THE PORTRAYAL OF SUBJECTIVITY IN SELECTED DYSTOPIAN NOVELS

by

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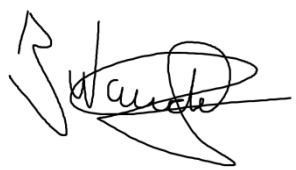

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ABSTRACT

The portrayal of subjectivity in selected dystopian novels

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In his *Truth and Method*, Gadamer explains that **subjectivity** is the everyday **understanding** that allows us to engage with the world. Gadamer identifies three main aspects that **effect** our understanding, namely **history**, **language** and **dialogue**. Dystopian fiction is in a unique position to portray how systems of societal control affect and effect understanding, and thus subjectivity, because dystopian fiction primarily explores societies rather than only individuals.

This dissertation applies Gadamer's framework of subjectivity to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* to analyse their portrayals of subjectivity critically. Huxley's imagined world of test-tube births, rampant consumerism, feelies and orgy-porgies depicts a subjectivity that is nearly completely controlled through the manipulation of history, language and dialogue, with the exception of a few rebellious characters. But Orwell's Oceania is far grimmer, and the systems of control in place to manipulate history, language and dialogue create a harsh environment in which Winston Smith, the protagonist, struggles to assert his individuality, his own subjectivity, until the liberating sexual relationship he has with Julia. Although both novels depict stringent measures of control, the possibility of rebellion is present in the worlds depicted in both novels, suggesting that despite the manipulation around subjectivity's three main pillars, as identified by Gadamer, something else provides the impetus for the characters' understanding of rebellion. Therefore, the study also analyses the characters' pre-understandings, as explained by Nietzsche and Heidegger, as sources for a wider framework. Through the novels' portrayals of rebellion, these pre-understandings are shown to complement and inform Gadamer's framework of subjectivity.

KEY WORDS

Brave New World
dystopia
Gadamer
Huxley
Nineteen Eighty-Four
Orwell
philosophical hermeneutics
rebellion
subjectivity
understanding

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

> [T]he way we experience one another, the way we experience historical traditions, the way we experience the natural givenness of our existence and of our world, constitute a truly hermeneutic universe, in which we are not imprisoned, as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened.
>
> (Gadamer, [1960] 2006:xxiii)

1.1 BACKGROUND

Gadamer's comment in *Truth and Method* ([1960] 2006) that our experience of our existence and our world "constitute a truly hermeneutic universe" provides a point of departure for describing subjectivity, our understanding, our mutable ontological interpretive stance to the world. Our experience of history, tradition, nature, our existence, in short, all of our being, is underpinned by a hermeneutic understanding. This hermeneutic engagement and experience of the world constitutes our subjectivity. But what happens to subjectivity when these experiences are hampered or manipulated, and are not a "natural givenness", as one sees happening in some dystopian fiction? Does "damage" to certain aspects of the construction of subjectivity due to mechanisms of societal control reveal how subjectivity is structured in these dystopian worlds? Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a discussion of the construction of subjectivity can be used to explore areas in dystopian fiction.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and his phenomenology of understanding, as outlined in *Truth and Method*[1] ([1960] 2006), builds on the foundations laid by Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger, who, each in his own way, reacted to Enlightenment thinking with its emphasis on the notion of a knowable truth. Nietzsche ([1873] 2010:19) says the following about Enlightenment thinking:

> The arrogance involved in cognition and sensation, spreading a blinding fog over men's eyes and sense, deceives them about the value of existence by implying the most flattering evaluation of cognition. Its most general effect is deception – but even its most particular effects have something of the same quality.

[1] Hereafter, references to *Truth and Method* (Gadamer [1960] 2006) are shortened to *TM*.

Nietzsche gives a stern warning against claiming that it is possible to posit an exterior truth to be arrived at through human logic alone, a problem he identifies in Enlightenment thinking. This is why Nietzsche ([1886] 2010:66-67) says that "what was once enough to serve as the cornerstone of the sublime and conditioned philosophers' edifices [is] perhaps a play on words, a seduction of grammar, or a bold generalization from so very narrow, so very personal, so very human, *all too human facts*" (my emphasis). Nietzsche is talking about the Enlightenment emphasis on and belief in logic. Nietzsche's affirmation that there are no *uninterpreted facts* opens up the way for later hermeneutic thinkers, such as Gadamer, to determine what is operative in the process of understanding, and thus what constitutes our understanding. This is where Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics makes its mark.

One can see that Gadamer is carrying on Nietzsche's thinking when he claims that "understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general" (*TM*:xx). Gadamer thus appears to agree with Nietzsche that atemporal facts are illusory, and he extends **interpretation** into our everyday experiences. Gadamer is saying that the same processes that are operative in the hermeneutic process of interpreting texts are what drive human **understanding** in general (**subjectivity**). He says even more emphatically that "Heidegger's temporal analytics of *Dasein* has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of being of *Dasein* itself" (*TM*:xxvii). Heidegger's ([1953] 1996:12) description of human beings as *Dasein* is intended to highlight that in our *being* we are constantly interpreting our being, which implies that our basic orientation to the world is interpretive, which is linked to our understanding of the world. Thus, our understanding is ontologically bound to interpretation. Gadamer (*TM*:292) also says that the "task of hermeneutics is to clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious communion of souls, but sharing a common meaning". In the clarification of understanding, in identifying the processes operative in understanding, Gadamer provides a definition of understanding, interpretation and subjectivity.[2] In this regard, Gadamer (*TM*:294) says the following:

[2] A detailed definition of subjectivity, as a central concept in this study, is given in Section 1.4.1 "Explication of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics".

> Here again we see that understanding means, primarily, *to understand the contents of what is said*, and only secondarily *to isolate and understand another's meanings* as such. Hence *the most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one's own fore-understanding*, which comes from being concerned with the same subject. *This is what determines what can be realized* as unified meaning and thus determines how the fore-conception of completeness is applied. (my emphases)

This excerpt illustrates that Gadamer does not claim that subjectivity equates to purely being subjective. This is because the task is to "understand the *contents* of what is said" and thus is also to recover an element of truth. But our own "fore-understanding" retains an important role in the process, since it is "what determines *what can be realized*". **Subjectivity** is thus the range of what can be understood given one's fore-understandings.

For many thinkers, such as Nietzsche ([1873] 2010), our **situatedness** in terms of what imbues us with our own unique and individual subjective position is a limiting factor because we cannot see past these subjective "lenses". But Gadamer is able to look at the process of understanding and see not only the limits of understanding but also the very factors which enable us to understand in the first place. Nonetheless, Gadamer does not regard the human intellect as a wordless, timeless source of insight into reality "in itself" (*noumenal*) (Wachterhauser, 1986:5). Like Nietzsche, he argues that no knowledge claim (which is subject to the temporal intellect of a particular person) can be seen as *sub specie aeternitatis*. For Nietzsche, this limitation was due to our instinctual, physiological and politico-historical perspectives, which limit our understanding according to the unique combinations and conditions of these three perspectives. Gadamer (*TM*:xxxi) provides a nuanced view of these limitations. He maintains the following:

> Hence what is here affirmed – that the province of hermeneutics is universal and especially that *language is the form in which understanding is achieved – embraces 'pre-hermeneutic' consciousness as well as all modes of hermeneutic consciousness*. Even the naive appropriation of tradition is a 'retelling' although it ought not to be described as a 'fusion of horizons'. (my emphases)

Gadamer explains that language in all its transitory forms is what opens up the external world to us. Yet language itself is subject to the course of history and traditions, and through their influence on the language of the day, our understanding of certain things are affected (and effected). Wachterhauser (1986:6) holds a similar

view when he explains that “human understanding…is always in terms of some evolving linguistic framework that has been worked out over time in terms of some historically conditioned set of concerns and practices”. It is through the particular language that we possess that we are able to meaningfully refer to anything. Therefore, subjectivity, in an analysis of subjectivity as understanding, must be understood in terms of a person’s tradition and language.

Dystopian fiction is in a unique position in its portrayal and analysis of subjectivity (as defined by Gadamer). The reason for this can be seen in the following summary of dystopia by Sisk (1997:1):

> Dystopia is utopia's polarized mirror image. While utilizing many of the same concepts as utopia—for example, social stability created by authoritarian regimentation—dystopia reads these ideas pessimistically. Dystopia angrily challenges utopia's fundamental assumption of human perfectibility, arguing that *humanity's* inherent flaws negate the possibility of constructing perfect *societies*, except for those that are perfectly hellish. Dystopias are solely fictional, presenting grim, oppressive *societies*—with the moralistic goal of preventing the horrors they illustrate. (my emphases)

This description suggests that dystopian fiction’s focus is on the portrayal and characterisation of societies rather than of individuals. Hence, novels in the genre explore specific social, political, economic, and scientific mores, often contemporary, which the authors wish to throw into relief. These novels portray deliberate constructions of society and history (by both the novelists and the dystopian societies they portray), so one can relate them to the effective and effecting history that Gadamer deems vital in the act of understanding. This suggests that the genre can be used to analyse how authors understand the construction of subjectivity. And due to their engagement with the topic of subjectivity, the novels’ insights, as reflected in their portrayals of this construct, can contribute to a deeper understanding of subjectivity.

Dystopian fiction can trace its roots to issues raised in utopian fiction, which essentially began with Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* ([1516] 2008) (Sisk, 1997:2). As the above quotation from Sisk suggests, there is a pessimistic element in dystopian fiction. But the pessimistic quality of dystopian writing should not be misread as being indicative of its being merely a dark and morbid genre. Sisk (2005) identifies the overarching goal of dystopian fiction as instilling fear in its readers, namely the

fear that societies such as the ones portrayed in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* could become a reality.[3] The production of fear is an attempt at didacticism: in both *BNW* and *1984*, there is a resounding warning of how human nature as we know it can be destroyed (Calder, 1976:32), although the novels differ on how this might happen. Moylan (2000:xii) goes further in saying that dystopia's "foremost truth lies in its ability to [*reflect*] upon the causes of social and ecological evil as systemic". Dystopian fiction should therefore not be seen as a purely pessimistic genre, since it can convey a truth by reflecting on the causes of societal decay. The causes of such decay vary, with each author focusing on different aspects, and the novels themselves offer different opinions of how totalitarian states go about manipulating their subjects. The extent to which such manipulation is taken blurs the lines regarding a definition of what we consider to be human. This is especially true when such manipulation is viewed in terms of a framework of subjectivity (as a human attribute), and more specifically so, in terms of philosophical hermeneutics' framework of understanding/subjectivity, which hermeneutic thinkers such as Gadamer see as central to being human.

The resounding warning given by dystopian fiction in its extrapolation of contemporary social trends into oppressive and terrifying societies is balanced by optimism (Sisk, 1997:2). Optimism is elicited in the genre by demonstrating that human nature (including human flaws) is ineradicable; hence, the aim of producing a "perfect" society (one that is controllable – and thus perfectible in terms of the ideal society envisaged by those who wish to control humankind) is effectively specious (Sisk, 2005). This creates an interesting tension between the strength of manipulative control of humanity and the ineradicable (and often rebellious) factor of human nature in its hermeneutic resistance to imprisonment "as if behind insurmountable barriers" (*TM*:xxiii). The combination of pessimism and optimism in the genre suggests attitudes and actions that can prevent the horrors of what could happen if contemporary trends continued unchecked (Sisk, 1997:6).[4] Additionally, the portrayal of subjectivity in these novels reveals shortcomings on the part of dystopian systems of control (and possibility for rebellion), which ties in with the

[3] Hereafter *Brave New World* is referred to as *BNW* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is referred to as *1984*.
[4] These attitudes and actions are discussed in more detail in later chapters.

difficulty of eradicating human nature (especially if it is defined in terms of subjectivity).

The widely acknowledged overarching aim of dystopian fiction to educate (Calder, 1976; Sisk, 1997; Moylan, 2000) has thus far produced criticism of the genre that focuses largely on the various politico-historical implications of the text, often in readings that focus on the satirical treatment of social and political elements in these texts, sometimes linking these with biographical details about the authors. For instance, Rai ([1988] 1990:9) sums up the body of the existing research on Orwell effectively in saying that "anyone who wishes to write on Orwell must be willing to be both 'aesthetic' and 'political'". Although only Orwell is referred to here, such a description can easily be extended to Huxley and other authors of dystopian fiction. Even studies that focus on sexuality in the novels, such as Thomas Horan's (2007) article, "Revolutions from the waist downwards: Desire as rebellion in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*", are still largely framed in political terms and look at the sexual relationships in these novels by considering how they relate to power and subversion.[5]

Regarding this limitation in dystopian criticism, Sisk (1997) appears to think similarly to Rai ([1988] 1990:9) when Sisk (1997:11) comments that "scholars tended to examine concerns with language in dystopian fiction as minor interests". Sisk (1997:11-12) also mentions that "issues of language are so closely intertwined with questions of power and freedom in dystopian literature that any criticism ignoring these concerns will inevitably produce less-than-comprehensive readings". This insight implies that issues of consciousness and subjectivity (which, as Gadamer and Heidegger show, are inseparable from language) are indeed very important in analyses of dystopian texts.

This study hopes to differ from the previous generic approaches to the reading dystopian fiction. This study attempts to expand on the spectrum of dystopian criticism by analysing two famous dystopian novels, *1984* and *BNW*, to explore what the novels have to say about subjectivity, over and above their politico-historical and

[5] This article is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

biographical orientation. In order to achieve this aim, the study focuses on portrayals of subjectivity in the chosen novels, as it would appear that subjectivity has not been a concern for critics of dystopian fiction, although some do come close to discussing it. For instance, some of Calder's comments suggest openings to a discussion of subjectivity, although they clearly maintain a focus on a politico-historical and biographical reading of the texts. For example, Calder (1976:9) says:

> When Huxley wrote to Orwell after reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* he suggested, in spite of *Ape and Essence* […] that a more authentic picture of the future would not contain the violence of Orwell's book. It would not be necessary, for men had the means to control the mass of humanity through influencing their minds. That kind of power made the punishment of their bodies unnecessary. In fact it is not the violence in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that is the book's most alarming feature, although it is so hard to forget, but the control of history. In Orwell's Oceania *men are manipulated through the manipulation of facts and of the past* – although an atmosphere of constant warfare and continual threat is a necessary environment for this manipulation.
>
> *That Orwell was using directly the knowledge of methods in Nazi Germany – full knowledge of which only emerged after the war – is obvious*. (my emphases)

In discussing the control displayed on the citizens' subjectivity through the manipulation of history (a theme that ties in strongly with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics), Calder draws a parallel between manipulation in Orwell's Oceania and that of Nazi Germany (drawing on Orwell's personal engagement with the politico-historical experiences of his contemporaries), but she fails to address the blurring of the distinction between epistemological and ontological knowledge.[6] She comes very close to discussing subjectivity when she rightly mentions that the manipulation of history is more powerful in Orwell's novel than the actual violence, but her argument remains within the political sphere that Rai mentions.

Subjectivity has not thus far been addressed satisfactorily in critical readings of dystopian novels. Where it has been addressed at all, it is, as Sisk says of language, "a minor concern" and the concern is not made explicit. More importantly, a framework such as Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which emphasises the importance of *effecting* mechanisms of subjectivity, has not been applied. The mechanisms Gadamer ([1960] 2006) mentions specifically are history, language and dialogue. Consequently, the way in which characters understand, come to

[6] See Section 1.4.1 "Explication of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics".

understand and create new understandings of and in their world is an underexplored area of dystopian fiction which my study hopes to address.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study is examining Orwell's and Huxley's portrayals of subjectivity, in the form of a close reading of Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *BNW*, using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as the basis for a theoretical framework to delineate the construction(s) of subjectivity found in the texts. The study shows that other rich readings of dystopian fiction are possible, aside from the typical readings of dystopian fiction briefly discussed above. The study also explores the portrayal of rebellion in the texts in terms of the portrayal of resistance to imposed societal control of individual subjectivity. In order to achieve these aims, several interrelated questions have been posed.

Firstly, what is Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics? This question is asked mainly in order to arrive at a working definition of subjectivity. Proposing a definition of subjectivity allows a theoretical framework to emerge which can be used to analyse the portrayal of subjectivity in *1984* and *BNW*. In addition to the above, the study also considers how Nietzsche's slightly different construction of subjectivity (which includes the body) complements Gadamer's view of subjectivity and can thus also be used to supplement an analysis of the texts' portrayals of subjectivity. Elements from Nietzsche's work are used in order to supplement Gadamer's thought, since Nietzsche's construction of subjectivity takes into account the role of the body in subjectivity and hence provides a possible explanation for the phenomenon of rebellion in both novels.[7] In addition to elements from Nietzsche, Heidegger's phenomenology is also used to supplement the discussion of rebellion because his discussion of humans *as Dasein* and being-in-the-world suggests a further construction of subjectivity. These complementary sources suggest that Gadamer's work, although it is regarded as a ground-breaking text in hermeneutics, does not take into consideration all aspects of subjectivity, since it is possible to identify elements of other frameworks of subjectivity in dystopian fiction. This implies

[7] This "bodily" subjectivity has been linked to rebellion by critics such as Tirohl (2000), Horan (2007), and Gheran (2012). For this reason, rebellion is discussed with reference to Nietzsche's and Heidegger's constructions of subjectivity in Chapter 4.

that, just as Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics can be used to critique and analyse literary texts, conversely, literature can indirectly critique formal frameworks of knowledge (in this case the philosophy of Gadamer).

Secondly, in what ways are subjectivity portrayed and explored in *1984* and *BNW*? Do the novels differ in their portrayal of subjectivity and the "constructedness" of subjectivity? A close reading of the texts is undertaken in order to explore how these dystopian texts portray complex constructions of subjectivity. Huxley's and Orwell's depictions of subjectivity have much in common with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The study does not claim direct parallels between the texts and Gadamer, but rather that there is a semblance of spirit between them. The study demonstrates an application of Gadamer's thinking regarding language, history and dialogue's role in the construction of subjectivity as a model according to which subjectivity can be analysed.

Thirdly, how can rebellion, in a very broad sense, exist (in an equally broad sense) when the manipulation of subjectivity and control over the subject goes as far as it is portrayed to go in the novels? Calder (1976:28), speaking about Bernard Marx's attempt to make something positive out of his individuality (as an expression of his subjectivity, as a being engaged in hermeneutic experience), says that "[t]he language doesn't exist, the feeling scarcely exists – shouldn't exist". This struggle to enunciate individuality, and therefore rebel against being just "a cell in the social body" (*BNW*:78), is symptomatic of the effects of the systems of control in the two texts. The extent to which manipulation of the effecting elements of subjectivity goes in these dystopian worlds, considering Gadamer's construction of subjectivity, should eliminate the possibility of rebellion, yet the possibility remains present. The study attempts to determine how such rebellion is possible and whether Gadamer's construction of subjectivity misses another type of understanding in its framework of subjectivity that may generate and effect an understanding that can "enunciate" rebellion and is thus a driving force for resistance.

Finally, can literature, in the form of these two novels, be seen to critique or inform the ideas, theories and models of formal frameworks of knowledge such as philosophy? What are the implications of the interpretation of portrayals of

consciousness in dystopian fiction for future analyses of dystopian fiction? Does the didactic overtone of dystopian literature have any bearing on its specific portrayal of consciousness? These four questions are thrown together in order to try to open up dystopian fiction to readings and critiques that supplement the traditional politico-historical and biographical readings that permeate much of dystopian criticism.

1.3 SCOPE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this study is, as stated above, the portrayal(s) of subjectivity in *1984* and *BNW*. These two literary texts were chosen because they arguably epitomise dystopian fiction and have influenced and been influenced by numerous other dystopian texts.

Much prior research has been conducted on Huxley and Orwell, as well as on dystopia as a genre, but no clear parallel or precedent to the current study was found. As already mentioned above, most readings have focused on politico-historical readings of the texts or biographical readings that look at how the authors' life experiences contributed to their outlooks in the novels.

Although many texts mention Orwell and Huxley, few directly compare Orwell and Huxley, and even fewer look specifically at *BNW* and *1984*. One notable exception is Calder's (1976) work, *Huxley and Orwell: Brave New World and Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, although Calder's work gives an excellent comparison and discussion of the texts, she does not compare the texts by specifically looking at the construction of subjectivity and its portrayals in these novels. Calder's discussion focuses primarily on the kind of socio-historical or political discussion that dominates analyses of the dystopian genre. As I have already indicated in Section 1.1, Sisk (1997:11) thinks "scholars tended to examine concerns with language in dystopian fiction as minor interests". In addition, as Sisk (1997:11-12) says, "issues of language are so closely intertwined with questions of power and freedom in dystopian literature that any criticism ignoring these concerns will inevitably produce less-than-comprehensive readings". In that case, issues of subjectivity (which, as Gadamer and Heidegger show, are inseparable from language) can be used in

analyses of dystopian texts that make any claim to be holistic.[8] The study thus departs from generic, politico-historical readings, or a biographical approach, to undertake a reading of Huxley and Orwell that focuses instead on expanding the possible areas of critique regarding dystopian fiction by examining the portrayals of subjectivity in two prominent examples of the dystopian genre.

A few useful discussions of Huxley and Orwell include Moylan's (2000) *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, which provides an insightful and detailed discussion of the emergence of dystopian fiction, as well as the scholarly work that has accompanied it. Sisk's (1997) *Transformations of Language in Modern Dystopias* gives a detailed discussion of language and the use of it as a means of manipulation and control in dystopias. Horan's (2007) article "Revolutions from the waist downwards: Desire as rebellion in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*" provides detailed insight into the role of sex in the rebellion of the characters in selected dystopian novels. Similarly, Gheran's (2012) article "Fracturing the monstrous geography of George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* – eroticism, dissidence and individualism" provides a fascinating discussion of how inner recalcitrance is aided by marginalised physical spaces in the two novels to grow into resistance. Such discussions greatly aided my study by providing insight into various aspects of dystopian fiction.

In light of the fact that this study concerns itself with using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to examine Orwell's and Huxley's portrayal of subjectivity in order to delineate the construction(s) of subjectivity found in the texts, it is first necessary to establish Gadamer's hermeneutics as a valid tool in the analysis of subjectivity. Elements of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's work are then used to complement this theoretical framework.

Gadamer's ([1960] 2006) magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, Nietzsche's "On truth and lie in a nonmoral sense" ([1873] 2010), *The Gay Science* (1882), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* ([1883] 2012), *Beyond Good and Evil* ([1886] 2012), and *The Genealogy of Morals* ([1913] 2003), and Heidegger's ([1953] 1996) *Being and Time* are used to

[8] See Section 1.1 Background.

delineate their respective theories. Use is also made of secondary texts on Gadamer, Heidegger and Nietzsche. In this regard, the preliminary research I have conducted has revealed a range of criticism and discussion on all three philosophers that give highly detailed and accessible descriptions and insights into their work. Works such as Kearney's (1994) *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* give a good overview of Heidegger, while applied commentaries on Gadamer and Derrida such as Feldman's (2000) article, "Made for each other: Deconstruction and hermeneutics" give insight into how philosophical hermeneutics are looked at and can be applied flexibly. Linge (1977), Wachterhauser (1986), and West (1996) also provide excellent commentary on Gadamer. It is essential not to be misled by the anachronistic appearance of using Gadamer (and Heidegger and Nietzsche) to analyse and reflect on the portrayal of subjectivity/understanding in the two novels.[9]

The study contributes to the current body of work on dystopian fiction by including a theoretical framework that can be used in the analysis of subjectivity. Furthermore, by demonstrating how this can be applied to prominent texts, the study also shows that dystopian fiction is open to readings other than the abovementioned generic types. Finally, the study shows that dystopian fiction can go even further than being merely open to other readings by showing that it can in its turn possibly critique formal frameworks of knowledge such as Gadamer's hermeneutics.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

For the purposes of this study, as has already been stated, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is used in order to arrive at a framework for the analysis of subjectivity. However, due to the novels' portrayal of rebellion it is necessary to supplement Gadamer's framework with those of Nietzsche and Heidegger. These frameworks are used to account for the possibility of rebellion. Only Gadamer's framework is given in this chapter, since its application is the one predominantly used. Nietzsche's and Heidegger's views on the topic are discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4, where they are applied to analyse the phenomenon of rebellion in the novels.

[9] For a discussion on why using Gadamer is feasible when he published *Truth and Method* (1960) after Orwell's *1984* (1949), see Section 1.4.2 "Using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics".

1.4.1 Explication of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is, to a large extent, reactionary. In part, it continues Heidegger's challenge of "the modernist metaphysics introduced by Descartes: a metaphysical dualism that sharply separated an autonomous subject or self from an objective world" (Feldman, 2001:54). Gadamer wished to explore the implications of Heidegger's being-in-the-world, *Dasein*, which Heidegger maintains is characterized by practical understanding and the examination of everyday or practical activities (Feldman, 2001:54; Schroeder, 2005:159). As Heidegger says, "[r]egarding, understanding and grasping, choosing and gaining access to are constitutive attitudes to inquiry and are thus themselves modes of Being of a particular being, of *the* Being we inquirers ourselves in each case are" (Heidegger, [1953] 1996:5-6). Understanding, and subjective understanding, for both Gadamer and Heidegger, is thus an ontological element of our Being and our entire lived experience, as opposed to Descartes's ([1647] 1983) thinking, in which understanding is something that must be reined in very tightly in order to arrive at objective truth.

Gadamer's reading of Heidegger's metaphysical turn led him to argue against an Enlightenment view that the meaning of a text must rest on some ground or foundation – such as the text itself or the author's intentions – an object that is supposedly separate and independent from, yet somehow accessible to a perceiving self or subject (Feldman, 2001:54). If such a "meaning" were possible, in order to understand a text, an interpreter would employ a mechanical technique or method to access the objective meaning of the text, or at least "mirror[…] in consciousness the objective content of the text" (Feldman, 2001:54), or the intentions of the framer. But Gadamer argues against the view that a text can be seen as an object that must be reconstructed somehow during the interpretive process. With regard to this, Gadamer says the following:

> [T]he interpreter can, and must, often understand more than he [the author]. But this is of fundamental importance. Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well. (*TM*:296)

Understanding is thus not re-creation but a productive action that is tied in with several *effecting* factors of understanding (which I discuss later in this section).

Additionally, for Gadamer, because understanding and interpretation are ontological, we cannot avoid interpretation or subjective understanding. As Gadamer (*TM*:xx) says, "[t]he understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general". This is an important point since it indicates that Gadamer believes that our being-in-the-world is interpretive, as well as ontological, hence it is not limited to the interpretation of texts but forms a fundamental part of our lived experience. In other words, since understanding and interpretation are part of our lived experience, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics does not just clarify the mechanisms operative in textual interpretation, but all interpretation – our subjectivity.

Gadamer also attempts to understand what contributes to or shapes our subjectivity. He realizes that the subject "is never an independent and autonomous subject who freely or arbitrarily imposes meaning on a text" (Feldman, 2001:55). Rather, Gadamer maintains the following:

> [W]e are always situated within traditions, and this is no objectifying process – i.e., we do not conceive of what tradition says as something or other, something alien. It is always a part of us, a model or exemplar, a kind of cognizance that our later historical judgment would hardly regard as a kind of knowledge but as the most ingenuous affinity with tradition. (*TM*:283)

As one sees here, according to Gadamer, tradition is what imbues the interpreter with a specific "horizon" of interpretation. Thus, each person's horizon is both a limiting and *effecting* mechanism in the process of understanding. To fully understand how tradition can be both a limiting and effecting part of understanding, detailed consideration must first be given to the two interrelated elements that form our horizon of understanding, namely history and language.

1.4.3.1 History

As Wachterhauser (1986:6) explains, "[h]ermeneutical thinkers see history and language as special types of transcendental conditions of all understanding". As such, history and language can be seen as "'transitory *a prioris*' of thought" (Wachterhauser, 1986:6). The dynamic – and to some extent, dialectic – nature of both history and language implies that there can be no final theoretical account of

them. This implies that Gadamer's account of language and history has to be necessarily general.

Geschichtlichkeit, or historicity, is a term used by hermeneutical thinkers to describe how our understanding is historical, through and through. This stands in stark contrast to the thinking of Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant ([1781] 2013), who believed that we can be reduced to a transcendental *ego* which is the same for all times and places. However, Gadamer (*TM*:301) maintains that all "self-knowledge arises from what is historically pregiven, because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions, and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility for understanding". This is also why Wachterhauser (1986:7) says that we are ontologically *historical*. For Gadamer, "the past is never simply a collection of objects to be recovered or duplicated by the interpreter". Instead, it is what he calls a *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effect) (Linge, 1977:xvii). Rather, Gadamer tells us that we are always affected and effected by our history (*TM*:300).

For much of history and especially for the Enlightenment, thinking has been oriented towards specific phenomena in history, rather than their effects, thus leading to a view that the "history of effect" is a mere supplement to historical inquiry (*TM:*299). But Gadamer argues against such a perception, and attempts to resuscitate the "history of effect" from the peripheries of hermeneutical inquiry. He shows how, in fact, because when "we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, *we are always already affected by history*. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation" (*TM*:300; my emphases). The effect is that history inculcates us with certain pre-judices.[10] These pre-judices are carried by tradition. But tradition should not be seen as merely something to be overcome in attempting to arrive at objective knowledge, but must

[10] Gadamer uses the term pre-judice and fore-understanding interchangeably. The term implies that we come to every text with what he calls *Vormeinungen* (literally pre-opinions) and *Vorurteile* (prejudices, in the literal sense of pre-judgments), constructed by our own historical *Geschichtlichkeit*. Gadamer's term *Vormeinung* is more neutral than his term *Vorurteil*. However, *Vormeinung* implies that we are consciously aware of these inculcated judgments. Thus I hyphenate the term "pre-judice" in this dissertation to distinguish it from the negative connotations of 'prejudice', which is used by the translators in my edition of *Truth and Method*.

be understood as a *repository* for our pre-judices. Gadamer explains this idea as follows:

> In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the pre[-]judices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being*. (*TM*:278; Gadamer's emphasis)

Although Gadamer is only speaking of self-understanding here, his philosophical hermeneutics builds on the idea that history imbues or effects a certain horizon in every person that, as a whole, both enables and limits understanding. It is this horizon of understanding that allows us to come to new information, which we then approach with the pre-judices of various historical elements (which are causally related to events in history).[11]

In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics it must be understood "that in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work" (*TM*:300). Consequently, "the power of effective history does not depend on its being recognized" (*TM*:300). Our *Geschichtlichkeit* is thus not dependent on our awareness of it, and is operative in all understanding. In fact, it can be argued that in most cases where we attempt to understand, we are not aware of the pre-judices that are operative in our understanding.[12]

This can perhaps lead to the conclusion that in light of Gadamer's thinking, understanding can be understood as (pre)determined. In other words we are predisposed and will inevitably reach certain conclusions about certain topics because of the pre-judices that have been inculcated in us through our historical involvement. However, this would be misunderstanding the term "horizon".

[11] It may seem that the study is heading towards a politico-historical reading of the novel, possibly aligned with a biographical reading of influences on Huxley and Orwell. However, this is *not* the focus of this study. Although politics and history are elements of subjectivity and thus cannot be ignored, the study focuses on how the *portrayal* of these elements *in* the novels contributes to the overall portrayal of subjectivity rather than on how the authors' own *Geschichtlichkeit* affected the novels.

[12] Heidegger argues in (1962) *Being and Time* that interpretation and understanding occurs all the time since our being-in-the-world is interpretive.

Firstly, as Gadamer (*TM*:303) says, "[t]he horizon is […] something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion". Thus our horizon is constantly shifting and expanding, moving to and fro in a *Horizontverschmelzung* (fusion of horizons). As Gadamer (*TM*:274) says, "[u]nderstanding itself is not to be thought of so much as an *action* of subjectivity, but as entering into an *event of transmission* in which past and present are constantly mediated" (my emphases). Because understanding must be thought of as an *event*, we can see that it does not mean or even have the same shape in different contexts. Therefore, the shift in horizons and new understanding develops a new tradition and therefore leads to different understandings.

Secondly, our *Geschichtlichkeit* presents a possibility of understandings, that to which we can be open, rather than expressing a definite route which our understanding can take. The interplay of various pre-judices that have percolated into an individual through various historical and traditional horizons to which the person has been exposed create a near-infinite web of relations which all present themselves in the *event* of understanding, which itself is in turn mediated by the present.

However, it must also be noted that the process that shapes our *Geschichtlichkeit* is an ongoing process. With each new event of understanding we are creating and shaping new understandings that contribute to our current and future understandings. As Gadamer (*TM*:366) says, historical "tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of event". This idea must also be tied in with Gadamer's (*TM*:366) theory that by "being re-actualized in understanding, texts are drawn into a genuine course of events in exactly the same way as are events themselves". The combination of these two ideas shows that historical tradition is something that is continuously created by our continued understanding, which itself "can be regarded as a historical potential of what is understood" (*TM*:366).

In summary, history is what effects understanding by imparting certain pre-judices to us due to the historical effect of certain events. These pre-judices are both limiting

and enabling. On the one hand, we can, at an immediate point, only see so far in terms of our understanding. On the other hand, these pre-judices allow us to come to come to a situation and attempt to reconcile it with our historical subjectivity in a moment of understanding. This is what is called a fusion of horizons, which then creates a new understanding and expands our horizon.

1.4.3.2 Language

The next question is how these pre-judices are transferred from one individual to another and from one time to another. For Gadamer, the transfer of pre-judices is achieved through language. Gadamer (*TM*:390) says that "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*" (Gadamer's emphasis) and that the "linguisticality of understanding is *the concretion of historically effected consciousness*" (*TM*:391; Gadamer's emphasis). It is important to note that Gadamer does not equate understanding with language, but argues that we cannot have one without the other. As the second part of Gadamer's statement illustrates, our *Sprachlichkeit* or linguisticality is where the pre-judices instilled in us by our tradition become operative.

In a simple sense, Gadamer speaks of the connotative and denotative meanings of words. For instance, the pre-judices operative behind a particular word (connotative) affect and effect the way we would understand and think of the term. This is because tradition is verbal (*TM*:391). More specifically, Gadamer (*TM*:366) says the following:

> Historical tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of events […] By being re-actualized in understanding, texts are drawn into a genuine course of events in exactly the same way as are events themselves.

This idea must also be understood with the following in mind:

> The mode of being of tradition is, of course, not sensible immediacy. It is language, and in interpreting texts, the hearer who understands it relates its truth to his own linguistic orientation to the world. (*TM*:459)

The pre-judices that are created through tradition are carried via language from one place to another, from one person to another and from one horizon to another. Wachterhauser explains this by using the example of language acquisition. He says that "by learning our native tongue or by learning a specialized language of some field of study we inherit with it a past we have not shaped" (Wachterhauser, 1986:9).

This past carries with it the pre-judices of tradition. Thus, "[l]anguage, so to speak, goes out ahead of the reflective understanding and shapes our grasp of the subject matter" (Wachterhauser, 1986:10). Thus it is clear that before we understand, understanding has already been shaped by the specific politico-historical context we find ourselves in.

But Gadamer (*TM*:xxxii) also mentions the following:

> However, the fact that ideas are formed through tradition, especially through the hermeneutic circle of whole and part, which is the starting point of my attempt to lay the foundations of hermeneutics, does not necessarily imply this conclusion. The concept of the whole is itself to be understood only relatively. The whole meaning that has to be understood in history and tradition is never the meaning of the whole of history.

This is important because it ties in closely with another part of hermeneutic thinking, which is that we cannot understand anything in totality unless we understand the whole of which the subject is a part of, or "relative to the limited whole of the context in which the subject matter plays its part" (Wachterhauser, 1986:12). This implies that understanding is relative to the person doing the understanding, or the inquirer. The historical context within which the person finds him- or herself *effects* a specific type of understanding, which shifts, depending on the context (which can also be different between different *events* of understanding) and the constituents of the subject. In a similar sense as Kant's transcendental categories of understanding, our *Sprachlichkeit* and *Geschichtlichkeit* become *a priori* categories of understanding. However, they are transitory because they shift, depending on the context. Therefore, as Wachterhauser (1986:13) says, all understanding is an *interpretive act*. But this interpretive act, importantly, is one that is to a large extent unconscious. Understanding does not only happen in consciousness but occurs via the previously mentioned *a priori* facets of understanding. What then enables a new insight to emerge from a process that appears self-referential and locked into the past? In other words, what other facet of our understanding is operative to make possible new insight if all our understanding is located in the pre-judices handed down to us via tradition and its carrier, language? For Gadamer, the answer lies in dialogue or *Gespräch*.

1.4.3.3 Dialogue

For Gadamer, dialogue is central to his philosophical hermeneutics and his model of our understanding. Wachterhauser (1986:32) explains that "Gadamer conceives language primarily as a living dialogue or conversation and only secondarily as a deposit of grammatical rules and lexigraphically secure meanings". Specifically, Gadamer says that the experience of meaning always includes application and that this whole process is "verbal" (*TM*:385) and that "it must be emphasised that language has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*" (*TM*:443; Gadamer's emphasis). It is important to note that in this case, it is *new* understanding that is being spoken of, in which new insights and understandings are shaped in the twists and turns of dialogue – in the fusion of horizons between the interlocutors.

Importantly, for the hermeneutical conversation truly to take shape, *equality* and *active reciprocity* must be part of the dialogue:

> Reaching an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognize the full value of what is alien and opposed to them. If this happens mutually, and each of the partners, while simultaneously holding on to his own arguments, weighs the counter-arguments, it is finally possible to achieve – in an imperceptible but not arbitrary reciprocal translation of the other's position (we call this an exchange of views) – a common diction and a common dictum. (*TM*:388)

In order to come to a new insight Gadamer maintains that we must give up our independent authority and be open to the discussion in which we are taking part. In the same sense, Wachterhauser (1986:33) argues that in a dialogue we must not devote ourselves to "scoring points" or simply "defending a position".

Additionally, it is important that the conversational partners are concerned with a *common subject matter*. The important issue here is that it is the subject matter that is spoken of and is of concern to the interlocutors, rather than the other person in the dialogue. Wachterhauser (1986:34) tells us that "understanding takes place only when the inquirer doggedly pursues the logic of the subject matter itself". A problem arises when the one conversational partner looks *at* the other, instead of the partners looking *with* each other at the subject matter (Linge, 1977:xx). When with each other at the subject matter, the interpreters open themselves up to the question at hand;

their own pre-judices (horizons) then come to the fore and can then be critically analysed.

These pre-judices' coming to the fore is particularly important for this study because of the isolation of cultures one sees in *1984*, and the inter-caste isolation as well the intra-caste ossification of knowledge in *BNW*.[13] As Linge (1977:xxi) says, the hermeneutic phenomenon in which dialogue can elucidate the interlocutors' own pre-judices "is at work in the history of cultures as well as in individuals, for it is in times of intense contact with other cultures […] that a people becomes most acutely aware of the limits and questionableness of its deepest assumptions". By casting light on these pre-judices one can analyse them and question their validity to reach new conclusions and produce a wider horizon of understanding. However, if this is not possible because dialogue does not occur, for whatever reason, then there is ossification and stagnation of knowledge. After all, "an openness to new possibilities […] is the precondition of genuine understanding" (Linge, 1977:xxi).

This is not to say that dialogue can work out understandings holistically. As Wachterhauser (1986:34) explains, "any linguistic account is never entirely clear and univocal but carries with it unspoken meanings and possibilities of understanding and critique to be explored and articulated". Grondin (1994:119) is of a similar opinion and says that in a dialogue "there are no statements, only questions and answers that call forth new questions in turn". Therefore, no final point is reached in terms of fixing knowledge. This inability to fix knowledge in a claim that is *sub specie aeternitatis* is what Gadamer means when he talks about an event of understanding (see page 17). The linguistic account given in an event of understanding allows for new understandings to come to light when a new dialogue is formed about that which is implicit and unsaid in previous accounts – either as criticism or as a positive continuation. In a sense then, knowledge claims are involved in the dialectical relation between history and language "that gives rise again and again to new insights" (Wachterhauser, 1986:34). But this dialectical relationship is obviously not strictly meant in a Hegelian sense, which has a final goal in mind. Rather it is in the

[13] This will be clarified in the relevant chapters. For a discussion of *BNW* refer to Chapter 2, for a discussion on *1984*, refer to Chapter 3.

sense of a knowledge claim being an *event* of understanding in which past and present are mediated through language into a temporal claim.

In conclusion, subjectivity can be thought of as follows. Our basic orientation to the world, our being-in-the-world, as *Dasein*, is interpretive. This ontological orientation forms part of our *a priori* conditions of understanding. Our understanding is *effected* by history, which inculcates us with certain pre-judices through tradition. In turn, history and tradition percolate to various geographical regions and through time via language. Accordingly, in dialogue, language takes its fullest form and under the right circumstances new understandings are formed in a fusion of horizons. But the process is not linear. In other words, the entire process is reciprocal: new understandings create new traditions and pre-judices, which in turn create new language and so on. Our understanding (which must now be understood to contain this ability to reciprocate and change) is thus at the heart of what Gadamer would consider to be human.

1.4.2 Using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics

It might appear that using Gadamer is anachronistic when analysing and reflecting on the portrayal of consciousness in *BNW* and *1984*, given that Gadamer published *Truth and Method* in 1960, well after Huxley published *BNW* in 1932 and Orwell published *1984* in 1949. However, as has been shown, Gadamer's hermeneutics looks at human understanding, not at understanding in a specific period. This is why Gadamer says that "the purpose of the investigation is not to offer a general theory of interpretation and differential accounts of its methods […] but to discover what is common to all modes of understanding" (*TM*:xxviii). As Wachterhauser (1986:6) says, "[h]ermeneutical thinkers see history and language functioning as special types of transcendental conditions of *all understanding*" (Wachterhauser's emphasis). Gadamer, in his discussion of the processes by which we come to understand, uncovers the ontological nature of our understanding. Thus, it implies that Gadamer's hermeneutics can be applied in an analysis of work that appeared some time before he published *Truth and Method*.

There is also the additional concern that an analysis of subjectivity might be too far removed from what the novels were intended to portray. After all, even a recent critic such as Sisk (2005:1) makes no mention of portrayals of subjectivity when he claims that dystopia "angrily challenges utopia's fundamental assumption of human perfectibility, arguing that humanity's inherent flaws negate the possibility of constructing perfect societies, except for those that are perfectly hellish". The implication is that these are the sole concerns of dystopian fiction. But Gadamer (*TM*:xxviii) has the following to say about limiting a reading of a text to the perceived intentions of a text:

> [T]he universality of hermeneutics cannot be arbitrarily restricted or curtailed. No mere artifice of organization persuaded me to begin with the experience (*Erfahrung*) of art in order to assure the phenomenon of understanding the breadth proper to it. Here the aesthetics of genius has done important preparatory work in showing that the experience of the work of art always fundamentally surpasses any subjective horizon of interpretation, whether that of the artist or of the recipient. The *mens auctoris* is not admissible as a yardstick for the meaning of a work of art.

In a sense Gadamer appears to be ahead of his time because only later do literary critics such as Roland Barthes ([1968] 2001), with his essay "The Death of the Author", and Wimsatt and Beardsley (1979), with their chapter "Intentional Fallacy", pick up on this idea that the author's intention is not the benchmark for interpretation. Barthes ([1968] 2001:1468) says that "[w]e now know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash". Similarly, West (1996:112) comments on Gadamer's writing:

> [T]he meaning created by the author of a work itself depends on the horizon of meanings, within which it was produced. This hermeneutic context is always much richer than the author can comprehend. It is this all-encompassing horizon of language and meaning, rather than the author's intentions, which ultimately determines meanings.

Both Barthes ([1968] 2001) and West (1996) argue that any meaning inscribed in a text and meaning derived by a reader go far beyond what an author may have intended. As Gadamer would say, the horizon within which a text forms is thus what determines its meaning.

Barthes ([1968] 2001:1469) explains how meaning can be recovered after the "death" of the author as follows:

> The reader is the space on which all quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal; the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.

One should be careful to accept Barthes's statement at face value. Barthes is talking about the reader in a plural sense and thus he believes that in this pluralistic sense readers can overcome their respective horizons comprised of their history, biography and psychology. But this is a gross oversimplification. The "reader" might have an indescribably vast horizon due to plurality, but it does not extend so far that it can be said that there is no horizon.[14] Therefore, the meaning or truth behind a text is far more open than the limitations imposed by ideas such as the author's intention. Thus, although the authors of dystopian texts may have intended them to relate to their specific politico-historical context, the texts have a far richer meaning than such a limited reading would imply.

Moreover, there may well have been a *Zeitgeist* that allowed for some of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's work (as precursors to Gadamer's work) to percolate into the common understanding of the early 20th century. In turn this could explain the appearance in the novels of early forms of what Gadamer formulated in *Truth and Method*, since both Nietzsche and Heidegger were available to Huxley and Orwell, and heavily influenced Gadamer's work. More importantly, because Gadamer attempts to understand subjectivity and understanding at an ontological and phenomenological level, the aspects he identifies as constructing consciousness and subjectivity are *a priori* and thus not bound by context.

1.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to give a brief but concise explication of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. At first, it might seem anachronistic to apply such a theory of understanding in an analysis of subjectivity to texts that appear before Gadamer writes, but as discussed above, Gadamer's theory outlines an atemporal, and perhaps universal model of our understanding. Additionally, the chapter shows

[14] A fuller discussion of reader reception and responses is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but is an area for possible further research.

briefly how philosophical hermeneutics is applicable in the study of subjectivity in dystopian fiction.

In the two dystopian novels that I focus on in this study, namely *BNW* and *1984*, there are many occasions when the characters in the novels encounter new or foreign *horizons*. It is their reaction to and interpretations of these new experiences that throw into relief their own pre-judices that have percolated down to them through tradition via language, and that have deliberately been manipulated in attempts to impose control on their societies. In this sense then, their subjectivity and its construction by the State can be analysed with Gadamer's model in mind. By looking at the language in the fictional worlds, the way history is portrayed and constructed, and the characters' use of dialogue, a much clearer picture emerges of dystopian fiction's power to explicate, question and reassess ideas of subjectivity.

The authors' understanding of subjectivity itself is considered. The study will show that these authors have some understanding of, or at least a semblance of spirit with, philosophical hermeneutics – which may have arisen from earlier versions of philosophical hermeneutics (such as from Nietzsche and Heidegger). The texts, in conjunction with philosophical hermeneutics, also reveal gaps in Gadamer's model. Reading the texts via Gadamer's thinking throws light on other possible models of subjectivity operative in the novels.

With regard to these considerations, Chapter 2, by means of a detailed critical analysis, considers the portrayal of subjectivity in *BNW*. In doing so, the mechanisms that control and manipulate subjectivity in the text are elucidated and Huxley's understanding of subjectivity is shown to be comprised of frameworks of subjectivity that include the hermeneutics captured by Gadamer with specific regard to history, language and dialogue. The chapter begins by considering if one can see elements of Gadamer's later hermeneutics in Huxley's polemic. This is done in order to illustrate that there is a semblance of spirit in thinking between the two.

In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework is applied to *1984*. The specific focus is on the mechanisms of state control on the subject, especially the manipulation of history, the manipulation of language as depicted in the principles of "Newspeak",

paying special attention to the “prejudices” that have percolated into the language of Airstrip One. Furthermore, the absence of dialogue between the three nations mentioned in the novel is discussed with regard to Gadamer’s discussion of the importance of Dialogue as a possible driver for creating new knowledge. The Appendix of the novel is also discussed as a paratext which displays an overt awareness of Language’s role in effecting consciousness.

Chapter 4 considers the phenomenon of rebellion in the two novels, considering the likelihood of the thought, action and emotion of rebellion manifesting itself in the characters of either novel, whether the actions of the protagonists (dissenters) can be considered rebellious and what in the characters allows them to rebel against the mechanisms of state control. The role of the body is considered in the act of rebellion in the context of Nietzsche’s considerations of the body’s role in subjectivity. Additionally, Heidegger’s discussion of being-in-the-world is also used to elaborate on our practical orientation to the world, and the way this practical orientation imbues us with a certain understanding of the world.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 5, reflects on the findings and points out the strengths and limitations of the study, discussing the implications of the study and the usefulness of the theoretical framework. It also makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2:
THE PORTRAYAL OF SUBJECTIVITY IN ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

> 'You all remember,' said the Controller, in his strong deep voice, 'you all remember, I suppose, that beautiful and inspired saying of our Ford's: History is bunk. History,' he repeated slowly, 'is bunk'. (*BNW*:29)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Huxley's famous *BNW* has inspired many different and detailed readings over the years. In fact, it is possible to argue that no two novels have elicited as much introspection regarding modern society's treatment of citizens as *BNW* and *1984*. The two novels are often considered together for this reason. *Brave New World* continues in the tradition of dystopian fiction's hyperbolic tendency to look at societal norms and tropes and to take them to their logical extreme. For Huxley, consumerism, conformity and to some extent, science, were the biggest threats to society (Atwood, 2007:xi), whereas Orwell saw politics and totalitarianism and abuses of power as the threats that warrant our attention (Atwood, 2007:xi). In both novels, there is a strong focus on the mechanisms that are put into place to keep the citizens of these dystopias under control. These mechanisms of control are arguably largely focused on the minds of the citizens in the novels.[15] The novels depict obvious mechanisms of control such as policing people's behaviour, but I believe that the more subtle manipulation of subjectivity and understanding (which ultimately disables the citizens' ability to enunciate rebellion)[16] has not been focused on in enough detail in studies of *BNW, 1984*, and dystopian fiction in general.

This chapter considers how Huxley thinks about subjectivity, primarily in his portrayal of it *BNW*, but also in connection with a brief look at a few of his more explicitly polemic work. I examine the mechanisms of control that affect subjectivity which Huxley describes in the novel, the way characters perform any interpretation (in other words, exercise their understanding, which I equate to their ontological

[15] Although there are definite elements of bodily control in the novels, for instance the birthing process and *soma* in *BNW* and the physical torture and gin *1984*, these elements are orientated to controlling the citizens' subjectivity. The aspects of bodily control are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
[16] Rebellion is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

subjectivity) and the author's treatment of the material. The analysis bears in mind the discussion in Section 1.4.1 of the three elements of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, namely history, language and dialogue, and the context of selected comments by Huxley in some of his other works.

2.2 HERMENEUTICS IN HUXLEY'S POLEMICS

Before discussing *BNW* in detail, I would like to examine elements of thinking akin to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics that are present in Huxley's thought by briefly considering a selection of his polemic texts.[17] I trace a semblance of spirit between the two thinkers because they shared some effective influence from sources such as Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger – all of whom had a marked impact on *Zeitgeist* of their time and hence affected and effected history, tradition and language (which through these mechanisms could then percolate into Huxley's and Gadamer's respective pre-judices).[18] In addition, by considering Huxley's polemic, which is overt in its discussion of the relevant ideas, I hope to show more clearly the similarities between Huxley's portrayal of subjectivity and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

Huxley's poem, "Two Realities", in addition to expressing his argument on individual perspectives, shows his fascination with human understanding (subjectivity) and the plurality of the interpretations that can exist regarding a single event, seen by two people:

A wagon passed with scarlet wheels
And a yellow body, shining new.
'Splendid!' said I. 'How fine it feels
To be alive, when beauty peels
The grimy husk from life.' And you

Said, 'Splendid!' and I thought you'd seen
That wagon blazing down the street;
But I looked and saw that your gaze had been
On a child that was kicking an obscene
Brown ordure with his feet.

[17] As I indicated earlier, Huxley can at best be seen to share a *Zeitgeist* that led to Gadamer's philosophy because of the chronological sequence of their respective works (see Section 1.4.2.)
[18] I do not consider the mechanisms of how this percolation occurs, or attempt to detect direct influence, but look for relevant expressions of Huxley's thinking on subjectivity.

> Our souls are elephants, thought I,
> Remote behind a prisoning grill,
> With trunks thrust out to peer and pry
> And pounce upon reality;
> And each at his own sweet will
> Seizes the bun that he likes best
> And passes over all the rest. (Huxley, [1916] 1970:20)

Although the poem itself has been dismissed by at least one critic as "frivolous" (Ferns, 1980:26), its central theme is very important when considered in the context of Huxley's *Brave New World*. Huxley (1931:38) affirms a similar idea in an essay entitled "And wanton optics roll the melting eye", when he says that "in practice we are almost never aware of more than one aspect of each event at a time". Ferns (1980:27) maintains that the poem focuses on Huxley's concern with the "variety of possible perceptions" and claims that during Huxley's Italian travels, as depicted in *Along the Road* (Huxley, [1925] 1985), what concerned Huxley most was "his belief in the necessity of recognizing the validity of different, even conflicting interpretations of experience".

A further noteworthy idea that Ferns picks up from Huxley ([1925] 1985) in *Along the Road* is the following:

> Our understanding of reality is necessarily partial and limited […] yet to pretend otherwise is to make it even more so, since by accepting one interpretation of reality as representing the whole truth about it, one automatically excludes a whole range of other interpretations which may in fact be no less valid. (Ferns, 1980:27)

This is evidence, albeit circumstantial, that he may well have read up on the matter – which lends support to my argument that he shares a *Zeitgeist* of influence with Gadamer (an effective horizon).

With this in mind, it is important to note that Gadamer (*TM*:301) himself speaks several times of something similar when he says that a "person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him". This is similar to Huxley's idea in the poem: "And each at his own sweet will//Seizes the bun that he likes best". Gadamer (*TM*:301) adds that a "person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon". There are thus clear similarities between the two thinkers. Both maintain that there is a definite *evaluative*

stance in one's perception of reality.[19] Interestingly, both thinkers use imagery that implies a limitation to what one can access. For Gadamer this limitation comes in the form of his famous concept of the *horizon,* and for Huxley this is in the form of "the prisoning grill" which limits the reach of the elephant's trunk. Gadamer's thinking here is perhaps more nuanced; for instance, he goes on to clarify that not each person has the same capacity for understanding, and this capacity for understanding is contingent on a person's horizon. He also mentions that the expansion of horizons works in a positive-feedback loop, which implies one can more fully evaluate one's current horizon and then expand it (*TM*:301-302).

The poem by Huxley and the short summary of his awareness of subjectivity's role in perception suggests a similarity (albeit tenuous) with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Huxley overtly laments what he sees as an imposition of a singular definition on understanding in terms of the everyday language that we use. Huxley ([1925] 1985:81) claims that most "of our mistakes are fundamentally grammatical" because of the epistemological truncation that occurs when we use the same word for more than one thing. Although this at first glance appears to be dissimilar to Gadamer's line of argumentation, Huxley is elucidating what happens when the plurality of interpretation, which he champions, is neglected in the formation of language. Thus, the term "painters", for example, is actually a collective name for people engaging in activities that may be quite divergent. Huxley ([1925] 1985:81) also takes cognisance of the following concern regarding language: "Deceived by the uniqueness of the name, aestheticians have tried to make us believe that there is a single painter-psychology, a single function of painting, a single standard of criticism". This further emphasises Huxley's view that language does not take into account either individual subjectivity (understanding) or the plurality of experience. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer mentions the importance of the formative aspect of language regarding the ability to understand, but Gadamer is even more acutely aware of the plurality of perceptions that are formed in unique socio-historical contexts. We see evidence of this when Gadamer writes:

[19] It is very possible that this evaluative stance may be an evolved, re-appropriated or reinterpreted form of Heidegger's idea that we, in our ontological *Dasein*, have a practical orientation to the world, which is part of our being-in-the-world.

> If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history. *It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation*. (TM:300; my emphases)

Each of us has a unique hermeneutic situation. This determines in a unique fashion what questions we will pursue and how we will pursue them – a notion very similar to Huxley's earlier mentioned point of selecting what is to be investigated.

Huxley's sense of aesthetics is therefore shaped by an awareness of (hermeneutic) subjectivity's role in the production of art.[20] In this regard, Huxley ([1925] 1985:85) maintains that "[t]he number of ways in which good pictures can be painted is quite incalculable, depending only on the variability of the human mind". It is the variability of the human mind which is of interest here. If one were simply to replace that phrase in the quote with Gadamer's *horizons*, then no meaning would be lost in the statement.

There are other similarities between the two thinkers that are not limited to an awareness of the plurality of perceptions of experience that lends itself to the emphasis on subjectivity. In *Jesting Pilate*, Huxley ([1926] 1994) expresses his awareness of what happens to one's deepest and most closely held assumptions when encountering others during travel. Huxley ([1926] 1994:22-23), writing about how "Sicily as a Mohammedan country, cruelly ravished from its rightful owners, the Arabs, struck me as rather shocking", mentions that in "the traveller's life these lessons in the theory of relativity are daily events". The idea here is very similar to Gadamer's theory of dialogue. Gadamer maintains that only in the conversation between individuals regarding a specific subject do we place under the limelight the pre-judices that effect and thus direct our thinking. By doing this in dialogue we can reach new understandings and achieve a fusion of horizons. As Huxley ([1926] 1994:241) says, to "travel [shifting our horizons] is to discover that everybody is wrong". It is in the realization that all knowledge is relative, a horizon with limitations, that we can truly converse about a topic and come to understand the topic in a different light, which can again be discussed further. These thinkers share the idea

[20] And by extension, in people's engagement with and construction of everyday experience, as I will show in connection with *BNW*.

that dialogue (in whatever form) is how one can elucidate one's own pre-judices or assumptions. However, Gadamer's view on the matter is more nuanced in that it looks at the enabling side of our pre-judices, as well as the further production of knowledge that can occur in dialogue.

In addition to Huxley's strong belief in the subjectivity of individuals, as well as the power of dialogue, he is also acutely aware of the spuriousness of positing an atemporal immanent truth "out there". In *Proper Studies*, Huxley (1927:49) comments that he finds "incomprehensible the state of mind of those to whom the flux of reality seems something dreadful and repulsive. Enjoying my bath in the flux, I feel no longing for the rock of ages or other similar solidities". In itself, the comment implies mainly that Huxley finds rigid-minded people irksome. However, taken in conjunction with his other ideas, especially his thoughts regarding subjectivity, it is possible to extend a reading of the comment to include ideas regarding human subjectivity and its products of understanding as necessitating an open mind and someone who can fully engage in dialogue to open up new possible ways for understanding, and for coming together in a fusion of horizons for further events of understanding. This is very similar to Gadamer's thinking regarding fully engaging in dialogue and focusing solely on the subject matter, as well as his claim that truth and knowledge claims are not atemporal.

Overall, there are clear correlations between Huxley's thinking and Gadamer's. They do appear to share a *Zeitgeist* in terms of a theoretical horizon of experience due to their probable shared awareness of Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger. These similarities are noteworthy and create a useful point of departure for the discussion regarding Huxley's fictional writing in *Brave New World,* allowing for the possibility of analysing the portrayal of subjectivity in Huxley's text with Gadamer in mind.

2.3 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF HISTORY IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

The role of a historical past (in the sense of prior texts, statues, works of art, poetry, and events that relate to what the World State in *BNW* would deem an "outdated" past) and its corollaries, history (as Gadamer uses the term), tradition, and pre-judices, do not, at first glance, appear to receive much attention in *BNW*. The statement "History is bunk" (*BNW*:29) seems to resonate throughout the novel to the

extent that there is almost no visible, explicitly recorded historical past that effects the subjectivity of the characters in the novels, apart from John the Savage, and Mustapha Mond, the Controller, who both have access to some form of historical past through old books. There are only a few instances when reference is made to such a past. One notable instance occurs in Chapter 16 of the novel, when John has a long discussion with Mond regarding the reading of Shakespeare and why Shakespeare's work has been banned.[21] Despite these mentions, the pseudo-religion and hypnopaedia in the novel appear to have replaced a historical past which evolved organically, as it were – without explicit manipulation of the kind noted in *1984* – and thus supersede the role of *Wirkungsgeschichte* in Gadamer's sense.

The World State's replacement of the effecting role of a historical past in the construction of subjectivity with pseudo pre-judices such as hypnopaedia in order to establish control fails to function in the same nuanced and sophisticated manner as history, tradition and pre-judices. This can be explained by Gadamer's claim that it is because historical tradition is *always* being defined by the course of an event that understanding can be "regarded as a *historical potential*" (*TM*:366; my emphasis). At first glance this implies that any character in the novel actually does have access to history, because each event of their understanding would mean tradition and history is being created. But the horizon from which these new understandings are being created is one that is vastly different from the "organic" history that Gadamer describes. Because history, as Gadamer describes it, is *always* being created, its influences stretch back much further and are near-infinite in number. Mere hypnopaedia, in contrast, will have a vastly curtailed scope. The history and tradition in *BNW* from which understanding emanates is **consciously created** in order to control; it does not occur through the vagaries of random individual experience. This means that historical potential shifts from being a source of openness to being limiting. Thus the "history-surrogate" of conditioning that the characters receive results in a changed, almost anaemic history (in the Gadamerian sense). Evidence

[21] Baker (1970:117) mentions that "John's autobiographical narrative deliberately echoes the Director of Hatcheries' lecture on embryonic development and childhood training in the introductory chapters". This is particularly ironic in view of the fact that the Director, for all his disgust at the notion of biological parenting, is probably John's biological father. It seems that Huxley is drawing parallels between John's Shakespearian horizon and the citizens' decanting.

of this can be seen in the characters' responses to information that is not included in their horizons, as discussed in Section 2.4.

The absence of an "organic" historical past for the majority of the citizens is a powerful tool in controlling their subjectivity, because it limits the characters' horizons. The following passage illustrates this idea:

> He waved his hand; and it was as though, with an invisible feather whisk, he had brushed away a little dust, and the dust was Harappa, was of Ur of the Chaldees; some spider-webs, and they were Thebes and Babylon and Cnossos and Mycenae. Whisk, whisk – and where was Odysseus, where was Job, where were Jupiter and Gotama and Jesus? Whisk – and those specks of antique dirt called Athens and Rome, Jerusalem and the Middle Kingdom – all were gone. Whisk – the place where Italy had been was empty. Whisk, the cathedrals; whisk, whisk, King Lear and the Thoughts of Pascal. Whisk, Passion; whisk, Requiem; whisk, Symphony; whisk…. (*BNW*:29)

In this passage, Huxley evokes different images from different stages and places of the past. The evocation starts with the allusion to the ancient city of Harappa, which was is in the greater Indus region and part of the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations, namely Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia, and China (Harappa, 2008). Next, Huxley mentions Ur of Chaldees, an important city throughout Mesopotamian history (Helgestad, 2014). This imaginative trip through history continues with other important and later civilizations, but also asks about central figures in different religions and mythologies such as Greek polytheism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism. Interestingly, Mond's godlike whisking away of history also includes seminal works of moral philosophy such as the *Thoughts* of Pascal, and works of art, such as Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Mozart's Requiem. It is perhaps not so much the specific pieces of history but the vast range which is important here. This passage illustrates some of the differences between Huxley's portrayal of the World State's history and Gadamer's understanding of history. Each historical event would have a vast number of influences that constitutes its being that particular event of tradition. And as one progresses through history, each event adds its influence to subsequent ones and so on. Thus the richness of different cultures, through different ages, places, and languages, implies an even richer horizon through all these different connections, which Mustapha Mond, Huxley and the reader share (and that Huxley could probably assume his readers knew and attached meaning to), whereas the citizens of the World State have but one initial horizon – their conditioning.

It seems then that the World State's destruction or hiding of the world's historical past starts with the very earliest civilizations, extends to the Greeks and the Romans and also includes art and science. It also indicates that it is not just Western history which is at stake here, with the mention of Gotama. Considering Gadamer's claim that our historical past is constitutive of our subjectivity, the elimination of so much of history is ominous. Where would our understanding be without Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and modern European historical and philosophical traditions? How different would the global horizon of understanding be without just one these? Taken in conjunction with Mond's quoting of "Our Ford" as well as the controlling effect of destroying history has on the subjectivity of the novel's characters, this paragraph plays a central role in the near-absent exposition of the sequence of events that contributed to the dominant world order described in the novel.[22]

Throughout the novel there are very few indications of the events that led up to the shaping of the World State as it stands and there could be several reasons for this. It is likely that the World Controllers deemed it necessary that such information only be available to a privileged few, since the decision-making that led to the developments were likely to be unsavoury. Additionally, if such information were publicly available, it might well be counter-productive in terms of controlling the effective history of the world and hence the inhabitants' subjectivity. The mechanical simplicity with which all these great events are swept aside (as epitomised by Mond's whisking) suggests a near omnipotent power – and when it comes to Bernard and Helmholtz's "rebellion" the power of that controlling effect is truly felt (see Chapter 4).

Thus when analysing history (in the Gadamerian sense) in the novel, I reconsider that which has taken the place of history and tradition in the process of understanding – conditioning – and then compare it to Gadamer's theory regarding understanding. The constituting effect of the conditioning on the minds of the characters is shown very emphatically in the opening chapter of the novel. When the director is giving a tour of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre and

[22] The wordplay between "Our Ford" and "Our Lord" and the allusion to Henry Ford suggests the elevation of technology and the mechanised production line to a god-like status

enters the room for Elementary Class Consciousness, he says that the conditioning is done:

> "Till at last the child's mind *is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too – all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides – made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are *our* suggestions!" (*BNW*:23; Huxley's emphases)

The Director's delivery of these lines is trance-like, and his jolting out of his meditative state is indicative of either fanaticism or, more probably, his own conditioning. When the ideas in this paragraph are read with Gadamer in mind, a far grimmer picture emerges.

Gadamer informs us that the horizons that are historically effected in us (instilled in us through our personal and collective *Geschichtlichkeit*) play a constitutive role in our decision-making beyond the initial point from which we depart into further understandings that expand our horizons. As already indicated above, Gadamer says that when

> …we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from *the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation*, we are always already affected by history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation (my emphases). (*TM*:300)

In other words, the initial tradition imbued in us has a lasting effectual relationship with our further inquiries and the way in which we approach them. Similarly, the controlling mechanism of hypnopaedia has a far more lasting effect than the mere immediate control of tastes. It is in this light that the Director's words must be understood. His emphasis on the word "*is*" further demonstrates how the characters' subjectivity is actually effected by the conditioning. He seems to suggest that it is a matter of the conditioning being given an organic body.[23]

In the structure of the novel there is further evidence of the power controlling history and its effective dimension. Moylan (2000:148) notes that "the text opens *in medias*

[23] The effect such conditioning has on subjectivity in light of Gadamer's position that understanding and subjectivity are ontological are best understood when characters come in contact with people whose horizons are vastly different from their own. Lenina, for instance, struggles to reconcile John's differences, and John's inability to reconcile his actions with his beliefs at the end of the novel lead to his suicide. For a fuller discussion see Section 2.5.

res within the 'nightmarish society', cognitive estrangement is at the first forestalled by the immediacy, the normality, of the location" and that there is no trip to get to this "everyday place of life".[24] Similarly, Baccolini (1995:293) maintains that the text is "built around the construction of a narrative [of the hegemonic order] and a counter-narrative [of resistance]". For both Moylan and Baccolini, the narrative structure is about immersing us in the protagonist's world about which he or she then becomes uneasy and against which the person may seek to rebel. By putting us *in medias res* and giving an exposition of "the construction of a narrative of the hegemonic order", Huxley is actually allowing the structure of novel to display the effectiveness that the "whisking" away of previous historical events has – even the narrator appears to have little access to them. The narrator's not having access to this history might at first glance appear to be a weakness in the novel, but presenting a background on how things came to be as they are in the novel would arguably be counterproductive and would detract from the novel's coherence. The structure of the novel in fact gives support to and emphasises the theme of historical control and its role in effecting consciousness by purposefully omitting the details of the history of the World State.

The content of the novel also adds to the juxtaposition established at the beginning of the novel. One important aspect of this juxtaposition is in the comparison and contrast of the New Mexican Savage Reservation, "Civilization", and our own (or the reader's). The reason for the existence of the Reservation is not entirely clear. It seems as if the Controllers of the World State simply use it for tourism, but it might also be used for purposes of propaganda to show citizens of "Civilization" how vastly superior their lives are compared to those of the savages in the Reservation. But Huxley also uses this juxtaposition to allow us entry into the "Civilization" through the character of John. The characters in the Reservation appear to be largely trapped in trying to meet the most basic needs in Maslow's (1943:372-380) hierarchy, namely the physiological and safety needs, as well as sex, which have not been entirely

[24] Ironically, as in *1984*, the familiarity of the setting with its London landmarks and parts of the British landscape evokes a rich history for readers, while clearly it has quite different associations for the characters in the novel.

resolved in the reader's own (20th or 21st century) world.[25] John is atypical in that he struggles primarily with love, rather than mere sex, and the need to belong in his community, which are middle order needs (Maslow, 1943:380-381). In "Civilization", the basic needs are so fully satisfied that they cease to be needs at all, and the middle order needs and the rest of the higher needs in Maslow's hierarchy (esteem, and self-actualization) have been largely eliminated, barring the few rebellious characters who require esteem (Bernard), and self-actualization (Helmholtz). This might be difficult for readers to empathise with, because the horizons of understanding in "Civilization" are so vastly different from our own (the world of the readers) that it would make it somewhat difficult to penetrate the workings of it without characters who are more closely aligned to our own experiences than the majority of "Civilization" in the World State. But at the same time it appears that the characters in the Reservation are just as far removed from the experiences of an average first world reader (if there is such an average reader), as they are from those of the inhabitants of the "civilized" part of the World State. In this sense not only is John atypical in the world, but so are Bernard and Helmholtz. John's inclusion gives the reader someone with whom the reader can empathise a little more than with Bernard or Helmholtz, because his horizon is not that of World State's conditioning and also is not truly that of the Reservation. John's education in Shakespeare aligns him more closely to our own horizons than any character other than Mustapha Mond.

The effects of the citizens' conditioning are seen at various times in the novel. Examples range from Lenina's remembering to take her contraceptive even though she is heavily drugged (*BNW*:67), to the repetition of hypnopaedic slogans such as "everyone belongs to everyone else" (*BNW*:34), to the preferences or dislikes instilled in the different classes regarding certain colours and consumer objects (*BNW*:53),[26] to the extreme conditioning of sexual behaviour as normal that most

[25] The assumption here is that Huxley is writing for a Western and predominantly middle-class audience. Reader reception is not something I discuss in detail and is mentioned as an area of additional research in Section 5.3.
[26] The conditioning (along the lines of Pavlovian conditioning) is the only time that the World State needs to use pain (in the form of mild electrical shocks) in using reward/punishment to condition likes and dislikes for specific objects or ideas.

readers even today would consider gross promiscuity.[27] In this world, excess is considered virtuous, there are several examples in which the characters display how their conditioning has replaced the "normal" historical milieu that is immanent to the subjectivity of 20th (and 21st) century readers.[28] The overall effect in the reading of subjectivity in the novels, with these factors taken into consideration, has implications when it comes to actually thinking of the characters in the novel as fully human.

Calder (1976:11) mentions that along with "indecision, suffering, human cruelty on a personal level, have been cast out creativity, independence, a sense of self. Individuality, the crux and centre of the human condition, has gone".[29] It can be argued that Huxley would be in complete agreement with Calder's deduction, since the plurality of perception is something brought up time and again in the novel. Mond can be seen as symbolising the opposite idea, especially when he speaks of ideas such as that the "social body persist[ing] although the component cells might change" (*BNW*:84). But this is one of the major problems that Bernard Marx wrestles with. An example of his struggle against this emphasis on social cohesion is evident when Bernard says the following of looking at the sea in silence: "It makes me feel as though […] I were more *me*, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body" (*BNW*:78).[30] Calder (1976:18) also goes so far as to say that in the novel "characterization becomes impossible" because of the lack of individuality instilled in the characters through their conditioning.

[27] Hickman (2009:145) notes that although Huxley was not opposed to drug taking *per se*, he was "opposed to recreational drug taking that would render a population docile" and that he was "reluctant to advocate their use for the masses".
[28] Although Gadamer speaks of only a few factors that effect subjectivity, my argument, brought to the fore through an analysis of subjectivity, as well as readings of other theorists, suggest that there are other factors that play an integral role in shaping subjectivity. Hence, "normal" must be used cautiously, since what is "normal" is a socially constructed concept.
[29] This way of seeing the human condition is largely Western, and it seems that Huxley is enforcing this idea due to the narrator's alignment with the characters who rebel against the World State's emphasis on the social body. Although there is a definite link between individuality and subjectivity, they are not one and the same. Therefore, it is possible to imagine that someone who comes from a culture in which the social body is emphasised over the individual (the African concept of *Ubuntu* comes to mind) it is likely that they would identify more with Mond's decision to subsume his individuality to the needs of the World State than with Helmholtz's desire for individuality. See Section 2.4.
[30] The significance of this quote is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

However, Calder's conclusion is a product of the standard way of approaching dystopian fiction from a biographical and socio-cultural perspective. Instead, I would argue that precisely because the individuals in the novel are so very similar in character (although there are important differences) it is possible to produce a characterization, perhaps not of the individuals, but of the entire society. Moreover, I would argue that subjectivity should be considered to be on an equal footing in terms of importance to individuality when it comes to the human condition, and possibly more so. Calder's conclusion that when individuality, "the crux, the centre of the human condition", has gone, what is left are people who can almost not be considered human. But it must be added that that centre is shared with subjectivity – it is the underlying fundamental that shapes individuality. When subjectivity is controlled and manufactured as it is in *BNW* by eliminating and supplanting history, the effect reaches beyond shaping individuality in an epistemological sense and extends to people's not having any real understanding at all.

2.4 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

Language plays a vital role in *BNW*. With the manipulation that one sees in the novel, several interesting things can be observed. Firstly, highly descriptive language that extends beyond the framework of what is possible within the sphere of manipulation would be out of place, for the characters in the novel, as well as for the narrative. This is similar to the structure of the novel which keeps to the minimum any mentions of events that preceded those within the novel, because their mention would detract from the novel's overall aesthetic cohesion – if "history is bunk", it is justifiably excluded from the World State.[31] Huxley preserves this aesthetic cohesion by limiting what the characters say to what they were taught in their conditioning, and uses juxtaposition of different characters, as well as different scenes, to create contrast and insight, which guides the reader to look more closely at the text.

Orwell ([1946b] 1957:135-136) says the following in "Politics and the English language":

> When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases […] one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a

[31] The only "history" that is included is that familiar to the reader – it is not familiar or made known to the characters, as in the extract on Mond's whisking away the past cited in Section 2.3.

> live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them. And this is not altogether fanciful. A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance *towards turning himself into a machine*. (my emphasis)

In a similar sense, in *BNW*, the "turning oneself into a machine" can be seen in the language of the phrases used by the characters. For instance, there are several instances where the characters living in the "civilized" world simply spout hypnopaedic phrases. Lenina, showing the conditioning of her caste, for instance, comments on what "a hideous colour khaki is'" when she sees a Delta gymnastics display and Community Sing (*BNW*:53). Even when she is physically being threatened by John, she merely stammers, "'A gra-amme is be-etter…'" (*BNW*:170), beginning the usual recitation of "a gramme is better than a damn". John provides some contrast to this with his use of Shakespeare in his attempt to understand certain events. An example of this is Mond's mention of cardinals, to which John replies: "'I, Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal.' I've read about them in Shakespeare'" (*BNW*:204). This short line resembles several other instances when John uses the language of Shakespeare to fit the "civilized" world into his understanding, with limited success, as his pre-judices based on his experiences of the Savage Reservation do not fully match the world depicted by Shakespeare. As one sees in Section 2.5, John's inability to reconcile what he learns in Shakespeare fully with what he learns from the "civilized" world leads to his suicide.

The systems of control in the novel do not permit creative use of language in the World State, or even in the Reservation.[32] Hence, its presence could cause a chasm between form and function in the text. The few times it is present, predominantly seen in John's quoting of Shakespeare, the absurdity of its presence in the context of "Civilization" is instantly perceived by the reader.

Sisk (1997:40) notes that the "blank discs" mentioned in "Politics and the English language" reflect "the absence of genuine thought within the mind of the speaker,

[32] Creative language must be understood in the sense of the metaphorical and idiomatic expressions we use to describe our world, the language that Helmholtz so desperately yearns for and that John finds in Shakespeare. The Reservation's language might have this type of use, but the systems of control in place there limit subjectivity in other ways, which are not the focus of the current discussion.

which acts like a mental vacuum and lends itself perfectly to parroting political ideals without truly examining them". Gadamer would agree that simply using language mechanically and lacking the capacity for discerning what language is used in a situation would result in a "mental vacuum". As the person speaking might appear to be speaking on his/her own accord, one could be misled to think that the person possesses subjectivity (understanding), when the person is simply spouting the ideals and morality of the State, given physical form in the speaker's body. The implication is that individual subjectivity is replaced by the State's doctrine – as already indicated in Section 2.3, the Director of Hatcheries boasts: "…the child's mind *is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child's mind" (*BNW*:23; Huxley's emphases).

Sisk (1997:22) says the following about *BNW*:

> [The novel] does not reveal a government forcing a thought-restricting language on its populace. Rather, Huxley shows us a society that engineers its population from conception on and then fulfils all the desires that it has conditioned in them […] some words for outdated concepts still exist but have been debased into vapidity (*love*), smutty humor (*marriage*) or even obscenity (especially the term *mother*).

It is unclear why Sisk does not consider this change in language manipulative or thought-restricting. One argument could be that it is part of the natural progression of language that one sees through time. But this change is usually related to the denotative meaning, and not necessarily to the connotative meaning or the underlying pre-judice that is operative in our subjective interpretation of a word's function. For instance, Paul Chilton (1983:38) gives a good example of how the political context in which the word "deterrent" was used in the early 1980s had changed the word's connotative meaning while leaving what it denotes intact:

> The word 'deterrent' is almost such a case. It has long been in public usage, and encapsulates a whole ideology based on the simultaneous evocation of threat and reassurance. Even the form of the word gives it a technical connotation, and therefore, a kind of authority. But what is most important is that the term 'deterrent' carries unspoken implications: firstly, it says, in military contexts, 'nuclear', without saying it out loud; secondly, it asserts, as if it were a fact, that A deters B; and thirdly it says that B is aggressive and A is non-aggressive so the word asserts the presence of an alien threat while at the same time promising the ability to ward it off. It is thus a potent symbol for attracting political allegiance, and whose usefulness becomes clear in the course of public debate, where to say 'It is wrong to want to get rid of the deterrent' is almost self-evidently true.

In this case, Chilton, although not speaking in a strictly Gadamerian sense, does illustrate effectively how once a word has been taken up in the ebb and flow of historical events (in this case the Cold War) its connotative meaning can shift drastically without necessarily affecting its definition, or its denotative meaning, just as the word "parent" has a changed meaning in *BNW*.

Meckier (1969:181) has a more subtle conclusion on language's state in the novel and maintains that "language has virtually lost its meaning and few speakers in this model world of scientifically engineered precision realize how unscientific and imprecise their words really are". Although speaking about the denotative meaning, Meckier is aware of the control that has been affected regarding language. When language is vacuous, it effects a subjectivity in people that is related to the "blank discs" Orwell mentions. This is highly favourable for maintaining the status quo in the world since "the world state depends on arresting the population's development" (Sisk, 1997:26). It is this hampering of their development that stops the ability to enunciate the "language of rebellion" and hence prohibits, without force, rebellion from physically being acted out. Without the language to speak about dissent and hence understand the feelings of dissent, there can be no rebellion. As Matter (1983:106) argues, the "World Controllers appear to agree with [Benjamin Lee] Whorf's theory of linguistic relativity, which suggests that people who have no words to express antisocial sentiments cannot think antisocially".[33] In other words, their subjectivity has been shaped and moulded through the repression of language into a subjectivity that cannot rebel.

There are many examples of this oppression through language in the novel. As was previously pointed out, Sisk (1997:22) mentions that words we currently commonly use have had the pre-judicial meanings shifted to ones that are "vapid", "smutty" or "obscene". For instance, during the opening scenes of the novel when the Director of Hatcheries asks his group if they know what Polish is, there is the following exchange:

> 'You know what Polish is, I suppose?'
> 'A dead language.'
> 'Like French and German,' added another student, officiously showing off his learning.

[33] See Whorf (1956).

> ‘And “parent”?’ questioned the DHC.
>
> There was an uneasy silence. Several of the boys blushed. They had not yet learned to draw the significant but often very fine distinction between smut and pure science. One, at last, had the courage to raise a hand.
>
> ‘Human beings used to be . . .’ he hesitated; the blood rushed to his cheeks. ‘Well, they used to be viviparous.’ (*BNW*:19)

The denotative meaning in this example of the word “parent” remains intact. But there has been a dramatic change in the pre-judice that is operative behind the word, in other words, its connotative meaning. It is hard to imagine how a term which is so integral to all human society can have its corollary pre-judice shifted as much in a natural progression without effecting some kind of historical shockwave that would have sparked a resistance to these changes. However, if a system of manipulation and control that focuses on language deems the word unfit for maintaining the policies of the ruling party and the desired status quo, then it is far more feasible that such a shift can happen.

There is more evidence of this type of manipulation of language throughout the novel. We read, for instance, that child sexuality is encouraged:

> He let out the amazing truth. For a very long period before the time of Our Ford, and even for some generations afterwards, erotic play between children had been regarded as abnormal (there was a roar of laughter); and not only abnormal, actually immoral (no!): and had therefore been rigorously suppressed. (*BNW*:27)

Based on reactions to the topic of children’s sexuality in Huxley’s time and even today, for sexuality to become what it is in the novel must have required a dramatic change in tradition, which must have been enforced with a restructuring of the pre-judices in language. The fact that the novel appeared third in the American Library Association’s 2010 list of “Most Frequently Challenged” book due its sexuality shows the extent to which the topics it brings up are still abhorred (Flood, 2011). However, even in the World State’s sexual excess, there is never any mention of sexual relations between generations – after all, the rather vaguely explained sexual relationships of children, for example, a “little boy of about seven and a little girl who might have been a year older” (*BNW*:26), is called “erotic play” (*BNW*:27) – which is indicative that even Huxley who invented this world could not fathom such behaviour.[34] The overall conclusion from this evidence is that the amount of change

[34] Aside from the issue of erotic play between children, and the World State-mandated promiscuity, Huxley depicts heteronormative sexuality. Sexism, racism and colonialism in *BNW* are interesting in

required to have this sort of behaviour (notice my own phraseology) acceptable needs to include a dramatic shift in the linguistic pre-judices and necessitates stringent control on the part of the party who wants to establish its status quo. There needs to be control to effect this sort of change, contrary to Sisk's claim that there is no "government forcing a thought-restricting language on the populace".

Nonetheless, Sisk (1997:20) also says:

> Huxley's society fears the printed word as perhaps the only force that can permanently subvert years of careful conditioning. This threat is countered by a policy of appropriating words, stripping them of undesirable meaning, and using them to further extend State conditioning.

The evidence of this purge of literature is evident throughout the novel and is summarized in the following passage:

> 'Do they read Shakespeare?' asked the Savage as they walked, on their way to the Biochemical Laboratories, past the School Library.
> 'Certainly not,' said the Head Mistress, blushing.
> 'Our library,' said Dr Gaffney, 'contains only books of reference. If our young people need distractions, they can get it at the feelies. We don't encourage them to indulge in any solitary amusements.' (*BNW*:142)

The opening chapter in the novel includes books among the things infants are conditioned not to like, with electric shocks administered to reinforce the conditioning (*BNW*:15).

Just as with the structure in the novel and how the absence of history necessitates a form of writing that adheres to its content, the language of the novel necessitates a plain style almost to the extent of being bare in order to be cohesive with its content. Huxley's *Brave New World* has often been criticized for this, with critics even saying that *BNW* is "stylistically inferior to [Huxley's] previous novels" (Brooke, 1958:23). However, considering the linguistic framework established by Huxley's minimalist approach to style, a language other than his minimalist style would have detracted from the work's being a holistic whole, since otherwise there would be a chasm between the narrative and the narration.

The manipulation of language and the purge of literature create a subjectivity in the novel that cannot enunciate subtleties and complexities as we, as readers,

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the language, and the existence of the Reservation. But these aspects fall outside of the scope of this discussion. See Section 5.3.

understand them (even in our very diverse sense). As Meckier (1969:182) says "much of the language used in *Brave New World* is not really stable, *but is, like society and the formerly diverse individual, artificial, stagnant, virtually dead*" (my emphasis). It is the apparent stagnation of the language, in the manner in which the characters speak, and hence understand, and the way the novel is written that Huxley exhibits an underappreciated skill for maintaining consistency between form and content. It is when we are jolted by the few examples of a sophisticated use of language that it becomes possible to see what might have happened if Huxley had employed a different style of writing. This jolt is a consequence of the apparently absurd presence of language that is not artificial, stagnant and virtually dead in the context of the novel.

One of the most prominent examples of this apparent absurdity in the novel is seen when John the Savage reads *Romeo and Juliet*:

> With closed eyes, his face shining with rapture, John was softly declaiming to vacancy:
>
> 'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
> It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
> Like a rich jewel in Ethiop's ear;
> Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear . . .'
>
> The golden T lay shining on Lenina's bosom. Sportively, the Arch-Community-Songster caught hold of it, sportively he pulled, pulled. 'I think,' said Lenina suddenly, breaking a long silence, 'I'd better take a couple of grammes of *soma*.' (*BNW*:155)

Immediately prior to these two juxtaposed scenes, Mustapha Mond has also finished reading a paper titled "A new theory of biology" and deems the paper unpublishable, since it might upset the status quo because it admits "explanations in terms of purpose" and thus could recondition people to think that "the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well-being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge" (*BNW*:155-156).

The passages in question appear right after one another and it is in their juxtaposition that Huxley shows the absurdity of the type of language that would admit to anything the World Controllers deem inappropriate – in fact, the author of the paper may be sent into exile. The absurdity (that is to say being out place) of such language is not only found in Shakespeare's quote, but in the description of

John's reaction during his recital. His face is described as "shining with rapture". In a sterile world, where exuberance and passion are controlled or channelled into consuming goods, it is impossible to imagine anyone's expression as "shining with rapture". Furthermore, the futility of this feeling is emphasised by the World Controller's reaction to a paper he admits to as being "a masterly piece of work" (*BNW*:155). Mond's powerful reaction to something so small in the grand scheme of the world means that anything as seditious as feeling rapturous will be crushed without hesitation.

The repetition of the word "sportively" in the scene involving Lenina supports Meckier's (1969) idea that the language is stagnant. However, this "stagnancy" appears to be a deliberate choice on Huxley's part, given that, in comparison to the scene involving the Savage which displays a far greater range of vocabulary and emotion, the scene with Lenina is fraught with repetition ("sportively" and "pulled") and is without any real sentiment and emotion that is *described by the language*, although the scene does portray her agitated state of mind. But the emptiness and lack of description in the scene, when compared to the one just before it, are wholly in line with the context of the world in which language's manipulation does not admit any sophisticated usage. In stark contrast to this, John's emotional response is an absurdity that has no place in this world and hence will inevitably be removed.

The juxtaposition of these scenes highlights the absence of the type of language that reflects John's lived experience or inner world from the "civilized" world's and the characters' vocabulary. Taken in conjunction with Gadamer's assertion that the "linguisticality of understanding is *the concretion of historically effected consciousness*" (*TM*:391), absence of this type of language from the characters' vocabulary means that the subjectivity that is effected is devoid of thoughts aligned with such language. Huxley's portrayal of language would be incapable of forming these thoughts as well. Helmholtz is perhaps the best example of this idea when he mentions his struggle to have a thought because he does not have the language to describe it:

> Helmholtz shook his head. 'Not quite. I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it – only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of the power. If there was

> *some different way of writing* . . . Or else something to write about . . .' (*BNW*:59; my emphasis)

Although Helmholtz has a gut feeling, an instinct (what Nietzsche might call a bodily impulse),[35] he does not possess the language to fully articulate the thought and, hence, it is incomplete. His poetry illustrates the same tendency:

> Yesterday's committee,
> Sticks, but a broken drum,
> Midnight in the city,
> Flutes in a vacuum,
> Shut lips, sleeping faces,
> Every stopped machine,
> The dumb and littered places
> Where crowds have been –
> All silence rejoice,
> Weep (loudly or low),
> Speak – but with the voice
> Of whom, I do not know.
>
> Absence, say, of Susan's,
> Absence of Egeria's
> Arms and respective bosoms,
> Lips and, ah, posteriors,
> Slowly form a presence;
> Whose? And I ask, of what
> So absurd an essence,
> That something, which is not,
> Nevertheless should populate
> Empty night more solidly
> Than that with which we copulate,
> Why should it seem so squalidly?
> (*BNW*:157-158)

There is a continued lamentation in the poem of something missing. We read of "a vacuum", "shut lips", "sleeping faces", "dumb and littered places". The last two lines of the first stanza are especially evocative of the inability to enunciate something – and it must be called "something" since it is never made entirely clear in the novel what Helmholtz is trying to say. We are only made aware that it is something other than what he has been conditioned to say. For instance:

> But what on earth's the good of being pierced by an article about a Community Sing, or the latest improvement in scent organs? Besides, can you make words really piercing – you know, like the very hardest X-rays – when you're writing about that sort of thing? Can you say something about nothing? That's what it finally boils down to, I try and I try . . . (*BNW*:60)

[35] See Section 4.2.1

It is the collection of these sentiments that Helmholtz has, for something more, even though he cannot articulate what exactly it is, that forms the centre of his rebellion. In the context of the world, his desire to say something "piercing" about a topic that matters becomes "[t]hat something, which is not,/Nevertheless should populate/Empty night more solidly/Than that with which we copulate".[36] It is interesting to note that in this description, which is the foundation of his rebellion, he has to frame it in terms he is familiar with. The juxtaposition of his existential crisis must be framed in terms of "copulation" – a connection which might seem absurd to us, but illustrates the magnitude of control that has been exerted on the language to preserve the status quo. But apart from that, his poem and his conversation with Bernard both display a limit imposed on understanding through the control of language – a sequence of cause and effect that Gadamer would call inevitable.

But this limitation is not only visible in the portrayal of the civilized world's citizens but can also be seen in the particular subjectivity of John. Importantly, Matter (1983:106) notes that "John does not learn to hate Popé until Shakespeare gives him the necessary words". This is as, Gadamer (*TM*:385) says, because "the experience of meaning that takes place in understanding […] is verbal". Thus, when Huxley writes of John's reading we are being shown the creation of a subjectivity through the language of Shakespeare – it is the process of his pre-judices and his mind being *effected*. For instance, we read that:

> He hated Popé more and more. A man can smile and smile and be a villain. Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain. What did the words exactly mean? He only half knew. But their magic was strong and went on rumbling in his head, and somehow it was as though he had never really hated Popé before; never really hated him because he had never been able to say how much he hated him. But now he had these words, these words like drums and singing and magic. These words and the strange story out of which they were taken (he couldn't make head or tail of it) – they gave him a reason for hating Popé; and they made his hatred more real; they even made Popé himself more real. (*BNW*:114)

This passage, which quotes *Hamlet* Act 2 Scene ii (Shakespeare, [1602] 2001), provides a highly contrasting situation in terms of having the language to describe John's feelings and experiences as opposed to the "absurd…essence" which Helmholtz cannot articulate and therefore cannot fully experience. For John, the fact that he has the language to articulate his particular feelings, even though he does

[36] For further discussion of the significance of "piercing", see Section 4.3.2.

not fully comprehend the words, opens up his horizon and solidifies his understanding. As Gadamer says, the verbal "interpretation is the form of all interpretations, even when what is to be interpreted is not linguistic in nature – i.e., is not a text but a statue or a musical composition" (*TM*:400). It is the combination of having a language to articulate that which is not verbal, but a feeling, in combination with the expansion of his horizon through having an accessible "history" in the form of Shakespeare's texts, and its corollary tradition, to which he can refer in order to grasp current situations that result in his feeling more real, more substantial – and with some justification.[37] It is perhaps this lack of feeling real, a lack of substance, which is part of the lacuna in Bernard's and Helmholtz's rebellion.

2.5 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF DIALOGUE IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

The overall effect of the manipulation and control of the characters' subjectivity through the control and manipulation of history and language, as well its presence in the lives of characters such as John the Savage, has a remarkable effect on their understanding and can be seen in their dialogue with one another. This is especially evident in situations where the parties from the two different worlds (those from "Civilization" and John, from the Reservation) attempt to form a new understanding in their discussion of various topics. In this regard, Gadamer (*TM*:399-400) notes that when "we are concerned with understanding and interpreting verbal texts, interpretation in the medium of language itself shows what understanding always is *assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own*" (my emphasis). What one sees throughout the novel is that the two worlds are so far removed from one another that "assimilating what is said to become one's own" is virtually impossible and this situation contributes to a large extent to John's suicide. The possibility to form a *Horizontverschmelzung* between the two interlocutors in a discussion (as opposed to a true dialogue) is hampered to the point of impossibility by the extent to which the citizens of "Civilization" are controlled. Through the absence of any *Geschichtlichkeit* other than their pre-approved conditioning and the shallowness of their language, these citizens are almost non-human in terms of Gadamer's framework.

[37] John's horizon may still be somewhat limited despite his having access to Shakespeare, but it is at least broader than that of the characters from the "civilized" world.

The differences created by the effective history in the characters' corollary subjectivities is made prominent in Chapter 8 of the novel. The chapter opens with the following passage:

> 'So hard for me to realize,' Bernard was saying, 'to reconstruct. As though we were living on different planets, in different countries. A mother, and all this dirt, and gods, and old age, and disease . . .' He shook his head. 'It's almost inconceivable. I shall never understand unless you explain.'
> 'Explain what?'
> 'This.' He indicated the pueblo, 'That.' And it was the little house outside the village. 'Everything. All your life.'
> 'But what is there to say?'
> 'From the beginning. As far back as you can remember.'
> 'As far back as I can remember.' John frowned. There was a long silence. (*BNW*:106)

Bernard's inability to comprehend the situation he finds John in is due to the historical and linguistic chasm that lies between them. He cannot bridge it himself because of the vast distance between their respective horizons, although, generally speaking, this kind of chasm is not uncommon. What is uncommon is that they are unable to bridge the gulf. As Gadamer notes:

> [A] hermeneutical conversation, like a real conversation, finds a common language, and that finding a common language is not, any more than in real conversation, preparing a tool for the purpose of reaching understanding but, rather, coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement. Even between the partners of this 'conversation' a communication like that between two people takes place that is more than mere accommodation. The text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is ultimately the achievement of the interpreter. Both have a share in it. (*TM*:389-390)

Bernard's inadequate and vague gesturing towards different and ever expanding topics in order to produce an understanding between himself and John is indicative of what Gadamer in the above quote calls "more than reaching a tool for the purpose of reaching an understanding". I would argue that Bernard is aware of this chasm, and is looking for a "tool" to bridge it, but with each topic that he hopes to grasp, which could "[bring] a subject matter into language" that would create an understanding, he realizes that "this" is far too specific a topic for them to successfully enter into a dialogue, hence it has to become "that" which is further removed and finally "everything". It is perhaps, only in beginning right at the start, in discussing "everything", that they could find some common ground, because in discussing everything they would inevitably share the same horizon. However, John's response, "But what is there to say?", shows that he too is acutely aware of

this chasm and even in his discussion of such a vague topic, it is unlikely that they could reach a common understanding because of the differences in their respective pre-judices. The silence between them – the impossibility to enter into a dialogue – is emblematic of the failure for a possible *Horizontverschmelzung*.

The majority of the rest of the chapter details John's experiences and life in the Reservation. The manner in which it is told, however, is not what one would expect from a character reliving the tale of his or her life, because it is not actually told by John – it is narrated in the third person. There is no clear indication why this is done, since John could simply tell his story to Lenina and Bernard. However, when one considers the content of the story, a possible answer arises. The first scene of John's story begins with a narration of Popé's first throwing John out of his mother's room and Popé's then forcing himself onto John's mother. John cannot fully articulate this experience, except by drawing on Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Hamlet* for a vocabulary to express his hatred of Popé and his disgust at the form of sexuality that he witnesses. Discussing this event would be a very strange way of initiating a story of one's life to people who are complete strangers. However, taken in the larger context of the novel, this scene does coincide to some extent with the opening scenes of the novel in which the sexuality of the citizens of "Civilization" and its effecting role on their subjectivity is portrayed. Huxley could very well be drawing parallels between the "conditioning" the characters received from these experiences. When looked at with Gadamer in mind, this scene theoretically allows for some common ground between the two interlocutors to form since sex plays a vital role in the subjectivity of the citizens of the civilized world. However, Bernard's response after John's telling of his story shows how ineffective the topic of sex is, since the concept "rape" would scarcely be intelligible to Bernard because the State-mandated promiscuity in "Civilization" has eliminated the construct.[38] Instead Bernard's response comes from his rebellious and seditious tendency that values his selfhood. This is something he would share with John, and it proves to be their only common ground. We read:

[38] That is not to say that a person might not be averse to sex with a particular potential partner, as is demonstrated by Lenina's resorting to some additional "grammes of soma" (*BNW*:155) when the Archsongster makes advances to her (see Section 2.4), but outright rejection might lay even an orthodox person like Lenina open to suspicion of treasonable behaviour. Hence, Helmholtz's self-imposed celibacy, as a refusal to participate in state-mandated sex, attracts attention. Huxley does not explore the notion further, however.

> ‘Alone, always alone,’ the young man was saying.
> The words awoke a plaintive echo in Bernard’s mind. Alone, alone . . . ‘So am I,’ he said, on a gush of confidingness. ‘Terribly alone.’
> ‘Are you?’ John looked surprised. ‘I thought that in the Other Place . . . I mean, Linda always said that nobody was ever alone there.’
> Bernard blushed uncomfortably. ‘You see,’ he said, mumbling and with averted eyes, ‘I’m rather different from most people, I suppose. If one happens to be decanted different . . .’ (*BNW*:118)

It is almost impossible to think of any other character in the civilized world, other than a few rebellious ones, having any kind of “plaintive echo” in their mind. The use of such non-mechanical words to describe his state of mind sets him far apart from other inhabitants of the World State. But this passage also illustrates that the feeling of “aloneness” is the only part of John’s story that Bernard can empathise with. His *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* simply does not extend his subjective horizon far enough to allow any understanding with the other topics John discusses. The only point on which the horizons overlap is one that falls *outside* of Bernard’s official conditioning.

Gadamer notes on several occasions the importance of remaining focused on what is said rather than on who is doing the saying, or for that matter, the listening (*TM*:292; 294; 302). This idea is summed up when he says the following:

> The same is true of a conversation that we have with someone simply in order to get to know him – i.e., to discover where he is coming from and his horizon. This is not a true conversation – that is, we are not seeking agreement on some subject – because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person. (*TM*:294)

Moreover, the conversation between John and Bernard is thrown into a fresh light if we recall three points from Linge’s views on Gadamer. Firstly, the “hermeneutical conversation between the interpreter and the text [or two interlocutors] involves equality and active reciprocity” (Linge, 1977:xx). Secondly, the dialogue “presupposes that both conversational partners are concerned with a common subject matter” (Linge, 1977:xx). Thirdly, the “dialogical character of interpretation is subverted when the interpreter concentrates on the other person as such rather than on the subject matter – when he looks *at* the other person, as it were, rather than *with* him at what the other attempts to communicate” (Linge, 1977:xx).

With this in mind, Bernard’s emphasis on the similarities they share is subverted: he does not concern himself at all with the real subject matter of what John is saying.

This suggests a strong narcissistic tendency in Bernard, which implies that the reciprocity and the equality that is central to dialogue (in Gadamer's terms) cannot guide the conversation between Bernard and John. What Bernard is doing is both similar to and different from what Linge warns of, which is looking *at the person*. Rather than looking at the other person, Bernard looks at *himself as a person.* Hence, the formation of new knowledge, a new understanding that could have shaped a whole new horizon for the two characters, is impossible. It is very likely that this could be due to his conditioning, which emphasises personal satisfaction (although the group's survival is emphasised, the communal consumerist ideal is achieved through individual gratification). In conclusion, this scene is emblematic of the novel's larger depiction of the eradication of meaningful dialogue. The only true conversation we see in which we could consider a moment of a fusion of horizons is the conversation between Mond, Bernard, Helmholtz, and John. But the outcome of that dialogue is negative: Mond banishes Bernard and Helmholtz.

But before that is considered, perhaps one of the best examples of how the characters reach a point in their conversation which can turn into Gadamer's conception of how dialogue ought to operate, but fails, is when Lenina and Bernard go on a date:

> 'I want to look at the sea in peace,' he said. 'One can't even look with that beastly noise going on.'
> 'But it's lovely. And I don't want to look.'
> 'But I do,' he insisted. 'It makes me feel as though . . .' he hesitated, searching for words with which to express himself, 'as though I were more *me*, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body. Doesn't it make you feel like that, Lenina?'
> But Lenina was crying. 'It's horrible, it's horrible,' she kept repeating. 'And how can you talk like that about not wanting to be part of the social body? After all, everyone works for everyone else. We can't do without anyone, Even Epsilons…'
> 'Yes I know,' Said Bernard derisively. '"Even Epsilons are useful"! So am I. and I damned well wish I weren't!' (*BNW*:78)

Three points can be deduced from this passage. Firstly, the noise Lenina hears from the helicopter is comforting to her, since it does not leave room for the possibility of introspection (which is a solitary activity and is therefore seditious). Secondly, Lenina's conditioning does not allow her to engage with Bernard's musings at all. Thirdly, Bernard's own emphasis on himself means he cannot engage with Lenina in a dialogue about the matter.

In order to understand the significance of the abovementioned points, it is important to first give some background. Steiner (2001:225) mentions that barbarism occurs when language unravels and is deformed into mundane "chit-chat", when silence disappears along with aloneness (not loneliness). Similarly, De Beer (2008:3) mentions that "respect for language in its fullness and the surrendering to silence is an unrelenting condition for inventiveness". Steiner's and De Beer's thinking can be related to the above extract, because their understanding of language's role on concept formation requires both a reflective and conscious use of language, and not the noisy language of "chit-chat", as well as the silence in which inventiveness can take hold (something which Bernard does display). In this instance though, dialogue and its corollary concept formation in which Lenina and Bernard have the potential to reach a higher understanding is completely hampered. Lenina actually fears the silence, and her conditioning is likely to be the underlying cause.[39] This fear is indicative of the futility of any attempt at meaningful conversation that is devoid of the noise of "chit-chat", and hence no concept formation or fusion of horizons can take place. Similarly, it also shows how inventiveness is not possible, since using the required silence would make it a "solitary amusement" (*BNW*:142).

Furthermore, Lenina's responses to Bernard's question are purely hypnopaedic mumbles. Not a single one of her responses, other than her tears, are authentically hers.[40] Her responses are conditioned by the World State's teaching. This conditioning does not allow for any new concept formation that might disturb the status quo (as seen with Mond's refusal to publish the biology article). It is therefore highly unlikely that Lenina's conditioning would allow even the slightest possibility in which she can focus on the subject matter at hand and engage in dialogue with Bernard. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley (1958:90) shows an awareness of Pavlov's research and speaks of how "on their way to the point of a final breakdown […] new behaviour patterns can easily be instilled". Lenina does appear to be

[39] I believe it is likely, but not entirely certain. This is because Bernard, although rebellious, does display some effects of conditioning (such as his sex drive), which suggests that he might react the same way to the silence as Lenina does, although he clearly does not. Thus, it is possible that Lenina might be reacting like this to the silence for some other reason.
[40] Her tears might be a conditioned response as well, since the fear she feels might be similar to the fear instilled in babies during their conditioning as displayed when they are made to dislike books and flowers (*BNW*:16-17).

reaching such a breaking point, but the effectiveness of the State's intervention is demonstrated by her reverting to her conditioning.

Additionally, Bernard's focus on his own plight is again shaped into a barrier that inhibits actual dialogue. Earlier in the novel the narrator remarks that mental "excess could produce, for its own purposes, the voluntary blindness and deafness of deliberate solitude, the artificial impotence of asceticism" (*BNW*:59). Mental excess in Helmholtz's case, and perhaps even Mond's, produces exactly this type of artificial impotence of asceticism. However, in this case, Bernard's "voluntary blindness and deafness" leading to asceticism is brought on by his deliberate solitude and placing himself on a higher rung than his peers in consequence of his being physically different from his peers. Nonetheless, it leads to a state in which he limits the chances of expanding his own understanding. As mentioned previously, Gadamer (*TM*:294) maintains that when we attempt to form a new understanding the focus must always be on expanding our horizon. Although Gadamer mostly warns against focusing on the *other's* horizon, Bernard mostly seems to be so overly concerned with his own experience and how it agrees with his understanding, that he is barely interested in his interlocutors' views at all; he is trapped within his own very narrow horizon. However, this could be due to Bernard's awareness that true interaction with anyone other than someone who is also uncomfortable with the status quo of the world (such as Helmholtz) is impossible since, as we saw with Lenina's responses to Bernard's question, most interactions involve meaningless hypnopaedic recitation phrased in the vacuity of the State's language.

This lack of the creation of any real understanding continues throughout the various parts of the novel where people from different horizons enter into conversation.[41] Gadamer also notes the following on understanding:

> When we are concerned with understanding and interpreting verbal texts, interpretation in the medium of language itself shows what understanding always is: assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own. Verbal interpretation is the form of all interpretation, even when what is to be interpreted is not linguistic in nature, i.e., is not a text but a statue or a musical composition. (*TM*:400)

[41] If we accept the premise that the manipulation produces a homogenous subjectivity on the part of the inhabitants of the civilized world, barring a few rebellious ones, then they share the common subjectivity of the State. Hence, they can enter into dialogue, although the knowledge they produce is very limited or is a rehashing of commonly held knowledge.

As we can see, Gadamer maintains that knowledge must become one's own, must be discernible, understood and be interpreted according to the *Geschichtlichkeit* and *Sprachlichkeit* which forms one's horizon. This idea, taken in conjunction with Baker's (1990:124) idea that John is "encumbered by the language of Hamlet and Lear" coupled with his "confused mingling of Shakespearean poetic diction and normal speech [which] is grotesquely abstruse" implies that John may be unable to understand the world at all. Sisk (1997:28) reaches a similar conclusion when he claims that, despite the vocabulary Shakespeare provides, "John is incapable of using it to better understand the society he has entered". However, such an interpretation makes the following excerpt from the novel difficult to explain:

> 'But aren't you shortening her life by giving her so much?'
> 'In one sense, yes,' Dr Shaw admitted. 'But in another we're actually lengthening it.' The young man started, uncomprehending. '*Soma* may make you lose a few years in time,' the doctor went on. 'But think of the enormous, immeasurable durations it can give you out of time. Every *soma*-holiday is a bit of what our ancestors used to call eternity.'
> John began to understand. 'Eternity was in our lips and eyes,' he murmured.
> 'Eh?'
> 'Nothing.' (*BNW*:134)

In this passage there is a clear indication of an event of understanding. If it is true that, as Sisk (1997:28) argues, "Shakespeare *is* his conditioning", we see explicitly how John is using his language to understand the situation. As Gadamer would say, the knowledge has become his own, at least to a limited extent. Why then does Baker say John is encumbered by the language of Shakespeare and why does Sisk say John cannot us it to understand the society he has entered better, when it is clearly aiding him in this particular instance?

As I have just shown, there is at least one instance where John's contact with the "civilized" world becomes intelligible and accessible to him through his existing horizon in what Gadamer calls a *Horizontverschmelzung* by using the language, which is the bearer of tradition and pre-judices, of Shakespeare. However, Dr Shaw's failure to understand John's comment and John's suicide at the end of the novel are indicative of his inability to make the world fully his own or to comprehend fully the world in a sense that makes it not seem so threatening. Sisk (1997:29) narrows his previously mentioned statement with regard to John's suicide and says that John "exemplifies Whorf's theory taken to the extremity of its conclusion:

essentially, the Savage strives to fit the world he encounters into the language he has acquired, with disastrous results". Therefore, I contend that conversely John's fitting of the world of his language into a framework that is so very far removed from what he experiences in "Civilization" that causes his final breakdown.

John's conversation with Mond should have served as a warning to him of this problem. An indication of the absurdity of attempting to fit such disparate systems into one another is given when we read the following:

> 'But why is it prohibited?' asked the Savage. In the excitement of meeting a man who had read Shakespeare he had momentarily forgotten everything else.
>
> The Controller shrugged his shoulders. 'Because it's old; that's the chief reason. We haven't any use for the old things here.'
>
> 'Even when they're beautiful?'
>
> 'Particularly when they're beautiful. Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones.'
>
> 'But the new ones are stupid and horrible. Those plays, where there's nothing but helicopters flying about and you *feel* the people kissing.' He made a grimace. 'Goats and monkeys!' Only in Othello's words could he find and adequate vehicle for his contempt and hatred. (*BNW*:193)

Again, John needs to use his inculcated framework, his subjective horizon, to respond to the situation, but this time, it is not to make sense of it. A shift has occurred where he is no longer entering into an event of understanding but is rejecting the world based on his aesthetics and sense of moral outrage. Interestingly, the quality of his language is also degenerating into the language that reflects Othello's increasing loss of a grip on reality which is seen in Act 4, Scene 1 (Shakespeare, [1604] 1996:IV,i,265). Othello's references to animals to express his revulsion inadvertently align him with Iago, who is often associated with animal imagery and especially its use in dialogue. Similarly, Huxley is subtly drawing parallels between John and Othello, both of whom are victims of a grave misunderstanding, although John's is far more elaborate in its origin (and to some degree brought about internally as opposed to Othello who is misled by Iago). John's downfall is foregrounded here and the quality of his dialogue is degenerating into simple cursing rather than entering into an event of understanding. The animal imagery also links to that in the final two pages of the novel where we read of John's spectators as "pushing and scrambling like swine about the trough" moments before he succumbs to the frenzied "orgy-porgy" (*BNW*:228).

The final conversation John has with Mond is indicative of his failure to reconcile the two worlds he has come to know. The two have the following exchange:

> 'But if you know about God, why don't you give them these books about God?'
> 'For the same reason we don't give them *Othello*: they're old; they're about God hundreds of years ago. Not about God now.'
> 'But God doesn't change.'
> 'Men do, though.'
> 'What difference does that make?'
> 'All the difference in the world,' said Mustapha Mond. (*BNW*:204)

The passage is central to John's failure to come to terms fully with the make-up of the "civilized" world. Mond knows that the relative position of humankind changes, which implies that a seemingly immutable "fact" (in John's view), such as God, also changes. This links to Nietzsche's (1882:Section 125) famous declaration that "God is dead", the meaning of which "relates to the western world's reliance on religion as a moral compass and source of meaning" (Philosophy Index, 2015:1). This idea also relates to Gadamer's (*TM*:274) insistence that, "[u]nderstanding itself is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as entering into an event of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated".[42] Unlike previous occasions where John has been able to assimilate new information into his Shakespearean framework, he cannot do so here, which hints that he will not be able to adjust fully to this society. True to his style in *BNW*, Huxley juxtaposes this scene with several moments in quick succession in which John is actually able to relate his framework (partially) to other topics such as cardinals and philosophers. Despite the extensive discussion, where John finally claims the right to be unhappy, grow old, live in constant apprehension, have lice, catch typhoid and be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind, there is no resolution. The subjective gulf between the two interlocutors is simply too vast to allow for any type of compromise in terms of their respective socio-historical framework. Dialogue, as the medium in which understanding manifests as an event of understanding, is impossible.

2.6 CONCLUSION

With regard to three of the central themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, namely history, language and dialogue, there is very little opportunity for John to enter into a dialogue with the people he encounters from "Civilization", and vice

[42] See page 17.

versa. Their respective historically effected consciousnesses are so vastly different in terms of their individual horizon that they see almost every point in a different way and Huxley's portrayal of this effectively shows the extent of this difference.

The absence of a *Wirkungsgeschichte* (apart from the World State's conditioning) on the part of the citizens in "Civilization" negates the possibility of their understanding's horizon's forming beyond what the State deems appropriate. It also prevents them from seeing things in a light similar to John's way of seeing them. Overall, the effects of controlling, and their portrayal through the structure of the novel, its emphasis during the exposition on the characters' conditioning, and the stylistically mechanical introduction of the novel, all paint a very grim picture regarding the possibility of true understanding effected through history and tradition in cases where these elements are deliberately distorted. This also introduces difficulties for the development of pre-judices that can meaningfully effect a subjectivity that mediates past and present in an event of understanding (*TM*:274).[43]

Additionally the *Sprachlichkeit* of the characters in the novel is also greatly affected, as a consequence of the absence of an organic *Wirkungsgeschichte*, rather than a severely restricted artificially constructed one. The characters of *BNW*'s "Civilization" have only a rudimentary language at their disposal with which to express themselves and in which they can form their thinking. As Gadamer says, "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*" (*TM*:390; Gadamer's emphasis). Given that the medium in which they form and shape their thoughts is so carefully limited and constructed by the State in order to maintain the status quo, the characters can only enunciate the desires of the State. Huxley also does not allow an incongruity to creep into novel's language, especially when such differences would be incongruous with what the systems of control would allow. Rather, he employs a sophisticated juxtaposition. Huxley is able to show the absurdity of incongruous language within the context of the civilized world with references to Shakespeare and by using particularly descriptive phrases such as "his face shining with rapture", which are then juxtaposed to mechanical phrases such as the repetition of "sportively". At the same time Huxley's also highlights the struggle that

[43] See page 17.

rebellious characters such as Helmholtz and Bernard experience in trying to speak about their concerns without having an adequate language to do so.

Finally, John's contact with the "civilized" world, and that of Bernard, Lenina and Helmholtz with John, we are shown a crucible of thoughts and ideas for which there can be no true resolution. The enormous disparities between the characters' respective traditions, pre-judices, and horizons create a chasm that prevents any meaningful dialogue, so that even the rebellious characters cannot converse meaningfully with John, for the reasons discussed. Mustapha Mond, because of his reading of forbidden books, is the only character who shares the tradition John has adopted (but only partially understood) to some extent. The dialogue they have is far more meaningful, extensive and thought-provoking for John than any conversation he has with any of the other characters, or any conversations these characters have with each other. Even Bernard's and Helmholtz's conversations cannot truly bear fruit in terms of the formation of new understandings. Although they do come very close, the language at their disposal and the tradition they share is insufficient. Nonetheless, John and Mond's conversation has the possibility to reach such a point, and perhaps John does arrive at an insight into the inevitability of continuing his attempt at understanding the world. However, his attempt to fit the world into a framework of understanding that is so far removed from the world he encounters has consequences as severe as those experienced by Lear and Othello – both of whom die in consequence of their respective misunderstandings.

In conclusion, in discussing the construction of subjectivity, the novel displays a far greater sophistication of style than most prior critics have acknowledged. Huxley shows an acute awareness of the need to maintain a homogenous whole in terms of style, while still allowing room for the interaction between two extremes of conditioning (that of John and that of "Civilization") seen in the novel. However, the possibility of rebellion in a place with these extreme forms of control seems nearly as absurd as the use of Shakespearean language in a world as bare of aesthetic language as "Civilization" in *BNW*. Nonetheless, rebellion is present and forms a central part of Bernard's and Helmholtz's, and to some extent Lenina's, motivations for their actions, as is discussed for both *BNW* and *1984* in Chapter 4, after a consideration of the portrayal of subjectivity in *1984* in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3:
THE PORTRAYAL OF SUBJECTIVITY IN GEORGE ORWELL'S *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

> 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. – *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. (*1984*:207)[44]

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Like *BNW*, George Orwell's *1984* has had a dramatic impact on how society's treatment of its citizens is viewed – with scandals such as the recent "Big Brother"-like monitoring by the United States' National Security Agency of citizens' internet browsing habits (Lütticke, 2013), the novel remains highly relevant. The novel has received some mixed reviews, from being called a "nightmarish vision of the future" (Meyers, 1975:144)[45] to "a very concrete and naturalistic portrayal of the present and past" (Meyers, 1975:144). However, Rai (1990) claims that "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is, as an object of critical attention, constantly on the point of vanishing; it lives perilously on the borderline beyond which lies its own impossibility". Such a view arises from the critical bias of dystopian criticism thus far, which has focused largely on the politico-historical and biographical underpinnings of dystopian fiction, rather than on the plethora of other approaches possible to the genre.[46] This bias does indeed mean that novels such as *1984* are "constantly on the point of vanishing", because their major premises are not topical in all times and in all places. The assumption underlying this claim is that the very possibility of their becoming a reality is what makes them entertaining to read, because we can see the mores and policies in our society that might lead up to such an outcome, but if these mores and policies change or become less threatening to human nature, then the novels may cease to be seen as relevant.

[44] In the novel, there is uncertainty regarding the author(s) of the quote. The reason for this is made clear in this chapter (see Section 3.4).
[45] There are several authors who compare *1984* to a nightmare. These include early critics such as Deutscher (1957), Elsbree (1959), Howe (1957), Lewis (1952), Rieff (1954), Shibata (1962) and Woodcock (1966), and slightly more recently Meyers (1975), who agrees with these critics.
[46] In the case of *1984*, this bias is strengthened by critics' awareness of the overtly political intent of Orwell's political allegory, *Animal Farm* ([1945] 2003).

However, *1984* remains topical in light of possibilities of critical analysis that extends beyond the mainly politico-historical and biographical readings to which most dystopian fiction has been subject. For this reason, the highly sophisticated manner in which language and history (along with other tropes) play a role in the portrayal of subjectivity is analysed in this chapter. My analysis also examines *1984*'s similarities to and differences from Huxley's *BNW*.

This chapter considers how Orwell thinks about subjectivity, primarily in his portrayal of it in *1984*. I examine the mechanisms of control that affect subjectivity which Orwell describes in the novel. The analysis bears in mind Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and the three main elements that Gadamer discusses, namely history, language and dialogue. But as with the previous chapter, this chapter begins with a brief discussion of Orwell's polemics in an attempt to identify a semblance of spirit between Orwell's and Gadamer's thinking.

3.2 HERMENEUTICS IN ORWELL'S POLEMICS

As established in Section 1.4.1, it is a spurious endeavour to try to find a direct link between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Huxley's writing. The same is true for Orwell's writing, and for the same reasons. Hence, as with Huxley in the previous chapter, I rather look for similarities in terms of Orwell's depiction of language, history, and dialogue to the way in which Gadamer posits their function, rather than try to claim a direct link between Orwell and Gadamer.

Admittedly, Orwell's polemic is far more politicized than Huxley's. Orwell's overtly political interest, as expressed, for instance, in the title of his famous polemic essay, "Politics and the English language" ([1946b] 1957), shows how Orwell's thinking is framed when it comes to language. This stance has in turn led the vast majority of criticism on Orwell to focus on his political thinking. But this is not to say that his polemics are devoid of any meaningful insight for the current discussion, as I hope to show in the brief consideration below of selected examples of Orwell's polemics.

In his essay "Why I write", Orwell (1946e:1) identifies four impulses for writing, namely sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse and political purpose,

and comments that for him “the first three motives would outweigh the fourth” (Orwell, 1946e:3). Only a little lower down, Orwell (1946e:3) gives the following poem, which he wrote in 1935:

A Happy Vicar I Might Have Been

A happy vicar I might have been
Two hundred years ago
To preach upon eternal doom
And watch my walnuts grow;

But born, alas, in an evil time,
I missed that pleasant haven,
For the hair has grown on my upper lip
And the clergy are all clean-shaven.

And later still the times were good,
We were so easy to please,
We rocked our troubled thoughts to sleep
On the bosoms of the trees.

All ignorant we dared to own
The joys we now dissemble;
The greenfinch on the apple bough
Could make my enemies tremble.

But girl’s bellies and apricots,
Roach in a shaded stream,
Horses, ducks in flight at dawn,
All these are a dream.

It is forbidden to dream again;
We maim our joys or hide them:
Horses are made of chromium steel
And fat little men shall ride them.

I am the worm who never turned,
The eunuch without a harem;
Between the priest and the commissar
I walk like Eugene Aram;

And the commissar is telling my fortune
While the radio plays,
But the priest has promised an Austin Seven,
For Duggie always pays.

I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls,
And woke to find it true;
I wasn’t born for an age like this;
Was Smith? Was Jones? Were you?

This elegiac poem foreshadows several motifs in *1984* such as "The Golden Country" that the protagonist in *1984*, Winston Smith, remembers and the loss of which he laments, the central role of politics and how it steers people's lives, and the difficulty of maintaining hope where the State controls everything and political expediency rules. Unlike Huxley's poem "Two Realities", this poem does not seem to contain themes or ideas that relate to hermeneutic concerns, at least overtly.

This view is perhaps largely retrospectively affected by the fact that Orwell (1946e:3) maintains that every line he wrote since 1936 is "directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism" – this poem from 1935 perhaps already reflects Orwell's sense of change, of being "born, alas, in an evil time" (l.5). As Thomas (1965:79) says, Orwell "liked to think of himself as basically genial but forced by the circumstances of the time into bitter political controversy". Thomas (1965:79) adds that this might not exactly have been the case, but still claims that Orwell's writing is largely politically oriented. Additionally, Orwell (quoted by Wykes, 1987:100) maintains that he is not "bogged up in metaphysical discussions about the meaning of *reality*".

But this is not to say that no hermeneutic concerns can be found in this poem at all. After all, if Gadamer's theory holds that our subjectivities are effected by our *Geschichtlichkeit*, then some semblance of spirit must be identifiable and this seems to be the case. In his essay "A good word for the Vicar of Bray" ([1946a] 1950), Orwell explains how it struck him that the Vicar of Bray, maligned in a satirical 18th century song for his ecclesiastical opportunism in the face of political change, left a living relic behind, in the form of a yew tree. In that moment Orwell came to an understanding about redeeming oneself, and one's "antisocial acts", to posterity by planting trees. As Orwell ([1946a] 1950) says, "if even one in twenty of them [trees planted for every antisocial act one commits] came to maturity, you might do quite a lot of harm in your lifetime, and still, like the Vicar of Bray, end up as a public benefactor after all". As frivolous and light-hearted as Orwell's idea seems, it does illustrate an important point for the current study. That event that Orwell experienced in 1935 when he engaged with a piece of the historical past (a note at the base of a yew tree planted by the Vicar of Bray) elicited in him a subjective understanding. Eleven years later, in 1946, when he published "Why I write", that event of

understanding contributed to his writing, to produce another event of understanding in which past and present are mediated. Thus although Orwell does not overtly and directly discuss his experience as an instance of hermeneutic engagement, Orwell's writing displays philosophical hermeneutics in action. Orwell's polemic writing might be politically oriented, although one can still identify hermeneutic principles in it.

Notwithstanding the more overtly political focus of Orwell's writing, there is a semblance of spirit between Orwell and Gadamer's thought. This can be seen in Orwell's essay "Politics and the English language", and in *1984*. Regarding language, Orwell ([1946b] 1957:143) maintains the following:

> Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely […] It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.

The following points that display some similarity to Gadamer's hermeneutics can be seen in this extract. Firstly, Orwell is aware of the link between historical events and the changes these events can effect in language when he says "the decline of language must *ultimately* have political and economic *causes*" (my emphases), since these are historical. Secondly, he is aware of the reciprocal nature of events in history when he says "an effect can become a cause", but it is not clear whether this is through an event of understanding or through some other mechanism. Thirdly, he is also aware of the link between the type of language people use and the resulting subjective (and hermeneutic) position it might evoke in the users of this language when he says that "if one can get rid of these habits one can think more clearly".

In his description of life, politics and social control in Oceania in *1984,* Orwell shows an acute awareness of the effecting role these elements have, whereas Huxley alternates between an explicitly overt and sometimes implicit awareness and portrayal of the roles that history, language and dialogue play in the construction of subjectivity. In *1984*, for instance, Syme, one of Winston Smith's colleagues in the

Ministry of Truth, claims that in the end "we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it […] The revolution will be complete when the language is perfect" (*1984*:55). Such an explicit awareness of language's power to control thought at a level that can even make the enunciation of a thought impossible is remarkably similar to Gadamer's claim that "*language is the universal meaning in which understanding occurs*" (*TM*:390; Gadamer's emphasis).

There are many other similarities between Gadamer and Orwell which appear in many different forms, from explicit statements such as the above, to more implicit portrayals of subjectivity, such as the novel's aesthetic structure (for example, the narrative which mostly occurs internally, in Winston's mind, rather than externally, in dialogue) which gives a strong indication of how one can think of dialogue in its role of subjectivity. Nowhere is language's role in effecting subjectivity given more prominence than in the Appendix on Newspeak at the end of the novel. For this reason it is surprising that Meyers (1975:153) asserts the following:

> The least effective parts of the novel are the purely expository passages where he establishes the future state of the world in *1984*: the political events that followed the Atomic War (as revealed in Goldstein's book), Winston's 'historical' work at the Ministry of Truth, and the Appendix on Newspeak.

Meyers's thoughts on these sections are noteworthy because I believe they stem from the largely politico-historical and biographical readings to which dystopian fiction has largely been subjected. In the light of the rest of Meyers's analysis, this indeed appears to be the case. In fact, the Appendix on Newspeak plays a central role in Orwell's explication of the careful ways in which the language of Oceania functions, on a grammatical and syntactical level, but far more importantly, on an epistemological level at which what there is to know is limited, hampered and guided by what the powers that be think fit.[47] Therefore, we see that there is a culling of words that are deemed unnecessary or inappropriate: "Countless words such as *honour*, *justice*, *morality*, *internationalism*, *democracy*, *science* and *religion* had simply ceased to exist. A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them" (*1984*:318; Orwell's emphases). This culling of words leads to the following conclusion:

[47] For the full discussion of the Appendix on Newspeak, see Section 3.4.1.

> When Oldspeak [English as we know it in the 20th century] had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. (*1984*:324)

It is necessary to examine the extent to which this reworking of language and subjectivity has gone in Oceania to understand the overall mechanisms of control in the novel.[48] The information that "a full translation [from Oldspeak into Newspeak] could only be an ideological translation" (*1984*:325) implies that even seditious material could be translated in a way that suits the Party. This is because of the strict way in which the different vocabularies used in Oceania are constructed. Language can only be used to describe simple, everyday activities using the A vocabulary, in political terms that are entirely framed in Party doctrine using the B vocabulary, or in technical terms using the C vocabulary. As we read in the Appendix it "was impossible to translate any passage of Oldspeak into Newspeak unless it either referred to some technical process or some very simple everyday action, or was already orthodox (*goodthinkful* would be the Newspeak expression) in tendency" (*1984*:324). As an example of this impossibility of translating Oldspeak into Newspeak, the Appendix explains how the well-known passage from the Declaration of Independence beginning, "We hold these truths to be self-evident…" cannot be rendered into Newspeak "while keeping the sense of the original" (*1984*:325). It goes on to explain that the "nearest one could come to doing so [the translation] would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word *crimethink*" (*1984*:325). Due to the central role that language plays in the novel, the Appendix is valuable in understanding the novel as whole.

Winston's job in the Ministry of Truth also involves manipulation, in this case, of history. As we are told, "Winston's job was to rectify the original figures by making

[48] The Appendix on Newspeak in *1984* gives a detailed explanation of the process of language's manipulation in Oceania. The Appendix is divided into the A, B, and C vocabularies. The A vocabulary consists of words used for everyday life such as putting on clothes and eating. The B vocabulary consists of words used specifically for political purposes and where desired to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them. The C vocabulary is supplementary to others and consists of scientific and technical terms. Although these words are used in a similar way to the way we use them today, care has been taken to define them rigidly and strip them of undesirable meanings. Overall, the care taken to strip words of connotative definitions, ambiguities, redundancies and metaphorical meaning that the Party finds undesirable leads to Syme's "perfect" language in which seditious and rebellious thought is impossible because the connotations and definitions that could enunciate ideas of rebellion have been stripped from them.

them agree with the later ones" (*1984*:41). In fact, what he is doing is taking bits of "historical" data (which may or may not have been the actual data, as the data may well have been manipulated before), in one case, for example, the *Times's* official forecasts of the output of various classes of consumption goods in the fourth quarter of 1983, and going back and changing the forecast's figures to agree with what the later production turned out to be, which is far less than was predicted. The "original" copies are then destroyed and "history" would be brought "up to date" with the publishing of the new figures (*1984*:42). This republication at once shows the Party in a better light and serves the more nefarious purpose of allowing everything to fade away "into a shadow-world in which, finally, even the date of the year had become uncertain" (*1984*:42). This kind of correction is done to "every class of recorded fact, great or small" (*1984*:42). Although Meyers (1975) deems this section of the novel ineffective, the section is central to a holistic understanding of the mechanisms of control in the novel. The manipulation of history begins simply. As Winston ponders:

> 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 way of 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. (*1984*:76-77)

This alteration is an example of a simple manipulation, which seems routine in Winston's line of work. A "fact" is taken from "history" regarding, for instance, the average wage, and this "fact" is then manipulated in the Party's favour.[49] But later, when we can assume its position becomes stronger, the Party can extend its control to more complex and fundamental aspects of history:

> In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality, was tacitly denied by their philosophy […] And what was terrifying was not that they would kill you for thinking otherwise, but that they might be right. 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? (*1984*:83-84)

This passage illustrates that the basic assumptions on which we (as the reading audience) operate are thrown into doubt and become a source of speculation because the foundation on which understanding is built has been ripped out from underneath the citizens of Oceania. Winston's own work is the mechanism that allows for this to happen, and the creation of doubt relating to fundamental principles

[49] The effect of this manipulation is discussed in detail in Section 3.3.

is central to the novel's overall coherence. Without Orwell's illustration of the vicious, punctilious and zealous manner in which history is altered to suit the desires of the Party, it is unlikely that a reader would completely understand how the manipulation of history can effect the changes in subjectivity seen throughout the novel. Orwell displays an acute awareness of how necessary this mechanism is in the construction of subjectivity.

The manipulation of language in the novel is extensive, and it is not possible without the weakening of traditions (history) and their corollary pre-judices. The presence of history in Oceania would have percolated into the understanding of its citizens and thus made the Party's changes to languages difficult to take root. Whereas in *BNW* there is a deliberate vacuum in terms of a historical past, in *1984* the Party sees fit to turn the effecting role of history against its citizens by manipulating this foundation of understanding – the "truth" of history is taken away and placed within the Party itself. Both authors are thus aware of history's importance in constructing a compliant subjectivity, but it seems that Orwell's portrayal is arguably more nuanced.

Finally, Meyers's (1975:153) criticism that the narrative of the political events following the Atomic War is ineffective also does not seem to hold when viewed in the context of an analysis that does not focus on politico-historical or biographical interpretations of the text. The effectiveness of these events' narrative is largely due to the inability on the part of Winston, and thus the reader, to gain access to the information given in a book that Winston reads, Emmanuel Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, [50] through any means other than simply reading the text, and reading it out loud to Julia. With the Party's stringent monitoring of its citizens and with its manipulation of history, it is highly unlikely that Winston would be able to gain access to the information contained in the book, because it is unlikely that anyone would know about the workings of Oceania (other than through their gut

[50] Emmanuel Goldstein is believed by the citizens of Oceania to be the leader of The Brotherhood, a rebellious organization that seeks the demise of the Party. The book, *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, is at first believed to have been written by him, but we see it has a dubious history and origin. It details the coming into power of the Party, how it abolished private property, and claims that the world remains in a constant state of war to simply use resources. It also explains how the Party maintains control through the manipulation of historical facts and language. One problem with *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* is that O'Brien says that he has collaborated in writing it (*1984*:274). This implies that the book is not trustworthy as a source, but may contain sophisticated disinformation. For a fuller discussion of this book, see Section 3.4.1.

feel), and the type of dialogue that can lead to the explication of the events is simply not possible. But this lack of dialogue is somewhat different from the difficulties of dialogue in *BNW*. This is because of the controls that are in place regarding free conversation, rather than the chasms between characters as one sees in *BNW*. These controls consist of the fear and mistrust other characters have of each other (since they might denounce each one another as rebels), and constant surveillance. Thus, in terms of Gadamer's ideas regarding dialogue creating new understandings, it would perhaps be as difficult to create new understandings in Oceania as in *BNW*'s World State, but for different reasons than in the World State. It is the sparseness of dialogue in this case that inhibits understanding.

If, for the purposes of illustration, one considers dialogue presented as direct speech in the novels, in *1984* there are roughly 370 lines of dialogue in the first chapter.[51] In my edition this is about ten pages in a chapter of 107 pages. This is then less than ten per cent of the chapter. In *BNW*'s first chapter, there are roughly 146 lines of dialogue, *ergo* about four pages of text out of 14 pages, which means that nearly thirty per cent of the first 14 pages are comprised of dialogue. This suggests that *1984* has considerably less dialogue (in this narrow definition) than *BNW* in the first chapter alone. Additionally, a large part (about a quarter) of the dialogue in *1984*'s first chapter is dedicated to Winston and Syme's discussion of Newspeak, which overlaps in content with the Appendix on Newspeak. Almost half of the first chapter's dialogue (in the narrow definition) is dedicated to a discussion Winston has with an old man in a prole pub. Because Winston is constantly confronted with fragments of information in his work, Winston wants to find out if he can get a truthful (and fuller) account of the early part of the century, but he fails.

The sparse nature of dialogue continues throughout the novel, even between Julia and Winston, although they become lovers, until we get to the final chapter and Winston's reconditioning with O'Brien.[52] Overall the sparseness of the dialogue does not allow the reader access to the details of how Oceania came to be as it is (or

[51] Although Gadamer does not equate conversation with dialogue (see Section 1.4.1), conversation is often where one finds dialogue according to Gadamer's definition. Thus when looking for events of understanding in dialogue, conversation is a good place to start.
[52] See Section 3.5 for a fuller discussion of Winston's reconditioning.

was).[53] Importantly, no characters, with the possible exception of O'Brien, would have had access to information relating to the events that shaped Oceania, due to the manipulation of history. Thus, even if there is a chance for a meaningful dialogue, the interlocutors would not have been privy to that information. Hence, the explication of the events through a rather long reading of Emmanuel Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* maintains both the stylistic quality of *1984*, as established in the introduction to the novel, and serves to inform the reader and Winston of what happened.

The three aspects of the novel which Meyers (1975) criticizes as being the least effective parts in the novel are thus central to a reading of the text that considers the portrayal of subjectivity in the novel with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in mind. The three major themes in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, namely history, language and dialogue, are central aspects in the novel and are depicted in different ways by Orwell in showing how these aspects are used in various ways by the Party to produce a very specific type of subjectivity within the novel. This limited subjectivity is characterized by a type of amnesia, as is shown in later sections of this chapter. When *1984* is viewed alongside Huxley's framework one notices that there is a more sophisticated and more nuanced portrayal of the mechanics of subjectivity in Orwell in terms of the theoretical aspects later outlined by Gadamer. This is because it is possible that Nietzsche's and Heidegger's theories as precursors to Gadamer's theories (see also Chapter 4) would have had more time to percolate into the traditions of the day and thus create a *Zeitgeist* of pre-judices.

3.3 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF HISTORY IN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

In his essay "The prevention of literature", Orwell ([1946d] 1957:164-165) notes three points (I numbered the points to highlight them):

> [1] From the totalitarian point of view *history is something to be created rather than learned*. [2] A totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy, and its ruling caste, in order to keep its position, has to be thought of as infallible. But since, in practice, no one is infallible, it is frequently necessary to rearrange past events in order to show that this or that mistake was not made, or that this or that

[53] There are several hints in the novel, primarily in the use of the past tense in the Appendix on Newspeak, that suggest that the system in place in Oceania may not have lasted indefinitely.

> imaginary triumph actually happened. Then, again, every major change in policy demands a corresponding change of doctrine and revaluation of prominent historical figures […] Totalitarianism demands, in fact, the *continuous alteration of the past*, and in the long run probably demands a *disbelief in the very existence of objective truth* […] [3] A totalitarian society which succeeded in perpetuating itself would probably set up a schizophrenic system of thought, in which the laws of common sense held good in everyday life and in certain exact sciences, but could be disregarded by the politician, the historian, and the sociologist. (my emphases and numbering)

Orwell demonstrates these ideas in a largely unchanged form in different ways in the novel. Orwell sets out his polemic in a literary form, from Winston Smith's work (which relates to the first point), to the acceptance of these historical changes by various characters in the novel (which relates to the second point), and finally to O'Brien's logical but deranged teaching of the principles of Ingsoc in the final part of the novel (which relates to the third point).

Unlike in *BNW*, history in *1984* is very overtly present and it has a dramatic effect on the subjectivity of the characters and keeps them in line. The Party's manipulation of history is not fully effective, however, if one considers Winston's idea of the Golden Country, since it is formative in his rebellion and thus does not form part of the history of the Party.[54] In *BNW* the sparseness of historical references suggests that citizens' subjectivity is effected by the inadequate substitute of hypnopaedic conditioning, as well as other conditioning that the citizens receive. But in *1984*, history works and operates in a far more sophisticated way than in *BNW*.

Firstly, in terms of the history of *1984*'s world, the narrator does give the reader some background as to how the world came to be as it is, predominantly in the form of Winston's reading of Emmanuel Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* (although as I have indicated above, this source is not necessarily reliable). *BNW* does not have a similar mechanism for stating how World State came to be as it is. Secondly, history's effecting role in *BNW* appears simply to have been replaced for the citizens of the "civilized" world with hypnopaedia and other forms of conditioning. In *1984*, history has been turned into a weapon for creating uncertainty, which leads to a kind of amnesia.

[54] See Section 4.3.1.

However, the "history" in *1984* is not of the same essence as Gadamer describes when he says that historical "tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of event" (*TM*:366) that by "being re-actualized in understanding, texts are drawn into a genuine course of events in exactly the same way as are events themselves" (*TM*:366). Although the flux of historical facts in the novel might at first glance actually seem to be in complete agreement with Gadamer's statement, since facts are "drawn into the course of events" and "rectified" depending on the Party's requirements, this is not the case.

One can think of it in the following way. Gadamer does not mean that actual events are **re-inscribed** in history, since in his argument the events happened as they happened (or at least as they were initially recorded and taken up by tradition) – this can be equated to the denotative aspect of language. Instead, Gadamer is illustrating with his emphatic (and slightly ambiguous) language the extent to which tradition is **re-interpreted** each time it forms part of a new **event** of understanding – this can be equated to the connotative aspect of language. Thus, because the denotative aspect does not change, but its interpretation changes each time since understanding is an event, its connotation is contingent upon its relation to present historical and contextual criteria. Thus, if one were to change the denotative aspect of history (as the Party does in *1984*), it would be similar to and worse than changing a word's denotative aspect. Would the confusion of changing the definition of the word "father" (a denotative aspect) not be similar to the confusion of changing the facts around historical events (also a denotative aspect)? This is how history is manipulated in *1984*.

Clearly, Orwell's understanding of how history, with relation to its role in effecting subjectivity, is manipulated is highly sophisticated. We are made aware of something odd happening in terms of historical context in the very first line of the novel: "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen" (*1984*:1). This line foreshadows many of the concerns raised in other parts of the novel. Firstly, the reference to April is an allusion to Chaucer's ([ca 1400] 2008) *The Canterbury Tales*. The "General Prologue's" opening lines state the following:

> Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath pierced to the roote

> And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour;… (ll.1-4)

Chaucer depicts how the Northern hemisphere's spring rain brings life to the parched land. There is a life-giving, empowering and animating energy to these lines. But *1984*'s opening sentence does not have this quality at all: the cold of winter is lingering still and does not wish to release its grip. There is an almost onomatopoeic effect in the cold cracking plosives in "bright cold day" and the monosyllabic words emphasise this further. In this sense, perhaps the opening lines are much closer to those of T.S Eliot's (1922:1344) "The Waste Land", which also evokes and inverts Chaucer's lines:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain. (ll. 1-4)

In these lines, the life-giving rains of spring are still there, but what they mean for the landscape has changed drastically. Instead of vibrancy, the rain instils a painful metamorphosis from a slumbering languid state to one of "breeding, mixing and stirring". Importantly, and one could almost say essentially, memory and desire are thrown together which allow the "dull roots" to be animated. The similarities Orwell's line and the rest of his novel share with Eliot's poem are striking. But for current purposes let us focus on their relation to history. Eliot's poem is taking Chaucer's historically significant poem, throwing it into modern sensibilities. This requires us to at once hold the past and the present in mind while also coming to a new understanding of what is being said in the lines. Orwell does something similar but because his allusion is necessarily vague (we do not know which of these two poems he is evoking) he is playing his own clever trick of "doublethink". Both poems are relevant, but it is the current situation that determines what parts of them must be appropriated. This is also perhaps why so little is actually being taken from the two poems, since the rest of them, like most of the literature in Oceania, is inappropriate.

Similarly, the clocks' striking thirteen is both ominous and an allusion to military time. The actual keeping of time has taken on a completely new meaning. No longer is keeping time and by logical extension, history, to do with situating oneself in the movement through time, in other words, orienting oneself. It is now a threat that looms large (the clocks strike from where, we know not, possibly everywhere) and is

controlled for the purposes of the Party. Additionally, because time is no longer referred to in the same way that historical texts would have used it, it adds more difficulties to using history in the present context. In a sense, this is similar to doublethink that is required in the paradox of "2+2=5", in which arithmetic certainty is eliminated.

This opening line, in its allusion to Chaucer and Eliot as well as its foreshadowing of the way in which history is controlled, sets the tone for the rest of the novel. The seemingly simple, but clearly complex way in which Orwell throws together so many ideas, which leave more questions than answers when one digs deeper, is symptomatic of the control of history expressed elsewhere in the novel. But perhaps when taking the rest of the novel into consideration, there are greater parallels between Orwell and Eliot than Orwell and Chaucer, because of the way memory is treated.

The first line, it has already been shown, introduces history's role in the novel through its vague allusion. However, the rest of the novel is full with examples of a history that is heavily manipulated and which has dire effects on the citizens' subjectivity – their ability to interpret their past, and thus their present in any attempt to make meaning of their universe. One such example is in the beginning of the novel when Winston attempts to remember a moment from his past. We are told the following:

> He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been like this […] But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible. (*1984*:5)

When a memory as broad as remembering the general living conditions in a city needs to be "*squeezed out"* (my emphasis), like a dry orange, and the impossibility of doing so is highlighted, this elicits several questions. For instance, what mechanisms of control in the novel create this amnesia, and how do these mechanisms work? Interestingly, the diction Orwell uses here is indicative of the mechanism of historical control used by the Party. The memories Winston does have access to are described as "bright-lit tableaux" as if they were picked out, approved and herded to the front of his other memories in order to serve as his point

of reference for other recollections. The background that they should have been cast against has been obliterated or has been made "unintelligible". The sense of amnesia Winston experiences appears to be a carefully crafted combination of selecting and obliterating of memories (collective memories?) approved by the Party.

This state of being unable to recollect events from the past is encouraged by the Party's doctrine. We read that the Party encourages an "act of self-hypnosis, a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of rhythmic noise" (*1984*:18). And if one considers that the philosopher Strawson ([1959] 1990), a contemporary of Gadamer's, maintains that "person", "body" and "mind" are wholly inseparable and should be considered as "basic particulars", then by drowning out consciousness and memory in an act of self-hypnosis, the person is actually being destroyed.[55] All that is left is an empty husk for the consumption of goods and an object for the act of domination.

The extent of Winston's amnesia is quite severe. In fact, he does not even remember when his parents died and only vaguely recollects that the "two of them must evidently have been swallowed up in one of the first great purges of the 'fifties" (*1984*:31). Winston's amnesia is summarized in the following passage:

> Beyond the late 'fifties everything faded. When there were no external records that you could refer to, even the outline of your own life lost its sharpness. You remembered huge events which had quite probably not happened, you remembered the detail of incidents without being able to recapture the atmosphere, and there were long blank periods to which you could assign nothing. (*1984*:34)

In this passage, Orwell is painting a grim picture of the characters' world. Without memory, they have no foundation. Additionally, the emotionless way in which these lines are written, as well as those of Winston trying to recall memories of his parents, is indicative of how the state of amnesia extends to the purging of the emotional connections citizens might have to the past. Orwell also moves from specifically talking about Winston's memories to the more general pronoun of "you". This

[55] Huxley's portrayal of the extreme consumerism in *BNW* can also be seen in this light. One would think that the extent to which the "drowning" of consciousness in *BNW* has gone with *soma*, orgies and rampant consumerism would result in even more pliant citizens. But characters such as Bernard, Helmholtz and even Mond show that the destruction of the individual is not entirely possible; see Chapter 4.

extends the amnesia to include other citizens, as well as adding emphasis to the terrifying idea that this is in a way happening to the reader.

Winston continues to struggle with an attempt to recollect whether conditions had always been as bad as they are at present throughout the first part of the novel. And this part of the novel is continuously punctuated, much the same as with the propaganda he is continuously exposed to, by Winston's remembering that he "could not now remember" (*1984*:36). Winston comes to the conclusion that the "past […] had not merely been altered, it had been destroyed" (*1984*:38). But this, as we know, is an oversimplification of the processes used by the Party to control history. Rather, the processes involved link back to the first line in the novel, where uncertainty, conflation and confusion are emphasised. This also explains why we read that day "by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date" (*1984*:42). The apparent oxymoron in this example summarises the process by which history is manipulated in Oceania. In the novel, history's referential relationship with events in the past has been replaced with a position that supersedes even a relativistic position.[56]

In fact, history's relationship with events is more like the Aristotelian idea of *phronesis* – moral knowledge (the type that governs action) – which is later picked up by Gadamer. Gadamer explains his revival of the term with an example from law:

> Aristotle shows that every law *is in a necessary tension with concrete action*, in that it is general and hence cannot contain practical reality in its full concreteness […] The law is always deficient, not because it is imperfect in itself but because human reality is necessarily imperfect in comparison to the ordered world of law, and hence allows of no simple application of the law. (*TM*:316; my emphasis)

In this example Gadamer explains how a practical understanding or interpretation of something requires a special regard for the real-world application of that understanding. He therefore emphasises that the interpreter "must relate [apply] the text to this [the particular hermeneutical situation] situation if he wants to understand at all" (*TM*:321). Wachterhauser (1986:37-38), taking his cue from Gadamer, also stresses this aspect of our interpretive stance to the world "since it is precisely this

[56] One would think that Winston's working on the old newspapers would give him insight at least into what he is eradicating, but the fragmentation of the task prevents that. He has no leisure to read the whole article he is altering, and in any case, he may be altering something that was altered before.

need for application that prevents the past from turning into a sterile deposit of irrelevant facts or an ossified orthodoxy". Due to this practical dimension of both history and understanding, *phronesis* can be understood as a judgment that takes into consideration "the explicit and implicit needs and priorities of the particular historical community in which it functions" (Wachterhauser, 1986:38). Importantly though, "application [through practical understanding] is neither a subsequent nor merely an occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but codetermines it as a whole from the beginning" (*TM*:321). But as Gadamer notes, understanding is always a historically situated *event*. Hence, "the rational criteria of such judgments changes as the self-understanding of the historically situated community changes" (Wachterhauser, 1986:38). In short, Gadamer maintains that all understanding is practically oriented in making judgments for what is necessary in the current context. As such, this *phronetic* understanding is contextual, but also creates further context when in applied, since it creates further understanding and therefore tradition.

With this in mind, the seemingly simple idea that "[d]ay by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date" (*1984*:42) becomes a far more complex and menacing process. History's relationship is shifted from being a referential one that gives a foundation for the citizens' *Geschichtlichkeit, Sprachlichkeit* and their ability to apply history for understanding to one that is *phronetic*. However, this bringing-up-to-date of history is not what Gadamer has in mind. Instead, the practical application's context is that of the Party's will and desires. In the novel, history as a phenomenon is there purely to serve as part of the "boot stamping on a human face – for ever" (*1984*:280). The Party shifts and changes, manipulates and falsifies history to the point where it cannot serve as part of the Gadamerian framework in which history has the positive connotation of serving to effect understanding constructively. Instead, in the novel, through its shifting and changing, history is weaponized and disarms the possibly seditious and rebellious heroes, such as Winston, of their understanding with a kind of amnesia. The foundation from which the characters could develop a rebellious understanding is thus turned against them,

and hence must be overcome in order to reach understandings other than those approved by the Party.[57]

Interestingly, the resulting vagueness of understanding created by the constantly shifting historical framework extends further than simply making rebellion difficult, it also makes the foundation on which Ingsoc (the principles of the Party) is built similarly vague. Nowhere in the novel are the rules of Ingsoc clearly laid out. There are mentions in the novel of crimes such as thoughtcrime, and we read that an "unforgiveable crime was promiscuity between party members" (*1984*:68), but the laws are not clearly laid out (Babcock, 1983:87). But we are also told that if the Party has its way "there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think, orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (*1984*:56).[58] The Party wants an understanding of its principles without thought, hence history, as Gadamer understands it, would be problematic if it were applicable to the Party's principles.

The product of such orthodoxy is exhibited in a man whom Winston observes talking to a young woman in his workplace's dining hall:

> His head was thrown back a little, and because of the angle he was sitting, his spectacles caught the light and presented to Winston two blank discs instead of eyes. What was slightly horrible was that from the stream of sound that poured out of his mouth, it was almost impossible to distinguish a single word. Just once Winston caught a phrase – 'complete and final elimination of Goldsteinism' – jerked out very rapidly and, as it seemed, all in one piece, like a line of type cast solid. For the rest it was just a noise, like a quack-quack-quacking […] Whatever it was, you could be sure it was pure orthodoxy, pure Ingsoc. As he watched the eyeless face with the jaw moving rapidly up and down, Winston had a curious feeling that this was not a real human being but some kind of dummy. It was not the man's brain that was speaking, it was his larynx. The stuff that was coming from out of him consisted of words, but it was not speech in the true sense: it was a noise uttered in unconsciousness, like the quacking of a duck. (*1984*:57)

The speaker's unconsciousness, and hence lack of interpretive ability, while still maintaining the faculty of spewing Party doctrine is exactly the end product that the Party is hoping to accomplish. The narrator's disdain for this sort of thing is clear. And this might be a case where Orwell himself is inserting himself within the

[57] Reaching new understandings is one of the few ways that characters can rebel since open, physical rebellion (besides having a carnal relationship) is virtually impossible (see Chapter 4).
[58] The similarities to the ideas expressed here and to those in "Politics and the English language" (Orwell, [1946b] 1957) are clear, as I show below.

framework of the novel, more than an unbiased narrator would. After all, this scene is a reworking of Orwell's comment in "Politics and the English language" ([1946b] 1957:135-136) where Orwell also uses the image of a machine-like dummy with blank discs for eyes mindlessly churning out well-rehearsed dogma, which he also refers to as "orthodoxy".

History thus has a curious ambiguity in the novel. Unlike in *BNW*, it is definitely present, but the form it has taken is very different. On the one hand, its shape, form and content are obsessively observed and "brought up to date". But, contrary to what one might think, this does not produce a constantly shifting and cutting-edge type of understanding as one might expect, considering Gadamer's thinking on the topic. Instead, it produces a general amnesia to the extent that Winston asks whether "he, then, was *alone* in the possession of a memory" (*1984*:62), which illustrates the general amnesia. But as already shown, his memory is hardly helpful to the reader, since he cannot even recall his parents properly. However, in the context of Oceania, the mere fact that he thinks he possesses "some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different" (*1984*:63) is significant enough to set him apart from other citizens. But importantly, as is shown in Chapter 4, it is "only" an ancestral memory. The history manipulated by the Party, with its constant updating, produces an oxymoronic ossification. It is an ossification of pre-judices and understanding, but only insofar as these relate directly to the Party's doctrine of Ingsoc.

3.4 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE IN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

Few other works of literature can claim to present so explicitly the effects of the control of language on a population's subjectivity as *1984*. As Sisk (1997:41) states, "Orwell insisted that language is the tool through which a totalitarian state can most effectively maintain its own power and stifle dissent". Orwell presents his idea of such control largely "without significant alteration" (Sisk, 1997:38) from ideas expressed in his polemic. The four articles that relate most notably to his portrayal of totalitarianism are "Politics and the English language" ([1946b] 1957), "Politics *vs* literature: An examination of Gulliver's *Travels*" ([1946c] 1957), "The prevention of literature" ([1946d] 1957), and "Why I write" (1946e). As I have already considered

the last of these essays (see Section 3.2), I would like to consider the first three of these briefly here.

In “The prevention of literature”, Orwell states that “the history of totalitarian societies, or of groups of people who have adopted the totalitarian outlook, suggests that loss of liberty is inimical to *all* forms of literature” ([1946d] 1957:170) and that “in any totalitarian society that survives for more than a couple of generations, it is probable that prose literature, of the kind that existed during the past four hundred years, must actually *come to an end*” ([1946d] 1957:167). These two statements contribute to and shed light on the grim picture painted in *1984* and on the abolition of literature in *BNW* There are not many references directly to literature in the novel, but we do have some mentions. Mostly these references relate either to Julia’s work (she works in the fiction department). A form of literature (albeit a popular and slight form) appears in a prole woman’s song, and in Winston’s persistent desire to remember bits of a folk rhyme relating to the churches of London. Overall, the absence of literature is as noteworthy in *1984* as it is in *BNW*, where only non-fiction is kept in the libraries (See page 45).

“Politics and the English language” ([1946b] 1957) is Orwell’s most influential text on language in a totalitarian state, and is thus relevant to language in *1984* and the state it is in. Sisk (1997:39) notes that in the article Orwell “focuses […] on language strategies that inhibit communication and understanding”. One sees an example of this in Orwell’s ([1946b] 1957:152-153) previously mentioned image of the politician repeating mechanical phrases. This is a good indication of what one can expect to find in the novel.

Throughout the novel there are several references to the ongoing project of Newspeak. Syme, one of Winston’s colleagues, speaks at length about his work on the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak dictionary, which largely involves cutting down and fixing language into a form that makes “thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words with which to express it” (*1984*:55). Importantly, the Appendix on Newspeak gives an excellent way for us to further understand how language is manipulated. (I discuss the significance of the fact that it is added as an appendix later).

In “Politics *vs* literature: An examination of *Gulliver’s Travels*” ([1946c] 1957), Orwell discusses one of the major dystopian influences on Orwell’s writing, Swift’s ([1726] 2003) *Gulliver’s Travels*. Although this essay does not directly discuss Orwell’s ideas on language, it does pick up on many dystopian ideas such as the Houyhnhnyms’ inability to “[hold] differing opinions” (Sisk, 1997:40) as Orwell ([1946c] 1957:132) observes that the Houyhnhnyms “were unanimous on almost every subject”. But Orwell ([1946c] 1957:132-133) also notes that they “had apparently no word for ‘opinion’ in their language, and in their conversations there was no ‘difference of sentiments’”. Orwell ([1946c] 1957:131) comments in the essay that “one of the aims of totalitarianism is not merely to make sure that people will think the right thoughts, but actually to make them *less conscious*” (Orwell’s emphasis). These three ideas are combined in *1984* in Orwell’s portrayal of language’s effect on subjectivity.

Language in *1984* is explicitly attended to by the Party’s systems of control (in *BNW* language is largely symptomatic of other state systems of control). For the most part it is not passively affected by the particular subject positions of the citizens. The greatest factor in linguistic changes is its active manipulation, contortion and remaking to fit the Party’s current agenda. One of the first examples of this is Winston’s discussion of Newspeak with Syme. Syme explains how the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak dictionary will be the “definitive edition” that will get “the language into its final shape […] the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else” (*1984*:53). The Party wishes to impose a system of language as described in the Appendix on Newspeak in order to make the citizens of Oceania less conscious, as in *Gulliver’s Travels*. The ultimate goal of Newspeak, we are told, is to “not only provide a medium of expression for the world-view of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible” (*1984*:312). This singular goal is the driving force behind much of Ingsoc’s doctrine and the control of language is where it finds much of its expression.

Traugott (1983:93) has the following to say regarding such deliberate ossification of language:

> Can language be fixed in a “final, perfected version”? No. Because language does not exist as an organism, or in dictionaries, or in computer programs.

> Crucially, it must be learned anew by each generation, and each generation interprets sounds, sentence structures, and meanings in different ways. Crucially, too, metaphorical use of language is almost inescapable. We have few ways of talking literally about anything abstract, and even some of the most everyday terms derive historically from metaphorical extensions of words with more concrete meanings […] In fact, a great many of our words for different types of discourse are metaphorical at least in origin, as for example *express* (press out), *put ideas into words*, *open up the discussion*, *put an end to the argument*, and *put/pose the question*. Even prepositions like *before* and *after*, when used to express time, as in *before Winston met Julia*, are metaphorical extensions of special terms (cf. *before* in the sense of "in front of," and expression which is itself now becoming quite common, as in *two minutes in front of the hour*). Language without metaphor is almost inconceivable; new metaphors constantly replace old, dying ones, and inevitably lead to flux. (Traugott's emphases)

Traugott's useful explanation of Newspeak's inability to become a fully-fledged system of control that lasts does not address this failure within the novel, as she never answers the question, "What does Newspeak's failure in the novel contribute to our interpretation of the novel?" Nonetheless, Traugott does give insight into metaphorical language that creeps into Syme's speech even though he is in the vanguard in the Party's war on language. Syme uses the metaphor "shape" to describe what his project would achieve in terms of language's final grammar, syntax and idiom (in the form of the absence of idiom). Syme's use is thus an example of what Traugott identifies as historically derived metaphorical extensions of words with more concrete meanings. However, Syme's use of language is still far sparser in terms of metaphor than, for instance, the language of the proles, or even of Parsons, another of Winston's colleagues.

The language of the proles is subject to far less control than that of the members of the Party and Newspeak. Whereas there is a strong attempt to control the language of the Party members through the introduction of Newspeak, the proles are left to their own devices and their language displays the usual characteristic of fitting to and shaping new understandings and interpretations, as described by Gadamer. By creating new understandings through a fusion of horizons, the proles are left to create and form their language in events of understanding. This is why they speak with a more colloquial and far freer sense. For instance, we read that one of the proles warns Winston by exclaiming "Steamer! […] Look out, guv'nor! Bang over'ead! Lay down quick!" (*1984*:87). The metaphorical use of "steamer" and "bang" are in stark contrast to for instance Syme's discussion with Winston about the

dictionary. One gets the impression that Syme can only give an exposition of his (Party-approved) ideas, much like Newspeak is only an exposition of Ingsoc.

However, the way Winston's colleague Parsons uses language contrasts starkly with Syme's use of language. When discussing voluntary subscriptions, Parsons says the following:

> 'For Hate Week. You know – the house-by-house fund. I'm treasurer for our block. We're making an *all-out* effort – going to put on a tremendous show. I tell you, it won't be my fault if *old* Victory Mansions doesn't have the biggest *outfit* of flags in the whole street […] By the way, *old boy*,' he said. 'I heard that *little beggar* of mine let fly at you with his catapult yesterday. I gave him a good *dressing-down* for it…' (*1984*:59-60; my emphases)

Parsons's repeated use of seemingly outdated and metaphorical descriptions can only be described as prole-like. His manner of speech does not match Winston's or Syme's literal expressions, found in almost all their conversations. His speech seems far more natural, and perhaps this is the reason for the animosity Winston and Syme share towards Parsons. However, Parsons is the exception when it comes to Party members using this type of language. His use of language also provides a possible explanation for his arrest later in the novel. Although we are told that he was betrayed by his children, ostensibly for saying "down with Big Brother" (*1984*:245) in his sleep, his reaction to his arrest attests to his orthodoxy, which also explains Winston's surprise at Parsons being arrested. Parsons's language perhaps indicates a residual unorthodoxy that is operative in the language he uses and thus could have effected some pre-judices which resulted in his blurting out the seditious phrase.

This also implies that the language that falls outside of the Party's control is seditious. Importantly, it is not the words that are spoken that are necessarily seditious, but the way in which language operates – as Gadamer would describe this, "as the tradition is newly expressed in language, something comes into being that had not existed before and that exists from now on" (*TM*:458). Since language is the repository of tradition and each new event of understanding further creates tradition, language must operate freely and creatively in order to contribute to new understandings. Thus the language of the proles, which unlike that of the Newspeak, displays an openness to new meaning through its creative, metaphorical and figurative expressions is one that allows for the creation of further understandings.

Newspeak on the other hand seeks to create "*less conscious*" (Orwell, [1946c] 1957:131; Orwell's emphasis) citizens.

Gadamer's understanding of how language operates holds an important key for unlocking the language of the proles. He notes the following:

> The fact that tradition is essentially verbal in character has consequences for hermeneutics. *The understanding of verbal tradition retains special priority over all other tradition*. Linguistic tradition may have less perceptual immediacy than monuments of plastic art [paintings, sculptures etc.]. Its lack of [perceptual] immediacy, however, is not a defect; rather, this apparent lack, the abstract alienness of all "texts," uniquely expresses the fact that everything in language belongs to the process of understanding. *Linguistic tradition is tradition in the proper sense of the word – i.e., something handed down*. It is not just something left over, to be investigated and interpreted as a remnant of the past. What has come down to us by way of verbal tradition is not left over but given to us, told to us – whether through direct retelling, in which myth, legend, and custom have their life, or through written tradition, whose signs are, as it were, immediately clear to every reader who can read them. (*TM*:391; my emphases)

Gadamer is clearly illustrating that language is a repository of tradition and therefore traditional pre-judices. He also points out that although "plastic art" can serve as a vessel for tradition, linguistic tradition, although it does not seem as immediate, is actually more immediate because it "belongs to the process of understanding".

This suggests that the proles, whose "plastic art" is heavily monitored and controlled but whose language is left unchecked, have at their disposal one of the strongest weapons against the control of the Party. Although the Party's control is still noticeable in the form of the historical amnesia experienced by Winston and also seen in the old man in the pub, there is a lot of evidence throughout the novel that language has not suffered the same fate. Primarily, this comes in two forms. First, it is in the metaphorical and creative use of language by the proles. Their language is not subject to the same system of control that Newspeak is subject to and is therefore a lot freer and more conducive to the formation of new understandings precisely because of its ability and freedom to change. Secondly, the prominence of folk songs also indicates that a large amount of tradition not directly created by the Party is still present in the language, which also indicates that there is room for tradition, and thus understanding, to percolate into it further.

At several points in the novel we encounter three folk songs, each of which resurfaces, which speaks to its importance. The first is the following:

> *Under the spreading chestnut tree*
> *I sold you and you sold me:*
> *There they lie, and here lie we*
> *Under the spreading chestnut tree.* (*1984*:80)

This song is not heard but remembered (or misremembered) by Winston when he recollects the moment when just "once in his life he had possessed – *after* the event: that was what counted – concrete, unmistakable evidence of an act of falsification" (*1984*:78). This song, which Winston's thinks of as "peculiar" and as a "yellow note" (*1984*:80) appears to be tied to the idea of objective knowledge that cannot be manipulated by the Party because of its connection with this knowledge of falsification. Winston's description of it as peculiar and as a yellow note, however, might refer to an awareness that he is remembering it incorrectly. The song seems to be a reworking of Longfellow's (1840) "The Village Blacksmith". Another source (Coates, no date: Chestnut tree) has the song as follows:

> Under the spreading chestnut tree,
> Where I held you on my knee.
> We'll be happy as can be;
> Neath the spreading chestnut tree.

The source material is difficult to pin down. But Winston's misremembering the song suggests that his version's contents appears even more ominous. This is because, like the folk song he attempts to reconstruct, this folk song (or Winston's memory of it) also appears to have been influenced or even created by the Party. Thus when Winston encounters the song after his reconditioning, the song is cut off after the second line, and like other seditious thoughts is truncated.

The second folk song is one a prole woman sings and consists of two verses which are actually written by the Party's Music Department for the entertainment of proles:

> It was only an 'opeless fancy,
> It passed like an Ipril dye,
> But a look an' a word an' the dreams they stirred
> They 'ave stolen my 'eart awye!
>
> They sye that time 'eals all things,
> They sye you can always forget;
> But the smiles an' the tears across the years
> They twist my 'eart-strings yet! (*1984*:144; 148)

The contents of this song seem rather ironic within the context of the rest of the novel which is rife with ideas of amnesia and the mutability of the past. In this song, however, the idea of memory is strong. It comes as no surprise then that later in the novel we are told that "the drivelling song seemed to have kept its popularity. You still heard it all over the place. It had outlived the Hate Song" (*1984*:227). This song then, speaks of the power of language's ability to stir (l. 3) and the power of memory. It seems that the Party has inadvertently written a song that is seditious.

The final folk song is the following:[59]

Gay go up and gay go down
To ring the bells of London Town.
Bulls' eyes and targets,
Say the bells of St. Marg'et's.
Brickbats and tiles,
Say the bells of St. Giles'.
Ha'pence and farthings,
Say the bells of St. Martin's.
Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of St. Clement's.
Pancakes and fritters,
Say the bells of St. Peter's.
Two sticks and an apple,
Say the bells of Whitechapel.
Old father Baldpate,
Say the slow bells of Aldegate.
Pokers and tongs,
Say the bells of St. John's.
Kettles and pans,
Say the bells of St. Anne's.
You owe me ten shillings,
Say the bells of St. Helen's.
When will you pay me?
Say the bells at Old Bailey.
When I grow rich,
Say the bells at Shoreditch.
Pray when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.
I'm sure I don't know,
Says the great bell at Bow.
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head.
(Alchin, 2011:90)

The version found in *1984* is as follows[60]:

[59] The full folk song does not appear in *1984*. The italicised lines are those that appear, although in an altered form, in *1984*. Compare with the version given by Orwell on the next page.

'Oranges and lemons,' say the bells of St Clement's,
'You owe me three farthings,' say the bells of St Martin's,
'When will you pay me?' say the bells of Old Bailey,
'When I grow rich,' say the bells of Shoreditch.
"Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head."
(*1984*:102; 104; 144; 148; 153; 186)

This song is more complex than the others. The last part is not in the version given by O'Brien when Winston exclaims 'You [O'Brien] knew the last line!" (*1984*:186) but by Mr Charrington, who, as we later find out, is a member of the Thought Police. The first two lines are also given by Mr Charrington and Winston carries on trying to find out the rest of the song till O'Brien gives him what are apparently the last two lines.

Few critics have given attention to this folk song, and when they have it has been somewhat unsatisfactory. For instance, Traugott (1983:107) notes the following:

> Secondly, there is another and almost opposite feature of Winston's sensibility – his characteristic obsession with folk memories of the past; the most important one is the rhyme "Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's,/You owe me three farthings, say the bells of St. Martin's/When will you pay me? Say the bells of Old Bailey,/When I grow rich, say the bells of Shoreditch." Here one attraction is that this particular rhyme is a clue to an imaginative reconstruction of the old churches and customs of London as it had once been.

Traugott's brief explanation, although insightful, does not take into account the differences between Orwell's version and the original, and does not take into account the last two lines. Winston's obsession with reconstructing the poem does echo his yearning for a reconstruction of the past, which is also evident in his conversation with the old prole in the pub. However, this time it is a linguistic reconstruction. Nonetheless, lines are swopped around, making it different from the original, and most of the song is left out. Importantly, the last two lines are never given in the novel in verse form but are only spoken as part of a prose sentence.

The lines left out by Winston are of special interest because of their threatening content. From the beginning of the novel we are made aware that Winston's actions will inexorably result in his death. For instance we are told that after Winston begins writing in his diary that he will inevitably be arrested because he "had committed –

[60] The song appears at several places in the novel, never in its full form and also never in the full form as it is quoted here. Various bits and pieces are added throughout. The song is given in its most complete form by O'Brien on page 186 and consists of the first four lines only. The last two lines are never actually given in verse form, but appear in the reported speech of Mr Charrington.

would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper – the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it. Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be concealed for ever. You might dodge successfully for a while, even for years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you" (*1984*:21). This suggests that his elision of those specific lines is an attempt to ignore this inevitable end. Additionally, the reference to light in these lines also alludes to Winston's dream that someone says in passing "'We shall meet again in the place where these is no darkness'" (*1984*:27), which is used by Winston in saying goodbye to O'Brien moments before he receives the apparent last lines of the song. O'Brien's apparent recognition of the allusion is explained by the fact that they meet again in prison where the lights are never turned off – which also perhaps explains O'Brien's own elision of the last two lines of the song.

In conclusion, this song's appearance connects to various other ideas. But importantly the fact that Winston's imaginative, linguistic reconstruction of the past is corrupt (the lines are out of order) and truncated (the whole song is ever recovered) all suggest that the Party's control over language and history extends to the corruption of the actual past. The extent to which it has gone to destroy that past implies that even if anyone attempts to reconstruct that past, the action contains the person's inevitable demise. Language has thus become weaponized. After all, we read the following in the Appendix:

> The intention was to make speech, and especially speech on any subject not ideologically neutral, as nearly as possible independent of consciousness. For the purposes of everyday life it was no doubt necessary, or sometimes necessary, to reflect before speaking, but a Party member called upon to make a political or ethical judgement *should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets*. (*1984*:322; my emphasis)

The manner in which language is controlled, unlike most critics suggest, is not just through the Party's fixing, cutting down and inevitable ossification of the language but also through the corruption of its referential capacity. Although the idea of objective truth is shaky at best, when language is used to create apparent falsehoods for the sake of creating falsehoods and then parades them as facts, then language as an *a priori* transcendental category of understanding that contributes to our subjectivity loses its ability to open us up to observations. As Wachterhauser (1986:6) reminds us, "human understanding…is always in terms of some evolving

linguistic framework that has been worked out over time in terms of some historically conditioned set of concerns and practices". The consequences of no longer understanding paradoxes such as "war is peace", "freedom is slavery", "ignorance is strength", and "2+2=5" (*1984*:303) *as paradoxes*, but instead becoming linguistic truths, are severe. The result is a kind of logical insanity, which is the embodiment of doublethink. In many ways this is related to the etymological understanding of the term schizophrenia which comes from the Latin for "split mind" ("Schizophrenia", 2015). This adds to the idea that when practising doublethink one must hold two contrasting ideas in one's mind at once, and accept both ideas as true (*1984*:223).

O'Brien is the best embodiment of this type of thinking and the language and ideas he uses are rife with what seems intuitively impossible. For instance, Winston and O'Brien have the following exchange:

> 'We control matter because we control the mind. 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 wished 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.' (*1984*:277)

Objectively speaking, the control O'Brien mentions is not possible, but for someone well acquainted with the practices of doublethink and Newspeak, it will be undeniable that O'Brien could float. Later, we read that Winston comes to understand that sanity "is statistical" (*1984*:290). He comes to this realization just after he is finally broken by the torture and begins accepting the paradoxes of Ingsoc as truths. But the way in which Winston's acceptance of these ideas is portrayed only further emphasises the "insanity" of them. For instance we read that Winston begins to hallucinate in order to understand Ingsoc's "truths":

> 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. Then everything was normal again, and the old fear, the hatred and the bewilderment came crowding back again. But there had been a moment – he did not know how long, thirty seconds, perhaps – of luminous certainty, when each new suggestion of O'Brien's had filled up a patch of emptiness and become absolute truth, and when two and two could have been three as easily as five, if that were what was needed. It had faded out before O'Brien had dropped his hand; but though he could not recapture it, he could remember it, as one remembers a vivid experience at some remote period of one's life when one as in effect a different person. (*1984*:270-271)

The narrator here intrudes to supply a reference point of what is real and what is not by interjecting with words such as “normal”, statements such as “if that were what was needed” and “when one was in effect a different person”. Although throughout the novel there are various moments and levels of mistrust, the narrator is an aspect of the novel that shows that the idea of collective solipsism or an extreme form of rationalism does not equate to what is “normal”.[61]

The idea of subjectivism versus objectivism is repeated throughout the torture scene and appears to be one of the main pillars of Ingsoc’s principles. But the portrayal of the Party’s valuation of a subjective and (collectively) solipsistic worldview is not positive, as we have already seen with the narrator’s interjections. Thus it comes as no surprise when we read the following:

> Anything could be true. The so-called laws of Nature are nonsense. The law of gravity was nonsense. ‘If I wished,’ O’Brien had said, ‘I could float off this floor like a soap bubble.’ 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. The fallacy was obvious. It presupposed that somewhere or other, outside oneself, there was a ‘real’ world where ‘real’ things happened. But how could there be such a world? What knowledge have we of anything, save through our own minds? All happenings are in the mind. Whatever happens in all minds, truly happens. (*1984*:291)

O’Brien’s argument at first glance might appear to contradict the idea that the narrator’s interjections portray Ingsoc’s ideas of solipsism and subjectivism as insane and false. But this has more to do with the argument between rationalism and empiricism as well as the argument between subjectivism and objectivism. This argument has raged on from Plato all the way through to the Enlightenment thinkers, and more recently, with Phenomenology’s somewhat reactionary origin. Philosophy has yet to provide an answer to this debate. Winston’s struggle with accepting the idea of solipsism, however, does lend itself to the earlier point that the novel leans towards there being an objective world “outside oneself”. Although the narrator poses the question, not just Winston, the overall portrayal of Winston’s struggle with acceptance of Ingsoc’s principles, the fact that he needs to be tortured to the point of

[61] The narrator as someone who can see the far bigger picture tends to interject on behalf of Winston’s thoughts and ideas. Winston is not eloquent enough to mount an effective argument against solipsism (and for that matter neither is philosophy) but one can safely assume that the narrator’s interjections against Ingsoc’s principles represent Orwell’s point of view.

complete mental breakdown, and the previously mentioned idea that Winston returns to "normal" after his hallucination of seeing five fingers when O'Brien "held up the fingers of his left hand, with the thumb concealed" all come together to suggest that pure solipsism, and mass solipsism at that, requires a schism in the mind to the point of being insane. It seems that Orwell is suggesting, through the alignment of the narrator with Winston, and through the narrator's interjections, that subjectivity has direct access to the ontological world – which interestingly is one of the foundations of phenomenological thinking.

3.4.1 The Appendix on Newspeak: on the principles of Newspeak

The Appendix in the novel requires special mention because of the central role it plays in the novel, despite its apparently marginal nature. The *Oxford English Dictionary* ("Appendix", 2015) defines an appendix as an "addition subjoined to a document or book, having some contributory value in connection with the subject matter of the work, *but not essential to its completeness*" (my emphasis). The novel is made up of three parts, the Appendix, Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* and Winston's narrative. Why then is the explanation of Newspeak's construction put aside in a section that is apparently not "essential to its completeness"? Is it as Sisk (1997:43) argues because "Newspeak is only peripherally described (and nowhere completely used) within the portion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* devoted to Winston Smith's story"? This could show that Orwell felt that a fuller explanation of its principles was needed. But why then did he not simply add it into the novel like Goldstein's book? He certainly had the opportunity to go further into an explanation using the character of Syme. One could argue that Orwell felt that it might be tedious for readers or that it would be to the detriment of the narrative. But this does injustice to Orwell's ability as a writer. He certainly shows with Goldstein's book that such an explication is possible and can still be entertaining and informative, when he incorporates part of Goldstein's book into the narrative.

Many critics have argued that Orwell's construction of Newspeak is itself problematic. For instance, Traugott and Pratt (1980:109) argue that Newspeak "overlooks the creative nature of language [,] denies any notion of semantic features that can be reused in different groupings of sound-meaning correlations [,] denies

the possibility of saying one thing and meaning another [and raises] the question of how languages get to be as complex in vocabulary as they do". They also add that "Orwell's discussion presents an incomplete view of what human language is" (Traugott & Pratt, 1980:109). Similarly, Bolton (1984:35) argues that inscribing Newspeak into the fabric of Oceania's life via a dictionary is problematic because dictionaries are descriptive and not prescriptive, and that people use "the dictionary for a restricted range of purposes (chiefly spelling and pronunciation) if at all, and rarely so as to increase their vocabulary – never to reduce it". Burgess (1978:51) argues that there "is no guarantee that the State's creation of Newspeak could flourish impervious to gradual semantic distortion, vowel mutation, the influence of the richer Oldspeak of the proles".

On a superficial level Gadamer (*TM*:443) would appear to think similarly to these critics when he claims that "invented systems of artificial communication are never languages". And I agree with Traugott and Pratt (1980), Bolton (1984) and Burgess (1978) that Newspeak as a language cannot work, and for the same reasons they mention. The Party's attempt to fix language into a perfect form that will require no alteration and its implementation in the Inner and Outer Party's structures simply cannot work because of the points raised in the aforementioned arguments. However, as Sisk (1997:49) points out, these arguments are only valid as long they centre on a discussion of Newspeak as a real "workable language". The criticism seems to be aimed at Orwell's ability as a writer by focusing on Newspeak as a workable language. Traugott (1983) wrote a chapter entitled "Newspeak: could it really work?" The question indicates the focus on Newspeak as an actual language rather than as a mechanism in *1984*. However, precisely because Newspeak is not a workable language, language can be seen as a kind of "nucleation site" for the collapse of the Party.[62]

The Appendix is written in the past tense. Both the narrative of the novel and the Appendix are written retrospectively, and the narrative voice in the Appendix is not constructed as a specific persona. But its existence and possibly seditious discussion of Newspeak's construction and operation is indicative of a far freer

[62] See Section 4.3.1 for further discussion.

society than the one portrayed in the novel. The systems of control in place in Oceania do not allow for material of the type seen in the Appendix to exist. After all, even the most mundane bits of evidence regarding its historical manipulation must be erased. Therefore, the only plausible conclusion is that the Party has failed to remain in power.

Secondly, the fact that the Appendix is written *as an appendix* is noteworthy – it poses as **metatext**, but is actually part of the novel since it is written within the same fictional scope. This is borne out by the fact that Newspeak is never portrayed fully in Winston's narrative. It is also not fully described through the exposition of the language through several characters' use of it, or through further discussion about it, such as in Syme and Winston's conversation. Bolton (1984:108) argues that "political and even sexual conduct [are] under the closest possible scrutiny, [but Orwell] made no provision for linguistic enforcement". This is not necessarily a shortcoming on Orwell's part, but rather adds to the idea that the Party is eventually overthrown, perhaps due to its inability to enforce the language it attempted to create.

There are parallels between Gadamer (*TM*:385), and Traugott and Pratt when he mentions that "a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth it – i.e., that it allows something to 'emerge' which henceforth exists". But the criticism that Traugott and Pratt direct at Orwell should not be seen as a failure in the novel but should be turned around and seen as an actual understanding on Orwell's part of the nature of language by his implication that the Party is eventually overthrown and left behind. Orwell could not do this by simply saying that the Party is overthrown or that there is a coup, but gives several bits of evidence, predominantly through his depiction of Newspeak. After all, Orwell's purpose in writing the novel is not to serve as a guide for overthrowing totalitarianism but to depict the evils of totalitarianism through satire.

Thus, the Appendix's description of the principles of Newspeak as an *appendix* illustrates that Newspeak was never able to fully proliferate in Oceania. Even Syme's description of its principles in his discussion with Winston is not framed in Newspeak terms, but is ironically eloquent and metaphorical. For instance, Syme says the following: "We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day.

We're cutting the language *down to the bone*" (*1984*:54; my emphasis). Although this is not the comparatively free and highly metaphorical language of Parsons and the proles, the inclusion of metaphorical language by someone who is tasked with furthering Newspeak does not bode well for the language's efficacy or its enforcement. The criticism levelled at Orwell for his apparent misunderstanding of how language works thus turns out to be his masterstroke of at once maintaining aesthetic unity, portraying the dystopian society, depicting its rules and showing how the Party's actions contain its demise.

3.5 THE HERMENEUTIC CONCEPT OF DIALOGUE IN *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

As has been shown, the extent of the systems of control on the subjectivity of the citizens of Oceania is extensive. But Orwell's portrayal of language, for instance, shows that there are strong indications that such control is not invulnerable to the natural processes operative in language's formation and evolution. This suggests that subjectivity is still able to form understandings outside of at least one of the Party's systems of control, namely language. But in terms of dialogue, the citizens, or at least the Party members, are severely constricted. Control of dialogue, along with the Party's control over history, is far more effective than control over language. The Party's more effective control over dialogue and history is due to the general air of suspicion and mistrust that Party members have of each other. Where language use is not strictly enforced, dialogue is severely constricted to the point where it is almost non-existent. In *BNW* dialogue is difficult because of the chasm that separates one interlocutor's horizon from the other's is just too wide to bridge. In *1984*, horizons are fenced off with literal and metaphorical barbed-wire.

This fencing off is highly problematic for successful dialogue (but highly effective for the Party's purposes) if one considers Gadamer's (*TM*:443) view on dialogue:

> Reaching an understanding in language places a subject matter before those communicating like a disputed object between them. Thus the world is the common ground, trodden by none and recognized by all, *uniting all who talk to one another*. All kinds of human community are kinds of linguistic community: even more, they form language. *For language is by nature the language of conversation; it fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding*. That is why it is not a mere means in that process. (my emphases)

Gadamer is pointing out a connection between language and dialogue, as well as that this connection must be shared between people who enter into real dialogue. Although Newspeak is not strictly enforced, Newspeak is indicative of the type of division that one is likely to find in the novel. It is not the same as in *BNW*, where characters' horizons are too far apart for real dialogue due to the traditions that have effected them. In *1984* the division of horizons is in the form of one subject from another through state control. Furthermore, as one sees in the torture scene, the Party undermines any individual experience or engagement with the ontological existence of the world. For instance, O'Brien says, "'We control matter because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull'" (*1984*:277). Thus the world is no longer the "common ground" which could "unite all who talk to one another" – it just further divides potential interlocutors of dialogue. Additionally, language is used to separate the different strata (classes) in Oceania's social make-up. Newspeak is solely reserved for Party members, and Prolespeak is used by the lower classes. The two classes hardly interact, and as one sees with Winston's interaction with the old man in the pub, where interactions do occur, they do not seem to be very fruitful. Finally, the different societies of the world are also cut off from one another and thus cannot develop richer understandings.

The most telling detail about the state of sign-posted dialogue (as indicated with quotation marks) between characters, is its sparseness. As previously indicated, the proportion of *1984's* first chapter that is dedicated to dialogue is only about 10% of the first chapter, as opposed to *BNW*'s 30%.[63] Although the chapters that follow after this contain somewhat more dialogue, it is never as thickly interspersed between the narrative text of *1984* as one sees in many other novels. The absence of dialogue seems to be a deliberate strategy by Orwell to reflect the world of Oceania: the Party works very hard to sever relationships between people and prefers relationships to be purely functional, such as Winston and his estranged wife's relationship. Relationships in whatever form must only be a means to an end: a marriage is there for procreation and for the partners to monitor of each other; a work relationship is only one for work, and social relationships hardly exist.

[63] See page 71.

The resulting relationships deprive characters such as Winston and his wife of the chance of dialogue that creates newer and fuller understandings. When she and Winston go on a community hike, they have a perfect moment to have a discussion about a topic other than one the Party approves of (*1984*:40-41), but the moment is lost:

> They had lagged behind the others for a couple of minutes, but they took a wrong turning, and presently found themselves pulled up short by the edge of an old chalk quarry. It was a sheer drop of ten or twenty metres, with boulders at the bottom. There was nobody of whom they could ask the way. As soon as she realised that they were lost Katharine became very uneasy. To be away from the noisy mob of hikers even for a moment gave her a feeling of wrong-doing. She wanted to hurry back by the way they had come and start searching in the other direction. (*1984*:140-141)

This scene is very similar to the one in *BNW* in which Lenina and Bernard travel in their helicopter and Bernard switches off the main rotors for a short while.[64] But whereas in *BNW* the two can actually have a short conversation about the silence, even if it is not a moment of *Horizontverschmelzung*, in this scene Winston cannot even share a private conversation with his wife. When Winston begins to speak about the tufts of loosestrife he finds between the crags, she has already turned to go and, although she comes back at his request, she does so unwillingly and fretfully and they still cannot share the moment. The two are thus unable to enter into any meaningful dialogue. Katharine's uneasiness about being alone does not have to do with their being lost, but has to do with her need to comply with the Party's doctrine of not engaging in activities that might constitute thoughtcrime. It is unclear if this is out of fear of the Party or out of willing compliance with Party doctrine, although I would suggest it is the latter based on the sexual relationship between them.[65]

The scene between Winston and Katharine is also juxtaposed with Winston's and Julia's excursion into the countryside to have sex. Importantly, the narrator notes that Winston thinks that with "Julia he felt no difficulty in talking about such things" (*1984*:138-139) (and he has no difficulty in engaging in sex with her). Whereas Winston cannot even discuss seeing the loosestrife with his wife, with Julia he can

[64] See page 54.
[65] The narrative gives some indication of Winston's relationship with his wife on pages 69 and 70. She describes the sexual act as "'our duty to the Party'" (*1984*:70), which can be seen as evidence of her orthodoxy, rather than of her fear of persecution. She does not respond sexually and stiffens at his touch, but persists in sexual intercourse in the hope of "making a baby", and "produc[ing] a child", to satisfy the Party's need for controlled procreation.

talk about nearly everything. This is due in large part to Katharine's adherence to Party doctrine and the fact that she would have turned Winston in if she knew of his "unorthodox opinions" (*1984*:140).

The juxtaposition also makes evident the clear limits imposed on the types of conversation that two individuals can have within the confines of Oceania. The cliff that Winston and Julia approach (*1984*:141) is symbolic of his relationship with his wife and his relationship with Julia: on the one side is the empty loneliness; on the other, a brief glimpse of something beautiful that inevitably ends with being dashed on the rocks. The dialogue one can have is similarly cordoned off. But Winston and Julia's dialogue, limited as it is, is possible because it operates beyond the paradigms set up by Party, and hence they can achieve new understandings.

The types of understanding they achieve are remarkable under the circumstances. For instance, Julia educates Winston on the Party's doctrine regarding sex as well as her insights into it:

> Unlike Winston, she had grasped the inner meaning of the Party's sexual puritanism. It was not merely that the sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside the Party's control and which therefore had to be destroyed if possible. What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship. (*1984*:139)

What is important in this scene is that it is the personal insight of one person into the Party's doctrine. Winston's conversation with Syme does not have the same effect on Winston's understanding because he is already aware to some degree of Syme's project. Thus, Winston's insight into the term sex, the connotative meaning he attaches to the word and the action, is forever altered through this crucial conversation with Julia.

But this dialogue is the exception rather than the norm in Oceania, whose citizens are entirely cut off from other nations and thus cannot enter into any meaningful conversation or dialogue with another society. Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* is not trustworthy, since it turns out to have been written in part by O'Brien, but at some level its content does contain a degree of intuitive truth, since Winston thinks that "Chapter 1, like Chapter 3, had not actually told him anything that he did not know, it had merely systematised the knowledge he already

possessed already" (*1984*:226). Thus his gut feeling has already led him to this conclusion. This is after all the first part of his reconditioning: doublethink requires him to keep two contrasting ideas in his mind. He must be able to hold all the "facts" of the Party's doctrine, in all its terribleness, in his mind and then accept them. With this in mind, Goldstein's book's claim that apart from prisoners of war "the average citizen of Oceania never sets eyes on a citizen of either Eurasia or Eastasia, and he is forbidden the knowledge of foreign languages" can be taken as being an actual representation of Oceania and the world (*1984*:204). The majority of the population thus never have any interaction with people who hold a different and possibly vastly different subjective position from themselves.

The result of such international segregation goes beyond simply curtailing any rebellious movements by preventing mobility. In terms of the dynamic that is part of subjectivity, the element of dialogue is vastly hampered with regard to its role in creating new understanding and thus new language, history, tradition and pre-judices. As Linge (1977:xxi) says, the hermeneutic phenomenon in which dialogue can elucidate the interlocutors' own pre-judices "is at work in the history of cultures as well as in individuals, for it is in times of intense contact with other cultures […] that a people becomes most acutely aware of the limits and questionableness of its deepest assumptions". Linge's statement focuses on a dialogue that happens between cultures and not just between individuals. The Party's control over this aspect of life in Oceania suggests that it is not possible for cultures to interact and thus to realise the extent of their oppression. Although the text does mention that the other states have similar systems of control in place, this obviously cannot be verified in any way. We read the following in *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*:

> But in each variant of Socialism that appeared from about 1900 onwards the aim of establishing liberty and equality was more and more openly abandoned. The new movements which appeared in the middle years of the century, Ingsoc in Oceania, Neo-Bolshevism in Eurasia, Death-Worship, as it is commonly called, in Eastasia had the conscious aim of perpetuating *un*freedom and *in*equality. These new movements, of course, grew out of old ones and tended to keep their names and pay lip-service to their ideology. But the purpose of all of them was to arrest progress and freeze history at a chosen moment. (*1984*:211-212; Orwell's emphases)

The Newspeak word "*un*freedom", with its emphasis, should have alerted Winston to some degree of the text's origin. The presence of this word is indicative of the

possible fabrication of this information (Newspeak creates words by adding the prefix un- to words, allowing the elimination of many antonyms). Framing the information in Newspeak terms reduces the trustworthiness of the "facts", which are already highly questionable and cannot be verified. But interestingly, the text does state that the "movements […] grew out of old ones". Thus, regardless of the systems' intentions (and even if they are, as *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* claims, intended to create inequality and curb freedom) they are likely to have different approaches in their governance. If there were to be contact between the citizens from the different states they would, as Linge says, become acutely aware of the limitations imposed on them and the questionableness of their deepest assumptions.

But this does not happen. As far as we can tell from the events depicted in the novel, there is absolutely no interaction with other nations, other than war, even amongst the proles. This has dire implications for the development of subjectivity in Oceania. Gadamer argues that "*language is the universal meaning in which understanding occurs*" (*TM*:390, Gadamer's emphasis) and that "language is by nature the language of conversation; it fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding" (*TM*:443). These two ideas, when combined and applied to the lack of dialogue between states, imply that subjectivity is actively hampered. Consequently, there will be a severe ossification of ideas. The questioning of assumptions that Linge mentions will not happen. The old pre-judices will be retained in tradition and will not be expanded. The citizens' horizons will remain severely limited. This is exactly the situation that the Party hopes to achieve. *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* explains how the Party and its equivalents in the other blocs will "arrest progress and freeze history at a chosen moment" (*1984*:212). But this goal, through the hampering of dialogue, is not limited to socio-economic conditions, but to the very core of human understanding, and thus to what it means to be human.

There is one conversation in the novel that at first glance appears to be related to Gadamer's idea of dialogue, namely that of Winston and O'Brien in the torture chambers of the deceptively named Ministry of Love. Winston is clearly transformed by the torture, and one can argue that his horizon has been drastically expanded to include a whole range of new understandings. But is this really the case? Does it

coincide with the processes operative in understanding that Gadamer identifies? The simple answer is no, and there are several reasons for this. In the last section of the final chapter Winston is depicted as indeed vastly changed. His reconditioning has been completed and he is able to "comprehend" and accept with a compliant manner the horde of "facts" and figures churned out by the ubiquitous telescreens – he has been taught to love the Party and Big Brother. One gets the distinct feeling that the humanity in him has disappeared. He is no longer a man, but an empty vessel for Party doctrine. He now shrinks at the thought of having sex with Julia and appears to be almost lifeless. As Orwell puts it, the "long hoped-for bullet was entering his brain" (*1984*:311). The apparent *Horizontverschmelzung* which he was *subjected* to has gone far beyond altering his subjectivity. His humanity has been "cauterised" (*1984*:304).

The methods used by O'Brien could explain this. Gadamer makes the following three important points regarding dialogue. Firstly, "hermeneutical conversation, like a real conversation, finds a common language, and that finding a common language is not, any more than in real conversation, preparing a tool for the purpose of reaching understanding but, rather, coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement" (*TM*:389-390). Secondly, he notes that one needs to focus on what is said rather than on who says it (*TM*:294).[66] Thirdly, Gadamer notes that verbal understanding involves assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own (*TM*:400).[67] These three factors are interdependent. Once the conversation between Winston and dialogue is viewed within this framework, it becomes more apparent why the torture Winston is subjected to and his subsequent understanding is not a true *Horizontverschmelzung* .

The torture scene is predominantly a scene in which one person, Winston, is forced to accept the language of another, O'Brien (the Party). Although the physicality of this scene is unquestionable, Winston is required to accept and make his own the pre-judices and linguistic concerns of the Party. As O'Brien says, "We are not interested in those stupid crimes that you have committed. The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about" (*1984*:265). In coming to

[66] See page 52.
[67] See page 52.

accept the doctrine of the Party, Winston is immersed in its language. The oxymoronic way of speaking and thinking, the checking of thoughts, ideas and words that carry certain pre-judices is something that O'Brien wishes to impose on Winston with this so-called conversation. And in this sense perhaps the conversation is actually truly like Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue. For when Winston finally grasps the linguistic premise, of, for instance, "2+2=5", then he begins to fully understand the oxymoronic nature of Party doctrine and begins to make it his own. But there is one important difference with regard to this idea that a common language must be found and that in finding it the act of understanding is achieved as well. This difference relates to Winston's torture. O'Brien says the following:

> 'That was forty,' said O'Brien. 'You can see that the numbers on the dial run up to a hundred. Will you please remember, throughout our *conversation*, that I have it in my power to inflict pain on you at any moment and to whatever degree I choose. If you tell me any lies, or attempt to prevaricate in any way, or even fall below your usual level of intelligence, you will cry out with pain, instantly. Do you understand that?' (*1984*:257; my emphasis)

Although O'Brien is threatening Winston with more torture, O'Brien still calls the process he subjects Winston to a "conversation", a telling detail regarding the Party's ideas of dialogue. Torture is depicted and used as a quasi-dialogical retort. For instance, the two have the following exchange:

> 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. (*1984*: 261-262)

Here O'Brien's retort is not the usual verbal bombardment of Party doctrine, but simply the turning of a dial to induce pain.

But this scene is almost immediately trumped by the following claim by O'Brien:

> 'Do not imagine that you will save yourself, Winston, however completely you surrender to us. No one who has once gone astray is ever spared. And even if we chose to let you live out the natural term of your life, still you would never escape from us. What happens to you here is for ever. Understand that in advance. We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back. Things will happen to you from which you could not recover, if you lived a thousand years. Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling. Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. *We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves*.' (*1984*:267-268; my emphasis)

The last sentence is indicative of the Party's wish not only to break Winston down physically and psychologically but for him to adopt Party doctrine fully – to make it his own. Combined with O'Brien's "repartée" of hurting Winston, the torture appears to be dialogical.

But this is not what Gadamer would expect of dialogue. The "language" O'Brien uses is associated with a breaking of the body and the mind and thus does not adhere to the view of language in Gadamer's framework, although it is effective in inculcating an understanding of sorts. Torture as "language" has a strong undercurrent of a power relation between the O'Brien and Winston. When Winston is almost wholly focused on who is speaking to him the content is only of interest to him because of who is doing the talking. Thus when Gadamer (*TM*:388) says that reaching "an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognize the full value of what is alien and opposed to them", we can clearly see that the dialogue in this scene from the novel is heavily skewed and does not contain the active reciprocity Linge (1977:xx) identifies as being necessary for true dialogue. Winston achieves "understanding", but because of the methods used in the process it is clear that in order to achieve his "understanding" of Party doctrine, his humanity, in terms of Gadamer's definition, needs to be destroyed.[68]

3.6 CONCLUSION

Orwell's portrayal of subjectivity in *1984* is depicted in a highly sophisticated manner. In terms of the three central themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, history, language and dialogue, we can see a degree of manipulation of the citizens that goes beyond mere oppression. Instead, *1984* describes a far more elaborate system of control than *BNW* (albeit not as sophisticated as in *BNW*).

Ingsoc's principles do not simply do away with history and its central role in the construction of subjectivity. The Party embraces history's central role, but then turns history against Oceania's citizens so that they have no stable reference to the past. In respect of the citizens' *Wirkungsgeschichte*, they are affected by an induced amnesia in which they cannot fully recall the past, even important personal

[68] Refer to Section 1.4.1.

recollections. Winston attempts to recollect this past, but inevitably finds himself intertwined in further state systems of control. The combination of amnesia and the State's control results in further control of the citizens' subjectivity. Their pre-judices become fully shaped by the Party's wishes, and attempting to break out of that control only results in further oppression.

Orwell's depiction of the manipulation of language contrasts somewhat with that of his depiction of the manipulation of history. Although there are vast projects at hand to attempt to control language in the same way that history has been effectively controlled, the novel hints that this is not entirely possible. Through various techniques, but mostly through the depiction of the Newspeak as an Appendix in the past tense, Orwell shows that it is nearly impossible to "fix" language in the same way that it is possible to alter historical records. The result is that language becomes a possible source of the Party's overthrow, although this demise of the Party is never shown. Nonetheless there is enough evidence for this argument. In the novel Winston mentions on several occasions that the proles will eventually overthrow the Party, and it also seems that the Party's attempt to control their members' subjectivity through language is highly ineffective – even their philologists do not truly use Newspeak.

Dialogue in the novel also has a dual nature. It is viciously controlled and the citizens appear to be cut off effectively from each other and from other cultures as well. The Party also replaces what one expects to find in dialogue with torture – an answer becomes an electrical shock. Additionally, the element of power plays a central role in skewing the dialogue. The active reciprocity that Linge identifies as being central to dialogue is completely negated. The Party achieves Winston's reconditioning, but the expense at which this is achieved shows, by replacing the linguistic aspect of dialogue with vicious torture, that humanity needs to be destroyed in order to achieve understanding in such a framework. The conclusion then is that for subjectivity to be preserved as we understand it now, and as we prefer it, reconditioning cannot be a route for creating understanding.

In conclusion, *1984* depicts and portrays subjectivity in ways that inform us about the construction of subjectivity, its durability and to some degree its self-sustainability.

Orwell's famous novel has a didactic undercurrent that extends beyond the usual dystopian didacticism that relates to taking current social trends to their extremes in order to show how grotesque they can be if given institutional power.

The question of whether rebellion is possible is such a system arises. In *BNW* it is difficult to think of how rebellion is possible, considering the extent of the systems of control and the use of state-controlled hedonism as a mechanism. In view of the pervasive hardships people experience in Oceania, in *1984*, rebellion seems to be almost inevitable, but the question is what form it takes. The potential for rebellion in Huxley's and Orwell's dystopias, as a way to express and achieve subjectivity, is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:
THE PORTRAYAL OF REBELLION IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD* AND *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

> Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act. (*1984*:133)
>
> "I want to look at the sea in peace […] It makes me feel as though […] as though I were more me, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body." – Bernard Marx (*BNW*:78)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Gadamer's work is considered by many to have been ground-breaking, highly influential and comprehensive, but Huxley's *BNW* and Orwell's *1984* portray subjectivity in a manner that goes beyond what Gadamer mentions in *Truth and Method*. As already discussed in the previous three chapters, Gadamer identifies three main *a priori* conditions of understanding (history, language and dialogue) as being formative in understanding (and thus of subjectivity), and as fundamental to human nature. But the phenomenon of rebellion, or the need for resistance, subverts the possibility that Gadamer's framework of subjectivity can be seen all-encompassing. My discussion of language in *1984* in Chapter 3 supports my argument that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is a suitable framework of subjectivity, by showing that the Party's control over society as a whole is ultimately ineffective because it misunderstands the role of language (as postulated by Gadamer). However, there are other aspects in *1984*, such as Oceania's control over perceptions of history and dialogue, or in *BNW,* that could still enable enough manipulation to control the citizens under the Party's or the World State's dominion effectively, thereby making rebellion impossible. In view of this control, rebellion as a phenomenon and central theme of the novels may at first appear to be absurd or impossible. If that argument holds, the inclusion of this possibility in the novels might be dismissed as a simple narrative device to provide a moment for conflict with the ruling parties in order to create opportunities for development in the plot. But this does injustice to the level of artistic and aesthetic unity that Orwell's and Huxley's novels display.

Moreover, the interesting and nuanced portrayals of subjectivity/understanding in these novels go beyond the parameters of Gadamer's well-respected framework of subjectivity and thus merit further analysis. The novels display great variety in their considerations of how subjectivity can be thought of, ranging from allusions to and possibly outright re-appropriations of Nietzsche's thought to hints of Freudian portrayals of the effects of sexual repression. The novels can thus conversely be used to critique and inform a formal framework of subjectivity such as Gadamer's. The only understanding that can enunciate the ideals of rebellion or cause them to be understood must clearly fall outside of the State's systems of control, which, as I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, fall largely *within* Gadamer's framework of subjectivity. Thus, a clearer picture of the novels' frameworks of subjectivity will emerge if we take the various factors and portrayals of rebellion into consideration.

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of rebellion with the abovementioned arguments in mind. In order to begin this discussion, it is first necessary to give a brief overview of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's work, since their thinking forms a complementary framework with which I seek to analyse rebellion in the novels and supplement Gadamer's framework of subjectivity. Through the short exposition of their thinking, it will become clear that a type of understanding that happens *before* the *a priori* conditions of understanding that Gadamer identifies must be operative in the characters' understanding and subjectivity in order for rebellion to be possible. Once this has been established, the portrayal of rebellion in the two novels is considered, looking first at *1984* and then at *BNW*. I inverted the order of the discussion followed in the previous two chapters because the discussion of rebellion in *1984* is helpful in understanding what happens in *BNW*. Primarily, the discussion of rebellion centres on the characters' sexual relationships and their interaction with their physical environment.

4.2 HEIDEGGER'S AND NIETZSCHE'S THINKING AS A SUPPLEMENTARY FRAMEWORK OF SUBJECTIVITY

4.2.1 Nietzsche

The overall influence that Nietzsche's work had on 20th century thinking is undeniable. Many thinkers and writers are indebted to his work (for example, Freud,

Foucault and Gadamer), so it is likely that Huxley and Orwell experienced an *effective* influence from this well-known philosopher.

The main influence that one can see clearly in both novels' portrayals of subjectivity is echoes of Nietzsche's thinking on the body's role in subjectivity. Nietzsche ([1883] 2012:Pt. 1, IV), in his typically scathing style, says the following regarding the body: "To the despisers of the body I will speak my word. I wish them neither to learn afresh, nor teach anew, but only bid farewell to their own bodies, – and thus be dumb [mute]". He also tells us that "[b]ehind thy thoughts and feelings […] there is a mighty lord, an unknown sage – it is called Self; it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body" (Nietzsche, [1883] 2012:Pt. 1, IV). His insistent claim that the body is an *a priori* category of understanding that actually informs our secondary "spirit" is different from what Gadamer posits. Atkins (2009:71) summarises Nietzsche's view on subjectivity as follows: "Nietzsche regarded consciousness as a second-order expression of underlying part-biological, part-social evolutionary urges and instincts."

Nietzsche ([1913] 2003:25) writes the following in *The Genealogy of Morals*:

> *A quantum of strength is just such a quantum of movement, will, action* – rather it is nothing else than just those very phenomena of moving, willing, action, and can only appear otherwise in the misleading errors of language (and the fundamental fallacies of reason which have become petrified therein), *which understands, and understands wrongly, all working as conditioned by a worker, by a 'subject'*. (my emphases)

In this sentence, Nietzsche highlights the importance of bodily living by emphasising the misleading way we have chosen to describe ourselves. For Nietzsche, we are all animated by "moving, willing and action" – all of which are related to bodily stimuli. Nietzsche ([1913] 2003:26) states even more emphatically that "there is no *substratum*, there is no 'being' behind the doing, working, becoming; the 'doer' is a mere appanage to the action". Taken in the broader context of his work, we can understand this to mean that the "subject" in Gadamer's terms does not exist, and instead what we observe as action "is an orchestration of the organism through the agency of its own impulses" (Atkins, 2009:72). This type of "bodily subjectivity" falls outside Gadamer's framework of subjectivity (see Section 1.4.1) and I would argue that it therefore plays an essential role in the portrayal of rebellion in the novels. This is especially true in those cases where it seems that the characters draw a physical understanding from their surroundings or their sexuality, and only later enunciate this

understanding in a very limited way through the "appanage" of their subjectivity. Importantly, there is a clear depiction of the characters' gaining understanding of their rebellion through their physical interaction. At times, this understanding is not explicit even to their "self" (their apperceptive "I").

4.2.2 Heidegger

For Heidegger, even before our body, we have a specific orientation towards the world that he calls *In-der-Welt-sein* (being-in-the-world) which inculcates a certain understanding in us. For him, we, as *Dasein*, as subjects for whom Being is a concern, "are the only beings who can stand back from (*ex-sistere*) the objective conditions of things (*qua Seiendes*) and so put ourselves into question" (Kearney, 1994:32). Heidegger's argument is similar to Nietzsche's here, in that this understanding is not limited to our reflective consciousness. Instead, "it refers primarily to those pre-reflective 'moods' (*Stimmungen*) of our lived experience – e.g. anguish, guilt, fear, concern, wonder and so on – which Heidegger identifies not simply as psychological emotions but as ontological acts of *pre-understanding* (*Vor-Verständnis*)" (Kearney, 1994:34). Thus, an intuitive *Vor-Verständnis* (pre-understanding) precedes a *Meinung* (opinion) and an *Urteil* (judgement).

Heidegger demonstrates the value of our practical orientation to the world in his phenomenological analysis of the questions of *being*. Through various steps[69] Heidegger comes to two conclusions: firstly, *Dasein* "is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being" (Heidegger [1953] 1996:10; Heidegger's emphasis), and secondly, *Dasein* "always understands itself in terms of its own existence" and "[w]e come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself" (Heidegger [1953] 1996:10). These two comments clearly argue our primary, practical orientation to the world, which is rooted in our ontic existence, which can almost be described as visceral (it is in this practical physical "bodiliness" that Heidegger's views differ from Gadamer's, and more closely resemble Nietzsche's). In this sense, Heidegger notes that our ontological and ontic being endows us with a certain understanding.

[69] A fuller discussion of Heidegger's argument is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and is not central to the argument presented here.

For this reason, when Heidegger ([1953] 1996:97) says that "*Dasein* is 'in' the world in the sense of a familiar and heedful association with the beings encountered within the world", it must be understood to mean that this forms part of the questioning of the self, in other words, part of our interpretive self. Thus, the *Vor-Verständnis* which is ontologically affected (effected?) by our *In-der-Welt-sein*, which is in turn intrinsically linked to our experience of spatiality, implies that in questioning ourselves we are given to certain understandings. For Heidegger then, asking the question of Being by *Dasein* is thus definitive for and of human nature. What implications does this then have for the characters in the novels who do not ask existential questions, especially those in *BNW*?

4.2.3 Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thought as a framework for reading the novels

The two philosophers provide a useful framework from which to analyse the phenomenon of rebellion outside of Gadamer's framework. As I have explained previously, it is possible to look at rebellion using Gadamer's framework, since it can be argued that the methods of manipulation and control in the two novels are not holistic when it comes to controlling subjectivity, but there are still elements that are indicative of there being enough control for the State to prevail. Because the factors which effect subjectivity in terms of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's arguments (the body and being-in-the-world respectively) are in a sense "prior" to those identified by Gadamer, the levels at which the systems of control in Oceania and "Civilization" must operate in order to curb the possibility of rebellion are difficult to attain, and fissures in the social fabric are visible in these two fictional worlds.

The characters' rebellion is "enunciated" at this primary level as described by Nietzsche and Heidegger, a level which can be termed one of "pre-understandings".[70,71] For Nietzsche and Heidegger, if these pre-understandings are subverted, precisely because of their primacy, the consequences for human nature

[70] Language does not allow for an expression of understanding to the outside world, other than through speech. In the novels there is an acting-out of the understanding, rather than a speaking to another character.
[71] The term "pre-understanding" as I use it here must be understood to refer to the framework I set out using Nietzsche and Heidegger. This term combines the bodily understanding that Nietzsche identifies, as well as the understanding that our being as *Dasein* endows us with.

are destructive – I would argue that the conditions that need to be in place to destroy or control the ability to understand via the body or through our being-in-the-world must be far more terrifying than those that limit history, language and dialogue. This is not to say that the elements of our subjectivity identified by Gadamer are any less important in the construction of subjectivity. But because these pre-understandings are so close to us, so very intimate that they are non-verbal, their loss is in a sense more dangerous and more complete.

4.3 REBELLION

In a carefully argued article, Thomas Horan describes how the sexual relationships (which I would argue are bodily relationships that create forms of understanding) that develop between characters in what he terms "projected political fiction" [72] are fundamental to a political awakening (and thus understanding) of the characters. Horan (2007:314-315) states:

> [T]he major authors of dystopian fiction present sexual desire as an aspect of the self that can never be fully appropriated […] This point is commonly made by a sexual relationship situated at the beginning of the story, which eventually develops into a subversive political conspiracy for revolution. Though these sexual liaisons are usually ill-fated, they suggest that sexual desire has a propulsive ability to promote change even when the sexual relationship itself is curtailed. Sex works as a portal through which the dystopian everyman at the cent[re] of the story glimpses the idea of both political liberation and a universal human dignity based on a newfound understanding of the sublime.

As "an aspect of the self that can never be fully appropriated", sexual desire appears to be a pre-understanding (in the sense of Nietzsche and Heidegger) that exhibits the potential for subversive behaviour because sexual desire can develop into a "subversive political conspiracy". In addition to this, Horan's claim that "sexual desire has a *propulsive ability* to promote change even when the sexual relationship itself is curtailed" (Horan, 2007:314; my emphasis) is an important way in which one can read relationships between the characters. Additionally, his conclusion that "sex works as a *portal* through which the dystopian everyman at the cent[re] of the story *glimpses* the idea of both political liberation and a universal human dignity based on a newfound understanding of the sublime" (Horan, 2007:314-315; my emphases) is

[72] This term refers to "dystopian stories that are both speculative and political" (Horan, 2007:315). Horan (2007:315) clarifies his focus by stating that authors of "projected political fiction project a political system or philosophy with which they disagree into a futuristic society".

very similar to the conclusion I arrive at using the Nietzschean and Heideggerian framework, although my focus differs from his. Horan's claims may thus be understood to be in line with my previous discussion of pre-understanding. The characters exhibit a definite pre-understanding in their sexual relationships. This pre-understanding only later becomes cognitive, and subsequently falls in the categories established by Gadamer.

Although the argument set out by Horan has many merits, there are some shortcomings. Firstly, although the sexual relationships that develop between characters may serve as a point around which they construct their rebellion, the sexual relationship is usually only a catalyst and not the very point from which rebellion is sparked. In both *1984* and *BNW* there are elements predisposing Winston and Bernard to rebellion *before* their sexual rebellions.[73] Secondly, Horan's argument is framed exclusively within the confines of political criticism. Horan (2007:315-316) explicitly limits his reading of dystopian fiction to the political when he makes the following point:

> Projected political function is written for one of two not always mutually exclusive purposes: either as a warning to the author's contemporaries to help them avert an impending governmental disaster, or it predicts what the seemingly unavoidable future will look like […] What clearly defines projected political fiction as its own genre is the way that illicit sexual arousal always precedes political awareness within the story […] As the story progresses, the docile character is first overwhelmed with lust for the rebellious character and then, once consummation has occurred, he or she is won over to the hope provided by the renegade's heretical political philosophy.

The fact that Horan's argument is framed in political terms limits the range of interpretations that it can bring to the genre. However, the ideas that "illicit sexual arousal *always precedes* political awareness within the story" (my emphasis) and that it is only once consummation has occurred that the protagonist is "won over to the hope provided by the renegade's political philosophy" are a generalisation that does not apply, for example, to *BNW* or to *1984*.

Some of the problems in Horan's argument arise from his insistence that the sexual relationship between characters is the turning point in each case. In *1984* and *BNW*, both Winston and Bernard already feel disconcerted about and discontented with

[73] These factors are discussed in the sections relating to the different characters' rebellion, Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

their (dystopian) lives before they engage in their respective relationships. Even more problematic for Horan's argument is sexuality in *BNW* in general, and Helmholtz's rebellion in particular. After all, Helmholtz *abstains* from sex, despite ample opportunities presented to him. Similarly, John the Savage is deeply unhappy with life in the Reservation long before he meets Lenina and repudiates sex as crude and immoral.

Winston's "political awakening" is not as clear-cut, and could fall into Horan's classification. His first seditious act, beginning a journal, is a result of his encounter with two people who come to the Two Minutes Hate, namely Julia and O'Brien, although he does not know them at this point (*1984*:11). The description in his diary of Julia seems more hostile than sexual, but her role later in the novel, and the fact that the narration (which is linked to Winston's thoughts) focuses on her before it focuses on O'Brien, are telling. Towards the end of this scene, it seems that O'Brien's glance towards Winston has a more profound effect on him, but Julia's presence, especially just before the Two Minutes Hate, cannot be dismissed.[74] For Horan, it is through the consummation of the sexual act that the protagonist is won over. However, he believes there must be some precursor to this, because the sexual act itself is seditious – certainly in *1984* (but in *BNW* abstinence appears to signify sexual sedition). In other words, there must already be some rebellious elements present in the pre-understanding of the characters, making the sexual act extreme in terms of its seditiousness. Thus the sexual act can be seen as a catalyst to rebellious tendencies that are already developing through pre-understandings such as those identified by Nietzsche and Heidegger.

In addition to my argument that the characters have some form of rebellious understanding (some form of subjectivity beyond the control of the State) before the "consummation" has occurred, there is also strong evidence that the "renegade" whom Horan identifies also learns a great deal through the various forms of understanding that relate to pre-understanding, for example, sex and the

[74] Later in the novel Julia explains to Winston that "sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leadership" (*1984*:139), which are all clearly visible in the Two Minutes Hate scene. This idea that sexual privation induces hysteria also appears to be an allusion to Freud, whose ideas informed thinking and writing at the time.

environment. These pre-understandings play an integral role in the renegade's development and not just in the protagonist's role.[75]

Regarding how one can think of sex as pre-understanding in rebellion, Freud (1922:Chap. 12, D) writes the following regarding sexual impulsions:

> [S]exual tendencies are *unfavourable to the formation of groups* […] [T]he more important sexual love became for the ego, and the more it developed the characteristics of being in love, the more urgently it required to be *limited to two people* […] Two people coming together for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, in so far as they seek for solitude, are *making a demonstration against the herd instinct*, the group feeling. The more they are in love, the more completely they suffice for each other […] Even in a person who has in other respects become absorbed in a group the directly sexual tendencies preserve a little of his *individual activity*. If they become too strong they disintegrate every group formation. (my emphases)

Deleuze and Guattari's ([1972] 2000:116) comments on sexual repression add an interesting perspective:

> If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of society […] Desire is revolutionary in essence […] No society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised […] Desire does not want revolution, it is revolution in its own right.

Although these thinkers are looking at different aspects of (sexual) desire and impulsions, they share the opinion that there is a definite rebellious undertone to desire and thus to sexuality. This is why the characters rally around sexuality and exhibit such seditious sexual tendencies. Freud's (1922) and Deleuze and Guattari's ([1972] 2000) statements also shed some light on Gheran's (2012:97) conclusion that disobedience "to the [S]tate is nothing more than a natural consequence of the [S]tate's own repressive measures". Simply put, as long as humans remain sexual, there is a natural "nucleation site" from which rebellion can spring if sexual desires are repressed. But it is not enough to say that it is a "natural" response and leave it at that. The two novels have vastly different ways in which they approach sex. In *1984* sex is disapproved of unless it is for politically permitted procreative purposes, and in *BNW* free sex with many different partners is the norm and procreation is controlled through various chemicals, but extended relationships (potentially the

[75] The specifics of the rebellious characters' pre-understandings and the form they take are discussed in the sections that relate to those characters: Julia is the renegade (or rebellious character) and Winston is obviously the protagonist (see Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

desire of “love” as opposed to slaked bodily desire) are frowned upon. Additionally, the characters’ act of pre-understanding their respective societies’ repressive mechanisms requires elucidation.

4.3.1 Winston and Julia

Orwell powerfully portrays Julia’s non-verbal representation of her general pre-understanding in the following description of her undressing: “Almost as swiftly as he had imagined it, she had torn her clothes off, and when she flung them aside it was with that same magnificent gesture by which a whole civilization seemed to be annihilated” (*1984*:131). Second wave feminism might read this as a mere exhibition of her naked figure, but this scene strongly links her body to power.[76] Orwell’s description in this scene evokes Marlowe’s ([1604] 2008:12 ll. 89-91) description of the destruction unleashed by Helen in *Doctor Faustus* when Faustus is ravished by Helen’s beauty: “Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships,/ And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?/ Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss”. Julia’s body and her gesture appear to contain the same force that Helen’s beauty has. Although Winston clearly does not become immortal, he is greatly revitalised through the sexual relationship that he shares with Julia, as is discussed below. Importantly, Marlowe and Orwell only hint that the women’s beauty set in motion a chain of events that end in destruction. It *is* Helen’s face and it *is* Julia’s gesture that launch a thousand ships and annihilate a civilization respectively. It is thus within the bodies of these two women that power is located and not merely in what their bodies can get other people to do.

In contrast to the conversation that follows, this scene is far clearer than the words that are spoken between Winston and Julia. Winston says: “I hate purity, I hate goodness! I don’t want any virtue to exist anywhere. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones” (*1984*:132). His exclamation appears to be hyperbolic and somewhat inarticulate, albeit powerful. This scene introduces the idea that it is through sex that Julia and Winston can create an actual revolution. By engaging in sex with Julia, Winston enunciates his rebellion even more emphatically than he does in the

[76] The name Julia is itself evocative of conquest (Julius Caesar belonged to the House of the Julia).

writings in his journal. His exclamation here is similar to his somewhat incoherent journal entry:

> *…theyll shoot me i dont care theyll shoot me in the back of the neck i dont care down with big brother they always shoot you in the back of the neck i dont care down with big brother* – (*1984*:21; Orwell's emphasis)

Although the same excited tone can be seen in both examples, Winston's exclamations *after* he has had sex with Julia seem far more coherent and refined. And they also appear to be less fearful, more directed towards actual, open rebellion.

Julia herself seems far more capable of enacting her rebellion than Winston. Winston still attempts to use his cognitive understanding, which falls into Gadamer's categories, rather than the pre-understanding outlined by Nietzsche and Heidegger. But his cognitive understanding does not fully grasp his rebellious tendencies, and his pre-understanding still needs some education from Julia. The fact that Julia is described as "not clever" (*1984*:136), but can recognise "the inner meaning of the Party's sexual puritanism" (*1984*:139) before Winston does suggests that her (bodily) pre-understanding is far more developed than his.

The description of Winston's and Julia's bodies also mirrors this idea. She is described as having a "youthful body", a "wide red mouth", and a "prettiness [that …] frightened him" (*1984*:126). The vitality of her body and youthfulness stands in contrast to Winston's body, which is not as full of the life-affirming potential that Nietzsche deems so necessary for living – Winston suffers from a varicose ulcer and coughing fits, and has difficulty in completing routine physical exercises. The description of the levels of vitality of their bodies thus coincides with the level of their political and seditious understanding.

Such descriptions in isolation are not enough to provide an argument for the strong role that pre-understanding plays in the rebellion of Julia and Winston. It is the change in physicality that corresponds with their progressive political awakening that is truly interesting. The first indication that a change is happening in Winston is when he "succeeded in touching his toes with his knees unbent, for the first time in years" (*1984*:39). This is noteworthy, since it happens just after a long internal monologue that Winston has during his morning routine and also just after he opens his journal.

In opening the journal and thinking about the state of Oceania, he commits thoughtcrime. With the awakening of his recalcitrance there is an improvement in his physical condition, albeit minor.

Lee (1969:141) notes the importance of the physical in his discussion of Winston's ulcer as a symbol in the novel. He claims that "Winston's wound is associated with those activities that mark his deviation from the norms of Oceania" (Lee, 1969:141). The ulcer goes through three main stages. It is an irritation during the early stages of the novel, flares up when he is being tortured in the Ministry of Love, and is finally cured after his successful reintegration into Oceanian society (Lee, 1969:141). A similar path is followed by Winston's rebellion. He is a budding dissident, and faces his greatest trial in the Ministry of Love, but when he is broken, there is no further possibility of rebellion for him. Importantly, Lee (1969:141) also notes that Winston's ulcer is "temporarily healed in his love affair". Its progression coincides with his mood, the stages of his rebellion and his pre-understanding.

Lee (1969:143) maintains that "pain is the sole cognitive mode by which a person can maintain his conception of self in a world in which selfhood is impossible". Lee explains that in experiencing pain, one is aware of oneself because it is only oneself that is feeling that pain. Lee argues that the integration in society and the corollary societal bonds that connect each person to another in these dystopias are so strong that the sharp jarring of (physical) pain is enough to separate one individual from another.

Later in *1984* it becomes clear that the increased understanding that Winston and Julia gain through their actions (and thus through bringing to the fore their pre-understandings into their reflective subjectivity) is threatening to the Party. However, because this understanding is in the form of a pre-understanding, it cannot be enunciated. But there are still indications in the narration of the effects that increased pre-understanding has on the couple. Firstly, we read the following:

> Four, five, six – seven times they met during the month of June. Winston had dropped his habit of drinking gin at all hours. He seemed to have lost the need for it. He had grown fatter, his varicose ulcer had subsided, leaving only a brown stain on the skin above his ankle, his fits of coughing in the early morning had stopped. (*1984*:157)

The description here is again one that details how the relationship between Winston and Julia improves their physical status, which is reflective of their bodily understanding. This is because, as Thomas (1965:90) puts it, "their senses, their bodies, confirm that a different sort of world once existed". Julia in particular shows an increased awareness of her sense of individuality, and the form her rebellion takes might be somewhat surprising to readers in the 21st century. Julia dons make-up, silk stockings and high heels and says to Winston, "I'm going to get hold of a real woman's frock from somewhere and wear it instead of these bloody trousers. I'll wear silk stockings and high-heeled shoes! In this room I'm going to be a woman, not a Party comrade" (*1984*:149). Here she is harking back to the idea of the Golden Country. Wykes (1984:144) notes that Julia's actions are not a simple "capitulation to patriarchy" but actually come to symbolize her bid for freedom.

In terms of chronology, this is a text published in 1949 that is set in the future, but the description here draws on a depiction of women and femininity contemporary to the novel (ironic as it may be to see post-World War II and the end of war-time austerity measures as the Golden Country). Readers after the mid-1960s, aware of second wave feminism, might interpret this as capitulation in the sense of women's being mere "objects of beauty dominated by a patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or in dull, low-paying jobs" (Rampton, 2014). But, in a sense, Orwell's vision of Julia is both effected by the conventions and ideas about femininity of his own time, and vastly ahead of his time. This is because Julia seems to be depicting third wave feminism ideology, which only began in the mid-1990s (Rampton, 2014). As Rampton (2014) says, "an aspect of third wave feminism that mystifies the mothers of the earlier feminist movement [second wave feminists] is the readoption by young feminists of the very lipstick, high heels and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression". There is an interesting dynamic here, in that it raises the question of whether some of the ideologies imposed on women by second wave feminists did not correspond to the sexual oppression witnessed in *1984*, if women were not free to choose their own personal expression of themselves, in whatever form of clothing they choose. These brief speculations aside, Julia's drawing on the "past" in order to construct her physical expression of rebellion in the "present" of the novel appear to align with Thomas's statement that Julia's body knew that a different world once existed.

Julia's growing pre-understanding manifests itself in a realisation of her womanhood and she expresses it in the only way she can, and thus rebels. By wearing feminine contraband, she is at once harking back to the idea of the Golden Past and acting against the image of what the Party prefers women to be: in a sense, sexless. It is not a declaration or a manifesto, but her actions contain the same seditious tendencies that other, more "cognitive" forms of rebellion would contain. As Horan (2007:317-318) puts it, it "is this egalitarian, quasi-mystical, universal human nature that sexuality awakens in projected political fictions".

The vague way in which Horan frames his ideas regarding what it is that sexuality actually *does* is not a shortcoming of his argument, but is in fact characteristic of pre-understanding in general, since it operates on a level that is pre-linguistic. But the centrality of the sexual relationship between Winston and Julia suggests that it cannot be ignored, despite the necessarily vague ways in which it is portrayed. Taylor (1984:26) argues that it "is the very centrality of the relationship between sexual and political repression in *1984* that makes the novel seem so recognizable today". Tirohl (2000:55) states that the Party re-appropriates "sexual energy for its own needs". The Party is thus acutely aware of the danger posed by what it considers to be misdirected sexual energy, and Julia says as much when she claims the following:

> 'When you make love you're using up energy; and afterwards you feel happy and don't give a damn for anything. They can't bear you to feel like that. They want you to be bursting with energy all the time. All this marching up and down and cheering and waving flags is simply sex gone sour.' (*1984*:139)

In terms of subjectivity, this sexual energy, this life-affirming instinct, gives Julia and Winston a more acute pre-understanding of themselves, which in effect is their rebellion. In contrast to this, Taylor's (1984:28-29) says the following:

> This dichotomy between lust and utopian desire, between woman as Madonna and whore, is paradoxically both broken down and reinforced in Winston's love affair with the 'real' Julia. *But both separately and together they act as escapist fantasies – as vacations rather than emancipations*. In his first secret encounter with Julia in the hideout in the 'Golden Country' outside the city, Winston's desire is still negatively conditioned by the Party's puritanism, Julia's whorishness is simply the underside of repression; corruption is pleasurable only because it is corrupt: 'Not merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire – that was the force that would tear the Party to pieces'.[77]

[77] This is a quote from *1984*. In my edition it appears on page 132.

> Later, undifferentiated sexuality is tempered by domesticity […] Julia remains a projection, but one who combines the characteristics of wife and whore, and in the process neither questions nor transgresses either category. (my emphasis)

Taylor appears to see the sexual relationship as being at once conditioned by Party doctrine, or rather the characters' hate of it, domesticity, and as escapist, rather than as the empowering and didactic experience that Nietzsche, and even Freud, would have it.[78] In a sense, the pre-judices that Winston and Julia develop as a consequence of their exposure to Party doctrine shapes their sexual rebellion. But it is in the escape from Party control that emancipation occurs. It is the moment of escape through "simple undifferentiated desire" (*1984*:132), "the ineffable passion to fuck" (Horan, 2007:318), in combination with the idea that "the sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside of the Party's control" (*1984*:139) that emancipation happens through "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" (*1984*:76-77) – escape teaches emancipation.

But this didactic moment of escape can also appear in a form that is different from sexuality. Gheran (2012) states that this can also be found in the dichotomy between a dystopian outer geography (often identified with the city) and natural spaces. Gheran (2012:93) maintains that due to "their marginalization and their uncanny quality, these spaces become hotspots of dissidence, vantage points from which a potential resistance to the dominant discourse could theoretically be channelled, from where the suppressed individual will may re-emerge". This marginalization, their "outsideness" in this case resembles Winston and Julia's sexuality, so it is perhaps significant that the (politically seditious) sexual incident described in most detail occurs in nature, and that the location of their sexual encounters only later shifts to the bedroom above Mr Charrington's shop.[79] Additionally, if the bodily understanding that Nietzsche speaks about can be seen as relating more to sexual rebellion, then Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world and our practical orientation to it can be seen as relating more to the effect that physical space has in pre-understanding.

[78] All these views tend to equate sexuality with love, and see both love and sexuality as empowering (a Western construction which *BNW* problematizes).
[79] Mr Charrington's shop is also where the couple are eventually captured. A telescreen which betrays all their intimate conversations to the Party is hidden behind a painting in the room. Mr Charrington, we also later find out, is a member of the Thought Police. Thus in a way, their move away from a natural space to an urban space contributes to their undoing.

A good example of how the suppressed individual can re-emerge through certain spaces of dissidence is Winston's idea of the Golden Country. There are four mentions of this utopian inner geography in the novel. It is first mentioned when Winston dreams of his mother, and is still a continuation of his "intellectual life" (*1984*:32). He also perceives how tragedy belongs to an ancient time when "there was still privacy, love and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason" (*1984*:32). The second time it is mentioned is when Julia and Winston embark on their first tryst in the countryside and the lovers have the following exchange:

> 'Isn't there a stream somewhere near here?' he whispered.
> 'That's right, there is a stream. It's at the edge of the next field, actually. There are fish in it, great big ones. You can watch them lying in the pools under the willow trees, waving their tails.'
> 'It's the Golden Country – almost,' he murmured.
> 'The Golden Country?'
> 'It's nothing, really. A landscape I've seen sometimes in a dream.' (*1984*:129-130)

The next two mentions happen in quick succession. During Winston's extended torture, first, Winston dreams he is again in the Golden Country (*1984*:288). Then, when he is walking down the corridor, having accepted his eventual execution (*1984*:292), he has the following hallucination:

> He was walking down the corridor, waiting for the bullet. He knew that it was coming in another moment. Everything was settled, smoothed out, reconciled […] He walked easily, with a joy of movement and with a feeling of walking in sunlight. He was not any longer in the narrow white corridors of the Ministry of Love, he was in the enormous sunlit passage, a kilometre wide, down which he had seemed to walk in the delirium induced by drugs. He was in the Golden Country, following the foot-track across the old rabbit-cropped pasture. He could feel the short springy turf under his feet and the gentle sunshine on his face. At the edge of the field were the elm trees, faintly stirring, and somewhere beyond that was the stream where the dace lay in the green pools under the willows.
> Suddenly he started up with a shock of horror. The sweat broke out on his backbone. He had heard himself cry aloud:
> 'Julia! Julia! Julia, my love! Julia!'
> […] They could not let such an outburst go unpunished. They would know now, if they had not known before, that he was breaking the agreement he had made with them. He had obeyed the Party, but he still hated the Party. In the old days he had hidden a heretical mind beneath an appearance of conformity. Now he had retreated a step further: in the mind he had surrendered, but he had hoped to keep the inner heart inviolate. (*1984*:293)

These four mentions of the Golden Country paint an important picture of Orwell's thinking around pre-understanding and subjectivity. Primarily the Golden Country

motif serves as an image for Winston's yearning for the past and the (bodily felt) idea that things were better than they currently are. Additionally, it serves as a benchmark against which Winston's rebellion can be measured: initially the Golden Country is what Winston begins to rebel *for*. He yearns to be able to have privacy and be free from the confines of the systems of control of the Party. Later in the novel, in the last two mentions of the Golden Country, this begins to change. In those two cases, the release has turned into a release from life. But it also has another function. As Gheran (2012:95) mentions, "collective memory becomes untrustworthy and Winston Smith begins to rely more and more on individual memory until he begins to perceive himself as a minority of one, an individual". Winston's Golden Country ideal forms part of his individual memory and having possessed an individual memory is an important step in Winston's rebellion, since the Party fights so hard to extinguish any sense of individuality, either in memory or in language.

But for the current discussion, the most important part, like so many aspects of *1984*, is the moments at which the idea of the Golden Country is absent. In the first mention we are introduced to Winston's yearning for the Golden Country, but the second time he thinks of it is when he says he has found it. The motif is not mentioned again for 159 pages because what is in fact being described in the settings of the lovers' trysts *is* his Golden Country. In light of this, the following passage, in connection with the idea of Winston's growing reliance on individual memory, is important: "…the room had wakened in him a kind of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory. It seemed to him that he knew exactly what it felt like to sit utterly alone, with nobody watching you, no voice pursuing you, no sound except the singing of the kettle and the friendly ticking of the clock" (*1984*:100). Later he thinks that "so long as they were actually there they both felt no harm could come to them. Getting there was difficult and dangerous but the place itself was sanctuary" (*1984*:158). These two passages indicate that the physical space which Winston and Julia find themselves in does not just have a simple escapist effect on them. Rather, both experience a growing sense of themselves and an increasing understanding of their individuality through their being there. Gheran (2012:95) states that spaces "considered relics from the past, like the old room or the church tower, besides serving as temporary safe havens for him and Julia outside the Party's reach also seem to serve the purpose of triggering questions of historic accuracy for the main

character". This is another addition to their increased sense of self, which is seditious. I agree with Gheran that it does trigger these questions of accuracy in the characters. I would also argue that in view of Heidegger's argument regarding our being-in-the-world the two characters' practical relation to their environment can also be read as eliciting in them a certain pre-understanding which translates into their growing awareness as individuals. This is most prominent in Julia's assertion of markers of a constructed femininity and Winston's reliance on individual memory, which is seditious, according to the Party's doctrine.

Winston's final capitulation to the Party, his relinquishing of the possibility of rebellion, can also be seen as testament to the body's role in subjectivity. I would argue that this is where the true power of the novel lies. Ominously, the first introduction to Winston's fear of rats actually occurs in his "Golden Country". A rat runs across the room as the couple are talking happily in their rented room. Winston's fear is palpable. He exclaims "'*Don't go on!*' […] with his eyes tightly shut" (*1984*:151; Orwell's emphasis) after Julia gives a description of the rats in London and how they sometimes attack children. We are told that "he had the feeling of being back in a nightmare which had recurred from time to time throughout his life" and that "it was connected with what Julia had been saying when he cut her short" (*1984*:151). However, there is no indication of any past trauma that could have created this fear in Winston. There is no mention of his or his family's ever having been attacked by rats. But it can be safely assumed that something must have happened in order for him to feel such fear when encountering rats. However, because he is an adult, rats hardly pose a threat to him, thus his fear is irrational.

At the end of Winston's torture, we read the following:

> The mask was closed on his face. The wire brushed his cheek. And then – no, it was not relief, only hope, a tiny fragment of hope. Too late, perhaps too late. But he had suddenly understood that in the whole world there was just *one* person to whom he could transfer his punishment – *one* body that he could thrust between himself and the rats. And he was shouting frantically, over and over:
>
> 'Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!' (*1984*:299-300)

The consequences to Winston's subjectivity are devastating:

> Something was killed in your breast: burnt out, cauterised out […] 'Sometimes,' she said, 'they threaten you with something – something you can't stand up to, can't even think about. And then you say, "Don't do it to me, do it to somebody else, do it to so-and-so." And perhaps you might pretend, afterwards, that it was only a trick and that you just said it to make them stop and didn't really mean it. But that isn't true. At the time when it happens you do mean it. You think there's no other way of saving yourself that way. You *want* it to happen to the other person. You don't give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself.'
> 'All you care about is yourself,' he echoed.
> 'And after that, you don't feel the same towards the other person any longer.'
> 'No,' he said, 'you don't feel the same.'
> There did not seem to be anything more to say. (*1984*:304-306)

Winston's symbolic thrusting of Julia's body between himself and that rat is the final step in his reconditioning and is the ultimate betrayal of Julia and himself – the cause he was fighting for. This is because he *wants* it to be done to her – he *wishes* that it gets done to her. It is also this betrayal that "cauterises" something out of his breast. What then is the difference between his betrayal here and his denouncing her to O'Brien? Winston says after his prolonged torture, "'I have not betrayed Julia'" (*1984*:286). Even though he has told the Party "everything he knew about her, her habits, her character, her past life" (*1984*:286), O'Brien understands what Winston means. This is because he "had not stopped loving her; his feelings towards her had remained the same" (*1984*:287).Winston's final capitulation is thus the destruction of this love.

The form his final capitulation takes has implications for an analysis of the portrayal of subjectivity. The reason for this is that the method used to coerce Winston into capitulating appeals to Winston's bodily instinct – a pre-understanding according to Nietzsche. Love must thus also be a form of pre-understanding.[80] There are definitely elements of Gadamer's framework of subjectivity present in the choosing of a partner,[81] but Orwell's description seems to suggest that because an instinct must be used in order to destroy this part of Winston, love must also operate on the same

[80] In the love that Winston has for Julia, and not just in their sexual relationship, lies a pre-understanding that seems to fall outside even Nietzsche and Heidegger's frameworks. In the survival of the couple's love for one another lies the last possibility of rebellion. Thus, in their love's destruction, and their portrayal after the events one sees that any possibility of talking, thinking or acting rebelliously is destroyed.

[81] We are instilled with many pre-judices (bodily and cognitive) that incline us to whom we want as a partner. Whether tall, short, blonde, dark, or whatever other permutation, factors from our horizons play a role in this, although I do not reduce our choices to the factors outlined by Gadamer.

level. After all, O'Brien's torture of Winston involves a large degree of verbal reconditioning which reforms his subjectivity to some degree. But Winston is still able to retain some form of rebellion until the final rat scene. At this moment the bond Winston shares with Julia is completely broken by the Party because his instinct for physical self-preservation outweighs his love for her. There is also a power relation: he would rather have Julia tortured because otherwise it will be done to him – power is doing to others before they do to you. The warning O'Brien gives at the beginning of the torture becomes a reality – O'Brien says: "When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will" (*1984*:267) and "We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves" (*1984*:269). The need for self-preservation which overwhelms Winston thus appears to be the reason behind the Party's continued existence, since in the moment when Winston can think only of preserving himself, he is filled with the Party. Winston, in that moment of absolute terror, loses what Orwell portrays as the last ounce of what can stand against the Party, love. As pre-understanding, love is shown to have the capacity to maintain a seditious capacity, but absolute self-preservation replaces love and Winston becomes wholly part of the Party. The apparent "love" he feels for Big Brother in the last sentence of the novel is thus, paradoxically, love for himself.

In conclusion, Julia's and Winston's respective subjectivities are portrayed in ways that emphasise the role of their environment and their bodies in the construction of their subjectivity. The depiction of their rebellion, which, due to the magnitude of the Party's control, illustrates that their rebellion begins with a pre-understanding that is immanent to them through their being-in-the-world and their part-biological, part-social evolutionary urges and instincts. For Orwell, in many ways, this understanding is prior to our somewhat more cognitive understanding, due to the extreme measures that must be taken in order to effect measures of control. Winston's surrendering of his mind nonetheless still allows him to harbour rebellious tendencies in his pre-understanding. As I indicated earlier, the conditions required to control the ability to understand via the body or through our being-in-the-world must be far more terrifying than those that limit history, language and dialogue. This is borne out by the fact that Winston's final capitulation is marked by the threat of torture that destroys his pre-understanding, because his fear of rats is instinctual, just as his love

for Julia is, but his sense of self-preservation ultimately "squeezes out" that love, and with it, the last element of a subjectivity that might enable him to show resistance.

4.3.2 Bernard, Helmholtz and Lenina

Whereas in *1984* rebellion has the opportunity to manifest itself through the pre-understanding of the characters because the Party cannot adequately control their pre-understanding, in *BNW* large sections of the novel are dedicated to the elucidation of the systems of control that focus specifically on effecting a desired subjectivity through the manipulation of the body.[82] In the first two chapters there is an exposition of the Bokanovskification process by which humans are "decanted" instead of born. Only in the third chapter of the novel are we introduced to some of the central characters, in Huxley's rapid montage-like juxtaposition of different scenes. Its overall effect is to make us aware that the characters themselves seem to play second fiddle to the larger discussion of societal control. At the heart of the novel is the conflict between individuals and their incorporation into the social body. Normally, a novel's exposition provides background on the characters as protagonists, but Huxley suggests, through this irregular introduction, that the characters can be summarized through the elucidation of the processes that shape them as "a cell in the social body", as Bernard Marx puts it (*BNW*:78). Importantly, this process is predominantly biological and neuropharmacological.[83]

When viewed in light of Nietzsche's ideas regarding subjectivity, Huxley's introduction is shocking, perhaps even more terrifying than the systems of control of *1984*. Because subjectivity is effected and limited at such a basic level, even prior to the linguistic and social manipulation that one sees in *1984*, it becomes virtually impossible to enunciate rebellion. As the Director of Hatcheries shouts:

> 'Hasn't it ever occurred to you that an Epsilon embryo must have an Epsilon environment as well as an Epsilon heredity?' […] 'The lower the caste […] the

[82] In the exposition of the novel we are not introduced to the characters of the novel. According to Freytag's (1890) Pyramid, the exposition "consists of early material providing the theme, establishing the setting, and *introducing the major characters and sometimes early hints of the coming conflict*" (cited in Wheeler, 2014; my emphasis).

[83] Although the drug *soma* does not form a central part of this discussion, it is an additional means through which citizens of these dystopias can be controlled. Hickman (2009:156) also notes that for "Huxley, pharmacological satisfaction of superficial pleasure threatens to subvert the urge toward spiritual enlightenment". I would not liken Helmholtz's and Bernard's rebellion to spiritual enlightenment, but this added hurdle can possibly impede other characters' rebellion.

> shorter the oxygen.' The first organ affected was the brain. After that the skeleton. At seventy per cent of normal oxygen you got dwarfs. At less than seventy, eyeless monsters. (*BNW*:11)

The process being described depicts how the embryos are subjected to specific treatments in order to produce in a certain class certain characteristics that are beneficial to the State, and even more specifically in a certain occupation. On top of this, the characters are also bombarded with neuropharmacological reinforcements in the form of *soma*, hormones to increase their libido, and simultaneously to control fertility. The biological programming described in this scene illustrates Hickman's (2009:164) claim that drug dystopias "served as vehicles for their authors to warn about the utility of pharmacology to tyranny either by the reduction of entire populations to docility or by assaults on the integrity of individual minds". This is compounded by the use of hypnopaedia and operant conditioning. How does the possibility of rebellion present itself when these characters do not have the capacity to rebel, since they are biologically programmed and drugged to adhere to a certain set of rules?

The character Bernard Marx provides a possible answer to this question. Fanny makes the comment that "'somebody made a mistake when he was still in the bottle – thought he was a Gamma and put alcohol into his blood-surrogate. That's why he's so stunted'" (*BNW*:39). Alphas, as Mustapha Mond explains, "are capable (within limits) of making a free choice and assuming responsibilities" (*BNW*:195). They are still conditioned, but because of his stunted growth, Bernard's interaction with the social body he is a part of, and with the world at large, is vastly different from that of other Alphas. Thus, his rebellious tendencies are in a sense predestined through his physical make-up, much like the destinies of other citizens decanted for specific roles. Importantly, the shape of his rebellion is not predetermined, but due to his bodily pre-understanding, his rebelliousness becomes verbal as it develops. In a similar sense as Winston's rebellion, his rebelliousness comes in the form of an increasing awareness of his own individuality. The narrator explains that Bernard is subjected to mockery due to his diminutive stature, and it "made him feel an outsider; and feeling an outsider he behaved like one, which increased the prejudice against him and intensified the contempt and hostility aroused by his physical defects" (*BNW*:55-56).

Helmholtz's individuality has a different quality. Whereas Bernard's arises from his physical defects, Helmholtz is described as follows:

> 'Able,' was the verdict of his superiors. 'Perhaps' (and they would shake their heads, would significantly lower their voices) 'a little *too* able.'
>
> Yes, a little too able; they were right. A mental excess had produced in Helmholtz Watson effects very similar to those which, in Bernard Marx, were the result of physical defect. Too little bone and brawn had isolated Bernard from his fellow men, and the sense of his apartness, being, by all the current standards, mental excess, became in its turn a cause of wider separation. That which made Helmholtz so uncomfortably aware of being himself and all alone was too much ability. (*BNW*:57-58)

The narrator seems to equate Bernard's and Helmholtz's individuality and one can say that the effects are similar, but the paths down which their self-awareness takes them are vastly different. At the end of the novel Bernard begs to be forgiven by Mustapha Mond for his transgressions, whereas Helmholtz accepts his punishment and in fact asks to be sent to the Falkland Islands, because, as he says, "'I should like a thoroughly bad climate, […] I believe one would write better if the climate were bad. If there were a lot of wind and storms for example…'" (*BNW*:201). It appears that his quest to explore his individuality is far more advanced than Bernard's.

Two paragraphs can be used to compare the subjectivities of Bernard and Helmholtz. For Bernard, it is this previously mentioned passage:

> 'I want to look at the sea in peace,' he said. 'One can't even look with that beastly noise going on.'
>
> 'But it's lovely. And I don't want to look.'
>
> 'But I do,' he insisted. 'It makes me feel as though…' he hesitated, searching for words with which to express himself, 'as though I were more me, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely a part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body. Doesn't it make you feel like that, Lenina?'
>
> But Lenina was crying. 'It's horrible, it's horrible,' she kept repeating. 'And how can you talk like that about not wanting to be part of the social body? After all, everyone works for everyone else. We can't do without anyone, Even Epsilons….'
>
> 'Yes I know,' said Bernard derisively. '"Even Epsilons are useful"! So am I. and I damned well wish I weren't!' (*BNW*:78)

For Helmholtz, the following passage is important:

> Helmholtz shook his head. 'Not quite. I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it – only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of the power. If there was some different way of writing … Or else something else to write about …' He was silent; then, 'You see,' he went on at last, 'I'm pretty good at inventing phrases – you know, the sort of words that suddenly make you jump, almost as though you'd sat on a pin, they seem so new and exciting even though they're about

> something hypnopaedically obvious. But that doesn't seem enough. It's not enough for the phrases to be good; what you make with them ought to be good too.' (*BNW*:59-60)

When viewed side-by-side, these two passages allow important conclusions regarding the two men's individuality and its relation to their subjectivities.

Firstly, Bernard's individuality is largely reactionary: his sense of individuality, although it originates from his physical make-up, is always in relation to the opinions of others, which inform his pre-understanding. Unlike Helmholtz's sense of individuality, which attempts to understand itself further, Bernard's does not appear to come from such a strong sense of pre-understanding which is purposefully widened, which is perhaps why he falters in his resignation to explore his individuality further. Bernard's exclamation that he damned well wishes he were not so useful would stand in contrast to Helmholtz's exclamation that he needs to find his own use to make a greater contribution to himself and society.

Secondly, Helmholtz's individuality goes beyond the stage of merely feeling, which corresponds to what Atkins (2001:71) identifies as Nietzsche's focus in the claim that consciousness or subjectivity can be seen in our urges and instincts. Instead, Helmholtz is now looking for a language with which to express these views (and ethical uses for them) and is impeded by the language he has inherited. This is significant since he is beginning to move into Gadamer's framework of subjectivity, which now appears to be a direct corollary to Nietzsche and Heidegger's (in a sense, their frameworks are being depicted as being antecedents to Gadamer's).

Finally, subjectivity is something that cannot be entirely controlled. There is no suggestion of any flaws in Helmholtz's decanting process, and yet he develops a sense of individuality. In fact, the same happened to Mustapha Mond, but he chose to remain in the service of the State. But although both men are prime examples of the Alpha decanting process, there is still an intrinsic quality in them that leads to the development of subjectivity, apart from that induced by the controlling mechanisms of the World State. It does, however, also appear that subjectivity requires certain conditions in order for a person to manifest a sense of independence, which Huxley

deems vital for humanity. There are biological conditions that must be met to allow for higher thinking to occur.

Lenina's character adds to this conclusion. The reason is that she is unconventional in many ways. For instance, she is attracted to Bernard and she "has" one man for several months, instead of having sex with several men. Her friend Fanny complains: "'Of course there's no need to give him up. Have somebody else from time to time, that's all'" (*BNW*:35). Lenina is also highly attracted to John, even though he resists having sex with her. Her "deviant sexual conduct" (not behaving with complete promiscuity) has all the makings of creating a sense of individuality, especially in the same reactionary way that Bernard's sense of individuality originates. But in most aspects she is still highly conventional: she does not enjoy being alone, she enjoys all the consumerist activities that the World State advocates, and she also adheres to the ideas of the social body.

Horan (2007:331) makes the following claim:

> But in *Brave New World*, associations between sex and freedom have been almost completely eradicated. Since desire is always potentially anarchic, it is eliminated through genetic engineering, conditioning, drugs, and hypnotic influence. Sex is reduced to the physical act itself. The idea is that when people get all the sex they want without any effort or exertion, sexuality is thoroughly desublimated. *No concept of liberty or individuality can arise from lust because the constant gratification of sexual impulses precludes the hopes, ambitions, and desires which arise from the deferment of consummation*. By making sex so easily and continuously available, the government fosters complacency and people become content with a public pleasure system that doles out orgasms like meal tickets. The political applications of desire are castrated. (my emphasis)

With Horan's ideas in mind, Lenina's sexuality should actually create a sense of liberty and individuality in her, since her sexual desires for John are not immediately gratified. And yet this is not the case. Till the end of the novel she does not possess any true sense of individuality, although Lenina does appear to be somewhat different from Fanny. This might be because Lenina, who is a Beta, has been subjected to greater conditioning than Bernard, Helmholtz and Mond, who are Alphas. From a purely speculative perspective then, Lenina appears to be caught between her greater conditioning and a sense of individualism that forms in the same way that Helmholtz's and Mond's individuality do – although it cannot flourish like theirs, due to her conditioning.

When looking at Huxley's overall portrayal of subjectivity, it seems that Lenina is limited by her specific pre-understanding. Lenina is a Beta Plus and not an Alpha like Bernard, Mustapha and Helmholtz. Although the precise limitations that are imposed on the Beta caste are not given, one can assume that they are not as cognitively capable as the Alphas, and when compared to the Alpha characters we know the most about (Bernard, Mustapha Mond, Helmholtz and the Director of Hatcheries), this does appear to be the case. Horan's argument thus does hold for the characters that have the capacity to act on the various and complex stimuli that effect a sense of individuality. But due to the limitations imposed on the pre-understanding of characters such as Lenina, these characters cannot be considered as *Dasein* because of their inability to consider their own being. The enunciation of rebellion for a character such as Lenina thus does not seem to be possible. Huxley's depiction of subjectivity suggests the criteria that need to be in place for the characters to be capable, first of all, of developing a sense of individuality which leads into a construction of subjectivity, which in turn is required to act rebelliously.

The form rebellion takes is also noteworthy. In a world where physical pain and even emotional pain have been largely eliminated, the one way in which one can rebel is through experiencing discomfort. In *1984* one sees the opposite, since Winston and Julia attempt to create a little happiness and comfort for themselves, and try to evade physical pain. In a way then, Huxley is saying that constant pleasure can be just as unnerving and disconcerting as constant discomfort. Huxley's portrayal of this discomfort-inducing pleasure is seen primarily in Helmholtz and John. Although Bernard is a rebellious character, his rebellion is of a different nature since he is ostracised from the beginning of his life and this leads him to a sense of individuality. As soon as he receives the sort of attention he likes, he takes full pleasure in what his world has to offer him.

Early in the novel, Helmholtz says the following:

> But what on earth's the good of being pierced by an article about a Community Sing, or the latest improvement in scent organs? Besides, can you make words really piercing – you know, like the very hardest X-rays – when you're writing about that sort of thing? Can you say something about nothing? That's what it finally boils down to, I try and I try . . . (*BNW*:60)

Interestingly, for Helmholtz saying something worthwhile is associated with "piercing" which has the overt connotation of pain. This ties his idea of rebellion to that of John. As an example, consider the following exchange between John and Mond:

> 'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'
> 'All right, then,' said the Savage defiantly, 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'
> 'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'
> There was a long silence.
> 'I claim them all,' said the Savage at last.
> Mustapha shrugged his shoulders. 'You're welcome,' he said. (*BNW*:212)

John's insistence that he has the right to be unhappy distinguishes unhappiness from a category of understanding. It is a right that he has, rather than an element of his understanding. But considering that for Helmholtz his desire to feel pain is part of his attempt to assert his individuality, pain can be seen as something that aids in defining a person as an individual. Remember that in *1984* pain is also what separates characters from one another. In Orwell's world, pain is used in an extreme sense to create individuals that are cordoned off. But in *BNW*, because pain has been removed, each individual (if one can call the citizens in "Civilization" that) is just a cell in the social body. Therefore, pain, or the right to feel pain, is a necessary precondition for individuality, although it can be used to fence off individuals from one another.

John's appropriation of tragic drama, such as Shakespeare's *King Lear*, in his discussion with Mond illustrates the value of pain. This is especially true if one considers the role of catharsis in tragedy. Regardless of which side one is on regarding the debate of whether catharsis happens within the play or if the audience also experiences it, it is the fact that pain plays a role in catharsis that is important. In a world of saturated appetites, pain might be impossible, but that also implies that its opposite, pleasure, is not truly attainable either. Only by having the contrasts that highlight each other can either truly be perceived. As John explains: 'Are you quite sure that the Edmund [from *King Lear*] in that pneumatic chair hasn't been just as heavily punished as the Edmund who's wounded and bleeding to death? The gods are just. Haven't they used his pleasant vice as an instrument to degrade him?' (*BNW*:208).

Mustapha does not agree with this conclusion at all and his final ambiguous words to John, "'You're welcome'" (*BNW*:212), may shed some light on this debate. Mustapha does not say "you're welcome to something" which would imply John can claim all the unpleasant things he wants. Mustapha's words can thus be interpreted as simply a dismissive, slightly ironic, conventional formula to end the conversation since he does not have an answer to the right to be subjected to unpleasantness. This would also why he ships dissident members of society to remote parts of the world. After all, the World State is predicated on providing each caste with the pleasures its members are conditioned for. Whatever the case, Huxley is illustrating the importance of a balance of pleasure and pain in being an individual. In terms of subjectivity then, pain can be seen as forming part of our being-in-the-world. Helmholtz also feels the need for it instinctually, which thus suggests that pain forms part of our pre-understanding. This is not something that either Nietzsche or Heidegger specifically mentions, but Huxley's portrayal appears convincing.

4.4 CONCLUSION

As I have shown, rebellion forms a central part in the novels. Its existence, as discussed in Chapters 1 to 3, should be impossible in terms of Gadamer's framework of subjectivity. Rebellion's presence in the novels suggests that some understandings operative in the novel fall outside Gadamer's framework and allow for rebellion to be enunciated. These can be found in the bodily pre-understandings elucidated by Nietzsche and Heidegger. Indirectly then, the novels can be said to critique the formal framework of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

Orwell's portrayal emphasises the sexual and environmental causes that relate to one's sense of individuality, bodily understanding and the consequences to them if left unchecked in a society that hopes to control its subjects absolutely. Regardless of how effective other systems of controlling subjectivity are, one's pre-understandings will allow for a seditious tendency, or at least the ability to understand sedition, but also offer a possibility to overcome resistance. Similarly, Orwell also maintains, through the portrayal of Winston's torture, that love should be seen as a form of pre-understanding. The desires, needs and actions that love

effects work towards love's own outcomes and not towards those of the systems of control. Once love has been channelled toward the Party, as one sees at the end of the novel, control is complete.

Huxley takes a slightly different approach. For him individuality is central to subjectivity and there have to be certain biological factors in place for individuality and thus subjectivity to be possible. A certain level of cognitive ability must be in place. Those who do not possess this faculty cannot truly become aware of their own subjectivity. In addition to this, the portrayal of Bernard's individuality also shows how something that sets one apart can create a sense of individuality. But it is in Helmholtz's and John's rebellion and resistance that Huxley depicts his true view on what ought to be in place in order for a stronger sense of individuality than Bernard possesses to be possible, namely, the desire for the right to feel pain. Bernard experiences pain and does not wish for it. Helmholtz only experiences pleasure and wishes to find a balance in his life. Both he and John demand the right to experience pain because an excess of pleasure devalues pleasure. In a sense, their search is for pleasure, because only by feeling pain is a backdrop provided against which pleasure can be experienced and appreciated.

Thus, although the novels differ in their approaches to rebellion, both depict worlds that emphasise the centrality of the possibility of resistance whenever systems of control are placed on citizens. These dystopian texts, in their respective portrayals of subjectivity thus illustrate themes, motifs, characterisations, images, metaphors and various artistic techniques that fall outside of politico-historical and biographical readings. Their richness and complexity thus deserve readings that take cognisance of their status as works of art, rather than simply as texts that fall within the dystopian genre. Just as rebellion would have been impossible if Gadamer's framework of subjectivity were holistic in its description of what effects understanding, this analysis would have been impossible if only politico-historical and biographical readings of dystopian fiction are possible. My analysis thus illustrates that like pre-understandings, which allow for the enunciation of rebellion, other readings can rebel against the "systems of control" in place regarding dystopian criticism.

CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION

> [T]he meaning created by the author of a work itself depends on the horizon of meanings within which it was produced. This hermeneutic context is always much richer than the author can comprehend. It is this all-encompassing horizon of language and meaning, rather than the author's intentions, which ultimately determines meanings. (West 1996:112)

> We do not read novels simply in order to admire the artistry, the aesthetic unity displayed but also because we wish to learn about the world, about ourselves, about our perceptions and judgments. (Ferns, 1980:17)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate portrayals of subjectivity in selected novels of dystopian fiction, illustrating that criticism other than politico-historical and biographical readings is possible. In order to achieve this, several interrelated questions were posed and subsequently investigated with particular reference to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The main questions were as follows: Firstly, what is Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics? Secondly, in what ways are subjectivity portrayed and explored in *1984* and *BNW*? Do the novels differ in their portrayal of subjectivity and the "constructedness" of subjectivity? Thirdly, can rebellion, in a very broad sense, exist (in an equally broad sense) when the manipulation of subjectivity and control over the subject is taken as far as it is portrayed to go in the novels? Finally, can literature, in the form of these two novels, be seen to critique or inform the ideas, theories and models of formal frameworks of knowledge such as philosophy? The main findings to these questions are summarised below.

5.2 MAIN FINDINGS

Chapter 1 opened with an explanation of Gadamer's claim that our experience of our existence and our world "constitute a truly hermeneutic universe" (*TM*:xxiii). This implies that our experience of history, tradition, nature, our existence – in short, all of our being – is underpinned by hermeneutic understanding. The chapter went on to explain that in Gadamer's terms, subjectivity is not "just being subjective" but is actually the range of what can be understood, given one's own fore-understandings,

or pre-judices. The chapter also briefly discussed the genre of dystopian fiction and explained that thus far the genre has mostly elicited criticism that has focused on the politico-historical and biographical connections discernible in the texts. However, dystopian fiction's limited focus on the portrayal and characterisation of societies, rather than only individuals, makes it possible to analyse the societal constructs that Gadamer deems necessary in effecting subjectivity critically in these novels. Most of the chapter focused on explicating Gadamer's work concept of philosophical hermeneutics as a framework for discussing subjectivity. In this explication, three central themes in Gadamer's work were identified, namely history, language, and dialogue, and these provided a structure for my analysis of the novels. These three pillars of the construct of subjectivity were explained in Gadamer's terms. History was shown to be an enabling process that is active in the formation of new understandings, and that is added to through these new understandings. Language was shown to be the medium through which the pre-judices that are shaped through tradition and history are carried through time and to various geographical locations. Dialogue was shown to be an active process that requires reciprocity for the interlocutors to come to new understandings in a *Horizontverschmelzung*.

Chapter 2 opened with an explanation of a semblance of spirit between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Huxley's polemics. This suggests that the *Zeitgeist* that permeated Huxley's time elicited ideas in Huxley similar to those of Gadamer, due to influences from thinkers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger. I explained that it is a semblance of spirit that I traced here, and that I do not claim that there is direct influence, since it is unlikely that there were channels of direct influence between the two. Gadamer's ideas were also shown to be necessarily more nuanced, since he was exposed to more sophisticated horizons, because he wrote later than Huxley.

The remainder of Chapter 2 was dedicated to an analysis of Huxley's *Brave New World* in terms of Gadamer's framework. The division of the chapter into the three predominant themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (history, language and dialogue) allowed for a detailed analysis, focusing on each element of subjectivity in turn.

History, in Gadamer's sense, was shown to be largely absent from Huxley's dystopian world. It can be argued that the hypnopaedia the citizens are subjected to, as well as various other forms of indoctrination, can be seen as a mutation of history: this "history" does not contain the life-affirming and empowering characteristics that Gadamer identifies as essential to understanding. Instead, these forms of control are limiting because they only allow for a recital of phrases and "understandings" that do not open up the citizens of Huxley's dystopian World State to further understanding.

Language was shown to be similarly devoid of any enabling capacity. The fact that language that is highly metaphorical and idiomatic, such as quotations from Shakespeare, is considered absurd in the context of the World State highlights the degeneration and impoverishment of the language used in World State. This further emphasises the limitation of subjectivity in the novel, because, according to Gadamer's framework, language is central to the creation of new understandings.

The state of language as depicted in *BNW* also creates difficulties when it comes to dialogue, because there are vast chasms between what the characters can actually speak about and their (largely inexpressible and therefore undefined) experience. A conversation between Bernard and John (see Section 2.5) highlights this difficulty. Because of the chasm between the two characters in terms of their horizons, their conversation is limited to general claims or latching onto statements that apply to themselves. Bernard's emphasis on himself illustrates how limited their dialogue is.

Chapter 3 began by detailing similarities between Orwell's polemic and Gadamer's work. The discussion focused on Orwell's "A good word for the Vicar of Bray" (Orwell, [1946a] 1950), "Politics and the English language" (Orwell, [1946b] 1957), "Politics *vs* literature: An examination of *Gulliver's Travels*" (Orwell, [1946c] 1957), "The prevention of literature" (Orwell, [1946d] 1957), and "Why I write" (Orwell, 1946e:1). In addition to these essays, *1984* was also discussed due to the largely political focus in Orwell's polemic. For this part of the discussion, the focus was on the role of language in the construction of subjectivity (especially in the form of the Appendix on Newspeak), Winston's work in the Ministry of Truth and the Party's quest to bring history up to date (which shows an awareness of how history can be

used to manipulate subjectivity), and lastly, the state and amount of dialogue in the novel (its sparseness was shown to be a feature of Orwell's style).

Chapter 3 followed the same pattern of analysis as Chapter 2, also looking at the three predominant themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The analysis revealed marked differences between Huxley's *BNW* and Orwell's *1984*. It seems that Orwell's depiction of history and its role in the construction of subjectivity is more nuanced than that of Huxley, probably because Orwell wrote at a time when people had had more exposure to the constructs central to philosophical hermeneutics than Huxley had, and Orwell could draw on his first-hand experience of the mechanisms of totalitarian propaganda during World War II. Consequently, Orwell depicts the Party's de- and re-construction of history as a sophisticated system in which history is constantly "brought up to date". It was shown how this effects a kind of amnesia in the characters. This results in Winston's becoming less and less able to rely on collective history, or even on his own attempts to reconstruct his own personal history. These attempts ultimately fail and have to be abandoned.

In terms of language, my analysis showed that the project of Newspeak, which attempts to destroy the user's ability to refer to the ontological world, fails because of the difficulties of fixing language in a controlled system. Members of the Party continue to use metaphorical and idiomatic language, although, admittedly, characters in the Party, such as Syme, display far *less* of the metaphorical and idiomatic language found in characters whose actions are not so strictly controlled, such as the proles. Chapter 3 also showed how, in order to fully adopt the language of the Party, a schism needs to occur in the mind, because of how different the Party's language is from how language normally operates.

The Party's control extends primarily into the control of dialogue. The characters are fenced off from one another and cannot fully articulate their inner thoughts, given the danger they might face if they were to do so. Orwell's writing displays a remarkable relation between form and function in this context, because his limitation of dialogue in the novel, and his use of a narrative that occurs largely within Winston's mind (although not a true stream of consciousness) allows the reader to follow and "experience" the plot, not allowing a dissonance to creep in. Ultimately the torture of

Winston reveals the Party's conception of "dialogue" – it does not have the qualities Gadamer deems essential to subjectivity, namely equality of the interlocutors, a focus on the subject matter and openness. Therefore it is not true dialogue.

These discussions led to my discussion of the possibility of resistance or rebellion in the novels in Chapter 4. Given the various systems of control present in the novels, rebellion should not have been possible, because these systems largely address the aspects of subjectivity identified by Gadamer. Therefore, an additional framework was needed. I chose Nietzsche and Heidegger because of their influence on Gadamer and because of their emphasis on the bodily and worldly aspects of our subjectivity, which is quite different from Gadamer's emphasis on subjectivity's historical and linguistic aspects.

Huxley and Orwell portray rebellion in different ways. I found that in both *BNW* and *1984*, sexuality plays an important role. Sexuality was shown to be a *catalyst* in the characters' rebellion, rather than something that precedes political awareness, as in Horan's conception of sexuality in dystopian novels. Therefore, I described sexuality as a "nucleation site" of rebellion. The analysis suggested that sexuality appears to have an effecting quality that is similar to Gadamer's discussion of history, language, and dialogue in subjectivity – through the exploration of their own and each other's sexuality, the characters come to greater understandings of their rebellion.

The characters' involvement in their world in the form of physical spaces and the experience of pain and suffering evokes in them a certain subjectivity, in terms of Heidegger's framework. If these elements in pre-understanding (physical spaces and pain) are disallowed, or are taken to an extreme, they can have disastrous consequences for subjectivity, as in the case of John. An interesting conclusion that can be drawn from the two novels is that love (in *1984*) and pain (in *BNW*) are vital aspects in a balanced, well-formed, empowered and free subjectivity.

In conclusion, in many senses, the two novels appear to be in a dialogue with one another. In *1984* pain is used to subjugate its citizens, while *BNW*'s portrayal of John and Helmholtz shows how pain, and the feeling of something other than hedonistic pleasure, is a necessary part of subjectivity. Orwell's portrayal is particularly

interesting, since he begins to illustrate how the love between two people, Winston and Julia, can be superseded under extreme conditions with a love for self. In that moment, in Winston's and Julia's torture, the extreme need for self-preservation is the same self-love that the Party has, and as a consequence, Winston's love for himself in effect means love for the Party. The complexity of these two novels is far richer than politico-historical and biographical readings have hitherto suggested. Hence, the lenses to be used in analysing texts in the dystopian genre need to be similarly diverse.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the Gadamerian framework used to analyse the texts is by no means exhaustive, as I have briefly shown in the use of Nietzsche and Heidegger to supplement this framework. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is not a holistic framework, but I have used it to illustrate how literature can be seen to critique philosophy. There are many other and different frameworks of subjectivity available, ranging from Enlightenment frameworks all the way through to modern conceptions such as those of Jung,[84] Strawson, Foucault[85] and others. However, none of these frameworks can ever be considered truly holistic, since subjectivity is a diverse topic. Thus, it would be possible to undertake an analysis similar to mine using one of these various frameworks of subjectivity, or another combination of them, and similarly, it is also possible that those frameworks can in turn be informed by literature. Therefore, various philosophical lenses can be applied to literature, which is in effect what the dissertation attempted to show.

Because Gadamer's framework was the predominant framework used, many aspects of subjectivity have not been addressed fully. The main focus was on history, language and dialogue, as defined by Gadamer. However, it may also be possible to use a framework comprised of, for instance, just Nietzsche's thought, and

[84] Jung's idea of the universal of the collective unconscious such as those explained in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* ([1960] 1970) can also be used to supplement Gadamer's framework of subjectivity.
[85] A reading of the techniques of surveillance and coercion used in terms of Foucault's such as those explained in *Madness and Civilization* ([1967] 2005) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ([1975] 2012) would also be a useful avenue to pursue.

thus to consider in similar detail the various aspects of our part biological, part social-evolutionary urges and instincts. Something similar could be done from a perspective of *Dasein* and of being-in-the-world, which illustrates the richness of the novels.

Despite my argument in Section 1.4.1 that a text goes beyond the intention of the author, dystopian fiction remains a genre in which the intention of the author plays an integral role in the text's construction. After all, as Sisk (2005:1) says, dystopias "are solely fictional, presenting grim, oppressive societies—with the moralistic goal of preventing the horrors they illustrate". These grim societies are logical extensions of problems the authors found in their own social milieus – these problems were very personal to the authors, and worried them, leading them to extend their warnings in the first place. Thus, my study focuses on expanding the number of interpretations one can bring to dystopian fiction, and my argument does in a sense go to an extreme to point out what is possible in reading the genre. But this implies that my argument may *also* miss out on some of the rich interpretations possible from politico-historical and biographical interpretations (such as the prior studies cited in this study).

Perhaps the most important criticism that can be levelled at this study is the fact that it uses only two examples of dystopian fiction. In a genre that boasts many excellent novels, the study could have been expanded to novels such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Zamyatin's *We*, Ray Bradbury *Fahrenheit 451* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*. Aside from the limitations imposed on the scope of an MA dissertation, the choice to include only *BNW* and *1984*, as two well-known examples of dystopian fiction, was consciously taken, because if the argument holds that subjectivity can be analysed in detail, showing that interpretations other than the politico-historical and biographical are possible in the genre, then it is likely that the method or the idea can be extended to other examples of the genre as well. This limitation offers opportunities for further research. The chance to analyse subjectivity in other dystopian novels and then to compare their portrayals can form a large body of research.

The concept of being historically effected can also be fruitfully combined with biographical readings and reader reception studies. These necessarily fell outside of

the scope of the current study. However, the brief illustration of Orwell's pre-judices formed in his writing of the poem, "A happy vicar I might have been", and the pre-judices' re-appropriation in "Why I write" shows the possibilities of such readings. Additionally, although it again fell outside of the scope of the study, reader reception studies that consider, for instance, heteronormativity and Western constructions of relationships are likely to yield interesting results.

In effect, all the limitations I have discussed are opportunities in terms of further research that can be conducted, which hopefully adds to my argument that dystopian fiction creates more opportunities for interpretation than purely politico-historical and biographical readings allow (and such interpretations can be fruitfully combined with analyses of subjectivity).

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Gadamer's remark cited at the very beginning of this study that the "way we experience one another, the way we experience historical traditions, the way we experience the natural givenness of our existence and of our world, constitute a truly hermeneutic universe, in which we are not imprisoned, as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened" (*TM*:xxiii) has been shown to shed a new light on a genre that dates back hundreds of years. So to answer the question of what happens to subjectivity when our hermeneutic experiences are hampered in severe ways, as it is in the worlds in Huxley's and Orwell's dystopian novels, it seems that, as in some neurophysiological studies of the brain, "damage" to certain aspects of the construction of subjectivity reveals how subjectivity is structured. The inability to speak of the world in meaningful ways due to mechanisms of societal control seems to reveal what is missing in terms of subjectivity in these societies, in the same way that damage to Broca's region in the brain reveals where grammar is stored. Sisk's (1997:1) claim that dystopias "are solely fictional, presenting grim, oppressive societies—with the moralistic goal of preventing the horrors they illustrate" thus appears to be only the beginning of what dystopian fiction can teach the general public, literary scholars, philosophers and, importantly, our politicians. *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with their accessible register, lively characters, and memorable dystopian portrayals, provide a complex, sophisticated and nuanced

depiction of the horrors that human beings can inflict upon one another. But at the same time, in the subtle glimpses of hope that we see in the characters' rebellion, we realise that the tenacity of the individual spirit is nearly indestructible. The individual, with the individual's own unique horizon, subjectivity and perception of the world, despite all manipulation, is shown to be even more tenacious than any "boot stamping on a human face – for ever" (*1984*:280).

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