

Conflict between
sacrifice and love
against selfishness
and contempt



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In George Orwell's novel 1984 and Fritz Lang's Metropolis, it is seen that both texts explore the conflict between the value of sacrifice and love against selfishness and contempt. Both Orwell and Lang explore this conflict in light of their differing contexts. Behind Metropolis, Lang foregrounds his own Christian values as the counter to economic pragmatism, reflecting the influences of his own Catholicism along with the emerging technological advancements of the Weimar Republic. Whilst, Orwell advocates the value of sacrifice and love of others in the face of political power, reflecting his fears regarding totalitarian regimes emerging out of WWII.

In Metropolis, Lang presents this conflict through specific reference to self-sacrifice foregrounded by his Catholic values. Maria, being the ultimate depiction of these values, foretells to the working class, revealed in the inter-titles, that 'the mediator between the head and the hands must be the heart'. By metaphorically representing this process as a person i. e. Freder, Lang is accentuating the role of human values in reforming the societal structures' power, ultimately reflecting his intentions of Metropolis being a contextual message to the German people for a peaceful revolution. This recurring motif foregrounds Lang's Catholic values as central to the continuation of human values. This is contrasted against the intertextuality of the original Tower of Babel story where a long shot displaying the exploited slaves reveals the implications of the selfishness of the upper class and how such power ultimately diminishes human values. In further exploring this conflict, Lang employs a symbolic exclamation from a worker "someone has to stay at the machine", emphasizing the influence of the machine age upon the selfish morality dictating current society. Lang further

employs a medium shot portraying Freder replacing the worker which make evident Freder's self sacrifice to relieve the oppression of the worker; that the preservation of their lives is Lang's privileging of the human value of sacrifice that would otherwise be lost in the midst of selfishness. A long shot then portrays the religious iconography in the crucifixion pose of Freder working the machine. This reinforces Lang's Catholic values and his idea of Freder as a Christ like savior who will restore the values in the midst of the selfishness diminishing them.

Orwell similarly makes this conflict evident in 1984 where such selfishness ultimately deprives any forms of emotional human connections. The installation of the party into power creates a new hierarchical structure where their unilateral selfish desires are for ' power...power, pure power". The repetition of ' power' reinforces that its preservation is the driving force behind their oppressive crushing of human values as metaphorically conveyed in ' power is tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together". This diminishing of values is reflected through the restrictions on emotional relationships, based on Orwell's fears of the continuity of totalitarian states and their devaluing of love and sacrifice. He presents love as the antithesis to these structures through Winston and Julia's relationship: " a battle, the climax a victory... a blow struck against the party" as Winston believes they ' could not alter (their) feelings'. The metaphorical military imagery aligns the relationship with the revolt implicit in it, but also their love that conflicts with the party's selfishness. However, O'Brien highlights the ineffectual nature of their opposition to authority in the metaphors " You are a flaw in the pattern...a stain that must be wiped out". Their

inconsequential revolt is further reinforced through Winston's torture as he exclaims: " Do it to Julia! Not me!... Tear her face off, strip her to the bones". The graphic imagery within the imperative possesses violent connotations of suffering and evokes the horror of what Orwell is foreshadowing; that such totalitarian regimes destroy human values. This further reflects O'briens statement to Winston: " We do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them" foreshadowing Stalin's totalitarianism where the Party's selfish fabrication of reality; " Who controls the past controls the future" contributes to the demise of human values, metaphorically rendering Winston a " lonely ghost uttering a truth". In Metropolis, Lang presents a resolution through a return to human values, Orwell presents no such resolution as O'Brien metaphorically asserts: " We shall squeeze you empty ... fill you with ourselves", highlighting the irrelevance of human values in this world.

In Metropolis, Lang continues to portray the same diminishing of human values by the selfishness of those in power. Freder's symbolic hallucination depicts a long shot portraying the workers being consumed as a sacrifice to ' Moloch' for the selfish desires of Frederson. In Personifying the workers' actions as an act of satiating the machines: " Who feeds the machines with their own flesh?", Lang is reflecting on his warnings that human values are lost as a result of embracing new technology as he found through his experiences of the Weimar republic's privileging of automation. That for the sake of the ' revolution of a mechanical wheel', as revealed through the intertitle describing the Son's club, human values are ultimately diminished. In alluding to the tradition of child sacrifice through the Moloch image, the workers are metaphorically made into " the living fodder for the machines".

This highlights Lang's warning about the innate dangers of selfish oppression, as he saw emerging out of the economic imperatives within the Weimar Republic. Despite this, Lang foregrounds mediation so that such contempt does not continue to diminish these values. The reverse angles between Grot and Frederson that suggest a space between them is contradicted against the subsequent two-shot of them standing on level ground on either side of the frame, with Maria in the middle facilitating mediation between their respective values. Lang is offering a positive reconciliation between the value of love after having been diminished by the selfishness of the upper class.

Orwell portrays no such mediation in 1984, only a selfish valuing of power that engenders a similar disregard for others as it does in Metropolis. Orwell evokes the significance of values of love and sacrifice, identified by Winston as the 'human heritage'. Winston reflects this through recalling his mother's gestures: "the enveloping protecting gesture of the arm..." The present participle verbs "enveloping" and "protecting" suggest that her gestures, even when taken away, extend beyond the ordinary parameters of time. This reinforces Winston's hope of the preservation of human values, that "if the object was not to stay alive but to stay human", the goal is the continuity and preservation of the human heritage foregrounded in his mother's gestures. However, Orwell presents the conflict of the diminishing of this 'human heritage' to a mindless loyalty in the midst of the party's selfishness through reference to his mother again who 'had sacrificed herself to a conception of loyalty that was...unalterable'. The past tense 'sacrificed' foreshadows the self-sacrifice she represented that has been lost which is

further echoed in the drowning metaphor of his mother and sister ‘ in the saloon of a sinking ships, looking up at him through the darkening water’. This recurring motif and the present participle “ darkening” further reinforce the irrevocable diminishing of human values in the midst of the party’s selfishness. These ideas are ultimately foreshadowing Orwell’s fears of the control of totalitarian dictatorships he found emerging out of WWII.