

<b>Makale Bilgisi:</b> Karagöz, C. (2024). George Orwell'in 1984 Romanını Frommcu Açısından Okumak. DEÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Cilt:11, Sayı:2, ss.798-810.	<b>Article Info:</b> Karagöz, C. (2024). Formmian Reading of George Orwell's 1984. DEU Journal of Humanities, Volume:11, Issue:2, pp.798-810.
<b>Kategori:</b> Araştırma Makalesi	<b>Category:</b> Research Article
<b>DOI:</b> 10.69878/deuefad.1480013	<b>DOI:</b> 10.69878/deuefad.1480013
<b>Gönderildiği Tarih:</b> 07.05.2424	<b>Date Submitted:</b> 07.05.2424
<b>Kabul Edildiği Tarih:</b> 12.08.2024	<b>Date Accepted:</b> 12.08.2024

## A FROMMIAN READING OF GEORGE ORWELL'S 1984

Cengiz Karagöz\*

### ABSTRACT

Although George Orwell's *1984* has been interpreted from a variety of theoretical perspectives, the narrative still reveals an opportunity to inquire into novel trajectories of arguments. It provides enough room for a reading especially in light of Erich Fromm's theoretical views. Erich Fromm is well-known for his criticism of modern society in which sadism, masochism and the crisis of freedom are outstanding features. For Fromm, since the Renaissance, modern individuals have found themselves entangled in a psychological state of loneliness, powerlessness and meaninglessness owing to their attempt to obtain freedom. Leaving behind traditional values and religious faith has not afforded them any freedom that they can be satisfied with; rather, lack of pre-modern values has caused them to embark on a quest for suppression of a feeling of impotence. That's why, sadist dictators like Big Brother desire to make up for a sense of insignificance by oppressing the masses while the masses become masochists by submitting blindly to his dictatorial authority as an indication of impotence. The novel offers the possibility of finding examples regarding how sadism and masochism foster the maintenance of each other in modern society in which acts of dominating and being dominated are commonly observed due to feelings of loss and emptiness.

**Keywords:** Erich Fromm, 1984, sadism, masochism, modern society

## GEORGE ORWELL'İN 1984 ROMANINI FROMMCU AÇIDAN OKUMAK

### ÖZ

George Orwell'in *1984* adlı romanı çeşitli teorik perspektiflerden yorumlanmış olsa da, anlatı hâlâ tartışmaların yeni yörüngelerini araştırma fırsatını ortaya koyar. Eser özellikle Erich Fromm'un teorik görüşleri ışığında bir okuma için yeterli alan sağlamaktadır. Erich Fromm, sadizm, mazoşizm ve özgürlük krizinin öne çıkan özellikleri olduğu modern topluma yönelik eleştirileriyle tanınır. Fromm'a göre,

\* Öğr. Gör. Dr. , [ckaragoz@nku.edu.tr](mailto:ckaragoz@nku.edu.tr), Tekirdağ Namık Kemal Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, ORCID: 0000-0002-7564-3815

Rönesans'tan bu yana modern bireyler, özgürlüğü elde etme çabaları nedeniyle kendilerini psikolojik bir yalnızlık, güçsüzlük ve anlamsızlık durumunun içinde bulmuşlardır. Geleneksel değerleri ve dini inancı geride bırakmak onlara tatmin olabilecekleri bir özgürlük sağlamamış; daha ziyade modern dönem öncesi değerlerin eksikliği, onların acizlik duygusunu bastırma arayışına girmelerine neden olmuştur. Bu nedenle Büyük Birader gibi sadist diktatörler, kitleleri ezerek acizlik duygusunu telafi etmek isterken, kitleler acizliğin göstergesi olarak diktatörlük otoritesine körü körüne teslim olup mazoşistleşiyorlar. Roman, kaybetme ve boşluk duyguları nedeniyle tahakküm kurma ve tahakküm altına alınma eylemlerinin yaygınlaştığı modern toplumda sadizm ve mazoşizmin birbirini sürdürmeyi nasıl beslediğine dair örnekler bulma olanağı sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Erich Fromm, 1984, sadizm, mazoşizm, modern toplum

## 1. INTRODUCTION

George Orwell is an acclaimed writer of modernist literature who witnessed brutality, horror, pessimism and war in the last century. As a writer of such widely known works as *1984*, *Animal Farm* and *Burmese Days*, Orwell orients his thematic concerns towards freedom, equality, colonialism, dystopian themes and modern political tendencies of totalitarian regimes. Especially *1984* has been open to much debate due to its focus on modern dictatorial systems, psychological effects of such regimes along with social and political tendencies of modern society.

The novel presents a range of topics ranging from totalitarian regimes and their potential impacts on society to the extent to which technological and scientific developments changed modern society negatively. Frodsham states: “The dehumanized society of 1984 is just such a world where the machine has triumphed over man and mechanical over human values. Orwell ... had long feared that the machine would come to dominate mankind” (Frodsham, 1984, p. 142). Dobson and Fisher argue that Orwell foresaw a different potential of “Panopticon” with the invention of “television” and assumed it as a device of “totalitarian government” and “surveillance” (Dobson&Fisher, 2007, p. 308-309). Lisboa discusses Orwell stresses the deprivation of “individuality” and society’s exposure to “mass-produced and quality-controlled emotion,” which changes from “love for Big Brother to all-surround TV and organized daily sessions of Hate” (Lisboa, 2011, p. 152). To put it in a different way, Orwell questions whether welfare and freedom of humanity moves forward optimistically in parallel with progressive theories of the previous period.

Orwell deals with the emergence of modern totalitarianism whose outcome remains a vain hope in terms of freedom, equality and democracy. He is claimed to have given a message to Britain concerning the potential risk that it could become a land of “totalitarianism” despite “its long and distinguished tradition of liberal values” (Ingle, 2010, p. 118). Ingle claims: “Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* within the British socialist tradition to

warn fellow socialists to be on their guard against an intellectual elite which he despised and which he believed to be chiefly interested in power for its own sake” (Ingle, 2010, p. 118). Having experienced the general mood of the twentieth century marked by the dictatorial regimes of Nazism, Fascism and Socialism, Orwell did not draw an optimistic picture about the modern political atmosphere.

Erich Fromm wrote an afterword on the novel as he possibly thought that the narrative concerns perceptions that are in tune with his theoretical stance on modern values. In the afterword, he considers that modern man’s progressive thoughts about a perfect future in which “justice and peace” would play a predominant role failed and ended with the ultimate triumph of widespread pessimism (Fromm, 1963, p. 204). According to Fromm, contrary to “the early utopias” stressing “the mood of self-confidence and hope of post-medieval man,” the novel appears as an example of a “negative utopia” which relates “the mood of powerlessness and hopelessness of modern man” (Fromm, 1963, p. 205). The afterword includes such general views of Fromm on the novel, but we cannot see any direct quotes referring to the text. In addition, there is no mention of sadism, masochism and other issues that he elaborates on in his books. Thus, this study aims to handle the novel again by extending the analysis further with an emphasis on Fromm’s critique of modern man and the unexpected consequences of modernization.

## **2. Frommian Theory on Modern Man and Modernity**

Erich Fromm is a German-born American psychiatrist whose theoretical views on general human nature, psychology and modernity are still discussed in social sciences. He attempts to shed light on humanity concerning the psychological crisis of modern society with an emphasis upon Europeans’ collective experiences being lived almost for the last five hundred years. His points of departure in his theoretical approaches concentrate on modern capitalist society, freedom, love, the effects of the industrial revolution on family life, individual relations as well as working life.

He calls attention to a set of characteristics that define the psychological state and plight of modern man. According to Fromm, due to industrialization and modernity, individuals have severed their deeply ingrained bonds to “traditions,” “common values” and other people, so they have been overcome with feelings of isolation and loneliness (Fromm, 1973, p. 107). Despite being “part of a crowd” and living together with other members of society, modern man reflects “no convictions which he could share with others” and has turned into “an a-tom (the Greek equivalent of ‘individual’ = indivisible), held together only by common, though often simultaneously antagonistic interests, and by the cash nexus” (Fromm, 1973, p. 107). He attains a sense of security on the condition that he feels “as similar as possible to his fellow man” and gains approval of other people; that is, “to be different,” “to find himself in a minority,” “any deviation from the pattern”

and “any criticism” are among the main factors that awaken “fear and insecurity” (Fromm, 2002, p. 191). Drawn into a course of action where he forces himself to bear a strong resemblance to the majority of mass society, modern man faces the prospect of losing his individuality and predispositions peculiar to himself. He begins to suppose that the more he resembles mass society in many respects, the more self-confidence he summons up.

The concept of freedom is also among the points that Fromm raises in his discussions. For Fromm, individuals have become subservient to “capitalist marketplace” which has restricted their “freedom” since the Renaissance and Reformation (McLaughlin, 2021, p. 87). Due to “the predominance of exploitive, alienating forms of life and activity” such as “the hierarchical, regimented modern workplace, the atomization of the modern family, competitive acquisitiveness, technological reification,” “free personhood” has been replaced with an anxious one (Thompson, 2020, p. 27-28). Concerning the radical changes occurring in modern subjects after the Renaissance, Erich Fromm argues:

“Not having the wealth or the power which the Renaissance capitalist had, and also having lost the sense of unity with men and the universe, he is overwhelmed with a sense of his individual – nothingness and helplessness. Paradise is lost for good, the individual stands alone and faces the world – a stranger thrown into a limitless and threatening world. The new freedom is bound to create a deep feeling of insecurity, powerlessness, doubt, aloneness, and anxiety. These feelings must be alleviated if the individual is to function successfully.” (Fromm, 1965, p. 81)

Modernity offers man a new world which is no longer governed by traditional values and previous hierarchies where his status was fixed and secure. Setting foot in a phase of life that modern man was not familiar with has left him subject to new pursuits and attempts to release himself from this psychological crisis. Fromm claims: “Modern man sees things differently. He is not as interested in being and becoming more as he is in having more. He wants a better job, more money, more power, more respect” (Fromm, 1986, p. 68). Removed from traditional ties and social norms commonly practiced in the pre-modern period, modern man puts forth great efforts to gain appreciation, material wealth and a better career.

Erich Fromm raises the interconnection between sadism and modern society in his arguments. He states: “The sadistic person wants to escape from his aloneness and his sense of imprisonment by making another person part and parcel of himself. He inflates and enhances himself by incorporating another person, who worships him” (Fromm, 1956, p. 20). In order to make a distinction between “sadism” and “destructiveness,” Fromm thinks that “destructiveness” is associated with “destroying the object,” “doing away with

it,” and “getting rid of it” whereas “the sadist wants to dominate his object and therefore suffers a loss if his object disappears” (Fromm, 1965, p. 181). He continues to define the concept as such: “Sadism aims at incorporation of the object; destructiveness at its removal. Sadism tends to strengthen the atomized individual by the domination over others; destructiveness by the absence of any threat from the outside” (Fromm, 1965, p. 202). Fromm describes “sadism” as one of the most severe malaises of modern society in which modern man, as a means of suppressing his loneliness and anxiety, tends to exercise authority and influence over others. Feeling concerned by lack of self-reliance, security and traditional values, he cannot adapt himself to the new social atmosphere that he has not been familiar with. Mired in a sense of emptiness, he aims to seek for new ways of reaching freedom by stretching his sphere of influence to the extent of oppressing and having authoritative power over other individuals.

The feeling of masochism emerges as one of Fromm’s basic arguments as regards modern society. Masochism is one of the instruments which aims to protect the modern “self” from concerns led by prompted by modernity (Thompson, 2020, p.39). As individuals may feel powerless, insignificant and inferior in modern culture, they tend to be dependent on “powers outside of themselves, on other people, or institutions, or nature” and “submit to the factual or alleged orders of these outside forces” (Fromm, 1965, p. 163-164). The underlying purpose behind the fact that “the individual seeks to submit to a person or power which he feels as being overwhelmingly strong” is “to get rid of the individual self, to lose oneself; in other words, to get rid of the burden of freedom” (Fromm, 1965, p. 173). Hence, modern values have not always triggered sadistic tendencies in all modern individuals and nor have influenced them in the same way. Whereas some have tried to dominate others with an inspiration from sadistic inclinations, masochist ones have shown a strong tendency to be dominated by those possessing sadistic symptoms.

Modern totalitarian regimes constitute an integral part of Erich Fromm’s research concerning modern society. He is of the opinion that modern dictatorial systems such as “Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism” found a large number of supporters as “the atomized individual” was in search of “a new refuge and security” (Fromm, 2002, p. 230). Fromm expresses: “The individual is made to feel powerless and insignificant, but taught to project all his human powers into the figure of the leader, the state, the ‘fatherland,’ to whom he has to submit and whom he has to worship” (Fromm, 2002, p. 230). In such systems, the manifest reflection of sadism-masochism relations might be observed; in other words, the sadist leader tries to compensate for “the sense of vital impotence” by exercising strict control and authority over the masochist masses struggling to neutralize “the sense of vital impotence” by conforming blindly to the will of the dictator (Fromm, 1973, p. 291-292). Both

the sadistic leader and the masochistic masses seem to be in need of each other as a means of seeking solace in master-slave relations.

### 3. A Frommian Reading of *1984*

*1984* epitomises the philosophy and theoretical views of Erich Fromm when it is treated from the perspective of the psychological crisis of modernity and modern society. In his “Preface on 1984,” Erich Fromm defines the novel as “despair about the future of man” and a message for humanity regarding the gloomy prospect of failing to preserve “human qualities” and turning into “soulless automatons” (Fromm, 1963, p. 204). George Orwell provides us with a political structure in Oceania where the modern dictator reflects sadistic inclinations and, through the use of force, brings the masses into conformity with a standardised pattern of living. The masses, through a masochistic disposition, follow the instructions imposed by a single party and identify strongly with Big Brother. The novel throws into question to what extent modern technology and development have improved the freedom and justice of humanity when compared with the Middle Ages and ancient times. The loss of traditional social relations based on close ties and firmly implanted family life fosters cold and uniform modes of attitudes as the modern political system imposes that.

Big Brother in the novel serves as a typical example of a sadistic leader who reminds the reader of characteristics put forward by Erich Fromm. He is depicted as the ultimate authority whose commands and decisions are put into practice without a slight opposition. Here, the author is likely to give an implicit message that political leaders in modern society, particularly in the totalitarian regimes, raise themselves above the level of ordinary human beings and receive pleasure from being elevated to the status of a semi-god.

“At the apex of the pyramid comes Big Brother. 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. Nobody has ever seen Big Brother. He is a face on the hoardings, a voice on the telescreen. We may be reasonably sure that he will never die, and there is already considerable uncertainty as to when he was born” (Orwell, 1949, p. 209).

According to the Frommian psychological norms, the sadistic attitudes of Big Brother emerge as a direct consequence of modernity. Big Brother seems to find satisfaction in keeping the masses under control and putting them under pressure. This is because he has lost his traditional values and strong social relations that prevent him from feeling powerless and lonely. Plagued by anxiety and lacking self-confidence, Big Brother takes refuge in making his society subservient. Lack of traditional values such as firm faith in God and close human ties brings him into a psychological state of loneliness and

meaninglessness. As a result, such a psychological crisis provokes sadistic acts of Big Brother which mean feeling the need to keep individuals enslaved.

The literary text makes references to the ways sadistic figures and their followers pay the way for a more rigid stratification of social classes cropping up after the 20th century than the previous ones. In the preceding centuries, the industrial revolution and capitalist system laid the foundation for the emergence of new middle classes as well as exploitation of the masses. Progressive ideas of science and technology failed to be marked by a favourable outcome in terms of alternative options being suited to actual conditions.

“But by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian. The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realizable. Every new political theory, by whatever name it called itself, led back to hierarchy and regimentation” (Orwell, 1949, p. 205).

New class distinctions in the modern dictatorial systems prompt us to question to what extent equality is achieved in modern society. The organisation of the class structure is performed according to the instructions of Big Brother and his party. In this stratification of classes, “the new aristocracy” consisting mainly of “bureaucrats, scientists, technicians, trade-union organizers, publicity experts, sociologists, teachers, journalists, and professional politicians” stand out as the new “middle class” above “the working class” (Orwell, 1949, p. 206). What these classes have basically in common is their ideology determined by Big Brother. Thus, according to the novel, while modern political structure under dictatorial regimes spreads economic inequality between classes, it restricts the classes to a single ideology.

The writer compares modern dictators with those of the previous ages and argues that the previous ones are not as oppressive as modern leaders. The novel narrates: “The ruling groups were always infected to some extent by liberal ideas, and were content to leave loose ends everywhere, to regard only the overt act and to be uninterested in what their subjects were thinking” (Orwell, 1949, p. 206). For Orwell, “[e]ven the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was tolerant by modern standards” (Orwell, 1949, p. 206). Then, it is possible to suppose that modernity orients political leaders towards sadistic tendencies which result in more severe and cruel political systems in the twentieth century than those in pre-modern periods.

“The invention of print, however, made it easier to manipulate public opinion, and the film and the radio carried the process further. With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end. Every citizen, or at least every citizen

important enough to be worth watching, could be kept for twenty-four hours a day under the eyes of the police and in the sound of official propaganda, with all other channels of communication closed” (1949, p. 206-207).

The text gives us the message that technical developments no longer serve the interests of the masses. They are used in favour of the sadistic ambitions of modern tyrants like Big Brother. The main function of technological devices is to subject society to a close observation and collect information about each individual. Protection of privacy is almost impossible due to “telescreens” constructed in houses. Also, the media brainwash the masses by propagating the single doctrine of the regime. Contrary to the previous expectations, technological developments do not bring freedom to the public life of modern society; instead, technology limits the realm of freedom for the masses while extending the authoritative power of Big Brother over the whole society. It seems logical to draw a parallel between restriction of freedom and development of modern technology.

In the novel, punishment of death and questioning methods in the Middle Ages are juxtaposed with those of modern governments, and it is recounted that the Inquisition is more honourable and less merciless than punishment methods in modern totalitarian regimes. According to the text, burning heretics in front of crowds might seem brutal, but those killed in conformity with the Inquisition remained firmly and honourably adherent to their beliefs till their last breath; as a result, the Inquisitor deserved to be condemned whereas the victim became a heroic person (Orwell, 1949, p. 257). However, modern dictatorial systems change their questioning and punishment methods in which human rights, freedom, mercy and justice are not valued.

“Later, in the twentieth century, there were the totalitarians, as they were called. There were the German Nazis and the Russian Communists. The Russians persecuted heresy more cruelly than the Inquisition had done. And they imagined that they had learned from the mistakes of the past; they knew, at any rate, that one must not make martyrs. Before they exposed their victims to public trial, they deliberately set themselves to destroy their dignity. They wore them down by torture and solitude until they were despicable, cringing wretches, confessing whatever was put into their mouths, covering themselves with abuse, accusing and sheltering behind one another, whimpering for mercy. And yet after only a few years the same thing had happened over again. The dead men had become martyrs and their degradation was forgotten. Once again, why was it? In the first place, because the confessions that they had made were obviously extorted and untrue” (Orwell, 1949, p. 257).



Sadistic inclinations of modern dictators dehumanise the judicial system and judgment to such a degree that victims lose their consciousness and confess whatever is imposed on them after a period of harsh physical and mental pain. Victims are forced to admit crimes that they did not commit. They are prevented from dying faithful to their beliefs and condemned to a death in the shadow of lies, dishonesty and coercion. Unlike the burned individuals in the Middle Ages, victims lose their dignity so that sadist leaders can maintain their authority with so-called dignity and disguise the real face of the system.

The narrative gives examples about the ways sadism and masochism add to each other for the smooth operation of the existing political order. The masses become masochistic as a result of being isolated from pre-modern ties with religion, traditions and social life. Talking with Winston about the system, O'Brien says: "The first thing you must realize is that power is collective. The individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual. You know the Party slogan: 'Freedom is Slavery.'" (Orwell, 1949, p. 267). This appears as the case where modern individuals have striven to attain freedom since the Middle Ages, but have not succeeded in reaching their ambition so far. In order to break loose from freedom whose boundaries they do not know and which they have never been acquainted with since the Middle Ages, they feel it necessary to submit to the sadistic character of Big Brother and his order. O'Brien says: "But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he is the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal" (Orwell, 1949, p. 267). The desire to obtain freedom and individuality since the Renaissance has evolved into a process in which modern individuals are tormented by a sense of loneliness and weakness; therefore, they believe that they will become powerful and satisfied on the condition that they identify with the authority of Big Brother and One Party. The political system urges the masses to devote themselves entirely to the ideological precepts of the party and to sacrifice their freedom. It is indispensable that atomised individuals in modern society turn into blind adherents to the doctrines of Big Brother.

The psychological state of sadism induces Big Brother to be heavily dependent on support and submission of the masses as he feels a sense of inadequacy and lacks self-confidence. Attributing weakness and helplessness to the masses as a means of self-defence mechanism, Big Brother tries to find justification for his sadistic rule. Masochistic character of the masses is exploited to his advantage:

"That the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority. That it sought power because men in the mass were frail, cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth, and must be ruled over and systematically deceived by others who were stronger than themselves. That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of

mankind, happiness was better. That the party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come, sacrificing its own happiness to that of others “ (Orwell, 1949, p. 265).

This illustrates the tragic case of sadist and masochist personalities, far removed from previous attachment to ancestral beliefs, customs and intimate social relations. A feeling of deprivation leaves Big Brother and the masses in a void that precludes them from knowing what to do with freedom. Engaged in a struggle to find a way of escaping from a heavy burden of freedom, both Big Brother and the masses place an excessive reliance on each other. For Big Brother’s party, the masses are so deeply devoid of help and protection that they need the dictator’s intervention in their freedom if they want to be happy. In a similar way, Big Brother gives the impression of needing to govern society with cruel restraints as a way of repressing his inability to cope with freedom.

The writer exhibits the decay of humane values and love in a social and political milieu governed by interdependence of sadistic and masochistic personalities. As well as a gradual falling into degeneration from the viewpoint of freedom and equality, the loss of social norms characterised by close and affectionate personal relationships becomes evident. Modern man’s strong and persistent desire for lost values belonging to pre-modern times is highlighted: “The old civilizations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph, and self-abasement. Everything else we shall destroy – everything” (Orwell, 1949, p. 270). The fact that humanity has become more modern in technological terms does not mean that love and social relations have improved in parallel with the progress. A deviation from previous familial relations where individuals begin to experience love seems inescapable: “Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex instinct will be eradicated ... Our neurologists are at work upon it now” (Orwell, 1949, p. 270). Science and technology are manipulated to repress the inborn need to procreate and to render assistance to the interests of the despotic regime. The close and warm ties between family members are removed: “We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer” (Orwell, 1949, p. 270). The political regime sees love relations between family members as a large obstacle to the regular running of the system. Big Brother aims to fill the place of parents and to direct the masses to transfer emotions of love to his authority: “There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother” (Orwell, 1949, p. 270). Psychological health of people is impaired with the aim of producing generations whose attachment to family is cut through brutal intervention in family bonds.

The narrative attracts the reader to notice uniformity and unvarying forms of behaviour resulting from a fixed set of patterns being determined by Big Brother and obeyed by the masses. The outcome of the policy that the party pursues is portrayed as follows: "...a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting – three hundred million people all with the same face" (Orwell, 1949, p. 74). The sadistic ambition provokes the dictator to erase all visible traces of individuality and individual ways of thinking and acting. Big Brother cannot tolerate any minor difference of belief and opinion and regards it as a threat. Since individuality means substantial divergence from the imposed norms, it might render ineffective the despotic system step by step and ultimately subvert the government.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

*1984* as a novel interpreted from a variety of theoretical perspectives provides us with much evidence suggestive of Erich Fromm's theoretical notions of modern man and modernity. Erich Fromm thinks that modernity, beginning from the Renaissance, stimulated individuals to believe that they could obtain freedom and happiness after abandoning pre-modern norms, traditions and religious belief. However, the result has been dashed expectations. Removed from traditional social relations and beliefs, modern individuals could not know what to do with freedom and found themselves stuck in a desolate sense of loss. This process of loneliness, impotence, anxiety and powerlessness culminated in psychological states of sadism and masochism. Modern dictators possessing sadistic tendencies needed to dominate and oppress the masses with the aim of suppressing a feeling of emptiness. Masochism figured in modern society as a result of a desire to form a strong attachment to a person. Masochist individuals associated themselves with the modern totalitarian regimes and took pleasure in being enslaved. That is, lack of conventional codes of behaviour left modern society in a void in which either enslaving or being enslaved plagued individuals. The prevailing atmosphere in modern society reflects uniformity and standardisation because individuals want to be a part of the dominant ideology as a method of escaping from loneliness and isolation.

Big Brother represents a sadistic personality that desires to dominate the masses and control strictly each step of their life. Owing to a sense of weakness and anxiety concerned with alienation from pre-modern values, he needs the existence of a group of people that he can put under pressure and impose mass-produced social norms on. Because he lacks self-confidence, he is haunted by insecurity and concern about the possibility of losing his authority over society. For this reason, telescreens are used to keep individuals under constant surveillance even inside their homes. The press assumes the role of disseminating one-sided information based on lies, exaggeration and distortion to promote the ideological doctrine of Big Brother. He derives

pleasure from restricting freedom of the masses and thus tries to satisfy his sadistic feelings. Any sign of opposition and departure from his despotic regime or any suspicion about such a prospect causes incarceration, torture and death.

The masses illustrate masochistic tendencies of modern individuals, no longer preserving their ties to tradition and religion and therefore feeling a sense of powerlessness. They have a strong tendency to compensate for such a predicament by committing themselves unreservedly to the sadistic desires of Big Brother. Becoming an ardent follower of his political system possibly provides some sort of deliverance from anxiety and loneliness caused by separation from deep-seated practices. They associate themselves with the dictator and suppose that freedom expresses meaninglessness and emptiness. Hence, real happiness may be achieved by participating in the collective soul, the criteria of which are dictated by the totalitarian system. Freedom is equivalent to obscurity and divergence from unity of the nation. Masochistic desires entail their blind devotion to the party without any suspicion and questioning. Profound dedication to the religious beliefs in the previous ages is replaced with faithful subservience to Big Brother and his sadistic ambitions.

The prevailing tone of society in the narrative is characterised by the loss of warm love relations and the emergence of a homogeneous societal pattern. The correlation between sadism and masochism destroys love relations in family life by educating little children in conformity with the mindset of the political order. They are brought up in such a way that they show unconditional loyalty to Big Brother and, if necessary, can sacrifice their parents for the sake of the regime. The masses are often gathered around slogans and national marches which declare immense dedication to the dictatorial system. Individuality is not a feature which can be observed in the modern despotic regime both because it is perceived as a threat and because it means a feeling of insecurity and isolation for the masses.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

**ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study. There are no participants in this study.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The authors did not receive any kind of financial support for this research.

**AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

This research and all its stages were conducted by the author

## REFERENCES

- Dobson, J. E., & Fisher, P. F. (2007). The Panopticon's Changing Geography. *Geographical Review*, 97(3), 307–323. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30034174>
- Frodsham, J. D. (1984). The New Barbarians: Totalitarianism, Terror and the Left Intelligentsia in Orwell's 1984. *World Affairs*, 147(3), 139–160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20672021>
- Fromm, E. (1963). Afterword on 1984. *Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four: Text, Sources, Criticism*, ed. Irving Home. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., pp. 204-210.
- Fromm, E. (1965). *Escape From Freedom*. New York: Avon Books.
- Fromm, E. (1986). *For the Love of Life*. Ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz. Trans. by Robert and Rita Kimber. New York: The Free Press.
- Fromm, E. (1956). *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Fromm, E. (1973). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Fromm, E. (2002). *The Sane Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ingle, S. (2010). *Nineteen Eighty-Four Promotes the Values of the Common People*. In Dedria Bryfonski (Ed.), *The Abuse of Power in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four* (pp. 115-128). Detroit: Greenhaven Press.
- Lisboa, M. M. (2011). *The End of the World: Apocalypse and its Aftermath in Western Culture* (1st ed.). Open Book Publishers.
- McLaughlin, N. (2021). *Erich Fromm and Global Public Sociology*. Bristol University Press.
- Orwell, G. (1949). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Thompson, M. J. (2020). Erich Fromm and The Ontology of Social Relation. Kieran Durkin and Joan Braune (Eds.), *Erich Fromm's Critical Theory: Hope, Humanism, and the Future* (pp. 23-42). London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.