

way of worshipping God but in his failure to practice that worship. The missionary in all his dealings with his people must be conscious that he is liable to be associated with that failure, if not in reality, then in their minds.

There are hundreds of more or less Christian African sects in South Africa. Islam has come from the north and is well established in parts of Central Africa. In these assemblies the African feels able to express his reverence for God in tranquility of mind, feels able to realize his dignity as a man. And yet, how many Africans have admitted to a priest that they look to Rome as to their mother? The South African Bishops have in the clearest terms condemned racial discrimination as an offence against God. The lives of heroic missionaries bear witness to the absolute necessity of being committed to the African as a child of God and a brother in Christ. Unless the faithful, priests and people, heed these examples, their responsibility is a most heavy one.

An Analysis of Newspeak

BRIAN WICKER

The recent publication of his *Collected Essays* has renewed interest in Orwell's position as a writer, and especially in his attitude to the artist's commitments in the world. The writer's problem, in a time of conflict, according to Orwell, was that 'one half of him, which in a sense is the whole of him, can act as resolutely, even as violently if need be, as anyone else. But his writings, in so far as they have any value, will always be the product of the saner self that stands aside, records the things that are done and admits their necessity, but refuses to be deceived as to their true nature'.¹ For Raymond Williams (e.g. in *The Observer*, May 21 1961) this separation, while understandable, is not necessary: 'it is part of the dissociation between the individual and society which is our deepest crisis'. Elsewhere he points out that any defence of liberty by an exile, as Orwell chose to be, standing apart

¹*Writers and Leviathan* (*Collected Essays* p. 434).

from society, is bound to be ambiguous because 'while the rights in question may be called individual, the condition of their guarantee is inevitably social . . . to belong to a community is to be part of a whole, and, necessarily, to accept, while helping to define its disciplines'.² While I agree with this view, I want to argue in this article that the source of Orwell's dilemma, and indeed of the dissociation in general, has an important but hitherto undiscussed, philosophical aspect—to put it crudely, Cartesian dualism—which manifests itself in Orwell's treatment of two related problems: the problem of language and the problem of orthodoxy.

Undoubtedly one of the most important things which Orwell did was to expose the connection between political language and political behaviour, by a serious attempt to relate what is said to how it is being said, between what is spoken and what is being thought, intended and felt. This analysis is based on a certain view of language: 'an instrument which we shape for our own purposes', rather than an autonomous natural growth. By exposing the faults of modern political language Orwell felt he could do something towards political regeneration: not by giving a recipe for a 'good prose style', but by clarifying expression in order to make it more difficult to get away with dishonest or foolish thoughts. This view of language, clearly stated in *Politics and the English Language* is based upon two almost contradictory ideas. The first is that words are merely the garment of thought—something selected from a range of possible choices, like an overcoat in an outfitter's shop. The second is that language is more than a means of displaying thought publicly: it is inextricably connected with having the thought in the first place. The first theory is most fully stated thus:

'When you think of a concrete object, you think wordlessly, and then, if you want to describe the thing you have been visualizing you probably hunt about till you find the exact words that seem to fit. When you think of something abstract you are more inclined to use words from the start, and unless you make a conscious effort to prevent it, the existing dialect will come rushing in and do the job for you, at the expense of blurring or even changing your meaning. Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures or sensations. Afterwards one can choose—not simply *accept*—the phrases that will best cover the meaning'.³ To the second theory belongs Orwell's belief that to restrict the

²*Culture and Society* (Pelican Ed.) p. 281.

³*Politics and the English Language* (Collected Essays, p. 350).

range of linguistic choice is to restrict the range of possible thoughts: and this is the basis of the theory of Newspeak in 1984.

I think the first theory is closely related to the process of dissociation referred to by Raymond Williams: but before trying to show how this is so, an interesting example may be given of its application in Chapter XII of *Homage to Catalonia*, where Orwell describes the experience of being shot:

'Roughly speaking it was the sensation of being *at the centre* of an explosion. There seemed to be a loud bang and a blinding flash of light all round me, and I felt a tremendous shock—no pain, only a violent shock, such as you get from an electric terminal: with it a sense of utter weakness, a feeling of being stricken and shrivelled up to nothing'.

Now, no doubt, in writing this, he had to go over again the sensations involved. However, that was a purely private procedure into which no outsider could possibly enter. But that having been done, it is noticeable that Orwell does not, in fact, speak in terms of sensations at all, but of analogies. There is no sensation as such, definable as *the* sensation of being at the centre of an explosion, no mental picture which could be generally referred to as *the* picture of a man being shrivelled up—let alone to nothing! So he has not, in fact, described what he visualized when 'thinking of' the sensations involved in the very concrete experience of being shot: he has merely perceived analogies and chosen those which seem most apt. There is no reason here to postulate some intermediate process, between going over the sensations again, and perceiving the analogies, which is the process of choosing the best words to describe the sensations: for describing the sensations does not enter into the process at all. Good description is a matter of perceiving the best likenesses, not of choosing the best words to 'describe' objects. Writing is not a kind of drawing in words. It is saying what the object is *like*.

The trouble with Orwell's theory is that it seems to imply that the likeness between objects is purely a property of the objects, and is perceivable without any conceptual or linguistic apparatus. With concrete objects, especially, we can have a clear and distinct idea of them through bare sense-perception and it is this fact which makes them so reliable as guarantors of external reality. They will not deceive us into thinking they are like one kind of thing when in fact they are like another. The difficulties of this view should not obscure the valid point Orwell is making: namely that it is dangerous to imagine that what is 'meant' when a person uses a certain form of words is already *present*

somewhere in his mind before he gives it expression. Orwell subscribes to this theory, of course: but he sees that it is open to grave perils. His use of the 'concrete object', and its visualizability, as a shield against possible deception is based on a sound philosophical instinct. In fact, it is exactly similar to Wittgenstein's:

To understand the relation between thought and expression 'it is useful to consider the relation in which the solutions of mathematical problems stand to the context and ground of their formulation. The concept "trisection of the angle with ruler and compasses" when people are trying to do it, and, on the other hand, when it has been proved that there is no such thing'.⁴

If you try to form a picture, or to think out in the concrete, the process of trisection, you soon realize its impossibility: but merely to entertain the idea seems somehow plausible. Orwell's mistake, of course, is to think that, because the act of 'visualization' is what shows its impossibility most clearly, this is what ultimately makes the trisection impossible: that, unless I can see the object concretely, I can have no absolute guarantee against being deceived. But many purely abstract examples are just as easy to deal with. The contradictoriness of putting together the propositions in the following argument for God's existence:

'Everything is caused by something else: therefore, there is something which causes everything else' is just as easy to spot as visualizing the trisection of an angle.

An opposite situation is also possible: namely to be deceived even by the simplest and most direct uses of concrete objects. In the essay on *Politics and the English Language*, Orwell diagnoses the corruption of political language as consisting in vagueness, long-windedness, dead metaphor, pretentiousness, etc. But in *Animal Farm*, where the corruption is actually practised, these faults are not apparent in the language of the pigs. For example, when the pigs break the Seventh Commandment by sleeping in beds, Squealer explains their behaviour not merely by lying, but by twisting the very simplest word:

'You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against *beds*? A bed merely means a place to sleep in. A pile of straw in a stall is a bed, properly regarded . . .'

By redefining the word *bed* in this way, Squealer obliterates an essential and perfectly simple 'visualizable' distinction. But how can this purely linguistic device affect the world of concrete objects? After all, the very

⁴L. Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations* 334.

notion of analogy makes ambiguity possible, by extending meanings, so it is no answer in this case to hope for a final guarantee against corrupt thought in a precise correlation, or tabulation, of word against concept. Indeed, that is precisely the objective of Newspeak:

‘Every concept . . . will be expressed by exactly *one* word’.⁵

But the point of introducing Squealer’s piece of corruption is surely that this kind of tabulation *is* the answer. Merely writing the commandment down for all to see is not enough: the exact limits of the words must be universally agreed as well.

The mistake is that of imagining all language to consist of words which function as the names of objects, and which are learned by some process of ostensive definition. On such a theory, *bed* is a sound, represented by certain marks, which stands for, i.e., names that class of objects which consist of a spring supported by two end pieces, etc., etc. As long as this fact is recognized, the theory goes on to say, it is impossible to be taken in by Squealer’s swindle, because it will be obvious that merely being ‘a place to sleep in’ is not a sufficient criterion for labelling an object *bed*.

This theory of language is based on the fictitious notion that we learn a word like *bed* by seeing lots of beds and, by systematically not attending to their individual colours, shapes, sizes, etc., come to notice some common element shared by all of them, possession of which is indicated by calling them each a *bed*.⁶ If this theory has any plausibility for *bed* it certainly has none for a word like *science*, and Orwell knows it. In the C vocabulary of Newspeak there was no word for science, only words for its particular branches. Hence, science ‘as a habit of mind, or a method of thought’ was abolished, and so any possibility of believing that empirical verification could establish the truth about external reality was destroyed. Science is now a collective *name* for various particular examples of concrete activity, and as such it is quite unable to provide any basis for the discussion of scientific principles. The very logic of its use has been altered.⁷

While Orwell does not see the incoherence of the theory behind this transformation, he is well aware of its political implications. He sees that a word like *Fascism*, for instance, is used by unscrupulous people as

⁵*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Penguin Edition), p. 45.

⁶For a criticism of this abstractionist theory see P. Geach’s book *Mental Acts*.

⁷cf. the following, from a report on a visit to China (*The Guardian*, May 25 1961): ‘We once began a conversation with: “Suppose a person wishes to change his job . . .” and got the answer: “Which man? in what factory?” There is in fact no answer to anything not now, here and expedient’.

a kind of collective name for a miscellaneous range of items—say, rubber truncheons, the goose step, extermination of Jews, Spanish bishops, the Gothic alphabet, autobahns—in order to prevent people from thinking coherently about Fascism, and hence from opposing it. At the end of *Politics and the English Language* he remarks that:

‘Stuart Chase and others have come near to claiming that all abstract words are meaningless, and have used this as a pretext for a kind of political quietism. Since you don’t know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism?’

Now this is a very important observation, for it exposes one source of political cynicism and apathy. I do not merely mean that people are confused about political ideologies and feel helpless in trying to sort out the good from the bad in them, with the result that they cry ‘a plague on both your houses’ and turn on the television instead of going out to vote. I also mean that ‘moderate’ politicians who try, on grounds of expediency, to keep the political temperature down below normal on every important issue, are abetted by the modern political philosophers on grounds which closely resemble the reasons given by Stuart Chase for not opposing Fascism. As Iris Murdoch has pointed out,⁸ the anti-theoretical trend in philosophy, exemplified in T. D. Weldon’s *The Vocabulary of Politics*, for example, results in a feeling that morality, and theorizing about it, is somehow anti-liberal. Thus Weldon, in discussing words like *Communism* rejects the idea that ‘we must begin by asking the meanings’ and that ‘when we have discovered what these meanings are, we shall be qualified to pronounce on whether Communism is to be praised or condemned’. This enquiry is ‘doomed to sterility because words have not the meanings in the required sense at all: they simply have uses . . . they are not the names of anything’.⁹ But one of the prevalent, and insidious, uses, as Orwell sees, is as a kind of name. It is part of the theory of Newspeak, and especially of its B vocabulary, to substitute collective names for genuine political and moral concepts. Thus ‘all words grouping themselves round the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word *crimethink*’.¹⁰ The process behind this development is not one of increasing vagueness or greater abstraction: it entails a profound logical alteration. One cannot ask ‘What is crimethink?’ in the way that one

⁸cf. her article *A House of Theory* in the symposium *Conviction* edited by Norman Mackenzie, 1959.

⁹T. D. Weldon: *The Vocabulary of Politics* (Pelican Edition) p. 19.

¹⁰*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 246.

can ask 'What is science?'—for, unlike *Science* as a method of thought, *crimethink* can cover any thought whatever which the party wishes to name.

It follows from all this that the guarantee of our knowledge of objective reality lies in the preservation of a sound logic as much as in the experience of 'bare sensation' of external objects—even if such an experience were possible. For instance, it is no answer, to the suggestion that Negroes or Jews are not fully human, to say: look at them more closely and you will see that they are. It also depends on what kind of objects you are prepared to call *men* and what exactly you mean to imply by this 'calling'. The name-theory obliterates the distinction that unanimously refusing to call Negroes *men* does not stop them from being men, but that unanimously refusing to call Jones *Jones* is tantamount to his not being Jones. The upshot of that way of thinking is the idea that by not calling a person anything, his existence can be cancelled: he is simply an *unperson*.

It is because he inherited an incoherent epistemology that Orwell is inconsistent in his account of general terms. Sometimes he seems to think of the word *man* as a kind of collective name. Thus in a review of N. de Basily's *Russia under Soviet Rule* he says that 'in the past every tyranny was sooner or later overthrown . . . because of human nature, which as a matter of course desired liberty. But we cannot be at all certain that "human nature" is constant. It may be just as possible to produce a breed of men who do not wish for liberty as it is to produce a breed of hornless cows'.¹¹ But if human nature changes in any essential feature, then the individuals who come under it will be changed. No amount of calling them human will make them human any longer, in the sense in which, at present, possessing a human nature is what makes an individual to be human. This point is relevant to the very conception of 1984:

'Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in shapes of your own choosing'. This power is manifested in the Party's absolute control of the objective world and of the past, which are the very context in which personality is developed. Cut off completely from these, a being cannot properly be conceived of as a person, for it is the encounter with reality, and the use of memory, which constitutes the basis for personal identity. If control over persons is the Party's aim, then to reduce its victims to abject automata is to defeat its own object, for it means abolishing the very material which

¹¹Quoted in John Atkins: *George Orwell*, p. 254.

it seeks to manipulate.

In 1984 Orwell's pessimism is so fundamental that it ends up in logical contradiction: but in an earlier work (*Looking Back on the Spanish War*) he does seem to imply that to be human at all depends on being able to fasten on to certain indubitable objective facts. In past disagreements, he says, 'there would still be that body of, as it were, neutral fact on which neither would seriously challenge the other. It is just this common basis of agreement, with its implication that human beings are all one species of animal, that totalitarianism destroys'.¹² But the question here arises, whether by abolishing agreement among people, it is possible to destroy the notion of the one human species; or whether the notion of a species is based, not upon agreement about what to call certain kinds of thing, but upon the very conditions which make the use of language possible at all. This is a question to which Orwell never seems to give a satisfactory reply. There is no indication how the work of the editors of the Newspeak dictionary is to be applied to the actual use of words by people at large. I am not here thinking of the technical problem of how the Thought Police actually control talking, but the logical problem of how a word-list is related to a language-game. Orwell's theory seems to be that a language simply consists of its own vocabulary, plus a set of grammarian's rules—about inflexions, irregular formations, etc.—which can be varied without reference to the vocabulary. Rules in the sense of a game do not exist for Orwell, in the conception of Newspeak. This is why he thinks it possible to reduce the consciousness of people by restricting their vocabulary: 'Every year, fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller'.¹³ But isn't this like preventing people from being able to play chess by taking the pieces away? As long as I have learned the rules of chess (including, of course, the appearance of the pieces—for this is part of the rules) it would be possible for me to play chess 'in my head' with an opponent similarly equipped, provided my intelligence and my memory were good enough. What would prevent me from thinking certain thoughts would not be my not having the vocabulary, but my not having mastery any longer of the rules—including the rules by which words of certain shapes function in the language-game in the way that they do. In fact, vocabulary *consists of these rules*. Hence, the only way to reduce people's consciousness is to make them unable to understand

¹²*Collected Essays*, p. 197.

¹³*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 45.

certain rules, or unable to remember them: that is, to make them less *intelligent*. Consider Wittgenstein's example of a tribe 'who measure lengths of a field by striding along and counting the steps. If different results are obtained for the same field, they think nothing of it . . . The notion of more accurate measurement does not enter into their lives, and so the notion of the *real* length does not either'.¹⁴ It does not follow from this example that, once they have grasped the idea of *real* length, they can be compelled to not-be-able-to-grasp-it once more, simply by abolishing the phrase *real length* and destroying all the tape-measures. Not to be able to understand it entails not to be *able* to understand it—not merely not to be able to remember the words. To attain the objective of Newspeak depends on compelling people to forget the rules of the language-game, and to not be able to remember them afterwards. But this kind of forgetting is not the same as simply not remembering: for it involves a personal voluntary act of forgetting. No doubt Orwell's idea was that, in abolishing words, the conditions for being able to remember were removed, and the compulsion to forget was therefore indirect. But what conditions are there which, if removed, would make me unable to remember the rules of chess—other than the ability to use my memory? It might be easy for the Proles to not-remember how to use abstract or difficult concepts: but with the intelligentsia, co-operation in forgetting was required. *Crimestop* 'includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors . . .'¹⁵ But not having the power to grasp analogies is different from having the power to not-grasp them. Exercising the power of not-grasping an analogy, or not-remembering a rule, or not-spotting a fallacy entails having a grasp of what it is you are required not to grasp; otherwise how could you decide not to do it?

Now Orwell admits there are contradictions in Ingsoc. Double-think is the capacity to accept two contradictory beliefs simultaneously and wholeheartedly. But the question is, what did Orwell think a contradiction was? Was it something which could not *be* (like the 'proof' of the trisection of an angle) or was it a limitation in the human mind, which could be removed by conditioning? If he accepted the first alternative, then all his work of exposing the dangers of being able to control thought, through manipulating language and using double-think, was a waste of time. It was based on something that he knew

¹⁴From notes taken at Wittgenstein's lectures, quoted by Norman Malcolm in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p. 48.

¹⁵*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 169.

could not happen. But if he accepted the second, epistemological interpretation, then it is relevant to consider his account of how we can be certain of truths about external objects, about the past and about our own personalities.

I have tried to show that for most of the time, Orwell was a kind of naive realist, who insisted that a pre-linguistic experience of undifferentiated sensations gives an immediate knowledge of how things are, and so provides the basis of all certainties. The evidence of the senses is the final indubitable guarantor of reality, whatever else it may be possible to doubt. This position is not consistently maintained, of course, and the idea of attacking reality through attacking language is a kind of refutation of it. But when Winston Smith, in his extremity of confusion, takes refuge in the 'concrete evidence' of the photograph of the conspirators, and later in the glass paperweight,¹⁶ he is surely underwriting Orwell's considered view. 'If the past survives anywhere', he says to Julia, 'it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them, like that lump of glass there'. It is language alone which provides the Party with its power to corrupt. Get rid of that and you are free. However, this is not merely an unnecessary conclusion: it is also an illogical one. When Winston buys the paperweight, which acts as a kind of symbol of objective truth, he is attracted by its apparent uselessness: but 'he could guess that it must once have been used as a paperweight'.¹⁷ Later Julia asks him what it is, and he replies, 'I don't think it was ever put to any use. That's what I like about it. It's a little chunk of history they've forgotten to alter'.¹⁸ In this way, but only by a piece of half-conscious lying, for he had already been able to guess its use, Winston makes the paperweight a symbol of his certainty about the past, and about his own personal memories. But it is only because he saw it in the first place as being a thing having some possible use, i.e., as being a thing of a certain *kind*, that he could conceive of it as being an historical relic. The paperweight's uselessness is significant in the way that any work of art is useless: to be useless is, so to speak, its use. But to see things within a conceptual framework such as this is to see them 'with words attached to them': if I did not know the rules for using words like 'useless' or 'art', I could not form the concept of this object's uselessness at all. Thus there is no refuge from language, either for the defenders of decency, or for the Thought Police and the Party.

¹⁶*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, pp. 66, 80, 119 and 126.

¹⁷*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 80.

¹⁸*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 119

And this means that they necessarily have something in common—something which implies that they are members of the one human species. In trying to destroy this idea they merely make its truth more obvious.

It is because of his Cartesian presuppositions—because he thinks he can look upon the objective world as wholly *other*, and himself as a kind of faithful camera recording ever more accurately what is presented to it from outside—that Orwell is able to regard the writer as wholly separate from the world, during his most vivid moments of recording such impressions. These are the moments when the creative writer is most truly himself, standing aside as the ‘saner self’ from the dirty work of politics, seeing and understanding it all, but remaining uninvolved. Orwell was not merely the victim of a morbid temperament, but of a deep philosophical dissociation between the observer and the world, between language and thought. This is what makes him such a relevant writer. Orwell’s life of exile is an exile from the world of the paperweight and the words which are inevitably attached to it.

This philosophical dualism is not only responsible for Orwell’s rejection of society: it is also responsible for his rejection of orthodoxies. Ideally, an orthodoxy is simply a reflection of the attempt by man to found his communal living upon a community of thinking—a sharing of thoughts as well as of goods. The opposite of orthodoxy ought to be the madness of solipsism. But for Orwell, the opposite of orthodoxy is common-sense—‘the heresy of heresies’.¹⁹ Now words were the instruments of orthodoxy, being the repositories of doctrine. Therefore, common-sense entailed the separation of word from thing. Things stood over against words as the foundation and test of truth. But just as he saw, inconsistently, the need for action in, as well as understanding of, the world, so Orwell saw that there was need for orthodoxy as well as liberty, because orthodoxy was the only possible guardian of moral law. Science—the empirical habit of thought—was, for Orwell, organized common-sense. It worked by verification on the ground of evidence, which is the basis of every assent to truth. The wickedness of Mr Macgregor, in *Burmese Days*, when confronted by the anonymous slanders against Dr Veraswami, consists in his not looking at the concrete evidence, and in trying to decide *a priori* whether the doctor is the *kind* of man to harbour seditious thoughts. The wickedness of Old Major, in putting to the *vote* the question ‘Are rats comrades?’ is that

¹⁹*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 68.

whether a person is a friend or an enemy is a question of his actions, motives and intentions, about which there is evidence to be considered. The wickedness of the non-literary reaction to a book—'This book is on my side, and therefore I must discover merits in it'—is that, unlike the literary reaction 'I like this book', questions of fact should have a bearing on the issue.²⁰ These are all cases of regarding evidence as primary even in our judgments about other people. It is an extension of the scientific habit to personal relationships. However valid they may be, the end of this train of thought is liable to be that of Winston Smith:

'The only evidence is inside my own mind, and I don't know with any certainty that any other being shares my memories.'²¹ The implication is that all certainty depends somehow on the strength of the evidence alone. My belief in other people is only an inference I make from 'I think: therefore I am' to 'You think: therefore you are': and since the validity of this inference cannot be proved from any evidence for it, I cannot be certain even of its conclusion.

But this is surely a mistake. However relevant evidence may be, certainty is ultimately a matter of voluntarily committing myself to a truth unconditionally.²² Because Orwell conceived of all certainties as being based solely on evidence, which he saw could not adequately support them, he rejected all orthodoxies as equally irrational and dangerous. In *Notes on Nationalism* his main point is that all orthodoxies involve refusing to admit some 'grossly obvious' fact because it conflicts with the orthodoxy. This is a valid point against an orthodoxy based on evidence alone: but it is no argument based on a certainty concerning 'the substance of things unseen', for the ground of this orthodoxy lies elsewhere. Orwell realized that Christianity was not merely based upon evidence: and in order to square this (for he thought Christianity in most ways a healthy manifestation of human aspirations) with the empirical habit, he was forced to say that religion was based on emotion. Thus in *The Clergyman's Daughter* the heroine's faith and its loss are both due to emotional conditioning. She begins as a Christian because that is how she was brought up: and she ceases to be a Christian because, in a fit of amnesia, she forgets how she was brought up.

²⁰cf. *Burmese Days* pp. 135 ff., *Animal Farm* (Penguin Edition), p. 11, and *Writers and Leviathan* (Collected Essays, p. 428).

²¹*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 127.

²²cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate* Q. XIV Art. 1; S.T. 2a 2ae, 1.4 and Newman *Grammar of Assent* passim.

In spite of this emphasis on emotion in religion, however, Orwell had a remarkably objective notion of what Christianity was about: it was about personal immortality, Heaven and Hell. Without Heaven and Hell, the whole edifice crumbles. The Rector in *The Clergyman's Daughter* is contemptible partly because he compromises between two mutually exclusive and exhaustive alternatives: to be 'daringly broad-minded and preach comforting sermons proving that there is no Hell and all good religions are the same' or to say 'Yes' to the atheistical Warburton's Question: 'Do you believe in Hell? When I say *believe* mind you, I'm not asking whether you believe in it in some milk and water metaphorical way like these modernist bishops . . . Do you believe in Hell as you believe in Australia?'²³ But how, if Hell is as objective as Australia, can it be mere emotion to believe in it?

The reason why Orwell had to say that all religion was emotion was that he had to reconcile the feeling that religion was good, with a conviction that it was incredible at face value. And the reason why he felt that it was good was that he felt that morality was ultimately a matter of law—natural law—and that that law was only intelligible on the basis of its promulgation by some authority. Morality was a matter of being obliged, not of being merely well behaved: and moral decision meant discovering where one's obligation lay and following it unhesitatingly, not debating whether conscience ought to be obeyed in this case. Gordon Comstock's decision to take the job in an advertising agency is an excellent example of being under a sense of moral obligation: 'He knew already what he was going to do . . . When the problem appeared it had brought its solution with it; all his hesitation had been a kind of make believe. He felt as though some outside force were pushing him.'²⁴

Miss G. E. M. Anscombe has pointed out²⁵ that when the notion of moral obligation ceases to be connected objectively to moral law as imposed by God, resort is usually had to convention as the binding force of society. Orwell saw that this solution meant more, not less restriction of liberty: 'In a society where there is no law, and in theory no compulsion, the only arbiter of behaviour is public opinion. But public opinion, because of the tremendous urge to conformity in gregarious animals, is less tolerant than any system of law. When human beings are governed by "Thou shalt not" the individual can

²³*The Clergyman's Daughter*, pp. 24 and 81.

²⁴*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, p. 279.

²⁵In *Philosophy* Vol. XXXIII, Jan. 1958.

practise a certain amount of eccentricity: when they are supposedly governed by “love” or “reason” he is under continuous pressure to behave in exactly the same way as everyone else’.²⁶ Hence the unanimity of the Houyhnhms on all subjects. But the only way of upholding a ‘thou shalt not’ morality is by doctrinal orthodoxy. The fact is that Orwell’s own brand of defiant reliance on pragmatic common-sense entails a contradiction within the order of things as radical as any which the orthodox inherit.²⁷ The answer is surely simple: namely an orthodoxy in which personal integrity, and the following of conscience, is actually part of the creed itself, and the first principle laid down for man from above in his moral life. This fundamental tenet of Christian teaching is the only solution to Orwell’s contradiction: and it is the only basis on which one can say that a single individual—like St Thomas More—can be objectively right, and all the others, both the leaders and their flocks, can be wrong. In following his conscience, More did not merely demonstrate his superior sanctity, but also, and *ipso facto*, his greater orthodoxy as well. His was a true exile of the ‘saner self’.

Why is it that sincere and honest men like Orwell do not see Christianity in this light? I think the answer can be found in his assertion that ‘“The Catholic Church is opposed to persecution” is a statement almost always made with an intent to deceive’.²⁸ Perhaps the most important question to which Catholics must give a practical answer in the next few decades is whether this assertion is to be true or false. Only a radical adjustment of the Church’s practical posture towards the modern world, through the development of a constructive theology of toleration, will be able to convince honest disbelievers like Orwell, who are concerned for the survival of decency and truth, that it has the answer to their problem.

²⁶*Politics versus Literature* (Collected Essays, p. 389).

²⁷*Writers and Leviathan* (Collected Essays, p. 432).

²⁸*Politics and the English Language* (Collected Essays, p. 343).