

George Orwell (25 June 1903 – 21 January 1950) was the pen name of British novelist, essayist, and journalist **Eric Arthur Blair**.

- **Spending the night out of doors has nothing attractive about it in London, especially for a poor, ragged, undernourished wretch.** Moreover sleeping in the open is only allowed in one thoroughfare in London. If the policeman on his beat finds you asleep, it is his duty to wake you up. That is because it has been found that a sleeping man succumbs to the cold more easily than a man who is awake, and England could not let one of her sons die in the street. So you are at liberty to spend the night in the street, providing it is a sleepless night. But there is one road where the homeless are allowed to sleep. Strangely, it is the **Thames Embankment**, not far from the Houses of Parliament. We advise all those visitors to England who would like to see the reverse side of our apparent prosperity to go and look at those who habitually sleep on the Embankment, with their filthy tattered clothes, their bodies wasted by disease, a living reprimand to the Parliament in whose shadow they lie.
- To the well-fed it seems cowardly to complain of tight boots, because the well-fed live in a different world—a world where, if your boots are tight, you can change them; their minds are not warped by petty discomfort. But below a certain income the petty crowds the large out of existence; one's preoccupation is not with art or religion, but with bad food, hard beds, drudgery and the sack. **Serenity is impossible to a poor man in a cold country** and even his active thoughts will go in more or less sterile complaint.
- In England, a century of strong government has developed what **O. Henry** called *the stern and rugged fear of the police* to a point where any public protest seems an indecency. But **in France everyone can remember a certain amount of civil disturbance, and even the workmen in the bistros talk of la revolution — meaning the next revolution, not the last one.** The highly socialised modern mind, which makes a kind of composite god out of the rich, the government, the police and the larger newspapers, has not been developed — at least not yet.
- **Man is not a Yahoo, but he is rather like a Yahoo and needs to be reminded of it from time to time.**
- Think of life as it really is, think of the details of life; and then think that there is no meaning in it, no purpose, no goal except the grave. Surely only fools or self-deceivers, or those whose lives are exceptionally fortunate, can face that thought without flinching?
- It is a mysterious thing, the loss of faith—as mysterious as faith itself. Like faith, it is ultimately not rooted in logic; it is a change in the climate of the mind.
- There is a geographical element in all belief—saying what seem profound truths in India have a way of seeming enormous platitudes in England, and *vice versa*. Perhaps the fundamental difference is that beneath a tropical sun individuality seems less distinct and the loss of it less important.
- I am struck again by the fact that as soon as a working man gets an official post in the Trade Union or goes into Labour politics, he becomes middle-class whether he will or no. ie. by fighting against the bourgeoisie he becomes a bourgeois. The fact is that you cannot help living in the manner appropriate and developing the ideology appropriate to your income.

- One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England.
- If there are certain pages of Mr [Bertrand Russell](#)'s book, *Power*, which seem rather empty, that is merely to say that **we have now sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men.** It is not merely that at present the rule of naked [force](#) obtains almost everywhere. Probably that has always been the case. **Where this age differs from those immediately preceding it is that a liberal intelligentsia is lacking. Bully-worship, under various disguises, has become a universal religion, and such truisms as that a machine-gun is still a machine-gun even when a "good" man is squeezing the trigger — and that in effect is what Mr Russell is saying — have turned into heresies which it is actually becoming dangerous to utter.**
 - Review of *Power: A New Social Analysis* by Bertrand Russell in *The Adelphi* (January 1939); Paraphrased variant: **Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men is the restatement of the obvious.**
- Acceptance of the Catholic position implies a certain willingness to see the present injustices of society continue... Individual salvation implies liberty, which is always extended by Catholic writers to include the right to private property. But in the stage of industrial development which we have now reached, **the right to private property means the right to exploit and torture millions of one's fellow creatures.** The Socialist would argue, therefore, that one can only defend property if one is more or less indifferent to economic justice.
 - Review of *Communism and Man* by F. J. Sheed in *Peace News* (27 January 1939)
- The past is a curious thing. It's with you all the time. I suppose an hour never passes without your thinking of things that happened ten or twenty years ago, and yet most of the time it's got no reality, it's just a set of facts that you've learned, like a lot of stuff in a history book. Then some chance sight or sound or smell, especially smell, sets you going, and the past doesn't merely come back to you, you're actually *in* the past.
- Perhaps a man really dies when his brain stops, when he loses the power to take in a new idea.
- It is not possible for any thinking person to live in such a society as our own without wanting to change it.
- So much of left-wing thought is a kind of playing with fire by people who don't even know that fire is hot.
- Men are only as good as their technical development allows them to be.
 - "[Charles Dickens](#)" (1939), *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (1940) [2]
- **When one reads any strongly individual piece of writing, one has the impression of seeing a [face](#) somewhere behind the page. It is not necessarily the actual face of the writer.** I feel this very strongly with [Swift](#), with [Defoe](#), with [Fielding](#), [Stendhal](#), [Thackeray](#), [Flaubert](#), though in several cases I do not know what these people looked like and do not want to know. What one sees is the face that the writer ought to have. Well, in the case of Dickens I see a face that is not quite the face of Dickens's photographs, though it resembles it. It is the face of a man of about forty, with a small beard and a high colour. He is laughing, with a touch of [anger](#) in his [laughter](#), but no

triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is generously angry — in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, **a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.**

- [Hitler] has grasped the falsity of the hedonistic attitude to life. Nearly all western thought since the last war, certainly all "progressive" thought, has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security, and avoidance of **pain**. In such a view of life there is no room, for instance, for patriotism and the military **virtues**. The Socialist who finds his children playing with soldiers is usually upset, but he is never able to think of a substitute for the tin soldiers; tin pacifists somehow won't do. Hitler, because in his own joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings don't only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flag and loyalty-parades. However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life. The same is probably true of Stalin's militarised version of Socialism. All three of the great dictators have enhanced their power by imposing intolerable burdens on their peoples. Whereas Socialism, and even capitalism in a grudging way, have said to people "I offer you a **good** time," Hitler has said to them "I offer you struggle, **danger** and **death**," and as a result a whole nation flings itself at his feet.

- It is all very well to be "advanced" and "enlightened," to snigger at Colonel Blimp and proclaim your emancipation from all traditional loyalties, but a time comes when the sand of the desert is sodden red and what have I done for thee, England, my England? **As I was brought up in this tradition myself I can recognise it under strange disguises, and also sympathise with it, for even at its stupidest and most sentimental it is a comelier thing than the shallow self-righteousness of the left-wing intelligentsia.**

- **There is something wrong with a regime that requires a pyramid of corpses every few years.**

- About the "current Russian regime" (11 April 1940) **p. 532** in The Collected Essays, Journalism, & Letters, George Orwell: An age like this, 1920-1940, Editors: Sonia Orwell, Ian Angus

- **We are in a **strange** period of **history** in which a revolutionary has to be a patriot and a patriot has to be a revolutionary.**

- **Even as it stands, the Home Guard could only exist in a country where men feel themselves free. The totalitarian states can do great things, but there is one thing they cannot do: they cannot give the factory-worker a rifle and tell him to take it home and keep it in his bedroom. THAT RIFLE HANGING ON THE WALL OF THE WORKING-CLASS FLAT OR LABOURER'S COTTAGE, IS THE SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY. IT IS OUR JOB TO SEE THAT IT STAYS THERE.**

- Since **pacifists** have more **freedom** of action in countries where traces of **democracy** survive, **pacifism can act more effectively against democracy than for it.** Objectively the pacifist is pro-Nazi.

- **The **choice** before human beings, is not, as a **rule**, between **good** and **evil** but between two evils.** You can let the **Nazis** rule the **world**: that is evil; or you can overthrow them by **war**, which is also evil. There is no other choice before you, and whichever you choose you will not come out with

clean hands.

- "No, Not One," *The Adelphi* (October 1941), p. 7-8
- You and I both know that there can be no real solution of the Indian problem which does not also benefit Britain. **Either we all live in a decent world, or nobody does.** It is so obvious, is it not, that the British worker as well as the Indian peasant stands to gain by the ending of capitalist exploitation, and that Indian independence is a lost cause if the Fascist nations are allowed to dominate the world.
- Both men were the spiritual children of [Voltaire](#), both had an ironical, sceptical view of life, and a native pessimism overlaid by gaiety; both knew that **the existing social order is a swindle and its cherished beliefs mostly delusions.**
- **Nearly all creators of Utopia have resembled the man who has toothache, and therefore thinks happiness consists in not having toothache.** They wanted to produce a perfect society by an endless continuation of something that had only been valuable because it was temporary. The wider course would be to say that there are certain lines along which humanity must move, the grand strategy is mapped out, but detailed prophecy is not our business. **Whoever tries to imagine perfection simply reveals his own emptiness.**
- From Carlyle onwards, but especially in the last generation, the British intelligentsia have tended to take their ideas from Europe and have been infected by habits of thought that derive ultimately from Machiavelli. All the cults that have been fashionable in the last dozen years, Communism, Fascism, and pacifism, are in the last analysis forms of power worship.
- **Between them these two books sum up our present predicament.** Capitalism leads to dole queues, the scramble for markets, and war. Collectivism leads to concentration camps, leader worship, and war. There is no way out of this unless a planned economy can somehow be combined with the freedom of the intellect, which can only happen if the concept of right and wrong is restored to politics.
 - Review of *The Road to Serfdom* by [F.A. Hayek](#) & *The Mirror of the Past* by [K. Zilliacus](#), reviewed in *The Observer* (9 April 1944).
- Of course, fanatical Communists and Russophiles generally can be respected, even if they are mistaken. But for people like ourselves, who suspect that something has gone very wrong with the Soviet Union, **I consider that willingness to criticize Russia and [Stalin](#) is the test of intellectual honesty.** It is the only thing that from a literary intellectual's point of view is really dangerous.
- Particularly on the Left, political thought is a sort of masturbation fantasy in which the world of facts hardly matters.
- **Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats.**
 - "Benefit Of Clergy: Some Notes On [Salvador Dalí](#)," *Dickens, Dali & Others: Studies in Popular Culture* (1944) [4]
- **So far as I can see, all political thinking for years past has been vitiated in the same way. People can foresee the [future](#) only when it coincides with their own [wishes](#), and the**

most grossly obvious facts can be ignored when they are unwelcome.

- The idea that an advanced civilization need not rest on slavery is a relatively new idea, for instance; it is a good deal younger than the Christian religion. But even if [Chesterton's](#) dictum were true, it would only be true in the sense that a statue is contained in every block of stone. Ideas may not change, but emphasis shifts constantly. It could be claimed, for example, that the most important part of [Marx's](#) theory is contained in the saying: **'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'** But before Marx developed it, what force had that saying had? Who had paid any attention to it? Who had inferred from it — what it certainly implies — that laws, religions and moral codes are all a superstructure built over existing property relations? It was [Christ](#), according to the Gospel, who uttered the text, but it was Marx who brought it to life. And ever since he did so the motives of politicians, priests, judges, moralists and millionaires have been under the deepest suspicion — which, of course, is why they hate him so much.'

- **At any given moment there is an orthodoxy, a body of ideas which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question.** It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that or the other, but it is 'not done' to say it, just as in mid-Victorian times it was 'not done' to mention trousers in the presence of a lady. **Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the highbrow periodicals.**

- Thus, for example, tanks, battleships and bombing planes are inherently tyrannical weapons, while rifles, muskets, long-bows, and hand-grenades are inherently democratic weapons. A complex weapon makes the strong stronger, while a simple weapon — so long as there is no answer to it — gives claws to the weak.

- **Looking at the world as a whole, the drift for many decades has been not towards anarchy but towards the reimposition of slavery.** We may be heading not for general breakdown but for an epoch as horribly stable as the slave empires of antiquity. [James Burnham's](#) theory has been much discussed, but few people have yet considered its ideological implications — that is, the kind of [world-view](#), the kind of beliefs, and the social structure that would probably prevail in a state which was at once *unconquerable* and in a permanent state of "cold war" with its neighbors.

Had the atomic bomb turned out to be something as cheap and easily manufactured as a bicycle or an alarm clock, it might well have plunged us back into barbarism, but it might, on the other hand, have meant the end of national sovereignty and of the highly-centralised police state. If, as seems to be the case, it is a rare and costly object as difficult to produce as a battleship, **it is likelier to put an end to large-scale wars at the cost of prolonging indefinitely a "peace that is no peace."**

- Commonly cited as the first documented use of the phrase "[cold war](#)", in "You and the Atom Bomb"], *Tribune* (19 October 1945); also in *George Orwell: The Collected Essays, Journalism & Letters, Volume 4: In Front of Your Nose 1946–1950* (2000) by Sonia Orwell, Ian Angus, p. 9

- Scientific education for the masses will do little good, and probably a lot of harm, if it simply boils down to more physics, more chemistry, more biology, etc to the detriment of literature and history. Its probable effect on the average human being would be to narrow the range of his thoughts and make him more than ever contemptuous of such knowledge as he did not possess.

- **The whole idea of revenge and punishment is a childish day-dream. Properly speaking, there is no such thing as revenge. Revenge is an act which you want to commit when you are powerless and because you are powerless: as soon as the sense of impotence is removed, the desire evaporates also.**
- Actually there is little acute hatred of Germany left in this country, and even less, I should expect to find, in the army of occupation. Only the minority of sadists, who must have their "atrocities" from one source or another, take a keen interest in the hunting-down of war criminals and quislings.
- The relative freedom which we enjoy depends of public opinion. The law is no protection. Governments make laws, but whether they are carried out, and how the police behave, depends on the general temper in the country. If large numbers of people are interested in freedom of speech, there will be freedom of speech, even if the law forbids it; if public opinion is sluggish, inconvenient minorities will be persecuted, even if laws exist to protect them.
- **Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play.** It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.
- **Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.** This is an illusion, and one should recognise it as such, but one ought also to stick to one's own world-view, even at the price of seeming old-fashioned: for that world-view springs out of experiences that the younger generation has not had, and to abandon it is to kill one's intellectual roots.
- Anyone who cares to examine my work will see that even when it is downright propaganda it contains much that a full-time politician would consider irrelevant. I am not able, and do not want, completely to abandon the world view that I acquired in childhood. **So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the Earth, and to take pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information.** It is no use trying to suppress that side of myself. The job is to reconcile my ingrained likes and dislikes with the essentially public, non-individual activities that this age forces on all of us.
It is not easy. It raises problems of construction and of language, and it raises in a new way the problem of truthfulness.
- The [Spanish war](#) and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. **Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects.**
- Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand.
- **If I had to make a list of six books which were to be preserved when all others were destroyed, I would certainly put [Gulliver's Travels](#) among them.**
 - "Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of Gulliver's Travels" (1946)
- **In my opinion, nothing has contributed so much to the corruption of the original idea of**

socialism as the belief that Russia is a socialist country and that every act of its rulers must be excused, if not imitated. And so for the last ten years, I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the socialist movement.

- **The real division is not between conservatives and revolutionaries but between authoritarians and libertarians.**

- If publishers and editors exert themselves to keep certain topics out of print, it is not because they are frightened of prosecution but because they are frightened of public opinion. **In this country intellectual cowardice is the worst enemy a writer or journalist has to face, and that fact does not seem to me to have had the discussion it deserves.**

- [Original \(unused\) preface to *Animal Farm* \(1945\)](#); as published in *George Orwell: Some Materials for a Bibliography* (1953) by Ian R. Willison

- I have never visited Russia and my knowledge of it consists only of what can be learned by reading books and newspapers. Even if I had the power, I would not wish to interfere in Soviet domestic affairs: I would not condemn [Stalin](#) and his associates merely for their barbaric and undemocratic methods. It is quite possible that, even with the best intentions, they could not have acted otherwise under the conditions prevailing there.

But on the other hand it was of the utmost importance to me that people in western Europe should see the Soviet regime for what it really was. **Since 1930 I had seen little evidence that the USSR was progressing towards anything that one could truly call Socialism. On the contrary, I was struck by clear signs of its transformation into a hierarchical society, in which the rulers have no more reason to give up their power than any other ruling class.** Moreover, the workers and intelligentsia in a country like England cannot understand that the USSR of today is altogether different from what it was in 1917. It is partly that they do not want to understand (i.e. they want to believe that, somewhere, a really Socialist country does actually exist), and partly that, being accustomed to comparative freedom and moderation in public life, totalitarianism is completely incomprehensible to them.

- [Original preface to *Animal Farm*](#); as published in *George Orwell: Some Materials for a Bibliography* (1953) by Ian R. Willison

- **I am well acquainted with all the arguments against freedom of thought and speech — the arguments which claim that it cannot exist, and the arguments which claim that it ought not to. I answer simply that they don't convince me and that our civilization over a period of four hundred years has been founded on the opposite notice.** For quite a decade past I have believed that the existing Russian régime is a mainly evil thing, and I claim the right to say so, in spite of the fact that we are allies with the USSR in a war which I want to see won. If I had to choose a text to justify myself, I should choose the line from Milton:

By the known rules of ancient liberty.

The word ancient emphasizes the fact that intellectual freedom is a deep-rooted tradition without which our characteristic western culture could only doubtfully exist. **From that tradition many of our intellectuals are visibly turning away. They have accepted the principle that a book should be published or suppressed, praised or damned, not on its merits but according to political expediency. And others who do not actually hold this view assent to it from sheer cowardice.**

- Original preface to [Animal Farm](#); as published in *George Orwell: Some Materials for a Bibliography* (1953) by Ian R. Willison
- **If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.**
 - Original preface to [Animal Farm](#); as published in *George Orwell: Some Materials for a Bibliography* (1953) by Ian R. Willison
- **The point is that we are all capable of believing things which we *know* to be untrue, and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually, it is possible to carry on this process for an indefinite time: the only check on it is that sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield.**
- **To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle.**
- Certainly we ought to be discontented, we ought not simply to find out ways of making the best of a bad job, and yet if we kill all pleasure in the actual process of life, what sort of future are we preparing for ourselves? **If a man cannot enjoy the return of spring, why should he be happy in a labour-saving Utopia? What will he do with the leisure that the machine will give him?**
- By preaching the doctrine that nothing is to be admired except steel and concrete, one merely makes it a little surer that human beings will have no outlet for their surplus energy except in hatred and leader worship.
- The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it.
- It was only *after* the Soviet régime became unmistakably totalitarian that English intellectuals, in large numbers, began to show an interest in it. Burnham, although the English russophile intelligentsia would repudiate him, is really voicing their secret wish: the wish to destroy the old, equalitarian version of Socialism and usher in a hierarchical society where the intellectual can at last get his hands on the whip.
- **In a Society in which 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 practise a certain amount of eccentricity: when they are supposedly governed by "love" or "reason", he is under continuous pressure to make him behave and think in exactly the same way as everyone else.
 - "Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of [Gulliver's Travels](#)," *Polemic* (September/October 1946) - [Full text online](#)
- People talk about the horrors of war, but what weapon has man invented that even approaches in cruelty to some of the commoner diseases? "Natural" death, almost by definition, means something slow, smelly and painful.
- But is it really necessary, in 1947, to teach children to use expressions like "native" and "Chinaman"?

- A tragic situation exists precisely when virtue does *not* triumph but when it is still felt that man is nobler than the forces which destroy him.
 - "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool," *Polemic* (March 1947) - [Full text online](#)]
- [Shakespeare](#) starts by assuming that to make yourself powerless is to invite an attack. This does not mean that *everyone* will turn against you (Kent and the Fool stand by Lear from first to last), but in all probability *someone* will. **If you throw away your weapons, some less scrupulous person will pick them up. If you turn the other cheek, you will get a harder blow on it than you got on the first one. This does not always happen, but it is to be expected, and you ought not to complain if it does happen.** The second blow is, so to speak, part of the act of turning the other cheek. First of all, therefore, there is the vulgar, common-sense moral drawn by the Fool: "Don't relinquish power, don't give away your lands." But there is also another moral. Shakespeare never utters it in so many words, and it does not very much matter whether he was fully aware of it. It is contained in the story, which, after all, he made up, or altered to suit his purposes. It is: "Give away your lands if you want to, but don't expect to gain happiness by doing so. Probably you won't gain happiness. **If you live for others, you must live *for others*, and not as a roundabout way of getting an advantage for yourself.**"
- A normal human being does not want the [Kingdom of Heaven](#): he wants life on earth to continue. This is not solely because he is "weak," "sinful" and anxious for a "good time." Most people get a fair amount of fun out of their lives, but on balance life is suffering, and only the very young or the very foolish imagine otherwise. Ultimately it is the Christian attitude which is self-interested and hedonistic, since the aim is always to get away from the painful struggle of earthly life and find eternal peace in some kind of [Heaven](#) or [Nirvana](#). The humanist attitude is that the struggle must continue and that death is the price of life.
- There are people who are convinced of the wickedness both of armies and of police forces, but who are nevertheless much more intolerant and inquisitorial in outlook than the normal person who believes that it is necessary to use violence in certain circumstances. They will not say to somebody else, 'Do this, that and the other or you will go to prison', but they will, if they can, get inside his brain and dictate his thoughts for him in the minutest particulars. Creeds like pacifism and anarchism, which seem on the surface to imply a complete renunciation of power, rather encourage this habit of mind. For if you have embraced a creed which appears to be free from the ordinary dirtiness of politics — a creed from which you yourself cannot expect to draw any material advantage — surely that proves that you are in the right? And the more you are in the right, the more natural that everyone else should be bullied into thinking likewise.
- No one can look back on his schooldays and say with truth that they were altogether unhappy.
- **Threats to freedom of speech, writing and action, though often trivial in isolation, are cumulative in their effect and, unless checked, lead to a general disrespect for the rights of the citizen.**
 - "The Freedom Defence Committee" in "The Socialist Leader (18 September 1948); also in The Collected Essays, Journalism, & Letters, George Orwell; Vol. IV: In front of your nose, 1945-1950 (2000), p. 447
- I always disagree, however, when people end up saying that we can only combat Communism, Fascism or what not if we develop an equal fanaticism. **It appears to me that one defeats the fanatic precisely by *not* being a fanatic oneself, but on the contrary by using one's**

intelligence.

- Letter to Richard Rees (3 March 1949), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. 4: *In front of your nose, 1945-1950* (1968), ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, p. 478
- **It is difficult for a statesman who still has a political future to reveal everything that he knows:** and in a profession in which one is a baby at 50 and middle-aged at seventy-five, it is natural that anyone who has not actually been disgraced should feel that he still has a future.
- One cannot really be Catholic & grown-up.
 - "Extracts from a Manuscript Notebook" (1949), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4 (1968)
- At 50, everyone has the face he deserves.
 - "Extracts from a Manuscript Notebook" (1949), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4 (1968)
- The [Paris](#) slums are a gathering-place for eccentric people — people who have fallen into solitary, half-mad grooves of life and given up trying to be normal or decent. Poverty frees them from normal standards of behaviour, just as money frees people from work. Some of the lodgers in our hotel lived lives that were curious beyond words.
- I am trying to describe the people in our quarter, not for the mere curiosity, but because they are all part of the story. **Poverty is what I am writing about, and I had my first contact with poverty in this slum.** The slum, with its dirt and its queer lives, was first an object-lesson in poverty, and then the background of my own experiences. It is for that reason that I try to give some idea of what life was like there.
- There is only one way to make money at writing, and that is to marry a publisher's daughter.
- For, when you are approaching poverty, you make one discovery which outweighs some of the others. You discover boredom and mean complications and the beginnings of hunger, but you also discover the great redeeming feature of poverty: the fact that it annihilates the future. **Within certain limits, it is actually true that the less money you have, the less you worry.**
- Hunger reduces one to an utterly spineless, brainless condition, more like the after-effects of influenza than anything else. It is as though all one's blood had been pumped out and lukewarm water substituted.
- One always abandons something in retreat. Look at [Napoleon](#) at the [Beresina](#)! He abandoned his whole army.
- **Fate seemed to be playing a series of extraordinarily unamusing jokes.**
- It is fatal to look hungry. It makes people want to kick you.
- I only realized during my last week that I was being cheated, and, as I could prove nothing, only twenty-five francs were refunded. The doorkeeper played similar tricks on any employee who was

fool enough to be taken in. He called himself a Greek, but in reality he was an Armenian. After knowing him I saw the force of the proverb "Trust a snake before a Jew and a Jew before a Greek, but don't trust an Armenian."

- Roughly speaking, the more one pays for food, the more sweat and spittle one is obliged to eat with it. ... Dirtiness is inherent in hotels and restaurants, because sound food is sacrificed to punctuality and smartness... The only food at the Hotel X which was ever prepared cleanly was the staff's.
- We crawled up to bed, tumbled down half dressed, and stayed there ten hours. Most of my Saturday nights went like this. On the whole, the two hours when one was perfectly and wildly happy seemed worth the subsequent headache. For many men in the quarter, unmarried and with no future to think of, the weekly drinking-bout was the one thing that made life worth living.
- Looking round that filthy room, with raw meat lying among the refuse on the floor, and cold, clotted saucepans sprawling everywhere, and the sink blocked and coated with grease, I used to wonder whether there could be a restaurant in the world as bad as ours. But the other three all said they had been in dirtier places.
 - Ch. 21; on the state of the kitchen at the newly opened [Auberge](#).
- How sweet the air does smell — even the air of a back-street in the suburbs — after the shut-in, subfaecal stench of the spike!
 - Ch. 27, on the morning after Orwell is let out of his first tramps' accommodation, or 'spike'.
- He had two subjects of conversation, the shame and come-down of being a tramp, and the best way of getting a free meal.
- Paddy and I had scarcely a wink of sleep, for there was a man near us who had some nervous trouble, shell-shock perhaps, which made him cry out 'Pip!' at irregular intervals. It was a loud, startling noise, something like the toot of a small motor-horn. You never knew when it was coming, and it was a sure preventer of sleep. ...he must have kept ten or twenty people awake every night. He was an example of the kind of thing that prevents one from ever getting enough sleep when men are herded as they are in these lodging houses.'
- Being a beggar, he said, was not his fault, and he refused either to have any compunction about it or to let it trouble him. He was the enemy of society, and quite ready to take to crime if he saw a good opportunity. He refused on principle to be thrifty. In the summer he saved nothing, spending his surplus earnings on drink, as he did not care about women. If he was penniless when winter came on, then society must look after him. He was ready to extract every penny he could from charity, provided that he was not expected to say thank you for it. He avoided religious charities, however, for he said it stuck in his throat to sing hymns for buns. He had various other points of honour; for instance, it was his boast that never in his life, even when starving, had he picked up a cigarette end. He considered himself in a class above the ordinary run of beggars, who, he said, were an abject lot, without even the decency to be ungrateful.
- **He was an embittered atheist (the sort of atheist who does not so much disbelieve in God as personally dislike Him), and took a sort of pleasure in thinking that human affairs would never improve.** Sometimes, he said, when sleeping on the Embankment, it had consoled him to look up at Mars or Jupiter and think that there were probably Embankment sleepers there. He had a curious theory about this. Life on earth, he said, is harsh because the planet is poor in the necessities of existence. Mars, with its cold climate and scanty water, must be far poorer, and life

correspondingly harsher. Whereas on earth you are merely imprisoned for stealing sixpence, on Mars you are probably boiled alive. **This thought cheered Bozo, I do not know why. He was a very exceptional man.**

- **Beggars do not work, it is said; but then, what is *work*?** A navvy works by swinging a pick. An accountant works by adding up figures. A beggar works by standing out of doors in all weathers and getting varicose veins, bronchitis etc. **It is a trade like any other; quite useless, of course — but, then, many reputable trades are quite useless.** And as a social type a beggar compares well with scores of others. He is honest compared with the sellers of most patent medicines, high-minded compared with a Sunday newspaper proprietor, amiable compared with a hire-purchase tout-in short, a parasite, but a fairly harmless parasite. He seldom extracts more than a bare living from the community, and, what should justify him according to our ethical ideas, he pays for it over and over in suffering.

- The most bitter insult one can offer to a Londoner is "bastard" — which, taken for what it means, is hardly an insult at all.

- My story ends here. It is a fairly trivial story, and I can only hope that it has been interesting in the same way as a trivial diary is interesting. ... **At present I do not feel I have seen more than the fringe of poverty.**

Still, I can point to one or two things I have definitely learned by being hard up. I shall never again think that all tramps are drunken scoundrels, nor expect a beggar to be grateful when I give him a penny, nor be surprised if men out of work lack energy, nor subscribe to the Salvation Army, nor pawn my clothes, nor refuse a handbill, nor enjoy a meal at a smart restaurant. That is a beginning.

- **Ellis was one of those people who constantly nag others to echo their own opinions.**

- **Living a lie the whole time — the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them ... it corrupts us, it corrupts us in ways you can't imagine.**

- **Beauty is meaningless until it is shared.**

- It is one of the tragedies of the half-educated that they develop late, when they are already committed to some wrong way of life.

- I always think they're rather charming-looking, the Burmese. They have such splendid bodies! Just think what sights you'd see in England if people went about half naked as they do here!

- An earthquake is such fun when it is over.

- Is there anything in the world more graceless, more dishonouring, than to desire a woman whom you will never have?

- Envy is a horrible thing. It is unlike all other kinds of suffering in that there is no disguising it, no elevating it into tragedy. It is more than merely painful, it is disgusting.

- **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of [angels](#), and have not [money](#), I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.** And though I have the gift of [prophecy](#), and understand all [mysteries](#), and all [knowledge](#); and though I have all [faith](#), so that I could remove

mountains, and have not money, I am **nothing**. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not money, it profiteth me nothing. Money suffereth long, and is kind; money envieth not; money vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ... **And now abideth faith, hope, money, these three; but the greatest of these is money.**

- Money, once again; all is money. All human relationships must be purchased with money. **If you have no money, men won't care for you, women won't love you; won't, that is, care for you or love you the last little bit that matters.** And how right they are, after all! For, moneyless, you are unlovable. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. But then, if I haven't money, I DON'T speak with the tongues of men and of angels.
- No need to repeat the blasphemous comments which everyone who had known Gran'pa Comstock made on that last sentence. But it is worth pointing out that the chunk of granite on which it was inscribed weighed close on five tons and was quite certainly put there with the intention, though not the conscious intention, of making sure that Gran'pa Comstock shouldn't get up from underneath it. If you want to know what a dead man's relatives really think of him, a good rough test is the weight of his tombstone.
- Gordon and his friends had quite an exciting time with their 'subversive ideas'. For a whole year they ran an unofficial monthly paper called the Bolshevik, duplicated with **jellygraph**. It advocated Socialism, free love, the dismemberment of the British Empire, the abolition of the Army and Navy, and so on and so forth. It was great fun. Every intelligent boy of sixteen is a Socialist. At that age one does not see the hook sticking out of the rather stodgy bait.
- Most of the employees were the hard-boiled, Americanized, go-getting type to whom nothing in the world is sacred, except money. They had their cynical code worked out. The public are swine; **advertising** is the rattling of a stick inside a swill-bucket. And yet beneath their cynicism there was the final naivete, the blind worship of the money-god.
- It was queer. All over England young men were eating their hearts out for lack of jobs, and here was he, Gordon, to whom the very word 'job' was faintly nauseous, having jobs thrust unwanted upon him. It was an example of the fact that **you can get anything in this world if you genuinely don't want it.**
- Gordon put his hand against the swing door. He even pushed it open a few inches. The warm fog of smoke and beer slipped through the crack. A familiar, reviving smell; nevertheless as he smelled it his nerve failed him. No! Impossible to go in. He turned away. He couldn't go shoving into that saloon bar with only fourpence halfpenny in his pocket. Never let other people buy your drinks for you! The first commandment of the moneyless. He made off down the dark pavement.
- This life we live nowadays! It's not life, it's stagnation, death-in-life. Look at all these bloody houses, and the meaningless people inside them! Sometimes I think we're all corpses. Just rotting upright.
- Poverty is spiritual halitosis.
- Hermione always yawned at the mention of Socialism, and refused even to read Antichrist. 'Don't

talk to me about the lower classes,' she used to say. 'I hate them. They *smell*.' And Ravelston adored her.

- This woman business! What a bore it is! What a pity we can't cut it right out, or at least be like the animals—minutes of ferocious lust and months of icy chastity. Take a cock pheasant, for example. He jumps up on the hen's backs without so much as a with your leave or by your leave. And no sooner is it over than the whole subject is out of his mind. He hardly even notices his hens any longer; he ignores them, or simply pecks them if they come too near his food. He is not called upon to support his offspring, either. Lucky pheasant! How different from the lord of creation, always on the hop between his memory and his conscience
- Before, he had fought against the money code, and yet he had clung to his wretched remnant of decency. But now it was precisely from decency that he wanted to escape. He wanted to go down, deep down, into some world where decency no longer mattered; to cut the strings of his self-respect, to submerge himself—to *sink*, as Rosemary had said. It was all bound up in his mind with the thought of being *under ground*. He liked to think of the lost people, the under-ground people: tramps, beggars, criminals, prostitutes. It is a good world that they inhabit, down there in their frowzy kips and spikes. He liked to think that beneath the world of money there is that great sluttish underworld where failure and success have no meaning; a sort of kingdom of ghosts where all are equal. That was where he wished to be, down in the ghost-kingdom, *below* ambition. It comforted him somehow to think of the smoke-dim slums of South London sprawling on and on, a huge graceless wilderness where you could lose yourself forever.
- **One's got to change the system, or one changes nothing.**
- Chiefly I remember the horsy smells, the quavering bugle-calls (all our buglers were amateurs--I first learned the Spanish bugle-calls by listening to them outside the Fascist lines), the tramp-tramp of hobnailed boots in the barrack yard, the long morning parades in the wintry sunshine, the wild games of football, fifty a side, in the gravelled riding--school.
- **I have no particular love for the idealised "worker" as he appears in the bourgeois Communist's mind, but when I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on.**
- All Spaniards, we discovered, knew two English expressions. One was "O.K., baby", the other was a word used by the Barcelona whores in their dealings with English sailors, and I am afraid the compositors would not print it.
- **I have the most evil memories of Spain, but I have very few bad memories of Spaniards.**
- The fat Russian agent was cornering all the foreign refugees in turn and explaining plausibly that this whole affair was an [Anarchist](#) plot. **I watched him with some interest, for it was the first time that I had seen a person whose profession was telling lies — unless one counts journalists.**
- It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle ... There was much in it that I did not understand, **in some ways I did not even like it, but I recognized it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for.**

- An immense amount, enough to fill many books, has already been written on the subject [of the Barcelona fighting], and I do not suppose I should exaggerate if I said that nine-tenths of it is untruthful.
- It seemed queer, in the barber's shop, to see the Anarchist notice still on the wall, explaining that tips were prohibited. **"The Revolution has struck off our chains," the notice said. I felt like telling the barbers that their chains would soon be back on again if they didn't look out.**
- **Human beings were behaving as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine.**
- It is sometimes a comfort to me to think that the aeroplane is changing the conditions of warfare. In the next great war, we may see that sight unprecedented in all history, a [jingo](#) with a bullet-hole in him.
- Everyone always did miss everyone else in this war, whenever it was humanly possible to do so.
- The workers' militias, based on the trade unions and each composed of people of approximately the same political opinions, had the effect of canalizing into one place all the most revolutionary sentiment in the country. I had dropped more or less by chance into **the only community of any size in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites.** Up here in Aragón one was among tens of thousands of people, mainly though not entirely of working-class origin, all living at the same level and mingling on terms of equality. In theory it was perfect equality, and even in practice it was not far from it. There is a sense in which it would be true to say that one was experiencing a foretaste of Socialism, by which I mean that the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism. Many of the normal motives of civilized life--snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc.--had simply ceased to exist. The ordinary class-division of society had disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England; there was no one there except the peasants and ourselves, and no one owned anyone else as his master. Of course such a state of affairs could not last. It was simply a temporary and local phase in an enormous game that is being played over the whole surface of the earth. But it lasted long enough to have its effect upon anyone who experienced it. However much one cursed at the time, one realized afterwards that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable. One had been in a community where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word 'comrade' stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, for humbug. One had breathed the air of equality. I am well aware that it is now the fashion to deny that Socialism has anything to do with equality. **In every country in the world a huge tribe of party-hacks and sleek little professors are busy 'proving' that Socialism means no more than a planned state-capitalism with the grab-motive left intact. But fortunately there also exists a vision of Socialism quite different from this. The thing that attracts ordinary men to Socialism and makes them willing to risk their skins for it, the 'mystique' of Socialism, is the idea of equality; to the vast majority of people Socialism means a classless society, or it means nothing at all.** And it was here that those few months in the militia were valuable to me.
- It is the same in all wars; the soldiers do the fighting, the journalists do the shouting, and no true patriot ever gets near a front-line trench, except on the briefest of propaganda-tours.
- The revolutionary atmosphere remained as I had first known it. General and private, peasant and militiaman, still met as equals; everyone drew the same pay, wore the same clothes, ate the same food, and called everyone else 'thou' and 'comrade'; there was no boss-class, no menial-class, no

beggars, no prostitutes, no lawyers, no priests, no boot-licking, no cap-touching. I was breathing the air of equality, and I was simple enough to imagine that it existed all over Spain. I did not realize that more or less by chance I was isolated among the most revolutionary section of the Spanish working class.

- **No one I met at this time — doctors, nurses, practicantes, or fellow-patients — failed to assure me that a man who is hit through the neck and survives it is the luckiest creature alive. I could not help thinking that it would be even luckier not to be hit at all.**

- **There are occasions when it pays better to fight and be beaten than not to fight at all.**

- **As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me.**

They do not feel any enmity against me as an individual, nor I against them. They are 'only doing their duty', as the saying goes. Most of them, I have no doubt, are kind-hearted law-abiding men who would never dream of committing murder in private life.

- **One cannot see the modern world as it is unless one recognizes the overwhelming strength of patriotism, national loyalty.** In certain circumstances it can break down, at certain levels of civilization it does not exist, but as a positive force there is nothing to set beside it. Christianity and international Socialism are as weak as straw in comparison with it. **Hitler and Mussolini rose to power in their own countries very largely because they could grasp this fact and their opponents could not.**

- **England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality.** In left-wing circles it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman and that it is a duty to snigger at every English institution, from horse racing to suet puddings. It is a strange fact, but it is unquestionably true that almost any English intellectual would feel more ashamed of standing to attention during *God save the King* than of stealing from a poor box.

- Is the English press honest or dishonest? **At normal times it is deeply dishonest. All the papers that matter live off their advertisements, and the advertisers exercise an indirect censorship over news.** Yet I do not suppose there is one paper in England that can be straightforwardly bribed with hard cash. **In the France of the Third Republic all but a very few of the newspapers could notoriously be bought over the counter like so many pounds of cheese.**

- [A] world in which it is wrong to murder an individual civilian and right to drop a thousand tons of high explosive on a residential area does sometimes make me wonder whether this earth of ours is not a loony bin made use of by some other planet.

- Not to have a national anthem would be logical.

- Antisemitism, for instance, is simply not the doctrine of a grown-up person.

- During the Spanish civil war I found myself feeling very strongly that a true history of this war never would or could be written. Accurate figures, objective accounts of what was happening, simply did not exist. And if I felt that even in 1937, when the Spanish Government was still in being, and the lies which the various Republican factions were telling about each other and about the enemy were relatively small ones, how does the case stand now? Even if Franco is overthrown, what kind of

records will the future historian have to go upon? And if Franco or anyone at all resembling him remains in power, the history of the war will consist quite largely of "facts" which millions of people now living know to be lies.

- During part of 1941 and 1942, when the Luftwaffe was busy in Russia, the German radio regaled its home audience with stories of devastating air raids on London. Now, we are aware that those raids did not happen. But what use would our knowledge be if the Germans conquered Britain? For the purpose of a future historian, did those raids happen, or didn't they? The answer is: If Hitler survives, they happened, and if he falls they didn't happen. So with innumerable other events of the past ten or twenty years. Is the Protocols of the Elders of Zion a genuine document? Did Trotsky plot with the Nazis? How many German aeroplanes were shot down in the Battle of Britain? Does Europe welcome the New Order? In no case do you get one answer which is universally accepted because it is true: in each case you get a number of totally incompatible answers, one of which is finally adopted as the result of a physical struggle. **History is written by the winners.**

- The really frightening thing about totalitarianism is not that it commits 'atrocities' but that it attacks the concept of objective truth; it claims to control the past as well as the future.

- If you talk to a thoughtful Christian, Catholic or Anglican, you often find yourself laughed at for being so ignorant as to suppose that anyone ever took the doctrines of the Church literally.

- [Man] is not likely to salvage civilization unless he can evolve a system of good and evil which is independent of heaven and hell.

- Let a politician die, and his worst enemies will stand up on the floor of the House and utter pious lies in his honour, but a writer or artist must be sniffed at, at least if he is any good.

- [E]ven stupidity is better than totalitarianism.

- It will be seen that, as used, the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless. In conversation, of course, it is used even more wildly than in print. I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922 Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley's broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else.

- But Fascism is also a political and economic system. Why, then, cannot we have a clear and generally accepted definition of it? Alas! we shall not get one—not yet, anyway. To say why would take too long, but basically it is because it is impossible to define Fascism satisfactorily without making admissions which neither the Fascists themselves, nor the Conservatives, nor Socialists of any colour, are willing to make. All one can do for the moment is to use the word with a certain amount of circumspection and not, as is usually done, degrade it to the level of a swearword.

- **The fallacy is to believe that under a dictatorial government you can be free *inside*.**

Quite a number of people console themselves with this thought, now that totalitarianism in one form or another is visibly on the up-grade in every part of the world. Out in the street the loudspeakers bellow, the flags flutter from the rooftops, the police with their tommy-guns prowl to and fro, the face of the Leader, four feet wide, glares from every hoarding; but up in the attics the secret enemies of the regime can record their thoughts in perfect freedom—that is the idea, more or less.^[12]

- **Take away freedom of speech, and the creative faculties dry up.**

- One of the big failures in human history has been the agelong attempt to stop women painting their faces.

- In the nineteenth century some parts of the world were unexplored, but there was almost no restriction on travel. Up to 1914 you did not need a passport for any country except Russia. The European emigrant, if he could scrape together a few pounds for the passage, simply set sail for America or Australia, and when he got there no questions were asked. In the eighteenth century it had been quite normal and safe to travel in a country with which your own country was at war.
- A phrase much used in political circles in this country is "playing into the hands of". It is a sort of charm or incantation to silence uncomfortable truths. When you are told that by saying this, that or the other you are "playing into the hands of" some sinister enemy, you know that it is your duty to shut up immediately.
- Circus dogs jump when the trainer cracks his whip, but the really well-trained dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip.
- [T]he outcry against killing women, if you accept killing at all, is sheer sentimentality. Why is it worse to kill a woman than a man?
- The whole question of evolution seems less momentous than it did, because, unlike the Victorians, we do not feel that to be descended from animals is degrading to human dignity.
- In any form of art designed to appeal to large numbers of people,...[t]he rich man is usually 'bad', and his machinations are invariably frustrated. 'Good poor man defeats bad rich man' is an accepted formula.
- Anyone who knows of a provable instance of colour discrimination ought always to expose it.
- Stop to consider how the so-called owners of the land got hold of it. They simply seized it by force, afterwards hiring lawyers to provide them with title-deeds. In the case of the [enclosure](#) of the common lands, which was going on from about 1600 to 1850, the land-grabbers did not even have the excuse of being foreign conquerors; **they were quite frankly taking the heritage of their own countrymen**, upon no sort of pretext except that they had the power to do so.[\[19\]](#)
- I note that once again there is serious talk of trying to attract tourists to this country after the war...[b]ut it is quite safe to prophesy that the attempt will be a failure. Apart from the many other difficulties, our licensing laws and the artificial price of drink are quite enough to keep foreigners away. ... But even these prices are less dismaying to foreigners than the lunatic laws which permit you to buy a glass of beer at half past ten while forbidding you to buy it at twenty-five past, and which have done their best to turn the pubs into mere boozing shops by excluding children from them.

How downtrodden we are in comparison with most other peoples is shown by the fact that even people who are far from being "temperance" don't seriously imagine that our licensing laws could be altered. Whenever I suggest that pubs might be allowed to open in the afternoon, or to stay open till midnight, I always get the same answer: "The first people to object would be the publicans. They don't want to have to stay open twelve hours a day." People assume, you see, that opening hours, whether long or short, must be regulated by the law, even for one-man businesses. In France, and in various other countries, a café proprietor opens or shuts just as it suits him. He can keep open the whole twenty-four hours if he wants to; and, on the other hand, if he feels like shutting his café and going away for a week, he can do that too. In England we have had no such liberty for about a hundred years, and people are hardly able to imagine it.[\[20\]](#)

- "As I Please" column in *The Tribune* (18 August 1944)

- **Do remember that dishonesty and cowardice always have to be paid for.** Don't imagine that for years on end you can make yourself the boot-licking propagandist of the Soviet régime, or any other régime, and then suddenly return to mental decency. Once a whore, always a whore.
- [Some correspondents] rightly claimed that State patronage [for artists and authors] is a better guarantee against starvation than private patronage, but seemed to me too ready to disregard the censorship that this implies. The usual line was that it is better for the artist to be a responsible member of a community than an anarchic individualist. The issue, however, is not between irresponsible "self-expression" and discipline; it is between truth and lies.

Artists don't so much object to *aesthetic* discipline. Architects will design theatres or churches equally readily, writers will switch from the three-volume novel to the one-volume, or from the play to the film, according to the demand. But the point is that this is a political age. A writer inevitably writes—and less directly this applies to all the arts—about contemporary events, and his impulse is to tell what he believes to be the truth. But no government, no big organization, will pay for the truth. To take a crude example: can you imagine the British Government commissioning E. M. Forster to write *A Passage to India*? He could only write it because he was *not* dependent on State aid.

- "As I Please" column in *The Tribune* (13 October 1944)[22][23]
- The thing that I think very striking is that no one, or no one I can remember, ever writes of an execution *with approval*. The dominant note is always horror. Society, apparently, cannot get along without capital punishment—for there are some people whom it is simply not safe to leave alive—and yet there is no one, when the pinch comes, who feels it right to kill another human being in cold blood. I watched a man hanged once. There was no question that everybody concerned knew this to be a dreadful, unnatural action. I believe it is always the same—the whole jail, warders and prisoners alike, is upset when there is an execution. It is probably the fact that capital punishment is accepted as necessary, and yet instinctively felt to be wrong, that gives so many descriptions of executions their tragic atmosphere. They are mostly written by people who have actually watched an execution and feel it to be a terrible and only partly comprehensible experience which they want to record; whereas battle literature is largely written by people who have never heard a gun go off and think of a battle as a sort of football match in which nobody gets hurt.
- The thing that strikes me more and more—and it strikes a lot of other people, too—is the extraordinary viciousness and dishonesty of political controversy in our time. I don't mean merely that controversies are acrimonious. They ought to be that when they are on serious subjects. **I mean that almost nobody seems to feel that an opponent deserves a fair hearing or that the objective truth matters as long as you can score a neat debating point.**
- We are told that it is only people's objective actions that matter, and their subjective feelings are of no importance. Thus pacifists, by obstructing the war effort, are 'objectively' aiding the Nazis; and therefore the fact that they may be personally hostile to Fascism is irrelevant. I have been guilty of saying this myself more than once. The same argument is applied to [Trotskyism](#)...To criticize the Soviet Union helps [Hitler](#): therefore "Trotskyism is Fascism". And when this has been established, the accusation of conscious treachery is usually repeated.

This is not only dishonest; it also carries a severe penalty with it. If you disregard people's motives, it becomes much harder to foresee their actions.

- "As I Please," *Tribune* (8 December 1944)[26]

- **The important thing is to discover *which* individuals are honest and which are not, and the usual blanket accusation merely makes this more difficult.** The atmosphere of hatred in which controversy is conducted blinds people to considerations of this kind. **To admit that an opponent might be both honest and intelligent is felt to be intolerable. It is more immediately satisfying to shout that he is a fool or a scoundrel, or both, than to find out what he is really like.** It is this habit of mind, among other things, that has made political prediction in our time so remarkably unsuccessful.
- Victor Raikes, the Tory M.P., who is an able and outspoken reactionary, made a speech which I should have considered a good one if it had referred only to Poland and Yugoslavia. But after dealing with those two countries he went on to speak about Greece, and then suddenly black became white, and white black. There was no booing, no interjections from the quite large audience—and none there, apparently, who could see that the forcing of quisling governments upon unwilling peoples is equally undesirable whoever does it.
- *The Daily Worker* disapproves of dictatorship in Athens, the *Catholic Herald* disapproves of dictatorship in Belgrade. There is no one who is able to say—at least, no one who has the chance to say in a newspaper of big circulation—that this whole dirty game of spheres of influence, quislings, purges, deportation, one-party elections and hundred per cent plebiscites is morally the same whether it is done by ourselves, the Russians or the Nazis. Even in the case of such frank returns to barbarism as the use of hostages, disapproval is only felt when it happens to be the enemy and not ourselves who is doing it.
- It is not a good symptom that hanging should still be the accepted form of capital punishment in this country. Hanging is a barbarous, inefficient way of killing anybody, and at least one fact about it—quite widely known, I believe—is so obscene as to be almost unprintable.
- While the game of deadlocks and bottle-necks goes on, another more serious game is also being played. It is governed by two axioms. One is that there can be no peace without a general surrender of sovereignty: the other is that no country capable of defending its sovereignty ever surrenders it. **If one keeps these axioms in mind one can generally see the [relevant facts](#) in international affairs through the smoke-screen with which the newspapers surround them.**
- **This business of making people *conscious* of what is happening outside their own small circle is one of the major problems of our time, and a new literary technique will have to be evolved to meet it.** Considering that the people of this country are not having a very comfortable time, you can't perhaps, blame them for being somewhat callous about suffering elsewhere, but the remarkable thing is the extent to which they manage to be unaware of it. Tales of starvation, ruined cities, concentration camps, mass deportations, homeless refugees, persecuted Jews — all this is received with a sort of incurious surprise, as though such things had never been heard of but at the same time were not particularly interesting. The now-familiar photographs of skeleton-like children make very little impression. **As time goes on and the horrors pile up, the mind seems to secrete a sort of self-protecting ignorance which needs a harder and harder shock to pierce it, just as the body will become immunised to a drug and require bigger and bigger doses.**
- Since the decay of the belief in personal immortality, death has never seemed funny, and it will be a long time before it does so again. Hence the disappearance of the facetious epitaph, once a common feature of country churchyards. I should be astonished to see a comic epitaph dated later than 1850. There is one in Kew, if I remember rightly, which might be about that date. About half the

tombstone is covered with a long panegyric on his dead wife by a bereaved husband: at the bottom of the stone is a later inscription which reads, 'Now he's gone, too'.'

- **We have become too civilized to grasp the obvious. For the truth is very simple. To survive you often have to fight, and to fight you have to dirty yourself. War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil. Those who take the sword perish by the sword, and those who don't take the sword perish by smelly diseases.**
- I have little direct evidence about the atrocities in the [Spanish civil war](#). I know that some were committed by the Republicans, and far more (they are still continuing) by the Fascists. But what impressed me then, and has impressed me ever since, is that atrocities are believed in or disbelieved in solely on grounds of political predilection. **Everyone believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side, without ever bothering to examine the evidence.**
- Early in life I have noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper, but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely denounced as cowards and traitors, and others who had never seen a shot fired hailed as the heroes of imaginary victories; and **I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened. I saw, in fact, history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various 'party lines'.**
- **The outcome of the Spanish war was settled in [London](#), [Paris](#), [Rome](#), [Berlin](#) — at any rate not in Spain.** After the summer of 1937 those with eyes in their heads realized that the Government could not win the war unless there were some profound change in the international set-up, and in deciding to fight on [Negrin](#) and the others may have been partly influenced by the expectation that the world war which actually broke out in 1939 was coming in 1938. **The much-publicized disunity on the Government side was not a main cause of defeat.** The Government militias were hurriedly raised, ill-armed and unimaginative in their military outlook, but they would have been the same if complete political agreement had existed from the start. **At the outbreak of war the average Spanish factory-worker did not even know how to fire a rifle (there had never been universal conscription in Spain), and the traditional pacifism of the Left was a great handicap.** The thousands of foreigners who served in Spain made good infantry, but there were very few experts of any kind among them. The Trotskyist thesis that the war could have been won if the revolution had not been sabotaged was probably false. **To nationalize factories, demolish churches, and issue revolutionary manifestoes would not have made the armies more efficient. The Fascists won because they were the stronger; they had modern arms and the others hadn't. No political strategy could offset that.** **The most baffling thing in the Spanish war was the behaviour of the great powers.** The war was actually won for [Franco](#) by the Germans and Italians, whose motives were obvious enough. The motives of France and Britain are less easy to understand. In 1936 it was clear to everyone that if Britain would only help the Spanish Government, even to the extent of a few million pounds' worth of arms, Franco would collapse and German strategy would be severely dislocated. **By that time one did not need to be a clairvoyant to foresee that war between Britain and Germany was coming; one could even foretell within a year or two when it would come.** Yet in the most mean, cowardly, hypocritical way the British ruling class did all they could to hand Spain over to Franco and the Nazis. Why? Because they were pro-Fascist, was the obvious answer. Undoubtedly

they were, and yet when it came to the final showdown they chose to stand up to Germany. It is still very uncertain what plan they acted on in backing Franco, and they may have had no clear plan at all. Whether the British ruling class are wicked or merely stupid is one of the most difficult questions of our time, and at certain moments a very important question.

- **By "nationalism" I mean first of all the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can be confidently labelled "good" or "bad."** But secondly — and this is much more important — I mean the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests. **Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism.** Both words are normally used in so vague a way that any definition is liable to be challenged, but one must draw a distinction between them, since two different and even opposing ideas are involved. By "patriotism" I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. **Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power.** The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.
- **Nationalism is power-hunger tempered by self-deception.**
- **The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.**
- **Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage — torture, the use of hostages, forced labour, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians — which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by 'our' side.**
- **The majority of pacifists either belong to obscure religious sects or are simply humanitarians who object to taking life and prefer not to follow their thoughts beyond that point.** But there is a minority of intellectual pacifists, whose real though unacknowledged motive appears to be hatred of western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism. Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but **if one looks closely at the writing of the younger intellectual pacifists, one finds that they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States. Moreover they do not as a rule condemn violence as such, but only violence used in defence of western countries.** The Russians, unlike the British, are not blamed for defending themselves by warlike means, and indeed all pacifist propaganda of this type avoids mention of Russia or China. It is not claimed, again, that the Indians should abjure violence in their struggle against the British. Pacifist literature abounds with equivocal remarks which, if they mean anything, appear to mean that statesmen of the type of Hitler are preferable to those of the type of Churchill, and that violence is perhaps excusable if it is violent enough. After the fall of France, the French pacifists, faced by a real choice which their English colleagues have not had to make, mostly went over to the Nazis, and in England there appears to have been some small overlap of membership between the Peace Pledge Union and the Blackshirts. Pacifist writers have written in praise of Carlyle, one of the intellectual fathers of Fascism. **All in all it is difficult not to feel that pacifism, as it appears among a section of the intelligentsia, is secretly inspired by an admiration for power and successful cruelty.**

- **If one harbours anywhere in one's mind a nationalistic loyalty or hatred, certain facts, although in a sense known to be true, are inadmissible.** Here are just a few examples. I list below five types of nationalist, and against each I append a fact which it is impossible for that type of nationalist to accept, even in his secret thoughts:

BRITISH TORY. Britain will come out of this war with reduced power and prestige.

COMMUNIST. If she had not been aided by Britain and America, Russia would have been defeated by Germany.

IRISH NATIONALIST. Eire can only remain independent because of British protection.

TROTSKYIST. The Stalin regime is accepted by the Russian masses.

PACIFIST. **Those who "abjure" violence can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf.**

All of these facts are grossly obvious if one's emotions do not happen to be involved: but to the kind of person named in each case they are also intolerable, and so they have to be denied, and false theories constructed upon their denial. I come back to the astonishing failure of military prediction in the present war. It is, I think, true to say that the intelligentsia have been more wrong about the progress of the war than the common people, and that they were more swayed by partisan feelings. The average intellectual of the Left believed, for instance, that the war was lost in 1940, that the Germans were bound to overrun Egypt in 1942, that the Japanese would never be driven out of the lands they had conquered, and that the Anglo-American bombing offensive was making no impression on Germany. **He could believe these things because his hatred for the British ruling class forbade him to admit that British plans could succeed. There is no limit to the follies that can be swallowed if one is under the influence of feelings of this kind.** I have heard it confidently stated, for instance, that the American troops had been brought to Europe not to fight the Germans but to crush an English revolution. **One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool.**

- **There is no crime, absolutely none, that cannot be condoned when 'our' side commits it.**
- The enemies of intellectual liberty always try to present their case as a plea for discipline versus individualism. **The issue truth-versus-untruth is as far as possible kept in the background.** Although the point of emphasis may vary, the writer who refuses to sell his opinions is always branded as a mere egoist. He is accused, that is, either of wanting to shut himself up in an ivory tower, or of making an exhibitionist display of his own personality, or of resisting the inevitable current of history in an attempt to cling to unjustified privileges.
- **A totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy, and its ruling caste, in order to keep its position, has to be thought of as infallible.** But since, in practice, no one is infallible, it is frequently necessary to rearrange past events in order to show that this or that mistake was not made, or that this or that imaginary triumph actually happened. Then, again, every major change in policy demands a corresponding change of doctrine and a revaluation of prominent historical figures.
- Totalitarianism, however, does not so much promise an age of faith as an age of schizophrenia. **A society becomes totalitarian when its structure becomes flagrantly artificial: that is, when its ruling class has lost its function but succeeds in clinging to power by force or fraud.** Such a society, no matter how long it persists, can never afford to become either tolerant or intellectually stable. **It can never permit either the truthful recording of facts or the emotional**

sincerity that literary creation demands. But to be corrupted by totalitarianism one does not have to live in a totalitarian country. The mere prevalence of certain ideas can spread a kind of poison that makes one subject after another impossible for literary purposes. **Wherever there is an enforced orthodoxy — or even two orthodoxies, as often happens — good writing stops.** This was well illustrated by the Spanish civil war. To many English intellectuals the war was a deeply moving experience, but not an experience about which they could write sincerely. **There were only two things that you were allowed to say, and both of them were palpable lies: as a result, the war produced acres of print but almost nothing worth reading.**

- The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies "something not desirable". The words *democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice* have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like *democracy*, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. **Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.** Statements like *Marshal Petain was a true patriot, The Soviet press is the freest in the world, The Catholic Church is opposed to persecution*, are almost always made with intent to deceive. Other words used in variable meanings, in most cases more or less dishonestly, are: *class, totalitarian, science, progressive, reactionary, bourgeois, equality*.
- **All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia.** When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find — this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify — that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship. **But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation even among people who should and do know better.**
- Political language — and with variations this is true of all political parties, from **Conservatives to Anarchists** — is designed to make lies sound truthful and **murder** respectable, and to give an **appearance** of solidity to pure **wind**.
- **Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print. Never use a long word where a short one will do.** If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out. Never use the passive voice where you can use the active. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent. **Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.**
- **Saints** should always be judged **guilty** until they are proved **innocent**, but the **tests** that have to be applied to them are not, of course, the same in all cases. In *Gandhi's* case the questions one feels inclined to ask are: to what extent was Gandhi moved by *vanity* — by the consciousness of himself as a humble, naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires by sheer *spiritual power* — and to what extent did he compromise his own *principles* by entering *politics*, which of their *nature* are inseparable from coercion and fraud? To give a definite answer one would have to study Gandhi's *acts* and *writings* in immense detail, for his whole life was a sort of pilgrimage in which every act was significant.

- At about the time when the autobiography first appeared I remember reading its opening chapters in the ill-printed pages of some Indian newspaper. They made a good impression on me, which Gandhi himself at that time did not.
- **Strictly speaking, as a Nationalist, he was an enemy, but since in every crisis he would exert himself to prevent violence — which, from the British point of view, meant preventing any effective action whatever — he could be regarded as "our man." In private this was sometimes cynically admitted.** The attitude of the Indian millionaires was similar. Gandhi called upon them to repent, and naturally they preferred him to the Socialists and Communists who, given the chance, would actually have taken their money away. How reliable such calculations are in the long run is doubtful; as Gandhi himself says, "in the end deceivers deceive only themselves"; but at any rate the gentleness with which he was nearly always handled was due partly to the feeling that he was useful.
- **I could see even then that the British officials who spoke of him with a mixture of amusement and disapproval also genuinely liked and admired him, after a fashion. Nobody ever suggested that he was corrupt, or ambitious in any vulgar way, or that anything he did was actuated by fear or malice.** In judging a man like Gandhi one seems instinctively to apply high standards, so that some of his virtues have passed almost unnoticed. For instance, it is clear even from the autobiography that his natural physical courage was quite outstanding: the manner of his death was a later illustration of this, for a public man who attached any value to his own skin would have been more adequately guarded. Again, he seems to have been quite free from that maniacal suspiciousness which, as E. M. Forster rightly says in *A Passage to India*, is the besetting Indian vice, as hypocrisy is the British vice. **Although no doubt he was shrewd enough in detecting dishonesty, he seems wherever possible to have believed that other people were acting in good faith and had a better nature through which they could be approached.**
- Of late years it has been the fashion to talk about Gandhi as though he were not only sympathetic to the Western Left-wing movement, but were integrally part of it. Anarchists and pacifists, in particular, have claimed him for their own, noticing only that he was opposed to centralism and State violence and ignoring the other-worldly, anti-humanist tendency of his doctrines.
- The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals.
- **It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the regime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary.**
- **One feels of him that there was much he did not understand, but not that there was anything that he was frightened of saying or thinking.** I have never been able to feel much liking for Gandhi, but I do not feel sure that as a political thinker he was wrong in the main, nor do I believe that his life was a failure. ... One may feel, as I do, a sort of aesthetic distaste for Gandhi, one may reject the claims of sainthood made on his behalf (he never made any such claim himself, by the way), one may also reject sainthood as an ideal and therefore feel that Gandhi's basic aims were

anti-human and reactionary: but **regarded simply as a politician, and compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind!**

- **Within any important issue, there are always aspects no one wishes to discuss.**
- **In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.**
 - No source for this quote among Orwell's writings has yet been located. Earliest published source found on Google Books is [this snippet](#) from p. 35 of *New Statesman and Society, Vol. 3, Issues 133–136* (1991).
 - Variants: During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.
In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.
In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.
Speaking the Truth in times of universal deceit is a revolutionary act.
- **If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them.**
 - Attributed to Orwell by John H. Bunzel, president of San Jose State University, as reported in Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977), p. 151; but not found in Orwell's works or in reports contemporaneous with his life.
- **We sleep peaceably in our beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on our behalf.**
 - This has commonly been attributed to Orwell but has not been found in any of his writings. [Quote Investigator](#) found the earliest known appearance in a 1993 Washington Times essay by Richard Grenier: "As George Orwell pointed out, people sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." The absence of quotation marks indicates Grenier was using his own words to convey Orwell's opinion; thus it may have originated as a paraphrase of his statement in ["Notes on Nationalism"](#) (May 1945): **"Those who 'abjure' violence can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf."** There are also similar sentiments expressed in an essay which Orwell wrote on [Rudyard Kipling](#), quoting from one of Kipling's poems: "Yes, making mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep." In the same essay Orwell also wrote of Kipling: "He sees clearly that men can only be highly civilized while other men, inevitably less civilized, are there to guard and feed them."
- It's not a matter of whether the war is not real, or if it is, Victory is not possible. The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous. Hierarchical society is only possible on the basis of poverty and ignorance. This new version is the past and no different past can ever have existed. In principle the war effort is always planned to keep society on the brink of starvation. The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia but to keep the very structure of society intact.
 - [Michael Moore](#) declares these lines in his film [Fahrenheit 9/11](#) as something "Orwell once wrote". They are nearly identical to a block of narration in the [1984 Richard Burton/John Hurt movie version of 1984](#) when Winston (Hurt) is reading Goldstein's book. All of the lines are excerpts from various parts of Goldstein's book in part 2, chapter 9 of the novel with some paraphrasing. [\[30\]](#)
- To enforce the lies of the present, it is necessary to erase the truths of the past.
 - Attributed to Orwell by [Keith Olbermann](#) on MSNBC (27 September 2006), this seems to

be a paraphrase of [some of the statements](#) in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

- We have a hunger for something like authenticity, but are easily satisfied by an ersatz facsimile.
- There are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them.
 - Possibly a paraphrase of Bertrand Russell in *My Philosophical Development* (1959): "This is one of those views which are so absurd that only very learned men could possibly adopt them." It is similar in meaning to Orwell's line from *Notes on Nationalism* (1945): "One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool." However, Russell was commenting not on politics, as Orwell was, but on some philosophers and their ideas about language.
- The further a society drifts from truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.
 - This has been attributed to Orwell on the internet, but the earliest source citing him as author appears to be a [post from Jsniip4 on the RealistNews.net forum \(14 February 2011\)](#). The statement seems to have actually originated in an opinion piece by columnist Selwyn Duke, ["Stopping Truth At The Border: Banning Michael Savage From Britain" \(6 May 2009\)](#)
- I often feel I will never pick up a book by Orwell again until I have read a frank discussion of the dishonesty and hysteria that mar some of his best work.
 - [Kingsley Amis](#), *What Became of Jane Austen?, and Other Questions*. 1970.
- **He could not blow his nose without moralising on conditions in the handkerchief industry.** This habit of mind informed everything he wrote. *Animal Farm* and *1984* are political novels, *Homage to Catalonia*, *The Road to Wigan Pier* and all his essays ask a *cui bono* and try to unseat the profit-makers, whoever they be. **This ruling purpose is the secret of his best writing but far too evident in his worst.** If we look dispassionately at his achievement, we notice the enormous preponderance of journalism in these four volumes.
- What struck me in Orwell was his lack of historical sense and of psychological insight into political life, coupled with an acute, though narrow, penetration into some aspects of politics, and with an incorruptible firmness of opinion.
 - [Isaac Deutscher](#), in "1984 — The Mysticism of Cruelty" in *Heretics and Renegades* (1955)
- **Toward the end of his life he did ... become a kind of Tory anarchist — as he once described himself ... or even Tory socialist, someone, that is, who, though without exercising double-think, managed to fuse conservative ideas (about patriotism, for example) with radical ones (about the equitable distribution of wealth, for example).**
 - Peter Edgerly Firchow, in *Modern Utopian Fictions from H.G. Wells to Iris Murdoch* (2007), p. 106
- **The Spanish Civil War shaped the political consciousness of a whole generation, which overwhelmingly saw it as representing heroic resistance to Fascism.** [Goldman](#) and [J. C. Powys](#) did not belong to that generation – they belonged to the generation of its parents or, even, grandparents. **And rather than resistance to Fascism, it was the social achievements of the Spanish Revolution that inspired them.** In that they stand alone, among figures of the front rank, with [Read](#) and Orwell (and it will be seen how he and *Homage to Catalonia* fared, on the left at least, his reputation only taking off when *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were taken up as being anti-Soviet at the onset of the Cold War).

- **The word 'Orwellian' is a daunting example of the fate that a distinguished writer can suffer at the hands of journalists.** When, as almost invariably happens, a totalitarian set-up, whether in fact or in fantasy – in [Brazil](#) or in *Brazil* – is called Orwellian, it is as if George Orwell had conceived the nightmare instead of analysed it, helped to create it instead of helping to dispel its euphemistic thrall. (Similarly [Kafka](#), through the word Kafkaesque, gets the dubious credit for having somehow wished into existence the same sort of bureaucratic labyrinth that convulsed him to the heart.) Such distortions would be enough to make us give up on journalism altogether if we happened to forget that Orwell himself was a journalist.
 - [Clive James](#), in "The All of Orwell" in *The New Yorker* (18 January 1999), reprinted in *Even As We Speak* (2001), p. 12
- Two of Orwell's best attributes operating at once: **he had a global grasp, and he was able to guess the truth by the way the other side told lies.**
 - [Clive James](#), in "The All of Orwell" in *The New Yorker* (18 January 1999), reprinted in *Even As We Speak* (2001), p. 12
- **Blair's personal life and Orwell's public activity both reflected one powerfully single-minded personality. Blair-Orwell was made of one piece:** a recurrent theme in the testimonies of all those who knew him at close range was his "terrible simplicity." He had the "innocence of a savage." ... **Orwell once defined himself half in jest — but only half — as a "Tory Anarchist."** Indeed, after his first youthful experience in the colonial police in Burma, he only knew that he hated imperialism and all forms of political oppression; all authority appeared suspect to him, even "mere success seemed to me a form of bullying." Then after his inquiry into workers' conditions in northern industrial England during the Depression he developed a broad nonpartisan commitment to "socialism": "socialism does mean justice and liberty when the nonsense is stripped off it." The decisive turning point in his political evolution took place in Spain, where he volunteered to fight fascism. First he was nearly killed by a fascist bullet and then narrowly escaped being murdered by the [Stalinist](#) secret police:

What I saw in Spain, and what I have seen since of the inner workings of left-wing political parties, have given me a horror of politics.... **I am definitely "left," but I believe that a writer can only remain honest if he keeps free of party labels.**

From then on he considered that the first duty of a socialist is to fight totalitarianism, which means in practice "to denounce the Soviet myth, for there is not much difference between Fascism and Stalinism."

- Though he was a strong believer in individual difference and came to fear, above all, the thought that people would become interchangeable parts in a totalitarian system, he seems to have felt that as a subject for study himself he was a universal, *i.e.*, a fair sample of his kind, capable of normative reactions under dissection. His end has something macabre in it, like the end of some Victorian pathologist who tested his theories on his own organs, neglecting asepsis. In his last letters, he speaks of his appearance as being "frightening," of being a "death's head," but all along he has been something of a specter at the feast. **He was prone to see the handwriting on the wall, for England, for socialism, for personal liberty; indeed, his work is one insistent *reminder*, and his personal life — what we glimpse of it — even when he was fairly affluent seems to have been an illustrated lesson in survival techniques under extreme conditions, as though he expected to be cast adrift in a capsule.**

- Although he was always critical of the 1945-51 Labour government's moderation, his support for it began to pull him to the right politically. This did not lead him to embrace conservatism, imperialism or reaction, but to defend, albeit critically, Labour reformism.

The other crucial dimension to Orwell's socialism was his recognition that the Soviet Union was not socialist. Unlike many on the left, instead of abandoning socialism once he discovered the full horror of Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union, Orwell abandoned the Soviet Union and instead remained a socialist — indeed he became more committed to the socialist cause than ever.

- [John Newsinger](#), in "Orwell and the Spanish Revolution" in *International Socialism Journal*, No. 62 (Spring 1994)
- **Old George Orwell got it backward. Big Brother isn't watching. He's singing and dancing.** He's pulling rabbits out of a hat. Big Brother's holding your attention every moment you're awake. He's making sure you're always distracted. He's making sure you're fully absorbed... and this [act of] being fed, it's worse than being watched. With the world always filling you, no one has to worry about what's in your mind. **With everyone's imagination atrophied, no one will ever be a threat to the world.**
- **There was something about him, the proud man apart, the Don Quixote on a bicycle (and if Saint [Thomas More](#) was the first Englisman, as one historian called him, then Orwell was perhaps the last) that caught one's imagination right away.** That made one think of a knight errant and of social justice as the Holy Grail. **One felt safe with him; he was so intellectually honest. His mind was like a court where the judge was the lawyer for the defence.**
- **George Orwell was the wintry conscience of a generation which in the thirties had heard the call of the rasher assumptions of political faith.** He was a kind of saint and, in that character, more likely in politics to chastise his own side than the enemy.
 - [V. S. Pritchett](#), in *New Statesman* (1950)
- **Orwell in 1948 understood that despite the Axis defeat, the will to fascism had not gone away, that far from having seen its day it had perhaps not yet even come into its own — the corruption of spirit, the irresistible human addiction to power were already long in place, all well-known aspects of the Third Reich and Stalin's USSR, even the British Labour party — like first drafts of a terrible future.**
- In Burma and [Paris](#) and [London](#) and on the road to Wigan pier, and in Spain, being shot at, and eventually wounded, by fascists — he had invested blood, pain and hard labour to earn his anger, and was as attached to it as any capitalist to his capital. It may be an affliction peculiar to writers more than others, this fear of getting too comfortable, of being bought off.
- The question remains, why end a novel as passionate, violent and dark as this one with what appears to be a scholarly appendix?
The answer may lie in simple grammar. **From its first sentence, "The Principles of Newspeak" is written consistently in the past tense, as if to suggest some later piece of history, post-1984, in which Newspeak has become literally a thing of the past — as if in some way the anonymous author of this piece is by now free to discuss, critically and objectively, the political system of which Newspeak was, in its time, the essence.** Moreover, it is our own pre-Newspeak English language that is being used to write the essay. Newspeak was supposed to have become general by 2050, and yet it appears that it did not last that long, let alone triumph, that

the ancient humanistic ways of thinking inherent in standard English have persisted, survived, and ultimately prevailed, and that perhaps the social and moral order it speaks for has even, somehow, been restored.

- Orwell's defenders always look to contextualize Orwell's shortcomings in a historic moment. Whatever his infraction, he was a victim of circumstance — times were different then, and, for example, [Hitler](#) was looking really good for a minute there. Orwell never meant that his books should be employed to stultify schoolchildren. **And yet that's what [Animal Farm](#) is — an educational missile aimed at any healthy impulse towards reform.** The argument that "Animal Farm" is a generalized indictment of totalitarianism is simply unsupportable by the text or any existing presentation of the text. Rather, the intelligence of the pigs as opposed to the stupidity of the other animals, and the ultimate hopelessness of revolution, renders *Animal Farm* a *de facto* endorsement of the *status quo*.

- **What he feared most was the blind spot between us and the future, the space between identities where we could get lost forever.**

- If we ask what it is he [Orwell] stands for, ... the answer is: the virtue of not being a genius, of fronting the world with nothing more than one's simple, direct, undeceived intelligence, and a respect for the powers one does have. ... He communicates to us the sense that what he has done any one of us could do. Or could do if we but made up our mind to do it, if we but surrendered a little of the cant that comforts us, if for a few weeks we paid no attention to the little group with which we habitually exchange opinions, if we took our chance of being wrong or inadequate, if we looked at things simply and directly, having in mind only our intention of finding out what they really are, not the prestige of our great intellectual act of looking at them. He liberates us. He tells us that we can understand our political and social life merely by looking around us; he frees us from the need for the inside dope. He implies that our job is not to be intellectual, certainly not to be intellectual in this fashion or that, but merely to be intelligent according to our own lights—**he restores the old sense of the democracy of the mind, releasing us from the belief that the mind can work only in a technical, professional way and that it must work competitively.** He has the effect of making us believe that we may become full members of the society of thinking men. That is why he is a figure for us.

- [Lionel Trilling](#), "George Orwell and the politics of truth," *The Opposing Self* (1950), pp. 156-158

- **When I remember George Orwell, I see again the long, lined face that so often reminded me not of a living person, but of a character out of fiction. It was the nearest I had seen in real life to the imagined features of [Don Quixote](#), and the rest of the figure went with the face.** For Orwell was a thin, angular man, with worn gothic features accentuated by deep vertical furrows that ran down the cheeks and across the corners of the mouth. The thinness of his lips was emphasized by a very narrow line of dark moustache: it seemed a hard, almost cruel mouth, until he smiled, and then an expression of unexpected kindness would irradiate his whole face. The general gauntness of his looks was accentuated by the deep sockets from which his eyes looked out, always rather sadly. ... **The resemblance to Don Quixote was appropriate, for in many was Orwell can only be understood as an essentially quixotic man. ... He defended, passionately and as a matter of principle, unpopular causes.** Often without regard to reason he would strike out against anything which offended his conceptions of right, justice and decency, yet, as many who crossed lances with him had reason to know, he could be a very chivalrous opponent, impelled by a sense of fair play that would lead to public recantation of accusations he had eventually decided were unfair. In his own way he was a man of the left, but he attacked its holy

images as fervently as he did those of the right. And however much he might on occasion find himself in uneasy and temporary alliance with others, he was — in the end — as much a man in isolation as Don Quixote. **His was the isolation of every man who seeks the truth diligently, no matter how unpleasant its implications may be to others or even to himself.**

- [George Woodcock](#), in *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell* (1966), Ch. I: The Man I Remembered, p. 3