

Anna Geifman

## The Metaphysics of Orwell's Flawed Utopia

MANY SCHOLARLY ARTICLES and reviews have been written about George Orwell's novel, *1984*, since its initial publication fifty years ago. The book created an immediate sensation and provoked a torrent of diverse opinions. With the exception of a relatively small number of critics with leftist tendencies, who felt that Orwell had distorted the very essence of socialism, the novel made a tremendous impression on its readers. Some considered *1984* an amusing work of fantasy. Others viewed the novel as a distinct forewarning. Still others—as a prophecy that few took very seriously. It did not, of course, escape criticism for its “substance”: Orwell was reproached in particular for having given his characters such improbably short memories that under conditions of a totalitarian dictatorship they somehow too quickly lost all links with the past. However, in detailing the strengths and weaknesses of the novel, not many readers were able to assess the profound, almost metaphysical meaning and scope of this work. Fascinated by its utopian subject matter, few perceived that in addition to presenting a striking description of a society's existence in a totalitarian nightmare, Orwell, as a true artist, had attempted to penetrate the riddle of human personality, “inside” the soul, and wrote a book about what makes a man human—about the fragment of the Eternal in the soul that beckons to victory over human frailty and to immortality.

### Eternal Questions

The question of death and immortality is the central theme of the novel *1984*, above

all because, “death troubles all utopias except the religious.”<sup>1</sup> The Party or collective oligarchy that rules Oceania and is based on purely atheistic principles and the denial of higher spirituality, has established itself in the position of deity and object of worship. Only Big Brother, personifying the Party system, is supposed to be able to evoke from the people reverential trepidation and prayerful rapture: the little sandy-haired woman, “with a tremulous murmur that sounded like, ‘My Saviour!’ . . . extended her arms toward the screen. Then she buried her face in her hands. It was apparent that she was uttering a prayer” (17).<sup>2</sup>

Crushing and stigmatizing all manifestations of spiritual aspiration, the Party is nevertheless compelled to deal with the “eternal questions,” and to look for deliverance from aging, decay, and death outside of religion. And it finds this “nonspiritual salvation” in the repression and destruction of individual personality, in its total merging with the collective that composes the body of the Party itself. In its search for longevity, the Party employs in part the religious principle of the striving of each soul for the Whole, for the Beginning of All Beginnings, although, as opposed to religion, where immortality is victorious only through the individual and individual spirituality, the goal of the Party is to dissolve each “I” in a single organism, toward the preservation of which the Party directs all its strength.

Thus the question of the individual's immortality naturally becomes irrelevant: in

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accordance with Party doctrine, each person simply ceases to exist as any sort of independent personality and is transformed into a cell of the indestructible body of the Party. The collective does not suffer in the least from the deaths of individual people—easily replaced cells of its immortal organism. In the novel the doctrine of obliteration of the self for the sake of the Party's immortality is expressed by O'Brien—a prominent Party member and sincere adherent to its teachings:

Slavery is freedom. Alone—free—the human being is always defeated. It must be so, because every human being is doomed to die, which is the greatest of all failures. But if he can make complete, utter submission, if he can escape from his identity, if he can merge himself in the Party so that he is the Party, then he is all-powerful and immortal, (218)

since, as O'Brien continues:

... the death of the individual is not death.  
... The Party is immortal. (222)

Thus, under conditions of the total annihilation of all emotions, thoughts and desires not connected with the Party, and the absolute merging of individual personalities into a single whole, the Party is able to celebrate its victory over time and death. However,

the danger exists that if even one of its million healthy (from the point of view of the Party) cells were to "go out of its mind," "break down," become infected with the "cancer of individualism," it could threaten to metastasize and affect the entire organism. In order to establish absolute and eternal control, the Party should have found a means of combating the sickness corrupting it in advance, a method of curing the ailing cells and destroying the disease in embryo so that it could not recur. O'Brien tells Winston after the latter has been arrested for the horrendous crime of desiring to preserve his personal independence:

You are mentally deranged. . . . Shall I tell you why we have brought you here? To cure you! To make you sane! Will you understand, Winston, that no one whom we bring to this place ever leaves our hands uncured? (203, 209).

It is not appropriate to think, however, that people—the cells of the Party—are redeemed for their own good; the Great Inquisitor, who saves people from themselves, has nothing to do with this case. During one interrogation session, O'Brien punishes Winston for incorrectly understanding the true goals of the Party. Winston assumes O'Brien to be a fanatical idealist who sincerely believes, along with the Party,

that the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority. That it sought power because men in the mass were frail, cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth, and must be ruled over and systematically deceived by others who were stronger than themselves. That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was better. That the Party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come. . . . (216)

Actually, as O'Brien cynically acknowledges:

The Party seeks power entirely for its own



sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. . . . We are different from all the oligarchies of the past in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seized power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. (217)

Accordingly, concern for curing a person of himself is only the Party's concern about its own well-being, an attempt to eradicate the cancerous threat once and for all and ensure its own longevity.

#### A "Cure" for Individualism

The method the Party chose to employ in its struggle with individualism and independence from the collective will is called "directed reality," or "doublethink." By means of a long and tenacious training process, the Party reached the point at which the citizens of Oceania were conditioned not only to accept obediently everything presented to them (it would not prevent them from dissembling and secretly retaining their own independent viewpoint), but actually to see things in whatever light is most advantageous to the Party at a given moment:

To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget, whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it

was needed, and then promptly to forget it again, and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself—that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word "doublethink" involved the use of doublethink. (32–33)

Eventually people achieved remarkable success in directing reality. However, the teaching and constant practice of doublethink did not cease, but on the contrary increased. Gradually life was transformed into a minute by minute exercise in rejecting one's own will, views and feelings, memories and elementary logic.

In the novel Orwell cites numerous examples of doublethink, as inherent to the individual citizen of Oceania as to the crowd: a man who has become inconvenient to the Party is arrested, and after two days not only do his acquaintances no longer speak of him, they have actually forgotten that he ever existed (in the official language this is called "vaporization"); the chocolate ration is cut from thirty grams to twenty, and a day later, without the slightest pretense, people are grateful to the government for *increasing* the ration. Moments occur when with the help of doublethink thousands of people, as if under the influence of mass hypnotism, momentarily forget what they have been accustomed to believing for years:

On the sixth day of Hate Week, after the processions, the speeches, the shouting, the singing, the banners, the posters, the films, the waxworks, the rolling of drums and squealing of trumpets, the tramp of marching feet, the grinding of the caterpillars of tanks, the roar of massed planes, the booming of guns—after six days of this, . . . it had been announced that Oceania was not after all at war with Eurasia. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. . . . There was, of course, no admission that any change had taken place. Merely it became known, with extreme suddenness and everywhere at once, that Eastasia and not Eurasia was the enemy. . . . Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia. (148–149, 150)

No one experiences even the shadow of a doubt as to the truth of these words. It is as if human memory itself stands on the side of the Party lie. The same occurs with logic: the absolute contradictions contained in the basic Party slogans—"WAR IS PEACE," "FREEDOM IS SLAVERY," "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH,"—do not trouble people. These slogans are themselves a distinct exercise in doublethink, as is the fact that the Ministry directing the war is called the Ministry of Peace, and the building, terrifying even in its appearance, where torture is used to "cure" dissenters, is known as the Ministry of Love.

As a consequence of the constant exercise of doublethink, people lose all capacity to see things in their true light, but at the same time acquire "the ability to *believe* that black is white, and more, to *know* that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed to the contrary" (175). In such a case, when a man ceases independently to differentiate real things from unreal, good from evil, truth from lies, beauty from ugliness, and totally subordinates his mind, feelings and perceptions to the collective will, he loses that which makes him an individual personality, and becomes a robot, the mere shell of a man. This is indeed the goal of the Party, since this type of computer in human aspect cannot be infected with the cancer of individualism and craving for independence—the "I" in him, the element so mortally dangerous for the longevity of the collective, has already been crushed:

The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible, and glittering—a world of steel and concrete, of monstrous machines and terrifying weapons—a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting—three hundred million people all with the same face. (63-64)

#### The "Healing" Process

With an understanding of the principles of doublethink, it now becomes appropriate to

consider the question that Winston poses in his diary: "I understand *HOW*: I do not understand *WHY*." In other words, why is it necessary for the Party to use doublethink, forcing people to renounce their own ideas, values and desires?

The answer to this question must be sought in the basic ideology of the Party, in the doctrines it preaches, which O'Brien characterizes as "collective solipsism." In accordance with the Party's world view, nothing solid and objective exists on earth, just as there is no Higher Reason, Beauty or Justice superior to human consciousness: "'Outside man there is nothing'" (189). There is in the universe no such thing as The Beginning of the Beginnings and Higher Meaning, and only that which a man perceives in a given moment is true: "'Reality is inside the skull'" (218). A "great subjectivist," O'Brien sincerely believes that outside of man and his consciousness nothing exists, since everything in the world is relative and dependent on judgment: "'Nothing exists except through human consciousness'" (218).

However—and this is vitally important—having assimilated the ideology of relativism and subjectivity, the Party in its struggle to ensure the longevity of its authority announces that truth is only to be found in the *collective* consciousness: "'Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal'" (205). In accordance with its ideology, therefore, in order to safeguard its eternal power over the world, the Party must "simply" gain total control over a man, and dissolve his intellect in the collective consciousness, for by controlling minds, the Party obtains limitless power. Everything is subordinate to the Party: values, opinions, feelings, even natural law. The earth is neither round nor flat; it is whatever the Party finds convenient at a given moment. Ice is heavier than water, if it is in the Party's interest. O'Brien sets forth this Party principle with precise clarity: "'We control matter because we control the mind'" (218). This

is precisely why a tool such as doublethink is essential to the Party; with its help, after all, the Party has brought the entire world under its eternal control. And—it should again be emphasized—it is precisely ideology that compels the Party to set individual personality in opposition to the immortal and never-erring collective, obliterating all independence of consciousness and individual views of life.

There exist, however, in the words of O'Brien, "difficult cases" of the disease of individualism. Winston Smith is one such case: a strong personality with keen perceptions of the world around him. He categorically refuses to renounce his own "self," and dissolve into the healthy collective organism of the Party. O'Brien, however, who works on "curing" Winston, does not despair of success, and warns him: "No one whom we bring to this place ever stands out against us. Everyone is washed clean" (211). Some simply surrender sooner, and others later.

Here it is interesting to note that Winston's girlfriend, Julia, is broken amazingly quickly, according to O'Brien. Common and rather shallow, she nevertheless represents some danger to the monolith of the Party organism, in that even in her there is something personal and individual—her elemental femininity:

Life as she saw it was quite simple. You wanted a good time; 'they,' meaning the Party, wanted to stop you having it; . . . She hated the Party . . . but she made no general criticism of it. Except where it touched upon her own life she had no interest in Party doctrine. . . . Often she was ready to accept the official ideology, simply because the differences between truth and falsehood did not seem important to her (109, 127)

Julia resists the Party and defends her "self," that is, her freedom to derive pleasure from life. Winston wittily remarks to her once: "You're only a rebel from the waist downwards" (129). Even such a "self," however, is inimical to the collective; its presence threatens the group with decay. But

precisely because Julia has nothing to conceal, aside from her superficiality and dissipation, she presents the Party healers no particular difficulty. Her recovery is facilitated by her internal emptiness: the Party has only to destroy the womanliness in her, and Julia is no longer a separate personality. Yet another Party cell has been cleansed of disease, a feat of which O'Brien informs Winston with pride: "I have seldom seen anyone come over to us so promptly. . . . All her rebelliousness, her deceit, her folly, her



dirty-mindedness—everything has been burned out of her. It was a perfect conversion, a textbook case" (213-214).

Winston's case is not so simple. O'Brien's task consists of "cleansing" Winston's entire complex internal world, totally devastating his soul, so as then to fill the empty shell that had once been a man with "Party orthodoxy." Once the Party has completed the healing process, O'Brien tells Winston, "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" (211). And no matter how difficult the Party's task is in combatting such strong manifestations of potentially lethal individualism, O'Brien in the end succeeds in breaking Winston Smith. The same thing happens to him as to all who fall into the hands of the Party's healers: "By the time we had finished with them they were only the shells of men. There was nothing left in them except

sorrow for what they had done, and love of Big Brother' " (p. 211). Gradually and tormentedly Winston is saved from his "disease" and is received into the bosom of the Party, having yielded to the cure that heals the collective—and destroys him.

In the end, it does not matter whether they kill Winston in prison or release him; he has after all ceased to exist as a personality, having become for all time one of the numberless majority of totally healthy cells of the Party body: " 'And even if we chose to let you live out the natural term of your life, still you would never escape from us. . . . 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' " (211).

Thus the mortal danger threatening the longevity of the collective has been destroyed forever: by conquering the individual personality, the Party has achieved immortality. And its power, as O'Brien predicted, will exist forever, constantly gaining in strength, always more strongly and energetically suppressing man:

There will be no loyalty, except loyalty toward the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. . . . There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. . . . It will be a world of terror as much as a world of triumph. The more the Party is powerful, the less it will be tolerant; the weaker the opposition, the tighter the despotism. . . . If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever. (220, 221)

Before he is "cured," Winston constantly attempts in arguments with O'Brien to find the force that might overthrow the outwardly indestructible system that is deliberately creating hell on earth. Along with his hero, Orwell himself is seeking a way out, but does not find salvation. His novel is pro-

foundly pessimistic. It traces the gradual decay of a man, the final extreme of his humiliation and slow death (although in Winston's case it is not physical). The author draws a terrifying picture of the destruction of human nature and the beginning of the unthinkable, the eternal reign of the collective of healthy inhuman cell-people. Horrified by his own prophecy, Orwell attempts to find the path away from oblivion, but does not succeed, and ends the book with the total capitulation of man. To the end of his life the writer was unable to find the solution for himself; meanwhile, however, perhaps without knowing it, he had pointed it out in his novel.

#### Path to Oblivion

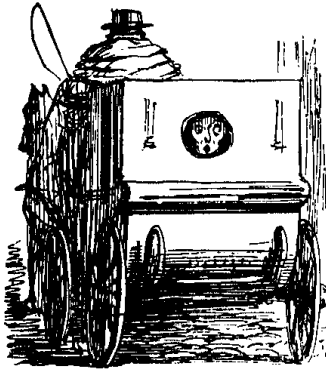
Worn out and overwhelmed by O'Brien's iron logic and the confident cynicism with which he discusses the final goals of the Party, Winston cries out helplessly: " 'You could not create such a world as you have just described. . . . Somehow you will fail. Something will defeat you. . . . I believe it. I know that you will fail. There is something in the universe—I don't know, some spirit, some principle—that you will never overcome' " (221, 222).

And then O'Brien poses the unavoidable question, " 'Do you believe in God, Winston?' " In this question is to be found the key to the novel. All relativism perishes in the face of true faith, all duality of morals, principles and values. Once the existence of a Higher Spirit is acknowledged, autonomous and not dependent on individual or collective perceptions, man himself and his subjective world recede into the background. There is a Higher Truth, standing above the narrowness of the human mind and horizon, and it exists in reality, independent of the ability of people to grasp it. There is a single foundation for this world, whether man likes it or not. There is a fundamental moral law underlying our existence, whether we accept or reject it. And had Winston answered affirmatively to the question of faith, then as if by magic the pseudo

powerful foundation of ideological subjectivism and relativity upon which the indestructible authority of the Party rested would have come crashing down.

The author of the novel *1984*, like his character O'Brien, instinctively recognizes the enemy of the Party and points it out to Smith. However, having done so, speaking through Winston, Orwell answers the question of faith in the negative, spurning belief and slamming the door on salvation. It is natural that for O'Brien, himself an integral part of the Party organism, the concept of "God" presents only a subjective danger, which, like all other sedition, it suffices to excise from the consciousness of men, in order to destroy it without a trace. But since O'Brien is himself no longer an individual personality, his opinion in this case is of no interest; the real tragedy is to be found in Winston's negative response, heralding the definitive victory of the Party over mankind.

Even before his arrest, Winston proves surprisingly vulnerable as a direct result of his disbelief. Joining the secret brotherhood



and declaring themselves enemies of Big Brother, he and Julia vow to employ any means to fight the authority they detest:

"You are prepared to commit murder?"

"Yes."

"To commit acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people?"

"Yes."

"To betray your country to foreign powers?"

"Yes."

"You are prepared to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases—to do anything which is likely to cause demoralization and weaken the power of the Party?"

"Yes."

"If, for example, it would somehow serve our interests to throw sulphuric acid in a child's face—are you prepared to do that?"

"Yes." (142)

No higher principles hinder Winston from promising to create evil for the sake of destroying what was to him the hateful dictatorship of the Party. And O'Brien (who himself, of course, knows no moral values other than those of the Party) is in general totally correct when he reminds Winston that morally he is no purer than the Party. The seductiveness of moral pluralism and the relativity of good and evil have already penetrated Winston's soul. His spiritual strength would have been drastically enhanced in the face of any temptation, had he possessed faith in a higher justice and an absolute morality.

Of no less importance is the fact that long before his "cure" in the cellars of the Ministry of Love, Winston had already begun to develop doubts as to the correctness of his convictions about objective facts and phenomena. He reflects: "... 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? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable—what then?" (69).

All the same, Winston fights the corrupting seductiveness of the official ideology with all his strength, but his lack of faith in an intellect higher than that of man prevents him from overcoming the logic of the Party. Thus, asserting that history itself is subordinate to the Party ("Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past"), O'Brien asks Smith: "Is

it your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence? . . . Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?" (204-205). And precisely because of his lack of faith Smith answers this question in the negative: the past, in his opinion, exists only in documents and in human memory, and, accordingly, is totally subordinate to the Party. In the end, Winston assimilates even the fundamental Party doctrine that all reality is subjective. His old way of thinking then seems to him to have been erroneous: "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" (229).

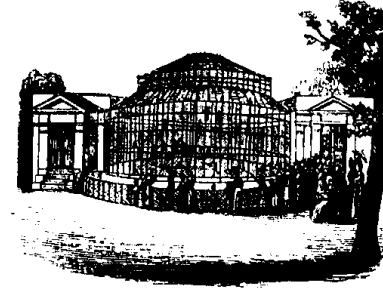
Moreover, Winston finally acknowledges that a free, independent man is always helpless and unavoidably makes mistakes; two plus two actually can equal five if at any given moment the collective consciousness of the Party decides it is so: "He had capitulated; that was agreed . . . the Party was in the right. . . . How could the immortal, collective brain be mistaken? By what external standard could you check its judgments?" (227, 228).

However, having already subordinated to itself a man's mind, the Party still has not achieved total victory over him. It must be remembered that Winston's "cure" consists of the devastation of his entire internal world, and not just the termination of his independent intellectual activity. Having destroyed Winston's capacity to think for himself, the Party has done only half the job, since "He 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" (231). And before the Party can celebrate the definitive "cure" of yet another of its cells, it is necessary to cleanse to perfect

spotlessness the entire contents of Winston Smith's heart and soul. O'Brien therefore tells him directly: "You are improving. Intellectually there is very little wrong with you. It is only emotionally that you have failed to make progress" (232). Here again it is necessary to return to the issue of faith, or—more accurately—the lack of faith.

### Death of the Spirit

Winston's entire life, both before and after his arrest, has been full of constant terror



and hate. He hates and fears the Party and its ideology in all its manifestations; he hates and fears nearly everyone he happens to encounter, since any of his neighbors or fellow workers will turn him into the Thought Police at the first sign of unorthodoxy; he even hates and fears children, malicious little demons brought up with limitless love for the Party, dreaming only of the heroic denunciation of its enemies. In truth, for Winston his very life in Oceania is hateful, and the only being ever to bring his life joy and meaning is Julia. But of course even his love for her is flawed: in his own words, ". . . you could not have pure love or pure lust nowadays. No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred." Their affair ". . . was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (105). Additionally, Winston's love for Julia was never a lofty sentiment inspired by an ideal of feminine beauty and purity. He himself tells her that he hates all the manifestations



of respectability employed by the Party to suppress man: "I hate purity, I hate goodness. I don't want any virtue to exist anywhere. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones." And Julia answers him, "Well then, I ought to suit you, dear. I'm corrupt to the bones" (104-105).

Still, Winston's love for Julia is the noblest emotion of his life. She represented for him the highest value in a detestable world of brutality and lies. Even when, under the influence of his hate for the Party, Winston promises without a second thought to commit suicide or to kill and maim innocent people if such actions were necessary in the name of a "good cause," he nevertheless refuses to be parted from Julia. As it turns out, all the noblest, strongest feelings capable of being generated in Winston's soul, embittered as it is yet desperate for enlightenment, were directed toward a vacuous, profligate girl. This is his tragedy. His hopes and desires were not focused on matters eternal and far-removed from worldly taint and pettiness, not on the spiritual but on things earthly, temporal and passing. This is precisely why the devastation of Winston's soul presents no particular difficulty for the Party—it is necessary only to destroy all love for Julia in him. And the tormenters get what they are after: In a state of inhuman terror at the prospect of the torture awaiting him, Winston sincerely desires to save himself at the cost of torment for his lover. After that—love is extinguished: "Sometimes, . . . 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 after that, you don't feel the same toward the other person any longer" (240).

The Party thus achieves its primary goal. It thoroughly roots out all that is human in the soul of Winston Smith, in order then to fill the empty shell of his former personality with itself, having made Winston an integral part of its healed organism. As we have seen, Winston's negative answer to the question of faith is of utmost assistance to the Party.

Had he replied, "Yes," the Party would have succeeded in breaking only his body, and the corrupting poison of moral and spiritual relativism would not have penetrated his soul. Having refused to believe, Winston loses all points of reference, rejects spiritual monism, the light of faith, and help from on high, allowing the collective gradually to gain control of his entire being. When the Party can at last celebrate total victory, Winston Smith no longer exists as a man. And it is precisely disbelief and the temptations of subjectivism that are responsible for his spiritual death.

#### The Riddle of Mortality

*1984* is an apocalyptic novel, a book about the end of human history. That which O'Brien predicts to Winston comes to pass: ". . . you are the last man. Your kind is extinct; we are the inheritors" (222). In Orwell's novel the Kingdom of Death has already begun. The souls of mankind have been devastated, and the lifeless shadows of pseudo people have merged together into a single Party organism. Time stands still and the world is immersed in the darkness of oblivion. And this has occurred because the dominion of the Party was erected on diabolical falsehood, and above all on the fatal untruth of relativism. Is it necessary, however, that such an outwardly innocent thing as departure from monism, from faith in a single Truth, a higher morality and objective phenomena, in the end inescapably leads to spiritual slavery and extinction? Here we must recognize that such is the irreversible end of a pluralistic world outlook. Man is not granted complete understanding of steadfast, eternal Truth. But at that moment when he stops striving for it, all points of reference become dislocated, and he loses the entire moral and spiritual foundation of his existence. And having lost faith in the immutability of laws and values, man becomes less confident in himself and his activities, feeling his primordial helplessness. Then arises the necessity for banding together, the idea of the collective that partially rescues

the individual from the horror of solitude, but all the same stands before the eternal riddle that renders a man fallen from truth so defenseless—the riddle of earthly frailty and morality. And here we return to the very beginning of our discussion, to the fact that, in accordance with its atheistic ideology, the collective consciousness of the Orwellian Party was compelled to seek the key to immortality outside of faith, finding it in the suppression and destruction of individual personality for the sake of the eternal health of a single collective organism. Thus, in rejecting faith and succumbing to the seduction of pluralism's illusory freedom, man inevitably comes to spiritual self-destruction, to the loss of all that makes him human. We therefore face a choice: either the instability of relativism and dissolution in the ghastly

visage of Big Brother, or the path of steady striving toward Truth, immutable and life-giving.

1. The words of the priest and teacher, Father Alexander Shmeman, in a lecture.
2. All quotations are taken from: George Orwell, 1984 (New York: American Library), an authorized reprint of the hardcover edition published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949.

#### Illustrations

- P. 34 Prisoners' cells in the penitentiary on Blackwell's (now Welfare) Island, New York, N.Y., c. 1891.  
P. 37 Abraham Batcheller House, Sutton, Mass., c. 1878.

All illustrations are from books of the Dover Pictorial Archive Series.

