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**BRAINWASHING IN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR* BY GEORGE ORWELL**

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of this project is the phenomenon of *brainwashing* in the dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. It analyses the depiction of brainwashing on two levels: collective (i.e. thought control performed on the entire society) and individual (i.e. thought control performed as a secluded process on the protagonist of the novel). The main purpose of this analysis is to explain why brainwashing depicted in George Orwell's novel is efficient and why it is one of the most significant images of totalitarian dream of absolute power.

The whole project is divided into three chapters, where the first one provides the background for the following analysis, and the remaining two consist in analysis itself.

The first chapter firstly provides the background for the term *brainwashing*: its history and use, alongside with a short presentation of Robert Lifton's eight totalist themes which are referred to in the second chapter. Secondly, it presents the novel background, both in historical context and in relation to the author's life and political views.

The second chapter focuses on brainwashing on a mass scale. It first characterizes the structure of the totalitarian system of Oceania; then it presents main policies and goals of the Party which provide the perfect background for mass brainwashing; and finally it analyses the methods thanks to which Ingsoc manages to brainwash successfully the most of the society. All those methods are analysed in terms of Lifton's eight totalist themes.

The third chapter focuses on a case of individual brainwashing: the one performed on Winston Smith. First, it shortly presents brainwashing as an actual process physically carried out on an individual. Next, it provides the background and analysis for Winston's character before his capture. In the end, it studies what happens to Winston during his imprisonment at the Ministry of Truth, how it affects him, and how it leads to his final defeat.

## CHAPTER 1

### Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the concept of brainwashing

#### 1.1 The concept of *brainwashing*

Nowadays, the term *brainwashing* is widely known and broadly used all around the world. We can often hear that the media, advertisements, governments, political parties, social groups, religious sects or the newest technology brainwash us; even the English rock band Muse sings in one of their latest tracks about “embedded spies brainwashing our children to be mean” (“Supremacy”). We seem to use this term mostly as a synonym for any attempt to influence our thoughts, beliefs, views and behaviours. Sometimes we use it in an offensive or ironical way as well, just to convey the opinion that someone is stupid or easily influenced and does not have his own views. However, do we understand the term when we use it? Do we use it properly? Is it really just a synonym for any influence on our thoughts, beliefs, views and behaviours, or a way to describe someone’s naivety and stupidity? The answer is no. There is much more to it than it may seem.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, brainwashing has been described as

the systematic and often forcible elimination from a person’s mind of more established ideas, especially political ones, so that another set of ideas may take their place; this process regarded as the kind of coercive conversion practised by certain totalitarian states on political dissidents (qtd. in Taylor 3).

The basic aspects of this complex meaning will be discussed in the next section, along with an outline of the term’s rich history and varied use.

### 1.1.1 The history of the term

*Brainwashing* is a relatively young term. Contrary to the popular belief, the term itself was not created in the times of the Second World War but some time later, during the Korean War, which broke out in 1950. The war, considered as a part of the Cold War, was an armed conflict between North and South Korea. When North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), supported by the Chinese Communists, invaded South Korea (the Republic of Korea), the newly created United Nations, led by the U.S.A., rushed to help the South. Not long after the intervention, the U.S. government noticed that something bad had happened to the soldiers who had been imprisoned by the enemy. Many of them came back from the captivity to their mother country as truly and effectively converted Communists. When interviewed, they could not think clearly and acted like human puppets. It was the CIA operative Edward Hunter who investigated and described this phenomenon as "brainwashing" for the first time (qtd. in Taylor 3). However, although brainwashing is a term invented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its origins reach much further into the past. Hunter observes that the word itself has its roots in the Chinese concept of *szu-hsiang-kai-tsao* (translated as "thought reform") which was commonly used in Chinese Communists' procedures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and which was originally invented in the fourth century BC, during the time of Meng K'o – a Confucian thinker who probably was the first to apply the word "washing" to human minds and souls (Taylor 5).

Kathleen Taylor in her book *Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control* notes that, although at first neutral, the concept of thought reform quickly became associated with notions of control and persuasion (7). Later on, it developed into the notion of thought control. In fact, some examples of this kind of persuasion can be easily found in the Bible and then in Shakespeare's works. As soon as people became aware of their minds, instead of killing anyone who disagrees with them or puts up resistance, they started trying to influence

each other in order to gain control. The methods of such control through persuasion have been effectively developed over the centuries, during the times of tribes, empires and totalitarian regimes. In 1961, psychiatrist Edgar Shein even depicted the techniques of thought control as “coercive persuasion” (qtd in. Taylor 7).

However, the concept of thought reform has not always had negative and coercive associations. Taylor brings up the example of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English poet, Lucy Hutchinson, who depicted the process of thought reform in a positive way, as an effect of her deep faith in God – she needed to erase all her former beliefs which were against the will of God in order to accept the divine views (5). The American psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton once pointed out that, contrary to what we think, the Chinese Communists saw the process of thought reform as “a morally uplifting, harmonizing, and scientifically therapeutic experience” (qtd. in Taylor 5). It shows us that, in fact, thought reform itself, at its core, is of a positive nature. The process gained really negative associations much later, when the Chinese Communists started to use it on the war prisoners against their will (Taylor 6). As a result of such actions, a new term, which would describe the coercive nature of thought reform and the dangers which grow from it, needed to be invented. And that is how the term *brainwashing* came into existence.

Brainwashing is a more complex and ambitious term than persuasion, thought reform or thought control themselves, but it certainly contains their elements. Hunter observes that the new term includes the victim’s complete submission without any indications of free will to the propaganda of those who perform the act of brainwashing. He refers to brainwashing as “a kind of mental rape” (qtd. in Taylor 4).

### 1.1.2 The use of the term

Although the term has its roots in communism, we most commonly associate it with totalitarianism in general. It is commonly assumed that totalitarian governments tend to use the process of brainwashing both to break dissidents' resistance and to keep absolute control over their citizens. Even if totalitarian governments of the Second World War did not have a specific word for their actions, now we certainly can identify them as brainwashing. However, seeing the term only as a totalitarian dream of the perfect weapon to control society is not enough. It is only one of the four main uses of the term, which Kathleen Taylor singles out in her study. To understand the term well, we should be aware of all of them (8-9).

First of all, brainwashing can be used in a political sense "as a term of mental abuse" (Taylor 8). In fact, that was its original and most common use. It can be seen as "a State-controlled process administered by a totalitarian regime against dissidents, whether citizens or foreigners" (Taylor 6). However, with the passage of time, the term became much more complex, and soon it exceeded its original political boundaries; as a result, it started to appear also in reference to smaller groups or even to individuals. Nevertheless, as the term has its roots in politics, it can never be completely separated from it. Taylor acknowledges that brainwashing in the political sense can mean "different things to different people depending on their background and agenda" (8).

Secondly, it can be used as "a functional description of a scientific process" which takes place in the human brain (Taylor 9). Although scholars are still arguing whether brainwashing as a scientific and psychological process actually exists, it can already be described as a set of real techniques used to change or control one's thoughts (Taylor 9).

Thirdly, brainwashing can be used as a name for a totalitarian dream. It may be seen as a fantasy of being in possession of an ultimate tool to control not only citizens' behaviour but

also their thoughts and minds (Taylor 9). The dream assumes that there is a perfect way to turn a thinking and independent human being into an obedient puppet – a mental slave.

Finally, it can be used as “a concept of last resort”. In this case, we tend to use the term in order to explain something extraordinary and unusual, instead of searching for a real explanation. For instance, it is quite natural for people to try to see voluntary mass suicide as a result of mass brainwashing. It is the first thing that comes to our minds (Taylor 9).

Of course, as it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, nowadays we also use the term *brainwashing* to ironically criticise someone’s stupidity, naivety or inability to think for themselves. Although we obviously are aware that this word is not a positive one, we do not seem to fully realize how many threats the actual process of brainwashing can pose.

As this project is an attempt to analyse a novel depicting a totalitarian society, it will focus mostly on the third use of the term, applying it to a totalitarian ultimate way to exercise complete control over people.

### **1.1.3 Eight totalist themes**

To better understand the totalitarian idea of brainwashing, a deeper insight into the totalitarian system and its mechanism is needed. Robert Jay Lifton, in his study *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (1961), described his own idea of thought reform, based on observations of the proceedings of the Communist party in China during the Korean War. He listed and depicted eight “totalist themes” as ways to effectively perform a thought reform (qtd. in Taylor 17). The themes are as follows:

1. “Milieu control” – its aim is to control one’s perception of reality through manipulating their communication with the outside world. As a result, the victim’s brain receives controlled impulses and reads them as proper ones.



2. “Mystical manipulation” – it encompasses creating specific patterns of behaviours and emotions so that for the person who experiences them they all seem spontaneous and natural, while in reality they were scrupulously planned.
3. “The demand for purity” – its task is to make one believe that everything outside the presented world is bad and should be completely erased as it has a negative and destructive influence on the minds of the whole group.
4. “The cult of confession” – it uses the necessity of personal confession and plays on the human sense of guilt. It makes people confess their sins publicly – most often before the government. Its aim is to minimize one’s privacy.
5. “Sacred science” – it encompasses the belief that the government’s ideological dogma is the highest, incontrovertible authority, both scientifically and morally.
6. “Loading the language” – it consists in the existence of language which is full of “thought-terminating clichés”. Their task is to compress complex ideas into brief phrases which are usually not clear for the outside world but commonly known for the members of a given society. As a result, these phrases determine the specific and limited way of thinking in totalitarian society.
7. “The primacy of doctrine over person” – it is based on the simple belief that any personal opinion of an individual society member can be neither more true nor more important than the ideological dogma of the government.
8. “The dispensing of existence” – it assumes that the government has the ultimate right to control every aspect of human life and fate, inside society as well as outside of it.

Lifton in his study describes totalitarian methods of providing the perfect background for constant brainwashing. Although those themes are based on the study of a particular communist party in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they can be easily applied to any kind of totalitarian

regime. The next chapter of this project will focus on applying those eight themes to the totalitarian society depicted in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

## **1.2 The novel's background**

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a dystopian novel written by the English writer George Orwell and published in 1949. As the title and the date of publication imply, the novel is set in the author's nearest future and tells us the story of a young man named Winston Smith, who lives in a totalitarian country called Oceania. The country is ruled by the Party and its ultimate leader, Big Brother. Smith tries to fight against the system which he hates, but his blurry attempts to organize the resistance end up with his imprisonment. In the end, he gets defeated by the Party, which has brainwashed him to love nothing and nobody else but Big Brother. Many literary critics are unanimous in claiming that Orwell's novel is a "nightmare vision" of the future (Meyers 144). Then why did George Orwell decide to write such a novel? What were his reasons and what was his aim? And finally: why did this novel become so famous? The political history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the author's life can provide us with some answers to these questions.

### **1.2.1 The novel in the historical context**

Nowadays, to fully appreciate the significance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a reader needs to know something more than just the title. Before 1984 it was clear that the novel is a futuristic one, but as this exact year became a part of history itself, it is not so obvious any more. Thus, probably the first thing we need to know about the novel is its date of publication. Although the novel was written more than 60 years ago and it depicts concerns of the past, it still can be seen as relevant in today's world.

To understand the concerns presented in the novel, we need to know what the world looked like at the time when the novel was written. In the late '40s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world was still trying to regain its balance after the Second World War. During the war, the world observed how close Hitler's totalitarian Germany was to taking power over the whole Europe, and it made many people realize how destructive for individuals such political systems could be. After the war, when Germany got defeated, peaceful times were supposed to come. Instead, influences of Communism and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe started to increase significantly. Two years after the end of the Second World War, the world had to face a completely new kind of war – the Cold War.

The division of the post-war world into democratic and communist parts was an indirect result of new views on socialism. The modern notion of economical and political socialism emerged among the working classes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and developed over the years of turbulent political changes. The main and the most basic version of modern socialism assumes that, as the mechanical and technological advancement makes everything easier to get, every person should have equal living conditions. Supporters of that new approach demanded that the economic and political systems based on private ownership (capitalism) be replaced with a system based on social ownership (socialism). The innocent and beautiful idea of social justice, where everyone gets what they deserve, led to the first political movements designed to put that idea into action. As making the dream come true turned out to be more difficult than it had seemed, the different ways of realizing the idea resulted in the formation of communism. At the beginning both political movements, socialism and communism, were very similar, but with the passage of time, especially after the First World War when the Soviet Union started to develop, communism in many aspects started to resemble the rule of terror and dictatorship.

However, during the time between the Great War and the Second World War, not only was the new nature of communism revealed, but also a new political movement called fascism was created. It was founded in Italy when Mussolini, the leader of Italian fascists, used the bad situation of the country after the war, gained support by promises of better living conditions and took over the reins. Soon afterwards, he became a fascist dictator and made Italy the first totalitarian country. The new political system actually helped Italy to restore its power after the war. Later, a similar scenario recurred in Germany when Adolf Hitler gained power. This event led to the formation of a new variation of fascism – Nazism, which, later on, became the main reason for the Second World War.

To sum up, the political systems in Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were changing very quickly. Due to the growing power of the Soviet Union in the '40s and the Cold War which lasted almost 50 years, the idea of “true” and “pure” socialism was lost. Russian Communists were discovered to have used the ideas of socialism under false pretences – in order to gain absolute power. Democratic countries were strongly against communism, while communists themselves firmly believed that it was the ideal political system. The growing tension between those two opposite systems led to the division of the world into two hostile parts – democratic and communist. The Iron Curtain was created and Eastern Europe, under the strong influence of the Soviet Union, became cut off from the rest of the world. In the West new discussions about politics, especially about totalitarianism, communism and socialism, were held – people wondered what Russian communists' plans were. As the tension kept growing and both sides were getting ready for a possible armed conflict, the fear of the next worldwide war was spread. Also, as people from the West did not really know what life looked like on the other side, they started guessing. As a result, everyone became naturally interested in politics. And George Orwell was not an exception.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* touches upon political topics that derive from the political conditions and events of the war and post-war time. Although it was, and still widely is, read just as a warning against totalitarianism, it actually reaches deeper and, as a political novel, presents the whole detailed machinery of totalitarianism – the political and social system which originated in the idea of socialism. Despite the passage of time, the novel is still relevant in that it shows the threat to the individual and to the human mind which can be posed by any kind of totalitarianism.

### **1.2.2 The author's background**

Another important key to appreciating and understanding the novel is the author's life and his views on historical events.

Eric Arthur Blair, better known by his pen name George Orwell, was born on 25 June 1903 in Motihari, Bengal, India. His family, as he himself put it, was of the “lower-upper-middle class” – i.e. the upper-middle class which lacks money and cannot independently afford to live on an upper level (Crick 58). When he was four, his family moved to England and at the age of eight he was sent away to preparatory school at St. Cyprian's, which had an enormous impact on his life. Far away from home, and thrown into a completely new and hostile world, he became extremely miserable and lonely. He got abused by other students and felt guilty about not being able to keep up with all the expectations he was supposed to meet (Meyers 23). However, in spite of these childhood's horrors, he managed to win a scholarship to Eton.

After leaving the public school, where he did not have good marks and did not reveal any hints of literary talent, in 1922 he joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. He spent five years working there. Back in England, in the autumn of 1927 he decided to live among the poor on the streets of London. A few months later he moved to Paris, where he lived in

the working-quarter of the town until he fell ill with pneumonia and had to be hospitalized for several weeks. After recovery, he taught in two small private schools in England but, due to his poor health, he soon had to resign.

After his first novel – *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) – was published, he wrote book reviews for the *Adelphi* magazine. Then, for one year and a half, he worked part-time in a Hampstead bookshop. In 1936 he gave up the job and, asked by the Left Book Club, went to northern England to write about its economical and social conditions. *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which described this journey, was published in 1936.

In June 1936 he married Eileen O'Shaughnessy, and five months later he went to Spain to take part in the Spanish Civil War. On 10 May 1937 he got shot through the throat and was taken back to England. In 1938, due to his defective lungs, he fell ill with tuberculosis, which, later on, prevented him from fighting in the Second World War. Nevertheless, he managed to become a sergeant in St. John's Wood Home Guard battalion in 1940.

From 1941 to 1943 he worked for the Indian Section of the BBC as a Talks Producer, where he broadcast British propaganda to Anglophile Asians. After quitting the job at the BBC, he became a literary editor of the *Tribune*, where he had his own, famous column named "As I Please". In 1944 he tried to publish one of his most famous works – the satire *Animal Farm*. For political reasons, the publishing houses kept turning him down. The novella got finally published in August 1945, right at the war's end, and it quickly became a worldwide-famous title.

However, Orwell's literary achievement did not harmonize with his personal life. In 1944, as he and his wife could not have their own children, they decided to adopt a baby. Richard Horatio Blair was one month old when he became a part of the Orwells' family. In February 1945, while Orwell was abroad working as a correspondent for the *Observer* from

France and Germany, his wife suddenly died. Orwell came back home and had to bring up their son on his own.

In 1946 his younger sister Avril settled down with them to help her brother out. In winter they moved to the island of Jura in the Hebrides, where Orwell started working on his last novel. At the same time he fought with a deadly illness. It took him 27 months to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The novel was published in June 1949. Orwell did not live to see the novel's success. He died on 21 January 1950.

Orwell's biography can provide us with important insights which may be crucial to the understanding of the importance and genius of his works.

First of all, George Orwell was a great observer of reality. Jeffrey Meyers in *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell* points out that he "did not have great powers of imagination and could write only about things he had actually observed, so he deliberately sought out material he could write about and used every scrap of experience in his books" (18). Thus, each of his novel is based on his life experiences and personal observations: *Burmese Days* (1930) described his job as an Imperial Policeman and the hatred of imperialism which he gained from it; *Down and Out in Paris and London* is based on his experience while living among the poor; *Homage to Catalonia*, based on his participation in the Spanish Civil War, is considered as one of his greatest works. Many literary critics claim that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* contains a combination of all his experiences, with his traumatic childhood at St. Cyprian's at its core (Crick 41). However, Bernard Crick, his biographer, observes that, although his personal experiences can be noticed, the novel should be seen neither as his last testament nor as a summary of his life but as a "masterpiece of political speculation" (570).

Secondly, Orwell was not only a novelist, but also a great essayist. In less than twenty years he published over seven hundred articles in different sorts of magazines (Meyers 37).

Many of them, such as *Why I Write* or *Such Such Were the Joys*, are considered to be the ultimate keys to his personality and his novels.

Thirdly, George Orwell, although born in India, was a real Englishman. He loved his country and saw himself as a real patriot, but not as an imperialist, which he frequently emphasized (Crick 22). Throughout his whole life he was concerned with his country's past, present and future, which is especially noticeable in his essays on English national character – *Lion and the Unicorn* and *The English People* (Crick 23).

Finally and most importantly, Orwell was very interested in politics. He saw himself, and still is seen, as a political writer. Crick even identifies him as one of the three greatest political writers in the canon of English Literature, together with Thomas Hobbes and Jonathan Swift (26). He also emphasizes that Orwell, apart from being a writer, was also a political thinker (25). Orwell himself believed that writing cannot be separated from politics. In his *Why I Write* essay (1946) he lists “four great motives for writing” – including “political purpose”, which, as he admits, was what his first works were lacking (184). He points out that during most of his life he was not sure what his political attitude really was. Experiences such as working in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma or living among the poor made him well-aware of the existence and conditions of the working class and certainly strengthened his hatred towards authority in general, but it was not until the Spanish Civil War that he realized what his “political purpose” really was. He writes: “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism” (186). This sentence is probably one of the most important keys to a proper interpretation of his last novel.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Orwell not only presented his own political views and gave us a warning against totalitarianism which could arise even in such a country as England



(Crick 568) but he also introduced a new dimension of the modern slavery: the slavery of the mind.

Although the term *brainwashing* came into existence only after the publication of his last novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seems to contain one of the most impressive fictional descriptions of brainwashing, not only in terms of one individual case but also in terms of a whole society.

## CHAPTER 2

### Power control over society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

#### 2.1 A totalitarian system of government

*The Cambridge Encyclopaedia* notes that although totalitarianism is strongly related to such concepts as authoritarianism and dictatorship, there are “certain common features” which help us to distinguish it from the other two. Unlike authoritarianism and dictatorship, the use of power in a totalitarian state goes way beyond politics itself, so that “all aspects of social, political, industrial, military, and economic life are controlled or permeated by the state apparatus”. In such a totalitarian state “political opposition is suppressed, and decision-making is highly centralized” (“totalitarianism”).

Orwell’s Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an excellent example of totalitarianism which derived from the idea of socialism. As we easily learn through Winston’s rebellious eyes, the whole society is fed with ideas of social justice and constant prosperity. Citizens are made to believe that every action undertaken by the Party has one goal: to make their lives much better and easier. But, of course, under the cover of social idealism, the totalitarian system of constant repression is blooming.

Since Orwell was not only a writer but also a great political thinker, his last novel is an example of political fiction in which he uses the literary form of a novel to convey his political thought. As he himself put it: “I have tried to draw these [totalitarian] ideas out to their logical consequences” (qtd. in Crick 569).

This section will shortly present the structure and the main policies of the Party of Oceania, which deliver the perfect background for making a totalitarian dream of brainwashing come true.

### **2.1.1 The structure of the society of Oceania**

As in any other authoritative country, the totalitarian state of Oceania is represented by the ruling group – the Party. At the head of the Party stands Big Brother. We learn from the first chapter of Goldstein's book that "Big Brother is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world" (Orwell 217). No one knows who he really is and when he was born, but every member of the Party is supposed to uncritically believe that he does exist. Big Brother, both as a dictator and as an idea, performs a very similar function to God – he is omnipotent, he sees and knows everything (not only what has been done but also what has been thought); he embodies every virtue, and he is an ultimate judge of one's crimes (Yeo 54). An average citizen of Oceania is supposed to perceive Big Brother as his beloved but respectful benefactor; he is the object of love and gratitude as well as fear because such emotions are "more easily felt towards an individual than towards an organization" (Orwell 217).

The Party itself is divided into two main groups: the Inner Party, which consists in the relatively small group (around 2% of the population) of the members who make political plans and give orders; and the Outer Party, which encompasses the regular Party workers such as Winston or Julia and can be described as the Party's executive. There is a relatively small difference between those two groups. Although a member of the Inner Party has a few more privileges than a member of the Outer Party, each member is (or at least is believed to be) under constant surveillance. From the day a Party member is born to the very last day of their life, their behaviours are under complete control. They need to meet specific standards of obedience and loyalty towards the authority. As a result, an exemplary Party member is an orthodox who does not have any personal feelings, views or thoughts. Due to numerous ways of maintaining control over citizens, any attempt to resist the authority is always nipped in the bud. From Goldstein's book we learn that members of both groups are chosen not on the basis

of heredity but on the basis of their efficiency, dedication and loyalty towards the government.

The rest of the society – i.e. around 85% of the Oceanic population – consists of the lowest social class called “the proles”. They are referred to as “the dumb masses”: uneducated and living on the edge of poverty, they are incapable of thinking and completely ignorant towards politics (Orwell 217). Although they make the biggest percentage of society, they are completely insignificant in the eyes of the Party. They are not even able to think about any kind of rebellion because they do not realize that the world they live in could be any different. Thus, the government holds a belief that as long as they remain uneducated, poor and involved only in their own lives, far outside the politics, they will remain unconscious of their own power and, at the same time, harmless to the Party. Then, since they cannot pose any real threat to the authority, the government is entirely indifferent towards them.

### **2.1.2 The policies of the Party**

The Party follows the political ideology called Ingsoc. As we learn from Goldstein’s book, Ingsoc – the abbreviation of English Socialism – is one of the three main political movements in the presented world, which all originated in the idea of socialism, but whose real common purpose is “to arrest progress and freeze history at a chosen moment” (Orwell 213). The Party’s hypocritical ideology of social justice is in fact focused on “perpetuating *unfreedom* and *inequality*” (Orwell 212). Therefore, the policies of the Party are aimed at controlling every aspect of the society: from politics and economics to not only people’s behaviours, but also their own beliefs and thoughts.

The two chapters of Goldstein’s book that Winston manages to read, provide us with the historical and sociological background for such aims. We learn that the shape of the presented world and the need for the hierarchical structure of the society, as well as the use of

totalitarian methods to maintain it, are natural consequences of historical changes. Over the ages, ruling classes were constantly searching for a way to permanently maintain the power. With the development of machinery and technology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the economic equality among people started to be technically possible to achieve. However, although the promise of equality was often the main reason for the ruling class to wield the power over weaker classes, the political thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to the conclusion that equality is no longer desirable. They realized that to permanently maintain power and order in society, the hierarchical structure and inequality between classes is indispensable. Thus, they returned to authoritative ways of ruling, claiming that they were progressive. From totalitarian systems of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century soon originated a new political movement, mirrored in all three super states' governments. The new system differed from the old one in its main goals and methods of maintaining power.

To begin with, the newly established political system needed to somehow abolish the possibility of economic equality. They needed to lower the standards of people's living so that the economic differences would justify the class division of society. As the development of technology could not be reversed, they decided to "use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living" (Orwell 196). And they became conscious of the fact that the only way to achieve it was by maintaining the state of ceaseless war. Thus, in the presented world, Oceania is in constant military conflict with one of the two superstates: Eurasia or Eastasia. Paradoxically, the state of permanent war between the three superstates brings peace and continuity to the structure of societies. The lack of interest in heredity – mentioned earlier – originates in the Party's belief that "[w]ho wields power is not important, provided that the hierarchical structure remains always the same" (Orwell 218).

With the hierarchical structure already accomplished, the ruling group needed to find the ultimate way to maintain their power permanently. Through the scrupulous analysis of the

history, they came to the conclusion that the only ultimate control could be attained by total control over people's minds and thoughts. If you could control what people believe in, you could easily eliminate any indication of resistance. Accordingly, the government would be impossible to overthrow and, in a sense, the Party would exist endlessly. O'Brien, who represents the Party after Winston's arrest, believes that "[w]e control matter because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull". Thus, one of the main aims of the Party's policies is to find an ultimate way to control people's minds.

However, only Winston's sessions with O'Brien reveal the true aim of all the Party's principles. Goldstein's book entitled *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* just indicates the main belief of the Party that the collectivism is the only way to a successful and consistent oligarchy. We learn about the core belief later on from O'Brien's mouth: "the Party seeks power entirely for its own sake" (Orwell 275). Ingsoc assumes that the real key to power lies in collectivism and absolute rejection of individuality. O'Brien explains to Winston that "[t]he individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual" (Orwell 277). They believe that collectivism and independence from individuals make the Party "immortal" – i.e. the system exists outside time and outside the human beings; it exists entirely for itself, independent from any external factors. Thus, the crucial aim of the Party's policies is to achieve that permanent, absolute power "for its own sake".

## **2.2 The ways of citizens' control**

The Party maintains its control over citizens of Oceania in many different ways which, nevertheless, have one common aim: to completely eliminate individuality and independent thinking; to take over the human mind. Therefore, all the ways of executing control fall into Lifton's criteria. All eight totalist themes are relevant in Orwell's world.

This section will shortly present the main effective ways in which the government, as a system based entirely on lies, tries to achieve its primary goal by brainwashing the society.

### **2.2.1 Propaganda and surveillance**

To start with, in Orwell's world both propaganda and surveillance are inseparable thanks to the invention of telescreen which not only broadcasts but also receives and transmits. Since such a device is present in every home, office and social building in Oceania, and there is no possibility of switching it off, a citizen is not only ceaselessly flooded with the Party's propaganda but also constantly invigilated. It is also worth noting that the Party uses propaganda to propagate surveillance. One of the most popular slogans of Ingsoc – "Big Brother is watching you" (Orwell 4) – popularizes surveillance, at the same time emphasizing that it is an integral part of Party's policies (Yeo 55).

Both propaganda and surveillance work in Oceania on three levels. Pervasive propaganda is the first level of manipulation. The most effective political propaganda should be able to convince people that the information presented by the government is ultimately true and right. More orthodox members of the Party are very susceptible to that kind of manipulation, and it is usually sufficient enough to keep them under control, but there are less malleable members on whom propaganda does not work. Hence, when the first level fails, surveillance, which covers next two levels, takes the lead.

Surveillance can be divided into panoptical and surreptitious (Yeo 53). The word panoptical originates in the concept of an institutional building called "panopticon" which was designed by English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. The conceptual design assumes that a watchman is able to observe all inhabitants while they cannot see him – they know they can be watched at any time, but they are never sure when it actually happens. Thus, the point of panoptical surveillance, which covers the second level of manipulation, is based on self

guarding (Yeo 53). In Oceania, telescreen stands for a watchman: citizens are aware that they can be watched and heard at any given moment, but they never know when exactly, so they remain obedient. In this case, even a doubtful citizen, such as Winston, is forced to watch himself in the presence of a telescreen. However, when panoptical surveillance also fails, the last, third dimension of manipulation, in the form of surreptitious surveillance, is put into action. This type of surveillance works in reverse: it is based on the lack of self guarding. A citizen who undergoes it needs to be unaware of the fact that he is invigilated. Only with certainty of being in a private and safe place, the possible offender of the Party can reveal his true thoughts and intentions (Yeo 55). In the world of Ingsoc, surreptitious surveillance is embodied by the Thought Police – a secret police force whose job is to recognize citizens thoughts, track their true intentions and eliminate any trace of “thought crime” (Orwell 219). This last level of manipulation enables the Party to supervise and control not only people’s every day behaviours but also thoughts and beliefs.

To sum up, propaganda and surveillance in Orwell’s world depict at least two of Lifton’s totalist themes: “milieu control” and “the primacy of doctrine over person”. As Oceanic propaganda is pervasive and the Party controls every piece of press and media, citizens’ perception of reality is completely dependent on the government (Orwell 222). Meanwhile ceaseless surveillance makes the whole society aware that any personal opinion, or belief inconsistent with the Party’s policies, is not allowed. Every citizen knows that individual thinking is undesirable; whatever the Party claims to be true needs to be true.

### **2.2.2 Historical negationism**

Winston’s job in the Records Department at the Ministry of Truth consists in re-writing history and falsifying facts that could be seen as untruthful to the Party’s infallible claims. The whole Ministry of Truth concerns itself with broadly understood propaganda.



Many different departments within it produce all the news, literature, music and art in strict accordance with Party's desires. The main task of the Records Department is to alter or negate the past. Day by day, Winston is forced to alter old records, following the scrupulous instructions from the above.

The negation of the past in Oceania, likewise surveillance, is strictly connected with Party's propaganda, because it is one of its main subjects. One of the Party's slogans says: "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past" (Orwell 37). Once again, this piece of propaganda reveals Party's policies: historical negationism is yet another way for Ingsoc to achieve its primary goal.

The Party believes that "past events (...) have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories" (Orwell 222). Thus, since Party's pervasive propaganda encompasses all the existing records, Ingsoc is in total control of the past. Such control enables the Party to stop the history and simultaneously stop time (Clune 40). This claim seems to be an extension of O'Brien's belief that the Party, independent from individuality, is immortal and exist outside time. Indeed, if the Party is able to freeze time at the given moment and completely negate the history, Ingsoc could, in a sense, exist forever.

Goldstein's book gives us two reasons for the importance of such negation. Firstly, it secures the Party's reliability, not only in terms of their predictions and promises but also in terms of their invariable policies. Secondly, it leaves the Party's members totally unaware of their actual situation. As the past can be altered in whatever way the Party pleases it to be, citizens of Oceania "have no standards of comparison" (Orwell 221). As a result, the Oceanic government manages not only to separate people from other countries but also from their own past.

Summing up, the negation of the history, together with the policy of permanent war, represents another totalist theme called "the demand for purity". Without either historical or

geographical possibility of comparison, Oceanic society carry on their existence in the fond belief that their way of living is much better than others'. The Party makes sure that people, when aware of other countries, associate it only in a negative sort of way.

### 2.2.3 Newspeak

The official language of Oceania – Newspeak – seems to be an extended version of Lifton's idea of "loading the language". The main aim of the new language is to not only determine the way in which people think, but to completely eliminate the lone possibility of inappropriate thinking. Ingsoc treats language as another medium of executing its political goals. Newspeak intends to express politically correct thoughts, at the same time making expressing any other kind of thoughts completely impossible (Orwell 312). Denis Donoghue notes that "Newspeak is the linguistic form of brainwashing" (65).

The core of Newspeak lies in Orwell's idea about language that he expressed in his essay *Politics and the English Language* (1946). He believed that the language is inseparable from politics, and it easily reflects mental and social condition of the people who use it. Hence, he claimed that "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought".

The idea of Newspeak as one of the Party's tools of gaining absolute control entails another, much more complex concept, called *doublethink*. As it is a Newspeak word, in Oldspeak (standard English) it stands for "reality control" (Orwell 223). It means "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (Orwell 223). The acquisition of *doublethink*, which in fact is "a vast system of mental cheating" (Orwell 224), requires a lot of self-discipline, but it is the most necessary and desirable skill of an exemplary citizen of Oceania. The concept of *doublethink* seems to be the key to the Party's ultimate control. It sums up and enables all the Party's actions. As we learn from Goldstein's book: "doublethink lies at the very heart of Ingsoc, since the essential act of

the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty” (Orwell 223). The full understanding of almost every Ingsoc’s slogan requires the use of *doublethink*.

In terms of Lifton’s criteria, the concept of *doublethink* perfectly realizes the theme of “scared science”. Thanks to the application of this technique, citizens of Oceania, in spite of facts, are able to unconditionally and truly believe that the Party’s dogma is not only the highest, but also the only possible, infallible authority.

#### **2.2.4 Demonstrations and rigour**

In coordination with methods listed above, the Oceanic government also makes perfect use of such ways of manipulation as demonstrations and rigour.

First of all, propaganda, together with surveillance, makes it possible for the Party to impose a fixed order of the day on every single citizen. Therefore, all Party members have predetermined waking and bed-time hour, strictly defined lunch breaks, the duty to take part in every-day exercises, called “Physical Jerks”, and the obligation to attend special meetings at Community Centre. The strictly imposed order of the day, as well as rationing food and goods, makes their existence completely dependent on the Party; and that stands for another totalist theme: “the dispensing of existence”.

Secondly, as we learn from Winston’s memories about his wife, a Party member is not supposed to have any personal feelings or desires, especially sexual ones. The abolition of such natural instincts and frustration that is connected with it serve as a fuel for sheer demonstration of hatred towards Party’s enemies and true devotion towards Big Brother during such events as the daily Two Minutes Hate or annual Hate Week. Such demonstrations provide us with yet another totalist theme, called “mystical manipulation”.

Finally, to perpetuate the motivational fear and respect among citizens, the Party makes popular events out of traitors' trials and hangings. Many arrested dissidents are forced to make a public confession in front of a camera. It not only helps the Party to maintain the general obedience but also depicts Lifton's theme of "the cult of confession".

## CHAPTER 3

### Winston's brainwashing case study

#### 3.1 Brainwashing as a process

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, brainwashing is, for the most part, shown as an ultimate totalitarian tool for gaining absolute control over society. As it has been presented in the previous chapter, the policies of the Party are subordinated to serve the most prominent goal of the totalitarian state: mind control on a mass scale.

However, in the case of Winston's conversion at the Ministry of Love, brainwashing is represented as an authentic psychological process, physically performed on the mind of an individual citizen. It still occurs as a part of a totalitarian dream, but it goes beyond the form of massive manipulation; it is a distinctive and secluded act of abuse which violates the most basic rules of personal freedom. What happens to Winston seems to be the last and quite extreme level of achieving absolute control over citizen's mind. Although O'Brien does not use the word brainwashing, he characterizes the process of re-shaping thought criminals' minds quite vividly. He says:

We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him. (...) [W]e make it [mind] perfect before we blow it out. (...) Everyone is washed clean. (...) We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves. (Orwell 267)

In Oceania, the process of thought reform is carried out when every other method of massive manipulation fails. Thus, the subjects of such a process are thought criminals, i.e. citizens who manifest politically incorrect thoughts and are immune to widely spread propaganda and surveillance. Once captured by the Party's secret service – the Thought Police – a thought criminal ends up in the Ministry of Love, where interrogations and torture, both physical and psychological, take place.

To see how the process works and why it was performed on Winston, we need to look more thoroughly at his personality, attitudes, reasons for rebellion and the way the system affects him.

### **3.2 Background for Winston's character**

Winston Smith is a thirty-nine-year-old man, a member of the Outer Party who works in the Ministry of Truth. He lives alone in his flat in Victory Mansions in London, "chief city of Airship One, itself the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania" (Orwell 5).

From his retrospections we learn that he once had a wife, and although he never got a divorce, they have been separated for more than ten years. His parents and younger sister disappeared unexpectedly when he was a youngster, so he does not remember them very well.

As the story gradually unfolds, and Winston's eyes introduce us to the realities and conditions of Oceanic society, we start to realize that, although at first sight very ordinary, he is quite an unusual figure in the totalitarian state. He is intelligent and has a strong sense of individuality that is non-existent in the world of Big Brother. As he has his own, independent and politically incorrect thoughts and ideas, he is a thought criminal. He condemns the system he lives in and dreams about a rebellion. However, apart from writing a diary that records his individual thoughts and manifests his autonomy, he does not know how he could effectively oppose the omnipotence of the Party.

The situation changes a little when he meets Julia, a rebellious young woman, and falls in love with her. The lovers quickly unite in their fight against the Party, gradually extending their individual, private space: first, by their timid and cautious meeting in the forest, and then, by a bold act of renting a room above Charrington's old junk shop. Shortly after O'Brien approaches Winston and reveals himself as a part of the underground resistance movement called The Brotherhood, Julia and Winston join forces with him.

Although Winston turns out to be one of the citizens who are immune to brainwashing on a mass scale, he does not stay completely unaffected by the system. In fact, his final defeat is gradually and symbolically foreshadowed, right from the very beginning of the novel.

### **3.2.1 Obsession with the past**

The most important and distinctive feature of Winston's character is his obsession with the past and history. Since his work at the Ministry of Truth consists in falsifying historical records, he is well-acquainted with the Party's methods of altering and re-shaping history. Due to the fact that he himself is old enough to dimly remember some minor events or at least atmosphere of the times before and during Revolution, he becomes aware that even the more distant history must have been altered by the Party. Thus, he obsessively seeks for proofs that would confirm his suppositions and make the downfall of the Party possible. Winston perceives history as the key to effective resistance.

However, during one of his conversation with Julia, Winston discovers that his desire to reconstruct the past is completely incomprehensible for citizens as she, who do not remember the times before the Party. Julia, who is much younger than Winston, represents a new generation which takes the existence of the Party for granted and does not want to overthrow it. For Julia, a successive manipulation of the system is rebellious enough. She does not really understand the ideas and dreams that Winston has. Such a distinction between

them indicates that Winston's mind belongs to the previous generation. He is the last person that "could use that connection to the past as a motive for rebellion" (Phelan 102).

Every defiant action of Winston in the novel is driven by his powerful nostalgia for history; his yearning for the past is the main reason for the resistance to the Party. Nonetheless, Winston chases the past also on a personal level. He does not know much about his own history, but he is constantly tormented by the vague and fragmented memories of his childhood and his lost family. It seems as if together with disappearance of his parents, he got deprived of his own origin, which results in the lack of personal and historical background (Fukuhara 29). Hence, another reason for his obsession with the past is a sheer belief that by reconstructing history, he can also reconstruct his own, lost identity (Fukuhara 27). Thus, Winston is not only a rebel, but also a troubled man who constantly looks for his true self.

To conclude, Winston believes that the real, unaltered past and the accurate historical knowledge of the world stands for the ultimate truth (Dwan 388). And this truth, once discovered, is supposed to contribute to the overthrow of the Party, as well as to help him find his lost identity. However, the Party's methods for annihilating the past turn out to be significantly efficient; although Winston does his best to find some external proofs for his arguments among proles, he is unable to succeed. His only real proof consists in his own memories that are irrelevant to the external world (Dwan 388).

The impossibility to prove his beliefs results in the lack of any sense of certainty. Winston is confused and not sure whether he can believe his own mind. And such uncertainty proves that, just as every other citizen of Oceania, although surely to a lesser degree, Winston is also affected by the system.



### **3.2.2 Uncertainty**

One of the Party's biggest and the most effective tool for sufficient brainwashing is uncertainty (Taylor, 21). By the Party's sufficient manipulation of the environment, citizens of Oceania are completely dependent on the government. Values and notions such as privacy, friendship, family, individuality or law are completely irrelevant to reality, and that makes people uncertain of their own personalities. Additionally, the alternation of the past deprives every – even the most personal – memory of its historical and sociological authenticity; and that, in turn, leads to the loss of personal identity (Bouet 8). To put it in other words, uncertainty turns Oceanic nationals into human puppets, susceptible to any form of the Party's manipulation.

The fact that such uncertainty manifests itself also in the figure of Winston is an excellent example of how the Party annihilates any sense of individuality among their citizens. Although Winston is a rebel, and he does fight for his beliefs and independent ideas, his uncertainty turns out to be his most significant weakness which, in a sense, enables his successive conversion at the Ministry of Love.

### **3.2.3 The trap**

However, the first thing that seems to at least partially break Winston's resistance is the trap that the Party set for him, and of which he is not aware for the most of the novel.

Almost from the very first pages, Winston develops and cherishes the idea that the Party cannot really control your mind. The significant dream about the gesture of protection made by his mother towards his little sister reveals his belief in the existence of some personal, inner space where you can be protected from the invasive force of the Party (Fukuhara 29). Also the paperweight, which Winston buys in Charrington's shop, and which is a clear symbol of history and his yearning for former golden times, represents this secure

part of human personality, where independent thoughts and personal secrets are safe and private. All his doings, from writing a diary, through the affair with Julia, to joining up the resistance movement, are connected both with his obsession with the past and the idea of the freedom of the mind (Fukuhara 30).

During one of their conversations, Julia says to Winston: “It’s the one thing they can’t do. They can make you say anything – *anything* – but they can’t make you believe it. They can’t get inside you” (Orwell 174). Both of them seem to cling to that idea. They are truly convinced that the Party cannot get inside them.

Winston and Julia face up to the possibility of their capture. They take it for granted, knowing that sooner or later the Thought Police will catch them. Winston even calls them “dead” (Orwell 183). They both are aware that once they are caught, they will not see each other ever again. They accept the fact that they will probably end up dead.

Nevertheless, their capture comes as a shock to Winston, and it happens not because he has not expected it, but because he suddenly realizes that almost everything he believed in was a well-set trap. It suddenly becomes obvious that the whole time spent in the rented room passed in the presence of the telescreen. The Party could arrest them days earlier, but instead they played with them, deliberately letting them hope that the resistance is possible. Additionally, it turns out that Mr Charrington, of whom Winston thought as “another extinct animal” of the golden past (Orwell 153), is, in fact, the agent of the Thought Police. Thus, also the old song that Mr Charrington introduced to Winston, and which he also perceived as a distinctive element of the past, turns out to be a deception (Fukuhara 30). Winston gets deceived by the Party.

The act of smashing the paperweight, the symbol of history and his belief in immunity of one’s mind, is in itself symbolic. The paperweight is crushed as well as the part of

Winston's beliefs in the past (Fukuhara 30). It seems not only to accurately mirror the situation, but it also foreshadows following events.

### **3.3 Imprisonment**

Once Winston gets captured, he quickly realizes that he has already lost his battle against the system. He becomes aware that there is no rescue, neither for him, nor for Julia. However, when the imprisonment begins, Winston still firmly believes that the Party cannot get inside him and make him betray Julia.

Winston's imprisonment can be divided into three parts: interrogation, mental treatment and Room 101. This section will shortly present how every stage of his captivity affects his mind and personality, and how it leads to his final defeat.

#### **3.3.1 Interrogation**

Winston spends the first part of his imprisonment in "a high-ceilinged windowless cell with walls of glittering white porcelain" (Orwell 237). He is under constant observation of the telescreen; he cannot move, sleep or eat. He has no sense of time and place. Tired, anxious and completely disoriented, Winston can only helplessly observe how other prisoners are taken to Room 101 and wonder what will happen to him. The increasing tension is finally released when O'Brien comes in and introduces himself as one of torturers – Winston's only remaining hope, the man, who he thought was a friend, turns out to be the greatest traitor of them all. The failure of his resistance becomes obvious. After that, he undergoes a severe series of physical torture, which makes him confess whatever the Party wants.

The first part of Winston's imprisonment affects him in two different ways. Firstly, cunningly deceived and suddenly secluded from the familiar surroundings where he built up his timid belief in the possibility of the resistance, he becomes more and more uncertain of his

own individual strength (Fukuhara 26); and the bigger his uncertainty, the more susceptible to brainwashing he becomes. Secondly, severe physical torture that he experiences manages to destroy his sense of dignity. Taylor notes that physical abuse, which usually is an integral part of the process of brainwashing, “has an undoubted psychological impact” on the victim (91). Thus, the series of tortures affects Winston psychologically. The inseparability between physical and psychological abuse becomes especially clear when, later on, Winston’s mirror reflection makes him realize that he, the Last Man, no longer resembles a human being (Orwell 283-284). It is the moment when he realizes that the Party has already changed him and that the person he used to be is lost irretrievably.

### **3.3.2 Mental treatment**

Once Winston confesses everything what is needed to be confessed, O’Brien starts individual series of meetings with him that are presented as a therapy. Taylor points out that the idea of mental healing is one of the most common justifications for the act of brainwashing (68), and O’Brien clearly claims that his sessions are indeed Winston’s mental treatment. He says:

You know perfectly well what is the matter with you. You have known it for years, though you have fought against the knowledge. You are mentally deranged. You suffer from a defective memory. You are unable to remember real events, and you persuade yourself that you remember other events which never happened. Fortunately it is curable. You have never cured yourself of it, because you did not choose to. There was a small effort of the will that you were not ready to make. Even now, I am well aware, you are clinging to your disease under the impression that it is a virtue. (Orwell 258)

Winston is made to believe that his individual way of thinking is an indication of insanity. O'Brien consequently and consistently tries to convince him that the act of brainwashing he is about to perform is going to cure him; to make him sane (Orwell 265). Of course, at first, Winston wants to fight for his own, though already weakened, beliefs. He is trying to argue with O'Brien, but fails for two main reasons.

First of all, it is Winston's – mentioned earlier – uncertainty and the lack of tangible proofs (every proof he was presented with turned out to be the Party's fraud) that makes him more prone to manipulation. He wants to contradict the belief of O'Brien that "[r]eality is inside the skull" (Orwell 277), believing that reality must exist outside of one's mind, but as he is not able to prove that, neither to himself nor to O'Brien, he needs to assume that what the Party claims might actually be the truth. Therefore, as he has been given the proof that his mind can be influenced (during one of his session he manages to see five fingers despite the fact that O'Brien shows only four), he gives up his dream about the inviolate self and accepts the possibility that his memories indeed might have been defective, untrue or simply irrelevant to reality. Additionally, since the whole ideology of Ingsoc is based on the abstract and ambiguous notion of power that stirs very strong emotions, it makes any rational argument put against it simply irrelevant (Taylor 27). Hence, every Winston's attempt to rationalize with O'Brien's arguments is, at its core, fruitless.

Secondly, Winston is under strong influence of authority which, as Taylor claims, is one of essential conditions for successful persuasion to occur (74). What is particularly interesting in Winston's case is the fact that although O'Brien turns out to be a traitor, Winston does not lose respect for him; he still remains a mentor in Winston's eyes. As O'Brien willingly listens to him and acts like a patient, understanding, although quite ruthless father, Winston, who generally lacks male example in his personal life, remains under strong impression of his intelligence; he believes that O'Brien is "a being in all ways larger than

himself. There was no idea that he had ever had, or could have, that O'Brien had not long ago known, examined and rejected. His mind *contained* Winston's mind" (Orwell 268). As Phelan notes: Winston subconsciously recognizes the very idea of Big Brother – the loving, caring, understanding, fair but fearful and ruthless father – in the character of O'Brien (107). The relation between those two resembles the relation between a teacher and a student, a father and a child, or a doctor and a patient: in the face of O'Brien's greatness, Winston is well aware of his own insignificance and feels obliged to obey him. According to Taylor, authority may become an effective tool for brainwashing as long as it is fully accepted by the victim (80). And since Winston accepts O'Brien's supremacy, the idea of authority greatly affects him.

However, although Winston obeys O'Brien's instructions and starts successively applying doublethink techniques to his own thinking, he still is, deep inside, certain that his inner mind is inviolate. He still dreams about dying as an enemy of the Party; "To die hating them, that was freedom", he dares to think (Orwell 294).

### 3.3.3 Room 101

Before O'Brien takes Winston to Room 101, he gives him a diagnosis: "Intellectually there is very little wrong with you. It is only emotionally that you have failed to make progress" (Orwell 295). Thus, in Room 101, it is Winston's emotions that are aimed at.

One of the most influential emotions of all is, of course, fear. Extreme personal fright, which often is the source of one's phobias, can develop a serious, mind-changing trauma. In other words, such a trauma, if well-used, can become another sufficient way to greatly influence one's mind. O'Brien tells Winston that "for everyone there is something unendurable – something that cannot be contemplated" (Orwell 297). And indeed, although Winston does not know what O'Brien requires him to do, while exposed to his personal

phobia of being eaten by rats, he does exactly what the Party wants him to do – he betrays Julia, at the same time betraying his own, inner and to that point inviolate sphere of his mind.

The experience in Room 101 becomes a deep trauma for Winston, and it not only effectively kills all his personal affections but also ultimately changes his personality. As Taylor notes, although in brainwashing “the command of act” comes from the outside, the effectively brainwashed person will be convinced that the change occurs inside (98). And indeed, in the end of the novel, Winston is able to win “the victory over himself”: he really starts loving Big Brother (Orwell 311). It is no longer a command or a duty, it is his own feeling.

To sum up, the process of brainwashing depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* uses such influential techniques against the individual as: physical pain (which destroys one’s dignity and weakens morals), isolation (which deepens the sense of uncertainty), submission to authority (which makes it easier for the individual to accept that the change of his beliefs is indeed needed), sanity (which helps convince that the brainwashing is something beneficial for the victim) and personal phobia (which can develop a powerful trauma). Therefore, Winston’s story of conversion is, as Phelan puts it, “not just an exemplary case of what happens when the individual rebels against the totalitarian state but also an account of how the Party responds to one of its last apparently serious threats” (103). In other words, it proves that the Party is successful in performing brainwashing both on mass and individual scale.

## CONCLUSION

Brainwashing is a notion that indicates the use of control in order to exercise (usually with use of force) the power of the person that performs the act. Taylor notes that it is “very much a social event, requiring both an agent and a victim” (92). Thus, brainwashing works most effectively in social environments where the ruling class or system wants to repress the individuality and freedom of lower classes by making human puppets out of citizens. Brainwashing can be applied to the masses and to an individual; in both cases it requires social interaction: between the government and citizens, or between a torturer and a victim.

In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the craft of thought control is used as the main tool for maintaining absolute control over citizens of the totalitarian state. In fact, George Orwell introduces us to the political system where the government fully succeeds in controlling every aspect of human life – from people’s behaviours through views and beliefs to their thoughts and emotions. In Oceania, brainwashing as a social and psychological process works on two levels – collective: where it affects the whole society; and individual: where it affects a thought criminal’s identity and mind alone.

Collectively, brainwashing is attained thanks to well-maintained political system. All policies and main goals of the Party are subordinated to the totalitarian dream of absolute control. The whole ideology of Ingsoc is fuelled with the ultimate desire to achieve ceaseless power. Propaganda, surveillance and all other methods and techniques of manipulation performed on Oceanic citizens are strictly connected with the act of brainwashing, and they all fall into Lifton’s eight totalist themes. Although on the surface most of those methods seem to be targeted only on people’s behaviours, their main and most crucial goal is to change people’s brains. The Party knows that if they succeed in controlling people’s thoughts and emotions, suitable behaviour and obedience will naturally follow.



Individually, brainwashing in Oceania is performed on people who remain immune to collective methods of thought control i.e. on thought criminals. We observe such an individual process through the rebellious eyes of Winston who, in the end, gets severely defeated by the Party. To achieve control over a thought criminal's mind, the Party makes use of not only isolation and torture (both physical and psychological) to weaken the victim but also such powerful ideas as authority and sanity, which make resistance almost impossible.

What really makes brainwashing effective in Orwell's world is that both those levels, as well as all the methods of maintaining control, are constantly overlapping. Whenever one of the techniques fails to succeed, the other one takes its place. A member of the Party can never be fully free from system's influence.

The Party also effectively propagates their own manipulative methods – they are keeping them in plain sight, but at the same time, thanks to the technique of *doublethink*, they are forcing people to stay unaware of what is really happening. Therefore, all their actions are always perceived as righteous, desirable and proper.

In short, the whole totalitarian system of Oceania – its goals, policies and agenda – is so meticulously organized that the Party is able to truly succeed in making their dream of maintaining absolute power true; by controlling citizens' thoughts, they control reality that is “inside the skull”. That makes Orwell's depiction of totalitarian future one of the most frightening fictional visions of all time.

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