

Example of essay on a universally unequal society

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In the history of human civilisation, there were various attempts to accommodate individual struggles for freedom and general social desire to unify one's interests for the sake of the general good. In this context, human history has seen diverse regimes changing one another for these or the other reasons. Various theoretical and philosophical concepts tried to facilitate individual into a common system of values and modes of behaviour, missing a crucial point - individual freedom is something internal, something no regime of social order can destroy because freedom is an inborn instinct we all share from our animalistic selves. George Orwell tried to explain it in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The aim of this essay is to explain that the novel does not criticise Marxism, as a conceptual framework or even an actual regime of socialism.

Looking at the novel from the contemporary perspective, it may seem that it is about a socialist or communist society, like the one they had in the Soviet Union. In fact, this is not true because Orwell had written his novel before the Soviet communism reached its peak (Levin, p. 548). Therefore, he could not criticise the existing order of complete control and surveillance of one's life the way it was in post-world wars Soviet Union. So, he could not actually criticise the ruinous outcomes of practical application of the Marxist theory. Therefore, the common argument that he was simply describing further stages of Soviet society's degradation is a bit of an exaggeration (Frodsham, p. 142).

Although it may seem that the society Orwell described is a model of Soviet society, it was not his intention, and the very essence of the described society is less Marxist than it may seem at a first glance. First of all, the

society of Oceania is not based on Marx's ideal and central concept of his theory - the prevalence of a single class and subsequent rule of a single class in society (Levin, 549). In this context, Marx argued that the proletariat, meaning the working class, should be predominant in society and that society should not be socially-stratified at all. The working class was meant to be the only class of the society. It was meant to be the society and the state as whole. So he argued that there was not meant to be any division between ruling and working classes. The socialist society, by Marx, was meant to be organised on common meetings by leaders of the proletariat, who were from the proletariat (Levin, 558). So the essence of Marx's socialism was a self-organisation and self-rule of the proletariat in the socialist society. Thus, Marx believed that working class was self-sufficient and was meant to rule itself against any suppression of other classes, which it was meant to overthrow during the revolution and transform into its members (Frodsham, p. 149).

What is shown in 1984 is an entirely different reality than what Marx wanted for his proletariat. First of all the described society is divided into 3 classes: the ruling upper class of Inner Party, the Outer-party middle class, and the lowest, poorest class of proles. While Marx's proletariat was meant to rule the socialist society, in Orwell's world, the proletariat was still suppressed by two other classes, which were actually procrastinating thanks to the cheap labour of the working class, which existed in minimal life-supporting conditions:

" the Party taught that the proles were natural inferiors who must be kept in subjection,

like animals, by the application of a few simple rules So long as they continued to

work and breed, their other activities were without importance" (Orwell, p. 41)

Another substantial feature of Marx's socialism is equality, which was meant to be achieved through unification of common ownership of resources of production, with further unification of socialists' appearances and actions. In this context, all were to be one and look pretty much alike (Frodsham, p. 151). In this context, Orwell shows unification of one's appearance by class belonging, which could make them relatively equal within their class, but this was also a means of distinguishing them from another class. Even their diets were entirely different - proles were not even allowed to have brandy; they could drink only beer in pubs (Orwell, p. 52). Another sign of the lack of equality is a constant surveillance and interference of the ruling elite into personal lives of all other members of society. Although Marx was not a prominent fighter for human rights and supremacy of personal interests over common, he did not argue for public control over one's personal life (Levin, 560). On the other hand, he argued that an individual was first of all as a social creature and struggled for belonging in a public realm (Frodsham, p. 154).

In any case, the interference and total control of one's life is not exactly a Marxist precondition of socialist society. He argued that socialism is based on mutual benefits realised by all members of proletariat society (Frodsham, p. 146). On the other hand, the essence of Oceania society is about total

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control and submission of one's will and thoughts to unified rule of elite. The former notions of inter-human relations were eliminated:

" Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still

privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another

without needing to know the reason" (Orwell, p. 78)

What Orwell's society achieved instead of equality is unification of human beings into functional bodies serving their purpose not even for common goodness but paying their debt to the Bigger Brother in charge of everything. In this regard, human beings no longer mean anything, but being means for regime's continuation for the sake of its continuation:

" The only recognised purpose of marriage was to beget children for the service of the

Party. Sexual intercourse was to be looked on as a slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema. This again was never put into plain words, but in an

indirect way it was rubbed into every Party member from childhood onwards"

(Orwell, p. 37).

Overall, it can be concluded that Orwell's novel was not about Marxist society and how corrupted it could become. So it can be argued that he claimed that socialism might be the way out of the situation he had described. This statement can be proved by his suggestion that the only hope for the society of Oceania was in proles, the number of whom was more

than 85 percent of that society, and through their revolution that society could be overruled and changed for good (Orwell, p. 40). In this context, it can be assumed that the Orwell suggested that the main reasons why Oceania ended up the way it was due to the prevailing inequality of capitalist society, which resulted in even more severe stratification of that society. Therefore, through the emphasis placed upon proletariat revolution, it may be assumed that Orwell manifested for the socialist revolution to resolve the existing problems. In this context, the whole novel can be observed as an attempt to show what might happen if capitalism continues to develop on its own and no socialist revolution takes place. Therefore, the novel is socialistic in its nature.

On the other hand, from the contemporary perspective and due to the 6 decades separating the time when the novel was written, many people will argue that this novel reflect the atrocities of the communist society mainly because various aspects of Oceania were reflected and practically applied in the Soviet Union. Although the initial intention of the novel was to criticise extremes of capitalist development, it actually showed how far any regime can go without control from outside and supremacy of human rights, as a universal value to follow. Although, from the contemporary perspective, the novel seems to be about communism, it is actually more about the prevalence of human inequality and desire of people to rule over the others, which is universal irrespective of the nature of a regime at rule.

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