of wartime London and uses the descriptive techniques of literary naturalism to produce images of a society of extreme material deprivation:

"Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him. The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats....Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours....The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine, and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way" (**1984**, p. 5).

The dismal environment, scarcity, and squalor makes one yearn for a society of abundance, health, and creature comforts. Moreover, the enforced conformity makes one yearn for political freedom and valorizes individuality, while the society of lies and propaganda positively valorize truth and honesty as an antidote to totalitarian indoctrination. Later in the novel, the suppression of family ties, romance, and love makes the reader yearn for these phenomena. This vision illustrates the theory, being developed at the time by

Hannah Arendt and others, which conceptualizes totalitarian society as a society wherein the state controls every aspect of life without the mediation of opposing public or even private spheres. With this vision, Orwell positions the reader to perceive the totalitarian present and future hostilely, and positively affirms opposing values and institutions through representation of their negation in his totalitarian society.

As Winston Smith begins writing his forbidden diary and articulates his oppositional thoughts, non-conformity and rebellion are valorized. In the second part of the novel, Orwell uses the genre of melodrama and techniques of the love story and romance between Smith and Julia to position audience identification with the characters and to promote sympathy for their rebellion against the totalitarian regime. Here Orwell uses nature, sexuality, memory, and the past to position the reader against the totalitarian present. Human love is contrasted to totalitarian hate and unspoiled nature is the haven contrasted to an oppressive urban-industrial social order.

As the narrative proceeds and Julia and Winston cultivate their love affair with forbidden trysts in a rented apartment, memories of past family ties, freedom, and well-being are contrasted to the misery of a totally alienated and repressive present society. The characters fix on symbols of the past which are used to criticize present oppressiveness, such as snippets of old poems, a small ornament which symbolizes the artifacts of a happier past, and their dreams and memories. Interestingly, these themes connect Orwell to Marcuse and the Frankfurt school who also championed the emancipatory potential of human nature, sexuality, and individualism. {6} For Marcuse believed that nature, memory, and the aesthetic dimension provided standards, norms, and energizing visions which could be used to critique and transform present oppressive conditions. For Orwell, by contrast, memory seems to evoke more nostalgic images of the past that make one yearn for what used to be instead of provoking visions of a better and different future life. In fact, I believe that this somewhat different role for memory points to a certain conservatism in Orwell that differentiates him from Marcuse's prefigurative socialist radicalism which strives to imagine socialism as a completely different society and way of life.

At the heart of **1984**, however, is its vision of how the lust for power motivates the party bureaucrats and how they use their power to crush anyone who opposes their goals or interests. Here we receive a powerful vision of the betrayal of a revolution by a new bureaucratic class similar to theories of **The Revolution Betrayed** advocated by Trotsky and his followers. Orwell uses a variety of literary techniques to critically represent state power and terror. Beginning in the middle of the second part of the novel, Orwell uses conventions of a political thriller to pit Winston and Julia in a conspiracy with a high party leader O'Brien against the state. As it turns out, O'Brien is really a functionary who has trapped Smith into revealing his rebellious thoughts and feelings.

The third part of the novel uses lurid melodrama bordering on a horror show to depict O'Brien's torturing of Smith and his eventual breaking down of Smith's will and resistance. After getting Smith to betray Julia (and thus to violate what he had believed was his inviolable commitment to her), O'Brien explains that what motivates the party bureaucrats and the real function of the bureaucracy is simply to perpetuate indefinitely the bureaucrats own power. The following analysis, one of the most famous sections of **1984**, shows the influence of Machiavelli's theory of power in **The Prince**:

"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 or happiness; only power, pure power....We are different from all the oligarchies of the past in that we know what we are doing....We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship....But always -- do not forget this, Winston -- always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and

constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- forever" (**1984**, pp. 217, 220).

In this passage, Orwell's vision of a totalitarian state is crystallized. For the totalitarian order, power is an end in itself; the party bureaucracy is primarily motivated to augment its power over the masses; the bureaucracy uses state terror, torture, and arbitrary murder to increase its power over its population. To maintain its power indefinitely, it develops institutions, practices, techniques, and technologies to increase its sovereignty over all aspects of its citizens' lives. Once it can control thought and behavior, then its power is assured and it can rule indefinitely without opposition.

During the 1980s, a tremendous amount of attention has been focused on Orwell's novel when the year 1984 came and went, and the question has been posed time and again concerning the extent to which Orwell's vision actually illuminates present day social reality. The consensus seems to be overwhelming positive: Orwell's **1984** has been profusely praised in the many conferences, anthologies, and articles that have appeared during 1984 and its aftermath for his prescient insight into social trends that supposedly materialized. Article after article during the 1980s praises his insights and the accuracy of his vision (see note 1). In this article, by contrast, I want to dissent from those who take Orwell's thought and writing as a prophecy, and as a key to interpreting and perhaps criticizing current socio-political trends. For although **1984** does anticipate many such trends throughout the world since its publication in 1949, I want to question the extent to which Orwell's vision provides an accurate conceptual mapping of contemporary capitalist and socialist societies, and will suggest that Marcuse and others provide a useful corrective to the limitations of some of Orwell's central intuitions and ideas.

## The State, Power, and Bureaucracy

To begin, we might question whether Orwell provides an illuminating vision of state power and bureaucracy, or whether there are serious limitations in his political perspectives. In **1984**, Orwell tends to equate the bureaucratic phenomenon within totalitarian states with overt political repression and force per se generalizing, I believe, from Hitler's and Stalin's use of state terror. Orwell concluded in the early 1940s that transition to a centralized economy was inevitable and that this would inevitably centralize power in the hands of the state apparatus. In a key and little known 1941 article "Will Freedom Die With Capitalism?", Orwell wrote that: It is inevitable that the planned, centralised state should supersede **laissez-faire** capitalism, because the latter is as helpless against it in a serious struggle as the Abyssinians were against the Italian machine guns.... what is happening everywhere is the replacement of competitive societies in which the individual has absolute rights over his own property, by planned societies in which power is centralised." {7}

A centralized government for Orwell inevitably meant more power for the state bureaucracy, and thus more state repression and terror. Unlike Max Weber, Orwell does not conceive of bureaucracy as containing its own dynamics, its own rationality, or its own contradictions. Consequently, especially in **1984**, Orwell reinforces the predominantly conservative-individualist vision that the state and bureaucracy per se are repressive and serve to concentrate power in a bureaucratic caste. {8} For Orwell, power and the will to power are depicted as the prime goal of a bureaucratic society and the primary motivation for party bureaucrats. Power is not a means but is an end in itself, **the** end or telos of at least the political elite's individual and societal behavior. Revolution, in this picture, is primarily a project of seizing power and establishing a new class of party bureaucrats whose primary goal is maintaining their own power.

Now this vision of revolution, power, and bureaucracy is quite similar to major conservative ideologues (Nietzsche, Pareto, Michels, etc.) and fails to account for contradictions within the bureaucratic



phenomenon. For Max Weber, by contrast, bureaucracy contained a certain amount of logic and rationality and was part of a process of rationalization and modernization which produced at least some social benefits and progress (i.e. rational calculation, predictability, law, governance by rules rather than force, etc.). In Orwell's vision, however, one gets the sense that human psychology and the nature of bureaucracy conspire to produce a completely oppressive bureaucratic structure whereby one group of individuals dominate others. This is the sense, I believe, conveyed by O'Brien's speech on power and bureaucracy that I quoted above and reproduces standard conservative discourses which fail to see any social rationality or use-value in the state and bureaucracy. In this regard, Orwell himself is at least partly responsible for his appropriation by conservatives.

Now, to be sure, in **1984** Orwell was articulating a novelistic vision of bureaucracy as terroristic repression and was not developing a political theory of bureaucracy. However, in both his novels and essays he tends to equate a centralized economy with state terror and repression in his conception of totalitarian society. Whereas I would argue that such a synthetic view provides an accurate conceptual mapping of the types of repressive and terroristic totalitarianism associated with Nazism and Stalinism, I believe it would be an error to project, as conservatives tend to do, such a vision on the state, bureaucracy, and a planned economy as such, as if all centralized state forms were inherently repressive and totalitarian.

As a corrective to one-sided and purely negative visions and conceptualizations, one might posit a **dialectics of bureaucracy** which sees both its rational and progressive and irrational and regressive features, the ways that it promotes both social rationality and irrationality, progress and regression. More historical and dialectical perspectives on bureaucracy would also analyze bureaucracies as parts of historically specific social systems so that capitalist bureaucracy, for instance, should be interpreted in terms of the social functions that it performs within various capitalist societies, whereas socialist bureaucracy should be analyzed in terms of its role and functions within specific socialist societies. Furthermore, although there have been many debates within contemporary Marxism (i.e. in Lukacs, Gramsci, Habermas, Offe, Gouldner, Castoriadis, etc.) over the precise relation between capitalism and bureaucracy, or socialism and bureaucracy, the best of these theories specify contradictions or tensions between the state apparatus, its bureaucrats, and, in capitalist societies, economic elites, thus pointing to tensions between social system and bureaucracy, whereas Orwell in **1984** tends to collapse social system into state bureaucracy, assimilating civil society to the state. {9}

Furthermore, one needs to work out analyses of the various relationships between bureaucracy and democracy which specifies how democratic participation can avoid the oppressive features of bureaucracy, as well as provide non-bureaucratic domains of social life where direct, participatory democracy replaces bureaucratic structures and organization completely (while other spheres of social life might require some form of bureaucracy). Orwell's nightmare, by contrast, completely eliminates democracy and shows bureaucratic domination run amok -- a useful warning, perhaps, against bureaucratic encroachment but one that does not provide useful perspectives for contemporary social theory. Moreover, Orwell equates state power with force and coercion per se, and makes it appear that bureaucracy is primarily a repressive and terroristic apparatus. Whereas this analysis provides a compellingly accurate picture of state terrorism -- either of the fascist sort or the Stalinist sort -- if taken as a model of the state and bureaucracy as such, it would cover over their contradictory nature and functions in different historical situations, and the complex ways that the state, bureaucracy, and instrumental rationality can be vehicles of both social progress **and/or** oppression. Instead of simply seeing **1984** as an attack on a bureaucratic state per se (often used by conservatives to attack communism or even welfare state measures) one should thus see it as a warning about what might happen if a state bureaucracy is to run amok and completely eliminate the institutions of civil society, rule by law, balance and division of powers in the political sphere, and respect for individual rights and liberties.

Moreover, equating bureaucracy with terroristic coercion undercuts the Gramscian distinction between force and hegemony, and fails to see that the state and bureaucracy can serve the interests of the ruling class, or party, without resorting to force to the extent that they do in Orwell's bureaucratic state. Distinguishing between different modes of socio-political control, Antonio Gramsci contrasted between force and domination (i.e. direct physical coercion) and "hegemony" or "direction" (i.e. ideological manipulation or the manufacturing of consent). {10} Hegemony was produced by a combination of state propaganda and ideological control and the mediations of the family, religion, schooling, and, today, one would want to include the media, advertising, mass culture, etc. Following Gramsci, I would argue that bureaucracy functions more as an instrument of hegemony than force in contemporary technological societies in the so-called developed world. For its' functions of social domination revolve primarily, I would suggest, around its instrumental rationality, its ability to impose seeming objective and "fair" rules and regulations on individuals, and its ability to provide a facade of objectivity and rationality for ruling elites and their managers and administrators.

To be sure, the supposedly "developed" societies often practice social barbarism themselves and have bureaucracies which specialize in violently suppressing deviance. But in view of the collapse of the most repressive 20th century totalitarian states, one might conclude that excessively brutal bureaucracies generate their own opposition and that therefore a repressive state apparatus which functions by terror alone is inherently unstable and doomed to collapse. Surely the continued existence of the neo-Stalinist bureaucracy, for example, in the Soviet Union does not only owe its longevity to pure repression and state terror but also must provide goods and services and engage in ideological indoctrination and not just brute force. A boot-in-the-face is surely one form of social control that repressive bureaucracies utilize, but whether it is the only or most certain to provide continuous stability for its regime is doubtful. {11}

In any case, for Orwell bureaucracy becomes the fate of the modern world in a very different sense from Weber. Weber's instrumental rationality and iron cage becomes a prison camp utilizing constant surveillance, force, torture, and brutality in Orwell's nightmare. Indeed, many such regimes have existed and do continue to exist after the publication of **1984**, so Orwell's vision continues to be relevant. But it is not clear that even totalitarian societies rely solely on terror and coercion to the extent suggested in **1984**, nor have communist regimes monopolized techniques of state terror, repression, and violence.

In fact, the vision of **1984** applies most readily today to the quasi-fascist and dictatorial regimes that have been client states of the United States over the past few decades: the dictatorships of Latin America and Africa, the Philippines, Iran, South Korea, etc. It has been the Shah of Iran, Marcos, Somoza, the 1970s military regime in Argentina, Pinochet, Duvalier, and others who have materialized Orwell's vision of a state whose power was based on terror, torture, and violence. Thus although features of such state terrorism are sometimes manifest in Communist and even capitalist societies, on the whole these societies, as I shall argue below, maintain their power in quite different ways than Orwell's vision suggests. Moreover, I believe that the military and war play a different role in the contemporary world than in Orwell's **1984**. His Oceania was engaged in constant warfare with Eastasia and/or Eurasia which kept the citizens in a constant state of mobilization and alert. Exploding bombs kept the citizens in an actual state of perpetual fear and the continuous warfare distracted them from thinking about the oppressiveness of their actual society. Since the advent of the atomic age, however, there have been no actual "hot" wars between the superpowers although the threat of nuclear annihilation hangs over our head like the sword of Damocles. Although military priorities play a primary role in shaping the economy and social system, this is accomplished with a minimum, though growing, amount of mobilization and actual warfare. And while our media often engage in campaigns which teach us to hate and fear our supposed "enemies" (the "evil Empire," or "terrorists"), there is nothing like the hate campaigns to which the citizens are subjected to on a daily basis in **1984**.

## Media, Hegemony, and Huxley's Vision

Orwell's representation of the role of the mass media in contemporary societies seems equally misleading as a model for the broadcast media in contemporary society. In **1984**, the middle echelon party functionaries like Winston Smith are subject to an electronic surveillance system that barks out commands and a constant barrage of propaganda in television sets that can monitor the behavior of individuals in their home. The primary function of the media here is to terrorize its citizens by constantly impressing upon them the omnipresent power of the state. Crucially, the television screen in Orwell's **1984** is on constantly, cannot be turned off, and has only one channel. Media are thus primarily here an apparatus of surveillance and terror rather than indoctrination. And Orwell even states that "the great majority of the proles did not even have telescreens in their homes" (p. X), thus underestimating the ubiquity of television and its functions of escape and diversion as well as indoctrination in contemporary society.

Broadcast media in both capitalist and communist societies thus arguably function in quite different ways than in **1984**. Structurally, they privatize, serialize, and depoliticize individuals by keeping them safely within the confines of their own homes rather than in public or social activity. That is, the very act of watching television privatizes individuals, and often subliminally imposes images, role models, and values which shape individual thought and behavior -- or merely distract individuals from social and political issues and problems. Television in **1984**, however, massifies individuals, waking them up every morning, forcing them to exercise and to shout slogans during the obligatory hate periods, and robs them of their privacy through their surveillance functions. Thus while one could argue that television massifies individuals in capitalist societies by involving them in quite similar news, sports, and entertainment, the fact of however limited choice in a pluralistic media system centrally distinguishes the nature and function of media in Orwell's world from the contemporary world.

Furthermore, the media, especially in capitalist societies, operate as vehicles of socialization and indoctrination in much more subtle and intricate ways than the crude propaganda machines in Orwell's novel. For most television viewers are not aware that when they are watching TV news, entertainment or advertising they are being indoctrinated into dominant values, beliefs, and forms of thought and behavior. Thought control in capitalist societies is more pleasant, ubiquitous, and multifaceted than in the crude, endless propagandizing to which the citizens of **1984** are subjected.

By contrast, Aldous Huxley's vision of a pleasantly manipulative society in **Brave New World** provides a more salient vision of how contemporary capitalist societies function than Orwell's nightmare of totalitarian horror. Indeed, Huxley himself wrote a letter to Orwell in 1949 stating: "The philosophy of the ruling minority in **1984** is a sadism which has been carried to its logical conclusion by going beyond sex and denying it. Whether in actual fact the policy of the boot-on-the-face can go on indefinitely seems doubtful. My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power, and that these ways will resemble those which I described in **Brave New World**." {12} In fact, Orwell had earlier contested Huxley's vision in **Brave New World** precisely because he believed that it did not provide an accurate picture of the mechanisms of power in the totalitarian present and future. In a 1940 essay, Orwell writes: "Mr. Aldous Huxley's **Brave New World** was a good caricature of the hedonistic Utopia, the kind of thing that seemed possible and even imminent before Hitler appeared, but it had no relation to the actual future. What we are moving towards at this moment is something more like the Spanish Inquisition, and probably far worse, thanks to the radio and the secret police." {13} In an article on "Prophecies of Fascism" in the same era, Orwell made similar claims: "In Aldous Huxley's **Brave New World**, a sort of post-war parody of the Wellsian Utopia, these tendencies are immensely exaggerated. Here the hedonistic principle is pushed to its utmost, the whole world has turned into a Riviera hotel. But though **Brave New World** was a brilliant caricature of the present (the present of 1930), it probably casts no light on the future." {14}



In **Brave New World Revisited** Huxley contests Orwell on precisely this point writing: "George Orwell's **1984** was a magnified projection into the future of a present that contained Stalinism and an immediate past that had witnessed the flowering of Nazism. **Brave New World** was written before the rise of Hitler to supreme power in Germany and when the Russian tyrant had not yet got into his stride. In 1931, systematic terrorism was not the obsessive contemporary fact which it had become in 1948, and the future dictatorship of my imaginary world was a good deal less brutal than the future dictatorship so brilliantly portrayed by Orwell. In the context of 1948, **1984** seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change. Recent developments in Russia and recent advances in science and technology have robbed Orwell's book of some of its gruesome versimilitude. A nuclear war will, of course, make nonsense of everybody's predictions. But, assuming for the moment that the Great Powers can somehow refrain from destroying us, we can say that it now looks as though the odds were more in favor of something like **Brave New World** than of something like **1984**." {15}

Framing this exchange contextually, it is reasonable to conclude that while Orwell's **1984** and writings on totalitarianism in the 1930s and 1940s presented an illuminating conceptual mapping of the fundamental social trends of the era, which presented to democratic capitalist countries a powerful warning of what would happen if we took the totalitarian route, I believe that Huxley's **Brave New World** provides deeper insights into the actual social processes of post-1950s capitalist societies. Huxley's novel shows how cybernetics, behavior conditioning, consumerism, mass culture, liberalized sexual behavior, and systematic control of thought and behavior produces a society of content conformists happy to play the social roles provided for them. The state primarily plays a role of administering this scientifically guided cybernetic system which is ruled from love of order, rationality, and efficiency rather than merely lust for power, or pleasure in sadistic domination.

### **Domination, Resistance, and the Technological Society**

In general, I would therefore argue that Orwell presents quite flawed perspectives on power and domination which should be corrected by the insights of contemporary social theory. Unlike Foucault who sees power as more diffuse, decentralized, and amorphous, used by different individuals and institutions in different ways and always struggled against, {16} for Orwell power is completely centralized and in the hands of a control center which manages the entirety of society. In the late Foucault, a dialectic of domination and resistance conceptualizes domination as a response to struggle and resistance and postulates -- however tenuously in Foucault's modest and ascetic micropolitics of resistance -- and thus presents a complex view of a society with heterogeneous and multi-dimensional sites of power and struggle. On Foucault's perspectives, Orwell's vision of a centralized, "panoptic" mode of power and surveillance belongs to an earlier era of social control which is being replaced by more sophisticated and dispersed micro-techniques of power and discipline. From this perspective, therefore, Foucauldian perspectives on power are needed to supplement the Orwellian vision for, as I shall suggest below, power in contemporary capitalist and state communist societies operates and is utilized in a variety of ways, many of which are quite different than in Orwell's vision.

For one thing, Orwell misses the rise of what Foucault calls "normalizing" disciplinary power and what Lasch calls the "therapeutic" or paternalistic social and state apparatus. {17} That is, contemporary capitalist societies utilize a wide array of social welfare programs and agencies, schooling, and institutions and techniques such as psychotherapy, mental institutions, prisons, and media to socialize individuals and to suppress deviancy. Deviant behavior in capitalist societies is thus more likely to be reshaped by techniques of behavior control rather than Big Brother's boot-in-the-face.

In fact, capitalist societies seem to be able to exert social control without having to control every facet of life through their use of normalizing, disciplinary, media and cultural power (though one should not

overestimate the amount of "freedom" it allows to individuals). On the other hand, power in capitalist societies is, as Foucault argues, diffused through different institutions, disciplines, and discourses that often function in much more subtle and complex ways than in the repressive societies of Orwell's nightmare.

Furthermore, and perhaps most crucially, Orwell misses the rise of the technological society in his grim vision of the future in **1984**. Against those who celebrate how Orwell's supposed prophecy anticipates social trends, I would argue that Orwell really did not anticipate the extent to which technological innovation in computers, the media, automation, and new technologies would transform industrial societies. Against those who praise Orwell's prescient vision of our present and future, I would argue that he really fails to anticipate the rise of our consumer, media, and technological society. Thus while Orwell might well be read as an acute social critic of the trends toward totalitarianism emerging out of the industrial society of his day, he is better read, I believe, as a critic of the most repressive socio-economic systems of his own epoch than as a prophet of the future. That is, Orwell is better read as a critic who provides powerful indictments of repressive totalitarianism, and warnings about what might happen if certain trends and phenomena continued in the future rather than as a theoretical and political guide to present-day social and political realities. For he envisages only one aspect of a future whose modes of domination are more complex, sophisticated, and heterogeneous than those pictured by Orwell.

In fact, I believe that there has been a misplaced emphasis on celebrating Orwell as a social prophet rather than as a critic who provided warnings about what might happen rather than projections of what would happen. In a letter to an American correspondent, part of which I cited earlier, Orwell emphatically stated that: "I do not believe that the kind of society I describe **necessarily** will arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it **could** arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences." {18}

This letter suggests that Orwell himself intended his work as a warning -- a position defended by some of his closest friends and most acute interpreters. Consequently, a series of problems emerge when one moves to apply Orwell's critique to contemporary capitalist societies. Since he depicts all repressive power centralized in the hands of the state, Orwell's most famous novels and essays do not provide useful critical perspectives on capitalism and do not, in **1984**, in particular, shed much light on how capitalist societies actually function. Thus, it is difficult to read **1984** as a critique of contemporary capitalist societies. In fact, the plot in Orwell's novel explicitly posits that a revolution took place in the 1950s which completely eliminated capitalism, and although there are some references to capitalist exploiters in the novel, I believe that **1984** might well make people yearn for more commodities and a higher standard of living, for more diversity, for more individual freedoms, in short for more capitalism. {19}

This is not to say that Orwell was a capitalist ideologue, for it is also well-known that Orwell was a life-long and convinced socialist who for decades had polemicized against capitalism. In one revealing essay, "Will Freedom Die With Capitalism?", Orwell wrote: "Capitalism, as such, has no room in it for any human relationship; it has no law except that profits must always be made. Not much more than a century ago, children as young as six were bought up and worked to death in the mines and cotton mills, more ruthlessly than we should now work a donkey. This was not more cruel than the Spanish Inquisition, but it was more inhuman, in that the men who worked those children to death thought of them as mere units of labour, **things**, whereas the Spanish Inquisitor would have thought of them as souls. According to the capitalist ethic there is absolutely nothing wrong in turning a man out to starve after he has served you for forty years; on the contrary, it may be 'sound business,' a necessary retrenchment which is part of your duty to your

shareholders. It is true that capitalism has been tamed and modified and has developed certain virtues of its own ... but I think it must be admitted that it is inherently evil and that as a result of it human life has deteriorated in certain ways." {20}

In the early 1940s, Orwell concluded that a planned, centralized state must supersede **laissez-faire** capitalism because of the inefficiency of a market economy in conditions of warfare, and its inability to mobilize the population and economic resources. Whereas earlier he had criticized precisely capitalism's unrestrained "free enterprise" as the cause of untold suffering, now he began to fear that with the end of economic liberty would come the end of political liberty and individual freedom. In a 1941 BBC talk on "Literature and Totalitarianism," Orwell states: "When one mentions totalitarianism one thinks immediately of Germany, Russia, Italy, but I think one must face the risk that this phenomenon is going to be world-wide. It is obvious that the period of free capitalism is coming to an end and that one country after another is adopting a centralised economy that one can call Socialism or state capitalism according as one prefers. With that the economic liberty of the individual, and to a great extent his liberty to do what he likes, to choose his own work, to move to and fro across the surface of the earth, comes to an end. Now, till recently the implications of this were not foreseen. It was never fully realised that the disappearance of economic liberty would have any effect on intellectual liberty. Socialism was usually thought of as a sort of moralised liberalism. The state would take charge of your economic life and set you free from the fear of poverty, unemployment and so forth, but it would have no need to interfere with your private intellectual life. Art could flourish just as it had done in the liberal-capitalist age, only a little more so, because the artist would not any longer be under economic compulsions" {21}

Orwell did near the end of the essay posit the hope that a non-totalitarian mode of socialism might evolve "in which freedom of thought can survive the disappearance of economic individualism," but this hope remains nothing but an article of faith, and for the most part he believed that repressive totalitarianism was the inevitable face of the future. {22} Indeed, like Marcuse and the Frankfurt School Orwell believed that with the rise of totalitarian societies we "live in an age in which the individual is ceasing to exist -- or perhaps one ought to say, in which the individual is ceasing to have the illusion of being autonomous." {23}

Given Orwell's fear of the rise of a world totalitarian order and the decline of the autonomous individual, he came to believe that a centralized state apparatus of whatever kind became a worst threat to human well-being and freedom than capitalism, and thus shifted the target of his critique from the capitalist economy to the totalitarian state. While Orwell never formally renounced his commitment to socialism, he rarely criticized capitalism in his later writings and focused his critique on (mostly communist, that is Stalinist) totalitarianism. Thus Orwell's post-1940s works -- especially **Animal Farm** and **1984** -- do not really contain critical perspectives on capitalism, and while the Left can appropriate Orwell for providing a critique of authoritarian state communism and can build on his commitments to democratic socialism, it is no accident that the Right has been able to use Orwell in the Cold War as a powerful critic of communism.

### **Marcuse's Critique of Consumer Capitalism**

Herbert Marcuse, by contrast, argued that the development of consumer capitalism constituted a profound threat to freedom and individuality. In **One-Dimensional Man**, he writes: "By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For 'totalitarian' is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole. Not only a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible with a 'pluralism' of parties, newspapers, 'countervailing powers,' etc." (**ODM**, p. 3)

Yet there is some ambiguity in Marcuse's analyses of the nature and origins of contemporary forms of domination. Against those who interpret Marcuse as a technological determinist, {24} I would argue that the passage just cited, and the main thrust of **One-Dimensional Man**, suggests that advanced capitalist societies are "totalitarian" because the capitalist mode of production and the "vested interests," or to use marxian discourse, the ruling class, use technology to manipulate needs, to indoctrinate, to integrate potential opposition, and to manage and administer society in accord with their own interests. In this sense, advanced capitalist societies are "totalitarian" because they are entirely controlled by the hegemony of capital. For in Marcuse's theorizing, capital controls the state, media, educational and ideological apparatuses, and social institutions while using them for its ends of maximizing profits and maintaining social control by eliminating opposition and integrating individuals into the capitalist system.

Yet Marcuse also claims that: "Technological rationality reveals its political character as it becomes the great vehicle of better domination, creating a truly totalitarian universe in which society and nature, mind and body are kept in a state of permanent mobilization for the defense of this universe" (**ODM**, p. 18). This passage suggest that it is technological rationality which produces the totalitarian universe, as if it was technology that was the demiurge of capitalist modernity. Yet Marcuse also writes: "Technology is always a historical-social **project**: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interest intend to do with mean and things. Such a 'purpose' of domination is 'substantive' and to this extent belongs to the very form of technical reason." {25} On this view, technology is structured and constituted by the interests that produce it, so that in a capitalist society certain capitalist interests are embedded in technology. Yet once constituted, technology becomes relatively autonomous and can have its own dynamism and power.

It is on this view a mistake to either utilize models of economic or technological determinism which would reduce social dynamics to one factor or another. One therefore needs to see contemporary capitalist societies as a synthesis of capitalism and technology, as a form of what I have called elsewhere:

**technocapitalism**. {26} In Marcuse's post-World War II writings -- which can be read as conceptualizing the historical stage **after** Orwell's totalitarian societies -- it is thus the synthesis of capitalism and technology which provides a new form of social domination. From this perspective, Orwell's nightmare can be read as an adequate, indeed powerful, articulation of the political realities of the nightmares of Stalinism, fascism, and world war in the 1930s and 1940s. I am suggesting, however, that Orwell's nightmare primarily illuminates his own historical epoch and does not anticipate the fundamental trends of social development in post-World War II capitalist societies.

Marcuse, by contrast, analyses precisely these new trends which he sees as producing a new form of totalitarian domination. **One-Dimensional Man** provides an analysis of such a totalitarian society which uses technology, consumerism, media, language, the state, and culture and ideology as new instruments of social control and domination. Marcuse's use of the admittedly loaded and rhetorical term "totalitarian" to describe advanced capitalist societies is a conscious attempt to remold and reconstruct political discourse so as to take a term that is used to attack fascist and communist societies and to apply it to capitalist societies. In so doing, Marcuse, I would suggest, implicitly provides a rebuttal to those who use the term to attack communism, or to equate communism and fascism, and is also able to suggest parallels between the worst features of "totalitarian" fascist and communist societies and contemporary technocapitalism.

The term "totalitarianism" has had its own political and ideological history within which Marcuse intervenes. "Totalitarian" was originally used by the Italian fascist Gentile in his **Origini e Dottrina del Fascismo** to describe "the totalitarian nature of the fascist doctrine," and Mussolini in 1932 proclaimed himself a "totalitarian" and labelled his fascist state "**lo stato totalitario**." {27} The term was taken over by critics of Nazism and was applied to the Nazi state. Scholars and oppositional Marxists also began applying it to the Stalinist system in the Soviet Union, and in her **The Origins of Totalitarianism**, Hannah Arendt took Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia as two prototypical examples of the totalitarian phenomenon. During



the Cold War the term "totalitarian" was used to equate fascism with communism by the "New York intellectuals" and others, and more recently ideologues like Jeane Kirkpatrick positively valorized "authoritarian regimes," like the Phillipines and Chile, that were friendly to US interests, against supposedly more repressive "totalitarian" regimes to legitimate U.S. support of repressive "authoritarian" dictatorships which opposed communism. {28}

Against these Cold War discourses, Marcuse attempted to redefine the term through what he later called "linguistic therapy" in which a term like "totalitarianism" used by the right to condemn communism is reconstructed and applied as a concept used to criticize capitalism by evoking images of a one-dimensional, "totalitarian" capitalist society. {29} There are questions, however, of the extent to which this rhetorical ploy works. First, by applying "totalitarianism" to pluralistic, non-terroristic societies, like most capitalist democracies, the term loses its historical specificity and its critical force. That is, in Marcuse's analysis, "totalitarianism" loses its historical and analytical specificity in which it can be used to attack particularly repressive and terroristic societies like fascism or Stalinism which do not allow democratic political elections, or provide human rights or civil liberties to those critical of the state and which, among other things, systematically use force to suppress and eliminate political opposition. And, secondly, although there is obviously something like a hegemony of capital in contemporary capitalist societies -- as Marcuse's own writings **after One-Dimensional Man** suggest -- there are also contradictions, forms of resistance, opposition, etc. which images of a totalitarian domination by capital in the one-dimensional society occlude.

Although I do not think that Marcuse's conceptual redefinition of "totalitarianism" is a successful or useful rhetorical strategy, and while I also have doubts concerning his model of "one-dimensional society," {30} I believe that he provides useful critical perspectives on capitalist society precisely to the extent to which he shows that control by capital of the political, social, and cultural realms and new syntheses of capital and technology constitute "new forms of social control" and domination. In these analyses, Marcuse differs most profoundly from Orwell. Whereas in **1984** it is coercion, overt political repression, even torture and murder, which constitute the crux of the society's instruments and strategy of social control, in Marcuse's analysis it is more the instruments of culture, mass persuasion, manipulation, consumerism and controlled gratification that function to integrate individuals into advanced capitalism and to produce what Marcuse calls "one-dimensional society" and "one-dimensional man":

"The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces 'sell' or impose the social system as a whole. The means of mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, goods, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life -- much better than before -- and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change"(ODM, p. 12).

Here Marcuse's analysis is much closer to Huxley's vision in **Brave New World** than to Orwell's in **1984**. Marcuse follows Huxley's vision in his analysis of how mass consumption produces false needs that integrate individuals into the consumer society, how sexuality is manipulated to produce social conformity, and how an entire system of education, indoctrination, and non-coercive social control produce tendencies toward conformity, submission, sameness. In my view, Marcuse and Huxley by and large more accurately describe how advanced capitalist societies actually function than Orwell. Most capitalist (and state socialist) societies today use a mixture of coercion and manipulation, of force and hegemony to use



Gramsci's terms, so at the very least Orwell's emphasis on force and state terror must be supplemented by Marcuse's and Huxley's emphasis on manipulation and new forms of social control. {I am excluding from this discussion the possibility of nuclear war or the complete collapse of the capitalist economy in which case probably Orwell's vision would be confirmed once more.}

In general, there is a complementary quality to the views of Marcuse and Orwell, and their analyses, critiques, and conceptual mappings can be used in a variety of historical contexts where in some cases Orwell's writings -- while in others Huxley's or Marcuse's -- might be more useful. Further, I believe that Orwell is strongest precisely where Marcuse is weakest (and vice versa). For Marcuse does not really have an adequate analysis of bureaucracy, political repression, and the state in **One-Dimensional Man**. Indeed, Marcuse tends to neglect analysis of the state and bureaucracy within a theory that blends critique of capitalism with Marxian cultural and ideological critique. Orwell, of course, provides a powerful and critical -- though problematical -- vision of the bureaucratic phenomenon, as well as a powerful condemnation of political terror and coercion. Unlike Marcuse, he focuses on the centrality of the state and political bureaucracy, though as I have been arguing, his vision is limited. Nonetheless, Orwell challenges us to think through the connection between party politics, bureaucracy, and power, whereas Marcuse tends to neglect these phenomena in his analysis. But whereas Orwell provides a chilling look at political bureaucracy and a party state, he fails to anticipate the more subtle ways in which the socio-economic system manipulates individuals into conforming to capitalist societies -- with the exception of his brilliant analysis of the manipulation of language which I shall take up shortly.

Interestingly, Huxley, Orwell, and Marcuse share strong commitments to individualism. Orwell and Marcuse manifestly demonstrate that it is possible to be strongly committed to both socialism and individualism, and that ideally socialism should exist to protect, preserve, and develop individuality to its fullest. {31} Orwell became skeptical as to whether **any** centralized state would truly protect the individual and began to see the economic liberty central to capitalism as at least a somewhat beneficial legacy, whereas Marcuse came to see capitalism and the control of the entirety of the society by capital as **the** great threat to freedom, individuality, and democracy in the modern world. Throughout **One-Dimensional Man**, Marcuse argues that the freedom and individualism which Orwell implicitly valorizes in his critique of political totalitarianism is itself being eroded in advanced capitalist societies. In one passage, Marcuse suggests that "economic freedom would mean freedom **from** the economy -- from being controlled by economic forces and relationships; freedom from the daily struggle for existence, from earning a living. Political freedom would mean liberation of the individuals **from** politics over which they have no effective control. Similarly, intellectual freedom would mean the restoration of individual thought now absorbed by mass communication and indoctrination, abolition of 'public opinion' together with its makers. The unrealistic sound of these propositions is indicative, not of their utopian character, but of the strength of the forces which prevent their realization" (**ODM**, p. 4).

The most striking similarity, however, between Huxley's, Orwell's and Marcuse's positions is their discussions of the degradation of language and thought in the contemporary epoch. Huxley showed in **Brave New World** how a totally administered society would condition thought and behavior through control of language, and this theme is central to Orwell's vision of **1984** as well, and was later explicitly taken up by Marcuse who adopts the term "Orwellian language" to describe tendencies toward control of language and thought in the contemporary world. Indeed, in articles published in the 1980s on Orwell that attempt to sort out which of his predictions were substantiated, many commentators focused on his theory of "Newspeak" and "doublethink" in relation to present political discourse in both the capitalist and communist spheres -- a theme which Marcuse himself took up during the 1950s while he was writing **One-Dimensional Man** and which remains one of his major contributions to contemporary social theory. {32} In view of the shared critical legacy between Marcuse and Orwell, and because the relationships

between language and politics are growing in importance, let us then see how Orwell's and Marcuse's perspectives can be applied to provide a critique of the degradation of thought, language, and politics in the contemporary United States.



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## Notes

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{1}George Orwell, **1984** (New York: Signet, 1961) (hereafter referred to as **1984** and page references in the text will refer to pagination in the Signet edition which is probably the most accessible text of the novel). I also drew on the four volume collection of **The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell**, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968). Secondary works on Orwell that helped me come to terms with Orwell as political critic include George Woodcock, **The Crystal Spirit** (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968); Bernard Crick, **George Orwell** (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981); and several collections of essays and journals devoted to Orwell including: **1984 Revisited**, Irving Howe, editor (New York: Harper and Row, 1983); **Nineteen Eighty-Four to 1984**, C.J. Kuppig, editor (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1984); **On Nineteen Eighty-Four**, Peter Stanksy, editor (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1983); **Orwell's 1984**, a special issue of **Social Theory and Practice**, Vol. 10, Nr. 3 (Fall 1984); **Insight, Prophecy and Moral Vision**, a special issue of **Cogito Vol. 1, Nrs. 3/4**, edited by Dennis Rohatyn (Sept-Dec 1983); and **Salmagundi 65** (Fall 1984).

These anthologies and journals dedicated to **1984** provide testimony to the incredible impact of Orwell's text; see also the discussion of "Big Brother in America" by Gorman Beauchamp in **Social Theory and Practice**, op. cit.) who points out that since 1949 about 160,000 hardback copies of **1984** have been sold and over ten million paperback copies in sixty-six printings; and in 1984 it sold at a rate of over 50,000 copies per day! (p. 253). Beauchamp and other contributors in some of the above cited anthologies and journal issues document continued interest in and debate over Orwell's novel and vision.

{2}Herbert Marcuse, **One-Dimensional Man** (Boston: Beacon, 1964) (hereafter **ODM**). My reflections on Marcuse draw on research contained in my book **Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism** (London and Berkeley: Macmillan and University of California Press, 1984).

{3}On Orwell's reception by the Left, see Robert Klitzke, **Orwell and His Critics: an enquiry into the reception of and critical debate about George Orwell's political works** (Ph.D. thesis, London 1977; copy in Orwell archive) and Crick, (op. cit.), who documents orthodox communist hostility to Orwell. I am grateful to Paul Thomas for letting me read a then unpublished article on "George Orwell and Raymond Williams" which documents Williams' surprisingly critical posture toward Orwell and which also cites extremely hostile appraisals of Orwell by the editors of New Left Review in their interviews with Williams; see Paul Thomas, **Theory and Society**, and Raymond Williams, **Politics and Letter: Interviews with**

**New Left Review** (London: New Left Books, 1979), 385ff. See also the anthology **Inside the Myth: Orwell: The View From the Left**, edited by Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart) for recent critiques from the radical Left of Orwell. For a feminist critique, see Daphne Patai, **The Orwell Mystique: A Study in Male Ideology** (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). Social Democrats, on the other hand, tend to claim Orwell as one of their own; see the Howe anthology cited in note 1. Curiously enough, such is Orwell's popularity that a recent Russian critic has argued that the appropriate referent for Orwell's novel is the United States of Ronald Reagan! See the citation in Beauchamp, (op. cit.), pp. 248ff.. On the other hand, the Soviets protested the inclusion of Orwell's **Animal Farm** in an international cultural festival. See **The New York Times** (May 29, 1986), p. 14, and **Village Voice** (July 1, 1986), p. 104. Indeed, "Orwell" continues to be a highly charged contested terrain.

{4}Orwell, **Collected Essays**, Vol. 4, p. 502.

{5}Erich Fromm in the Afterword to the Signet edition of **1984** discusses its lineage in contemporary dystopic novels, as does George Woodcock in Kuppig, (op. cit.), pp. 69ff. On the tradition of dystopic novels also see, H.L. Berger, **Science Fiction and the New Dark Age** (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1976).

@+{6}On the role of these themes within critical theory, see Martin Jay, **The Dialectical Imagination** (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973) and Douglas Kellner **Herbert Marcuse**, (op. cit.). Interviews with Erica Sherover-Marcuse in November 1984 indicated that Marcuse was quite fond of Orwell, and Leo Lowenthal also confirmed that he and his Institute colleagues thought quite highly of Orwell (interview in Berkeley, Nov. 1984). Their similar themes and similar critiques of tendencies toward administration and domination in contemporary societies probably disposed critical theorists to see Orwell more positively than many others on the Left.

{7}See the little-known essay George Orwell, "Will Freedom Die With Capitalism?," **The Left News** (April 1941), p. 1683. Thanks to Arthur Eckstein for sending me this text which was not included in the four volume **Collected Essays**.

{8}While I cannot elaborate on this distinction here, I would distinguish between corporate conservatism (Burke, Nisbet, Bell, etc.) and individualist conservatism which centers on the individual which it champions in terms of traditional values against more modernizing forces. For such individualist-conservative critiques of bureaucracy, see Friedrich Nietzsche, **The Portable Nietzsche** (New York: Vintage, 1968); Vilfredo Pareto, **The Mind and Society** (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1935); and Robert Michels, **Political Parties** (1911; English trans. Free Press, 1966).

{9}When Orwell discusses bureaucracy in his essays and journalism, he does tend to discuss the relation between bureaucracy and social system in historically specific terms. The point that I am trying to make is that Orwell's representations of the state and bureaucracy in the novel **1984** make it appear as if communism per se was identical to a terroristic bureaucracy, and that bureaucracy is thus primarily a repressive and terroristic apparatus in the modern state. This impression, I believe, accounts for the use that conservatives make of **1984** and I am suggesting that democratic socialists can counter this reading by presenting **1984** as a critique of a specific form of Stalinist bureaucracy that is in fact a deformation of socialism. For some studies of the contradictions of bureaucracy in historically specific societies, see Max Weber, **From Max Weber** (New York: Oxford, 1946); Alvin W. Gouldner, **The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology** (New York: Seabury, 1976); and Daniel Bell, **The Coming of Post-Industrial Society** (New York: Basic Books, 1973). For some French Marxist critiques of bureaucracy, see the studies by

Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis published in **Socialisme ou Barbarie** and collected in Lefort, **Elements d'une critique de la bureaucratie** (Geneve-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1971) and Castoriadis, **La societe bureaucratique** (Paris: UGE, 1973).

{10}See Antonio Gramsci, "The Modern Prince" in **Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci**, edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) where he characterizes the "dual nature" of bourgeois society in terms of "the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization" (pp. 169-170). See the excellent discussion of Gramsci and hegemony in Carl Boggs, *The Two Revolutions. Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

{11}In an essay "On 'Failed Totalitarianism'", Michael Walzer in Howe, (op. cit.), points to the failures and collapse of certain totalitarian societies, and argues that Orwell's vision of self-perpetuating totalitarian bureaucratic states has been at least partially refuted by the actual course of history (pp. 103-121). Against Jeane Kirkpatrick and those who distinguish between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes, Walzer also argues that this distinction is both analytically imprecise and politically dangerous by pointing out shared features between so-called "totalitarian" and "authoritarian" states and the continuities between them.

{12}Aldous Huxley, cited in Kuppig, (op. cit.), pp. 165-6. For Huxley's vision, see *Brave New World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1958; reprint of 1932 edition).

{13}Orwell, *Collected Essays*, Vol. II, p. 17.

{14}Orwell, *Collected Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 30-31.

{15}Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965; reprint of 1958 Harper and Brothers edition).

{16}See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) and *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

{17}Foucault, *ibid*, and Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1979) and *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* (New York: Norton, 1985).

{18}George Orwell, *Collected Essays*, (op. cit.), Vol. IV, p. 502.

{19}This view is shared by Arthur Eckstein who in "1984 and George Orwell's Other View of Capitalism," **Modern Age** (Winter 1985), discusses the role of "the past" in **1984**, and concludes that the positive reminiscences center on greater material comforts and individual freedoms in the capitalist past. In Eckstein's words, in the world of **1984**, "material life for the average person had been far better in the 'past' than under Ingsoc. Examples are numerous: the wide availability of real coffee, real sugar, real chocolate, good beer, wine, fruit, solidly-built furniture, elevators that worked. Above all: the wide availability of well-made books and even objects kept for their intrinsic beauty alone" (p. 11).

{20}Orwell, "Will Freedom Die?," (op. cit), p. 1683.

{21}Orwell, "Literature and Totalitarianism," in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, p. 135.

{22}This is the view projected in the two essays cited above, "Will Freedom Die? and "Literature

and Totalitarianism," which appears throughout Orwell's correspondence and essays of the period.

{23}Orwell, "Literature and Totalitarianism," (op. cit.), p. 134. See from the same period, Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 9: 3 (1941), pp. 414-439, and Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Seabury 1972; reprint of 1946 Oxford University Press edition).

{24}This interpretation is advanced in Morton Schoolman, *The Imaginary Witness* (New York: Free Press, 1980); see my detailed critique in *New German Critique* 26 (1982), pp. 185-201.

{25}Herbert Marcuse, "Industrialism and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," *Negations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 224.

{26}See Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

{27}On the development of the concept of "totalitarianism," see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.: 1951), and Andreas Wildt, "Totalitarian State Capitalism" *Telos* 41 (Fall 1979), pp. 33-58 who documents the left-opposition critiques of "totalitarian" Stalinism, claiming that "The Council Communists...were the first to connect Stalinism and Fascism" (p. 45). Orwell reviewed most of the major books that appeared on totalitarianism in the 1940s; see the reviews collected in *Collected Essays*, (op. cit.).

{28}Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals* (New York, 198X).

{29}See *One-Dimensional Man*, op. cit.), pp. 3ff. and *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 8ff..

{30}See my critique in Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, *ibid.*

{31}For discussion of Marcuse's individualistic socialism, see my book *Herbert Marcuse*, *ibid.*; on Orwell's blend of socialism and individualism, see

{32}On the contemporary relevance of Orwell's analyses of Newspeak, see the articles in *Alternative Media* (Spring 1984) from which I took some of the examples below of contemporary uses of Newspeak and Doublethink, and the articles by Bennett, Martin, and Blakemore in the *Social Theory and Practice* issue cited in note 1. For Marcuse's appropriation of Orwell's theory, see *One-Dimensional Man* Chapter 4, my discussion in *Herbert Marcuse*, and the article by Ian Slater, "Orwell, Marcuse, and the Language of Politics," *Political Studies*, Vol. XXXI, no. 4 (1975).





## From 1984 to One-Dimensional Man: Critical Reflections on Orwell and Marcuse

### Section Two

By Douglas Kellner

#### Language and Politics: Some Case Studies

In **1984**, "Newspeak" is the new totalitarian language which replaces "Old English." The aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought so that an individual could not even think critical or subversive thoughts. Potentially critical terms like "freedom" are formally defined into their conceptual opposites ("freedom is slavery"), or are simply eliminated from the dictionary and everyday language. In this manner, critical language would wither away as the number of words which allow differentiation and critique was increasingly reduced. "Doublethink" for Orwell was the mental activity of simultaneously knowing and not knowing, denoting an ability to be conscious of the truth while telling lies, so that one could hold two contradictory views at once and manipulate language to meet the exigencies of the moment (**1984**, pp. 32f., passim).

In these reflections on the politics of language, Orwell was generalizing from the practices of existing totalitarian states and projected a future in which truth and honesty no longer played any role in political discourse. In **One-Dimensional Man**, Marcuse uses the term "Orwellian language" to describe the nature and functions of dominant discourses within contemporary post-industrial societies, though most of his examples are from the US. In Marcuse's analysis, public and corporate officials, and the mass media, utilize a "one-dimensional language" to smooth over social contradictions and problems, and thus restrict thought and public discourse to the terms and interests of the established society.

Marcuse analyzes the methods and tricks through which language shapes public thought and discourse through "magic-ritual" formulas and "fixed images" which "abridge thought" and "cut off development of meaning." This language attempts to manipulate its audience with authoritarian dicta and to prevent critical thought and discourse. Marcuse cites contemporary examples of "Orwellian language" in which concepts such as democracy, freedom, and equality are used in capitalist countries to perpetuate class society, unfreedom, and inequality while "socialism" and "worker's democracy" are used by communist countries to perpetuate party dictatorship. He analyzes as well a logic of manipulation that is almost surrealistic in its unification of opposites. In the 1950s, Marcuse cites discussion of a "clean bomb" with "harmless fallout," and newspapers stating that: "Labor is seeking missile harmony" (**ODM** 89ff).

The trend continued during the Vietnam war when the destruction of villages was labelled a "pacification program," the village refugees were called "ambient non-combat personnel," and the concentration camps in which they were housed were termed "pacified hamlets." Doublethink prevailed in the inflated body counts and deflated estimates of enemy troop strength, and new forms of Newspeak appeared frequently:

bombing one's own troops is called "accidental deliverance of ordinance equipment," while getting killed by one's own forces is referred to as falling prey to "friendly fire." Unprovoked aggression against an innocent village is named a "pre-emptive defensive strike," while the invasion of Cambodia is an "incursion." Periodically rigged elections allowed corrupt military dictatorships in Vietnam to be labelled "democratic" while popularly supported national liberation movements are denounced as "terrorists."

During the Vietnam era in the United States an explicitly counterrevolutionary President, Richard Nixon, proclaimed a "New American Revolution" after his re-election in 1972, while rightwing groups called themselves "libertarians" and "Young Americans for Freedom," and advertisers tried to sell a "revolutionary new detergent," thus coopting the discourse of freedom and revolution to serve the interests of a conservative social system. And the overthrow of Allende's democratically elected government in Chile was called a "destabilization program," while CIA assassination teams were titled "health alteration committess" and their criminal and immoral acts were known as "covert actions." During the Watergate scandal, the Nixon administration engaged in orgies of doublethink and when his administration's lies became too blatant, they were declared "inoperative": the final triumph of bureaucratic jargon to escape criteria of truth and falsity.

However, Newspeak and doublethink have reached even greater heights during the Reagan administration. Reagan's constant barrage of lies are tolerated as "misstatements" and he seems to have perfected the art of using Newspeak and doublethink with a smile and a show of sincerity. {33} When the MX missile was being criticized in Congress, it was renamed "Peacekeeper" and the U.S. troops used in Lebanon to prop up the minority Gemayal regime were called "peacekeepers," though their presence elicited violence resulting in many deaths. Those whom the Reagan administration represents as "enemies" are denounced as "terrorists," while support of rightwing governments who repeatedly use terror and torture is part of business as usual; thus the murderous Nicaraguan "contras" who frequently use terror against civilians are celebrated as "freedom fighters." When a CIA manual which instructed the contras to "neutralize" (i.e. assassinate) Sandinista officials was published, the President and CIA officials claimed that it intended to "moderate" contra activities. And during the numerous debates over contra aid, support of this policy was defended in arguments which either exhibited extreme cases of "doublethink" whereby the Congresspeople in question knew that their arguments were totally specious or the total triumph of "newspeak" whereby they are so indoctrinated that they actually believe the patently untrue words which they mouth (i.e. about the contras being "freedom fighters," the Sandinistas being no more than tools of the Soviets, etc.).

Indeed, Newspeak and Doublethink have proliferated to such an extent in recent years that the National Council of Teachers of English presents yearly awards for especially egregious examples. In 1984, they provided Doublespeak awards to Pentagon descriptions of peace as "permanent pre-hostility," for calling combat "violence processing," and for referring to civilian casualties in nuclear war as "collateral damage." The Pentagon was cited for its description of the October 1983 invasion of Grenada as a "predawn vertical insertion." The Reagan administration has also appropriated medical terminology for military actions: the term "surgical strike" is used to describe bombing raids which usually involve civilian casualties. Successful military "excursions" are followed by "mopping up" operations -- a term also used to describe U.S. military activity in Grenada. War for the Reagan administration is thus a medical affair with surgery and mopping up, dedicated to eradicating the "cancer" of communism.

But throughout the Cold War both sides have specialized in Orwellian language. State communist regimes regularly called their party states "democracies" or "people's republics," and regularly uses Newspeak and doublethink to legitimate their regimes. {34} In the West, the Department of Defense replaced the Department of War after World War II and terms like the "Free World," "independent nations," or "allies" have been used to describe repressive dictatorships friendly to the capitalist democracies. In fact,

Reagan's 1984 \$253 billion dollar "defense budget" is better described as a "war budget," or at least a "military budget."

Consequently, both Orwell and Marcuse have called attention to the degeneration of language and truth in contemporary political discourse and have opened up an important area of political linguistics. Both call attention to the primacy of mass communications in politics and the way political discourse has degenerated into a play of images which has led to a decline of truth and honesty in political debate. This analysis provides powerful tools to develop a critique of language and politics in the contemporary era.

There is, however, a major difference between Orwell's and Marcuse's own uses of language and modes of thought. Orwell is very much a practitioner of English common sense and champion of empiricism who constantly argued for the use of simpler, clearer, ordinary language in his essays on language and politics. {35} Marcuse, on the other hand, consistently attacked positivism, empiricism, "common sense" and ordinary language philosophy from the standpoint of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectics and highly theoretical modes of thought characteristic of the Frankfurt School's critical theory. {36} Marcuse's own language is notoriously difficult and when forced to defend it, he argued that capitalist societies tend to appropriate and coopt all standard forms of critical and oppositional thought and behavior; thus a theory and discourse that wants to remain oppositional must consciously resist appropriation and assimilation into prevailing modes of discourse. Consequently, Marcuse consciously used theoretical language and a style that could not be easily coopted into prevailing discourse. The price paid, of course, is that many people have difficulties in reading or understanding Marcuse, and we might want to reflect upon whether Orwell's or Marcuse's writing strategy and theories of language are more appropriate today for radical social theory and politics today.

My own view is that while Marcuse is correct that theoretical language is often useful and necessary, there are limitations to this strategy, and that Orwell provides a useful corrective. The goal of critical political discourse, on this view, is to combine the sort of clarity and directness of expression championed by Orwell with critical and theoretical concepts and analyses of the sort associated with Marcuse. On this latter point, I would argue that Marcuse himself was not always as obscure or difficult as his detractors often claim, though his Germanic habits of language and thought occasionally caused problems for those not versed in German philosophy, especially in the tradition of Hegel and Marx. Furthermore, one could defend Marcuse's language by arguing that Orwell's arguments for simplicity and clarity might not always be appropriate for complex or novel subject matter that require new modes of thought and critical reflection for accurate understanding. Each subject matter and audience requires different levels of theoretical discourse, style, and language, so that there are really no simple nostrums for "politically correct" Left discourses or style. Consequently, we might profitably continue to study Orwell and Marcuse as quite different political stylists with some similar aims and some significant differences.

## From Theory to Practice

In conclusion I want to discuss the political effects of writing, theory, and style by contrasting Orwell's and Marcuse's works. There have been heated debates over where to situate both writers, especially in regard to Orwell who has been claimed by both Left and Right. {37} Here it should be stated emphatically that Orwell was a man of the Left who consistently attacked capitalism and imperialism while defending democratic socialism. In "Why I Write" Orwell stated: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, **against** totalitarianism and **for** democratic socialism." {38} Although obviously one can read any writer against the grain and use them for a multiplicity of political purposes, I believe that Orwell should be read as a leftist critic of totalitarianism -- of the fascist, communist, and welfare state capitalist varieties -- and, as I stated in the beginning, can therefore be used by the democratic Left to criticize forms of socialism that are to be avoided and overcome.

I have suggested that it is better to take **1984** as an illumination of its historical epoch and warning about what might happen than as futuristic prophecy. From this standpoint, the novel would cue us to what we should fight against as we are catapulted into an uncertain future: any threat to our civil liberties, restrictions on democracy, attempts at political manipulation and control, torture, state terrorism, etc. In this way, Orwell provides insights into what we should avoid and warnings against social trends that threaten to bring about an increase of unfreedom and misery into the world.

Yet I think there are serious problems concerning the political effects of Orwell's work, in particular **Animal Farm** and **1984**. The problem is not simply that their anti-communism can and has been used by the Right, but that in addition there are serious problems with the perspectives on contemporary society and on the possibility of emancipatory political change in Orwell's political thought. Although both Marcuse and Orwell tend to be quite pessimistic about the prospects for radical social change and overcoming the worst features of repression and manipulation in contemporary societies, I would suggest that Orwell is much more pessimistic to an extent that one receives the impression that meaningful political change is impossible. Marcuse, on the other hand, offers more productive perspectives.

Throughout **One-Dimensional Man** and his other writings, Marcuse contrasts one-dimensional with dialectical thought, resistance and refusal with conformity and submission, and projections of a freer and happier social order with the present one. {39} There is a utopian impulse that runs throughout Marcuse's thought, and one of its features is an insistence that it is possible to produce both more happiness and freedom in one's individual life and in society at large. This runs against Huxley's belief that happiness would be purchased against freedom in the future and a wide-spread belief that societies have to choose between happiness and freedom. Marcuse, by contrast, was a life-long partisan of both happiness and freedom, and was one of the few social thinkers in this oft-disillusioned and usually cynical age who kept the utopian impulse alive in philosophy and radical social theory. By contrast, **1984** is a thoroughly pessimistic and anti-utopian text.

Orwell, in fact, did not ascribe a particularly great value to happiness. In an article on Arthur Koestler, he recommends learning to accept "life on earth as inherently miserable" and suggests that: "Men can only be happy when they do not assume that the object of life is happiness." {40} The hedonistic strain that Orwell criticizes in Koestler is even more marked in Marcuse who is one of the few Marxian socialists to argue that socialism inherently requires more freedom, equality, **and** happiness. {41} Belief in the possibility of increased human happiness requires belief in the possibility of fundamentally changing conditions of both individual and social existence, and on this issue Orwell grew increasingly skeptical and pessimistic. In the essay on Koestler, Orwell urged "the realization that to make life liveable is a much bigger problem than it recently seemed" and seems to suggest in **1984** that the possibilities of eliminating totalitarian societies are extremely minimal. {42}

At several key junctures in **1984**, Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, writes in his notebook and then states, "If there is hope, it lies with the proles." (i.e. the proletarians, the workers who exist outside of the party apparatus). Note, first, the use of "if." Indeed, given Orwell's rather derogatory picture of the proles in **1984**, it is unlikely that this social class would want to or be able to resist, consequently the novel itself gives no grounds whatsoever that there is **any** hope for emancipation from totalitarianism. For Orwell's rebel-individualist Smith is so broken down at the end and has so thoroughly betrayed everything he believed in and loved, including his beloved Julia, that it appears that Orwell denies -- against Marcuse, Sartre, Fromm, and others -- that there is any profound human capacity for resistance which cannot be managed and suppressed by a totalitarian state. One does not have to be a "humanist," or subscribe to an

"essentialist" view of human nature to believe this, as, contrary to Orwell's vision, the history of revolution and resistance is full of testimony and examples of those who resisted torture and did not submit to torture or brainwashing.

Interestingly, in the article on Arthur Koestler, Orwell raises questions about why Rubashov in **Darkness at Noon** failed to confess since: "He has not even been tortured, or not very severely. He is worn down by solitude, toothache, lack of tobacco, bright lights glaring in his eyes, and continuous questioning, but these in themselves would not be enough to overcome a hardened revolutionary." {43} In a sense, **1984** goes beyond **Darkness at Noon** by showing policies of torture guaranteed to break down any person's resistance, thus supporting a fundamentally pessimistic view of the frailties of human nature and power of totalitarian regimes.

In Orwell's pessimistic vision, in fact, the party can remake human beings by breaking down their resistance, remolding the mind, and destroying all vestiges of resistance. Thus Winston Smith capitulates to O'Brien's torture, denounces Julia, and in the last sentence declares that he now loves Big Brother ( **1984**, p. 245). The implication is that it is possible for the state totally to control thought, behavior, and feeling and that since humans are weak and selfish they will ultimately submit to whatever sort of state attempts to control them. Consequently, it seems that Orwell fails to posit any hope for resisting, or overthrowing a totalitarian state, once established, either within oppressed social classes, human nature, or oppositional individuals. His prognosis is so depressingly negative that I am not convinced, as several of his defenders have argued, that **1984** contains an "energizing and passionate gloom" (Irving Howe) which might animate democratic political struggle. {44}

Marcuse, on the other hand, constantly advocated the "Great Refusal" as the proper political response to any form of irrational repression, and indeed this seems to be at least the starting point for political activism in the contemporary era: refusal of all forms of oppression and domination, relentless criticism of all of all policies that impact negatively on working people and progressive social programs, and militant opposition to any and all acts of aggression against Third World countries. Indeed, in an era of "positive thinking," conformity, and Yuppies who "go for it," it seems that Marcuse's emphasis on negative thinking, refusal, and opposition provides at least a starting point and part of a renewal of radical politics in the contemporary era.

But Orwell too can be useful for this project. Orwell's warning in **1984** about repressive and repugnant social trends might activate people to oppose the sorts of oppression he projected, and the fact that **1984** has become such a central part of the contemporary cultural and political landscape makes it possible to use Orwell's language and imagery as effective vehicles of a radical critique that can and have been easily turned to progressive uses. Moreover, the very antithesis between "optimism" and "pessimism" as opposing political mind-sets is a specious one and supposedly pessimistic ideas can be productively used to mobilize people against oppression, as is perceived in Gramsci's formula concerning "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will."

Yet there are dangers that excessive pessimism and negativity without emancipatory alternatives can lead to cynicism, apathy and hopelessness. While I believe that Marcuse had the correct political instincts for ferreting out and attacking all forms of domination and repression, while simultaneously seeking out forms of resistance and struggle, Orwell often manifests a pessimism so extreme that hope for a better future seems ruled out in advance. Indeed, I believe that Orwell seemed to be committed to a fundamental philosophical pessimism that found quintessential expression in **1984** and is prefigured in the 1944 article on Koestler and other writings of the period. {45} Criticizing Koestler's combined "short-term pessimism" and belief that in the long term things will work out, Orwell writes: "Since about 1930 the world has given no reason for optimism whatsoever. Nothing is in sight except a welter of lies, hatred, cruelty and ignorance,



and beyond our present troubles loom vaster ones which are only now entering into the European consciousness." {46}

However tempting such attitudes are in the face of a century of historical catastrophe, to move beyond the conservative political hegemony of the 1980s, we need to overcome temptations to complete pessimism or despair. On the other hand, in view of the catastrophes that conservatism or fascism run amok could bestow upon us, I also believe that we need both Marcuse's and Orwell's vision. Marcuse's "Great Refusal" seems to be the proper political response to the trends toward totalitarianism in the present, yet we also need Orwell's careful attention to forms of political repression and growing totalitarianism to alert us to threats to what remain of our civil liberties and democracy. But hope is (not yet at least) exhausted and I do not see how Orwell's vision will help animate individuals to engage in political struggle in the battles ahead.

With cracks appearing the conservative hegemony in the late 1980s, it is hardly the time for apathy and cynicism for these attitudes merely aid the powers that be and make the advent of an Orwellian **1984** more likely as we move from the conservative 80s into the next decade. Consequently, while Orwell's warning about political totalitarianism is useful, we need a dialectics of disaster (i.e. of catastrophe and hope, such as Ernst Bloch and more recently Ronald Aronson have developed) that provides room for both hope and resistance. {47} Although a more Orwellian **1984** may await us in the future, his sort of pessimism alone provides scant incentive for action, thus a Marcusean dialectic of domination and liberation, or a Blochian theory of catastrophe and hope, seems to provide more adequate political perspectives on trends toward domination and repression contrasted to prospects for resistance and social transformation than Orwell's one-sidedly bleak vision.

## Notes

{33}For examples of Reaganspeak, see the collection compiled by Mark Green and X, **Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error** (New York: ).

{34}For a critique of the continued use of Orwellian language in Soviet Communist regimes, see Leszek Kolakowski, "Totalitarianism and the Virture of the Lie," in Howe, (op. cit.).

{35}On some similarities and differences between Marcuse's and Orwell's critiques of political language, see Ian Slater, "Orwell, Marcuse." Orwell's penchant toward empiricism and a common sense vernacular style is discussed in Crick, (op. cit.).

{36}See Kellner, **Herbert Marcuse** for comprehensive discussion of Marcuse's mode of thought and discourse.

{37}Debates over Orwell's legacy and attempts by both Left and Right to claim him are still raging. See Beauchamp, (op. cit.), and the anthologies cited in notes 1 and 3. On debates over Marcuse's legacy, see my **Herbert Marcuse**.

{38}Orwell, "Why I Write," **Collected Essays**, Vol. 1, p. 5.

{39}This is one of the central themes of my book **Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism**, *ibid*.

{40}George Orwell, "Arthur Koestler," in **Dickens, Dali & Others** (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), p. 1@U(1984)

{41}Kellner, **Herbert Marcuse**, (op. cit.), *passim*.

{42}Crick, (op. cit.), amply documents Orwell's pessimism over the years; for example, pp. 272 and 622.

{43}Orwell, (op. cit.), p. 192.

{44}Howe, (op. cit.), p. 16.

{45}Orwell, "Koestler," (op. cit.), and Crick's study, cited in note 24.

{46}See Ernst Bloch, **Das Prinzip Hoffnung** (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973) and Ronald Aronson, **Dialectics of Disaster** (London: New Left Books, 1983). I discuss these themes in an article (with Harry O'Hara) on Ernst Bloch in **New German Critique 9** (Fall 1976) and in a review of Aronson's book (with Judith Burton) in **Theory and Society, Vol. XIV, Nr. 2** (March 1985), pp. 260-265.

