



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Teacher Education

## **Authoritarianism vs. Autonomy in Dystopian Literature**

A literary study of *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess and *1984* by George Orwell

Øyvind Eide

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## Abstract

This thesis conducts a comparative literary analysis of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*, examining the themes of authoritarianism and personal autonomy. Through a detailed examination of the narrative structures, character development, and thematic elements, this study explores how these dystopian novels depict totalitarian societies that use psychological and physical controls to suppress individual freedoms. These works serve as profound critiques of extreme political regimes, revealing the dire consequences of authoritarian governance.

The analysis incorporates theoretical insights from Hannah Arendt, John Stuart Mill and Robert Nozick to frame the discussion of personal autonomy and state control. By comparing the protagonists' struggles within their oppressive environments, this study highlights the ongoing battle for personal autonomy and the human spirit's resilience. Additionally, the thesis extends to the implications of these themes in contemporary society, particularly concerning issues of surveillance, freedom of speech, and governmental overreach.

Furthermore, the educational significance of dystopian literature is explored, advocating for its use as a tool to foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning in academic settings. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how dystopian fiction can reflect and challenge real-world political and social dynamics, emphasizing the relevance of literary studies in contemporary discourse.





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"When somebody's the president of the United States, the authority is total, and that's the way it's got to be." – Donald Trump, former President of the USA {C-SPAN, 2020 #44}





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## Introduction

In a modern world, where rapid political and technological evolutions mark a way of life, we frequently experience public debates over personal freedom and governmental control. The debate over individual freedom online is frequent in a constantly developing society. Should authorities be allowed to surveil citizens online in the battle against terror and organized criminality, or is this too much a breach of individuals' freedom? We are also in higher frequency witnessing louder and more public debates and demonstrations concerning equality and the fight for ruling power. Former president Donald Trump is fighting his case in the American courtrooms for his encouragement to the supporters in the attack on the United States Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021.

Similarly, in Norway, we observe growing skepticism towards political authority, paralleling the global decline in trust, a theme poignantly explored in our dystopian literature. The Norwegian population is becoming more critical and constantly losing trust in political parties and national institutions (Økonomistyring, 2024). We then find ourselves wondering why the Norwegian population should trust a government where eight ministers of state have had to resign in disgrace in three years. Tension is rising internationally and internally worldwide; armed conflicts between states are more frequent and last longer (Kruhaug, 2023). Internally, we see masses becoming segregated, alt-right movements expanding, and oftener becoming represented at the political high ground. Younger generations are also becoming increasingly rebellious; violence is increasing at a disturbing pace.

Looking back at the USA, Trump's supporters attacking the American political system share similarities with Big Brothers' comprehensive control of the citizens within Oceania. In the post-World War II, we saw the spread of the domino theory. The fear is that if one state becomes communistic, this will spread to neighboring states. This scenario was a nightmare for the USA as it could threaten their superstate. For that reason, they got directly involved with both the Korean War and the Vietnam War to fight the communist ideology. The upcoming American presidential election in November 2024 could see Donald Trump potentially returning as the 48th president, a scenario that might lead to a more authoritarian state. Then, the question would become, what sort of USA would the world witness? Could it be a lawful state, as exclaimed by one victim in *A Clockwork Orange*: "What sort of world is it at all? Men on the moon and men spinning round the earth like it might be midges round a

lamp, and there's no attention paid to earthly law nor order no more"(Burgess, 1962, p. 20). These contemporary concerns mirror the dystopian scenarios of Burgess and Orwell, where government surveillance and control over personal freedoms form the core of their narratives. In the pursuit of an answer to the increasing tension between our leaders and the masses, we will, in this thesis, do a deep dive into the world of fictional narratives, more specifically, the dystopian fiction genre.

This thesis aims to analyze two post-World War II novels that present a bleak future where the state has become absolute, and individuals are losing their freedom to become automatized machines. The selection of these particular theme of curiosity about how literature can reflect ongoing issues and how authors in the 1950s-60s have been able to use their literature as satires of the society at their time. The books that have been read enthusiastically are Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949). These two novels have experienced high acclaim while being regarded as highly controversial for their violent content and the political ideas depicted in them. The choice of these two novels was that they both, thematically, cover similar ideas within the theme of totalitarianism, allowing for a closer dissection of totalitarian states, individualism, state control, and human psychology. These two novels incorporate violence thematically and within the graphic content itself. In this comparative analysis, we will dissect the British author's depiction of state vs. individualists and how living under strict state control affects human psychology. We will also draw parallels between the novels' themes of individualism and state control and twenty-first-century totalitarian states.

In chapters 2 and 3, we will analyze Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*, where we will pay attention to how the novels thematically treat the themes of state control, individualism, behavioral control, and human psychology. We will analyze the protagonist of each novel to see how the protagonist's psychology reacts to living under a government's abusive control. It is naturally intriguing to compare political and ideological theories on totalitarianism, liberalism, and their balance. The state's control of individuals has different functions, which will open the text to us even further than by simple reading. Researching the relationship between the state and humans in these works also invites us to see the relevance and importance of personal freedom and how literature, despite graphical, is a beautiful source of information concerning totalitarianism and liberalism.

These novels give readers a deeper understanding of how to use literature to teach audiences about the consequences of violence and unchecked control.

Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* examines the concept of a segregated society and societal problems. Burgess, in an essay, states how the idea of writing about these themes came because of the UK's problem with growing criminality, particularly youth of the late fifties who were restless, violent, and destructive. A proposal for a solution that gained popularity was implementing aversion therapy, making youths associate violence with discomfort (Burgess, 1962, p. 246). In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Gregory Claeys points out that dystopia literature generally gets used interchangeably with `anti-utopia,` a solid contrast to perfect utopias. Dystopia concerns a society where evil or adverse political developments have led evil personalities to achieve the upper hand (Claeys, 2010, p. 107). This genre of fictional literature is biased as it reflects the ideological and political thoughts of the authors, which, in this circumstance, are the thoughts of two British leftist writers. Claeys (2010, p. 108) also highlights how, in the twentieth century, dystopias have developed as a subgenre within the science fictional genre to become a modern expression of the utopian ideal, intended to mirror the failures of totalitarian collectivism. It would then also closely align with the aftermath of the two world wars and now entering the Cold War when communism was entering world politics. The fright of communism spreading is visible in the dystopian genre, particularly in British dystopian literature. Although this is fictional literature that, on some levels, can be regarded as dated, it has indeed stood the test of time. Mainly through its everlasting popularity, it originates from its social commentaries and the graphic controversial plotline.

Burgess's book concentrates on the theme of behavioral control; by looking at the effects this would have on individuals, the novel questions what it means to be a human and how a young soul can lead a rebellion against an entire government. Burgess is critical of state control and how this power unchecked can become evil. "Theologically, evil is not quantifiable, yet I posit the notion that one act of evil may be greater than another, and that perhaps, the ultimate act of evil is dehumanization, the killing of the soul" (Burgess, 1962, p. 248). The reflection on autonomy and state control that Burgess's and Orwell's novels concern is what we intend to do with this thesis as well. By comparing the themes, characters, and

issues in the novels and supporting these findings with theoretical perspectives that handle these themes ideologically and politically.

In the analyses of *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984*, we will indicate that a state built upon an authoritarian ideology will only be prosperous at the expense of personal freedom and individual autonomy. Through our literary analysis of violence, state control, and individualism, the analyses showcase how other works of dystopian literature handle the theme of social issues. Ultimately, this study allows us to respond to the critics who are reading and regarding dystopian literature as "cautionary tales". Burgess himself, in his acknowledgment novel *1985*, made a solid point to highlight how remarkably wrong many critics and audiences understood *1984*, as it, in his opinion, was a comic transcription of the city of London in the aftermath of the Second World War (Burgess, 1978, p. 11). The tendency among audiences and critics is to build their understanding of dystopian narratives as, only cautionary tales about the potential states the world might find itself within in the future instead of the narratives being a social critique of the society at the time. The novel's exploration of state control is a fundamental theme. Some critics and audiences have misunderstood the authors by focusing on the novel's covering of violence, sexual abuse, and torture, implying that their analytical focus relies too heavily on the graphic content and not the metaphors. In tandem, the inclusion of social issues and violence in the novels highlights how many of the previous critic's readings of these two works have had their prejudice related to the novels being "futuristic" and warning narratives of the future. This callout for a more nuanced reading of their works correlates with Norwegian politician Mímir Kristjánsson, who in an article advocates for a subtle reading of *1984* because of the broader social and political critiques embedded in Orwell's work (Kristjánsson, 2023). These are works that do not solely critique unchecked state power but also societal conditions that enable such regimes. Being canonical works, a question that has risen among today's teachers is what position they should have towards the novels; the dilemma becomes how to approach these dystopias in classroom teaching. An analysis based on authoritarian control of individuals will reveal how literature can function as a social commentary on the status of the world.

State control and liberalism are two characteristics of Burgess's and Orwell's work overall. Notably, Orwell is recognized for his ability to write about ideological and social dilemmas in most of his novels. *Animal Farm* is one of these works, a book many consider a

precursor to *1984*, published four years later. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell makes a satirical beast fable about communism in Russia. Just last year, Mímir Kristjánsson brought George Orwell and his political thoughts into the debate; he highlights how Orwell, in his essay 'Why I Write' states, "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I see it" (Kristjánsson, 2023). Much of both Burgess's and Orwell's works concern state and socialism. However, they both write about their political opinions. The International Anthony Burgess Foundation claims that Burgess, in his younger years, had a general position towards radicalism, but as we will soon see, once he became a more public figure, his political views shifted towards order and stability (Biswell, 2022).

## 1.1 Burgess's narrative

Both *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange* have remained modern classics in science fiction narratives. They have influenced multiple other literary and media works, such as Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*. There have been various Hollywood adaptations of both novels, the most famous of which is Stanley Kubrick's classic cult movie depiction of *A Clockwork Orange*. Ironically, one of the movie adaptations of *1984* was ridiculed by Anthony Burgess as Hollywood attempted to make the two protagonists act as martyrs by altering the end (Burgess, 1978, p. 71). The dilemma with the Hollywood ending was that the party ruthlessly did not care about execution but more on manipulating the citizens into obedient, automatized citizens. Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Kubrick's movie adaptation have also faced much backlash for the narrative, particularly in the UK, which saw a spread of copycat crimes. One of these incidents was an assault in Lancaster, where a Dutch girl got violently assaulted by a gang chanting "Singing in the Rain," similar to Alex and his Droogs in the movie adaptation (Travis, 1999). In 2022, the public recently saw the dystopian classic connected to another crime (Malta, 2022). This violent outburst in the UK also leads Stanley Kubrick to ban the UK release of the movie until after his death.

Burgess noted in an epilogue to the novel that he was not proud of this novel becoming his most famous: "For my part, I do not like the book as much as others I have written I have kept it, till recently, in an unopened jar – marmalade, a preserve on a shelf rather than an orange on a dish" (Burgess, 1962, p. 251). Burgess stated that one of his dreams was for one of his other works being more unaggressive to receive as much attention and a



film adaptation (1962, p. 251). Burgess, in the UK media, became a personality responsible for the increasing spread of violence in the UK. Therefore, this became the opposite of Burgess's original intention regarding the narrative. The novel, published in 1962, is a satirical response to the rise in juvenile delinquency in Britain, similar to what some argue is the state of contemporary teenagers. Burgess viewed this as indicative of governmental failure. He stated that the novel was inspired by a horrific attack on his wife, intending to depict a bleak future overrun by rebellious youth and ineffective governance.

The narrative occurs in the UK in a distant future, where society has become increasingly segregated and violent. In this state, any traditional concepts of law and order have vanished. The youth generation has become the top of the social hierarchy, and this narration adapts to the protagonist Alex as their "political martyr." The government attempts to take back control by any means necessary, leading to Alex and his followers becoming increasingly oppositional and rebellious. Eventually, the state can frame Alex and have him imprisoned. During his incarceration, there was a political shift in the government, and a more authoritative government was implemented. To secure their reelection, they invent a new behavioral method to rehabilitate rebellious youth, the "Ludovico technique". As a recognizable public figure for his crimes, Alex becomes a candidate for the first subject test. After the procedure, his ability to choose evil is deceased, along with his individuality. He has become a "perfect citizen", an obedient, automatized machine that the government can use as propaganda. Readers, however, witness how this manufactured shift in Alex's emotion destroys his human autonomy, and simply makes him hopeless and suicidal.

## 1.2 Orwell's narrative

Eric Arthur Blair (1903-1950) published his most celebrated work, *1984*, in 1949. The fall of Germany and the menace of Stalin's Soviet Union undoubtedly influenced *1984*. Orwell, a political personality, feared that the communist ideology, which was increasingly expanding worldwide, would reach the UK parliament. Having previously experienced living among the poorest in Paris, Orwell supported the working classes. He was an outspoken admirer of what most would call "common decency" in the UK. His skepticism towards state and state control stemmed from him witnessing the civil war in Barcelona in 1936; professor Bernt Hagtvet, in an article writes, "George Orwell was inspired to write his novel *1984* during the street fights among Trotskyists, anarchists, and communists in Barcelona in 1937.

It was there he realized that "you cannot be anti-fascist without being anti-totalitarian," (Hagtvet, 2017). Still, to this day, Orwell's narrative is among the top book's charts.

In Christopher Hitchens' afterword of *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, he recalls how Orwell's captivating story is still to this day one of few literary works that has a high success rate in school: "I have found, in teaching the book at college and graduate level on numberless occasions, that it is one of the few such works that is not spoiled for younger readers in this way" (Hitchens, 2007, p. 202). *1984* is a thrilling story that in school curriculums sparks entertainment and enjoyment among younger readers. On the other hand, David Kubal claims the novel is famous because it is a narrative on behalf of the lowest in society (Kubal, 1972, p. 52).

Like Burgess's novel, Orwell's narrative takes place in a distant future in Oceania. In this state, everything belongs to the dictator personality, Big Brother. Every trace of individuality and freedom got erased for the benefit of creating power through obedient collectivism. One of the few humans still able to recall the life before Big Brother is Winston Smith, a middle-class man in his 30s reluctantly working on behalf of the party. In Oceania, Big Brother maintains his power through constant surveillance and checking of the population. The party retains a strict social hierarchy and uses censorship of history and news to its advantage. Winston, similar to Alex, becomes a "political martyr" of the state; together with his love interest, Julia, their goal becomes to fight Big Brother fiercely. Ultimately, Winston becomes too comfortable and is tricked by a "comrade," O'Brien, an employee of the truth department. Orwell's story is about the intense battle between individualism and state control as the party attempts to rehabilitate the human Winston through behavioral manipulation.

### 1.3 Dystopian literature

The dystopian genre of literature is a subgenre of science fiction narration. Caroline Edwards states how dystopia came to be the opposite of utopias; it was meant to depict a future that lacked the typical optimism of a utopia-good society (Edwards, 2017, p. 81). After having experienced a boom in utopian storytelling at the end of the 18th century, the focus descended into a fear of the kind of modernity that could be alongside the technological revolution and the fear of losing liberal values in enforced collectivization (2017, p. 81). H.G

Wells's *The Time Machine* from 1895 is one of the *fin de siècle* science fiction novels that depict a future where humanity got too reliant upon technology, which then became the downfall of humanity. In the late 1930s, dystopian portrayals of totalitarianism emerged in the world's literary scene.; as Edwards highlights, the world was introduced to Hitler's Nazism, leading to writers wanting to consider a dystopian reality of social engineering if Hitler were to spread his ideology throughout Europe (Edwards, 2017, p. 92). In 1932, the world witnessed Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a novel taking place far away; his novel envisions a future of entrenched inequality through a strict caste system. At the same time, as Edwards states, Orwell's *1984* is the work that has had the most lasting influence on the dystopian genre and literature in general (Edwards, 2017, p. 96).

A characteristic of dystopian fiction is the depiction of dysfunctional and unempathetic authoritarian figures. This tendency within the literary genre can be traced hundreds of years back. William Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* from 1623 depicts a delusional and obsessed protagonist seeking more control and power. Shakespeare shows how a powerful dream can make one delusional and cruel. In an article by Najaf Babazadeh, he reflects on the concept of power in *Macbeth*, where he writes, "Corrupted or destructive power corrupts so that it can be gained by immoral behavior and has a desire for power and its relations just for its own sake is corrupt in itself" (Babazadeh, 2017, p. 136). Anybody willing to sacrifice everything to obtain power, such as the party in *1984* or the government seeking reelection in *A Clockwork Orange*, is corrupt and evil. Moving further forward in time, we have Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, published in 1726. Swift's depiction of the Houyhnhnms race represents an authoritarian personality, "They indeed have some feeling that passes for affection and brother-love (...); yet they certainly are incapable of passion" (Kallich, 1960, p. 109). This incapability to feel compassion is similar to the state leaders depicted in Burgess and Orwell's narratives and dictator leaders visible today.

## 1.4 Organization

In the first chapter of this thesis, we will focus on the study's methodology and theoretical perspective. We will explain how our analysis of the primary text was and what specific approaches we made. We will also look at how we came to find my secondary sources and the selected theories for this thesis. There is also a subsection where we will offer an extended explanation of the terminology introduced in our introduction; we will look

closely at terms such as authoritarianism, liberalism, and behavioral control. The discussion on the terms will not simply revolve around their contextual definition but also around why these terms came to be relevant for our study of Burgess and Orwell's dystopian narratives.

The first chapter will also include an overview of our theoretical perspective. We will use books, prefaces, and articles that revolve ideologically and politically on state control and liberalism. Most famously, Hannah Arendt's novel *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, whose third chapter on totalitarianism will contribute to our understanding of the states and the ideologies found in *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984*. By using Arendt's theories, we shall, in our analysis, depict how a government can undermine an individual, as we see happening with Alex: "It said they had done great wrong to you. It said how the Government drove you to try and do yourself in" (Burgess, 1962, p. 186). Arendt states in her work that "Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who for one reason or another have acquired the appetite for political organization" (Arendt, 2004, p. 311). They are offering a possible explanation of the authoritarian states' paranoia and desperation to preserve their control of the masses. While many relate totalitarian states to surveillance, suffering, strict control, and oppression. Arendt explains how the most evident characteristics of a totalitarian society are, in fact, the pace at which a political leader is forgotten and replaced: "Nothing is more characteristic of the totalitarian movement in general and of the quality of their leaders in particular than the startling swiftness with which they are forgotten and the startling ease which they can be replaced" (2004, p. 305). In previous Hitler's Nazi and Stalin regimes, it is clear that individualism in an authoritarian society is dependent on the government's approval and actions, "It has frequently been pointed out that totalitarian movements use and abuse democratic freedoms to abolish them." (2004, p. 312).

To cover the aspects of liberalism and autonomy, we will use theories concerning the political approach philosophically. It is necessary in the theoretical chapter to distinguish between the metaphysical claim of existentialism and liberalism. This thesis will, however, focus on the political approach to individualism and liberalism. To achieve this, the work of John Stuart Mills and Robert Nozick will be highly relevant, as these are two political thinkers highly recognized for their interpretation of liberalism. We will make use of the introduction to Mill's political essay on liberty, where Mills offers an explanation of the evolution of liberalism in society and the principles within it: "The principle requires liberty

of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow"(Mill, 1974, p. 16). On the other hand, the preface to Nozick's work *Anarchy, state, and Utopia*, introduces the theory that the state's only function is to offer protection of individuals "A minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protections (...) is justified; that any more extensive state will violate person rights(...)" (Nozick, 1974, p. 4).

Our main objective is to examine how an authoritarian state's control affects the individuals; it will be necessary to include a work that looks at the psychological effects of surviving under totalitarian oppression. Bruno Bettelheim, a survivor of World War Two's concentration camps, has written an article "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism" (1952). This article looks at the psychological consequences that authoritarianism and behavioral manipulation offer to individuals. He states how opposition to an authoritarian force has, in fact, no option, "He can expose himself as an opponent of. The government and thus invite persecution, if not destruction. Or he can profess to believe something that he not only does not believe but hates and despises." (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 89).

Mímir Kristjánsson's (Kristjánsson, 2023) thoughts in his article concerning how the political left should recall George Orwell was also implemented into our thesis. The theories would then stand out among the other theories, as his article was published in 2023. This contributes to us being able to contemplate the novel with a contemporary perspective. Kristjánsson's theories build upon the fact that Orwell's works *1984* and *Animal Farm* are misinterpreted and misused by political opposition to Orwell's views. The interpretation of Orwell's work as anti-socialist is also challenged by Kristjánsson, as there is an apparent compatibility of socialism and democracy in Orwell's philosophy.

Chapter two focuses on *A Clockwork Orange*, where our main argument will be that a state adopting an authoritarian ideology will only be successful at the expense of liberalism. It will be particularly visible with the state-organized dehumanization of Winston, where the horrific consequence is him ceasing to be a human and instead becoming suicidal as he has no individuality or personal freedom. We draw parallels between the state's forceful "rehabilitation" of Alex and the practice of reeducation visible in certain totalitarian states today. Simultaneously, our study will draw parallels to the modern era by using the theories

of Arendt, Nozick, Mills, and Bettelheim. By doing this, we will also see that Burgess's narrative is both a cautionary tale and a satirical depiction of the society at the time.

Chapter three shall look at Orwell's *1984*. In the respective chapter, the main argument will be that the ideology of Ingsoc itself is Big Brother, which makes it impossible for liberalism to coexist in Oceania. It becomes evident as the novel progresses, and the all-encompassing power of Big Brother becomes obvious. As O'Brien tells Winston about Big Brother, "Of course he exists. The party exists. Big Brother is an embodiment of the Party" (Orwell, 1949, p. 272). On a high level, this foreshadows that the ideology of Ingsoc and the party is the authoritarian personality in Oceania. Similar to the analysis of Burgess's work, we will analyze the party's use of doublethink as a behavioral tool to control and reshape the individuals. This analysis should offer a new and unordinary conception of Orwell's narrative.

Chapter four, the last chapter of this thesis, shall examine our study of the positioning within the authoritarian state control vs. liberalism discourse. One of the goals of our research is to fill a gap that has been missing since the focus on state control vs. liberalism in literature has concentrated chiefly on George Orwell's *1984*. However, by doing a comparative analysis where the main focus is Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, this will be an unorthodox study that compares a more studied scholarly work with a lesser-studied work. There will also be suggestions for future research, which could enrich the exploration of more contemporary dystopias and allow us to see how modern authors interpret and incorporate modern technological and political developments into traditional dystopian themes. Another alternative would be to include non-Western dystopian literature to offer insights into cultural differences in portraying authoritarianism and resistance. Section two of chapter four shall focus on implementing dystopian fiction for educational purposes. How can this study offer teachers a new approach to teaching Burgess and Orwell to pupils?

In summary, the goal of our study will be to illuminate the intricate relevance of dystopian literature to contemporary discussions on authoritarianism and individual freedoms. The comparative study was done through a detailed analysis of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*. Both novels offer stark visions of the future where governmental control suppresses individuality and autonomy, reflecting the societal

dynamics of their respective times. This study underscores the social criticisms of Burgess's and Orwell's works by juxtaposing these texts with modern state surveillance and political unrest occurrences.

We will embark on a journey, envisioning how dystopian fiction not only mirrors the societal fears and ideological battles of the past but continues to serve as a critical lens through which we can examine and critique ongoing and emerging forms of governance and control. The parallels drawn between the novels' themes and the contemporary issues will focus on surveillance, political manipulation, and erosion of personal freedoms, highlighting the potential trajectories we might face if current trends continue unchecked.

In conclusion, this thesis significantly contributes to the academic discourse by proposing a nuanced reading of dystopian works. We recognize them as critiques of historical and potential future states rather than cautionary tales. Dystopian literature invites readers and scholars alike to reflect on the implications of these narratives for our understanding of freedom, power, and human rights in an increasingly controlled world. Through our exploration of *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984*, we reaffirm the significance of dystopian literature as a critical tool for societal reflection and a warning, urging us to remain cautious and proactive in safeguarding our liberties in an unpredictable global landscape.

## 1 Theoretical perspective

Three subsections organize this respective chapter. First, we will explore the methodology for our study, where we came to find our secondary theoretical material, and what approaches we made toward the final analysis of Burgess and Orwell's works. What specific analysis method contributed to our findings? Second, we will clarify terms such as authoritarianism, liberalism, and behavioral manipulation. The emphasis here will be on how these terms applied to my analyses. Thirdly, we will commence the discourse about state control vs. liberalism by introducing theories from Arendt, Bettelheim, Mills, Nozick, and Kristjánsson. Five theories encompassing different aspects of human autonomy vs. the state debate and allowing us to maintain a broad and complex perspective of the political and ethical debate.

### 1.1 Methodology

Our study will be strictly academic without quantitative research involved. It removes the necessity to include observations, records, or surveys, as our data will primarily rely on qualitative research in literary works. In subsequent chapters, we will perform close readings of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*. The main focus for our reading and study of the works will be on the protagonists' character development and their psychological response as individuals to the oppression brought by their state authorities. We will see how these characters develop from strong individualists to submissive tools for the governments to use. The contrasting depictions of authoritarianism and societal control will also be put under our lenses, as our goal is to show that an authoritarian government is only possible at the expense of autonomy and individuality. Committing to a close reading of the novels will allow us to explore them deeply, uncovering metaphors, subtleties, and narrative techniques employed by the authors to convey their messages about totalitarian control and individualism. The comparative analysis will also enlighten us on how each author presents these themes in similar and different ways and how they have contributed to a nuanced understanding of the dystopian genre.

Given the qualitative nature of our study, we have conducted a comprehensive literature review within the discourse of dystopias, liberalism, and authoritarianism. Our secondary data, sourced from reputable online databases such as JSTOR, MLA International



Bibliography, Google Scholar, and UiT's library database, ensures the credibility and authenticity of our sources. We have meticulously examined the credentials of each author to address any concerns about authenticity, further bolstering the reliability of our research.

## 1.2 Terminology

Monarch Fredrick the Great once stated, 'My people and I have come to an agreement which satisfied us both. They are to say what they please, and I am to do what I please' (Allison, n.d), a statement that encapsulates the essence of authoritarianism. The Cambridge Dictionary describes authoritarianism as "The belief that people must obey completely and not be allowed the freedom to act as they wish" (Cambridge Dictionary), an agreement many will recognize from the communist ideology and the communist states present today. The term employs a specific type of state leadership, which can also be referred to as a totalitarian state; in contrast to a democratic state where personal freedom and individualism are preserved. An authoritarian government demands unquestioning obedience from its citizens. Historically, authoritarians have fought for determination by governments of belief and actions and a lesser significance for individual choice. Simultaneously, as we can see with authoritarian states today, it is possible to be autocratic in some spheres while being more liberal in others. In one article, Michael Meng suggests that within an authoritarian state: "Power is with the people, authority with the Senate. Whereas Power (potestas) is political and relies on force or persuasion to command obedience, authority enjoys unequivocal obedience as a source beyond the contested realm of politics" (Meng, 2017, p. 1009).

"Authoritarianism" has several connotations while also closely paralleled with "totalitarianism." Therefore, it is essential to introduce a more limited definition to separate it from the related and often miss-compared term "totalitarianism." Both terms refer to a form of government where individualism and autonomy are discouraged. One key difference is that totalitarianism attempts to do this by asserting total control over the lives of individuals. At the same time, an authoritarian state prefers the blind submission of the citizens to authority. In contrast to a totalitarian state, authoritarian states lack the mobilization power to mobilize the entire population in pursuit of national goals, and any actions undertaken by the state are usually within relatively predictable limits. We have chosen to relay the interpretation of authoritarianism close to the definition offered by Dr. Christopher Phelps, who, in his article

"The Novel of American Authoritarianism," explains how *authoritarianism* is defined explicitly as political movements or schemes that are driven by autocratic ambitions, showing disdain for the liberal rule of law, and aim towards establishing or achieving a state led by a supreme ruler (Phelps, 2020, p. 6).

In the selected novels, authoritarianism is a recurring theme, particularly in the context of the authorities and the government. A poignant example of this is the strict state ideologies that concentrate power at the top of the state, often at the expense of the wealth and happiness of the masses. This is underscored by the chilling statement of O'Brien: "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" (Orwell, 1949, p. 275). In *1984*, authoritarianism is mirrored in the ideology of Ingsoc, the strict authoritative ideology that forms the core of Oceania.

Burgess's narrative is engaging as its use of authoritarianism can be ambiguous; it can relate to Alex's authoritative leadership, where Alex abolishes any attempt for democracy within the gang; "There has to be a leader. Discipline there has to be. Right? None of them skated a word or even nodded. I got more radraz inside, calmer out. `Ì,` I said, `have been in charge long now. We are all Droogs, but somebody has to be in charge" (Burgess, 1962, p. 36). Our interpretation, however, will build upon the authoritative state. In what way does it encompass the ideology by brutally eroding Alex's humanity, "A man who cannot choose ceases to be a man" (1962, p. 169). This study's interpretation of Burgess's novel builds upon the fact that the forceful erosion of Alex's humanity is a mere literary visualization of the authoritative political style.

In the context of state leadership, the term "liberalism" is closely related, defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as "the political belief that there should be free trade, that people should be allowed more personal freedom, and that changes in society should be made gradually"(Cambridge Dictionary). Our interpretation of Liberalism concerns individuals' freedom of expression and choice, the ability to become and do what one wishes without fearing the consequences of an unchecked authority. While there are multiple approaches to Liberalism, one of these philosophical approaches is existentialism, where one considers the issues of human existence. This study will, however, focus on the political aspect of

Liberalism, musing the works of Mills and Nozick, which we will go further into depth on in the theory section. Within "liberalism," there are multiple liberal ideas, personal autonomy, individualism, and resistance to unchecked state power. We will study These liberalistic principles closer to the protagonists Winston and Alex. Our understanding of "Autonomy" aligns with Kant's ethical theory, which states, "Autonomy is the capacity for self-government. Agents are autonomous if their actions are truly their own" (reference, 2021). Freedom of free will is necessary for individuals to have autonomy, as this is the principle of having the right to govern oneself and control one's life. In principle, in the case of Alex and Winston, this concerns their ability to take control entirely of their own lives and suit their life accordingly to their satisfaction.

In Burgess's work, Alex is an embodiment of political thought. He is a political opponent advocating for the right to act on what brings him joy and satisfaction. In the graphic scene, they lock Alex to a chair, which becomes a metaphorical representation of authorities within authoritarian countries silencing their political opponents and protestors in any way necessary, as recently experienced with Putin's arrest of anti-war protestors within Russia (Jones, 2022). While our interpretation of Liberalism will focus specifically on Alex, an alternative approach would be to focus on the civilians, Alex's victims, and his Droogs as representations of Liberalism. These are, respectively, also innocent victims under the tyranny of Alex Delarge. Simultaneously, as author Rubin Rabinovitz notes in his work (Rabinovitz, 1979, p. 44), The fictional writer F. Alexander is, in principle, also a spokesperson for four libertarians. His book underscores the proclaims of human perfectibility and freedom of choice. The internal change of F. Alexander from Liberalism to collaborating to drive Alex to commit suicide functions as a visualization of how quickly one can give up on Liberalism.

In *1984*, Winston Smith served as our representation of liberal values. The reasoning for this is that he is one of the very few citizens of Oceania who can still contemplate and recall a time before the regime of Big Brother. In the confrontation against O'Brien, Winston is the voice of reason trying to combat the authoritarian control by referring to individualism and the human right to live a personal life and have their own identity: "I am conscious of my own identity. I was born, and I shall die. I have arms and legs. I occupy a particular point in space. No other solid object can occupy the same point simultaneously" (Orwell, 1949, p. 272). Liberalism concerns the very existence of every individual human and the power through

singularity and individuality, while authoritarianism and totalitarianism advocate for power through the collective.

Behavioral manipulation also needs to be taken into consideration. The term combines "Behavior" and "manipulation," whereas behavior concerns how individuals act or conduct themselves. Behavior concerns the handling patterns of both humans and animals. In authoritarian states, there is an apparent lack of behavioral freedom, as individuals are often not allowed to have free behavior and act as they wish. Usually, there is an unchecked authority that dictates their behavior. "Manipulation can be defined as a way of exerting influence in which the target does not know that she or he has been influenced" (Auvinen et al., 2013, p. 415). Manipulation is often considered unethical, particularly by leadership. A combination of these terms, "behavioral manipulation," refers to the ability to manipulate and control someone's behavior or internal thoughts, and people or states can manipulate them differently. Since our study concerns state control and authoritarianism, we will focus on how a state can use force and reeducation to alter individuals' personalities.

In Burgess's narrative, manipulation can relate to Alex and the way he manipulates and takes advantage of the two drunk girls who, because of the alcohol, are unable to control their behavior (Burgess, 1962, p. 52). However, we will focus on the government's use of the Ludovico technique and how this makes individuals into automatized machines. A behavior that would secure the state's political dominance would erase all criminality and political opponents from society. Another approach to the Ludovico technique, as we will reflect upon later, is the thought of it being a therapeutical aversion technique. The goal in such a process is then to aversion and rehabilitate the individuals from their addiction, which in the case of Alex is the addiction to violence and liberalistic tendencies.

In the love department of Oceania, reintegration and doublethink are the embodiment of behavioral manipulation. Doublethink implemented by the government concerns the ability for individuals to have multiple believable thoughts simultaneously while believing the thought provided by the party; as the party states, it is the thought that  $2+2=5$  if that is what the party says. The novel's first sentence shows the behavioral manipulation: "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen (Orwell, 1949, p. 1). Readers understand that the entirety of Oceania has adapted to the idea that a clock can strike thirteen

times because this is the idea implemented by the authority. Having defined the most prominent terms for our study, we need to present the theories relevant to our task.

## 1.3 Theories

The first theory concerns liberal values and the state. We have chosen to use the preface of John Stuart Mill's essay "on liberty" (1859). Mill's work, however, is written with a utilitarian ethical approach, for which Mill has received criticism. The tension between freedom and authority has existed for centuries; Mills states, "The struggle between Liberty and Authority is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar, particularly in" (Mill, 1974, p. 6) In ancient times, liberty protected individuals against different tyrannies; authoritarian personalities were regarded as the citizens' antagonists in many areas. "The rulers were conceived as in a necessarily antagonistic position to the people they ruled." (1974, p. 6). This interpretation corresponds with the thoughts of Burgess and Orwell's protagonists, who view authority as the true antagonist to liberal values and humanity. According to Mill, did the antagonist leaders derive their authoritarian power from inheritance or conquest these power dynamics were, however, necessities in ancient centuries, "To prevent the weaker members of the community from being preyed upon by innumerable vultures, it was needful that there should be an animal of prey stronger than the rest, commissioned to keep them down" (1974, p. 6). Mill, in other words, argues that the greatest threats to individual liberty and society are tyranny, both socially and politically

Mill argues how patriots within the society, whose aim was to limit and caution the power that the ruler preserved over the community, and with this limitation, the term liberty was developed (1974, p. 6). A characteristic that encompasses the protagonists in *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984* is that their entire journey and battle within the narrative is to keep a check on the head of the community. At the same time, we will see how one of these protagonists is a clearer patriot while the other has a more ambiguous moral. A later historical expedient was the establishment of constitutional checks, in which some of the essential acts of the governing power were dependent on consent by the community or of an institution (1974, p. 7). The ruler whose power had previously remained unchecked, now a community or other institution, could interfere with the ruler, keeping the possibility of the ruler abusing their power and becoming a tyrant to minimal risk.

Mills's critical theory concerning the balance between authoritarianism and liberalism is that this power dynamic should only exist to prevent harm to others, "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others" (1974, p. 13). By this theory, one could interpret this as an explanation and justification of the state's treatment of Alex. Going by the theory that the government performs the Ludovico method on Alex as an aversion therapy and as a safeguarding for the civilians. The states are justified since they used their power to protect the rest of the community from Alex's regime.

One also needs to consider that the ruler often wants to maintain their power, something only achieved by keeping a mass of individuals. Therefore, their control over individuals and ability to exercise power over someone is to protect the community itself from any form of harm. They are doing what they believe is for the state itself. In modern media, we see how states such as Russia ban LBQT communities and forbid political demonstrations and justify this by doing what is best for the protection of the state itself, as other ideologies spreading throughout society could impose a significant risk on the state.

Mill believes that liberty builds upon three liberal principles. Firstly, liberalism involves freedom of thought; no authority can fully control or dictate an individual's thoughts, despite government attempts. Intricately connected to this is the concept of freedom of expression and opinion. Secondly, the principle of liberty extends to personal tastes and preferences. We should be able to decide what kind of life we want and tailor it to our preferences without restrictions from institutions or rulers. Mill states, "The principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow" (1974, pp. 15-16). According to Mill, individuals should be free to make their own choices and shape their lives as they see fit. Lastly, we move on to Robert Nozick's theories, which argue that the state should not interfere too closely with individuals.

American Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1975) has received high praise. It has even been referred to as one of the "100 most influential books since the war" by the UK Times Literary Supplement. Nozick notes the following on individuals, "Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their

rights)" (Nozick, 1974, p. 4). Certain fundamental rights that belong to every individual cannot be altered without simultaneously violating these rights. This theory suggests that Alex and Winston have fundamental rights within every individual, which cannot be tempered without violation, as we see in the novels. The UN notes, "Human rights are fundamental rights that everyone has, regardless of gender, age, religion, orientation, nationality or where in the world they live" (FN-Sambandet, 2024).

Nozick argues that a state is, in reality, limited to the narrow function of protection against force; he recalls a "Minimal state." Corresponding with Mill's suggestion that the role of a state is to be protectionary and ensure the safety of the masses, and that is only occurrence where power is accepted to interfere with liberal rights, performed to prevail harm to other individuals "A minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protections (...) is justified; that any more extensive state will violate persons rights(...)" (1974, p. 4). We will see how the states in each separate novel are in stark contrast to being minimal states, as these are states built upon the cornerstone of controlling and manipulating the masses. In the case of Oceania, the government is practicing a comprehensive surveillance ideology on their citizens, impacting every individual's human right to personal freedom.

An implication of liberalism, as Nozick acknowledges, is anarchists' claim, "(...) in the course of maintaining its monopoly on the use of force and protection everyone within a territory, the state must violate individuals' rights and hence is intrinsically immoral" (1974, p. 9). The claim of anarchists suggests that the state is, in fact, eternal, and it needs to have a monopoly on individual rights to maintain peace and prosperity. This concept of the state's monopoly over personal rights is a significant power imbalance that we must all be cognizant of. The ruler has the monopoly of power to preserve the community's interest and protect the state from public interference. Because the state is immortal and has a monopoly over human rights, anarchists advocate for anarchy of the state to seize power. The state and social hierarchy are unwanted and pose a harmful threat to the entirety of the community. The fear among many states is the fear of a political anarchistic ideology spreading through the community and eventually attempting to make a military coup of the government, as seen in previous historical revolutions in France and Russia. Both Alex and Winston are anarchists at an early stage, and allowing their oppositional voice to spread through the community would put the entire state at potential risk.

According to anarchists, this ability to use monopoly leaves us questioning to what extent the state should be permitted to extend its forcefulness. Should it go as far as to allow behavioral manipulation of political martyrs posing a threat to the state? To argue against this, Nozick explains that a state could emerge from anarchy without deliberately intending or attempting to create it through a process that does not violate anyone's rights (Nozick, 1974, p. 6) The critical theories in Nozick's work relate to the minimal state, which should only be concerned with achieving or distributing justice among its citizens, and states emerging naturally from anarchy without violating individuals' rights. Focusing more on the authoritarian and totalitarian ideology, we will shift the focus to Hannah Arendt's political thoughts.

In the aftermath of a destructive World War II and the increasing spread of communistic ideology, Hannah Arendt published her work *The Origin of Totalitarianism* in 1951. Arendt recalls how Hitler successfully used totalitarianism in Germany "It was characteristics of the rise of Nazi movement in Germany and of the Communistic movements in Europe after 1930 that they recruited their members from this mass of apparently indifferent people whom all other parties had given up as too apathetic or too stupid for their attention" (Arendt, 2004, p. 414). This approach suggests how the rulers in both novels became the head of state. From Oceania, we will see that the Ingsoc ideology builds on power from the masses. One plausible theory of the party could be that they recruited increasingly more individuals from the dirt of previous London. Eventually, the party was founded and rose to power.

Historically, a society where certain social groups perceive themselves as being mistreated has led to increased attraction to the authoritarian ideology, such as in the Soviets, which also have an extensive history with communism and anarchism. Arendt also argues that liberalism was previously perceived as wrong when they claimed that the state rules over individuals rather than classes. Nationalism would emerge as a force to protect nations from the consequences of social fragmentation while ensuring its continuation. "Nationalism, then, became the precious cement for binding together a centralized state and an atomized society, and it proved to be the only working, live connection between the individuals of the nation-state" (2004, p. 298). Unquestionable nationalism is the dream of the governments in *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984*, as this would ensure unstoppable loyalty, devotion, and allegiance to the nation. They allow the ruler to act as he pleases without fearing losing the



public's trust. Simultaneously, we see the political opponents within the narratives becoming a more significant threat to the state's narcissistic thoughts.

Arendt exclaims how totalitarian propaganda was one of the most efficient ways to maintain power. This type of propaganda, as we will see in our analysis, is performed in multiple different ways, most famously in *1984*, where the concept of Doublethink and Newspeak are two methods that have arisen to become dictionary terminologies in the modern day. We also see in Burgess's narrative the way the party uses increased police brutality and false news information to the advantage of the party. In today's authoritarian states, the practice of state propaganda is frequent; Russia, China, North Korea, or even influential political personalities such as Donald Trump or Boris Johnson are known for the spread of alternative information, primarily concerned with an alternative that benefits them. Totalitarian propaganda raised ideological scientifically and its technique of making statements in the form of predictions to a height of efficiency of method and absurdity of content because, demagogically speaking, there is hardly a better way to avoid discussion than by releasing an argument from the control of the present and by saying that only the future can reveal its merits (2004, p. 456), however, as we will reflect upon later, one of the dilemmas is in a highly technical evolving world with regular new artificial intelligence technologies. A question becomes the authenticity of the propaganda; we now live in a world where foreign authorities can, through social media and artificial intelligence, impact a whole presidential election, as seen with the election of President Donald Trump in 2016 (Horsley, 2020).

In line with our close reading and analysis of behavioral manipulation in the novels, we must distinguish the psychological effects that state control has on individuals. The Austrian scholar and psychologist Bruno Bettelheim has authored an extensive article, "On Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism" (1952), which we will use as a base for the psychological aspect of our study. Bettelheim remarks how, in earlier tyrannies, the despot did not demand an inner acceptance and agreement of his methods from the opposition. In the ancient era, it would still be possible for the opponent to survive (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 89). This corresponds with Burgess's depiction, where the state, rather than executing Alex, attempts to rehabilitate him forcefully. However, in *1984*, O'Brien

admits that the last step of Winston's reintegration will be a bullet to the head, which goes against the ideology of the ancient era.

In contrast, in modern authoritarian states, it is impossible to live in inner opposition to the system, "He can expose himself as an opponent of. The government and thus invite persecution if not destruction. Alternatively, he can profess to believe he not only does not believe but hates and despises." (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 89) From the reintegration process in *1984*, Winston professes his contradictory beliefs, which invite both persecution and, eventually, destruction by the party. Inner terror at this moment becomes one of the most evident psychological mechanisms of control; by using inner fear, the despot can preserve control. It is also built upon by O'Brien: "In our world, there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph, and self-abasement. Everything else we shall destroy-everything (Orwell, 1949, p. 279).

The oppositional subject of a totalitarian state demands to trick himself into being more accepting of the system. At the same time, this leads to the individual losing their inner self-respect and autonomy of thought (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 90). Bettelheim uses the Hitler salute as an example, where it would now be easy to recognize anyone in opposition and still claim to the democratic principles. Whenever an opponent of Hitler was out in public, his integration individualism was weakened by the experiences of no control and freedom of choice among the masses (1952, p. 90). In a totalitarian society like Nazi Germany, the opposition was forced to perform the Hitler salute, which then psychologically led to them feeling like a traitor to their ideologies and thoughts. "Since one's integration rests on acting by one's beliefs, he could retain his integration only by changing his beliefs" (1952, p. 91). To maintain their self-respect, it often becomes more accessible for the subject to change their beliefs, and in the circumstances with Hitler's Germany accepting the Nazi movement's control. In the case of authoritarian Germany, there was an experience of inescapable power, striking fear and terror; it could reach into even the most private and intimate moments of an individual's life. There was no more freedom for the population; the Fuhrer and Nazi party were everywhere and witnessed everything.

Bettelheim pinpoints how a growing self-hatred within the community is a psychological effect of authoritarian control. Individuals opposed to the original ideology but

learned to accept it would begin to hate themselves and what they represented, "Sure, she hated the regime that had forced her into this predicament. But she hated herself even more" (1952, pp. 91-92). We see traces of this idea of affecting the individual's self-hatred by forcing them to do daily tasks in modern authoritarian societies; one example is in North Korea, where citizens are required to participate in propaganda gatherings demonstrating loyalty and support for their regime. Bettelheim expresses how this often begins as a hatred towards the regime but ends up with self-hatred; the reason why this is psychologically effective by the governments is "because they remind the nonconformist every minute of his conscious life that he cannot afford to live by his inner convictions"(1952, p. 92).

In previous totalitarian societies, we could see occurrences where the individual citizen depended on the government to distribute life necessities, "Living in such a society, you are as dependent as a child for the substance of life" (1952, p. 93). Like parenthood, the government can revoke the individual's freedom through being sent to dig ditches or prison camps: "Workers who still have an independent ego or superego are consequently sent to dig ditches" (1952, p. 93).

Internal conflict among children is also heavily affected by living under control. The state, historically East German and Soviet Union children, required children to speak up, check, and potentially report on their parents if they did not obey the system. "The totalitarian system turns these youngsters loose, asks them to speak up, to control and check on their parents, to report them if they do not obey the laws of the system"(1952, p. 94). It leads to children in totalitarian states living with inner conflict between two superegos, loyalty to their own family or the state. Bettelheim also expresses how, by contributing to and manifesting this internal conflict, the state can manipulate the individuals, and rather than finding fault with the institutions, they begin to find guilt within themselves, "The inner desire to be loved by the superego is extremely strong, and the weaker the ego becomes, the stronger the desire" (1952, p. 94).

Modern authoritarian societies frequently demand assent and complete conformity in all life activities, even individuals' most private. In today's world, members of totalitarian societies live in constant fear and terror if they make a mistake that reveals how they are not in agreement with the party. "Totalitarian societies, people live in the continuous anxiety that

they might make a slip, that they might reveal their inner feelings and risk destruction for themselves, and maybe their families (1952, p. 96). We have seen this happening in China, where the human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo was arrested and imprisoned multiple times throughout his life for his work on human rights in China and protest against the Chinese party. In a controlled society, there is no doubt that peace is not found within individual humans, but rather the fear of punishment by the despot, "There is much truth in the remark that the peace that reigns in a totalitarian society is not the peace of human beings, but the peace of death" (1952, p. 96). The last theory to reflect upon is Mimir Kristjánsson, who raised his article on Orwell.

Mimir Kristjánsson's theories will concern the legacy of specifically Orwell's novella. He argues that Orwell and his political ideologies have been misconnected in modern times, notably by anarchists and right-wing movements that believe his work promotes their ideologies. Contrary to these misinterpretations, Orwell was a committed socialist who advocated for a classless society and critiqued totalitarianism rather than socialism itself; one of his most prominent passion cases was contributing to the middle and lower class and workers of the community. Orwell was a proud socialist, and his work concentrated on promoting a classless society; according to Kristjánsson, Orwell's work aimed to critique totalitarianism and revolutionary ideals, not socialism in itself.

The critique that both Kristjánsson and Orwell argue is that our society is complex, so the world needs a form of socialism that is adaptable while not overly reporting; it needs to evolve responsively rather than quickly. According to Kristjánsson, the left side must reclaim Orwell's methods and legacy and fight for his socialistic thinking, leading to a nuanced engagement with socialism and political issues

This study provides a detailed analysis of the political ideologies of authoritarianism and liberalism through the literary lenses of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*. By employing qualitative methods, specifically close readings and analysis of characters, the research delves into how both novels portray the profound effects of totalitarian regimes on individual autonomy and freedom. Theoretical insights from John Stuart Mill, Robert Nozick, Kristjánsson, and Hannah Arendt enhance the exploration, framing the narrative developments within a broader discussion of state power versus

personal liberty. These are also discourses from different centuries, from Mill's theory in 1859 to Mimir Kristjansson's in 2023.

By integrating literary criticism with political theory, this research contributes to the academic discourse on governance and human rights and underscores the profound role of literature. It serves as a mirror, reflecting and challenging our understanding of these crucial issues. This synthesis of literature and theory highlights the persistent relevance of Burgess and Orwell's works as tools for examining and questioning the dynamics of power and resistance in any authoritarian context. With the help of the selected discourse, we will reveal the intricate narrative mechanisms used by Burgess and Orwell to critique the invasive nature of authoritarian governance and its impact on personal freedom and identity. We have now distinguished multiple theoretical approaches we have taken in our study; the next step is the implementation of them to the analysis of *A Clockwork Orange*.

## 2 Anthony Burgess`s *A Clockwork Orange*

In this chapter, we will witness how Burgess critiques his contemporary society by showing that a single community can't exercise both liberalism and authoritarianism simultaneously. Eventually, the control and surveillance sprung from authoritarianism will devour an individual's arbitrariness and autonomy. According to Mills and Nozick, a state should be minimal and concerned with maintaining peace and safety for the community and the masses. Furthermore, the only circumstance in using power that the government should accept is that. However, it raises multiple ethical questions: to what extent should the state be able to exercise power for protection? And what sort of power should the state be allowed to use, behavioral control or military power? Is the state justified for its behavioral manipulation of Alex, despite making him cease to be a human, as they protected both the government and civilians from the tyrannical opposition to Alex's wrath? Our analysis reveals that authoritarianism, with its practices of imprisonment, violence, forceful rehabilitation, and censorship, constructs a society built on fear and hatred. Burgess suggests it is not sustainable, as personal freedom and liberalism are not embraced. It becomes clear that Burgess's intent with the novel was to critique his contemporary Britain, particularly the youth and the state leadership

We will begin with a dissection of the novel's use of authoritarianism, as there are multiple interpretations. The state is responsible for controlling the masses. However, at the same time, Alex can be argued to be an authoritarian symbol and the ruthless leader of the opposition forces of the government. In this subsection, we will deeply dive into the characteristics of state control and how these traits are visible in the novel. Ultimately, the question is whether the state can justify using behavioral manipulation on Alex. The characteristics of the authoritarian government are evident through the imprisonment of violent underage citizens, destroying individuals' humanity, propaganda, and a rapid shift of leadership. Eventually, when the government retreats and agrees to accept the responsibility for the destruction of the under-age Alex, it is because of the public backlash and the opportunity to get more publicity ahead of the reelection. Yet again, this symbolizes that they are putting their interest over individuality and autonomy.

The second subsection looks at liberalism through the eyes of particularly Alex, but also the alternative interpretation of the other civilians being the victims having their safety

affected by Alex and his gangs' criminal tendencies. In this chapter, the theories of Mills, Nozick, and Arendt will become vital for our interpretation of liberalism. The focus point of this chapter will be to argue for how autonomy and liberalism are affected and destroyed by authoritarianism. Is it right for a society to put the interest of the masses before the individuals?

The third subsection focuses on the Ludovico technique itself as a tool for behavioral manipulation and the effects of Alex. To understand the psychological impact, we will also use Bruno Bettelheim's article, which has this as a focus point. The ethical dilemmas of this process will be a vital part of this section. Should it be acceptable to create a utopian society and obedient humans by force artificially? According to the theories of Mills and Nozick, this works toward the safety of the collective and should, therefore, be accepted.

Our final section will examine the novel and its themes relevant to contemporary society to achieve a broad understanding of its potential as a teaching tool in contemporary schools. We will draw clear parallels between our findings and modern authoritarian societies and their everlasting attempt to overrule individualism and autonomy.

In this political satire, we delve into the world of Alex and his Droogs, witnessing their reign of terror in a not-so-distant future. The novel's subculture of extreme youth violence is a scathing critique of our society, where the authorities and parents find themselves subservient to the youth in a hierarchical structure. The authorities, to challenge this, resort to a revolutionary psychological experiment, making Alex the first victim of the Ludovico technique. This use of satire in *A Clockwork Orange* is a powerful tool, allowing Burgess to deliver a sharp critique of our societal structures. Author Rubin Rabinovitz argues similarly to our hypothesis that this is not simply a narrative about the conflict between a lawless hero and a society that attempts to control the individuals but also "the opposing views of libertarians and authoritarians on how best to provide social control" (Rabinovitz, 1979, p. 43). According to Rabinovitz, Anthony Burgess often framed historical conflicts in terms of Pelagian and Augustinian ideologies that oppose each other. This binary struggle is also evident in *A Clockwork Orange*, where the government suppresses the individual in favor of broader social control.

*A Clockwork Orange* is a satirical metaphor for the British post-World War society in which Burgess lived. In the following chapter, the novel aligns with Arendt's perspective of totalitarianism. Mainly the fact that the authoritarian ideology is uniquely destructive because it is all-encompassing and founded upon the use of fright, terror, and pain to dominate individuals' freedom systemically. The state's psychological appeal of authoritarianism, as brought up by Arendt, is that the ideology opens for the reshaping of citizens to isolated, atomized individuals without freedom of choice. It aligns with section two of the novel, where readers witness the government's abusive treatment of Alex in prison. Their ultimate aim is to erase the traditional social norms and traditions, imposing a fictional reality where the state is all-powerful and undisputed, with parallels to modern-day authoritarian governments, where democratic principles get overshadowed by falsified elections and manipulated laws to secure power.

Recently experienced with the reelection of Russia's president, "The reappointment of Vladimir Putin seems inexorable. The objective of the Kremlin, however, is not just victory, but a landslide result, both in turnout and percentage of votes" (Parliament, 2024, p. 1). In *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess's fictional government, as we will see, uses similar tactics, exposing the authoritarian desire to control and manipulate society by undermining democratic norms and replacing them with an undisputed, all-encompassing power.

## 2.1 Authoritarianism

It is clear from the opening that this is a dystopian society, and the world is a nasty, violent place; one of Alex's earliest victims exclaims, "It's a stinking world because it lets the young get on to the old as you did, and there's no law nor order no more" (Burgess, 1962, p. 20). Burgess's futuristic society is one where law or order has ceased to exist. The youth generation led by Alex has become the ruling authority in the streets. The social hierarchy has been flipped upside down, and the reverse societal evolution has accepted the ultraviolent youth in charge. Hannah Arendt writes, "Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who, for one reason or another, have acquired the appetite for political organization" (Arendt, 2004, p. 414). This explanation shows that if Alex can acquire substantial followers for his gang, it will allow them to challenge the political organization in charge. This theory also fits with Burgess's *1985* where he explains how the success of a leader is entirely dependent on the masses: "The power of the leaders of our collective is the



power of the collective itself. It has never yet done anything that has not benefited that collective" (Burgess, 1978, p. 153). Therefore, one could interpret it as a ruthless battle between Alex and the government to secure the collective, where the one with the best outcome becomes the authoritarian leader personality.

Author Rabinovitz argues that different types of government are in the narrative. At the novel's beginning, before the prison sentence, the anarchic and chaotic state of the society indicates that Pelagian liberals are in power (Rabinovitz, 1979, p. 44). Upon Alex's release from prison, we see how the government has now evolved to become more responsible and acted against the ultraviolence, "But what the Government was really most boastful about was the way in which they reckoned the streets had been made safer for all peace-lovin nigh-walking lewdies in the last six months, what with better pay for the police and the police getting like tougher with young hooligans and perverts and burglars and all that cal"(Burgess, 1962, pp. 144-145).

The newly shifted government during the end of Alex's prison sentence is, as Rabinovitz specifies, only Augustinian in a subdued way. This new government is a milder, less authoritarian one. Burgess hysterically satirizes the English welfare state's Labor and Conservative parties through the government's evolution, where rapid shifts get implemented (Rabinovitz, 1979, p. 44). Scaffolding onto this theory, the abrupt change of leadership aligns with Arendt's theory that "Nothing is more characteristic of the totalitarian movements in general and of the quality of their leaders in particular than the startling swiftness with which they become forgotten and the surprising ease with which an opposition replaces the government (Arendt, p. 407).

The authoritarian regime portrayed by Burgess has multiple distinguishable characteristics, among them propaganda. The state is willing to sacrifice a young Alex as a tool of propaganda, "He will be you true Christian,' Dr. Brodsky was screeching out, 'ready to turn the other cheek, ready to be crucified rather than crucify, sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly (Burgess, 1962, p. 140). It corresponds with the tradition of using propaganda in authoritarian societies to control the masses.

Another characteristic of this government is how they perceive themselves as working on behalf of God and treating every individual as an object, "Our subject is, you see, impelled

towards evil. The intention to act violently is accompanied by strong feelings of physical distress. To counter these, the subject has to switch to a diametrically opposed attitude" (1962, p. 137). The state refers to the young Alex as a "subject," symbolizing the cruelty of the state. The government has become blinded by the power it possesses with this new intervention, and it doesn't see its ethical and moral implications. Burgess explains that the state had committed a double sin when they closed the doors of heaven for Alex: "It has destroyed a human being since humanity is defined by freedom of moral choice; it has also destroyed an angel" (1978, p. 80). It is simultaneously one of the elements Burgess feels often is misinterpreted in his novel, as he is a nonviolent man primarily concerned with the ethical dilemma of removing the freedom of choice (1978, p. 80). The officials justify their attempt to play God by highlighting their perceived success with Alex, promoting the notion.

The state also extensively practices manipulation of truth. Rather than admitting that the authoritarian government has been unsuccessful in maintaining peace and safety, the narrative implies that the government prioritizes creating a utopian illusion of safety rather than taking responsibility and addressing the root causes of violence. The government blames the chaos in society simply on ultraviolence, and rather than offering rehabilitation, the solution becomes to make the youth generation less human. As we will see, censoring information and news is also a prominent part of Orwell's *1984*.

The sudden mobilization of the police force by recruiting younger people and upgrading the prison facilities are two other traces of authoritarianism. After Alex's release, he sees that his previous friends, who are underage, have been recruited into the police force. The state's obvious choice is to secure surveillance and stability within the society by creating a mass of police volunteers, "Oh, ` I said, please help. I've been beaten up by the police and just left to die on the road (1962, p. 166). The state has recruited a substantial amount of police volunteers. However, the state is not ensuring proper police training for these youths. This mobilization of the younger generation could also align with Bettelheim's notion of authoritarian government being thus cynical that they employ children and teenagers to work on the state's behalf (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 94).

At the same time, while an authoritarian state might fight for their conception of history and reality, it is essential to acknowledge that the State authoritarian itself makes

mistakes. In their behavioral intervention of Alex they make mistakes “The unintended destruction of Alex`s capacity for enjoying music symbolizes the State`s imperfect understanding (or volitional ignorance) of the whole nature of man, and of the consequences of its own decisions “ (Burgess, 1978, p. 80). Towards the end of the novel, we see how society rebels against the government when the news of Alex is public: "VICTIM OF CRIMINAL REFORM SCHEME and GOVERNMENT AS MURDERER" (Burgess, 1962, p. 186). Furthermore, this notion aligns with Hannah Arendt's notion that the totalitarian movement is more characteristic than the way the masses can turn on you and demand you depart (Arendt, 2004, p. 407). Moving further along, we need to distinguish the theme of liberalism within the novel.

## 2.2 Liberalism, Alex Delarge

The novel *A Clockwork Orange* is experienced through the first-person perspective of the protagonist, Alex. He epitomizes an ambiguous character, described by Professor Minodora Simion as one of the most murderous figures in modern fiction (Simion, 2013, p. 65). Even Alex's name is ambiguous, suggesting both English and Russian identities. Simion explains, "It fuses the negative prefix a with the word lex, which suggests simultaneously an absence of law and a lack of words" (2013, p. 65). This ambiguity aligns with Alex's use of the Russian-influenced English language, Nadsat, used by the youth in the narrative (Simion, 2013, p. 65).

Alex is a flawed character who has fallen out of society. Post- *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess indicated that he sees Alex as an anti-hero and that his name is short for Alexander, which means "defender of men" (Burgess, 1978, p. 80). Alex has never found a role within society; his idea of living is to experience life directly and joyfully, without morals or compassion for others. One passage that highlights Alex's lack of sympathy and carelessness is when one of the Droogs existentially reflects on outer space, and Alex responds, "There'll be life like down here most likely, with some getting knifed and others doing the knifing" (Burgess, 1962, p. 24). To Alex, life is a battle and survival of the fittest. To Alex, life is a battle and survival of the fittest. In many ways, Alex resembles the protagonist of Burgess's *1985*; the protagonist here also becomes a political opponent of the state: "I'm a human being deprived of work because I stand by a principle. I object to being a unionized sheep" (Burgess, 1978, p. 138).

At the same time, Alex sees himself as a rebellious leader. He believes he is an enemy of the state, destined to be imprisoned. Therefore, he feels it is his task to fight these powerful authorities by committing acts of destruction and terror, stating, "The not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines?" (1962, p. 46).

Alex's joy stems from violence, destruction, theft, and assault (Simion, 2013, p. 66), yet there is an argument to be made about society's role in shaping him. Alex displays apparent psychopathic and narcissistic traits, yet he simply exercises his freedom to choose what pleases him. Rabinovitz explains that many of Alex's characteristics are traced back to Augustinian traits: his dictatorial domination as a gang leader, his brutality, and his belief that criminals deserve punishment rather than rehabilitation (Rabinovitz, 1982, p. 45). With a sufficient law and order policy focused on rehabilitation, the youth who have fallen out of society might have experienced a different fate.

Alex's character aligns with Mill's theories on liberalism, particularly the notion that individuals should have the right to commit evil but must face the consequences. The government, therefore, should take responsibility for societal breakdowns, a point supported by a priest on television who states, "It was the DEVIL THAT WAS ABROAD and was like ferreting his way into young innocent flesh, and it was the adult world that should take responsibility for this with their wars and bombs and nonsense" (Burgess, 1962, p. 47). Alex uses this justification for the teenagers' tormenting of society. To him, he is living as a "good citizen," doing what satisfies him. When arrested, his primary concern is the betrayal by his gang, not the murder of an older woman.

To secure re-election, the government works on remedying social ills through emotional manipulation. Alex becomes a fitting candidate for the government's behavioral technology, which aims to control human will and transform criminals beyond recognition. Aligning with Bettelheim's theory of government control in an authoritarian society, Alex was forced to watch recordings of fictional and historical horrors of crimes against humanity. The violence that once excited him now only causes pain and nausea, forcefully instilling a version of human empathy in him. Once released, Alex questions his worth now that he

cannot rule over his life, leading to suicidal thoughts, as seen in a passage where he, once a strict authoritarian gang leader, is now beaten down and has become a civilian victim to authoritarian control: “What I wanted was not something violent but something that would make me like just off gentle to sleep and that be the end of Your Humble Narrator, no more trouble to anybody any more” (Burgess, 1962, p. 154). This passage reveals that Alex has become the opposite of his former self, now a weaker, more insecure. By removing the freedom of choice, the state has erased every liberalistic value from Alex and, in that way, his humanity and autonomy.

In chapter 21, Alex transitions into adulthood, leaving his violent past behind, suggesting the unnecessary nature of the government's behavioral control process, as individuals can outgrow their violent pasts on their own. Rabinovitz argues that this aligns with many of Burgess's other protagonists, who eventually learn to change and see their old way of life as part of a cycle of interacting opposites (Rabinovitz, 1979, p. 45). Alex begins to reflect on his future and dreams of becoming a father, needing to find a suitable wife: “But nor as I end this story, brother, I am not young, not no longer, oh no. Alex like growth up, oh yes” (Burgess, 1962, p. 204).

Ironically, one could argue that Alex learns through this experience about the importance of liberalism and autonomy in society as he states, “I see that it`s wrong because it`s against like society, it`s wrong because every veck on earth has the right to live and be happy without being beaten and tolchoked and knifed” (1962, p. 127). At the hospital bed, we see how Alex contemplates his role as a political tyrant, “If I had died it would have been even better for you political bratchnies” (1962, p. 185); he should have sacrificed himself for liberalism, and by that way becoming the strongest animal able to keep the authoritarian powers down (Mill, 1974, p. 6). Opposite to the state, which only wishes to benefit itself, Alex can sacrifice his own life for liberalism by attempting to commit suicide. This shows that forcefully Alex has learned the basics of society, while the government hasn't learned anything about the fundamentals of humanity. Our next step shall be to review the authoritarian government within *A Clockwork Orange*, mainly what separates it from a democratic twenty-first-century state.

## 2.3 Behavioral manipulation

Wellington, J. et al. discuss how Burgess's novel reflects ethical debates surrounding aversion therapy and aversive conditioning as treatments for addictive behaviors (Wellington et al., 2022, p. 879). The portrayal of aversion therapy in literature and media has significantly shaped societal views on these techniques and their acceptability as treatment forms. The Ludovico Technique stands out as one of the most chilling depictions of aversion therapy in popular culture. Later, we will explore similarities between this and the concepts of doublethink and reintegration in *1984*.

The ultimate goal of an authoritarian regime is to have citizens conform to its ideology and beliefs. Bettelheim's theory on the appeal of control suggests that individuals striving to follow a regime's rules are forced to destroy their egos. In the modern era, this has been achieved through propaganda, fake news, and symbolic acts like the Hitler salute during World War II. In literature, the Ludovico Technique used by authorities to manipulate and create automatized humans aligns with Bettelheim's theory that "The inescapable power of the totalitarian regime rests exactly on its ability to reach into even the most minute and private life activities of the individual" (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 91). By performing the Ludovico process on Alex, the authorities reach into his thoughts and emotions, an individual's most sincere and private parts. This use of the technique during Alex's imprisonment indicates a shift towards a more authoritarian and ruthless government aiming to turn the masses into a collective of automatized individuals.

The process itself functions as a metaphor for authoritarian control. Alex is tied to a chair and forced to watch violent historical and fictional movies, "An then the lights went out and there was Your Humble Narrator And Friend sitting alone in the dark, all on his frightened oddy knocky, not able to move nor shut his glazzies nor anything" (Burgess, 1962, p. 113). Alex is reduced to a government subject and experiment, unable to control his own body as they exert complete control over him, "This Ludovico stuff was like a vaccination and there it was cruising about in my krovvy, so that I would be sick always for ever and ever amen whenever I viddied any of this ultra-violence" (1962, p. 129).

Gradually, Alex's psychology transforms. He becomes confused and wishes to be sicker, "I want to be sick. Please let me be sick. Please bring something for me to be sick

into." (1962, p. 116). The process successfully destroys Alex's personality. By the end, the government has transformed Alex, "You're making me feel ill, 'I said. I'm ill when I look at those filthy pervert films of yours. But it's not really the films that are doing it. But I feel that if you'll stop these films I'll stop feeling ill" (1962, p. 125). What once brought Alex joy and excitement now causes him trauma and pain. His love for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony now brings back violent memories, making him ill, "Music and sexual acts, literature and art, all must be a source now not of pleasure but of pain." (1962, p. 169).

An essential element to reflect upon is the ethical and moral implications of the government's process. Psychologist Bobby Newman explains that Burgess's ultimate goal with *A Clockwork Orange* was to critique the morality of behavioral and government intervention in our lives (Newman, 1991, p. 66). In one crucial scene, the novel reflects on the ethical implications of behavioral interventions, "What does God want? Does God want goodness or the choice of goodness? Is a man who chooses the bad perhaps in some way better than a man who has the good imposed upon him?" (Burgess, 1962, p. 105). This corresponds with Bettelheim's theory that the ultimate goal of a totalitarian society is to make individuals question themselves and diminish their nature. Furthermore, Arendt's theory on totalitarianism describes this ideology as a mass organization of atomized, isolated individuals, "Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member (Arendt, 2004, p. 429). Newman argues that this behavioral alteration in Alex would not work in the free world. Gradual exposure to scenes of violence would begin a desensitization process, allowing Alex to gradually commit crimes again (Newman, 1991, p. 66). In the hospital bed, the conditioning process on Alex is miraculously reversed. Burgess never intended to present a scientifically accurate case study; instead, one could wonder if the Ludovico process was actual or merely a placebo effect, making Alex believe he couldn't commit crimes. Newman critiques Burgess's depiction of behavioral interventions, arguing that the novel ignores their benefits, such as increasing health, alleviating suffering, teaching skills, or solving problems. Therefore, the book cannot function as a commentary on the morality of behavioral interventions (Newman, 1991, p. 67). One question to ask, is how does Burgess's depiction of control vs. liberalism relate to contemporary society.

## 2.4 Relevance to contemporary society

Readers following Alex's battle against the State should understand this narrative as an allusion to Burgess's distaste for state interference with individual freedom. This story reflects the views of an author who is extremely liberal and opposed to state control. The narrative remains highly relevant to contemporary society despite being written decades ago. In his "Letter from England," Burgess expresses, "My political views are mainly negative: I lean towards anarchy; I hate the State. I loathe and abominate that costly, crass, intolerant, inefficient, eventually tyrannical machine which seeks more and more to supplant the individual. The more state we have, the more wretched we become" (Burgess, 1967, p. 458).

One obvious parallel to contemporary society is surveillance. Both authoritarian and democratic states engage in surveillance and monitoring of their citizens and other states. Autocratic regimes, like Russia, are known for their interference with foreign elections. Similarly, the authorities in the USA have engaged in mass surveillance of their citizens, undermining the principles of liberalism and autonomy (Delaney, 2020, p. 35). Using algorithms and social media raises significant questions about surveillance and data protection in our digital era. Burgess also reflects on this debate in his novel *1985*, where he writes, "A computer is a neutral thing. Information is a neutral commodity. The more information we have the better. That's the way I look at memory banks and so on" (Burgess, 1978, p. 53). Monitoring and using individuals' facial recognition is a highly debated topic. In a technically evolving world, particularly artificial intelligence, should there be an acceptance of creating holographs of deceased individuals? There are also circumstances where individuals can sell the rights of their face to big corporate businesses. This enables individualism and allows these significant concerns to own your rights, making yourself an object to be used.

The Ludovico Technique is another method by which the government breaks down the individual, and it can be related to modern society. In China, there are horrific reports of the persecution of Uyghurs. The genocide of the Uyghurs has been reported to involve methods such as political indoctrination. The United Nations report on the genocide in China concludes, "Serious human rights violations have been committed in XUAR in the context of the Government's application of counter-terrorism and counter-"extremism" strategies" (OHCHR, 2022, p. 43). Similar to the state's method of reintegrating Alex by altering his



personality, China attempts to rebuild and change this ethnic group into more automatized Chinese citizens.

This behavioral alteration of Alex parallels debates over punishment systems today. The attempted Norwegian drug reform in 2021 aimed to rehabilitate and change individuals with drug-related offenses rather than punish them (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2021). Although this represents an attempt at behavioral alteration by the state, it does not go as far as the Ludovico Technique. However, it illustrates a scenario where behavioral alteration could be argued to benefit both the individual and society. Another significant debate impacting liberalism is the use of chemical castration for sexual offenders. In this circumstance, the state intervenes to alter a person's behavior by changing an aspect of their human nature. This can be likened to Alex's experience, where profound psychological effects result from state intervention, effectively diminishing their humanity. This situation occupies a grey area, as the state exercises its power to interfere with individualism, justifying it by claiming to contribute to the safety of the collective.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess explores the inherent conflict between authoritarianism and liberalism, demonstrating how state control can erode personal freedoms. The novel illustrates the state's use of imprisonment, propaganda, and behavioral manipulation, mainly through the Ludovico technique, to enforce societal order. These mechanisms raise significant ethical concerns about losing individual autonomy and free will. Through the character of Alex, Burgess critiques the prioritization of societal interests over individual rights, questioning the morality of sacrificing personal freedoms for the greater good. The narrative suggests that such a society is ultimately unsustainable, stifling personal autonomy and fostering resentment. My hypothesis that *A Clockwork Orange* exemplifies the conflict between authoritarianism and personal independence is supported by Burgess's portrayal of state control and its impact on individual freedoms. The novel serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the importance of safeguarding personal liberties against the encroachment of authoritarianism. In today's context, Burgess's work remains a relevant and powerful critique of the dynamics between state power and individual freedom, underscoring the enduring need to protect personal autonomy in the face of increasing governmental control.

## 3 George Orwell's 1984

George Orwell's dystopian narration, *1984*, is a novel that still, in 2024, is recognized as one of the most brilliant pieces of dystopian literature. The novel, still in our modern era, keeps being introduced to newer audiences, whether it's through Hollywood movie adaptations, audiobooks with recognizable actors, or newer editions of the original novel. The novel's popularity is prominent in author Christopher Hitchens's afterword to *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*; he imagines that Orwell would be astonished to see the enormous popularity of his novel, especially its role as a compulsorily set text in schools (Hitchens, 2007, p. 202). One of the reasons for its success in schools stems from its being a thrilling novel that still has been able to remain unspoiled for most youths. At the same time, it's also a novel that has received much attention because of its controversial themes and graphic content, leading to the censoring of it in multiple particularly totalitarian countries.

In *1984*, we met Winston Smith, a 39-year-old citizen of Airstrip One. He works for the minister of truth, where he rewrites historical documents to align with the party's changing line. Eventually, Winston's skepticism towards Big Brother and the party's monopoly on truth grows. In a society under constant surveillance by the party and the thought police, this behavior is strictly forbidden and punished by death. At the climax of the narrative, audiences witness the excruciating interrogation and torturing of Winston, led by O'Brien. A process that, as we will see, shares multiple similarities with the Ludovico process on Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*. Like the Ludovico process, it indicates the state's interference with people's autonomy and individualism. This process successfully transforms Winston into an obedient citizen of Oceania who understands that  $2+2=5$  when that is the party's opinion.

Our analysis will delve into Orwell's portrayal of the struggle between individualism and governmental authoritarianism in *1984*. We will examine Winston Smith's psychological response to constant surveillance by Big Brother and how the thought police exploit their power to manipulate and suppress individuality. The first section will explore the state of Oceania and its authoritarian regime, Ingsoc. This discussion will also touch upon the state's use of surveillance and control and its impact on liberalist values. The theories of Hannah Arendt, Mills, and Nozick on totalitarianism and the minimal state will provide valuable insights into the analysis of Ingsoc and Big Brother.

Further on, we will also analyze the significance of Winston's rebellion in the context of personal autonomy and being a politically resistant tyrant representing liberalism. Based on Bettelheim's theory, we analyze how Winston's psychology is affected and makes him an individual whole of paranoia and confusion. Simultaneously, he keeps autonomy and personal freedom protected within his heart. Lastly, there will be a discussion of the cautionary aspect of the novel and the legacy of it in contemporary society. How can this novel be used in modern society to educate us?

## 3.1 Ingsoc

Our first argument is that audiences can recognize Big Brother as one of the most chilling depictions of an authoritarian state. What makes Big Brother particularly frightening is its omniscience, despite not being an actual individual. As the fictional opposition leader Goldstein writes in his book, "Every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration. Nobody has ever seen Big Brother" (Orwell, 1949, p. 216). Yet everyone is expected to love and praise Big Brother as a god because of this supposed omniscience. The image of Big Brother is omnipresent in society, ironically reminding us of the tendencies seen in the Stalin era, where portraits of the political leader were prominently displayed, and in today's North Korea, with propaganda posters of their leader Kim Jong-Un. Like the governmental leader in Burgess's narrative, Big Brother is a godlike figure not visible to the audience, yet he is above everyone and everything. As Orwell writes, "At the apex of the pyramid comes Big Brother. Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. Every success (...) is held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration" (1949, p. 216).

The goal of a state built on reshaping individualism to its advantage is to have all men become one man (Arendt, 2004, p. 602). To a high degree, this aligns with O'Brien's thoughts that individuals need to merge themselves into the party, and by becoming part of themselves, he becomes all-powerful (Orwell, 1949, p. 277). What is particularly concerning with the government is that they cannot process the crimes on humanity they are committing. They, however, believe that they are only working on behalf of the state and doing what is best for the majority, "The Party did not seek power for its ends, but only for the good of the majority. It sought power because men in the mass were frail cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth and needed to be controlled and systematically deceived by others

stronger than themselves." (1949, p. 275). Like Burgess's narrative, the state acts as gods, guardians of the weaker.. The dilemma is whether the theories of Nozick and Mills are eligible since we can interpret that the state has its false prediction of what it truly believes in. The state makes the decision for a mass of individuals who cannot face liberty and have a democratic saying. Therefore, the state is forced to use surveillance, censoring, and control to ensure that the public is one shared entity.

Aligning with the characteristics of authentic authoritarian governments, Oceania is successfully attempting to control and surveil everything and everyone. This creates a thrilling notion that we, as readers, are unaware if the thought police, like us, observe Winston and Julia's relationship and rebellion grow as the story progresses. Self-denial from citizens is vital for Big Brother. Citizens should focus their love on the party. Author Cheng brings up how sexual deprivation is one of the elements within Oceania that creates binding energy. The privation creates mass hysteria, which eventually will develop into war fever and leader worship (Cheng, 2002, p. 1104).

In Oceania, any form of privacy is against the law, the thought police see and hear everything, "How often, or on what system, the Thoughts Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork" (Orwell, 1949, p. 5). With the use of microphones and the implementation of telescreens in every household, the party witnessed rival actions or thoughts; as Winston says, "Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimeters inside your skull" (1949, p. 29). This privacy contrasts Alex's treatment in *A Clockwork Orange*, where the government could go inside the skull and alter human emotions. In this authoritarian society, it's also an implementation of the abolition of private property, which meant that no party members should own anything except only petty personal belongings. However, the party would own everything in Oceania (1949, pp. 214-215). The idea of liberalism and individual freedom in a society, as depicted in *1984*, is nonexistent.

The cruelty of Big Brother sees no end, and the government is willing to use children as authoritarian tools; children are expected to turn against their parents if Big Brother requests it. Bruno Bettelheim also argued that children from most Western authoritarian states were brought up to love the party over their parents and function as the party ear and eyes within the household (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 66). We even see how Orwell narrates that the

families' children become one of the antagonists within the story: "The children, (...) were systematically turned against their parents and taught to spy on them and report their deviations. The family had become an extension of the Thought Police (Orwell, 1949, p. 140). In part three of the novel, we see how the child of Parsons has even turned against her father and handed him over to the thought police as a traitor to the party (1949, p. 245). Adolf Hitler famously, in his speech at the Reichsparteitag in 1935, said, "He alone, who owns the youth, gains the future" (Adolf Hitler, 1935), which, as we can see through Orwell's narration is, in fact, the truth. By attacking and securing the alliances from the youth before they have grown to develop their knowledge further, the party can easily control and use them as additional tools for control throughout society. Moving further to another focus point of the government, we have power and censorship.

The following argument addresses how authoritarian governments use censorship and the manipulation of history to control individuals, transforming them into a collective organism from which the Party derives its power. The Party erases and censors' historical documents, replacing them with evidence that aligns with their version of history. Winston recalls how Oceania was once allied with Eurasia. However, the Party has erased this fact: "He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his consciousness, which must soon be annihilated" (Orwell, 1949, p. 37). Even possessing knowledge that contradicts the Party's version of history puts Winston at risk of being vaporized. The installation of memory holes to destroy any documents that could trigger such memories illustrates the people's obedience, as they willingly destroy materials deemed necessary by the Party (1949, p. 40).

One might wonder if this obedience stems from loyalty or fear of being caught by the Thought Police. The Party rewrites books to fit their narrative, ensuring no copies exist to contradict them. This control and censorship of Oceania's history mirrors the actions of actual authoritarian regimes: "When rulers have a monopoly over mass communication, they can and do engage in two complementary strategies: propagating beliefs that would induce people to support them and censoring communications that would induce people to oppose them" (Przeworski, 2020, p. 357). Censorship indicates that a society's leaders fear individualism and the coordination of rival beliefs. The Party in Oceania is unwilling to reduce censorship, signifying fear at the top of the hierarchy of social tensions. Peter Lorentzen explains that

authoritarian regimes may increase censorship during high tension and loosen it when necessary. By doing this, the government can control public discontent and media narratives. Conversely, losing control of the media could enable citizens to coordinate and challenge the regime (Lorentzen, 2014, p. 403).

However, there are limits to the government's ability to control citizens through censorship. Winston is one of the few who can recall Oceania's past: "(...) it was only four years since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia. But, that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge he possessed because his memory was not satisfactorily under control" (Orwell, 1949, p. 36). A fundamental principle of Ingsoc, the Party's ideology, is "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (1949, p. 260). Those in charge of the public's perception of the past can manipulate and control present information, thereby shaping the future.

Another element of control by the Party is the social hierarchy, in which the Party and Big Brother always occupy the top positions. According to Goldstein's book, the social hierarchy is divided into three irreconcilable sections: the High, who wish to remain in power; the Middle, who want to replace the High; and the Low, who dream of abolishing all distinctions and creating a society where all men are equal (1949, p. 210). The political structure of Airstrip One is divided into multiple sub-junction ministries: the Ministry of Truth, the Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Love, and the Ministry of Plenty. A close reading of this division raises the question of who the true leader of Oceania is. Is it Big Brother, the Party, or any of the ministries?

Hannah Arendt expressed the following on the relationship between government and absolute authority: "It has also been frequently observed that the relationship between the two sources of authority, between the state and party, is one of ostensible and real authority, so that the government machine is usually pictured as the powerless façade which hides and protects the real power of the party" (Arendt, 2004, p. 514). Using this theory, we can understand that the Party or the government acts as a façade, protecting the real power, Big Brother. At the same time, one could interpret that the Party or even the authoritarian ideology itself is the real power and that the tyrannical figure of Big Brother is, in fact, the actual façade.

The government's cruel lack of empathy for individuals and the suppression of autonomy are clear indicators of a totalitarian regime. The Thought Police and Party members show no remorse when torturing, murdering, and systematically undermining individuals, mirroring tactics seen in historical totalitarian states. These regimes often rely heavily on secret police and elite party formations, similar to other documented dictatorships. As Arendt (2004, p. 545) highlights, the extreme cruelty of these methods finds few parallels outside modern Western history, underscoring the unique brutality employed by such governments.

The Party's cruelty is evident in the implementation of the collective Two Minutes Hate, public executions, citizens referring to each other as "comrades," and dressing individuals in identical uniforms, effectively making the citizens enslaved people. This tactic of collectivism ensures that everyone is similar, with no individual standing out. Bruno Bettelheim refers to this collectivism, arguing, "He could not change his action—he had to give the Hitler salute. Since one's integration rests on acting by one's beliefs, he could retain his integration only by changing his beliefs" (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 123). The Hitler salute forced even Hitler's opposition to act against their beliefs, eventually leading them to adapt their mindset.

From the history of totalitarian governments, we see that the aim and goal of the High is to maintain their power or earn more. The party needs to destroy individualism and reshape its society based on collectivism. From the party, we see power comes from collectivism by building a culture where everyone is identical and thinks alike: "The first thing you must realize is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual". Arendt points out how totalitarian movements tend to abuse democratic freedoms to abolish them, which is both clever and cruel for the masses (Arendt, 2004, p. 416). We see this being carried out on Winston towards the end of his interrogation when the party begins to rebuild and give him false hopes about his future before getting executed.

O'Brien's assertion can summarize the Party's ideology "That the Party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come, sacrificing its happiness to that of others" (Orwell, 1949, p. 275). This passage, demonstrates that, like the government in *A Clockwork Orange*, these leaders claim to act on behalf of the collective, justifying their fundamentally evil actions as necessary for the greater good. Having examined

the government's authoritarian control, we will now focus on the individuals within the state of Oceania.

## 3.2 Liberalism, Winston Smith

Our first argument is that individuals in Oceania are treated as worthless objects whose only purpose is to benefit the Party. A straightforward way to summarize this treatment is to examine Winston's reintegration process in the Ministry of Truth. During his confrontation with O'Brien, we learn how the government views the worth of individuals: "Sometimes he was beaten till he could hardly stand, then flung like a sack of potatoes onto the stone floor of a cell, left to recuperate for a few hours, and then taken out and beaten again" (1949, p. 253). Similar to Burgess's narrative, in this society, the individual is regarded as an animal worthy of nothing, merely a tool for the hierarchy whose goal is to crush individuality.

Towards the novel's end, O'Brien uses filthy rats as a metaphor for what humanity truly is (1949, p. 298). There is an argument that the Party sees Winston as a potential political opponent capable of mobilizing the masses against them. He is the "animal of prey" stronger than the rest, as Mill refers to them (Mill, 1974, p. 6), destined to protect the weaker members of the community from being preyed upon by innumerable vultures—in this case, the state. The authorities believe they are justified in crushing Winston's individualism because of the potential risk of the masses collectively sharing a desire for political organization (Arendt, 2004, p. 414).

Our following argument demonstrates that despite being an all-powerful state, through Winston, there is still love and hope for liberalism. His feelings towards Julia show that despite living under constant observation and control, he still harbors private thoughts and emotions, which go against the fundamental principles of Ingsoc and doublethink. In his first interaction with Julia, their relationship is depicted as an act of rebellion against the Party: "But you could not have pure love or pure lust nowadays. No emotion was pure because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred. Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (Orwell, 1949, p. 133).

The authoritarian government maintains loyalty by ensuring individuals cannot have a personal life, significantly reducing the chances of rebellious behavior that could lead to a



national revolution. Despite this oppressive environment, Winston persists in his beliefs in liberalism and individualism: "I am conscious of my own identity. I was born, and I shall die. I have arms and legs. I occupy a particular point in space. No other solid object can occupy the same point simultaneously" (1949, p. 272). This statement solidifies Winston's strong mentality, which is necessary to survive in an authoritarian society. Even while being tortured by O'Brien, Winston attempts to hold onto thoughts of humanity and liberalism. This persistence is essential in a society dictated by an authoritarian personality to withstand the collective pressure of the masses and the government's oppression. Similar to *A Clockwork Orange*, the government uses pain and fear to rehabilitate individuals, attempting to crush their spirit and autonomy.

Another consequence of the lack of personal freedom under constant control is paranoia and confusion. Winston is a naturally paranoid and confused individual, struggling to distinguish between truth and the Party's lies and propaganda. We see this early in the novel when he first sees O'Brien: "I am with you,' O'Brien seemed to be saying to him. 'I know precisely what you are feeling. I know all about your contempt, your hatred, your disgust. But don't worry, I am on your side!" (1949, p. 19). Readers know that this is not true, but Winston believes it, seeing O'Brien as a trustworthy comrade. This uncertainty and unreliability in Winston's perception make him an unreliable narrator.

The climax of Winston's journey is when the Party ultimately triumphs over his individualism. Readers witness Winston's stream of consciousness and hallucinations as he loses his sanity and his last vestige of humanity: "He had fallen through the floor, through the walls of the building, through the earth, through the oceans, through the atmosphere, into outer space, into the gulfs between the stars" (1949, p. 300). We interpret this passage as a metaphor for the concept of liberalism in a totalitarian state, where the consequence of an authoritarian government is that the individual becomes an emotionless object without internal feelings or motivations. We also see in Winston's reintegration how the government breaks him down to show what the last actual human in this world has become: a bag of filth falling to pieces bit by bit (1949, p. 285).

The concept of ownlife is also worth revising. The process in which the expectations of party members had no sign of personal life and individualism, "It was assumed that when

he was not working, eating or sleeping, he would be taking part in some kind of communal recreation" (1949, p. 85). The word ownlife was a word that represented individualism and eccentricity. Doing something that would stride towards your own life would endanger your entire life. This history of forbidding personal life in totalitarian society is illustrated by Hannah Arendt when she writes, "We know that the iron band of total terror leaves no space for such private life and that the self-coercion of totalitarian logic destroys man's capacity for experience and thought just as certainly as his capacity for action" (Arendt, 2004, p. 611). Isolation and restriction have, in other words, always been a characteristic of restrictive states. Having reflected on both authoritarianism and liberalism and the balance between them, the next step is to focus on Winston's reintegration process.

### 3.3 Behavioral manipulation

We have seen how the Party uses multiple techniques to preserve its power: surveillance, propaganda, censorship, collectivism, indoctrination of children, and vaporizing dissenters. These totalitarian "tools" interfere with liberal values, creating an environment where individuality is systematically crushed. Burgess's notes recall that the government running Oceania has created an authoritarian ideology that precisely knows how to manipulate language and memory, meaning that they also control the perceived reality (Burgess, 1978, p. 29). Despite the Party's collective manipulation, a few liberals still exist, raising the question of how the state addresses this concern. In Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, the government employs behavioral manipulation to remove the ability of humans to make personal choices. The revolutionary and untested Ludovico technique performed on Alex is, to some extent, justifiable since the government did not fully know the repercussions of the treatment.

Conversely, in George Orwell's *1984*, the Party, through O'Brien, shows no sympathy for individualism. The Party's strategic process aims to destroy the last traces of humanity within the few "independent humans" still existing. Winston's reintegration involves three steps: learning, understanding, and acceptance (Orwell, 1949, p. 273), each represented by new pain. This strategy inflicts pain and malnourishment until the individual has no choice but to embrace the Party's ideology and love Big Brother. In both Alex and Winston's cases, individuals are metaphorically without control, forced to witness brutality. This serves as a

metaphor for individuals in totalitarian societies being coerced into accepting authoritarian ideology, relinquishing personal freedom, and becoming automated parts of the collective.

The difference between O'Brien's rehabilitation of Winston and the Ludovico process is significant. The Ludovico process accesses the individual's thoughts and interferes with the moral compass. In Winston's case, the process involves causing fear and pain until he can no longer resist. Winston's breaking point occurs when he sacrifices his love for Julia, pleading, "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones" (1949, p. 300).

Bruno Bettelheim remarks how, in earlier tyrannies, the despot did not demand inner acceptance and agreement of his methods from the opposition. In ancient times, it was still possible for the opponent to survive (Bettelheim, 1952, p. 89). This corresponds with Burgess's depiction, where the state, rather than executing Alex, attempts to rehabilitate him forcefully. However, in *1984*, O'Brien admits that the final step of Winston's reintegration will be a bullet to the head, starkly contrasting with the ideologies of ancient tyrannies.

A vital part of the governmental behavioral manipulation is Doublethink, which is essential to the Party's control over individuals' thoughts: "Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (1949, p. 223). Doublethink lies at the core of Ingsoc, enabling the Party to control the individual's perception of reality. Despite knowing the truth, a citizen is willing to accept the Party's version: "Applied to a party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it also means the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary" (1949, p. 221). Through Doublethink, the government aims to turn individuals into emotionless machines that uncritically accept their imposed realities. The question now becomes how this narrative holds up to contemporary society.

### **3.4 Relevance to contemporary society**

The legacy of George Orwell's *1984* will undoubtedly endure. As Cheng notes, "Although Orwell's *1984* is no longer widely read in the English Department, totalitarianism remains very much alive in the world, and Orwell's political insights continue to be highly useful for understanding this phenomenon" (Cheng, 2002, p. 1100). In Norway's political

landscape, politicians like Mimir Kristjánsson argue that socialist parties should reintroduce Orwell and his philosophy. After World War II, the USA used Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* to illustrate the challenges of achieving communist ideology. Kristjánsson emphasizes that Orwell, often misunderstood by the political left and right, was a proud socialist whose nuanced views on socialism deserve to be reclaimed and highlighted by socialist, rather than being co-opted for narrow political ends (Kristjánsson, 2023). Orwell himself wrote in his essay *Can Socialists Be Happy?* "Socialist thought has to deal in prediction, but only in broad terms. One often has to aim at objectives which one can only very dimly see." (Orwell, 2024). Rather than prescribing exact details of a socialist society, he advocated for broader contemplation about the future.

Additionally, Lara Crothers ignites a debate over whether Orwell should be considered a "Tory anarchist" or merely a "terrible simplification" (Crothers, 1994, p. 389). She argues that the British author had an inconsistent understanding of socialism, consistently focusing on one aspect: egalitarianism (Crothers, 1994, p. 390). In essence, Orwell envisioned a society built on equality, devoid of social hierarchy, a utopian vision that, according to Hannah Arendt's theories, is unsustainable as the masses will inevitably seek power, suggesting that Orwell's ideal society may be unachievable.

The alteration of perceived reality is also a pertinent issue in contemporary society. In 2024, there is growing concern about the increasing use of artificial intelligence. The boundaries between the fake and the real are becoming increasingly blurred, and states and individuals exploit this. With just a computer, one can create "deepfake" videos of important politicians committing crimes, leaving audiences uncertain of the origin of the information. As the presidential election in the USA approaches, it is evident that the era of deep fakes has arrived (Wolf, 2024). This technology allows for the creating artificial presidential recordings telling voters not to participate in the election. As seen in literature and reality, the separation between artificial creations and reality has significantly narrowed.

Finally, there are parallels to be drawn with behavioral manipulation, whether through the Ludovico technique or reintegration processes in authoritarian regimes today. Similarities exist in attempts to manipulate and alter individual personal freedom. Historically, this can be seen with the Gulag camps in the Soviet Union and, more recently, with the Kyohwaso camps

in North Korea, where border crossers and political opponents are sentenced to forced labor for reeducation. As Muico states, "Through labor and reeducation, prisoners not only work off their crime but also endure such hardship in the process that they become less likely to re-offend" (Muico, 2007, p. 24). Anthony Burgess and George Orwell accurately predicted how authoritarian governments would implement reeducation to influence individual mindsets.

In the first section of this chapter, we explored how the Party and Big Brother maintained absolute control over the masses through constant surveillance and intrusion into personal lives. Individuals were forced to relinquish their privacy while harboring profound adoration for Big Brother. They were expected to focus solely on the Party and Big Brother, excluding all other relationships. In the society of Oceania, the concepts of humanity and individualism are obliterated, with the Thought Police eradicating any semblance of liberalism. Following the principles of Ingsoc, humans are dehumanized to the extent of being considered mere rats, and as O'Brien states, the Party will stop at nothing to secure power. People are insignificant, but collectively, they embody the Party's control. This idea resonates with Hannah Arendt's theory that the masses, feeling alienated within the social hierarchy, will inevitably seek power. This dynamic serves as a justification for the Party's authoritarian measures, such as surveillance, manipulation, censorship, and historical revisionism. Collectivism, a fundamental aspect of authoritarian states, facilitated Hitler's rise in Germany, enabling his ideology to permeate throughout the populace.

The novel portrays Winston as one of the few remaining humans with a sense of individuality in a world where the population has been reduced to automatons. The Party swiftly neutralizes any semblance of opposition, as seen in Winston's ultimate betrayal of Julia and his acceptance of the Party's doctrines. The Party combats Winston's liberal tendencies by associating them with pain and suffering, demonstrating how individuals in authoritarian regimes can become susceptible to propaganda and misinformation. Winston's experience also serves as a metaphor for the paranoia and confusion prevalent in such societies.

The reeducation practices employed by the Party bear similarities to the Ludovico technique and are mirrored in real-world examples such as North Korea's reeducation camps, the Soviet Gulag, and China's treatment of the Uyghurs. These methods aim to align

individuals with the state's ideology through forced labor, torture, and indoctrination. Dystopian literature often explores the terrifying potential of governments to penetrate and manipulate human thoughts, a prospect that becomes increasingly plausible with technological advancements.

This analysis dissected George Orwell's *1984* work while drawing parallels to Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. The task of this chapter was to juxtapose the stark realities of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes against discussions on individual rights. While Oceania is more hyperbolic than the one met in *A Clockwork Orange* in its depiction of authoritarianism, it prompts reflection on how stringent governmental control can lead to greater collectivism, technological and educational advancements, and reduced criminality due to pervasive surveillance. Simultaneously, this will intervene with liberal values and worsen the lives of the individual. As we saw, the party challenged individualism by practicing methods such as surveillance, censoring doublethink, newspeak, and reintegration of their citizens. As we interpreted it, the reintegration process shared multiple parallels to the Ludovico procedure. Both methods are metaphors for authoritarianism, enabling an iron grip on liberal values. The protagonists, Winston Smith and Alex are similar in that they challenge the authorities at hand by being rebellious political opponents or stronger animals, according to Mills' theory. It could also justify the behavioral altering process if used to align with Mill's theory of harm-preventing harm to individuals. However, what is evident is that these authoritarian states break the rules of being a minimalistic state.

Our next chapter will examine how the insights from this thesis can be integrated into modern educational settings, serving as valuable resources for literature and social studies teachers. The aim is to illuminate how analyzing novels and political theories on the balance between authoritarianism and individual agency can significantly enhance pedagogical approaches, opening up new avenues for engaging and impactful teaching.

## 4 The Role of Our Studies in Discourse and Education

Recalling our central theory, a state founded on authoritarian ideology inevitably thrives at the cost of personal freedom and individual autonomy. Suggesting that communities governed by authoritarian ideologies will ultimately suppress liberalism, as these are inherently conflicting ideologies unable to coexist harmoniously in everyday life. Our analysis has shown how Burgess and Orwell depict authoritarian societies with solid parallels to historical regimes like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union while also drawing connections to contemporary states and leaders such as North Korea, China, Boris Johnson, and Donald Trump. In these narratives, similar to Big Brother or the ruler Alex, there is no space for liberalism in an authoritarian state, as the state acts in its interest, often at the expense of liberal values.

The psychological repercussions of authoritarianism undermining liberalism are critical. Through characters like Alex and Winston, we observe the broader societal effects where individuality is stifled, and conformity is enforced. Our central arguments maintain that both novels illustrate how authoritarian regimes employ sophisticated methods of control that suppress individual freedom and reshape societal norms. *A Clockwork Orange* debates behavioral conditioning and its impact on free will, while *1984* demonstrates community reshaping through surveillance and ideological manipulation.

In this chapter, we aim to contextualize this study within the broader landscape of existing scholarly works, exploring educational opportunities that emerge from it. By doing so, we aim to highlight the value of studying societal control versus liberalism in strictly controlled societies. This examination will also help us identify gaps in current discourse and demonstrate how this study contributes to future research on authoritarian control, liberalism, dystopian narratives, and their application for educational purposes.

First, we will briefly discuss the existing discourse and align our study. Second, we will explore the educational potential of dystopian literature through the lens of our research. Dystopian literature is an engaging interdisciplinary element and a valuable tool in interdisciplinary and adapted teaching. We will, in this section, offer an example of a teaching sequence building on dystopian literature, facilitating the four interdisciplinary topics: health and life skills, democracy, and citizenship, where we will see how this study can contribute to

the teaching of these two novels to today's youth. Though controversial, the works by Burgess and Orwell have remained popular due to their captivating plots and the suspense of unfolding events. These two works demonstrate literature and dystopian literature's position in the classroom, offering entertainment and critical educational insights. The final section of this thesis will propose avenues for further research, such as incorporating non-Western dystopian works or integrating more contemporary dystopian texts. These suggestions broaden the scope and enhance the relevance of our study.

## 4.1 Contextualization in current discourse

Within the vast landscape of scholarly work on authoritarianism and liberalism, a unique opportunity for comparative analysis arises with Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and George Orwell's *1984*. This study, aiming to fill a distinct gap, juxtaposes these two pivotal works, delving into their portrayals of authoritarian control mechanisms and their implications for liberalistic values. Burgess's novel, often overshadowed by the more recognized Orwell's, presents a critical yet highly underexplored narrative of authoritarianism and liberalism, brimming with potential for scholarly discussion and analysis.

The philosophical thinkings of Robert Nozick, John Stuart Mill, and Hannah Arendt provide an extensive framework for analyzing the themes within these novels. Nozick's advocacy for a "minimal state" emphasizes non-interference except in security matters. It contrasts sharply with the invasive governmental controls depicted in *1984* and the behavioral conditioning in *A Clockwork Orange*. These novels illustrate the consequences of an unchecked state overreach, where surveillance and psychological manipulation suppress individual freedoms, highlighting the tension between Nozick's ideals and authoritarian practices.

While Nozick advocates for a "minimal state," John Stuart Mill's principle of harm goes further and expands this framework, arguing for the protection of individual autonomy. This aligns with both novels' satirical hyperbole of totalitarian tendencies. Orwell's *1984* encapsulates Mill's fears of societal stagnation through forced conformity and collectivism. Burgess questions the morality of repressing individual will for the perceived societal good, challenging Mill's assertion that it restricts liberty to prevent harm to others.



Hannah Arendt's theories of the mechanics of totalitarian societies resonate with the social structures in Orwell's and Burgess's dystopias. Arendt describes how totalitarian regimes use propaganda and systematic control to dictate individuals, a theme vividly illustrated by Orwell through Newspeak and doublethink and by Burgess through the state's use of the Ludovico technique. These mechanisms aim to create an atomized society, reducing individuals to what Arendt refers to as "atomized individuals" in the service of the state's ideology, directly contesting the possibility of coexistence between authoritarianism and liberal values.

This study acknowledges the critique by Norwegian politician Kristjánsson, who argues that the political left has often misinterpreted these novels as mere critiques of communistic ideologies. Instead, these novels serve as a cautionary tale, warning against the potential dangers of a society overly reliant on socialism. If left unchecked and unmonitored, such a society could easily descend into the authoritarian regimes we see depicted. Burgess and Orwell, through their works, advocate for the necessity of control and oversight in balancing state control and individual freedom.

Moreover, our analysis of the psychological impact of authoritarian tools, such as the Ludovico technique, underscores their profound effects on individual autonomy and mental health. This aligns with a lesser-known work by Bruno Bettelheim, a psychologist and concentration camp survivor whose experiences echo the dehumanizing impacts of totalitarian control witnessed in Burgess's and Orwell's narratives. Through our comparative analysis, this study not only fills a significant gap in the current literature concerning societal control and liberalism but also underscores the enduring relevance of these dystopian narratives in contemporary political and educational discourse.

## 4.2 Dystopian literature in classrooms

Literature is a rich teaching tool that contributes to both learning and entertainment. Within a novel, there are no limits to the imagination, and it offers a compelling alternative world where students can escape the stresses of contemporary society. Christian Carlsen notes that for students in grades 8-13, the aim should be to develop a reading habit in English and other languages (Carlsen et al., 2021, p. 224). Creating this habit is essential by building on the joy literature offers. Carlsen emphasizes that literature sharpens everyday skills while

allowing us to interpret narratives (2021, p. 209). Reading is also crucial to developing intercultural competence. The Norwegian Directorate of Education identifies five essential skills the educational system should foster: reading, writing, counting, oral skills, and digital skills (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Teachers should work toward establishing a natural reading culture in the classroom; choosing appropriate literature is one method to achieve this.

In today's digital era, one challenge is creating a positive reading culture in classrooms. One way to encourage this is through extensive reading for pleasure. A classroom project lasting 2-3 weeks, where students select a book from a curated list, helps them manage their reading and responsibility, as Carlsen notes (Carlsen et al., 2021, p. 213). By narrowing the selection, students are not overwhelmed by too many options. This method promotes group work, writing, and oral discussions among students. If the goal is to integrate English with social studies, dystopian fiction can be a good interdisciplinary choice.

However, specific dystopian works like *Brave New World*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *1984*, and *A Clockwork Orange* are more suitable for older students due to their graphic content. Consider younger adult literature like Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* or James Dashner's *The Maze Runner series* for high school students. Carlsen notes that these books resonate with younger readers, typically feature toned-down content, and are relatable to younger protagonists (Carlsen., 2021, p. 217).

Dystopian literature often depicts flawed societies, making political dilemmas more tangible. Through a work like *1984*, students can understand how ideologies can conflict with liberal values. This opens opportunities for ethical discussions, like whether a government should control behavior for public safety or how far states should limit individual freedom. It provides room for debate on the pros and cons of communism and democracy.

To create a teaching strategy for Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, an interdisciplinary approach combining English literature, psychology, and political science could work well. Start with a multimedia presentation on the author, the novel, and the surrounding controversies, emphasizing the political climate of the time. Two relevant learning goals include "Read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts" and "read, analyze and interpret fictional

texts in English" (Utdanningsdirektoratet). These aims guide students to delve deeper into the text, analyze vital literary elements, and understand thematic layers.

Students need sufficient time to read the novel if the project lasts 1-2 weeks. The teacher can prepare essential chapters depicting Alex's initial violence, the government's psychological conditioning, and Alex's post-rehabilitation struggles. This ensures that all students understand the reading material and task. After each reading session, have students discuss ethical conflicts in pairs, such as whether psychological conditioning is justified or how the government in *A Clockwork Orange* reflects fears of authoritarian control. Conclude with a "Shut up and write" session, where students have an hour to write about their thoughts on the novel's ethical conflicts, providing an opportunity for personalized learning.

### 4.3 Further research potential

Working with *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984* has offered us a strong foundation for understanding the relationship between authoritarianism and individual autonomy. However, several areas with potential for future research could enhance comprehension of crucial aspects related to societal control. The choice of primary literature to base our study on has a significant impact on the results of our research. As noted, both Burgess and Orwell are British writers who represent Western literature. Another approach would be to choose literature from other parts of the world, such as Haruki Murakami's dystopian narrative *1Q84* from Japan or Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*, representing the African region. These alternative dystopian narratives can offer another perspective of authoritarianism, societal control, and liberalism. Simultaneously, are these narrations contemporary rather than older? It can offer us a depiction of a society created with the knowledge of today's global situations with globalization, pollution, and technological evolutions.

Another valuable perspective to build upon would be to choose an older dystopian narrative and do a comparative study of it about a contemporary work, where we can experience and reflect on the evolution of totalitarianism. How have the thoughts surrounding it changed from post-World War 2 till the modern era? The language within the novels also plays a significant part, so an approach focuses on the fictional languages Nadsat and Newspeak. Languages are a theme in both books and share a deep parallel with both the

governments and the individuals; an approach here is to investigate how the authoritarian government influences these languages.

Furthermore, we can broaden our understanding by comparing dystopian fiction in various media, such as the television show *Black Mirror* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, a cyberpunk novel. This interdisciplinary approach enriches our understanding of the dystopian genre and opens up discussions on surveillance and artificial intelligence, two critical characteristics of dystopian narratives.

In conclusion, this chapter has comprehensively examined how dystopian literature like *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984* critically reflects the psychological, societal, and political dynamics underpinning authoritarian control and its suppression of liberalism. By contextualizing these works within existing discourse, this study highlighted their significant educational potential in discussing ethical dilemmas and understanding how totalitarian regimes employ sophisticated mechanisms to reshape societal norms. Integrating interdisciplinary educational strategies underscores the power of dystopian narratives in teaching students to discern and debate complex political ideologies. Further research is encouraged to expand on these themes by incorporating non-Western or contemporary dystopian works, providing a global and modern perspective on the intricate relationship between authoritarianism and individual autonomy. This inquiry ultimately sets a strong foundation for future studies exploring dystopian fiction's pervasive and timeless relevance in understanding societal control.

## Conclusion

In examining the themes of authoritarianism and individual autonomy in George Orwell's *1984* and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, this thesis has illuminated the disturbing interplay between state control and personal freedom within dystopian literature. The analysis of these two seminal texts has revealed shared concerns over behavioral manipulation, surveillance, and the crushing impact of totalitarian ideologies on individuality. Orwell's *1984* vividly illustrates how state-sponsored surveillance and psychological manipulation can systematically erode the human spirit. The Party's relentless control over every aspect of citizens' lives is a cautionary tale of the dangers of unchecked authority. By contrast, *A Clockwork Orange* offers a grim exploration of the limits of state intervention in human behavior, where attempts to reform violent tendencies culminate in the suppression of free will. While each novel differs in style and narrative approach, they share common ground in their critique of systems prioritizing conformity and control over individuality and personal autonomy. Both works underscore the struggle to maintain humanity amidst overwhelming authoritarian structures.

The hypothesis that *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984* exemplify the inevitable conflict between authoritarianism and personal autonomy is supported by these works' narratives and thematic explorations. Both novels emphasize that a state built upon authoritarian principles cannot coexist with true personal freedom and individuality. Instead, such states rely on control mechanisms that ultimately dehumanize individuals and suppress their inherent rights. This comparative analysis shows how dystopian literature mirrors contemporary society, reflecting current fears about surveillance, state control, and the erosion of civil liberties. These novels serve as grim reminders of what can occur when governments prioritize order over freedom and reinforce the importance of vigilance in safeguarding personal autonomy. As Louis XIV's assertion, "L'état c'est moi (I am the state, and the state is me)," succinctly encapsulates, these stories warn of the consequences when absolute power is concentrated in the hands of a few.

This exploration of *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange* not only enhances our understanding of authoritarian themes in fiction and reality but also serves as a critical reminder of literature's power in reflecting and resisting oppressive systems. By connecting these novels to recent political developments, this thesis underscores the enduring relevance



of Orwell and Burgess's works and calls us to reflect deeply on literature's role in defending against the encroachment of authoritarian regimes. Let us remain vigilant, recognizing that the dystopian worlds envisioned by these authors offer more than mere fiction—they provide a crucial lens through which to view and challenge the real-world dynamics of power and control.

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