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*RESSENTIMENT, THE SUPEREGO, AND
TOTALITARIANISM: GEORGE ORWELL'S
1984**

*Sinkwan Cheng***

In the “Two Minutes Hate” described by Orwell in *1984*, Emmanuel Goldstein—the “primal traitor, the earliest defiler of the Party’s purity”—appears on the screen crying hysterically that “the revolution ha[s] been betrayed.”¹ This assessment of the Party is shared by Winston Smith, the leading character of the story.² Even O’Brien, a top official in the Inner Party, boasts

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¹ GEORGE ORWELL, 1984, at 14 (1992).

² This is also a critique shared by many leftists disenchanted by the Stalinist regime. Even though Maurice Merleau-Ponty has often been taken to task as an apologist for the Stalinist regime because of his arguments in *Humanism and Terror*, the philosopher actually criticizes the U.S.S.R. for having betrayed the Revolution in his preface to the book:

[T]he Revolution has come to a halt: it maintains and aggravates the dictatorial apparatus while renouncing liberty of the proletariat in the Soviets and its Party and abandoning the humane control of the state. It is impossible to be an anti-Communist and it is not possible to be a communist.

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY, *HUMANISM AND TERROR: AN ESSAY ON THE*

about the Party's success in betraying the agenda of the "old reformers." Contrary to the old reformers who "establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution," the Party "makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship":³

[W]hat kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but *more* merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain. The old civilisations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement. Everything else we shall destroy—everything.⁴

What O'Brien doesn't understand, and what Winston and the disenchanted left fail to appreciate, is the fact that the "betrayal" is not necessarily carried out by the new guards against the old. Rather, the betrayal is possibly *internal* to the Revolution itself—namely, the "fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement" characterizing the new regime might have been produced by the "justice" of the old revolutionaries carried out to the extreme. *Absolute justice results in absolute crime*, as Camus observes of the transformation of the French Revolution into the Reign of Terror. Camus insightfully analyzes how the French Revolution betrayed itself precisely by pressing justice and virtue to the extreme. Saint-Just, who appears to be anti-Sade,⁵ ends up being another Marquis de Sade in his relentless implementation of a program of absolute virtue in the New Republic.⁶ Shortly after the publication of Camus's *The Rebel*, Lacan also ties the Sadean fantasy to the inflexibility of the law and absolute virtue, although he discusses Kant's revolution in ethics instead of duplicating Camus's study of Saint-Just's political revolution.

Although Orwell's *1984* is no longer widely read in the English Department, totalitarianism remains very much alive in the world, and Orwell's political insight continues to be highly useful for our understanding of this political phenomenon. The entwinement of absolute virtue with absolute crime, of the ego ideal and the superego, of Utopia with Dystopia, will be at the center of my critique of totalitarianism as portrayed in *1984*. Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*, as well as the developments

COMMUNIST PROBLEM xi (John O'Neil trans., 2000)

³ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 276.

⁴ *Id.* at 279.

⁵ ALBERT CAMUS, *THE REBEL* 125 (Anthony Bower trans., 1991).

⁶ *Id.* at 131.

and transformations of this notion in the writings of Freud, Camus, Lacan, Arendt, and Lefort, will be used as keys for understanding that entwinement. Using *ressentiment* to examine totalitarianism will allow me to engage this modern political phenomenon from an angle hitherto unexplored. It will enable me to break away from studies performed by both the left and the right on the problems internal to radical revolutionary movements. This approach will also make possible a reevaluation⁷ of the politics of Nietzsche and Sade. By using Nietzsche's philosophy to critique totalitarianism, I hope to contribute to reclaiming Nietzsche from those who use him to advance a right-wing totalitarian agenda. Drawing from Lacan's analysis of the Sadean fantasy and totalitarianism, I also attempt to resist a trend which prematurely valorizes the Marquis de Sade as a hero of "anti-authoritarianism" and "anti-totalitarianism."

I. BASIC CONCEPTS: FROM NIETZSCHE TO FREUD AND FROM *RESENTIMENT* TO THE SUPEREGO

It is well known that Nietzsche's notion of "bad conscience" anticipates Freud's idea of the superego.⁸ Both Nietzsche and psychoanalysis are aware that morality and civilization cannot eliminate aggressivity. Rather, aggressive impulses being inhibited turn inward, become "introjected" and "internalized." Nietzsche explains this phenomenon in the *Genealogy of Morals* as follows:

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*—this is what I call the *internalization* of man. Thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul." The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was *inhibited*.⁹

The "internalization of man" gives birth to "bad conscience":

Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom—punishments belong among these bulwarks—brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the

⁷ I am alluding to Nietzsche's idea of *Umwertung* or "reversal of perspective."

⁸ One of the good commentators on this relationship was Ernest Jones. See ERNST JONES, *LIFE AND WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD* (1953-1957).

⁹ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *ON THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS* Second Essay para. 16 (Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1969).

possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the “bad conscience.”¹⁰

Following Nietzsche, Freud holds that when aggression is restrained by civilization, it is redirected by the superego against the ego, resulting in “man at war with himself”:

His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is . . . sent back to where it came from—that is, it is directed toward his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego and which now, in the form of “conscience,” is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals.¹¹

The introjection of aggression goes hand in hand with what Nietzsche calls “*ressentiment*.”¹² When a person’s aggressive instincts toward his/her neighbor are frustrated—whether from inhibitions or fear—s/he becomes consumed by rancor, fear, and hatred. Taking the clue from Nietzsche, Freud points out in *Civilization and its Discontents* that the Christian injunction to “love thy neighbor as thyself” in no way safeguards the neighbor from dangerous attacks. Rather, aggressive impulses that are not properly discharged become even more deadly in their assaults on both the self and the other. The wo-man of *ressentiment* holds his/her neighbor responsible for his/her misery, and on this premise constructs a *rationale*, a *moral justification* for punishing the other. This redirected aggression against one’s neighbor becomes all the more relentless once it finds a “moral” outlet.

II. “LOVE THY (BR-)OTHER!”: THE INJUNCTION OF THE SADISTIC SUPEREGO

The arguments from Nietzsche and Freud outlined above allow us to critique O’Brien’s naivete in *1984*. Contrary to his belief, “the old civilisations . . . founded on love or justice” are by no means the straight opposite of his Party, even though the latter is founded upon “hatred . . . fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement.”¹³ Pushed to the extreme, the old civilizations’

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ SIGMUND FREUD, *CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS* 84 (James Strachey ed., 1961) (1930).

¹² Nietzsche appropriated the term “*ressentiment*” from Eugen Dühring, even though Nietzsche, who strong disagrees with Dühring’s theory, gives the term a very different valuation.

¹³ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 279. Note that “hatred, . . . fear, rage, triumph and self-

abstract, indiscriminate injunction to “love thy brothers as thyself” is transformed into “love thy Big Brother and not thyself” in the new Regime—the Big (BR-)Other being as distant and impossible to comprehend as God.¹⁴ “Love thy brothers” requires loving all human beings equally regardless of their particular, personal relationships to the subject—a sentiment close to Kant’s idea of a “non-pathological” sense of duty. “Love thy Big (BR-)Other and not thyself” pushes this non-pathological love even further to the extreme in that it requires the subject both to abase himself/herself and to love a being who is visible only on the screen but never seen in person. Love for such abstraction only becomes possible when the individual is purged of all particular attachments and human feelings. As Julia in *1984* acutely observes: “the sex instinct¹⁵ create[s] a world of its own which [is] outside the Party’s control and which therefore [has] to be destroyed if possible.”¹⁶ It is hence not surprising that the Party imposes sexual puritanism and even self-abasement as central tenets: no love (not even self-love) is permitted save for the love of the Big (BR-)Other. O’Brien boasts of how the Party will “abolish the orgasm There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother.”¹⁷ When inhibited, the impulse to love, like the aggressive impulse, can turn into a different form of love which has within it an ob-scene¹⁸ and deadly *jouissance*. The “love” produced by asceticism (whether religious or political) is sado-masochistic, invested through and through with the death drive.¹⁹ This form of love induces one to serve as the Sadean executioner of the “enemy” of the Big (BR-)Other. This love, however, can also be masochistic. Given the central logic of the superego—that one is always guilty—the “enemy” of the Big (BR-)Other necessarily includes oneself. Love of the Big (BR-)Other thus results not only in abasement of “the enemy” but also in self-

abasement” are associated with *ressentiment*.

¹⁴ Even though the Big Brother is the guise deliberately chosen by the Party “to act as a focusing point for love, fear and reverence, emotions which are more easily felt towards an individual than towards an organisation,” ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 217, one can hardly say that he has a concrete existence in Oceania. According to “Goldstein’s book,” “Nobody has ever seen Big Brother.” His “tangibility” does not extend beyond “a face on the hoardings, a voice on the telescreen.” *Id.* at 216.

¹⁵ Note that Julia is using the word “instinct” rather than “drive.” The latter term is much more appropriate for describing the love for the Big (BR-)Other.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 139.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 280.

¹⁸ I am following Lacan who puns on “ob-scene” to mean “off-stage.”

¹⁹ For the close relationship between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, see SIGMUND FREUD, *BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE* (James Strachey ed. & trans., 1971) (especially Chapter VI), “ANALYSIS TERMINABLE AND INTERMINABLE” (Joseph Sandler ed., 1991), and *CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS* (Joan Riviere trans., 1958).

abasement and love of the torturers and executioners sent by the Party to supplement those internalized in the self.

The Party demands self-denial not merely for the purpose of focusing the love of its subjects on the Big (BR-)Other. What it really covets is the much more powerful source of energy produced by asceticism-induced perversion, which the Party commandeers to create war-fever and the hysteria of leader-worship. Julia understands how “sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship.” As Julia puts it:

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.²⁰

Winston concurs with Julia that there is “a direct, intimate connection between chastity and political orthodoxy. For how could the fear, the hatred and the lunatic credulity which the Party needed in its members be kept at the right pitch, except by bottling down some powerful instinct and using it as a driving force?”²¹

Significantly, the Party steers its members' sado-masochism against two specific targets: “foreign enemies and internal traitors” on the one hand, and the Party member himself/herself on the other. Once the members' hatred against these two targets is fully mobilized, the Party is in total control of the situation. Any potential challenges raised against the Party—externally or internally—are voluntarily policed by the Party members themselves:

A Party member is expected to have no private emotions and no respites from enthusiasm. He is supposed to live in a continuous frenzy of *hatred of foreign enemies and internal traitors*, triumph over victories, and *self-abasement* before the power and wisdom of the Party [T]he speculations which might possibly induce a sceptical or rebellious attitude are killed in advance by his early-acquired inner discipline.²²

The “self-abasement” that the Party successfully inculcates in its members can be illustrated by the way in which Winston learns to love his torturers, and he even graduates from loving O'Brien to loving Big Brother Himself. Pathetically enough, Winston looks upon O'Brien—who oversees his torture and interrogation—as his protector, teacher, and most beloved and entrusted friend.

²⁰ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 139.

²¹ *Id.* at 139-40.

²² *Id.* at 220 (emphasis added).

Winston “[clings] to O’Brien like a baby, curiously comforted by the heavy arm round his shoulders. He ha[s] the feeling that O’Brien [is] his protector”²³ When the interrogation is over and O’Brien orders for Winston an injection which causes “a blissful, healing warmth” to “spread all through his body,” Winston “open[s] his eyes and look[s] up gratefully at O’Brien”:

At sight of the heavy, lined face, so ugly and so intelligent, [Winston’s] heart seemed to turn over. If he could have moved he would have stretched out a hand and laid it on O’Brien’s arm. He ha[s] never loved him so deeply as at this moment . . .

.²⁴

The torturer is no less perverse than the tortured. O’Brien loves the victim he tortures as much as the victim loves his torturer. In all lunatic sincerity,²⁵ O’Brien looks at Winston “gravely and rather sadly” as he assures his victim that “I shall save you, I shall make you perfect.”²⁶ O’Brien truly believes that the Party has brought his victim to the torture chamber “[n]ot merely to extract your [Winston’s] confession, nor to punish you” but “[t]o cure you! [t]o make you sane!”²⁷ When he speaks to Winston, “his voice [is] gentle and patient”²⁸ and he “ha[s] the air of a doctor, a teacher, even a priest, anxious to explain and persuade rather than punish.”²⁹ In the end, Winston is indeed “cured.” The novel ends with the sentence “[Winston] love[s] Big Brother.”³⁰

III. THE ENTWINEMENT OF *EROS* WITH *THANATOS*, AND ABSOLUTE JUSTICE AS ABSOLUTE CRIME

The entwinement of *Eros* with *Thanatos* in the totalitarian regime should warn us against the over-hasty use of “hypocrisy” to explain why the ministry of torture is named the Ministry of Love in *1984*. As Winston points out, O’Brien “is not pretending . . . he is not a hypocrite; he believes every word he says.”³¹ Winston himself cannot help but perceive O’Brien as a composite of totally contradictory roles: “he [is] the tormentor, he [is] the protector, he

²³ *Id.* at 262-63.

²⁴ *Id.* at 264.

²⁵ *Id.* at 268.

²⁶ *Id.* at 256.

²⁷ *Id.* at 265.

²⁸ *Id.* at 257.

²⁹ *Id.* at 260.

³⁰ *Id.* at 311.

³¹ *Id.* at 268.

[is] the inquisitor, he [is] the friend.”³² In “the Goldstein book,” O’Brien, the real author, also disavows ordinary hypocrisy as the source of these contradictions:

[T]he Party rejects and vilifies every principle for which the Socialist movement originally stood, and it chooses to do this in the name of Socialism Even the names of the four Ministries by which we are governed exhibit a sort of impudence in their deliberate reversal of the facts. The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation. These contradictions are not accidental, nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy: they are deliberate exercises in *doublethink*.³³

O’Brien believes that “doublethink” is sufficient to account for the discrepancies between names and reality saturating the totalitarian regime. What he doesn’t see is that doublethink is itself made possible by the double-*Thing*—in the sense of the Kantian-Sadean *Thing* that Lacan elaborates in “Kant avec Sade” and his *Ethics Seminar*. This is to say, the new Party is the other side of the old Socialism³⁴ even as it “rejects and vilifies every principle” of its predecessor. There is no real opposition between the “old civilisations” and O’Brien’s Party; as early as the eighteenth century, Terror already goes hand-in-hand with the French Republic. Claude Lefort’s analysis of the ways the revolutionary struggle for “liberty, equality, and fraternity” turns into the Reign of Terror sheds light on how O’Brien’s Party is also intimately connected rather than merely opposed to the earlier

³² *Id.* at 256.

³³ *Id.* at 225.

³⁴ After all, despite O’Brien’s straightforward cynical declaration to Winston about the Party’s interest in raw power, the Party must have promoted itself in its political propaganda as the guardian of virtues similar to those promised by old Socialism. Otherwise, how would Winston get the idea that O’Brien would desire to hear him say that the Party wants power for the good of its own people? When O’Brien asks Winston, “Why should we want power?” Winston is under the illusion that he can predict “the good answer”:

[Winston] knew in advance what O’Brien would say. That the Party did not seek power for its own ends, but only for the good of the majority That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was better. That the Party was the eternal guardian of the weak, a dedicated sect doing evil that good might come, sacrificing its own happiness to that of others.

Id. at 274-75. The fact that the Party actively seeks power is not incompatible with the stated ideologies of the old revolutionaries either. After all, without power, how can one act as the “eternal guardian of the weak”? Note how the Sadean executioner in Lacan’s schema has power, even though he uses that power in a “self-sacrificing” manner—that is, he uses his power to “serve the Will of the Other”—to “serve the People,” to “serve the Destiny of History.”

Socialist movement:

When [Terror] is revolutionary, it conforms to its essence; in other circumstances, it becomes perverted. When it is revolutionary, it is . . . both the “dictatorship of liberty” and the “sword of the law.” Alternatively, we might say that it is the law in action, the law which makes the sharp distinction between good and evil, between being and nothingness. The terror of the tyrant, in contrast, does not have this great ability to discriminate; the tyrant suppresses that which resists, disturbs or displeases him. Having no knowledge of good and evil . . . he strikes cruelly, but at random, without even knowing who the enemy is. In that sense, the revolutionary Terror seems to have converted the terror of old into a truth or . . . to have elevated it to the status of truth. . . . [T]he formula Robespierre uses on more than one occasion: “the despotism of liberty” . . . the “slave of liberty.” The Terror, then, is not a means; it is imprinted upon liberty just as, for Saint-Just, it is imprinted upon virtue.³⁵

The problem emerges when revolutionary Terror “elevates [itself] into the status of truth”—when it is no longer *a means* but becomes “imprinted upon” liberty and virtue. This is exactly what happens with the new regime in 1984. For O’Brien’s Party, “power is not a means, it is an end”:

We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, *pure power*. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing. . . . The German Nazis and the Russian Communists . . . never had the courage to recognise their own motives. . . . We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. . . . *Power is not a means, it is an end*. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.³⁶

Power in the new regime is hypostatized as “pure power,” it becomes “Truth,” an *absolute* unto itself. What O’Brien overlooks is that this terrible power is actually imprinted upon the liberty and virtue, upon the love and justice fought for by the “old civilisations.” While Robespierre declares “the despotism of liberty,” Saint-Just proclaims that “morality is stronger than tyrants”—an insight that Albert Camus highlights when he comments, “[Morality] has, in fact, just killed Louis XVI.”³⁷ A

³⁵ CLAUDE LEFORT, *DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL THEORY* 73 (1988).

³⁶ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, 275-76 (emphasis added).

³⁷ CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 123.

society of absolute justice and virtue necessarily harbors terror within itself. The reason, as Camus puts it, is that “Absolute virtue is impossible, and the republic of forgiveness leads, with implacable logic, to the republic of the guillotine.”³⁸ Absolute virtue is accompanied by an absolutely inflexible law to whose standard no human being can measure up.³⁹ Once the standard of virtue and law are set at the “absolute,” every failure to live up to that absolute is regarded as coming “not from an imperfection in the law, which is presumed to be impossible, but from a lack of virtue in the refractory citizen.”⁴⁰ Any imperfection in the big Other—that is, any imperfection of law in the Republic—must be concealed by transferring the guilt to the citizens whenever conflicts or discrepancies arise between law and social or human reality. Not surprisingly, Saint-Just exclaims at the Convention: “One might think that each person was afraid of his own conscience and of the inflexibility of the law, and had said to himself: ‘We are not sufficiently *virtuous* to be so *terrible*.’”⁴¹

“Morality, when it is formal, devours,” observes Camus.⁴² As both Camus and Lacan point out, morality alone does not lead to terror. It is only when morality asserts itself as absolute and inflexible that it becomes sadistic. For both Camus and Lacan, terror arises from the failure to set a limit to any action or practice. Morality is necessary because it sets a limit on what the subject is allowed to do, but morality itself can become terror when it asserts unlimited authority. In fact, Nietzsche himself might not be too far from the position taken by Camus and Lacan. Even though Nietzsche appears to be more ready to dismiss morality *in toto*, the kind of morality he has in mind is one that seeks absolute control—driven as it is by the spitefulness and vengefulness of *ressentiment*. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he calls the human need for morality “the worst of all tastes,” because it is “the taste for the *unconditional*.”⁴³ In other words, it is the unconditional character of morality that Nietzsche finds

³⁸ *Id.* at 124.

³⁹ O’Brien overlooks a similar ob-scene *jouissance* which inhabits both Kant’s “duty for its own sake” and the Party’s “power for its own sake.” The compulsion to perform duty even when the situation doesn’t call for such performance is driven by the same *jouissance* which compels the exercise of power even when there is no reason to exercise it. In addition, absolute virtue and pure duty share with pure power the same indifference to the well-being of their subjects. Both are absolutely intransigent and unforgiving of human imperfections.

⁴⁰ CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 123.

⁴¹ LEFORT, *supra* note 35, at 72 (emphasis added).

⁴² CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 124.

⁴³ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL* para. 13 (R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1976) (emphasis added).

objectionable.

Absolute virtue leads to absolute crime because “absolute” virtue can exist only as a formal, rational idea, unresponsive to empirical and human reality. *Since it cannot operate in sync with reality, to reaffirm its status as the absolute Truth, it must persecute and even eliminate reality until its sovereignty reigns unchallenged.* Revolutionaries are often susceptible to the temptation of “absolute virtue,” because they see themselves and the old regime in terms of absolute good versus absolute evil. They are impatient to implement their *vision* of the “new society” and anxious to demonstrate the differences between the old society and the new—between “the bad” and “the good.” Convinced that a bad society corrupts its citizens, revolutionaries are eager to *reform* not only society but also humanity. *Reforming* necessitates shaping materials according to a certain *idea*. Revolutionaries thus often have a set of principles and virtues that they impose on the new society, be it liberty, equality, fraternity, or justice. Unfortunately, once these virtues have been *formalized* into inflexible laws which increasingly deviate from human reality, Saint-Just’s conclusion that “no one is virtuous innocently” becomes inevitable: “From the moment that laws fail to make harmony reign, or when the unity which should be created by adherence to principles is destroyed, who is to blame? Factions. Who compose the factions? Those who deny by their very actions the necessity of unity.”⁴⁴

Contrary to O’Brien’s belief, terror is nothing new to his Party; rather, it is one of the central “virtues” of the old revolutions, including the French Revolution itself.

IV. TOTALITARIANISM: THE UNBARRED BIG (BR-)OTHER, AND THE TOTALIZATION OF REALITY BY IDEAS/IDEALS/IDEOLOGIES⁴⁵

What kind of regime would allow a body of law to reign absolute without flexibility? The answer is: a regime which *uses ideas to dictate reality*, instead of allowing reality to inform its ideas and its body of laws. A regime which pushes such practice to the extreme and allows ideas/ideologies to *totalize* reality is a *totalitarian* regime. A totalitarian government imposes its own ideology as the *absolute* Truth. As a result, anything which goes wrong in the state is blamed on the subjects, who are accused of failing to carry out the Truth taught by the Party. *Totalitarianism*

⁴⁴ CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 124.

⁴⁵ The three words share the same etymological root “*eidōs*.” Totalitarian regimes mobilize ideas, ideals, and ideologies together in support of their absolute power.

gives absolute sovereignty to idea over reality. Its will to totalize reality with ideas or ideals explains precisely its relentless persecution of any idea or person who contradicts the total consistency of its ideology. Totalitarianism does not seek to justify its theories, or its practices, by measuring them against empirical reality. Rather, it eliminates reality whenever it contradicts the idea. That is why, as Arendt points out, totalitarianism has no justification but itself. That is also why Arendt gives her analysis the title “*Ideology and Terror*”⁴⁶ in *Origins of Totalitarianism*. The cruelty of totalitarianism originates precisely in its excessive idealism, in its jealous guardianship of the *perfect* consistency of its ideological fictions. The primacy given by totalitarian regime to ideas explains how totalitarianism differs from tyranny: totalitarianism is not satisfied with mere *outward* compliance; it is obsessed with thought policing and mind control. As Margaret Canovan puts it, the totalitarian regime is marked by its “determination to form the minds of the population through control of all communications.”⁴⁷

Revolutionary leaders are often “men of *ideas*” and “men with a message.” Their idealism and vision can be inspiring and refreshing. However, totalitarian leaders are those who (mis-)take the rational for the real. In doing so, they commit the Hegelian violence of “justify[ing] every ideological encroachment upon reality,” their philosophy hardening into an orthodoxy that “exalts destruction for its own sake.”⁴⁸ The fact that the encroachment of ideas upon reality leads to terror is evident from Saint-Just’s proclamation: “A patriot is he who supports the Republic in general; whoever opposes it in detail is a traitor.”⁴⁹ The difference between “in general” and “in detail” refers to the dichotomy between the general idea and empirical details. He who supports the Ideology of the regime as a coherent entity (“in general”) is a patriot, but whoever contradicts the general logic of the regime with local, empirical details and practices is a traitor and has to be destroyed. This is how the scaffold paradoxically symbolizes freedom⁵⁰ during the French Reign of Terror:

⁴⁶ My italics.

⁴⁷ Margaret Canovan, *Totalitarianism*, in ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY 442 (Edward Craig ed., 1998).

⁴⁸ This formulation is appropriated from Camus’s critique of Hegel in *The Rebel*. See CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 135.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 126.

⁵⁰ This is another continuity between the old and new revolutions overlooked by O’Brien. The new Party is not the only one which calls the Ministry of War “The Ministry of Peace,” and the Ministry of Torture “The Ministry of Love.” The French Revolution mobilized similar paradoxical formulations. The use of the scaffold to signify freedom is a case in point.

[U]ntil [Saint-Just's] time, the scaffold was precisely nothing else but one of the most obvious symbols of oppression. But at the heart of this logical delirium . . . the scaffold represents freedom. It assures rational unity, and harmony in the ideal city. It purifies . . . the Republic and eliminates malpractices that arise to contradict the general will and universal reason.⁵¹

Empirical details that contradict the logic of the Republic need to be purged so as to preserve the infallibility of the general will and the rational unity of the ideal polity. This is how the scaffold preserves the *rational* (rather than *real*) freedom of the Republic. This is also what Camus means by his remark that “absolute and abstract freedom must inevitably lead to terrorism; the rule of abstract law is identical with the rule of oppression.”⁵²

In order to preserve its own ideology as a complete Big Other, a totalitarian regime needs to eliminate two kinds of “details”: (1) people who harbor unorthodox ideas; and (2) facts and ideas which contradict the official Ideology. Both are deemed to be “flaw[s] in the pattern.” Both are considered “stain[s] that must be wiped out.”⁵³ In order to maintain its own consistency and “integrity” (that is, its role as an unbarred Big Other), purges and vaporizations become “a necessary part of the mechanics of [the totalitarian] government.”⁵⁴

In 1984, people who harbor unorthodox ideas are removed in two ways; these can also be understood as two steps of an elimination process. Those who deviate from the Party are first *reformed* until their minds and hearts cohere with the Establishment. Then, they are made to disappear. O'Brien describes the process as follows:

We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us; so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him.⁵⁵

Note that what the Party is really interested in getting rid of is the *ideas* in the heads of the “heretics.” What the Party cannot tolerate is any challenge to the supremacy of its own *Idea/Ideology*. As O'Brien points out, “The Party is not interested in the overt act: the thought is all we care about.” This is why “we

⁵¹ CAMUS, *supra* note 5, at 126.

⁵² *Id.* at 133.

⁵³ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 267.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 48.

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 267.

do not merely destroy our enemies, we change them.”⁵⁶

In other words, *totalitarianism* does not only *totalize* reality with ideas; it also *totalizes* all ideas with its own *Idea*. As Hannah Arendt points out, totalitarianism allows no room for individual thought. In its attempt to crush individuality, the totalitarian regime in 1984 condemns solitude as a dangerous practice: “There [is] a word for it in Newspeak: *ownlife*, it [is] called, meaning individualism and eccentricity.”⁵⁷ It is for the same reason that Oceania attempts to eradicate the individual emotions and attachments that come from sexual desire and love. Spontaneity is, of course, threatening to a totalitarian regime. Not surprisingly, Lenin declares that “[t]heory should subordinate spontaneity.”

To preserve its own Ideology as absolute Truth, the totalitarian regime needs to destroy not only individuals who harbor different thoughts, but also empirical facts and evidence that might compromise the Party’s status as a complete Big Other. The status of the Big Other, assumed by God in the old days, is transferred to the Big (BR-)Other in Oceania. The Big (BR-)Other literally takes over the attributes of God: omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, benevolent, and eternal.⁵⁸ Unfortunately for the regime, as “Goldstein’s book” points out, “since in reality Big Brother is not omnipotent and the Party is not infallible, there is need for an unwearying, moment-to-moment flexibility in the treatment of facts.”⁵⁹ In other words, when empirical facts show that the Party is not all powerful, the Party “conquers them” by rewriting the facts. Thus when Winston challenges O’Brien’s claim that “[the Party’s] control over matter is absolute”⁶⁰ by pointing out how Eurasia and Eastasia have not yet been conquered, O’Brien replies: “[u]nimportant. We shall conquer them when it suits us. And if we did not, what difference would it make? We can shut them out of existence. Oceania is the world.”⁶¹

The alteration of history in order to protect the completeness

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 265.

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 85.

⁵⁸ “Goldstein’s book” describes the Party’s deification of the Big (BR-)Other as follows: “Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration.” ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 216. In addition, he is also as inaccessible as God: “Nobody has ever seen Big Brother.” *Id.* Like God, he is “eternal.” O’Brien affirms that Big Brother “will never die, and there is already considerable uncertainty as to when he was born.” *Id.* at 216-17. *See also id.* at 272.

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 221.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 277.

⁶¹ *Id.*

of the Big (BR-)Other is an operation assigned particular importance by the Party, so much so that the past, and the record thereof, is being changed on an almost minute-to-minute basis.⁶² Changing the past allows the Party to maintain its image of Godlike infallibility. As “Goldstein’s book” points out, “no change in doctrine or in political alignment can ever be admitted.”⁶³ More importantly, changing the past gives the Party the appearance of omniscience and actively reinforces its authority to make prophecies about the future.⁶⁴ However, since the Party is not really omniscient, predictions made incorrectly in the past by the Big (BR-)Other must be changed continuously in order to prove the infallibility of the Party.⁶⁵ “[S]peeches, statistics and records of every kind must be constantly brought up to date in order to show that the predictions of the Party were in all cases right.”⁶⁶ From time to time, Winston’s job in the Ministry of Truth is to “rewrite a paragraph of Big Brother’s speech, in such a way as to make him predict the thing that had actually happened.”⁶⁷ The result of such an operation is that “the past . . . ha[s] not merely been altered, it ha[s] actually been destroyed.”⁶⁸

As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the *Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs—to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct; nor was

⁶² *Id.* at 42.

⁶³ *Id.* at 222.

⁶⁴ The totalitarian regime loves to prophesy about the world in order to demonstrate the transhistorical and transcultural (that is, absolute and total) predictive and explanatory power of its Theory. As Margaret Canovan puts it:

Totalitarian propaganda consists largely of prediction, and is prepared to change the world to make its statements come true; it deals also in secret conspiracies which it has detected, and through its ideology presents an account of the world that uncovers the hidden meaning of experience, providing its adherents with a *total* explanation.

Canovan, *supra* note 47, at 20 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵ Big Brother is a stand-in for the Party. According to “Goldstein’s book,” “Big Brother is the guise in which the Party chooses to exhibit itself to the world.” ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 217.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 221-22.

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 41.

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 38.

any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record.⁶⁹

Altering the past requires changing not only the historical documents but also destroying factual evidence and human memory. Undesirable individuals thus have to be “vaporized”—the factual evidence have to be destroyed—before they are erased from all records: “People in the Records Department . . . delet[e] from the press the names of people who ha[ve] been vaporized and [are] therefore considered never to have existed.”⁷⁰ “Heretics” in Oceania thus have to die twice in a Lacanian sense. After their biological existence have been eliminated, they are made to disappear eternally from human records and memories. The Party is hence in control of not only the present (the individual’s existence) but also the past. As “Goldstein’s book” points out:

Past events . . . have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the Party is in full control of all records, and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it.⁷¹

The horror is that, by controlling the past, the totalitarian regime manages to control the future as well. One clear example of this is how individuals tortured and murdered by the Party will not even have the hope of being vindicated by posterity. The totalitarian regime “hollows” out history in the same way it “squeezes empty” the individual,⁷² rendering both powerless to vindicate the dead. As O’Brien tells Winston, there is no possibility of martyrdom in Oceania:

[W]e do not allow the dead to rise up against us. You must stop imagining that posterity will vindicate you, Winston. Posterity will never hear of you. You will be lifted clean out from the stream of history. We shall turn you into gas and pour you into the stratosphere. Nothing will remain of you; not a name in a register, not a memory in a living brain. You will be annihilated in the past as well as in the future. You will never have existed.⁷³

This way, the totalitarian regime controls not only the individuals but also the records and the memories, not only the present but also the past and the future. Its control, in other words, is total,

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 42.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 44.

⁷¹ *Id.* at 222.

⁷² *Id.* at 269.

⁷³ *Id.* at 266-67.

not only across space (the whole country—its subjects and archives) but also across *time*. The Party itself has a slogan: “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”⁷⁴

At first sight, the Party’s practice of continuously altering the past seems to be in tune with Nietzsche’s argument that forgetfulness is “necessary for life.”⁷⁵ However, it is unlikely that Nietzsche would have approved of the Party in Oceania. First of all, the Party is not really “Nietzschean” in that it does not simply forget and move forward with life; rather, it is constantly forging memory because it cannot face life as it was and life as it is. More importantly, despite Nietzsche’s contention that “man must have and from time to time apply the power to break up and dissolve the past in order to live,” he also maintains that *forgetfulness needs to be destroyed sometimes in order to combat unjust regimes*: “The same life that needs forgetfulness sometimes needs to destroy this forgetfulness; for should it ever become clear how unjust the existence of something is, a monopoly, a caste, or a dynasty, for example, then this thing deserves to fall.”⁷⁶ The Party in Oceania is a regime of *ressentiment* whom Nietzsche would find necessary to overthrow.

V. THE RESULT OF TOTALITARIAN RULE: THE FLIGHT INTO IDEOLOGICAL FICTION AND UNIFORMITY

Once the Party’s ideological encroachment upon reality is complete, whatever the Party says becomes reality, whatever is “rational” according to the Party becomes “real.” As Winston rightly observes, “[n]ot merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality, [is] tacitly denied by [the Party’s] philosophy.”⁷⁷ As a result of the Party’s sacrifice of objective reality to its Idea, society is characterized by a mass flight from reality into an ideological fiction where everything is consistent and nothing can be out of line. This is exactly what shocks Winston when he suddenly realizes how Party members have been indoctrinated into living in fiction rather than reality:

How easy it [is], [thinks] Winston, if you [do] not look about

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 260.

⁷⁵ See FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, ON THE ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE OF HISTORY FOR LIFE (Peter Preuss trans., 1980).

⁷⁶ MARK WARREN, NIETZSCHE AND POLITICAL THOUGHT 87 (1988) (citing FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, RICHARD WAGNER IN BAYREUTH para. 3 (1931)).

⁷⁷ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 83.

you, to believe that the physical type set up by the Party as an *ideal*—tall muscular youths and deep-bosomed maidens, blond-haired, vital, sunburnt, carefree—existed and even predominated. Actually, . . . the majority of people in Airstrip One [are] small, dark, and ill-favored.⁷⁸

The Party's control is so absolute that it can "defeat" at will not only empirical truth but also mathematical truth. Winston's fear that the Party erodes all other truths with its own Truth turns out to have good grounds: in the end the Party does announce that two and two makes five; "the logic of their position demand[s] it."⁷⁹

This is to say, in the totalitarian regime, there is only one Truth—the Party's Truth; there is only one Love—the Love for the Big (BR)Other. Winston describes the ideal set up by the Party as "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."⁸⁰ As Hannah Arendt points out, the dream of totalitarian society is precisely to destroy "the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings" and to recreate society "as if all humanity were just one individual."⁸¹ Once the Party deems itself to be in possession of Truth, *it proclaims its authority as absolute, its say as final, and hence its law inflexible and its control total*. The Party's claim that it is in possession of Truth gives it justification to enforce uniformity—a practice which totalitarian regimes administers by resorting to all-pervasive and all-encompassing police control.

At this point, one might ask: why are totalitarian regimes interested in coercing their subjects to join its flight into ideological fiction? Such a flight into pure idealism serves not to raise the living standard of the state nor even to improve the well-being of the Party members. Unconcerned with external reality, material benefits do not interest the Party.⁸² Why does the totalitarian regime go to such extremes torturing both its own members and others just to maintain the consistency of its ideological fantasy? When Winston asks a similar question in *1984*, O'Brien answers that "[t]he Party seeks power entirely for its own sake."⁸³

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 63 (emphasis added).

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 83.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 77 (emphasis added).

⁸¹ HANNAH ARENDT, *ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM* 438 (1966).

⁸² Margaret Canovan rightly observes that "totalitarian rule differs from normal states, even despotic ones, in being unconcerned with considerations of utility." Canovan, *supra* note 47, at 23.

⁸³ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 275.

Once again, O'Brien's *answer* falls a step short of Nietzsche who can help us better identify the real key to the mystery. O'Brien claims that the Party wants power for power's sake. But he fails to identify where this lust for power comes from.

We have already discussed how totalitarian regimes enforce different forms of Puritanism and self-discipline which render their members prey to *ressentiment*—a pathology that the Party mobilizes against external enemies and internal traitors. In the next section, we will discuss how the Party's lust for power is itself motivated by *ressentiment*.

VI. RESENTIMENT AND SEEKING POWER FOR ITS OWN SAKE

A. *The Impotent's Dream of Omnipotence*

O'Brien claims that the Party is interested in pure power.⁸⁴ It does not seek power in order to protect the weak,⁸⁵ nor even to conquer the world.⁸⁶ A careful study of *1984* would reveal that this is because the Party is actually incapable of either protecting its own subjects or of winning a decisive war. Despite the Party's boasts, Oceania is "a bare, hungry, dilapidated place compared with the world that existed before 1914."⁸⁷ And, despite their propaganda, "[n]one of the three super-states could be definitively conquered even by the other two in combination."⁸⁸ The Party's lust for power, in other words, is driven by its own powerlessness. The Party does not desire power as a means to raising the standard of living for its citizens, nor as a means to defeating the other superpowers. Therefore, the Party can only desire power as "an end" and "not a means."⁸⁹

When power is sought for its own sake, power becomes a mere idea whose confirmation needs not come from external reality. For the Party to "have power," all it needs is its subjects' consent and acknowledgement that it does "have power." For example, the Party has the power to blot out the stars,⁹⁰ or to make two and two equal five,⁹¹ but not because they can really make

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ O'Brien tells Winston that the Party is not interested in conquering Eurasia and Eastasia. See ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 277.

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 196.

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 194.

⁸⁹ *Id.* at 276.

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 278.

⁹¹ *Id.* at 270-71.

such things happen in objective reality. So long as the Party can convince itself and its subjects that it can really make (or has really made) possible such things, then the Party “indeed” has such power. O’Brien claims, “[w]e control matter”—that is, the Party has power over matter—“because we control the mind. Reality is inside the skull.”⁹² This is to say, the form of power in “power for power’s sake” is an ideal rather than a material power—a power that exists in consciousness rather than in material reality. It is the power of consciousness that allows the Party to name the Ministry of Starvation “the Ministry of Plenty,” the Ministry of War “the Ministry of Peace,” the Ministry of Lies “the Ministry of Truth,” and the Ministry of Torture “the Ministry of Love.”⁹³

In other words, the mind is the be all and end all of real power for the Party. This is why O’Brien declares that “[t]he real power . . . is not power over things, but over men,”⁹⁴ “[o]ver the body—but above all, over the mind.”⁹⁵ The secret to the Party’s power is that “nothing [and above all, no power] exists except through human consciousness.”⁹⁶ Whenever external reality contradicts the Party’s claim to omnipotence, what the Party undertakes to change is not external reality but people’s minds. Hence the elaborate “reeducation” process to which the Party subjects the rebels before vaporizing them.

The meaning of the statement “Revolutionaries are often men of ideas” thus needs to be re-examined. Many revolutionaries are visionaries; however, some become such not in order to engage critically existing reality, but to escape from it. When totalitarian regimes find themselves incapable of controlling external reality, they tighten their control on the mind. Thus, Oceania can boast about “Plenty” when there is scarcity, about a rise in chocolate ration when precisely the opposite is true. Nietzsche’s critique of Plato can be usefully appropriated to critique the totalitarian regime’s flight into ideological fiction: the totalitarian leader is “a coward in the face of reality—consequently he flees into the ideal.”⁹⁷ Hence the hysterical proliferation of propaganda, youth movements, “reeducation camps,” and various forms of “blindfolding”⁹⁸ and brainwashing in totalitarian regimes.

⁹² *Id.* at 277.

⁹³ *Id.* at 225.

⁹⁴ *Id.* at 279.

⁹⁵ *Id.* at 277.

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 278.

⁹⁷ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *What I Owe to the Ancients* para. 2, in *Twilight of the Idols*, in *TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS AND THE ANTI-CHRIST* 118 (R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1968).

⁹⁸ The purpose of such brainwashing operations is to blind people to external reality and to make them substitute mental ideas for objective facts.

When a regime's thirst for power is prompted by its vague awareness of its powerlessness to control material reality (however reluctant the regime may be to acknowledge this even to itself), its rule inevitably demonstrates the desperation, the ruthlessness, and the vengefulness of those eaten up by *ressentiment*.⁹⁹ The less "omnipotent" a regime is in reality, the more omnipotent it fantasizes itself to be, and the more anxious it becomes in extracting confirmation of this fantasy from its subjects. All the frustrations it encounters in its *inability* to conquer reality it takes out on its subjects. It attempts to compensate for its inability—it attempts to prove its "*ability*"—by bullying its citizens into subjection and abjection, by turning them into slaves whose role is to grant their master recognition of his power and his "*ability*." Thus, the primary position of a totalitarian regime is not the celebratory affirmation of its own being and worth, but the negation of the dignity of its citizens. The regime compensates for its lack of self-confidence by making its subjects small. This is why the totalitarian regime's bullying of its subjects is often performed in an inflated manner: the regime seeks self-aggrandizement through a continuous negation of an "other."¹⁰⁰ The regime's identity, in other words, is derived negatively from the reduction of whomever they interact with rather than positively from an ability for self-affirmation.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche uses *ressentiment* to define the "bad" and to describe the "slave morality" of Christianity: "What is *bad*? But I have already answered this question: everything that proceeds from weakness, from envy, from *vengefulness*.—The anarchist and the Christian have a common origin." FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *The Anti-Christ* para. 57, in *TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS AND THE ANTI-CHRIST* 191 (R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1968). Nietzsche's discussion of Christianity in terms of a vengefulness associated with *ressentiment* appears in many other places as well, including, for example, in *Twilight of the Idols*.

Given that the Big (BR-)Other is in many ways a secularized version of the Christian God, much of Nietzsche's discussion of Christianity and *ressentiment* can be applied to critiquing the totalitarian Party.

¹⁰⁰ This observation is appropriated from Yirmiyahu Yovel's, *Nietzsche, the Jews, and Ressentiment*. Yovel describes *ressentiment* as follows:

[R]essentiment—that vengeful animosity toward the "other" . . . which mediates the inferior person's sense of selfhood and makes it possible. In the anti-Semite's case, his fervor conceals a profound lack of self-confidence. His primary position is not the celebratory affirmation of his own being and worth, but the negation of the Jew, conceived as his absolute other. . . . —which he does in an inflated manner. . . .

Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Nietzsche, the Jews, and Ressentiment*, in NIETZSCHE, *GENEALOGY, MORALITY: ESSAYS ON NIETZSCHE'S GENEALOGY OF MORALS* 227 (Richard Schacht ed., 1994).

¹⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze has a telling formulation of the way the creature of *ressentiment* mediates his sense of selfhood through negating the other: "We can guess what the creature of *ressentiment* wants: he wants others to be evil, he needs others to be evil in order to be able to consider himself good. *You are evil, therefore I am good*. . . ." GILLES

It is thus not surprising that the totalitarian regime is suffused with the vengefulness, envy, and control-mania of the weak-spirited.¹⁰² Lacking the capacity for pleasure, the superegoistic totalitarian regime seeks to ruin its subjects' faculty for enjoyment.¹⁰³ Hence the Party's endeavors to destroy sexual pleasure in 1984. "You wanted a good time; 'they,' meaning the Party, wanted to stop you having it," remarks Julia.¹⁰⁴ As Nietzsche points out, *ressentiment* is "rooted in the envy of all that is noble, healthy, and powerful." The Party seeks control not just out of envy. Weak and insecure, it is also afraid of challenges and competitions.¹⁰⁵ The Party wants to destroy not only sexual pleasure, but also all forms of "competing" pleasures, in order to ensure that its subjects take pleasure only in the officially approved activities. O'Brien makes this very clear to Winston when he says, "[t]here will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All *competing* pleasures will be destroyed."¹⁰⁶

The irony is, while O'Brien claims that the Party's "omnipotence" renders the existence of science superfluous, it is actually the Party's *impotence* that renders the non-existence of science necessary. Science, in other words, needs to be eliminated so that there will be no other truth competing against the Party's official "Truth." It is the abolition of science that enables the

DELEUZE, NIETZSCHE AND PHILOSOPHY 119 (1983).

¹⁰² We can think of the totalitarian regime and its subjects in terms of the superego and the ego. No matter how much the ego has submitted, the superego will still fault it for being guilty. No matter how sincerely the subjects of the totalitarian regime believe their rulers to be "omnipotent," the regime will still suspect their compliance and dedication. The regime will hence go on looking for "external enemies and internal traitors." This is the real reason why, for the Party,

[t]he heretic, the enemy of society, will always be there . . . [to] be defeated and humiliated over again The espionage, the betrayals, the arrests, the tortures, the executions, the disappearances will never cease. It will be a world of terror as much as a world of triumph. . . . Goldstein and his heresies will live for ever. Every day, at every moment, they will be defeated, discredited, ridiculed, spat upon—and yet they will always survive.

ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 280-81. The regime's continuous suspicion of its subjects actually betrays its own insecurity—its own awareness that its "omnipotence" is only a mental construct easily contradicted by objective reality.

¹⁰³ For an excellent psychoanalytic explication of the differences between jealousy and envy, see JOAN COPJEC, *Sour Justice, or: Liberal Envy, in* IMAGINE THERE'S NO WOMAN: ETHICS AND SUBLIMATION (2002).

¹⁰⁴ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 137.

¹⁰⁵ The totalitarian regime is hence the slave rather than the master in the Nietzschean worldview. It is anything but the Nietzschean *Übermensch* who loves challenges.

¹⁰⁶ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 280 (emphasis added).

Party to declare that it has the power to blot out the stars, and to make two plus two equal five.

For the same reason, the Party forbids its citizens from learning anything about the outside world. They are afraid that their experience with the outside will challenge “the Truth” dictated by the Party:

War prisoners apart, 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. If he were allowed contact with foreigners . . . The sealed world in which he lives would be broken, and the fear, hatred and self-righteousness on which his morale depends might evaporate.¹⁰⁷

Contact with external reality threatens to dispel citizens’ illusion about the Party’s omnipotence and hence their recognition of the Party’s authority and their loyalty to their rulers. Since the Party’s power comes almost solely from its subjects’ recognition, to maintain its power, it must make sure that no one—in particular, no one’s mind—is allowed to stray from the official line. This explains totalitarian regimes’ extreme controlling impulse.

B. “Pure Power”: Total Control of Minds and Hearts

Precisely because despotic control (as opposed to, for example, democratic negotiations) is the only way for totalitarian regimes to maintain power, totalitarian regimes are extremely adept at inventing all kinds of controlling devices. Since a regime built upon ideological fictions needs to constantly come up with devices to shield off reality from both itself and its subjects, it develops great cunning and resourcefulness in tricking itself and others. To appropriate Nietzsche’s description of *ressentiment*, the totalitarian regime lacks the “trust and openness with [it]self” which is characteristic of the noble. Because it is “neither upright nor naive nor honest and straightforward with [it]self,” it acquires subtlety and complexity. “A race of such men of *ressentiment* is bound to become eventually *cleverer* than any noble race; it will also honour cleverness to a far greater degree. . . .”¹⁰⁸

Indeed, high officials of the Party in 1984 are very smart and shrewd. Winston is repeatedly impressed by O’Brien’s intelligence.¹⁰⁹ They are ingenious with inventions for controlling

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at 204.

¹⁰⁸ NIETZSCHE, ON THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS, *supra* note 9, First Essay para. 10.

¹⁰⁹ The novel abounds with references to O’Brien’s remarkable intelligence. See, e.g., ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 264, 268, 286.

both others and themselves. “*Crimestop*,” for example, is designed to shut off any mental faculty that might be able to detect flaws in the Party’s Truth:

Crimestop means the faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, of misunderstanding the simplest arguments if they are inimical to Ingsoc, and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction [*Crimestop*] requires a control over one’s mind as complete as that of a contortionist over his body.¹¹⁰

A related but even more rigorous mind-controlling method is “*doublethink*.” While “*crimestop*” prevents dangerous thinking before it leads the subject “astray,” “*doublethink*” allows the subject to neutralize undesirable facts or evidence even when they lay directly in front of his/her eyes:

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 . . . 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*.¹¹¹

Interestingly enough, *doublethink* involves turning every mental operation against itself: using logic to counter logic, morality to counter morality. This structure recalls the superego—what Nietzsche calls morality and what Freud associates with civilization—which sets a human being against himself/herself,¹¹² thus giving rise to *ressentiment*. Indeed, *doublethink* is possible only among an over-“civilized” (to the degree of being “decadent” in the Nietzschean sense), highly sophisticated group—a group capable of such a degree of self-discipline that they can continuously *deny* the external reality they themselves see and register out of loyalty to the Truth upheld by the Party. In this way, *doublethink* requires an even more austere form of *self-denial*

¹¹⁰ *Id.* at 220-21.

¹¹¹ *Id.* at 37-38 (emphasis added).

¹¹² In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche discusses how civilization “brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*.” NIETZSCHE, *GENEALOGY OF MORALS*, *supra* note 9, Third Essay para. 16.

and asceticism than that attributed by Nietzsche to modern science.¹¹³ While modern science demands only the withholding of one's emotions and subjective feelings, doublethink demands strict suppression of both emotional and intellectual faculties.

Not surprisingly, although *crimestop* and *doublethink* are mandatory for everyone, they are practiced with special rigor by high officials. Since "it is often necessary for a member of the Inner Party to know that this or that item of war news is untruthful," such dangerous knowledge needs to be "neutralised by the technique of *doublethink*."¹¹⁴ The higher up a position one occupies in the Party, the more severe the self-discipline and self-denial needed. As a result, "those who have the best knowledge of what is happening are also those who are furthest from seeing the world as it is. In general, the greater the understanding, the greater the delusion: the more intelligent, the less sane." This is one of the horrors of totalitarian regimes: the people with the most power and intelligence in the state are also the most insane and the furthest removed from reality. In addition, because they are the severest practitioners of self-denial, they are also the most consumed by *ressentiment*, the most driven by "the ever increasing spiritualization and deification of cruelty."¹¹⁵

Indeed, the Party misses no chance to catch heretics and inflict on them the cruellest torture "for their good." Characteristic of the creature of *ressentiment*, the Party is always suspicious, always watching for traitors, always looking for heretics and enemies to ridicule, to spit on, to torture, and to execute.¹¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the Party is dedicated to police espionage, to technologies which would allow the Party "to discover . . . what another human being is thinking."¹¹⁷ After daily subjection to strenuous exercises of doublethink and crimestop, the high officials want to make sure that others suffer similar or worse mental ordeals. People in Oceania are constantly subjected to intimidation and harassment, constantly being reminded that they are being watched by the formidable Big (BR-)Other: "On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG

¹¹³ In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche calls modern science "*the latest and noblest form*" of ascetic ideal. NIETZSCHE, *GENEALOGY OF MORALS*, *supra* note 9, Third Essay para. 23.

¹¹⁴ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 200.

¹¹⁵ NIETZSCHE, *GENEALOGY OF MORALS*, *supra* note 9, Second Essay para. 6.

¹¹⁶ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 280-81.

¹¹⁷ *Id.* at 201.

BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.”¹¹⁸

The threat of surveillance is not a mere bluff either. The regime has set up a sophisticated panopticon so that no one can escape the gaze of the Big (BR-)Other: “How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to.”¹¹⁹ No one caught for a lapse in mental self-discipline is ever spared. O’Brien makes clear to Winston the horrifying consequences of “fail[ing] in humility [and] in self-discipline:”¹²⁰

Do not imagine that you will save yourself, Winston, however completely you surrender to us. . . . 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 We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back 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.¹²¹

Being truly *totalitarian*, the Party in 1984 is not satisfied with merely policing people’s thoughts. In order to have total control over people, it wants absolute command of its subjects’ feelings as well. At first, Winston and Julia think that even though the regime always succeeds in “changing people’s minds,” they will have one space left for freedom, integrity, and resistance, and that is their feelings. Julia thinks that the regime cannot stop people from loving each other: “They can’t get inside you.” Winston concurs, and remarks that “[t]hey could not alter your feelings: for that matter you could not alter them yourself, even if you wanted to [T]he inner heart, whose workings were mysterious even to yourself, remained impregnable.”¹²² This is why for Winston and Julia, even implicating each other in confessions does not constitute betrayal. Real betrayal occurs only if the regime can stop them from loving each other.¹²³

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 3.

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at 5.

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 261.

¹²¹ *Id.* at 268-69.

¹²² *Id.* at 174.

¹²³ As Winston points out to Julia, “Confession is not betrayal. What you say or do doesn’t matter: only feelings matter. If they could make me stop loving you—that would be the real betrayal.” ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 173.

The Party understands this “final space of resistance” very well, and hence disciplines and punishes “deviance in feeling” even more severely than “deviance in thought.” Winston is sent to Room 101 not for straying from the Party intellectually but for loving Julia. After the first interrogation, “in the mind he ha[s] surrendered, but he ha[s] hoped to keep the inner heart inviolate.”¹²⁴ However, that dream is crushed. Room 101 cures him *totally*. The final two sentences of the novel make this clear: “[Winston] ha[s] won the victory over himself. He love[s] Big Brother.”¹²⁵

In the end, Winston loves the Big (BR-)Other so much that he even longs for his own execution.¹²⁶ Winston is not the only “convert” who would die for his love of the Big (BR-)Other. Prior to him, “tough ones” like Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford also asked to die loving the Big (BR-)Other. O’Brien recounts how, toward the end of their interrogation, the three men were whimpering, grovelling, weeping, “not with pain or fear, only with penitence”:

By the time we were finished with them. . . . [t]here was nothing left in them except sorrow for what they had done, and love of Big Brother. It was touching to see how they loved him. *They begged to be shot quickly, so that they could die while their minds were still clean.*¹²⁷

Such willing victims and dedicated subjects remind one of the loyal communists in Stalinist Russia who made false confessions of guilt in order to help maintain the consistency of the Stalinist fiction. In Lacanian terms, these victims were so willing because they could not afford to see any gap in the big Other. Totalitarianism strikes us as exceptionally cruel precisely because of its excess of ideas and ideals, because of its jealous guardianship of the perfect consistency of its ideological fictions, and, above all, because of its success in creating willing victims who would give up their lives to defend the perfection of the Big (BR-)Other.

¹²⁴ *Id.* at 293.

¹²⁵ *Id.* at 311.

¹²⁶ Immediately before the ending of the novel, Winston indulges himself in the following “blissful dream”:

He was back in the Ministry of Love, with everything forgiven, his soul white as snow. He was in the public dock, confessing everything, implicating everybody. He was walking down the white-tiled corridor, with the feeling of walking in sunlight, and an armed guard at his back. *The long-hoped-for bullet was entering his brain.*

Id. at 311 (emphasis added).

¹²⁷ *Id.* at 268 (emphasis added).

VII. A NIETZSCHEAN CRITIQUE OF TOTALITARIANISM AS A SELF-DEFEATING ENTERPRISE

Nietzsche takes Christianity to task for positing a realm of truth over and against experience. By so doing, Christianity renders human beings incapable of engaging reality, thus allowing injustice and incompetence to flourish. This, according to Nietzsche, is the Christian priest's "*greatest crime against humanity*."¹²⁸ Like Christianity, the totalitarian regime's substitution of its own Truth for the truths drawn from the sensible world and everyday experience creates a kind of cognitive incapacity to handle natural and political calamities. Totalitarianism, *in reality*, is the politics of the slave rather than of the master, and the aim of the slave-ruler is to subjugate his entire state to a second level of slavery, subservient to his/her own slavishness. By shutting its polity off from reality, the totalitarian regime subordinates itself and its subjects in an opaque bondage to ideological fantasies. Totalitarian regimes are guilty of many kinds of crimes against humanity. The reduction of human beings to slavishness and to total dependence on the regime would, in Nietzsche's opinion, constitute one of those crimes.

For Nietzsche, nihilism is on the horizon, meaning begins to dissolve, "when a world view is no longer adequate to the 'facts' of experience in terms of reflexive needs for subjectivity." As Mark Warren rightly explains, for Nietzsche, "a world view is in trouble when it cannot account for most of what we *erkennen* in terms of our need to live, to act, and to situate ourselves as agents."¹²⁹ This can have serious political as well as existentialist consequences. When a person discovers that his/her Christian (or any other) system of values has no place in the real world, s/he might become prey to despair or cynicism. When a revolutionary government becomes *demoralized* by its failure to reform the world according to its values, rage and state terror may ensue.¹³⁰ What happens is that when a regime with deficient understanding of the world attempts to impose its ideal order on that world, when it seeks to bring freedom on behalf of humanity, its efforts are bound to run into obstacles and even resistance due to its ignorance of the world it tries to reform. At this moment, the regime finds that (or thinks that) humanity has become its enemy. In Gillian Rose's words, the

¹²⁸ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *DER ANTICHRIST* para. 49.

¹²⁹ WARREN, *supra* note 76, at 40-41.

¹³⁰ See NIETZSCHE, *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL*, *supra* note 43, paras. 38, 46, 212.

revolutionary regime under such circumstances “fails to understand that it has itself created its enemy as a result of its own definition of actuality and its own definition of the law. It considers the world to be an alien necessity or law” against which it has to assert the absolute authority of its own Truth and its own Law. This regime “remains especially deranged and *perverted*, raving in *self-righteous* indignation. But it is a vain conceit which *hates* all others. . . . It clings to the idea that *the unrealized and unrealizable law of its own heart is the only justice*.”¹³¹

Interestingly enough, when the regime is demoralized by its failure to reform the world, it begins to hate that world and treat humanity as its enemy. One symptom of this defensive position is the way the regime guards its “Justice” with an exaggerated degree of self-righteousness. The regime’s frustrations with its own powerlessness turns into *ressentiment*, which it unleashes onto society in the form of terror. To retrace the story, a regime founded on excessive idealism and little awareness of human reality is bound to fail in its attempt to violently impose an abstract, ideal order that is totally alien to the mores of the society in question. In that failure, the regime experiences the perversion of its goal and intent. The regime’s attempt to reform the world ends up being a re-forming/de-forming of itself, with its good intentions perpetually inverted/perverted.¹³² The end result is absolute crime emerging on the other side of absolute virtue, and Dystopia on the other side of Utopia.

This way, the regime’s “highest values devalue themselves,”¹³³ and nihilism begins to take over. As Ross Poole explains, Nietzsche’s nihilism involves a “loss of value . . . not through the application of higher values, but through a form of self-destruction.”¹³⁴ While nihilism is the product of this self-destruction, nihilism is also likely to cause more self-destruction of the same kind. Nihilism, in other words, is destructive rather than affirmative of life. Nietzsche faults morality, “the *décadence* instinct,” for opening the door to nihilism.¹³⁵ The abstract virtues,

¹³¹ GILLIAN ROSE, HEGEL CONTRA SOCIOLOGY 169-70 (1981) (emphasis added). The quoted passage comes from Rose’s explication of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See G. W. F. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT para. 377 (A. V. Miller trans., 1977).

Despite Nietzsche’s critique of Hegel, Rose’s Hegelian analysis helps elucidate Nietzsche’s insight that regimes demoralized by their failure to implement Christian ideals (such as fraternity, equality, justice, and peace) in the real world are likely to end up reigning through terror.

¹³² See ROSE, *supra* note 131, at 164.

¹³³ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, THE WILL TO POWER para. 2 (Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1968).

¹³⁴ Ross Poole, *Nietzsche: The Subject of Morality*, 7 RADICAL PHIL. 54 (1990).

¹³⁵ See FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *Morality as Anti-Nature* para. 5, in *Twilight of the Idols*,

the excessive idealism, and the extreme self-discipline and self-denial imposed by certain revolutionary regimes on their people are radical versions of this “*décadence instinct*”—radicalizations which lead to the subjection of entire societies to serious forms of nihilism. Nietzsche remarks that the tragedy of revolution driven by extreme idealism is the tragedy of nihilism. The perversion of the French Revolution into the Reign of Terror and the perversion of the old revolution into the new Party in 1984 are both instances of this kind.

Moral and political asceticism are both breeding grounds for, and symptoms of, nihilism. Both forms of asceticism share with nihilism a hostility to life. Through its dedication to ideology and its hostility toward the objective world, the totalitarian regime removes itself and its people from *life* and reality. In 1984, for example, the Party is so incapable of facing life and the real world that it enforces *crimestop* and *doublethink*, alters historical records, “vaporizes heretics,” remains permanently paranoid of challenges, and imposes sexual puritanism. In short, many policies and practices of the Party betray “an extraordinary hatred, a hatred for life, a hatred for all that is active and affirmative in life.”¹³⁶

No human being or human establishment can continue to survive while being so hostile to life itself. Winston’s arguments against O’Brien’s belief in the immortality of the regime derive their force from a rather Nietzschean belief in life. Winston predicts that the regime will fall, because “it is impossible to found a civilisation on fear and hatred and cruelty. It would never endure.” A regime founded on “fear and hatred and cruelty” is founded on *ressentiment*—the opposite of the life-affirming principle. Such a regime, Winston reasons, “would have *no vitality*. It would disintegrate. It would *commit suicide*.”¹³⁷ Winston reaffirms the power of life against *ressentiment* when he declares: “Somehow you will fail. Something will defeat you. *Life* will defeat you.”¹³⁸

Winston then continues: “Sooner or later they will see you for what you are, and then they will tear you to pieces.” He is convinced that “the spirit of Man” will eventually defeat the totalitarian regime.¹³⁹ The “they” obviously refers to “the proles.” Before Winston is caught, he emphasizes several times how “the

in TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS AND THE ANTICHRIST 29, 56 (R. J. Hollingdale trans., 1990).

¹³⁶ The formulation is adopted from DELEUZE, *supra* note 101, at 122.

¹³⁷ ORWELL, *supra* note 1, at 281 (emphasis added).

¹³⁸ *Id.* at 282 (emphasis added).

¹³⁹ *Id.*

future belong[s] to the proles.”¹⁴⁰ “*If there is hope,*” writes Winston, “*it lies in the proles.*”¹⁴¹ The Spirit of Man emanates from the proles because, unlike the over-disciplined, over-artificially-cultivated Party members, the proles have preserved their instincts¹⁴² and their humanity: “The proles ha[ve] stayed human. . . . They ha[ve] held on to the primitive emotions which he himself ha[s] to re-learn by conscious effort.”¹⁴³ By contrast, “[Party members] are not human.”¹⁴⁴ In other words, the proles are still capable of affirming life,¹⁴⁵ whereas Party members are both victims and perpetrators of the totalitarian regime’s destructive *ressentiment*. Their instincts, including the life instinct, have been destroyed.¹⁴⁶ They have been hollowed out until they are little more than robots, with nothing inside save for what has been programmed by the Party. The higher up people are in the ranks, the more thoroughly they are “preprogrammed,” and as their instincts become more and more curtailed, their *ressentiment* also grows increasingly intense. “Goldstein’s book” points out that the prevailing moods of a Party member are “fear, adulation and orgiastic triumph”:

In other words it is necessary that he should have the mentality appropriate to a state of war. It does not matter whether the war is actually happening, and, since no decisive victory is possible, it does not matter whether the war is going well or badly. All that is needed is that a state of war should exist [T]he higher up the ranks one goes, the more marked [the war hysteria] becomes. It is precisely in the Inner Party that war

¹⁴⁰ *Id.* at 229.

¹⁴¹ *Id.* at 72.

¹⁴² *Id.* at 87.

¹⁴³ *Id.* at 172.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.* at 173.

¹⁴⁵ Winston’s celebration of the proles as preservers of the life-bearing, life-affirming principle is evident in the fact that life and fertility are the focal points of his admiration for a proletarian woman whom he spots singing down in the yard while hanging up her laundry. He notices her “powerful mare-like buttocks,” *id.* at 228, and he has faith “out of those mighty loins a race of conscious beings must one day come.” *Id.* at 230:

The woman down there ha[s] *no mind*, she ha[s] only *strong arms, a warm heart and a fertile belly*. He wonder[s] how many children she ha[s] given birth to. It [may] easily be fifteen. She ha[s] had her momentary flowering, a year, perhaps, of wildrose beauty, and then she ha[s] suddenly swollen like a fertilised fruit and grown hard and red and coarse, and then her life ha[s] been laundering, scrubbing, darning, cooking, sweeping, polishing, mending, scrubbing, laundering, first for children, then for grandchildren, over thirty unbroken years.
At the end of it she [is] still singing.

Id. at 228-29 (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁶ “Goldstein’s book,” for example, points out how “the new High group, unlike all its forerunners, [do] *not act upon instinct* but [know] what [is] needed to safeguard its position.” *Id.* at 214 (emphasis added).

hysteria and hatred of the enemy are strongest.¹⁴⁷

These over-disciplined (or, in Freud's term, "over-civilized") Party members are good illustrations of what Nietzsche means by creatures of decadence and nihilism.

From a Nietzschean viewpoint, totalitarianism is a self-defeating enterprise because to be opposed to life means being self-destructive, and nothing can sustain if it sustains itself by feeding on its own destruction. Driven by the superegoistic logic of "man at war with himself," every attempt of the totalitarian regime at self-assertion tends to be simultaneously held back, or even cancelled out, by a force of self-negation or self-destruction. *Ressentiment* itself is first and foremost a two-edged dagger: the abstract love for the Big (BR-)Other—artificially created by the removal of a Party member's personal attachments and human affection—can easily turn into hatred, just as the artificial hatred for Goldstein—the arch-enemy of the Party—can easily turn into love and reverence. Such has indeed been the experience of Winston at a "Two Minutes Hate":

[T]he rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. Thus, at one moment Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration, and Big Brother seemed to tower up, an invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes of Asia, and Goldstein, in spite of his isolation, his helplessness and the doubt that hung about his very existence, seemed like some sinister enchanter, capable by the mere power of his voice of wrecking the structure of civilisation.¹⁴⁸

This instability—perpetual because internally generated—is symptomatic of how a regime which thrives on contradictions (the Ministry of War-Peace, of Truth-Lies, of Love-Torture, of Plenty-Scarcity) can also easily die by contradictions. A regime which thrives on *doublethink* can also perish by *doublethink*

¹⁴⁷ *Id.* at 200.

¹⁴⁸ *Id.* at 16-17.