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Truth in the Works of George Orwell

Petr Škaroupka

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Jméno a příjmení:	<b>Bc. Petr Škaroupka</b>
Osobní číslo:	<b>H18427</b>
Studijní program:	<b>N7503 Učitelství pro základní školy</b>
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### Zásady pro vypracování

Diplomant se ve své práci zaměří na pojetí pravdy v románové a esejistické tvorbě britského spisovatele George Orwella. Teoretická část práce se bude věnovat vývoji novověkých filozofických postojů k pravdě. Samotný rozbor se pak zaměří na to, s jakým pojetím pravdy pracuje G. Orwell konkrétně v románu 1984 a ve vybraných esejích (výběr zvolených textů k rozboru diplomant patřičně vysvětlí). Na základě této analýzy se práce mimo jiné pokusí najít souvislosti mezi moderními a postmoderními teoriemi pravdy a jejich novodobými kritiky či zastánci.

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Vedoucí diplomové práce:

**Mgr. Michal Kleprlík, Ph.D.**

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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University of Pardubice  
L.S.  
Faculty of Education  
Department of English Studies

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**doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D.**  
děkan

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**Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.**  
vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 29. listopadu 2019

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## ANNOTATION

This diploma thesis focuses on Orwell's views on truth in his written works. With the aid of the contemporary philosophical literature, the notion of truth, as well as related epistemological and metaphysical issues and concepts, are described in the first part of the paper. On the basis of this theoretical framework, the other half of the paper analyses Orwell's conception of truth and associated philosophical concepts. Special attention is dedicated to contrasting Orwell's account of truth with that of Winston, the Party (from Orwell's novel *1984*) and present-day philosophical doctrines; especially realism, postmodernism, and others.

## KEYWORDS

George Orwell, truth, 1984, postmodernism, facts, reality, metaphysics, epistemology, realism, idealism, Nineteen Eighty-Four

## ANOTACE

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na Orwellovy postoje k pravdě v jeho literárním díle. Za pomoci současné filozofické literatury, je v první části popsáno pojetí pravdy, společně se souvisejícími metafyzickými a epistemologickými tématy. Na základě tohoto teoretického rámce je provedena analýza Orwellova pojetí pravdy a přidružených filozofických konceptů. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována kontrastování Orwellova chápání pravdy s teoriemi Winstona, Strany (z Orwellova románu *1984*) a současných filozofických doktrín, zejména pak realismu, postmodernismu a dalších.

## KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

George Orwell, pravda, 1984, postmodernismus, fakta, realita, metafyzika, epistemologie, realismus, idealismus, Devatenáct set osmdesát čtyři

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*To tell the truth is to bring the most habitable reality into Being. Truth builds edifices that can stand a thousand years. Truth feeds and clothes the poor, and makes nations wealthy and safe. Truth reduces the terrible complexity of a man to the simplicity of his word, so that he can become a partner, rather than an enemy. Truth makes the past truly past, and makes the best use of the future's possibilities. Truth is the ultimate, inexhaustible natural resource. It's the light in the darkness. See the truth. Tell the truth.*

— Jordan Peterson

*12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*

*When regard for truth has broken down or even slightly weakened, all things will remain doubtful.*

— Saint Augustine



# INTRODUCTION

Humans are truth-seeking creatures who, by their nature, long for the comfort of certitude in their lives. Most of the times, such as during a medical consultation with a doctor, or a verdict of a judge, one commonly relies upon the assumption that the person involved is not telling lies; that he or she speaks the truth or at least something in the vicinity of it. In some cases, the distinction between truth and falsehood may be negligible; adults regularly tell white lies to their children to protect their innocence from the harsh reality. However, more often than not, it is a matter of life and death; for instance, the truth may save a wrongly accused man from a lifetime in prison or a death penalty. Truth is thus very important and want it or not, it represents an inseparable part of everyday life.

If nothing else, George Orwell can be regarded as one of the most iconic truth-seeking creatures that have ever walked on this planet. He was aware of the significance of truth and the potential dangers that might surround it. Maybe, for this reason, his novels immediately become the best-sellers as soon as people feel that their truth-seeking ability is being threatened by the authorities.

Throughout his life, Orwell was preoccupied with revealing the truth behind the veil of lies – be it during his brief, intellectually unsatisfying stint at the BBC where he was supposed to broadcast pro-British propaganda or his near-death experience in the Spanish Civil War where he had first encountered unparalleled dishonesty. It comes as no surprise that these and countless other intriguing events reflected in the themes that Orwell addressed in both fictional and non-fictional works. Quite logically, this includes the notion of truth.

Everyone has some theory of truth, and Orwell is not an exception in this regard. Nevertheless, truth is an extremely complex, philosophical concept; it relates to a myriad of other intertwined epistemological and metaphysical issues. A large amount of this intricate web is held unconsciously, and hence many ordinary people who are not much interested in philosophical matters happily live their lives without ever explicitly articulating what truth constitutes to them – yet some of their axioms can be retrospectively derived from their actions, utterances and possibly writing.

This paper attempts to do just that; to analyse George Orwell's theory of truth in his written works. Since, as already mentioned, truth is a complicated affair, it is essential to begin with the very foundations upon which the edifice of truth is built.

For this reason, the opening chapter focuses on presenting and discussing various epistemological/metaphysical problems and belief systems that inevitably influence how one

sees the truth. Those doctrines can be loosely classified as idealism, solipsism, postmodernism, and (continuance of) epistemological/metaphysical realism. The list is nowhere near being definitive, but it is relatively sufficient for the purposes of this paper. I have tried to define those doctrines objectively, however, I am aware that given the fact that the descriptions of them gravitate towards generalisation, some characterizations might, for example, be true for one realist/idealist/postmodernist, etc., while not being true for another. Such extreme diversity of philosophical views would be beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, the philosophies are mostly interpreted through the common traits that are usually ascribed to them in the philosophical literature. Still, as Orwell remarks, one must have some preferences, and so it should be admitted that some readings, particularly that of postmodernism, may slant towards more critical interpretation.

The following subchapter consequently delves into how epistemological/metaphysical commitments impinge on one's conception of truth. For reasons of convenience, the two most dominant and mutually incompatible theories of truth are described and contrasted there; that of realists and postmodernists.

The second chapter first attempts to dissect Orwell's, Winston's and the Party's underlying epistemological and metaphysical assumptions. These are juxtaposed with the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings outlined in the prior chapter. Based on this, the subchapters undertake to probe into Orwell's/Winston's, as well as the Party's regards of truth, and inspect them while utilising the theory. Where needed, additional notions that have not been included in the theoretical part are delineated and directly applied to the subject at hand.

The last chapter, labelled Orwell's Message and Conclusion, explores the message that Orwell presumably endeavours to convey to the reader via the novel *1984*. Finally, the chapter summarises the arguments from previous sections and carries them to the logical conclusions.

# 1. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TRUTH

## 1.1. The Foundations of Truth – Epistemology and Metaphysics

In order to understand Orwell's – or anyone else's – theory of truth, it would be first convenient to investigate the cornerstones upon which it is established. For this reason, this subchapter defines the basic concepts and provides descriptions of several dominant doctrines that have been developed in philosophy and which are of relevance to the subsequent analysis of Orwell's works.

In epistemology, there are two broad strands classified as epistemological realism and epistemological antirealism. Epistemological realism holds “that it is possible to obtain knowledge about mind-independent reality.”<sup>1</sup> Realists thus argue that “perception is able to provide us with (perhaps very complex and indirect) access to at least some parts of reality.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, realists affirm that the world is knowable.<sup>3</sup> Epistemological antirealism, oftentimes labelled as scepticism,<sup>4</sup> denies that.<sup>5</sup>

Epistemological realism can be further divided into two subcategories according to the nature of the link between the mind and the world, as well as the degree of knowledge that it is feasible to acquire. The direct (‘naïve’) realism, which follows Aristotelian tradition, advocates that external objects are directly and correctly reflected in the perception,<sup>6</sup> and hence one can “gain absolutely certain and strictly true knowledge about reality.”<sup>7</sup> By contrast, representative realism maintains that there is a causal connection between the external world and sense organs; i.e. the outside environment stimulates sense organs and creates the sense-data in the process.<sup>8</sup>

It was John Locke who had formulated representative realism as a reaction to the inability of direct realists to explain variations in people's perception of objects and illusions. Locke insisted that physical objects are the source of sense-data and distinguished between two types of qualities that these objects have; primary qualities (i.e. the real properties of physical

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<sup>1</sup> Ilkka Niiniluoto, *Critical Scientific Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Uskali Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. N. J. Smelser and B. Baltes (Pergamon, n.d.), 12820, <https://philpapers.org/archive/MKIRAT.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” 12820.

<sup>4</sup> A. Moore and M. Scott, *Realism and Religion: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Myron B. Penner and Hunter Barnes, *A New Kind of Conversation: Blogging Toward a Postmodern Faith* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Donald M. Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006), 262.

<sup>7</sup> Niiniluoto, *Critical Scientific Realism*, 95.

<sup>8</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999), 657.

objects, such as shape, mass, texture, etc.) and secondary qualities (i.e. those which produce sense-data, such as taste, colour, smell, etc.)<sup>9</sup> Locke maintained that while the sensory experience of primary qualities of objects *approximately (indirectly)* corresponds to the external world, sensory data based on secondary qualities do not faithfully represent real objects. Since these qualities are not inherent in the physical objects but rather constitute creations of the mind, the perceptual experience of them may vary among people. For example, “the colour will seem different by artificial light, or to a colour-blind man, or to a man wearing blue spectacles, while in the dark there will be no colour at all.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, though Locke acknowledged that secondary qualities are subjective and no global understanding of them is possible, primary qualities are objective, and hence it is plausible to have universal knowledge of them.<sup>11</sup>

However, critics of Locke known as idealists (such as Berkeley) pointed out that primary qualities are no less problematic than secondary qualities. For instance, it was discovered that depending on the point of view, the shape of an object may appear to be different to various observers.<sup>12,13</sup> Berkeley asked, as can be paraphrased, that since senses may be deceitful in regard to secondary qualities, how can one know that the representations of primary qualities are in accordance with those in objects?<sup>14</sup>

The answer is that this cannot be verified. This philosophical problem, also known as the egocentric predicament, denotes that “one can never eliminate the ‘human mind’ from knowledge and discover what things are like apart from one’s consciousness.”<sup>15</sup> Since the reality is mediated by the mind, and it is unattainable to scrutinise it from an independent vantage, it follows that there is no way of determining whether, and to what extent, the sense-data correspond to the objective reality and, indeed, whether there is any reality at all.<sup>16</sup> This is best illustrated by Descartes’ ‘evil demon’ which was later updated to a ‘brain in a vat’ thought experiment. According to these scenarios, human minds are deceived by an omnipotent being or a mad scientist. What both thought experiments emphasise is the possibility that experience may be just a dream, or a matrix-like illusion which is disconnected from the world.<sup>17</sup> Now,

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<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Touchstone, 1967), 605–606.

<sup>10</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2001), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Wilson, “Locke’s Primary Qualities,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40, no. 2 (April 2002): 212, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2002.0041>.

<sup>12</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 264.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 1999), 243.

<sup>15</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 261.

<sup>16</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 261.

<sup>17</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 26.

how can one react to the realisation that senses may be deceptive, and owing to the egocentric predicament, it is impossible to prove the contrary?

At this point, before the individual reactions are addressed, it would be useful to introduce a further philosophical distinction. Just like in epistemology, in metaphysics, two broad schools of thought can be distinguished; metaphysical realism and metaphysical antirealism. It is the mind (in-)dependence of reality (and its aspects) that is viewed as the decisive factor in differentiating between metaphysical realists and antirealists. While metaphysical realism in its essence maintains that the real world and facts exist independently of human cognition,<sup>18,19</sup> metaphysical antirealism propounds the view that the observable world in some way depends on minds.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for metaphysical antirealists, there is no objective world of facts.<sup>21,22</sup> Locke can be seen as a metaphysical realist,<sup>23</sup> for in order for his representative realism to function, a mind-independent reality must be presupposed.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, as it will be contended below, idealist,<sup>25</sup> as well as most postmodernists, are typically metaphysical antirealists for whom the external reality is fundamentally dependent on someone's mind(s).

### **1. REACTION – Metaphysical Antirealism of Idealists (“*The world depends on God’s mind.*”)**

One of the potential reactions is to adopt metaphysical antirealism of idealists. Idealism is predicated on epistemological antirealism. As already mentioned, Berkeley, similarly to Descartes, questioned the validity of sense experience. Consequently, faced with the boundaries of senses and egocentric predicament, Berkeley refused Locke's characterization of sense-data as something in the mind that at least approximately resembles the physical world that engenders it. Contrary to Locke, Berkeley asserted that the material world cannot be the root cause of sense-data.<sup>26</sup> By virtue of doing so, Berkeley adopted a form of epistemological antirealism to which Locke's representative realism had paradoxically given rise.<sup>27</sup>

This epistemological commitment, however, has a metaphysical consequence for Berkeley, for if one can experience only one's own ideas, “it makes no sense to believe in the

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<sup>18</sup> Samir Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2002), 58.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Brock and Edwin D. Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2005), 888.

<sup>21</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

<sup>22</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Niiniluoto, *Critical Scientific Realism*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 266.

existence of anything that we cannot perceive.”<sup>28,29</sup> Thus, Berkeley did not deny that ideas are signs of some reality but unlike Locke, he did deny that this realm is physical – it is purely mental.<sup>30</sup> For Berkeley (and Descartes<sup>31</sup>), the entire reality represents ideas held and produced by God.<sup>32,33</sup> Beyond that, there is nothing but minds and their ideas.<sup>34</sup> To illustrate this, if a chair is being observed, it is not considered a physical object existing independently of the mind, but an idea instilled by God who is in possession of all the ideas. This way, Berkeley explained the content of people’s minds.

## **2. REACTION – Metaphysical Antirealism of Solipsism (“*The world depends on MY mind.*”)**

Probably the most radical reaction to the limitations of senses and egocentric predicament is solipsism. In its broadest sense, solipsism asserts that only oneself and one’s experience exists.<sup>35</sup> There are no other objects and minds outside of one’s consciousness. Everything depends on one’s mind. The whole reality is a construct of the individual.

Not many philosophers have endorsed this view, but some may tend toward it. For example, Berkeley attempted to rescue himself from the trap of absolute solipsism by declaring that there is God who produces all the ideas that humans perceive. Equivalently, as will be expounded, Kant’s and postmodernists’ scepticism tends toward solipsism as well,<sup>36,37</sup> for if one has access only to appearances about which one cannot know whether they reflect the things in themselves, there is no reason for believing that this world exists.<sup>38,39</sup> As Russell accentuates, “emphasis upon mind as opposed to matter [...] leads in the end to the assertion that only mind exists.”<sup>40</sup> Like Berkeley, postmodernists have exerted comparable efforts to save themselves from this outcome by recognising the presence of some other minds.

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<sup>28</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2013), 131.

<sup>30</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 37,38.

<sup>32</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 5,20.

<sup>33</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1996), 356.

<sup>36</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 861.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals’ Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador, 1998), 54.

<sup>38</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 564.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell’s Question: the Ethical Implications of an Independent Reality,” *International Journal of Teaching and Education* 3 (2015): 39, doi:10.20472/TE.2015.3.4.004.

<sup>40</sup> Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 704.

### 3. REACTION – Metaphysical Antirealism of Postmodernism (“*The world depends on the collective of minds.*”<sup>41</sup>)

As with all ‘isms’, postmodernism is no less difficult to define and place in context. The word ‘postmodern’ had been allegedly coined during the 1930s, however, postmodernism emerged and gained attention in the 1970s when it first referred to the new architecture styles and only later to a cultural shift from modernism.<sup>42</sup> At this stage, postmodernism can be broadly construed as a late twentieth-century movement that reacts to and rejects the Enlightenment project of rationality.<sup>43,44</sup> The most prominent proponents of postmodernism were “Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Richard Rorty.”<sup>45</sup> Since the label ‘postmodernism’ is an umbrella term for a multitude of various theories proposed by a large number of philosophers, it is inconceivable to list all of them. Hence, only the central axioms which seem to be more or less shared uniformly among the majority of postmodernists will be presented here.

In order to delineate the postmodern philosophy, it is necessary to introduce Kant. Like Locke, Kant did not explicitly deny that the external, physical reality existed. On the contrary, he attempted to be a realist by admitting that there may be ‘things in themselves’ which affect the sense-data. But as opposed to Locke, Kant was an epistemological antirealist;<sup>46</sup> he maintained that this world is forever out of human reach and scientific investigation.<sup>47,48,49</sup> Furthermore, since the nature of mind-independent entities remains unaddressed,<sup>50</sup> and there is a strong emphasis on stressing that all people have access to is a phenomenal world which is subjective and mind-dependent, Kant transforms into a metaphysical antirealist.<sup>51,52</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> In Ayn Rand’s lexicon, this position which stresses that it is the consciousness of groups (or collectives) that creates the reality is called ‘social subjectivism’. Hicks employs the term to characterize postmodern philosophy. See Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*.

<sup>42</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen R. Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Scholarly Publishing, 2004), 1.

<sup>46</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 887.

<sup>47</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 250.

<sup>49</sup> Nicholas F. Stang, s.v. “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy),” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2016), accessed February 5, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism/>.

<sup>50</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 413.

<sup>51</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 60.

<sup>52</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

Postmodernists have been inspired by Kant's philosophy.<sup>53,54,55</sup> Like Kant, they are mostly epistemological antirealists who hold that the world of things in themselves is unreachable. Yet, unlike Kant, they appear to be more radical in this respect.<sup>56</sup> While Kant implicitly admitted that there is an external world (unreachable though it may be) which in some sense affects the internal composition of minds, postmodernists seem to argue that since "the world is accessible to us through our interpretations, [...] the idea of an independent reality is at best an irrelevant abstraction and at worst incoherent."<sup>57</sup> Thus, for many postmodernists, the reality is merely simulated and does not constitute "a very meaningful concept."<sup>58</sup> The majority of postmodernists thus disposed of the notions of the common external reality and unifying humanity altogether.<sup>59,60</sup> According to them, there seems to be no link between the world and the mind; the external world has an insignificant or non-existent role in knowledge construction.<sup>61</sup>

However, how do postmodernists explain the substance of the human mind if the role of the external reality is denied? On what (or on whom) one's reality is supposed to be dependent and determined by? In contrast to Berkeley and Descartes, they do not indicate that the source of everything happens to be God. Rather, they appear to proclaim that reality and all or significant knowledge of it are socially constituted;<sup>62,63,64,65,66</sup> they are dependent on or determined by human minds.<sup>67</sup> Thus, as Pinker reports, for a considerable number of postmodernists, concepts such as emotions, kinship, the sexes, illness, and even nature and the world are "said to have been —invented or —socially constructed."<sup>68</sup> For this reason, these

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<sup>53</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 6, 42, 83.

<sup>54</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 855.

<sup>55</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 729.

<sup>56</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 54.

<sup>57</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 855.

<sup>58</sup> Jason L. Powell, "Understanding Habermas: Modern solutions," *Sincronía*, Spring 2002, <http://sincronia.cucsh.udg.mx/modr.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 729.

<sup>60</sup> The latter may also relate to the characteristic postmodern denial of human nature.

<sup>61</sup> H.M. Collins, "Stages in the Empirical Programme of Relativism," *Social Studies of Science* 11, no. 1 (1981): 3, doi:10.1177/030631278101100101.

<sup>62</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 855.

<sup>63</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 351.

<sup>64</sup> Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 128.

<sup>65</sup> Neil L. Waters, *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies* (Lebanon: UPNE, 2000), 20.

<sup>66</sup> Brian Duignan, s.v. "Postmodernism | Definition, Doctrines, & Facts," in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>).

<sup>67</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 22.



abstractions are commonly supplemented by the quotation marks in the postmodern theory.<sup>69</sup> The objective facts as such do not exist; they are merely subjective, socially contingent interpretations/constructions. As Nietzsche, the foreteller of postmodernism,<sup>70</sup> professed: “There are no facts, only interpretations. And this too is an interpretation.”<sup>71</sup> Even the scientific notions such as that “the Moon is a physical body of such and such mass that orbits another physical body, the planet Earth, of such and such a mass in such and such an orbit that can be mathematically described”<sup>72</sup> cannot be regarded as universal descriptions of the mind-independent world. On the contrary, according to postmodernists, they are “man-made notions. They are inventions – they represent social constructs”<sup>73</sup> or “useful fictions.”<sup>74,75,76</sup> Thus, postmodernists do not portray themselves as metaphysical realists, for in order to be one, “facts about the domain must be out there to be discovered rather than constructed.”<sup>77</sup>

#### **4. REACTION – (Continuance of) Epistemological/Metaphysical Realism (“*The world is independent of mind and can be accessed.*”)**

The final reaction detailed here is the continuance of some form/modification of Locke’s or Aristotle’s realism. Probably the most commonly held one among the contemporary philosophers and scientists is scientific realism which springs from Locke’s system.<sup>78</sup> The following lines provide an overview of accounts of those contemporary philosophers who display the characteristics of epistemological/metaphysical realism.

Like Locke, the philosophers of this kind are epistemological realists who believe that perception is connected to the external reality, and hence knowledge is principally possible; they usually hold that there is a causal relationship between the world and sense-data. As Sokal argues, “the most natural way to explain the persistence of our sensations [...] is to suppose they are caused by agents outside our consciousness.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, for realists, it is “sights, sounds, glimpses, smells and touches” which arise through the interaction with the environment that “all provide reasons for beliefs.”<sup>80</sup> This explanation in terms of causality seems to be the best

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<sup>69</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press on Demand, 2005), 75.

<sup>71</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>72</sup> Jim Powell, *Postmodernism For Beginners* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1998), 151.

<sup>73</sup> Powell, *Postmodernism For Beginners*, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2002), 15.

<sup>76</sup> Powell, *Postmodernism For Beginners*, 151.

<sup>77</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 242.

<sup>79</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 53.

<sup>80</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 168–169.

one people have.<sup>81</sup> In other words, human beings are in touch with reality via their sophisticated faculties which are finely tuned to record aspects of reality necessary for survival, and apart from specifically designed illusions, they work accurately.<sup>82,83</sup> Even if the brain is confronted with illusions, it seeks ways of finding the universal reality and truth “behind the false impression.”<sup>84</sup>

Accordingly, realists counter the epistemological antirealism of Berkeley, Kant, postmodernists, and others. They can be designated as philosophical optimists; they resolutely oppose epistemological antirealism/scepticism.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, they realise the limitations of senses and acknowledge that experience is in some sense constructed.<sup>86</sup> However, as Pinker argues, though the reality is mediated to people through their brains and naïve realism is thus false, it should not bring about the postmodern conclusion that it is “an arbitrary construct — a phantasm created by expectations or the social context.”<sup>87</sup> Rather, it should be assumed that the world exists and “corresponds, at least approximately, to the image of it provided by our senses.”<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, present-day realists also apprehend that any form of realism may entail solipsism or some other manifestation of metaphysical antirealism. They comprehend that due to the egocentric predicament, it is impossible to prove that the external world and facts exist outside of one’s own mind.<sup>89,90</sup> As Bertrand Russell admits, these assumptions necessarily rest on an instinctive belief.<sup>91</sup> In any case, their reaction to this problem is distinct from postmodernists, idealists, and solipsists. Although they contend that it is a logical possibility that the extrinsic world may not exist, or exist solely as an illusion produced by God, the society, or even a supercomputer, “the mere fact that an idea is irrefutable does not imply that there is any reason to believe it is true.”<sup>92</sup> The instinctive belief in the actuality of the non-mental realm thus should never be renounced, for “all knowledge, we find, must be build up upon our instinctive beliefs, and if these are rejected, nothing is left.”<sup>93</sup> Therefore, faced with the

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<sup>81</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 177.

<sup>82</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 179, 194.

<sup>83</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 181.

<sup>85</sup> Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” 12815, 12820.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Luntley, *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned* (London: Routledge, 2003), 77.

<sup>87</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 179.

<sup>88</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 55.

<sup>89</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 54.

<sup>93</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 11.

egocentric predicament, contemporary realists refuse to accept metaphysical and epistemological antirealism which state that there is no external, mind-independent world that can be discovered. Rather, Russell concludes, it is more reasonable to be metaphysical realists and assume that “the external world does really exist, and is not wholly dependent for its existence upon our continuing to perceive it.”<sup>94</sup>

Though it is admitted by realists that there are categories which can be regarded as social constructions (e.g. money, tenure, citizenship etc.), it does not necessitate that “all conceptual categories are socially constructed.”<sup>95</sup> Conversely, Sokal stresses, it is crucial to realise that “there exist facts independent of our claims.”<sup>96</sup> For instance, there are facts such as that Earth is round, and blood circulates in veins whose rejection would equate to adopting solipsism.<sup>97</sup> Realists thus insist that facts “exist independently of how anyone thinks or feels about them; whereas an antirealist holds that they are so dependent.”<sup>98</sup> Such facts are discovered or detected, rather than constructed or invented.<sup>99</sup>

In the defence of this position, it is often pointed out by realists that if reality and facts were looked upon as nothing but man-made notions governed by minds alone, it should theoretically be possible to adjust them by changing the mind(s).<sup>100</sup> In other words, reality, and facts should be *consciously* alterable. The assumption is that if one believed that Earth is flat, and other people would come to accept it as well, Earth would become flat. This is, of course, erroneous; Earth would still be round even if people persisted that it is not. The same applies to sense experience. As Sokal argues, though people can change at will the sensations that are “pure products of [...] imagination, they cannot stop a war, stave off a lion, or start a broken-down car by pure thought alone.”<sup>101</sup> Kingsley observes that though many philosophers have attempted to undergo a ‘transcendental turn’ and bracket the existence of the outside world, such effort is quickly dispersed when being faced with brute facts such as a stone hitting the philosopher’s head.<sup>102</sup> Hence, a bomb may constitute a piece of text for some postmodernists “but it is not an image or piece of text to the person whom it kills.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 182.

<sup>96</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 103.

<sup>97</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 70, 88.

<sup>98</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

<sup>99</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 34.

<sup>100</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 41.

<sup>101</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 53.

<sup>102</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell’s Question,” 38.

<sup>103</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 170–171.

In addition to this, the proponents of realism raise the issue of why it is the case that many people share an identical or similar experience unless it is due to some shared reality independent of them.<sup>104</sup> As Kingsley demonstrates, antirealists cannot account for the fact that when a group of students observes a teacher's lecture, they all perceive relatively the same event. The reason that they do is because there is the lecturing teacher outside of the students' consciousness – the fact which can be proven by an audio or video recording.<sup>105</sup>

## 1.2. Realists and Postmodernists on Truth

As has been argued in the previous subchapter, philosophers can be divided into two broad groups. On the one hand, there are antirealists whose prominent representatives appear to be idealists, along with their postmodern successors and, on the other hand, there are contemporary realists who stand in opposition to those doctrines. The aforementioned philosophies may vary in their positions on numerous metaphysical and epistemological aspects. Most importantly, however, they differ in how they view the truth.<sup>106</sup> This subchapter focuses on two mutually exclusive conceptions of truth – the one of realists and postmodernists. Both viewpoints are in one way or another relevant to the analysis of Orwell's theory of truth.

Presently, it is imperative to recall that realists hold on to the metaphysical commitment that “there are, or could be, ‘recognition-transcendent facts.’”<sup>107</sup> In other words, a realist account of truth presupposes that “the world exists objectively, independently of the ways we think about it or describe it”<sup>108</sup> and that since “our thoughts and claims are about that world”<sup>109</sup>, this world “can be represented [...] in a way that is adequate, accurate and true.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, realists usually subscribe<sup>111,112</sup> to one of the most valid standards of truth<sup>113</sup> called the correspondence theory to which realism is closely related.<sup>114,115,116</sup> This theory dates back to Aristotle who is claimed to famously pronounce that “to say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that is, is

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<sup>104</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

<sup>105</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question,” 43.

<sup>106</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 7.

<sup>107</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Glanzberg, s.v. “Truth,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2006), accessed January 15, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/>.

<sup>109</sup> Glanzberg, “Truth.”

<sup>110</sup> Richard Appignanesi, *Introducing Postmodernism* (Icon Books, 2004), 13.

<sup>111</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 888.

<sup>112</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 7.

<sup>113</sup> William S. Sahakian and Mabel L. Sahakian, *Ideas of the Great Philosophers* (New York City: Barnes & Noble Publishing, 1993), 8.

<sup>114</sup> Glanzberg, “Truth.”

<sup>115</sup> Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” 12818.

<sup>116</sup> David Marian, s.v. “The Correspondence Theory of Truth,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2002), accessed March 8, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-correspondence/>.

false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.”<sup>117</sup> Simply put, the basic idea is that “a belief is true if and only if it corresponds to a fact.”<sup>118</sup> To give an illustration of this, the belief that it is raining is true only if it squares with the fact that it is raining.

Having accepted this standard, realists favour the perspective that the truth is made true or false by facts in the world.<sup>119,120</sup> Those facts – which can be considered the world’s data – function as the external referee.<sup>121</sup> By achieving the correspondence between the belief and the fact, the objective truth is attained. Realists thus hold that objective truth(s), i.e. propositions that are true regardless of whether anyone knows, or believes that they are true, are in principle possible.<sup>122,123</sup> This might be described as the thesis of the timelessness of truth which states that “what is ever true is always true.”<sup>124</sup>

For realists, the driving ambition is to aspire to truth and continue in a search for it.<sup>125,126</sup> Though it is conceded that theories about the reality may never be absolutely correct, it is argued that they might be at least approximately true.<sup>127,128</sup> To rephrase this, it is concluded by realists that “theories may not be correct down to every last detail, while still holding that they are broadly on the right lines.”<sup>129</sup>

As already presented in the preceding sections, Kant, Berkeley, and most postmodernists seem to be both epistemological antirealists arguing that knowledge of things in themselves is impossible, and metaphysical antirealists concluding that there are no mind-independent entities. These commitments inevitably affect one’s attitude to truth. As Blackburn asserts, “The loss of authority, the loss of logos, of our ways of getting at the truth, quickly transposes to loss of authority in the notion of truth itself.”<sup>130</sup> After all, if the world of things in themselves is out of human reach, or there is no such world at all, how can there be an objective truth? How could one achieve an agreement between one’s beliefs and facts which are supposedly not ‘out there’? Slowly but surely, truth vanishes out of the equation.

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<sup>117</sup> Marian, “The Correspondence Theory of Truth.”

<sup>118</sup> Glanzberg, “Truth.”

<sup>119</sup> Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 320.

<sup>120</sup> Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning and Truth* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993), 192.

<sup>121</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 97.

<sup>122</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 118.

<sup>123</sup> Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 320.

<sup>124</sup> Wright, *Realism, Meaning and Truth*, 177.

<sup>125</sup> Craig, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 952.

<sup>126</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 270.

<sup>127</sup> Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction*, 64.

<sup>128</sup> Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” 12818.

<sup>129</sup> Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction*, 64.

<sup>130</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 149.

This loss of truth is very often associated with postmodernism. The preponderance of postmodernists refuses the standard of the correspondence theory of truth.<sup>131</sup> They reject that theories and propositions can be measured against objective facts, or any other non-linguistic standard “independent of cultural and political presuppositions”<sup>132</sup> which could be utilised “to judge the validity of thought and knowledge.”<sup>133</sup> Facts are taken as products of discourse that cannot be true regardless of time and place. Hence, it is fruitless to check enunciations against them.<sup>134</sup> Accordingly, the very notion of the objective truth is dismissed,<sup>135</sup> and ‘truth’ becomes highly pluralistic and relative.<sup>136,137,138</sup> As Derrida writes, “there is no such thing as truth in itself. [...] Even if should be for me, about me, truth is plural.”<sup>139</sup> Thus, in the postmodern theory, “there is distrust in the concept of absolute and objective truth. ‘Truth’ is viewed as contextual, situational and conditional.”<sup>140</sup> The postmodern credo, Lyotard asserts, is not to ask “Is it true?” but “What use is it?”<sup>141</sup> Contrary to realists who believe in the correspondence theory of truth, many postmodernists advance an opposing theory which “equates truth with warranted assertability, practical utility or something else altogether.”<sup>142</sup> In this sense, claims for truth constitute nothing more than useful social fictions/constructs,<sup>143</sup> or micronarratives that compete with one another in a heterogeneous unity of cultures where there are no dominant meta-stories.<sup>144</sup>

This postmodern conception of truth may be designated as relativism – the theory of which holds that there are no universal objective truths, but only ‘truths’ that are “relative to some particular framework or standpoint (e.g. the individual subject, a culture, an era, a language, or a conceptual scheme).”<sup>145</sup> Consequently, the implication of this is that no claim

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<sup>131</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 41–42.

<sup>132</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 178.

<sup>133</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 43.

<sup>134</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Hoboken: Blackwell Pub, 1996), 37, 112.

<sup>135</sup> McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 126.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Helm, s.v. “Philosophy, religion, and religions,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>).

<sup>137</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 14–15.

<sup>138</sup> Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), “Heirs of Protagoras”.

<sup>139</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 103.

<sup>140</sup> Powell, “Understanding Habermas: Modern solutions,”

<sup>141</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 51.

<sup>142</sup> Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-realism*, 7.

<sup>143</sup> Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction*, 63.

<sup>144</sup> Powell, *Postmodernism For Beginners*, 33.

<sup>145</sup> Emrys Westacott, s.v. “Relativism,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (), accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/relativi/>.

for truth should be privileged over others.<sup>146</sup> Though some postmodernists dispute it, many of them are known for the celebration of this relativism.<sup>147,148,149,150,151</sup>

As expected, contemporary realists criticise this relativism by pointing out that there are standards that must be defended. They oppose that all truths are solely “representations that are somehow ‘good’ or ‘interesting’ or ‘useful’ for certain purposes.”<sup>152</sup> They stress that it is crucial to realise there are mind-independent facts and “that it is by comparison with these facts [...] that our claims have to be evaluated.”<sup>153</sup> The fact that theories are always limited and never quite indisputable should not lead to the relativistic conclusion that ‘anything goes’.<sup>154</sup> Admittedly, there is no guarantee that some unbiased, complete, final truth or theory can ever be established.<sup>155</sup> However, it is essential to note that some claims indeed conform to the reality and some do that better than others.<sup>156</sup>

It is thus accentuated that the relativistic implication that all interpretations and points of view are equally valid is absurd.<sup>157,158,159</sup> As Sokal argues, “some inductions are more reasonable and others are less so.”<sup>160</sup> For example, there are countless methods of how to run, but some of them are more efficient than others. Some interpretations may lead to harm while others may not.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, there are many maps of the city, but some can be said to mirror the layout more efficiently because they represent reality with greater precision.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Westacott, “Relativism.”

<sup>147</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 351.

<sup>148</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 183.

<sup>149</sup> Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 326.

<sup>150</sup> Luntley, *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned*, 71.

<sup>151</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 14.

<sup>152</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 270.

<sup>153</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 103.

<sup>154</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 80.

<sup>155</sup> Mäki, “Realisms and their opponents,” 12818.

<sup>156</sup> Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, 35–36.

<sup>157</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Guide*, 65.

<sup>158</sup> Richard Dawkins, “Postmodernism disobeyed,” *Nature* 394, no. 6689 (1998): 141–143, doi:10.1038/28089.

<sup>159</sup> Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (London: Penguin UK, 2018), 322.

<sup>160</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, 322.

<sup>162</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 158.

## 2. TRUTH IN THE WORKS OF GEORGE ORWELL

### 2.1. Orwell's/Winston's Epistemological and Metaphysical Commitments

In the first chapter, it has been illuminated how various philosophers approached the issue of epistemology; i.e. the precise way of acquiring knowledge. This problem is of great importance, for the epistemological stance that one adopts impacts on one's attitude towards metaphysics, which consequently affects how the notion of truth is perceived. The following subchapter thus first focuses on statements in Orwell's works which might be of epistemological nature. Afterwards, Orwell's metaphysical commitments are scrutinised. Because the presuppositions of this sort are seldom explicitly declared, the arguments are complemented by contemporary literary criticism of Orwell's work.

As argued in Chapter 1, philosophers can be segregated into two distinctive philosophical doctrines; epistemological realism and epistemological antirealism, the former of which expresses that the human mind is sufficiently equipped to provide access to reality, while the latter denies that. In the history of philosophy, Aristotle, and Locke – one of the founders of empiricism – can be classified as the most notable epistemological realists. In recent times, both doctrines partially survive in the form of scientific realism.

On the other hand, epistemological antirealists such as idealists and their postmodern successors seem to view perception as being separated from the world. Hence, knowledge of the things in themselves is impossible. All that people can take advantage of is the world of ideas, or appearances which may be ontologically arbitrary. In other words, the physical world is not the source of experience, for there is no ontological, demonstrable bond between the two. If the above division is possible among philosophers, can Orwell also be placed into one or the other group?

In literary criticism, Orwell is very often regarded as an empiricist. His inclination to empiricism, which originated during the Enlightenment with John Locke, is pointed out by several critics.<sup>163,164,165,166,167</sup> For example, Wenz documents Orwell's strong affiliation with

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<sup>163</sup> Alan Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984* (London: THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, 1986), 23, 45, 168.

<sup>164</sup> Stephen Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," *ECPR, April Nicosia 2006: Panel on Truth, Representation and Politics*, April 2006, 2, <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/18a37536-5c57-4983-8bfa-224a1a77399e.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> John M. Roberts, "Reading Orwell Through Deleuze," *Deleuze Studies* 4, no. 3 (November 2010): 360, doi:10.3366/dls.2010.0104.

<sup>166</sup> Peter S. Wenz, "The Critique of Berkeley's Empiricism In Orwell's 1984," *Idealistic Studies* 16, no. 2 (May 1986): 133–152, doi:10.5840/idstudies19861628.

<sup>167</sup> David Dwan, *Liberty, Equality, and Humbug: Orwell's Political Ideals* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2018), 163.



the leading empiricists of his time, namely A. J. Ayer and Bertrand Russell.<sup>168,169</sup> This characterization may not be off the mark, for Orwell confesses to having a “belly-to-earth attitude”,<sup>170</sup> meaning that he prefers being firmly anchored to objective reality with its earthly pleasures and fears the possibility of being extracted from the world “where grass is green, stones hard etc.”<sup>171</sup> Until he dies, he promises that he will adhere to this ‘earthbound’ philosophy and continue “to love the surface of the earth, and to take a pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information.”<sup>172</sup> As Roberts affirms, such claims are indications of Orwell’s empiricism.<sup>173</sup>

If, for the sake of argument, one accepts that Orwell is an advocate of empiricism, it is noteworthy to state that empiricists are widely known for emphasising the role of experience in the formation of knowledge.<sup>174</sup> For that knowledge to be possible, most empiricists need to assume that senses grant people at least moderate accessibility to the world around them.

And, indeed, Orwell regards senses as adequate and oftentimes unconditionally accepts the empirical evidence that they supply. In his words, “It is difficult to be certain about anything except what you have seen with your own eyes.”<sup>175</sup> Hence, as Ingle argues, Orwell gives the impression that the external world “could be discerned by the undeceived intelligence of the ordinary individual by means of sensory perception interpreted and codified by reason.”<sup>176</sup> This means “that man has within himself adequate ‘tools’ to understand the world around him. He has his five senses to interact with the world of senses, he has reason to make sense of what he perceives.”<sup>177</sup> As Sandison interprets, in Orwell’s philosophy, senses are to be trusted and there should be a free and “direct interplay between man’s senses and the world of appearances, facts, and laws.”<sup>178</sup> This link between the domain of facts and man’s senses must remain open and unimpeded.<sup>179</sup> The individual must not be dislocated or isolated from the macrocosm where the grass is green and stones hard. Nonetheless, some social systems endeavour to do just that. As

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<sup>168</sup> Wenz, “The Critique of Berkeley’s Empiricism In Orwell’s 1984,” 133.

<sup>169</sup> Both Ayer and Russell were also well-known promoters of philosophical realism, which may further strengthen the argument that Orwell may have been a realist as well.

<sup>170</sup> George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume I: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 228.

<sup>171</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 228.

<sup>172</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 6.

<sup>173</sup> Roberts, “Reading Orwell Through Deleuze,” 360.

<sup>174</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 32.

<sup>175</sup> George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (Penguin Books, 1977), Chapter 14.

<sup>176</sup> Ingle, “Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and ‘The Truth’,” 2.

<sup>177</sup> Mihai Marinescu, “Orwell’s 1984 Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man,” *Kali Tribune English*, last modified June 23, 2017, <https://en.kalitribune.com/1984-revisited-postmodern-and-the-demise-of-self-made-man/>.

<sup>178</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 11.

<sup>179</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 30.

Orwell claims, wicked dictators attempt to “keep their followers out of contact with reality.”<sup>180</sup> For Orwell, according to Sandison, the antidote to this is in the “observance of the natural laws and empirical contact with the material world.”<sup>181</sup>

Orwell is no philosopher and hence he scarcely deals with problems of this sort in his non-fictional works, although as some aforesaid literary critics have noticed, they are incorporated in the very fabric of his literary compositions. This is particularly the case of his most famous book *1984* in which Orwell’s positions are personified by the main character Winston who might be considered Orwell’s alter ego.<sup>182,183</sup>

Winston’s attitude towards epistemology is explained to the reader during the interrogation scene through the principal antagonist O’Brien. In this part, O’Brien elucidates to Winston: “You also believe that the nature of reality is selfevident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you.”<sup>184</sup> Here, Winston’s (and most likely Orwell’s own) epistemological commitments are clearly voiced. Winston, O’Brien describes, believes that the mind provides access to reality. Nature of matter is self-evident; obvious and axiomatic without any need for proof or explanation. Senses constitute reasonably effective tools for mediating the external reality which is somehow reflected in perception. Moreover, it follows that senses gather approximately the same data for all people – thereby serving as a universal bond to the non-linguistic reality. Since humans are equipped with comparable cognitive faculties, it is sensible for Winston to assume that when an object is being witnessed by numerous observers, the individual representation of the object will be more or less the same among each one of them. The fact that those spectators would verbally agree on some qualities of the phenomenon in question can demonstrate this.

Thus, from the foregoing account, it can be stated, almost undoubtedly, that Orwell and his alter ego Winston are epistemological realists of some sort. They both seem to trust their senses in their ability to accurately mediate what is out there in the world and share with both direct and representative realists the fundamental axiom that there is some association between perception and reality – and hence knowledge is possible. Furthermore, they believe in the

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<sup>180</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 376.

<sup>181</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 48.

<sup>182</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 169.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Inwagen, “Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?,” *Philosophia Scientiae*, 2008, 163, doi:10.4000/philosophiascientiae.218.

<sup>184</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (Planet eBook, 1949), 314, <https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/1984.pdf>.

relative uniformity of experience among multiple observers, which as shown in Chapter 1, is one of the arguments deployed in favour of epistemological realism.

However, epistemological realism can be further subdivided into another dichotomy; the direct ('naïve') realism which originated in Aristotelian tradition, and Locke's representative realism which became the basis of the modern scientific realism. Though these theories differ in detail, both have one aspect in common; they hold that people have access to the world but diverge in the degree of correspondence and nature of the link between sense-data and the external world. While direct realists argue that this connection is absolute and direct, representative realists view this relationship as causal, indirect and limited. For representative realists, it is particularly the primary qualities that to some extent correspond to the external, physical objects. Thus, unlike with secondary qualities, it is possible to obtain objective, universal knowledge of primary qualities. This is also what modern realists appear to believe; the image provided by senses *at least approximately* matches the actual world. Could it be determined what epistemological subcategory Orwell and his alter ego Winston might fall into?

Though Orwell can be placed within the umbrella term of epistemological realism, there is not enough evidence to unequivocally conclude that he is a naïve realist, representative realist, or some other subtype of an epistemological realist. Some literary critics view Orwell as a naïve, direct realist<sup>185</sup> while others deny it.<sup>186</sup> Admittedly, some statements such as that nature of reality is self-evident, universally perceived among everyone, and that senses can be relied on with certainty might suggest naïve realism or possibly common-sense realism which was popular among British individuals during Orwell's lifetime.<sup>187</sup>

On the other hand, his well-documented propensity for the traditional, British empiricism which, as already mentioned, has been noted by a myriad of scholars points to the direction of Locke's indirect, representative realism which explains the content of perception in terms of causality and thus allows for at least rudimentary knowledge of the external reality. This, as already said, is the doctrine of many contemporary realists who continue to follow in Locke's footsteps.

Be that as it may, it should be registered that Orwell does not come across as a confirmed naïve realist. This may be supported by pointing out that he appears to be cognizant of the deceitfulness of sensory experience and the impossibility to substantiate its validity. These two

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<sup>185</sup> Craig L. Carr, *Orwell, Politics, and Power* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010), 92.

<sup>186</sup> Roberts, "Reading Orwell Through Deleuze," 358.

<sup>187</sup> Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, 264.

aspects are what Berkeley, as well as other philosophers, stressed in reaction to the inadequacies of Aristoteles' naïve realism.

As those philosophers, Orwell encounters similar issues in his own way. In *1984*, through Winston, Orwell identifies the problem of what is now called the egocentric predicament; i.e. hopelessness of proving anything outside of one's mind. As Winston asks himself rhetorically in his diary: "For, after all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable what then?"<sup>188</sup> Winston realises that since the whole reality is mediated by the mind, and the mind embodies an inescapable prison, it is troublesome to prove that something happens outside of it; everything might as well be a figment of one's imagination. In addition to that, one cannot even testify that there are other human minds beyond one's own that share roughly the same reality. As Winston notes, "The only evidence is inside my own mind, and I don't know with any certainty that any other human being shares my memories."<sup>189</sup> In philosophy, this is often described as 'the problem of other minds'<sup>190</sup> and it directly relates to the subject of egocentric predicament; if one cannot escape one's own mind in order to experience someone else's mind, why assume that there are any other minds besides one's own?

Here again, Winston seems to voice the author's reasoning which can be found in Orwell's non-fictional works. In one of his essays, Orwell admits that he is aware of the argument of modern physics which states that "what seems to us the real world is an illusion."<sup>191</sup> However, this should not lead to the conclusion "that to believe in the evidence of one's senses is simply vulgar philistinism."<sup>192</sup> In other words, the human perception of the extraneous world may be an illusion – there is no way for Orwell to refute that. Due to the egocentric predicament, he cannot extricate himself from his body and appraise whether his perception is factually correct and whether there is some reality at all. Nonetheless, the incapacity to disprove the possibility that the mental idea of the world may be illusionary should not bring about the conclusion that it is, in fact, an arbitrary illusion concocted by the mind. Thus, it appears that Orwell and Winston are not naïve enough to be naïve realists. Both have their doubts and seem to be conscious of possible deceitfulness of perception and the futility to ascertain its validity

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<sup>188</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 102.

<sup>189</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 195.

<sup>190</sup> Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 19–20.

<sup>191</sup> George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950*, ed. Sonia B. and Ian Angus (New York: London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 64.

<sup>192</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 64.

beyond the boundaries of subjective prison that the mind represents. How can one react to this realisation?

As argued in Chapter 1, there are, broadly speaking, two responses; epistemological and metaphysical. Both can be illustrated via philosophies of idealists, postmodernists and modern-day realists. Epistemologically, in spite of the discrepancies between idealists and postmodernists, both groups share the axiom that since people are cursed with the egocentric predicament, and senses cannot be relied on, it must be the case that human perception is ontologically arbitrary. Hence, they often adopt epistemological antirealism; there is no connection, causal or direct, between the mind and the world to speak of. The noumenal realm is forever closed off and thus plays no role in the construction of one's reality. Experience is shaped subjectively, socially or instilled into people by God.

Certainly, this is not Orwell's reaction. Orwell's realism is in direct opposition to epistemological antirealism as held by idealists and postmodernists alike. As demonstrated above, both in *1984*, his essays, and according to many literary critics, Orwell seems to express that senses and the world are not disconnected, but somehow interconnected. Thus, it follows that experience is not a matrix-like illusion<sup>193</sup> generated by God as Berkeley and Descartes suggested. Nor is it a social construct as proposed by the postmodern theory. For Orwell, the world of things in themselves is not out of human reach as Kant and postmodernists offered. On the contrary, it is accessible and discoverable to humans via their cognitive faculties.<sup>194</sup> In the same way, contrary to postmodernists, Orwell does not regard reality as a superfluous, irrelevant concept which does not engage in knowledge construction. Quite the reverse, being a potential empiricist, it is of great significance to him that the external world is acknowledged as the primary motivator of experience.

Upon closer inspection, Orwell's reaction thus bears much more resemblance to the response of contemporary realists. As described in Chapter 1, those philosophers, who have their roots in Locke's empiricism/representative realism, are not altogether naïve realists; they apprehend the limits of human perception and admit that it is unfeasible to evade the egocentric predicament. For these reasons, they do not accept Aristoteles' naïve realism.

However, at the same time, they refuse to accept the opposite extreme of epistemological antirealism of postmodernists and idealists. Despite the undeniable philosophical problems of any form of epistemological realism and in the face of the impossibility to demonstrably prove it, they still remain convinced that there is a link between

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<sup>193</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 23.

<sup>194</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 23.

the mind and the world and maintain that it is the external, physical environment – not some other omnipotent entity, individual's or collective's mind – that primarily causes and influences one's perception. They believe that some objective knowledge is possible.

This seems to be Orwell's response as well. He appears to recognise the inadequacies of epistemological realism that he presumably holds; he knows that experience may in principle be an illusion, but he finds no reason to believe, argue, let alone act as if it is in fact an illusion. Thus, he decides to continue to trust his senses to reflect what is out there *in spite of* there being no irrefutable, factual evidence that it is correct. It may solely be an instinctive belief prone to being infected with some degree of doubt, but that does not mean one should abandon it; it is instinctive for a reason. After all, human senses are probably the only means of being connected to the world that nature endowed people with through millions of years of evolution, and if it relatively successfully guides people in their everyday life, why distrust it? Like other realists, Orwell cannot see any justification for this. Senses help him form and defend his individual integrity and anchor him to the objective world.<sup>195</sup>

However, what is this external world that is constantly being brought to the fore? And does it even exist? Considering that people have no way of ensuring that their sense-data accord with anything outside of their mind, is it fair to assume that there is some external world? And if there is, what is its nature? Thus, apart from the epistemological responses, the problems surrounding the perception also generated various metaphysical reactions.

As elaborated in Chapter 1, philosophers' metaphysical responses to the limitations of senses and egocentric predicament have been diverse over the years. Broadly speaking, the positions can be divided into two groups; metaphysical realism which holds that the material world exists mind-independently, and metaphysical antirealism which asserts that there is no mind-independent, physical world of facts and laws; all these aspects depend on mind(s). Subsequently, metaphysical antirealism can be partitioned into subgroups according to the mind(s) that the world is supposed to be dependent on. Idealists, such as Berkeley, asserted that it is pointless to put faith in anything that is not perceivable. By disposing of the concept of the external, physical reality and replacing it with an idea contingent on the mind, namely the mind of God, Berkeley accepts metaphysical antirealism and narrowly avoids solipsism, which may be rated as the most radical response to the problem. According to this doctrine, there is only one's own mind on which everything else depends.

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<sup>195</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 13, 23.

Having been inspired by Kant, postmodernists seem to tackle the problem by regarding external reality as an unreachable, irrelevant concept and, instead of God, they relocate reality into the minds of groups of people. Reality is thus dependent on many minds; it is socially constructed. This way, they attempt to avoid solipsism but, like Berkeley, on account of their denial of mind-independent, physical reality, they have their legs partly submerged in it.

On the other side of the spectrum, the last group of contemporary metaphysical realists believes that despite the futility to confirm it, it should be embraced that there is a mind-independent world to which sense-data at least approximately correspond. This way, they follow the path paved by Aristotle and Locke who also acknowledged the external, physical reality.

At this point, it should come as no surprise that it is precisely the latter metaphysical response that Orwell is in all likelihood closest to. This ensues directly from his epistemological realism. As several critics indicate, though he cannot prove it beyond a shred of a doubt, it is more natural for Orwell to assume that the external world and objects in it physically exist<sup>196,197,198</sup> and can be verified by senses.<sup>199</sup> The acknowledgement of the existence of this world is a moral necessity.<sup>200</sup> This metaphysical position is again unspoken in Orwell's non-fictional work (although it is alluded to), but it is explicitly stated by Winston who notes down into his diary that: "The obvious, the silly, and the true had got to be defended. Truisms are true, hold on to that! The solid world exists, its laws do not change. Stones are hard, water is wet, objects unsupported fall towards the earth's centre."<sup>201</sup> Thus, for Winston, the physical, external world and its laws exist. Such laws are proof for him that not everything happens in the mind.<sup>202</sup> If one accepts the premise that Winston embodies an alter ego of Orwell, it should be enough to infer that Orwell rejects solipsism. However, it is insufficient to argue that he rejects metaphysical antirealism of idealism and postmodernism. At the end of the day, the world that Orwell presupposes in his works might as well be an idea, or a construct created and held by the society or some other entity.

Thus, it is salient to state that not only the world and its aspects abide, but they do so independently of human minds and matters. As Orwell proclaims:

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<sup>196</sup> Roger Fowler, *The Language of George Orwell* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 1995), 31.

<sup>197</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 23.

<sup>198</sup> A. M. Tibbetts, "What Did Orwell Think about the English Language?," *College Composition and Communication* 29, no. 2 (1978): 162, doi:10.2307/357304.

<sup>199</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 23.

<sup>200</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 30.

<sup>201</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 103.

<sup>202</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 12.

The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but the earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it.<sup>203</sup>

This is the point where the real metaphysics comes into play. For Orwell, the physical world and its laws survive out there, separately from the human mind and matters.<sup>204</sup> There are natural laws, such as the Earth orbiting around the Sun, that remain constant regardless of whether one denies it. The dictators cannot change the movement of those celestial bodies precisely because they are not in their minds. The world and its natural laws are not hypothetical but very real, and they would not magically vanish if they were not observed; the laws of gravity would still be correct, the Earth would still rotate around the Sun, the blood would still flow through the veins, etc. This mind-independent reality of facts, Orwell contends, simply “goes on existing, as it were, behind your back, and you consequently can’t violate it.”<sup>205</sup> It functions as one of the safeguards in the world “in which black may be white tomorrow and yesterday’s weather can be changed by decree.”<sup>206</sup> Thus, there are some aspects of reality that cannot be reshaped even if people intended on it. That is because they are liberated from their consciousness.

Judging from this, it can be affirmed that unlike idealists and postmodernists, Orwell reacts differently to the problems of epistemology. Faced with the egocentric predicament, Orwell refuses to challenge the notion of the mind-independent world. He declines to become a metaphysical antirealist of *any* sort. Though he has no proof, he still clings to the idea that there is a world to which human senses are in some way connected and motivated by. That world exists independently of the human mind. Thus, it can be hypothesised that Orwell would probably disagree that reality solely depends on God as idealists proposed.<sup>207</sup> In the same vein, it is unlikely he would consider it to be wholly dependent upon the collective body of minds as the postmodern theory implies. Lastly, by no means would Orwell accept that the whole reality is a phantasm of his own mind and nothing outside of it – not even other minds – exists. On the contrary, for Orwell, there is a mind-independent world whose physical, lawful properties apply to everyone irrespective of whether one believes in them or not. Such components are

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<sup>203</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 144.

<sup>204</sup> James Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” in *Rorty and His Critics*, ed. Robert Brandom (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 279.

<sup>205</sup> George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell Volume II: My Country Right or Left, 1940-1943*, ed. Sonia B. and Ian Angus (Seeker & Warburg, 1970), 168, <https://archive.org/details/2-george-collected-essays-volume-ii-1940-1943>.

<sup>206</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>207</sup> One might gloss that if Orwell were confronted by immaterialist philosophy, he would kick a large stone, announcing, ‘I refute thus’ – just like Samuel Johnson is claimed to have done in reaction to Berkeley.



autonomous, self-sufficient and do not demand human minds for their continuance. They are not considered to be socially constructed but discoverable and unalterable.<sup>208</sup>

Thus, as far as metaphysics is concerned, it is safe to state that Orwell and his alter ego Winston can be seen as metaphysical realists.<sup>209</sup> This stance seems to be an expected by-product of Orwell's likely devotion to some form of epistemological realism. In other words, his epistemological commitments presuppose the existence of the noumenal world just like Aristotle's and Locke's ones do. Orwell's response is thus comparable to the contemporary realists who also resolutely refuse to dispose of mind-independent entities and instead opt for the continuance of metaphysical realism *despite* the impossibility to resolutely prove that such entities are really out there. Like them, Orwell is aware that this postulate may be empirically unfounded and purely instinctive; however, that does mean it is incorrect and should be abandoned in favour of some other alternative.

## **2.2. The Party's Epistemological and Metaphysical Commitments**

Having examined Orwell's/Winston's attitudes towards epistemology and metaphysics, this subchapter attempts to do the same regarding the philosophy of the Party. In the previous section, it has been discussed that both Orwell and Winston appear to be epistemological realists of some sort. They presume that there is a union between the world and senses, and for this reason, trust the empirical evidence deeply enough to hold that knowledge of mind-independent reality is obtainable. Moreover, since people spatially share this reality and perceive it through approximately the same cognitive faculties, it is plausible that there will be similarities in their mental representations that they can agree on. Hence, notwithstanding the philosophical limitations, at least some objective knowledge is considered possible. Orwell/Winston arguably shares these standpoints with those contemporary philosophers continuing Locke's tradition.

For the Party, conversely, the nature of sense experience is quite the opposite of what Orwell/Winston, the epistemological realist, holds. When O'Brien describes Winston's position in the following excerpt, he also passes judgement on him:

You preferred to be a lunatic, a minority of one. Only the disciplined mind can see reality, Winston. You also believe that the nature of reality is selfevident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 279.

<sup>209</sup> Inwagen, "Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?," 163, 165.

<sup>210</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 314.

In this quote, by regarding Winston as ‘a lunatic’ for holding that the nature of reality is self-evident, O’Brien implicitly characterises his and the Party’s epistemological commitments as well. Winston’s conviction that nature is self-evident, i.e. obviously known by human reason without any need of proof, is deemed to be insane and perpetuated only by an infinitesimal minority. In fact, it is only Winston’s mistaken belief, not anyone else’s, for in the Party’s epistemological theory, the empirical evidence accumulated by senses and its alleged correspondence to the external world is denied. As Winston explains, “the validity of experience [...] was tacitly denied by their philosophy.”<sup>211</sup> Sense experience is thus considered invalid; meaning not based on facts or evidence.<sup>212</sup> This might explicate why O’Brien uses the word ‘delude’ (with the common denotation to mislead the mind or judgement).<sup>213</sup> It presupposes that Winston misleads his mind when he sees something with his own eyes and mistakenly concludes that other people would perceive more or less the same thing. This Winston’s position, as argued in the previous subchapter, is typical of realist epistemology; though there may be some individual variations in perception, beholders would still agree on some qualities of the observed object. This is because there is some commonly shared objective reality that their senses at least partially mediate.

Obviously, the Party’s epistemology cannot be likened to that realism by any stretch of the imagination. The philosophy of the Party displays no such conviction. Rather, the Party may be viewed as proponents of epistemological antirealism with which they share the fundamental axiom that there is no connection between the mind and the world; experience might as well be an ontologically arbitrary product/construct, or an illusion which has *nothing* to do with what realists call the ‘real world.’ For this reason, it is illogical to assume that other people could have similar representations of reality. As described previously, in philosophy, this epistemological stance also seems to have been maintained by many idealists and postmodernists. However, for what rationale is this position adopted? Why hold that the so-called external reality is irrelevant or non-existent in the knowledge/experience construction? Are the motives purely philosophical or not? The questions of this sort will be addressed in subchapter 2.6.

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<sup>211</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 102.

<sup>212</sup> *Macmillan Dictionary | Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus* “INVALID (adjective) Definition and Synonyms,” (Macmillan Education Limited, n.d), accessed February 22, 2020, [https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/invalid\\_1](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/invalid_1).

<sup>213</sup> *Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America’s Most-trusted Online Dictionary* “Definition of DELUDE,” (Merriam-Webster, n.d), accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/delude>.

Nonetheless, given the above, if experience is purely subjective and unmotivated by the outer world, what is it motivated by? To put it another way, what is the source of the content of the mind for the Party? What are their metaphysical assumptions? Do they reckon that the external world exists? And if so, what is its nature?

As regards metaphysics, until the very last moment, the commitments of the Party are quite the opposite of Winston's/Orwell's. The dispute over the (non-)existence of the external, objective reality is probably best depicted in the final passage of the book where Winston is subjected to the interrogation and torture by O'Brien who states the following: "You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. [...] But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else."<sup>214</sup> Thus, in O'Brien's/the Party's philosophy, the only reality claimed to endure is the one in the human mind. There is nothing outside of it; reality is fundamentally mind-dependent. Presently, in light of this, it may be argued that O'Brien/the Party seem to be metaphysical antirealists<sup>215</sup> of some sort, for whom the nature of reality is not physical, but mental. Already, it can be declared that they share this elementary metaphysical axiom with idealists, postmodernists, as well as solipsists.

However, what sort of metaphysical antirealists could they be? As put forward in Chapter 1, there are multiple forms of mind-dependency. For Berkeley's idealism, the reality is dependent on the mind of God while for postmodernists, it relies on the numerous minds of people within the society. Finally, for solipsists, it is only *my* mind that constitutes the whole reality. To answer the question, first, it would be convenient to concentrate on the ontological status of mind-independent, physical world. Is the presence of it acknowledged in the Party's philosophy?

For the Party, the notion of external, objective reality is not recognised. Conversely, as it is explained, "the very existence of external reality, was tacitly denied by their philosophy."<sup>216</sup> Taking this into account, it may seem that the Party's metaphysical antirealism is that of solipsism, and this is also what Winston alludes to despite his incompetence to recall the precise word for it:

The belief that nothing exists outside your own mind—surely there must be some way of demonstrating that it was false? Had it not been exposed long ago as a fallacy? There was even a name for it, which he had forgotten.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 314.

<sup>215</sup> Inwagen, "Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?," 162.

<sup>216</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 102.

<sup>217</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 335.

However, this would be an inaccurate characterization. As O'Brien points out:

'I told you, Winston,' he said, 'that metaphysics is not your strong point. The word you are trying to think of is solipsism. But you are mistaken. This is not solipsism. Collective solipsism, if you like. But that is a different thing: in fact, the opposite thing.'<sup>218</sup>

The term 'collective solipsism' is an oxymoron; it is mutually exclusive. Solipsism cannot be collective because it generally dismisses the existence of anything apart from one's own mind, which also encompasses other people's minds. Then, why does O'Brien use it? In fact, it may be argued that it perfectly portrays the Party's metaphysical commitments. This unusual collocation may indicate the following.

The Party's philosophy is solipsistic in the sense that it denies the actuality of anything beyond the mind. The substance of perception is not a sign of anything transcendental; there is no physical, objective world. The Party is thus solipsistic in the same sense as idealists and postmodernists in Chapter 1. As the Party, both idealists and postmodernists question the existence of anything non-mental. They never articulate it the way O'Brien does, but it is what their philosophy implies. Hence, the two doctrines can be regarded as solipsistic in this respect. Yet, neither idealists nor postmodernists are full-blown solipsists per se, for they do not claim that it is only *my* mind – the mind of the individual – that exists. On the contrary, they do acknowledge that there are some other minds in addition to one's own.

In this same sense, the Party is not solipsistic either. This is where the word 'collective' comes in. The adjective indicates that they in fact do not decline that other minds apart from the lone self exist. Accordingly, as O'Brien chastises Winston, the Party cannot really be viewed as solipsists, for they do not refuse the presence of some other mind-dependent realities. From this perspective, the Party's metaphysics is collective; they presume that there is more than one mind upon which reality is dependent on. And since there is deemed to be no objective, physical reality outside of these collective minds, the Party's philosophy is solipsistic in the narrowed sense of meaning. Hence the collocation 'collective solipsism.'

However, who is this collective for the Party? To put it differently, whose mind or minds is reality supposed to depend on if it is not just *my* mind? Faced with this question, Big Brother immediately presents itself as an option. After all, it is explained that:

Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration.<sup>219</sup>

At first glance, it may seem as if the Party only replaced Berkeley's God as the reservoir of experience/knowledge with Big Brother. Just like in idealism, for the Party, it is not the external,

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<sup>218</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 335–336.

<sup>219</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 262.

physical world which determines human experience as some realists maintain. Rather, it is a mind of an omnipotent being; human minds are reliant on *Him*. However, their theories differ in their conceptions of who the almighty entity is. While Berkeley's God consists of one mind only and that being the mind of Christian God, Orwell's Big Brother amounts to more than one mind. In fact, Big Brother personifies the numerous minds of the Party members. As it is specified in the novel: "Big Brother is the embodiment of the Party."<sup>220</sup> Thus, Big Brother is synonymous with the Party. By means of the imaginary medium of Big Brother, the Party dictates all the knowledge. Hence, as O'Brien claims, reality is "not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal."<sup>221</sup> It is only through the Party's minds – not the mind of the individual – that one can gain knowledge, for otherwise "it is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party."<sup>222</sup> Therefore, as Winston adds, it is solely "a question of learning to think as they thought."<sup>223</sup>

He naturally struggles with that since he cannot know what the members of the Party think. For instance, he has considerable problems determining 'the correct' number of fingers during the final torture scene: "O'Brien held up his left hand, its back towards Winston, with the thumb hidden and the four fingers extended. 'How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?' 'Four.' 'And if the party says that it is not four but five—then how many?' 'Four.' [...] The needle went up to sixty. 'How many fingers, Winston?' 'Four! Four! What else can I say? Four!'"<sup>224</sup> Winston is not allowed to define reality based on his individual consciousness. In order to be valid, his experience must be first socially authenticated. It is only this 'social authentication' that makes belief possible.<sup>225</sup>

The same principle applies to O'Brien. As Winston, O'Brien cannot construct his own individual reality. He too must first 'think collectively' and somehow be in the alignment with the mindset of the rest of the Party. As O'Brien advises Winston: "We control matter because we control the mind. [...] There is nothing that we could not do. Invisibility, levitation—anything. I could float off this floor like a soap bubble if I wish to. I do not wish to, because the Party does not wish it."<sup>226</sup> O'Brien is not the one upon whom the reality hinges on – only the

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<sup>220</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 327.

<sup>221</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 314.

<sup>222</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 314.

<sup>223</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 349.

<sup>224</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 315.

<sup>225</sup> Michael P. Zuckert, "Michael P. Zuckert on Winston's Defeat," in *Bloom's Guides: 1984*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), 93.

<sup>226</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 334.

entire Party is – they are in charge of reality. Anything is possible provided that the collective minds of the Party make it feasible. What this presupposes is that if the Party thought and wished that O’Brien was levitating, and he believed it as well, he would start levitating. Since the whole reality is classed as a product of their collective consciousness, it could be modified solely by changing their psyches. Otherwise stated, Oceania is “an extreme example of a constructed world” in which “reality exists only in the mind and can be changed simply by encouraging people to think different thoughts.”<sup>227</sup> Thanks to this metaphysical position that might be described as collective solipsism, anything is possible, for the very reality is viewed as mutable; it should transform whenever the Party – the collective – fancies to change their minds. It is on this assumption that O’Brien instructs Winston about the number of fingers observed: “Sometimes, Winston. Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once. You must try harder. It is not easy to become sane.”<sup>228</sup>

Presently, drawing on the theoretical framework in Chapter 1, would it be realisable to answer the question of which subcategory of metaphysical antirealism the Party might belong to? Certainly, it is not altogether solipsistic; the individual mind is not regarded as the only one that creates the reality for itself.<sup>229</sup> The Party acknowledges the existence of other minds. Instead, idealism could be proposed as an option. But idealists – at least the traditional ones – usually stress that reality primarily depends upon one mind beyond one’s own and that being the God’s one. Though Big Brother could be seen as an archetype of that mind, he is not comprised of one mind only. The Party’s metaphysical antirealism is much more collectivistic and human-centred rather than divine centred. Reality is social; it depends on many minds – namely those of the Party members. As Kingsley alleges, the whole “reality is something that is defined by the Party rather than something that is discovered.”<sup>230</sup>

Thus, as far as metaphysics is concerned, out of the options listed in Chapter 1, the most suitable parallel can be drawn between the Party and postmodernism. Both share comparable metaphysical assumptions.<sup>231</sup> As for the Party, in the postmodern theory, there is no mind-independent reality to speak of. In this sense, postmodernists might be classified as solipsistic. However, having denied the external, physical world as the source of knowledge, they tend to promote that reality is constructed socially. Reality is dependent on minds and minds only. It relies on the social collective; it is collective solipsism which, as Zuckert puts forward, only

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<sup>227</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell’s Question,” 36.

<sup>228</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 316.

<sup>229</sup> Zuckert, “Michael P. Zuckert on Winston’s Defeat,” 94.

<sup>230</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell’s Question,” 36.

<sup>231</sup> Marinescu, “Orwell’s 1984 Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man.”

“plays out the modern scepticism regarding the human mind’s directness of access to the phenomena of the world: the mind knows idea, or constructs; it does not know ‘the things themselves.’”<sup>232</sup> In fact, Kołakowski applies the same term ‘collective solipsism’ as Orwell to characterise the twentieth-century movements that are based on Kant’s epistemology.<sup>233</sup> As Chapter 1 illustrates, postmodernism stems from Kant’s epistemology.

Admittedly, at the same time, there are differences between the two. Postmodernists have never verbalised that reality depends solely on their own collective of minds. In other words, their definition of the collective appears to be broader than that of the Party.<sup>234</sup> However, that their metaphysical position seems to be analogous can be illustrated by the fact that it logically presupposes the same consequences. As shown in Chapter 1, what realists point out in response to metaphysical antirealism of postmodernism is that supposing there was no connection between the mind and the world and reality solely depended on minds – the minds of the society or some other narrower group of people – then it should follow that as soon as the minds change, the very reality should be altered as well. On this hypothesis, the reality could be ignored, denied or reconstructed once it is socially conceived and authenticated. This is exactly what O’Brien (and the Party) assumes when he claims that he can levitate on condition that all those who observe him change their minds to make him levitate.

### **2.3. Orwell/Winston on Truth**

As discussed in Chapter 1, one’s epistemological and metaphysical commitments affect one’s conception of truth. If one conjectures that there is a mind-independent world with its attributes that humans can tap into, one can retain the concept of objective truth – i.e. the correspondence between one’s beliefs and the facts. As argued in the preceding sections, Orwell is suggestive of metaphysical realism. Moreover, he conveys the impression of an epistemological realist; he holds that people are connected to the world via their minds, and thus it is possible to obtain (at least some) knowledge about it.

What these presuppositions amount to is that since the mind-independent domain of facts and laws exists and can be discovered; it is conceivable to simply face them and achieve harmony with them. For Orwell, Conant postulates, it is by facing (or discovering) those facts – not constructing them – that the objective truth is attained.<sup>235</sup> As Orwell professes in his essay

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<sup>232</sup> Zuckert, “Michael P. Zuckert on Winston’s Defeat,” 94.

<sup>233</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, *Metaphysical Horror* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1988), 25.

<sup>234</sup> Yet, according to some critics, some postmodernists’ affiliation with very strict, group identity politics may suggest otherwise.

<sup>235</sup> Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” 310.

*Why I Write*, he was gifted with this ability from the very childhood: “I knew that I had a facility with words and a power of facing unpleasant facts.”<sup>236</sup> In the same essay, Orwell describes this “desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity”<sup>237</sup> as one of the primary impulses of a writer. Orwell himself quite frequently gives an appearance of a collector or a discoverer of facts.<sup>238</sup> This may also account for the reason why “most of his most successful work, fiction and nonfiction, had some quality of the documentary, of an ordinary observer looking for those facts and finding them.”<sup>239</sup> Orwell repeatedly urges people “to see what is in front of one’s nose”<sup>240</sup> and recommends keeping a diary to note down the events around them.<sup>241</sup> This is precisely what Orwell does; he oftentimes provides comprehensive lists of various facts<sup>242,243,244,245</sup> and criticises people and institutions for ignoring/not facing them<sup>246,247,248</sup> or presenting them inaccurately.<sup>249,250</sup> For example, according to Orwell, Germany and Japan “lost the war quite largely because their rulers were unable to see facts which were plain to any dispassionate eye.”<sup>251</sup> In the same vein, he denounces one of the official pamphlets about the Battle of Britain, asking: “Why couldn’t they simply give a cold, accurate account of the facts, which, after all, are favourable enough?”<sup>252</sup> Stated briefly, in Orwell’s view, the facts are out there and, as Gleason argues, one can “discover quite a lot of them and make some sense out of them.”<sup>253</sup> This process of searching for facts is paramount – it is a moral obligation for Orwell.<sup>254</sup> For this reason, Orwell applauds authors who “make a definitive attempt to get at real facts.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 1.

<sup>237</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 4.

<sup>238</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 177.

<sup>239</sup> Abbott Gleason, “Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War: George Orwell and Historical Objectivity,” in *“On Nineteen Eighty-Four”: Orwell and Our Future*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha C. Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 78.

<sup>240</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 125.

<sup>241</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 125.

<sup>242</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 62, 83, 90, 238, 255, 327.

<sup>243</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 299, 22.

<sup>244</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 282–283.

<sup>245</sup> George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume III: As I Please 1943-1945*, ed. Sonia B. and Ian Angus (New York: New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 266, 301, 379.

<sup>246</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 20, 37, 288, 49.

<sup>247</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 161, 236, 396, 123.

<sup>248</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 339, 340, 288, 330, 420–421.

<sup>249</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>250</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 197.

<sup>251</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 125.

<sup>252</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 260.

<sup>253</sup> Gleason, “Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War,” 78.

<sup>254</sup> Gleason, “Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War,” 78.

<sup>255</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 155.



Therefore, grounded on these assumptions, the notion of objective truth, which is one of Orwell's distinguishing themes in his work,<sup>256</sup> is preserved. As he affirms, "however much you deny the truth, the truth goes on existing, as it were, behind your back, and you consequently can't violate it."<sup>257</sup> He hopes that this "truth as something outside yourself, something to be discovered, and not as something you can make up as you go along, will survive."<sup>258</sup> Truth thus lasts for Orwell, and it does so independently of human minds.<sup>259</sup> There are truths that are not socially constructed and invariably ring true irrespective of people; they are simply universal and timeless and cannot be consciously altered. Such truths can in principle be uncovered.

However, according to Orwell, the principles of truth outlined above seem to be constantly violated. Various political systems deny that facts exist and can be discovered to reveal the truth. For Orwell, Conant alleges, this intentional onslaught on the human ability to establish facts is one the worst of cruelties.<sup>260</sup> With nostalgia, Orwell reminisces about the long-lost world when it was believed that "the facts' existed and were more or less discoverable. And in practice there was always a considerable body of fact which would have been agreed to by almost everyone."<sup>261</sup> Presently, this "common basis of agreement"<sup>262</sup>— the possibility to achieve correspondence between beliefs and facts — is being threatened, and as a result, Orwell has a feeling that "the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world."<sup>263</sup> This, he notices, is particularly common practice in totalitarian systems which necessitate "a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth."<sup>264</sup> To be more specific, Orwell observes that: "Nazi theory indeed specifically denies that such a thing as 'the truth' exists."<sup>265</sup> The prospect of the world devoid of truth terrifies Orwell "much more than bombs."<sup>266</sup>

Furthermore, Orwell appears to be anxious that truth is increasingly being viewed as something relative, alterable — not universal or timeless. For instance, he complains that people of various countries are progressively willing "to alter one's beliefs as soon as the political

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<sup>256</sup> George Orwell, *Orwell on Truth*, ed. Peter Davison and Alan Johnson (London: Penguin Random House, 2017), xvii.

<sup>257</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>258</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 111.

<sup>259</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 310.

<sup>260</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 279.

<sup>261</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>262</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>263</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>264</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 64.

<sup>265</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>266</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

scene alters.”<sup>267</sup> As previously, Orwell compares the present status of matters with history. As he asserts, “In medieval Europe the Church dictated what you should believe, but at least it allowed you to retain the same beliefs from birth to death. It did not tell you to believe one thing on Monday and another on Tuesday.”<sup>268</sup> It is again primarily the totalitarian state that “sets up unquestionable dogmas, and it alters them from day to day.”<sup>269</sup> Orwell illustrates this practice on the example of Nazism in which “if the Leader says of such and such an event, ‘It never happened’ -- well, it never happened. If he says that two and two are five -- well, two and two are five.”<sup>270</sup> Thus, in the Nazi Germany, truth is unstable; it is constantly being modified relative to the context. These extreme, unrestrained paradigm shifts are unacceptable for Orwell; two plus two equals four and it should remain this way forever.

Nevertheless, though the ideal of the timelessness of truth is being endangered, no matter how hard some people attempt to twist it, the objective truth still lives on sovereignly and transcendently – immune to these perversions. The truth deniers are conscious of the truth, for it must often be utilised in specific situations: “Hitler can say that the Jews started the war, and if he survives that will become official history. He can’t say that two and two are five, because for the purposes of, say, ballistics they have to make four.”<sup>271</sup> Thus, Orwell observes that “obvious and unalterable facts” are usually intentionally “being shirked by people who in another part of their mind are aware of those facts.”<sup>272</sup> In such case, those facts “exist somewhere or other in their consciousness, simultaneously known and not known.”<sup>273</sup> Consequently, this “power of holding simultaneously two beliefs which cancel out”<sup>274</sup> induce what Orwell disdainfully calls “schizophrenia”<sup>275</sup> or “the schizophrenic system of thought.”<sup>276</sup>

Based on this, it can be derived that Orwell presumably holds a realist conception of truth. As expected, he follows the simple standard of the correspondence theory; he does hold that the facts exist and can be found.<sup>277,278</sup> As a result, the concept of objective truth is preserved for him just as it is secured for other realists mentioned in Chapter 1. As those philosophers,

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<sup>267</sup> George Orwell, “11.6.42,” *Orwell Diaries 1938-1942*, last modified June 11, 2012, <https://orwelldiaries.wordpress.com/2012/06/11/11-6-42/>.

<sup>268</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 91.

<sup>269</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 91.

<sup>270</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 168.

<sup>271</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 177.

<sup>272</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 123.

<sup>273</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 124.

<sup>274</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 123.

<sup>275</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 123.

<sup>276</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 64.

<sup>277</sup> Gleason, “Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War,” 78.

<sup>278</sup> Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” 279.

Orwell seems to endorse the timelessness thesis of truth; there are some truths that remain eternally true. They are not relative or alterable at all. His greatest fear is that this notion of truth will not prevail. Truth and the human capacity to discover it are felt as something to cherish and protect.

Regardless of the above, like other realists, Orwell is not altogether naïve. In *England Your England*, he admits that absolute truth may be unattainable or even illusionary.<sup>279</sup> For instance, what impedes the possibility of uncovering the truth is feelings and “tendencies which exist in all our minds and pervert our thinking, without necessarily occurring in a pure state or operating continuously.”<sup>280</sup> It is thus essential that one unravels “what one’s own feelings really are, and then of making allowance for the inevitable bias.”<sup>281</sup> Though Orwell is sceptical that these cognitive biases and fallacies could be fully recognised and discarded, he does “believe that it is possible to struggle against them.”<sup>282</sup> One should attempt to prevent one’s personal beliefs and prejudices from interfering with the pursuit of truth. Nevertheless, as Orwell admits in *Homage to Catalonia*, this mindset may not result in absolute objectivity:

I have tried to write objectively about the Barcelona fighting, though, obviously, no one can be completely objective on a question of this kind. One is practically obliged to take sides, and it must be clear enough which side I am on. Again, I must inevitably have made mistakes of fact, not only here but in other parts of this narrative. [...] I warn everyone against my bias, and I warn everyone against my mistakes. Still, I have done my best to be honest.<sup>283</sup>

Orwell is aware that his account of the Spanish Civil War may not be completely truthful. Even so, despite his own limits, he attempts to be as objective as he can.<sup>284</sup> The difficulty of achieving a neutral, disinterested outlook on reality, should not lead to the hasty relativistic conclusion that all claims for truth are on the same level. It should not entail that “all creeds and causes involve the same lies, follies, and barbarities.”<sup>285</sup> Nor does it mean that “a big lie is no worse than a little lie.”<sup>286</sup> Orwell illustrates this by comparing totalitarianism with democracy, claiming that “arguments to the effect that democracy is ‘just the same as’ or ‘just as bad as’ totalitarianism [...] boil down to saying that half a loaf is the same as no bread.”<sup>287</sup> Thus, democracy and totalitarianism are not equal for Orwell. The former is *objectively* preferable to the latter. Correspondingly, Orwell demonstrates that throughout history, books “have always

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<sup>279</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 44.

<sup>280</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 427.

<sup>281</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 431.

<sup>282</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 430.

<sup>283</sup> Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Chapter 11.

<sup>284</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 138.

<sup>285</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 430.

<sup>286</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 64.

<sup>287</sup> Orwell, *CEJL2*, 44.

been written from several different viewpoints.”<sup>288</sup> However, some perspectives are “palpably more false than others.”<sup>289</sup> Orwell thus emphasises that it is vital that one has “preferences: that is, one must recognise that some causes are objectively better than others.”<sup>290</sup>

Taking this into consideration, it is apparent that Orwell refuses to accept the relativistic implication that all claims for truth are equivalent in terms of their truth value. Conversely, he advocates that they can be distinguished based on how well they correspond to facts. Hence, there are some standpoints that are more correct than others. One may never be wholly objective, but one should still aspire to truth and deliver as much truthful accounts of reality as one can. Orwell’s refusal of relativism and his continuous yearning for objective truth despite one’s limitations and shortcomings are again in accordance with the realist understanding of truth – as outlined in Chapter 1.

Beside the non-fictional works, Orwell’s theory of truth appears to be directly reflected in *1984* through his alter ego Winston. As argued previously, just as Orwell, Winston can be labelled as a metaphysical and epistemological realist. He believes that there is a mind-independent world of discoverable facts and laws. It is thus expected that Winston’s conception of truth will be in agreement with that of Orwell.

And, indeed, it seems to be. As Chapman offers, Winston holds that truth can be “established by means of empirical observation of evidence.”<sup>291</sup> In the same manner as Orwell, Winston keeps a diary where he notes down the facts and which he dedicates “to the future or to the past, to a time when thought is free, [...] when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone.”<sup>292</sup> The standard of correspondence theory is thus feasible for him; facts are there and can be confronted and integrated into beliefs. In other words, for Winston, “truth is the way our statements *correspond* with the world.”<sup>293</sup> As a result, the notion of objective truth, at least in principle, is preserved for him.<sup>294</sup> Maybe for this reason, he describes himself as a “sole

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<sup>288</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 223.

<sup>289</sup> Orwell, *CEJL4*, 223.

<sup>290</sup> Orwell, *CEJL3*, 430.

<sup>291</sup> Siobhan Chapman, “‘How could you tell how much of it was lies?’ The controversy of truth in George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four,” *Journal of Literary Semantics* 38, no. 1 (2009): 72, doi:10.1515/jlse.2009.004.

<sup>292</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 35.

<sup>293</sup> David Dwan, “Truth and Freedom in Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four,” *Philosophy and Literature* 34, no. 2 (October 2010): 381–393, doi:10.1353/phl.2010.0004.

<sup>294</sup> Ingle, “Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and ‘The Truth’,” 12.

guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies”<sup>295</sup>, or “a lonely ghost uttering a truth that nobody would ever hear.”<sup>296</sup> As he puts it, he “knows the secret doctrine that 2+2=4.”<sup>297</sup>

Thus, as Orwell and other contemporary realists, Winston appears to adhere to the timelessness of truth; there are some universal truths that do not change according to the context or humans’ belief in them; two plus two will always equal four, the Earth will always orbit the Sun, etc. As Hynes aptly summarises Winston’s philosophy: “Winston Smith’s beliefs are as simple as two plus two equals four: the past is fixed, love is private, and the truth is beyond change. All have this in common: they set limits to men’s power; they testify to the fact that some things cannot be changed. The point is beyond politics – it is a point of essential humanity.”<sup>298</sup> Having conserved objective truth, Winston can in principle differentiate between the veracity and falsity of claims. As he writes into his notebook: “There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad.”<sup>299</sup> He desperately struggles to discover and face the facts. However, Winston’s noble quest for truth is in vain due to the merciless methods of the Party and their pernicious philosophy.

## **2.4. The Party’s Theory of Truth**

The Party’s conception of truth represents a complete antithesis of what has been so far discussed in relation to Orwell/Winston. In fact, it is Orwell’s worst fear realised. As argued in the previous subchapters, for Orwell, the objective world of facts and laws exists. It is by discovering/facing these facts that the objective truth is attained. There are truths that are always true, for they are simply universal. One should not deny such truths or claim that one cannot get in their proximity. On the contrary, one should acknowledge their presence, aspire to them and be as precise as humanly possible.

By contrast, it has been argued that the Party can be viewed as metaphysical antirealists who deny the existence of the external, physical world. This, as already suggested, has far-reaching consequences for truth, for if one dispenses with mind-independent world, one also discards objective facts, which in turn delivers a decisive blow to the standard correspondence theory.

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<sup>295</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 19.

<sup>296</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 35.

<sup>297</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 278.

<sup>298</sup> Samuel L. Hynes, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 1984: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1971), 19.

<sup>299</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 274.

Hence, it is understandable that in the Party's ideology, no universal, mind-independent facts or laws are sustained.<sup>300</sup> Such entities are considered mere intellectual constructions or creations. As O'Brien advises Winston during the torture scene: "You must get rid of those nineteenth-century ideas about the laws of Nature. We make the laws of Nature."<sup>301</sup> Physical laws thus represent inventions of people – usually the members of the Party. Even the most obvious facts such as fossils of dinosaurs are thought to be social constructs. As O'Brien counters Winston's belief in this fact: "Have you ever seen those bones, Winston? Of course not. Nineteenth-century biologists invented them."<sup>302</sup> The fabrication of these 'facts' is paradoxically Winston's job in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth. At that place, Winston is assigned with faking 'facts' on the basis of material that has "no connexion with anything in the real world, not even the kind of connexion that is contained in a direct lie."<sup>303</sup> As Winston details the procedure:

Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute.<sup>304</sup>

Through this process of constant falsification and destruction, it is achieved that "the chosen lie would pass into the permanent records and become truth."<sup>305</sup> However, this truth is a far cry from being objective; it is not based on real facts but on refabricated fictions that are no longer motivated by events in the real world<sup>306</sup> but rather by what the Party wants them to be motivated by. 'Truth' is formed on continuously changing, made-up fictions, and any hard facts that might contradict them are immediately eliminated.<sup>307</sup> As the whole sequence is described: "Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth."<sup>308</sup> The erasure is mostly successful, for Winston himself has been in possession of what might be considered a fact "just once in his life."<sup>309</sup>

By means of the practices sketched above, it is ensured that there is only "an endless present in which the Party is always right."<sup>310</sup> Truth is thus regarded as relative, alterable; there are no timeless, universal truths. The 'truth' is whatever is useful or convenient for the Party *at*

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<sup>300</sup> Kingsley, "Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question," 37,51.

<sup>301</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 333.

<sup>302</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 334.

<sup>303</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 51–52.

<sup>304</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 195.

<sup>305</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 57–58.

<sup>306</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 307.

<sup>307</sup> Kingsley, "Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question," 44.

<sup>308</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 95–96.

<sup>309</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 95–96.

<sup>310</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 195.

*the moment*. As Chapman suggests, the Party “varies what is to count as received and accepted truth, depending on the particulars of circumstance and purpose.”<sup>311</sup> The consequence is that the notion of objective, discoverable, stable truth is abandoned,<sup>312</sup> and the Party by no means aspires to (re-)discover it unless it is necessary or inevitable. Hence, as Conant argues, the novel depicts “a state of affairs in which the concept of objective truth has faded as far out of the world as it conceivably can.”<sup>313</sup>

While Orwell’s/Winston’s account of truth seems to be that of a realist, there are some striking correlations between the Party and postmodernists. Admittedly, there are noticeable differences. The postmodern approach is more theoretical or rhetorical than real.<sup>314</sup> Postmodernists have never attempted to fabricate or destroy the facts – or at least not that physically and violently as the Party. Similarly, they do not explicitly claim that they are the ones constructing the truth.

Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that since their philosophies are founded on analogous epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions, both the Party and postmodernists consequently have very similar – if not identical – conceptions of truth. As the Party, most postmodernists do not seem to advocate that there are objective, mind-independent facts to be faced or discovered. Just like in the Party’s theory, the majority of ‘facts’, sometimes even the most brute ones, are considered to be man-made fictions or social inventions. The standard of correspondence theory is thus typically rejected, and the concept of objective truth – along with the aspiration to it – is abandoned. Simultaneously, many postmodernists advance that ‘truth’ is merely a societal construct; something to be constructed rather than discovered. Just like for the Party, for postmodernists, the ‘truth’ appears to be relative and changeable; there can be no universal, timeless truths. What is normally thought of as ‘truth’ is deemed to be contingent; it depends on the particular epoch, culture, individual, etc. In other words, rather than timelessly truthful, truth is whatever is useful *at the moment*.

However, is it really the case? Do the Party and postmodernists really believe in this theory of truth? To answer this, it is necessary to reconsider the very foundations on which the pillars of truth are supposed to be erected.

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<sup>311</sup> Chapman, “How could you tell how much of it was lies?,” 81.

<sup>312</sup> G. Stolyarov, “Orwell’s Warning: Relativism,” *A Journal for Western Man*, no. 12 (April 2003), <https://bit.ly/32TjbSi>.

<sup>313</sup> Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” 312.

<sup>314</sup> Philip Goldstein, “Orwell as a (Neo)conservative: The Reception of 1984,” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 49, doi:10.2307/1315117.

## 2.5. The Ubiquitous Contradictions

Up until now, it has been argued that the Party and postmodernists could be categorised as epistemological and metaphysical antirealists, for whom there is no mind-independent world that could be discovered – and hence there is no objective truth either. However, are the abovementioned commitments genuine? For that to find out, one needs to analyse whether their philosophies are not at odds with their actual behaviour; i.e. whether or not they are consistent.

As regards the Party's commitment to epistemological antirealism, there is a contradiction. As it is mentioned in the novel, although "the empirical method of thought, on which all the scientific achievements of the past were founded, is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc"<sup>315</sup>, the Party does not seem to follow this principle in practice, for as it is admitted: "in matters of vital importance—meaning, in effect, war and police espionage—the empirical approach is still encouraged, or at least tolerated."<sup>316</sup> One of the key features of the empirical method is the use of direct or indirect observation as a means of gaining empirical evidence. In order to be able to collect this evidence, one needs to assume that senses are competent enough to relatively accurately mediate what is there to be observed. Thus, when the Party hires a group of policemen and tasks them with spying on someone, they will have to rely on their senses. Therefore, the Party encounters a logical contradiction. On the one hand, they are seemingly confirmed epistemological antirealists claiming that senses cannot provide access to the external world, and all sensory experience is merely an ontologically arbitrary illusion. On the other hand, they behave as epistemological realists who operate on the premise that sensory experience can accurately reflect the non-linguistic world and hence is indispensable in specific situations.

This prompts a metaphysical contradiction, for if one concedes that objective knowledge is possible under certain conditions, one also acknowledges that there is a mind-independent reality to obtain knowledge from. Thus, though the Party do their utmost to deny the actuality of the material world and its components, they cannot but resort to it and infer that in some contexts, it serves as the catalyst for some of their beliefs. As it is explained in the novel: "Physical facts could not be ignored. In philosophy, or religion, or ethics, or politics, two and two might make five, but when one was designing a gun or an aeroplane they had to make four."<sup>317</sup> Even the representatives of the inner group of the Party who uphold the Ingsoc

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<sup>315</sup> Orwell, 1984, 244.

<sup>316</sup> Orwell, 1984, 244.

<sup>317</sup> Orwell, 1984, 250.



ideology most vehemently cannot deny that the objective world exists and can be discovered. For example, O'Brien seems to refuse the starkest facts such as the age of planet Earth and heliocentrism:

The earth is as old as we are, no older. [...] 'What are the stars?' said O'Brien indifferently. 'They are bits of fire a few kilometres away. We could reach them if we wanted to. Or we could blot them out. The earth is the centre of the universe. The sun and the stars go round it.'<sup>318</sup>

This might suggest that O'Brien/the Party supposes that such statements do not bear any objective truth value; since there is considered to be no mind-independent reality in the first place, it stands to reason that those claims cannot reflect any recognition-transcendent facts, and hence O'Brien has the freedom to twist them. Nevertheless, on the closer look, O'Brien admits that:

'For certain purposes, of course, that is not true. When we navigate the ocean, or when we predict an eclipse, we often find it convenient to assume that the earth goes round the sun and that the stars are millions upon millions of kilometres away.'<sup>319</sup>

Thus, even though the Party puts a lot of effort into the denial and concealment of objective reality from other people and sometimes even from themselves, they are unavoidably aware of its existence. Moreover, they oftentimes *need* it. Taking this into consideration, the Party can also be regarded as metaphysical realists who covertly recognise the presence of a mind-independent world with its universal facts and laws. In some circumstances, the Party does not view those entities as merely useful, man-made constructs relative to the context which could be wilfully reconstructed into anything. On the contrary, when it is urgent, they are obliged to take them as mind-independent, universal properties of the world – the world's data – to which one has to resort if some scientific achievement is to be made. In other words, all too often, they must be committed to the truth that two plus two makes four – not five, or that the Earth revolves around the Sun – not vice versa. Thus, in this regard, the Party cannot be thought of as relativists by any means; their behaviour and actions presuppose that there are at least some objective truths of which they are inescapably conscious. As Kingsley notes, they "first see the truth and then distort and suppress it, so that others will not see what they have seen."<sup>320</sup> This Party's cognizance of the truth can be further demonstrated in the following paragraph:

It is often necessary for a member of the Inner Party to know that this or that item of war news is untruthful, and he may often be aware that the entire war is spurious and is either not happening or is being waged for purposes quite other than the declared ones: but such knowledge is easily neutralized by the technique of DOUBLETHINK.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 335.

<sup>319</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 335.

<sup>320</sup> Kingsley, "Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question," 46.

<sup>321</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 243.

Thus, the Party is trapped in a kind of schizophrenic state of mind that has been described by Orwell in the previous subchapter. In many instances, the Party knows that some statements are palpably false; they pay heed to the truth that in reality there is no war. The objective reality and truth thus still lie in wait ‘behind their backs’, and they literally need to become ‘schizophrenic’; i.e. to employ the extremely self-deceptive technique of DOUBLETHINK – “the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously”<sup>322</sup> – to accommodate it. DOUBLETHINK, Chapman adds, “requires that people subscribe to the meaningfulness, and indeed the truth, of its propositions.”<sup>323</sup>

At this point, an apt analogy can be drawn between the abovementioned contradictions of the Party and those of postmodernists. Up to now, it has been argued that most postmodernists can be treated as epistemological antirealists. However, it has been pointed out that those philosophers contradict themselves in the assertion that senses cannot be relied on to accurately mediate reality, yet they find themselves depending on them on a daily basis.<sup>324</sup> Thus, as Blackburn illustrates, if the postmodernist Richard Rorty wants to catch a plane, he will probably consult the timetable; i.e. he will rely on his senses to precisely reflect reality.<sup>325</sup> To put it another way, postmodern philosophers have to take advantage of the very human capacities which they attempt to undermine.<sup>326</sup> Thus, though postmodernists plead for epistemological antirealism in academia and science, in real life, they follow common-sense realism; they count on the empirical evidence that their senses supply them with. To illustrate this, Sokal provides an example of a man who runs out of a hall yelling that there is a herd of elephants stamping inside. There are two outcomes to this scenario. Either other people look inside the hall and observe that there actually is a herd of elephants – in which case it would be advisable to call the zookeepers – or there are no elephants, and the man imagined it on account of some psychological disorder – in the event of which psychiatrists should be summoned. Sokal adds that no matter what some postmodernists may appear to argue in their books, it is unlikely they would react differently. They would trust their senses, calling either the zookeepers or psychiatrists based on what they had witnessed.<sup>327</sup>

Concerning the metaphysics, as in the instance of the Party, there seems to be a comparable contradiction ingrained in the postmodern theory. When postmodernists combat

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<sup>322</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 270.

<sup>323</sup> Chapman, “How could you tell how much of it was lies?,” 76.

<sup>324</sup> Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, 28.

<sup>325</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 158.

<sup>326</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, “Postmodernism and Rationality,” *Journal of Philosophy* 85, no. 10 (1988): 530, doi:10.5840/jphil1988851019.

<sup>327</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 91.

against mind-independent entities, they often form judgements about “normal communication, the existence of human bodies, human activities and practices, artefacts, books, written languages, laboratories”<sup>328</sup> – thereby presupposing their mind-independent status.<sup>329</sup> Correspondingly, as Hicks notices, “any statement or activity, including the action of writing a postmodern account of anything, presupposes at least an implicit conception of reality and values.”<sup>330</sup> This is understandable, for as Blackburn notes, “you are bound to use the concepts of metaphysics even as you attack metaphysics.”<sup>331</sup> He adds that “it is psychologically impossible to keep doubt about the external world alive outside the study.”<sup>332</sup> In the light of this, returning to the example above, Rorty must implicitly assume that there is a mind-independent timetable that is not a mere mental construct but a real, physical entity. That said, he would probably deduce the same thing if he were hit by a rock or a car.

As in the case of the Party, these findings presuppose that as regards the truth, postmodernists are not authentic relativists,<sup>333</sup> for they *do* seem to act on the correspondence theory of truth. They oftentimes covertly presume that there is such thing as mind-independent reality with its facts and laws that simply has to be taken into account during the formation of truth. This is partly due to the fact that relativism can never be sceptical enough; its proponents still acquiesce to the notion of truth.<sup>334</sup> As Inwagen notes, “it is not possible to go through life without asserting things, and everyone who asserts anything thereby affirms the existence of objective truth.”<sup>335</sup> To put it differently, “if someone makes an assertion, [...] he commits himself to the *truth* of that assertion, to the *objective* truth of that assertion, to that assertion’s corresponding to reality, and to its being true (and objectively true and in correspondence with reality).”<sup>336</sup> Hence, just like the Party, despite their well-known scorn of objective facts and truth, postmodernists are unwillingly driven to recognise that there are some objective, universal truisms such as that the Earth orbits the Sun, and a dropped rock falls down on the ground – or, at least, they have to act as if these statements were objectively true – as if they complied with something beyond the mind, language, and society.

What these mutually shared contradictions seem to suggest is that neither the Party nor the postmodern philosophers act on what they preach in theory – i.e. epistemological and

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<sup>328</sup> Niiniluoto, *Critical Scientific Realism*, 38.

<sup>329</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 161.

<sup>330</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 6.

<sup>331</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 78.

<sup>332</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 26.

<sup>333</sup> Luntley, *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned*, 72.

<sup>334</sup> Dwan, “Truth and Freedom in Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four,” 381–393.

<sup>335</sup> Inwagen, “Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?,” 182.

<sup>336</sup> Inwagen, “Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?,” 184.

metaphysical antirealism. Both groups seem to rely on their reason/senses and cannot operate without presupposing the notions that they desire to subvert. Hence, by the same token, they can be classified as realists. Accordingly, as far as truth is concerned, neither the Party nor postmodernists can be regarded as relativists, for they both employ the notion of objective, universal truth(s) in their everyday life and other convenient circumstances.

This implies that their adherence to these philosophical doctrines is not genuine, for they are not held and promoted consistently; they are applied in limited instances only. On these grounds, it may be proposed that both the Party<sup>337,338,339</sup> and postmodernists<sup>340</sup> may only *pretend* to hold these doctrines when in fact they are realists who believe in objective reality and truth; i.e. they subscribe to the correspondence theory. But then for what purpose do they profess these antirealist/relativistic doctrines if they do not actually believe in them? Why argue that the acquisition of knowledge is impossible, and reality is purely mental? Why purport that there are no facts and hence no objective truth(s)? Are the contradictions purely coincidental? Or could they be the result or by-product of some hidden agenda? The following subchapter aims to shed light on these questions.

## **2.6. The Hidden Motives and Functions**

So far, it has been postulated that in the history of philosophy, the primary motives for epistemological antirealism were primarily philosophical. A stick immersed in water may appear to be bent but when being observed out of water, it remains straight. What this well-known experiment shows is that human faculties are imperfect and susceptible to illusions. As outlined in Chapter 1, most philosophers very quickly realised this fact. If only there were a way of determining when senses are misleading and when they are accurate! But as many philosophers warned with the same haste, there is no such option; it is physically impracticable to establish whether the content of the human mind resembles the world outside. This is the egocentric predicament; in some sense, everybody is an island to themselves, a soul imprisoned in a body out of which there is no self-aware escape. These findings broadly comprise the philosophical reasons that might have provoked antirealists to adopt a very sceptical position towards the validity of human faculties. However, is this the full picture? It may not be.

In history, this can be demonstrated by Kant and Berkeley. Both philosophers were religious; they believed in God. Naturally, to justify this belief they were rigorously developing

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<sup>337</sup> Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," 16.

<sup>338</sup> Inwagen, "Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?," 164.

<sup>339</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>340</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 185–186.

arguments that supported it. One such ingenious argument had been put forward by Berkeley. After proving (through several thought experiments) that both primary and secondary qualities are solely sensations in one's mind, and there is no method of proving that they are not, Berkeley no longer had any justification for the existence of the physical, mind-independent world. Consequently, in place of this world, he planted the mind of God as the source and cause of everything.

Kant, though not being as devout as Berkeley, may have proceeded in a similar manner with the identical religious motive. As he announces in his *Critique of Pure Reason*: "I here therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*."<sup>341</sup> By denying that the noumenal reality can be discovered by human reason, it can be anything, but most importantly, it can be God.

It is critical to mention that this metaphysical replacement is feasible only after Berkeley and Kant have proven that the physical world is closed off to the human mind, i.e. after professing epistemological antirealism. Thanks to the egocentric predicament, they anchor the position of God. After all, how can one disprove that everything is just a part of God's mind when one cannot be relieved from one's mind to investigate? Since people do not have access to the external reality, and it is dubious and unprovable whether there is such thing at all, no one can claim to have the truth about anything – including whether or not God resides in heaven.<sup>342</sup> Faith in God thus cannot be criticised and "people arguing against religion could be told to be quiet and go away."<sup>343</sup> In other words, Kant concluded that people "do not have the capacity to make judgements about the nature of things in themselves based on our knowledge of things as they appear."<sup>344</sup> Thus, a sort of relativism is achieved by means of attacking epistemology. Maybe for this reason, Blackburn suggests, "It is no coincidence that theorists attracted to relativism first take aim at epistemology, hoping to destroy the pedestals that elevate some beliefs above others."<sup>345</sup>

With this in mind, it may be postulated that Kant's and Berkeley's motive for epistemological antirealism was partly religious/ideological. They might have *pretended* to argue in favour of this position in order to achieve relativism which consequently allows them

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<sup>341</sup> Wayne P. Pomerleau, s.v. "Kant, Immanuel: Philosophy of Religion," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/kant-rel/>).

<sup>342</sup> One cannot but be reminded of the well-known God-of-the-gaps argument in which the God is invoked to saturate the gaps in human knowledge.

<sup>343</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 29.

<sup>344</sup> Colin McQuillan, s.v. "German Idealism," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 9, 2020, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/germidea/#H3>.

<sup>345</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, xv.

to make room for faith in God and protect it against harsh criticism. This begs the question of why some people are attracted to relativism in the first place. What could be its ideological functions? And how could they be implemented in Orwell's *1984*? Following the line of argument from the previous subchapters, could there be some other similarities between the Party's and postmodernists' approach? The two following ideological, typically concealed functions of relativism inquire into these questions.

**Hidden Function no. 1: *Elimination of Standards of Comparison and Critique, aka 'Anything goes.'***

In the paragraphs above, it has been suggested that Kant and Berkeley tended to undermine the common-sense belief that at least some knowledge of the external reality is possible. From this, it usually follows that only mind(s) exist, and hence no one can lay claim to objective truth. Using this relativism, their faith in God can be advanced while staying protected from non-believers.

A similar strategy seems to be employed in the world of *1984*. In Oceania, no declaration of the Party can be measured against anything independent of one's mind and the Party's politics, for as Winston asserts, "there did not exist, and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested."<sup>346</sup> Since there is no such yardstick, it is impossible to determine its truth value or subject it to critique. In other terms, "there is no way in which discontent can become articulate."<sup>347</sup> As Winston observes: "I know, of course, that the past is falsified, but it would never be possible for me to prove it, even when I did the falsification myself. After the thing is done, no evidence ever remains."<sup>348</sup> In Goldstein's words, Winston finds no "grounds on which to resist Big Brother and the party."<sup>349</sup>

Because of that, from the very beginning of the novel, what Winston is left with is doubt. As he notes: "Everything faded away into a shadow-world in which, finally, even the date of the year had become uncertain."<sup>350</sup> And as he continues further:

How could you tell how much of it was lies? It MIGHT be true that the average human being was better off now than he had been before the Revolution. The only evidence to the contrary was the mute protest in your own bones, the instinctive feeling that the conditions you lived in were intolerable and that at some other time they must have been different.<sup>351</sup> [...] Perhaps a lunatic was simply a minority of one. At one time it had been a sign of madness to believe that the earth goes round the sun; today, to believe that the

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<sup>346</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 118.

<sup>347</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 262.

<sup>348</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 192.

<sup>349</sup> Goldstein, "Orwell as a (Neo)conservative: The Reception of 1984," 46.

<sup>350</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 53.

<sup>351</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 94.

past is inalterable. He might be ALONE in holding that belief, and if alone, then a lunatic. But the thought of being a lunatic did not greatly trouble him: the horror was that he might also be wrong.<sup>352</sup>

The only refuge that remains for Winston is what has been previously described as an instinctive feeling that his beliefs/claims are correct, and the Party's ones are wrong. The instinctive feeling, which in philosophy might be regarded as one of the criteria of truth,<sup>353</sup> becomes the sole primary standard of Winston. However, while this criterion assists Winston to drive and sustain his pursuit of truth for a while (i.e. until O'Brien manages to break him), it is unlike the correspondence theory of truth, a subjective standard which cannot be relied on to serve as a reliable source of evidence or certainty. Thus, as Dwan argues, Winston "sets great store in a feeling of 'certainty,' but there is nothing to vouchsafe the correctness or even identity of this feeling."<sup>354</sup> The truth is solely restricted to what is inside Winston's head. An analogy may help drive the point home. Founded on an intuitive feeling, how could a scientist prove the speed of light? By the same token, how can Winston confirm that the Party's claims are false with no mind-independent standard at hand? Clearly, this would be problematic. As Weingartner claims, "Who is telling the truth? How would one go about determining that? [...] In the absence of direct, unimpeachable, verifiable, adequate information, there is simply no way to make a feasible judgement."<sup>355</sup> Thus, by means of the Party's denial/removal of mind-independent standards and norms of empirical inquiry, people lose the capability to recognise what is objectively true.<sup>356</sup> In other words, the "ability to autonomously assess the credentials of a claim – any claim: even a straightforward perceptual or arithmetic claim" is deprived.<sup>357</sup> Once the restrictions that these standards previously imposed are eradicated, nothing can be criticised, and anything – even the most absurd claims – can in principle become 'truth.'<sup>358</sup> Stated briefly, anything can 'go'.

Nevertheless, this mantra does not apply to Winston yet. Unlike for Julia who, as Winston laments, is prepared "to accept the official mythology, simply because the difference between truth and falsehood did not seem important to her"<sup>359</sup>, for Winston, the distinction is crucial; there are still some propositions that 'go' while others do not. Although he hangs to the notion of truth by a thread, he still aspires to it and tries to differentiate between the lie and the

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<sup>352</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 102.

<sup>353</sup> Sahakian and Sahakian, *Ideas of the Great Philosophers*, 5.

<sup>354</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>355</sup> Charles Weingartner, *Beyond Nineteen Eighty-four: Doublespeak in a Post-Orwellian Age*, ed. William Lutz (National Council of Teachers, 1989), 56.

<sup>356</sup> Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," 5.

<sup>357</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 300.

<sup>358</sup> Kingsley, "Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question," 44.

<sup>359</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 193.

truth. He might be alone in this conviction, yet he remains the ‘guardian of truth’ who knows the secret doctrine that two plus two makes four. As will be detailed, this is soon about to change when Winston falls into the hands of O’Brien/the Party.

The Party’s course of action outlined above may be relatable to postmodernism. Postmodern intellectuals are said to have undermined the pre-postmodern standards that could be utilised for people’s conduct – thus crippling the capacity to criticise and compare different claims for truth.<sup>360,361,362</sup> According to some critics, this might have contributed to the alleged present-day crisis of truthfulness which is conveniently called the post-truth era.<sup>363</sup> For example, Dennett regards postmodernists as pure evil who should be held responsible “for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts.”<sup>364</sup> Along similar lines, Keyes holds that it is postmodernism that is accountable for “eroding commitment to truth telling” and argues that the absence of truth likely engendered by postmodernism impedes honesty and promotes lying, for the fine line between a lie and truth is dissolved.<sup>365</sup> What postmodern relativism enables is that nothing can be criticised let alone disproved, for according to it, all arguments – no matter how illogical, contradictory or false – should be tolerated and deserve the same respect.<sup>366</sup> Thus, just like for the Party, in the postmodern theory, anything can in principle ‘go’. Otherwise stated, the disrespect for facts and evidence may lead anywhere.<sup>367</sup>

Taking the above into consideration, it can be observed that both postmodern and the Party’s philosophies appear to make little room for criticism or comparison of discourses, for they tend to weaken or, in the Party’s case, physically eliminate the external standards that could be used for these purposes. Consequently, what both implicate is that no standpoint could be objectively privileged over others; i.e. all assertions should be on the same level. This way, they both, at least theoretically, open the door for the ‘anything goes’ scenario.

However, one needs to ask whether this relativism is well-intentioned or self-serving. If it were well-intentioned, all claims for truth – including one’s own – would have to be regarded as equal to others. As regards the Party, this is logically not the case. They themselves are not relativists at all. Apart from being aware that there are objective, universal truths to which they

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<sup>360</sup> Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, 60–61.

<sup>361</sup> Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, 39–40, 209.

<sup>362</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 209.

<sup>363</sup> McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 126, 150.

<sup>364</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, “Daniel Dennett: ‘I begrudge every hour I have to spend worrying about politics,’” *The Guardian*, February 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/feb/12/daniel-dennett-politics-bacteria-bach-back-dawkins-trump-interview>.

<sup>365</sup> Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era*, Heirs of Protagoras.

<sup>366</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, xviii.

<sup>367</sup> Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 13.



frequently resort (as indicated in subchapter 2.5), they clearly comprehend that some claims are truer than others. After all, ‘truth’ should be in accordance with the Party’s Ingsoc ideology. The ‘anything goes’ principle is thus not applicable to them. It becomes obvious that their relativism is self-serving; they exploit it in order to pass and protect their ideology.

What about for postmodernists? It is important to mention that relativism in the sense that all utterances are equal is a self-contradictory paradox.<sup>368,369</sup> Hicks illustrates this contradiction: “On the one hand, all truth is relative, on the other hand postmodernism tells it like it really is.”<sup>370</sup> This is understandable, for as it is argued, “the relativist, like everyone else, is under the necessity to sort out beliefs, accepting some and rejecting others. He will naturally have preferences and these will typically coincide with those of others in his locality.”<sup>371</sup> Given the above, it can be concluded that only God could be an authentic relativist.<sup>372</sup>

All this reaffirms that the relevant question is not whether postmodernists have beliefs that they hold to be truer than others – they all naturally do because they are only humans – but whether there is, just as in the case of the Party, Kant, and Berkeley, some common, underlying ideology for the reasons of which they might advocate relativism. If so, what is it? And how could that ideology be implanted? These questions allude to another function for which relativism may be used.

### **Hidden Function no. 2: *Creating and Filling the Void***

This function, as already hinted at, might have been used by Kant and Berkeley who had first aimed to weaken the discoverability and existence objective reality and truth, and then furtively advanced their conjecture that God exists. In this sense, relativism could be paradoxically exploited to implant the new, desirable ‘truth’.

The Party exhibits a similar pattern of behaviour. First, as Kant and Berkeley, they are compelled to cut off the mind from reality. As it is explained in the novel, “If one is to rule, and to continue ruling, one must be able to dislocate the sense of reality.”<sup>373</sup> For this displacement to be possible, one must deny the validity of senses, which is one of the goals of the Party. As it is elaborated by Winston, “The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command.”<sup>374</sup> In the course of the torture scene, O’Brien

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<sup>368</sup> Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, 95.

<sup>369</sup> Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, 27.

<sup>370</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 184.

<sup>371</sup> Barry Barnes and David Bloor, *Rationality and Relativism*, ed. Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Mit Press, 1982), 27.

<sup>372</sup> Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, 95.

<sup>373</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 271.

<sup>374</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 103.

pressures Winston to do just that; to deny the evidence of his senses and reconstruct it into something else:

O'Brien held up his left hand, its back towards Winston, with the thumb hidden and the four fingers extended. 'How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?' 'Four.' 'And if the party says that it is not four but five—then how many?' 'Four.' The word ended in a gasp of pain. The needle of the dial had shot up to fifty-five. The sweat had sprung out all over Winston's body. The air tore into his lungs and issued again in deep groans which even by clenching his teeth he could not stop. O'Brien watched him, the four fingers still extended. He drew back the lever. This time the pain was only slightly eased. 'How many fingers, Winston?' 'Four.' The needle went up to sixty. 'How many fingers, Winston?' 'Four! Four! What else can I say? Four!'<sup>375</sup>

This excerpt encapsulates the philosophical disparities between O'Brien/the Party and Winston. For Winston, the epistemological realist, it is an undeniable fact provided by his senses that O'Brien holds only four fingers, and he does believe that O'Brien perceives the same phenomenon. It is such common-sense for him that he cannot deny it and delude himself into seeing five fingers. He places confidence in his senses to reflect the reality out there. As Dwan notes, "Winston feels that much of reality is simply given to him through sensory awareness."<sup>376</sup> However, O'Brien seems to act as if all these Winston's convictions were blatantly fallacious. In Ingle's analysis, what he wants Winston to realise is that no one can "have a firm grasp of reality, of the external world."<sup>377</sup> In other words, the objective is to make Winston question his ability to acquire knowledge about external reality via his senses. O'Brien/the Party simply yearns to persuade Winston that there is no way he can prove that his "sensual perceptions correspond to any objective reality whatsoever."<sup>378</sup> Due to the egocentric predicament, Winston cannot verify that his sense experience is somehow inextricably linked to the external reality. The Party realises this fact and consequently exploits it by enacting that all "knowledge might very well be merely a product of a collective illusion or even less than that."<sup>379</sup> This is what they crave Winston to convince about. Ultimately, with the aid of the torment device, O'Brien is successful at the persuasion as he achieves the desired response from Winston:

O'Brien held up the fingers of his left hand, with the thumb concealed. 'There are five fingers there. Do you see five fingers?' 'Yes.' And he did see them, for a fleeting instant, before the scenery of his mind changed. He saw five fingers, and there was no deformity.<sup>380</sup>

Thus, at this moment, Winston becomes an epistemological antirealist. Now that he has been persuaded through the immense physical and psychological anguish that his sensory experience

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<sup>375</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 315.

<sup>376</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*," 381–393.

<sup>377</sup> Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," 12.

<sup>378</sup> Marinescu, "Orwell's *1984* Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man."

<sup>379</sup> Marinescu, "Orwell's *1984* Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man."

<sup>380</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 325.

is nothing but an arbitrary construct of mind(s), it may follow that, in theory, it can be remodelled into whatever is desired by O'Brien/the Party. For this reason, Winston is capable of regulating his mind so as to at least intermittently see the number of fingers that O'Brien and the Party want him to perceive.

However, O'Brien/the Party is not yet finished with the attempt to convert Winston. Having removed the sense of reality, O'Brien proceeds to contest Winston's metaphysical realism and his realist notion of what constitutes facts and truth:

Reality is inside the skull. You will learn by degrees, Winston. There is nothing that we could not do. Invisibility, levitation—anything. I could float off this floor like a soap bubble if I wish to. I do not wish to, because the Party does not wish it. You must get rid of those nineteenth-century ideas about the laws of Nature. We make the laws of Nature.' 'But you do not! You are not even masters of this planet. What about Eurasia and Eastasia? You have not conquered them yet.' 'Unimportant. We shall conquer them when it suits us. And if we did not, what difference would it make? We can shut them out of existence. Oceania is the world.' 'But the world itself is only a speck of dust. And man is tiny—helpless! How long has he been in existence? For millions of years the earth was uninhabited.' 'Nonsense. The earth is as old as we are, no older. How could it be older? Nothing exists except through human consciousness.' 'But the rocks are full of the bones of extinct animals—mammoths and mastodons and enormous reptiles which lived here long before man was ever heard of.' 'Have you ever seen those bones, Winston? Of course not. Nineteenth-century biologists invented them. Before man there was nothing. After man, if he could come to an end, there would be nothing. Outside man there is nothing.' 'But the whole universe is outside us. Look at the stars! Some of them are a million light-years away. They are out of our reach for ever.' 'What are the stars?' said O'Brien indifferently. 'They are bits of fire a few kilometres away. We could reach them if we wanted to. Or we could blot them out. The earth is the centre of the universe. The sun and the stars go round it.'<sup>381</sup>

Winston attempts to fight back against these absurdities, for at this point, he still possesses the remnants of the instinctive feeling that they are erroneous. However, he struggles to refute them; faced with O'Brien's irrefutable arguments, he is absolutely helpless.<sup>382</sup>

Winston shrank back upon the bed. Whatever he said, the swift answer crushed him like a bludgeon. And yet he knew, he KNEW, that he was in the right. The belief that nothing exists outside your own mind—surely there must be some way of demonstrating that it was false?<sup>383</sup>

Winston has faith that his metaphysical belief is correct, but at the same time, he realises that it lacks truth-status; it is based on thin air.<sup>384,385</sup> As already mentioned, his realism is predominantly intuitive.<sup>386</sup> Just as one cannot disprove Berkeley's argument that there is no

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<sup>381</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 334–335.

<sup>382</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>383</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 335.

<sup>384</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>385</sup> Marinescu, "Orwell's 1984 Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man."

<sup>386</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

mind-independent reality, and everything depends upon the mind of God, so too Winston cannot adequately counter the claims that the stars are at one's fingertips, or even that nothing beyond the mind exists.

Consequently, several pages of profound agony further, Winston comes across the egocentric predicament yet again, asking himself, "But how could there be such a world? What knowledge have we of anything, save through our own minds?"<sup>387</sup> Previously, as already discussed, Winston's response was to still retain faith that there is the external, physical world to which humans are somehow attached in the face of the fact that this cannot be proven or practically demonstrated. He had his doubts, yet he continued to cling to his metaphysical realism. Now, through the tremendous suffering, coupled with O'Brien's/the Party's irrefutable statements, his response is different. He finally abandons the last vestiges of his realism and adopts metaphysical antirealism. As Winston concludes, "All happenings are in the mind. Whatever happens in all minds, truly happens."<sup>388</sup>

Having embraced the aforementioned antirealist stances, Winston disposes of objective truth as well, for if there is no external reality that could be discovered, it is impossible to keep the standard of the correspondence theory of truth. Prior to this, though he had some doubts with regard to what constitutes a truthful belief/claim (see the foregoing function), Winston was still the protector of truth who was eager to find and face the truth, but now he no longer aspires to this noble objective. As Chapman notes, Winston "ceases to ask the question about how much of it is lies, and particular of how can you tell."<sup>389</sup> Winston thus abandons his faith in the idea of objective truth<sup>390</sup> and becomes as much of a confirmed relativist as can be imagined. He cannot distinguish between the validity of claims for truth anymore – not even the most essential ones. The absence leads him to the 'anything goes' scenario; it elicits the void of extreme relativism. As Winston pronounces: "Anything could be true. The so-called laws of Nature were nonsense. The law of gravity was nonsense."<sup>391</sup> Probably the most dramatic example of relativism is when Winston writes down that "TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE"<sup>392</sup>, which is the utter opposite of "the secret doctrine that two plus two make four"<sup>393</sup> that he had subscribed to previously (see subchapter 2.3).

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<sup>387</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 350.

<sup>388</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 351.

<sup>389</sup> Chapman, "How could you tell how much of it was lies?," 82.

<sup>390</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>391</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 350.

<sup>392</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 349.

<sup>393</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 278.

Winston is thus ushered into absolute madness, for even the most basic mathematical formulas, the fundamental scientific truths, of which he was previously almost certain are disputed – he is robbed of all certainties, any concrete Cartesian cornerstones on which he could (re-)build his integrity. As mentioned in the novel: “When there were no external records that you could refer to, even the outline of your own life lost its sharpness.”<sup>394</sup> The chaotic frame of mind that Winston endures is described as well, “Cut off from contact with the outer world, and with the past, the citizen of Oceania is like a man in interstellar space, who has no way of knowing which direction is up and which is down.”<sup>395</sup> This is precisely the situation that Winston finds himself in towards the end of the novel. He is like a directionless, helmless boat on the raging ocean, unable to catch sight of any lighthouse.

In the philosophical literature, this maddening condition largely caused by the absence of any mind-independent standard is well-described by Russell who said that: “The concept of ‘truth’ as something dependent upon facts largely outside human control has been one of the ways in which philosophy hitherto has inculcated the necessary element of humility. When this check upon pride is removed, a further step is taken on the road towards a certain kind of madness.”<sup>396</sup> This kind of extreme doubt – i.e. the absolute relativism – however, is probably unattainable let alone sustainable, for as has already been mentioned, no one can be an authentic relativist; one is destined to form and sort one’s beliefs and values. In other words, people require some certitudes that do not change; they are truth-seeking creatures who long for the soothing comfort of closure. Therefore, as Brock paraphrases Pierce, the permanent doubtfulness becomes “a prime motivator of the desire for certainty – any certainty.”<sup>397</sup> This mindset is optimal for the implementation of ideology, for as Arendt observes, “the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction [...] and the distinction between true and false [...] no longer exist.”<sup>398</sup>

For Winston, such a differentiation seems to be close to non-existent at the very end of the novel. However, the newly created knowledge vacuum sparked by relativism is not sustainable for him. Winston is a human; he yearns for some certitudes – for something to believe in and act on. Now that his beliefs and values have been compromised, Winston launches a search for an alternative to fill the void. And since “he cannot know the reality, he

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<sup>394</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 41.

<sup>395</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 251.

<sup>396</sup> Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 828.

<sup>397</sup> Simon Blackburn, *On Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 8.

<sup>398</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973), 474.

may well follow the interpretation of whomever exceeds him in title and authority within a rigidly structured oligarchic tribe.”<sup>399</sup> As a consequence, he accepts the most dominant and coherent narrative – the only alternative that thrives in the otherwise relativized world of Oceania – and that is the Ingsoc ideology of the Party. As Winston concludes defeatedly, “the Party was in the right. It must be so; how could the immortal, collective brain be mistaken?”<sup>400</sup> Having been convinced that blatant lies may pass for the truth, Winston undergoes a conversion;<sup>401</sup> he ultimately surrenders. In Marinescu’s interpretation, the Party becomes “the sole means to ascertain what is real and what is not in everyone’s personal identity and experience.”<sup>402</sup> Metaphysically, Winston adopts the collective solipsism of the Party, and his realist pursuit of objective truth is substituted by the advocacy of the dominant ideology.<sup>403</sup> In this fashion, it can be asserted that the Party/Big Brother saves Winston from uncertainty.<sup>404</sup>

Thus, to answer the questions posed in sections 2.2 and 2.5, the Party does not appear to propagate epistemological antirealism on account of philosophical reasons only. Just like Kant and Berkeley, they attack epistemology with an intention to ultimately achieve a relativized environment in which, at the same time, they are the ones in the possession of truth. The Party proceeds along the same lines too. They first shatter one’s belief that the world is accessible (i.e. epistemological antirealism). After all, owing to the egocentric predicament, one cannot demonstrate that the belief is justified. Second, having severed the mind from what is supposed to be out there, the Party easily obliterates one’s conviction in the mind-independent world itself. Again, there is no way to substantiate that such a world exists. The whole reality thus becomes mental; not dependent on the mind of God (as Berkeley and Kant would wish) but on the minds of the collective, namely the Party. During this process, the notion of objective truth collapses like a house of cards, and the relativistic, disorderly void ensues. Lastly, as there is nothing else to base one’s beliefs on and genuine relativism is unattainable, the thirst for objective truth is quenched by the only possible, coherent narrative – the one meticulously orchestrated by the Party. O’Brien accurately describes the whole procedure when he says to Winston: “We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back. [...] You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves.”<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Stolyarov, “Orwell’s Warning: Relativism,”

<sup>400</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 349.

<sup>401</sup> Stephen Spender, “Stephen Spender on Morality in the Novel,” in *Bloom’s Guides: 1984*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), 44.

<sup>402</sup> Marinescu, “Orwell’s 1984 Revisited: Postmodernity and the Demise of Self-Made Man.”

<sup>403</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell’s Question,” 51.

<sup>404</sup> Ingle, “Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and ‘The Truth’,” 5.

<sup>405</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 323.

All things considered, although the ideology that they might be encouraging is different, it can be said that the Party may be using a similar strategy to that of Kant and Berkeley. However, would it be possible to find a corresponding scheme in more recent, postmodern philosophy?

As has already been argued, though postmodernists proceed in a much more theoretical and benign way than the Party, it can be suggested that they might be pursuing the same course of action. They are inclined to weaken people's belief in the discoverability of the world by promulgating epistemological antirealism, thereby paralysing the assumptions about the very existence of objective facts and truth in the process. This strategy may be deliberately implemented in the well-known tool of postmodernists – i.e. Derrida's deconstruction,<sup>406</sup> which, generally speaking, might be described as an approach “in which everything is questioned and little is taken at face value. There is no right answer, only narrative.”<sup>407</sup> Both Sokal<sup>408</sup> and Keyes<sup>409</sup> observe that though the ‘original’ postmodernism may not be influential anymore, there is a sort of ‘applied postmodernism’ that is particularly dominant in Western universities. To illustrate this, Hicks provides an example of a radical gender feminist professor who verifiably uses deconstruction as a means of debilitating the old-fashioned beliefs and values of her students.<sup>410</sup> This inevitably creates the abyss; the notion of truth is abandoned, and the result is supposed to be the celebration of relativism. There is no truth; all claims are on the same level and nothing can be criticised. Is this relativism harnessed sincerely and disinterestedly to increase the tolerance of the oppressed voices as some postmodern philosophers propose, or is it exploited to advance some hidden ideology? On the latter hypothesis, there would have to be some ideology in the first place. Could one find some general political agenda that most postmodernists seem to share?

According to Hicks, postmodernism is primarily a political movement.<sup>411</sup> As Sokal,<sup>412</sup> Hicks detects that the majority of postmodernists are “far Left-wing in their politics.”<sup>413</sup> At this stage, it would be convenient to recall Derrida's words: “Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, in my view at least, except as a radicalization, which is to say also *in the*

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<sup>406</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 191.

<sup>407</sup> McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 125.

<sup>408</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 208.

<sup>409</sup> Keyes, “*The Post-Truth Era*,” *Applied Postmodernism*.

<sup>410</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 188.

<sup>411</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 186.

<sup>412</sup> Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, 198.

<sup>413</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 84.

*tradition* of a certain Marxism, in a certain *spirit of Marxism*.<sup>414</sup> However, if correct, the alleged allegiance with Marxism would contradict the principle that postmodernists seem to preach in many books; i.e. their “incredulity towards metanarratives.”<sup>415</sup> For this reason, some postmodernists have declared that they disagree with Marxist doctrines.<sup>416</sup> Nevertheless, as Peterson asserts, this does not change the fact that “their fundamental claims are still soaked in those patterns of thought.”<sup>417</sup> Thus, what this may suggest is that postmodernists might have a disposition to exploit the forms and functions of antirealism and relativism as tools to promote and secure/protect their ideology<sup>418</sup> in the same way Kant, Berkeley, and the Party might have done with their own agendas. In other words, under the spell of the powerful, intentionally relativistic rhetoric, people might be rendered sceptical or apathetic to objective reality/truth, thereby allowing postmodern proponents (or anyone else for that matter) to determine reality/truth for them, unimpeded by dissent.

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<sup>414</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London: Routledge, 1994), 115.

<sup>415</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, xxiv.

<sup>416</sup> Jordan Peterson, “Postmodernism: Definition and Critique (with a Few Comments on Its Relationship with Marxism),” Jordan Peterson, last modified February 26, 2019, <https://bit.ly/36mCeFr>.

<sup>417</sup> Peterson, “Postmodernism: Definition and Critique.”

<sup>418</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 185–186.



### 3. ORWELL'S MESSAGE AND CONCLUSION

At this point, there are several questions that should not be left unanswered. What could the defeat of Winston at the end of the novel signify? And what is the message that Orwell might desire to convey to the readers of *1984*?

Generally speaking, what matters the most is whether one regards the novel as Orwell's warning which shows readers what is there to value and protect or Orwell's "own loss of confidence in the values that he most highly prized and had made his signature"<sup>419</sup> that subsequently ends with no hope or message for the present or the future whatsoever – the argument of which might be supported by the fact that Orwell was not in good mental and physical health during the writing of the novel.<sup>420</sup>

On the latter hypothesis, Orwell might be attempting to persuade readers that Winston is wrong since he ultimately gets defeated by O'Brien/the Party. Winston's philosophy before the last torture scene (i.e. his realism and belief in objective truth) would in some sense be regarded as mistaken/incorrect by Orwell and O'Brien's/Party's one as the suitable alternative.<sup>421</sup>

Nonetheless, such a theory, attractive though it may be, seems to be flawed. First, it would negate the whole body of both fictional and non-fictional works in which Orwell consistently displays his proclivity towards epistemological/metaphysical realism and the tireless defence of the notion of objective truth – the contentions of which can be bolstered by evidence from many literary critics (see subchapters 2.1 and 2.3). These Orwell's principles are completely incongruous with O'Brien's/the Party's ones. It is hard to imagine that Orwell would betray the philosophy for which he stood up his whole life.

Second, it would devalue the whole message that Orwell allegedly wants to communicate. In one of his letters, Orwell states that he wrote the book "as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realised in Communism and Fascism."<sup>422</sup> Further, he adds: "I do not believe that the kind of society that I describe [in *1984*] necessarily will arrive, but I believe [...] that something resembling it could arrive. I believe [...] that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical

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<sup>419</sup> Gleason, "Puritanism and Power Politics during the Cold War," 74.

<sup>420</sup> Margaret Drabble, "Of Beasts and Men: Orwell on Beastliness," in *On 'Nineteen Eighty-Four': Orwell and Our Future*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha C. Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 45.

<sup>421</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 289–290.

<sup>422</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 502.

consequences.”<sup>423</sup> He emphasises that the goal of the book is to unveil that “totalitarianism, *if not fought against*, could triumph anywhere.”<sup>424</sup> Judging by this, it is apparent that the Party’s principles are esteemed as something amiss that needs to be *fought against*.

Third, Orwell admits that *1984* is satirical.<sup>425</sup> This satire is palpably voiced in the Party’s irrationality (for example, when O’Brien tries to prevail on Winston that he sees five fingers instead of four) which, according to Chai, “is exaggerated to a near-comical level to highlight a need for rationality.”<sup>426</sup> However, this satire does not seem to apply to Winston. He does not represent “a satirical character, but a satirist character”<sup>427</sup> who denounces the flaws to which Orwell wants to direct the reader’s attention.<sup>428</sup>

Furthermore, what is also crucial to spot is that though the novel ends tragically, there are still hopeful notes present.<sup>429</sup> This, as some critics point out, is particularly noticeable in the Appendix of *1984*, which “is written in the past tense and in Oldspeak, suggesting the passing of the Party into history by the time the appendix is written.”<sup>430</sup>

Another glimmer of hope can be demonstrated by recalling that the Party’s philosophy still yields logical contradictions, and the Party, Conant argues, has to “expend an enormous amount of energy to hide from itself the fact that there is a world going on behind its back – beyond its practices – which condemns those practices.”<sup>431</sup> However, despite that effort, facts still emerge and need to be constantly falsified or eliminated. Nevertheless, the Party cannot annihilate them altogether as they need to turn to brute facts whenever it is necessitated by their ideology. Hence, in order to be able to manipulate it, they still need to retain the notion of objective truth, and the factual exactness is still indispensable.<sup>432</sup> This results in DOUBLETHINK – or what Orwell normally dubs ‘schizophrenia’. This term, as shown in section 2.3, Orwell utilises pejoratively to describe those people/political systems who in spite of their ignorance and denial of truth are somehow secretly aware of it. They are what Orwell calls “the ruling caste” that deceives “their followers without deceiving themselves.”<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 502.

<sup>424</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 502.

<sup>425</sup> Orwell, *CEJLA*, 502.

<sup>426</sup> Howard Chai, “George Orwell’s Enlightening and Modern ‘1984’,” Medium, last modified March 22, 2017, <https://medium.com/@howard24/george-orwells-enlightening-and-modern-1984-3669206c44d8>.

<sup>427</sup> Chai, “George Orwell’s Enlightening and Modern ‘1984’.”

<sup>428</sup> Chai, “George Orwell’s Enlightening and Modern ‘1984’.”

<sup>429</sup> Anthony Stewart, *George Orwell, Doubleness, and the Value of Decency*, ed. William E. Cain (London: Routledge, 2003), 148, 152.

<sup>430</sup> Stewart, *George Orwell, Doubleness, and the Value of Decency*, 148.

<sup>431</sup> Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” 309.

<sup>432</sup> Dwan, “Truth and Freedom in Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four,” 381–393.

<sup>433</sup> Orwell, *CEJLI*, 376.

The same pertains to Winston. Admittedly, in the end, Winston is broken by O'Brien/the Party and does largely adopt their philosophy. However, the objective reality still seems to manifest to him from time to time, and hence there persists what Stewart identifies as "residual doubleness, left over even after all O'Brien has subjected him to."<sup>434</sup> That is probably the reason why Winston still needs to exercise CRIMESTOP to keep the unwelcomed thoughts at bay:

Winston worked it out. 'If he THINKS he floats off the floor, and if I simultaneously THINK I see him do it, then the thing happens.' Suddenly, like a lump of submerged wreckage breaking the surface of water, the thought burst into his mind: 'It doesn't really happen. We imagine it. It is hallucination.' He pushed the thought under instantly. [...] He set to work to exercise himself in crimestop. He presented himself with propositions—"the Party says the earth is flat", 'the party says that ice is heavier than water'—and trained himself in not seeing or not understanding the arguments that contradicted them. It was not easy. It needed great powers of reasoning and improvisation. The arithmetical problems raised, for instance, by such a statement as 'two and two make five' were beyond his intellectual grasp. It needed also a sort of athleticism of mind, an ability at one moment to make the most delicate use of logic and at the next to be unconscious of the crudest logical errors. Stupidity was as necessary as intelligence, and as difficult to attain.<sup>435</sup>

What Orwell appears to communicate is that the denial of objective reality and truth inescapably leads to severe logical contradictions with which one has to cope with by being expert at crimestop and doublethink. This could be understood as a sort of Orwell's mockery of the Party's philosophy which can never be consistent or fully reconciled; it is always 'schizophrenic'. Furthermore, similar ridicule may also be expressed by noting that although Winston was promised by O'Brien that he would make him perfect,<sup>436</sup> he ends up being far from the flawless member of the Party. On the contrary, Crick stresses, he becomes "a miserable, beaten, frightened drunk, neither dedicated proletarian nor purified Aryan."<sup>437</sup>

To conclude, all the arguments above may suggest that though "Winston abandons his defence of objective truth, [...] it is not to say that the novel does."<sup>438</sup> After all, Ingle insists, it is indicated that there would still be some truths "independent of Big Brother and would stand despite the fact that the last man in Europe had lost faith in them."<sup>439</sup> In other words, Winston's defeat "should not invalidate the ideal of the self as expressed in Winston's best insights."<sup>440</sup> Readers of *1984* should recognise that the fact that Winston was broken does not mean that he

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<sup>434</sup> Stewart, *George Orwell, Doubleness, and the Value of Decency*, 148.

<sup>435</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 351.

<sup>436</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 308.

<sup>437</sup> Bernard Crick, *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell* (Penguin, 1994), xiii.

<sup>438</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>439</sup> Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," 10.

<sup>440</sup> Mason Harris, "From History to Psychological Grotesque: The Politics of Sado-Masochism in Nineteen Eighty-Four," in *George Orwell: A Reassessment*, ed. Ira B. Nadel and Peter Buitenhuis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 50.

had been mistaken.<sup>441</sup> According to Nussbaum, what Orwell seems to underline is that Winston epitomises “a good case of the human spirit and of the possibilities of creativity and resistance of which that spirit is capable.”<sup>442</sup> This is approved by Crick who notes correspondingly that Winston “is actually a very brave man: he holds out for truth under torture astonishingly long.”<sup>443</sup>

Based on these observations, the former option feels more plausible; *1984* is likely to be Orwell’s warning against O’Brien’s/the Party’s ideology<sup>444,445,446</sup> which “by illustrating what can happen when our basic assumptions and beliefs are negated or reversed, [...] forces us to see anew what there is to value.”<sup>447</sup> But warning against what specifically? And what exactly is there to be valued? Apart from the obvious criticism of totalitarian regimes, *1984* might be read as a type of a cautionary tale against philosophical doctrines that those regimes might employ to achieve their ends.

Above all, *1984* might be viewed as “a warning against the social and political implications of anti-realism.”<sup>448</sup> The novel thus constitutes a defence of realism.<sup>449,450,451</sup> This can be buttressed by what has been evidenced throughout this paper in relation to Orwell’s philosophy.

Subchapter 2.1 outlined that although it is difficult to decide on the precise subcategory, Orwell himself (plus his alter ego Winston), can be classified as an epistemological realist; he believes that there is a link between the mind and the world. It is through the mind – i.e. via reason and senses – that one is anchored to reality. Nevertheless, Orwell is not excessively naïve; owing to the egocentric predicament, he admits that he cannot disprove that experience is merely a subjective/social construct, God’s idea or a matrix-like illusion, but that does not denote that such theories are correct and one should abide by them. He thus continues to trust

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<sup>441</sup> Ingle, “Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and ‘The Truth’,” 10.

<sup>442</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, “The Death of Pity: Orwell and American Political Life,” in *On ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’: Orwell and Our Future*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha C. Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 292.

<sup>443</sup> Bernard Crick, “Bernard Crick on the Novel as Satire,” in *Bloom’s Guides: 1984*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), 77.

<sup>444</sup> Stewart, *George Orwell, Doubtless, and the Value of Decency*, 148.

<sup>445</sup> Conant, “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell,” 294.

<sup>446</sup> Harris, “From History to Psychological Grotesque,” 49.

<sup>447</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, “Mind Control in Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four: Fictional Concepts Become Operational Realities of Jones’s Jungle Experiment,” in *On ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’: Orwell and Our Future*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha C. Nussbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 130.

<sup>448</sup> Chapman, “How could you tell how much of it was lies?,” 77.

<sup>449</sup> Stephen R. Clark, “Orwell and the Anti-Realists,” *Philosophy* 67, no. 260 (1992): 141–154, doi:10.1017/s0031819100039565.

<sup>450</sup> Inwagen, “Was George Orwell a Metaphysical Realist?,” 163.

<sup>451</sup> Chapman, “How could you tell how much of it was lies?,” 77.

his mental faculties *in spite of* the epistemic and cognitive limits. Orwell's response to the problems in epistemology is comparable to that of contemporary realists who also remain optimistic when confronted with overly sceptical arguments.

Besides this, the section explicated that Orwell/Winston can be esteemed as a metaphysical realist – the position of which springs from his epistemological views. For him, just like for many other present-day realists, the source of experience is not God, supercomputer, or a collective of people. For them, it is primarily the mind-independent, physical world with its qualities that gives rise to experience. People are linked to this world and interact with it. Again, its existence may be unprovable and indemonstrable but that should not compel people to deliberately bracket it. Quite the opposite, what Orwell presumably intends to underscore is that people should show some respect for the material reality, for as Kingsley adds, the absence of it might open the door for people like O'Brien/the Party.<sup>452</sup>

In *1984*, Orwell throws light on how this door may be unlocked. Evil people may try to dislocate the sense of reality and consequently redefine it in their image. The novel thus exposes the dangers “of the ultimate and absolute power which mind can develop when it frees itself from conditions, from the bondage of things and history.”<sup>453</sup> In other words, as Sandison asserts, “to permit the infringement of the individual's right to act on the evidence of his sense, or to allow the violation of the natural laws or to deny objective reality, was to take the first step towards subservience to the totalitarian.”<sup>454</sup> Hence, as it is argued, this is “the warning we may draw from Orwell about the legacy of philosophical realism. If we lose the legacy, we must face the eventuality of a Nineteen Eighty-Four sort of totalitarianism.”<sup>455</sup> That is partly due to the reason that the loss of the legacy may lead to self-serving relativism which is oftentimes associated with these regimes.<sup>456</sup>

As postulated in subchapter 2.3, Orwell (and Winston – for most of the novel) seems to hold a thoroughly realist conception of truth. Premised on the correspondence theory, he retains the notion of objective, universal, timeless truth(s) and affirms that the validity of claims can be distinguished; some assertions are simply truer than others. Despite his biases and limits, he aspires to find and face the facts which are considered discoverable – not constructed. Such assumptions are the exact opposite of relativistic theories of truth. Indeed, as expressed in his

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<sup>452</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question,” 46, 52.

<sup>453</sup> Lionel Trilling, “George Orwell and the Politics of Truth,” *Commentary Magazine*, March 1952, 225, <https://on.wsj.com/3b76syw>.

<sup>454</sup> Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984*, 169.

<sup>455</sup> William Casement, “Nineteen Eighty-Four and philosophical realism,” *Midwest Quarterly*, 1989, 228.

<sup>456</sup> Kingsley, “Epistemological Constructivism and George Orwell's Question,” 51–52.

essays, letters, etc., Orwell appears to object to the relativization of truth. Hence, as Ingle puts forward, it can be deduced that Orwell would not agree with the recent relativistic, philosophical trends.<sup>457</sup> In fact, it would be logical to propose that *1984* may be viewed as Orwell's rejection of relativism;<sup>458</sup> the dangers of which, according to Raymer, Orwell recognised "even before the threat of relativism loomed as large as it does today."<sup>459</sup>

As the last couple of subchapters undertook to establish, Orwell examines the risks and fallacies of the relativistic mindset in the novel *1984*. The Party desperately attempts to deny the objective reality and truth, yet they constantly rely on those concepts and hence cannot be deemed as relativists at all. On the contrary, they are in a schizophrenic state; they know the truth and only then try to distort it. This demonstrates that, in the hands of the Party, relativism functions as an ideological tool. Both physically and intellectually, the Party dismantles external standards and thereby deprives people of the ability to discriminate between the claims or criticise anything. This way, relativism enables the ruling caste to create knowledge vacuum which is immediately accompanied by an unquenchable thirst for some truth in their victims, "while rejecting any means for assessing its validity."<sup>460</sup> This should lead to the 'anything goes' scenario in which all claims for truth are equal, but as Orwell accentuates through Winston, this is never the case. The powers that be are always ready to satisfy this demand for truth and provide people with the right and only 'truth'. As Conant articulates it, the primary aim "is to bring about a state of affairs in which all people are free to say what they like and yet perfect consensus reigns."<sup>461</sup> What Orwell supposedly emphasises is that there is always some dominant narrative that thrives even in the most seemingly relativized atmospheres. In such places, Conant adds, "you can say whatever you like, but it will hardly differ from what anyone else says."<sup>462</sup>

If the premise that *1984* constitutes Orwell's warning against the philosophy of the Party is accepted, it may be extrapolated that those who adhere to the same or similar principles as the Party would be condemned by Orwell as well. As argued throughout this paper, out of the philosophical movements listed in Chapter 1, the Party seems to share the preponderance of

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<sup>457</sup> Ingle, "Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'," 9.

<sup>458</sup> Miles Raymer, "Review: George Orwell's '1984': Words and Dirt," Words and Dirt, last modified January 6, 2018, <https://www.words-and-dirt.com/words/review-george-orwells-1984/>.

<sup>459</sup> Raymer, "Review: George Orwell's '1984'."

<sup>460</sup> Dwan, "Truth and Freedom in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four," 381–393.

<sup>461</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 312.

<sup>462</sup> Conant, "Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell," 312.

philosophical assumptions with postmodernism.<sup>463,464</sup> In fact, Pinker advocates that “the philosophy of the regime is thoroughly postmodernist.”<sup>465</sup>

Some of these fundamental similarities have been discussed in subchapters 2.2 and 2.4. Both postmodernists and the Party can be categorised as epistemological antirealists. Both ostensibly hold that there is no unity between the mind and what realists call ‘the mind-independent reality’. No knowledge is possible and sensory experience might as well be regarded as an ontologically arbitrary construct or illusion. Furthermore, both the Party and postmodernists could be perceived as metaphysical antirealists who allege that reality with its facts and laws is a construct dependent upon and determined by the collective of minds – the reality should be whatever those minds authenticate as real. In both cases, this metaphysical position that denies the existence of mind-independent, physical reality but does not oppose other collective minds to which, on the contrary, it gives a major priority, can be described as ‘collective solipsism’.

Consequently, both the Party and postmodernists seemingly subscribe to relativism; they deny that there can be any objective, universal truth(s), which also implicates that all claims are equal. According to both, truth constitutes nothing more than a useful, relative fiction which is not discovered but constructed based on socially manufactured inventions that realists credulously call facts and laws.

However, subchapter 2.5 has revealed that neither the Party nor postmodernists seem to hold these doctrines in real life, and as a result, their philosophies contain a multitude of contradictions. In reality, they behave as epistemological/metaphysical realists who believe in the notion of truth and discriminate between claims.

Thus, as has been argued in subchapter 2.6, what this might suggest is that the Party and postmodernists (just like Kant and Berkeley) may have their own political agenda to preach and might be inclined to exploit those philosophical doctrines (i.e. forms of antirealism and relativism) with an intention to advance it and protect it from criticism. This might be conducted through the attack on epistemology which is consequently followed by the charge against mind-independent entities and objective truth – the resulting emptiness of which is to be filled with new ideals and beliefs. This argument can be reinforced by noting that just like the Party, many

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<sup>463</sup> For a further detailed analysis of the commonalities between the Party and one of the leading postmodernists Richard Rorty, see Conant “Freedom, Cruelty, and Truth: Rorty versus Orwell.”

<sup>464</sup> There could be many other overlaps between the Party’s and postmodern philosophies that have not been included in this paper and which would deserve a separate analysis. Some of these involve the denial of human nature, a tendency towards identifying Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ as the driving force of humans, linguistic idealism and determinism, an inclination to distort language, etc.

<sup>465</sup> Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, 363.

postmodernists might have the unifying political motivation (i.e. Marxism) that may be driving them.

Since the Party and postmodernists appear to have a myriad of beliefs in common, in relation to the recent trends in philosophy, *1984* has now been viewed by some critics as the condemnation of postmodernism.<sup>466</sup> As Dickstein suggests, “Orwell treats totalitarianism as the forerunner of what we today think of as postmodern relativism.”<sup>467,468</sup> What ultimately distinguishes postmodernists from the Party is the way they might be implanting their ideology. Unlike the Party, postmodernists are less radical (in means) and somewhat more theoretical; they have an inclination for using language<sup>469</sup>— rather than brute force — as a weapon.<sup>470</sup> The Party, on the other hand, ruthlessly puts the theory into practice and makes use of psychological and physical torture, elimination and fabrication of facts, propaganda, etc., to shove their worldview down the victim’s throat. Nevertheless, though the approach of postmodernism differs from that of the Party, in the wrong hands, its analogous mode of thought may theoretically produce the same unfortunate outcome as in *1984*; political indoctrination of an individual who through various means of persuasion has lost faith in the existence and discoverability of objective world and truth.

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<sup>466</sup> Goldstein, “Orwell as a (Neo)conservative: The Reception of 1984,” 44.

<sup>467</sup> Morris Dickstein, “Animal Farm: history as fable,” in *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, ed. John Rodden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>468</sup> While it is likely that Orwell would condemn most philosophical tenets of postmodernism (apart from those listed in this paper; the postmodern denial of human nature, linguistic idealism and determinism, excessive and confusing verbiage, etc.) being a social democrat, he would probably welcome the liberation of the oppressed to which the postmodern zeitgeist might have contributed to some extent.

<sup>469</sup> Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, 91.

<sup>470</sup> However, it might be ventured that implicit power of this sort may be all the more dangerous than that present in explicit, physical coercion.



## 4. RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je s využitím relevantních sekundárních zdrojů zmapovat způsoby, jakými Orwell ve svém díle nahlíží na pravdu a s ní spojené, filozofické koncepty. Práce je rozdělena na tři kapitoly. První kapitola představuje teoretickou část, která je rozčleněna na dvě podkapitoly.

Úvodní podkapitola se zabývá problémy epistemologie<sup>471</sup> a metafyziky, protože jsou to právě poznatky z těchto filozofických disciplín, které přímo ovlivňují postoj k pravdě. Filozofové se dají rozdělit do dvou skupin; epistemologický realismus, který vyjadřuje možnost dosažení poznání o externí realitě a epistemologický antirealismus, jenž toto popírá. Epistemologický antirealismus bývá podporován v reakci na fakt, že smyslové vnímání často podléhá zkreslení, či klamu. K tomuto skepticizmu také přispívá skutečnost, že kvůli tzv. egocentrickému predikamentu není možné se vymanit ze své tělesné schránky s cílem ověřit, zdali smyslová data odpovídají externí realitě. Na tyto jevy upozornil Berkeley, který následně odmítnul Lockův realismus, jenž zastává, že smyslová data se mohou alespoň v některých aspektech podobat fyzickým objektům. To ovšem nebyla jediná Berkeleyho reakce. Protože se Berkeley nedokázal osvobodit od egocentrického predikamentu, neshledal žádný důvod pro víru, že existuje externí, fyzická realita. Berkeley následně tento fyzický zdroj poznání vyměnil za Boha a přijmul tak formu tzv. metafyzického antirealismu, který zdůrazňuje, že veškerá realita je závislá na něčí mysli. Naopak Locke, který připouští možnost na mysli nezávislého světa, se dá považovat za metafyzického realistu.

Ještě radikálnější formou metafyzického antirealismu je solipsismus, jenž poukazuje na to, že existuje pouze realita jedince. Mimo tohoto subjektu, tj. mimo skutečnost sebe sama, neexistuje nic. Přestože tento postoj nezastávalo příliš mnoho filozofů, dá se tvrdit, že idealisté a postmodernisté tíhnou tímto směrem, protože zpochybňují status na mysli nezávislé reality a od absolutního solipsismu se zachraňují především tím, že připouští existenci jiných mentálních realit mimo té vlastní.

Postmodernisté reagovali podobným způsobem jako Kant, který měl na postmoderní filozofii poměrně značný vliv. Většina postmodernistů přijala Kantovo tvrzení, že poznání je nedosažitelné. Ovšem na rozdíl od Kanta, který alespoň implicitně předpokládal na mysli nezávislé jsoucno, které se nějakým způsobem odráží do lidské subjektivní reality, mnoho postmodernistů odmítlo, že by tato realita mohla být ovlivněna něčím, co přesahuje mysl.

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<sup>471</sup> Mimo anglosaskou literaturu se častěji používá termín „gnozeologie“.

Existence a vliv této domnělé externí reality je tedy zpochybněna. Na místo toho postmodernisté obvykle shledávají, že realita není tvořena individuálně jako v případě solipsismu, nýbrž je vykonstruovaná sociálně.

Poslední reakcí je pak pokračování v tradici epistemologického/metafyzického realismu. Filozofové a vědci, kteří vykazují charakteristiky tohoto směru, jsou obvykle filozofickými optimisty. Věří, že navzdory limitům smyslového vnímání a egocentrického predikamentu existuje nějaké spojení mezi objektivní a subjektivní realitou (většinou kauzální), a tedy je možné dosáhnout alespoň relativně přesného poznání. Přestože odmítají naivní realismus, stejnou měrou zavrhují skepticismus idealistů, postmodernistů a dalších. Uvědomují si, že egocentrický predikament zamezuje prokazatelnému ověření hypotézy, že na mysli nezávislá, fyzická realita skutečně existuje. Přesto zastávají předpoklad, že svět je společně se svými fakty a zákony oproštěn od jakékoliv mysli. Výše zmíněná tvrzení mohou být pouze instinktivním přesvědčením. To ovšem neznamená, že bychom od nich měli zcela opustit (tj. přijmout solipsismus), nebo hledat alternativu v podobě metafyzického antirealismu idealistů, postmodernistů a dalších.

Druhá podkapitola popisuje, jak výše zmíněné filozofické předpoklady ovlivňují postoj k pravdě. Díky tomu, že si realisté zachovávají koncept objektivní reality a její dosažitelnosti pomocí smyslů a rozumu, ideál objektivní pravdy, tj. korespondence mezi faktem a myšlenkou, zůstává zachován; věčné, neměnné pravdy existují. Realisté aspirují na dosažení takových pravd a rezolutně odmítají relativistické teorie.

Právě relativismus je jednou z doktrín, ke které se mnoho postmodernistů, ať již vědomě, či nevědomě, přihlásilo. Postmodernisté odmítají jakékoliv objektivní standardy pravdy. To, co realisté považují za pravdu, je pouze relativní, užitečná fikce, či sociální konstrukt, založený na lidsky zhotovených „faktech“.

Druhá kapitola a její podkapitoly se zaměřují na analýzu konceptu pravdy v díle George Orwella. Orwell se dá pokládat za epistemologického realistu, který zastává, že existuje nějaké univerzální spojení mezi subjektivní a objektivní realitou. K tomu přispívá fakt, že Orwell vykazuje určitý vztah k tradičnímu empiricismu. Mimo četnou literární kritiku, jsou tyto skutečnosti poměrně jasně vyjádřeny skrze alter ego Winstona v románu *1984*. S určitostí se nedá určit, do jaké podkategorie Orwell patří. Nicméně je pravděpodobné, že není zcela naivním realistou, protože si uvědomuje problém egocentrického predikamentu. Na toto uvědomění Orwell ovšem reaguje jinak nežli idealisté, postmodernisté apod. Odmítá se vzdát svého přesvědčení, že na duchu nezávislý, fyzický svět existuje a může být vhodně zprostředkován skrze smyslové orgány. Orwell se tedy dá pokládat za metafyzického realistu,

což je opět patrné i z jeho alter ega v *1984*. Orwellova reakce je tak podobná odpovědi současných pokračovatelů realismu, kteří navzdory problémům v epistemologii zachovávají svá optimistická přesvědčení o existenci a „objevitelnosti“ reality.

Filozofie Strany je pravým opakem. Na rozdíl od Orwella/Winstona, podporují epistemologický antirealismus; tj. popírají, že by existovalo nějaké univerzální, nenarušitelné propojení mezi lidskou myslí a světem. Smyslové zkušenosti nejsou ontologicky motivované. Strana sdílí tento základní axiom společně s idealisty a postmodernisty.

Co se týká metafyzických postojů, principy Strany se rovněž značně liší od stanovisek Orwella/Winstona. V obecné rovině je opodstatněné považovat Stranu za podporovatele metafyzického antirealismu, protože zdůrazňují, že realita je závislá na mysli. Přestože Strana odmítá jsoucnost externí, fyzické reality, nedá se brát za zastávce solipsismu, neboť je patrné, že přiznávají existenci mysli ostatních lidí, především pak členů Strany. Podle Strany je tak realita podřízená společenství mysli; jinými slovy, je vytvářena sociálně. Tato metafyzická teorie se dá souhrnně popsat jako „kolektivní solipsismus“, který je nápadně podobný metafyzické teorii postmoderních myslitelů, jenž také zpochybňují existenci vnější, fyzické reality a kladou důraz na sociální konstruktivismus.

Třetí podkapitola se specificky zabývá postoji Orwella a Winstona k pravdě. Orwellova koncepce se zdá být v souladu s realistickým pojetím; fakta existují a lze je objevit. Pojem objektivní pravdy je tak pro Orwella zachován; existují pravdy, které jsou platné nezávisle na lidských záležitostech. Takové pravdy nejsou relativní, nýbrž věčné a neměnné. Nicméně, Orwell zdůrazňuje, že přestože objektivní pravdy existují a jsou v principu objevitelné, kvůli lidské předpojatosti a kognitivním zkreslením není vždy realizovatelné na ně dosáhnout. Tento fakt ovšem neznamená vzdát se snahy o přiblížení se k pravdě, či odmítat rozlišovat mezi pravdou a lží. Pro Orwella je naopak nezbytné čelit faktům, bojovat proti svým předsudkům a neustále se tak přibližovat k pravdě. Toto odmítnutí relativismu a ambice na dosažení pravdy jsou typickými znaky realistického chápání pravdy. Orwellovo pojetí je opět implementováno v jeho alter ega Winstonovi, který rovněž po většinu románu touží po dosažení objektivní pravdy. Tato snaha je však zhcena Stranou.

Čtvrtá podkapitola pojednává právě o tom, jak O'Brien/Strana nahlíží na fakta, pravdu apod. Jejich představa pravdy je naprosto rozdílná od Orwella/Winstona. Podle Strany neexistují žádná objektivní fakta; jedná se pouze o sociálně vykonstruované fikce. „Pravda“ není objevena na základě korespondence s objektivními fakty, nýbrž je sestrojena za použití těchto fikcí. Samotná existence objektivní pravdy je tímto zavrhnuta; neexistují žádné věčné, neměnné pravdy. Pro Stranu je pravda relativní, proměnlivá. V mnoha ohledech je tato

koncepce pravdy přirovnatelná k pojetí postmodernistů, kteří rovněž podřívají standardní korespondenční teorii pravdy, a tak mají tendenci k relativistické doktríně.

Pátá podkapitola se zaměřuje na logické kontradikce, kterými filozofie Strany oplývá. Přestože se zdá, že Strana zastává epistemologický/metafyzický antirealismus a relativistické pojetí pravdy, sama podle těchto principů často nejedná. Ve spoustě situacích se naopak chovají jako realisté, kteří si jsou vědomi existence a objevitelnosti externí, fyzické reality, faktů a objektivní pravdy. Obdobné kontradikce se dají pozorovat v postmoderní teorii. Tyto skutečnosti naznačují tomu, že jak Strana, tak postmodernisté sami nevyznávají výše zmíněná smýšlení, ale pouze je z nějakého důvodu předstírají.

Šestá podkapitola se zabývá otázkou, proč by Strana, postmodernisté a další filozofové mohli předstírat zastávání těchto filozofických doktrín. Na příkladu Kanta a Berkeleyho je zjevné, že důvody pro epistemologický antirealismus nejsou čistě filozofické. Oba tyto filozofové měli náboženský důvod pro zapření možnosti poznání. Tímto odstrižením mysli od světa Kant a Berkeley dosahují zpochybnění existence externí reality, a tedy i objektivní pravdy. Nakonec je dosaženo určité formy relativismu, který zamezuje kritice víry.

Právě znemožnění jakékoliv možnosti porovnávání či kritiky nároků na pravdu, může být jednou z funkcí relativismu. Stejnou strategii používá i Strana. Pomocí zpochybnování, a dokonce i fyzické likvidace externích standardů dosahují znesnadnění nesouhlasných projevů. Stejně tak oslabují schopnost rozlišovat mezi jednotlivými výroky. Vše se tedy v principu může stát „pravdou“. Tento postup se dá vztáhnout k jednání některých postmodernistů, kteří svojí tendencí k relativismu rovněž zamezují kritice a porovnávání nároků na pravdu.

Druhou ideologickou funkcí relativismu pak může paradoxně být implantace nové pravdy, což je zřetelné z toho, jak O'Brien/Strana postupuje při indoktrinaci Winstona. Jako Kant a Berkeley, Strana nejdříve podřívá Winstonovu víru ve své smysly. Kvůli egocentrickému predikamentu se Winston nedokáže bránit, a nakonec pod silným mučením přijímá epistemologický antirealismus. V momentě, kdy O'Brien/Strana přeruší toto zásadní Winstonovo spojení s objektivním světem, už nic nebrání tomu napadnout jeho metafyzický realismus a koncepci objektivní pravdy. Za použití nezpochybnitelných tvrzení a extrémního mučení, O'Brien/Strana nakonec dosahuje tíženého cíle; Winston opouští zbytky svého metafyzického realismu a přijímá kolektivní solipsismus. Zbavuje se i svého (subjektivního) standardu instinktivního pocitu, který do té doby poháněl jeho touhu po pravdě. Winston se tímto způsobem dostává tak blízko k autentickému relativismu, jak je jen možné. Nicméně, ryzí relativismus není možný, neboť lidé musí diferenciovat; potřebují nějaké jistoty, kterými

by se mohli řídit. Ve své žízni po takové jistotě Winston přijímá jediný narativ, který je v relativizovaném prostředí Oceánie možný a dostupný, a to je ideologie Ingsoc.

I přestože je tento postup Strany mnohem fyzičtější a explicitnější, dá se argumentovat, že postmodernisté postupují podobně; mají tendenci podporovat epistemologický a metafyzický antirealismus, který v mnoha případech doplňují relativistickou teorií pravdy s cílem oslabit jistoty jedinců. Stejně jako v případě Kanta, Berkeleyho a Strany je možné prohlásit, že postmodernisté by mohli zneužívat tyto doktríny z ideologických důvodů. K tomu napovídá i důvodné podezření, že většina postmoderních filozofů, včetně lidí, kteří se k tomuto směru hlásí, má spojení s krajní levicí a Marxismem, jenž by mohl motivovat postmoderní filozofii.

Poslední kapitola řeší otázky Orwellova poselství a zároveň shrnuje poznatky z předchozích kapitol, jenž dotahuje do logických závěrů. Ve svých esejích, denících a rovněž skrze svoji alter ego postavu Winstona, Orwell vyjadřuje poměrně jasnou podporu epistemologického/metafyzického realismu a objektivní pravdy. Tyto filozofické domněnky jsou v přímém rozporu s filozofií Strany. Sám Orwell pak připouští, že napsal román *1984* jako upozornění na stav, který by mohl být nastolen, pokud by lidé zůstali neteční. Neposledními argumenty pro toto tvrzení je pak přítomnost satiry, či patrná naděje v apendixu. Podobná naděje je také vyjádřena Orwellovou implikací, že popření objektivní reality a pravdy, či lidské schopnosti tyto aspekty objevovat, vede ke kontradikcím, se kterými se jak Strana, tak i později Winston musí vypořádávat pomocí techniky *doublethink* a *crimestop*, jenž Orwell pejorativně připodobňuje ke schizofrenii.

Na základě těchto a dalších poznatků je možné konstatovat, že přesto, že Winston nakonec podléhá Straně, neznamená to, že tato kniha, či její autor ztrácí naději. Naopak, dá se říct, že Orwell se snaží přenést poselství o hodnotách a přesvědčeních, jenž jsou podle něj hodné obrany před těmi, kteří takové principy nevyznávají. Román *1984* je především možné považovat za varování před důsledky prosazování forem filozofického antirealismu a relativismu. Vzhledem k tomu, že filozofie Strany se v mnoha ohledech podobá zásadám postmoderní teorie, dá se extrapolovat, že *1984* představuje v určitém směru i zavrnutí postmodernismu a s tím spojených filozofických principů.

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