CHOLARS HAVE FREQUENTLY POINTED UP THE DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL VIEWS that separated two literary giants of twentieth-century Britain, G. K. Chesterton and George Orwell. Orwell was a singular breed of socialist whose mission was to battle dogma, especially what he saw to be the communist, fascist, and Catholic varieties. Orwell once explained to his fellow Etonian Christopher Hollis why he read the Catholic press: “I like to see what they enemy is up to.”

Chesterton, on the other hand, was Britain’s best-known anti-socialist who assailed the evils of his day through the dogma of orthodox Christianity. These two writers selected different paths to engage the troubles of their times—hence their contrasting politics—but what has not been adequately appreciated is the similarity of world view from which they arrived at their opposing political positions. A close reading of Chesterton’s and Orwell’s cultural criticisms reveals that their political commitments conceal a shared social vision that is perhaps greater and more significant than their political differences.

A seminal event, which set these two men on divergent intellectual paths, concerned a crisis in values, a deep questioning of religious beliefs, which occurred when both were young men. Chesterton’s struggle, conditioned in all likelihood by the painful process of passing through the adolescent crisis of individuation, came to a climax when he found himself removed from the security of his old boyhood intimates while a student at the Slade School. In his autobiography Chesterton described the experience as an interlude of darkness and moral anarchy where he came to know the ways of the devil. It was in the midst of the free artistic experimentation that pervaded the Slade that Chesterton became aware of the break-up of Victorian values and the ascendency of the so-called “Decadents,” the self-indulgent followers of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. The group celebrated the confusion of standards and moral anomic of their day by championing the Solipsist idea that the self was the only reality that could be known. This fin de siècle malaise forced Chesterton to explore the roots of his own beliefs and values.

In the summer of 1894 Chesterton expressed these personal feelings of despair to his friend E. C. Bentley:

Inwardly speaking I have had a funny time. A meaningless fit of depression, taking the form of certain absurd psychological worries, came upon me, and instead of dismissing it and talking to people, I had it out and went very far into the abysses, indeed. 2

Chesterton worked his way out of such darkness by “talking to God face to face.” This was the product of grappling with the countervailing belief systems of the day (Catholicism, Protestantism, paganism, socialism, spiritualism, etc.), all of which influenced him in varying degrees. As Joseph Pearce has noted, Chesterton contracted various forms of
these influences for short periods of time, “much as a man catches influenza.” The moral crisis brought on by Chesterton’s journey into the void of fads and fantasies was eventually resolved by his acceptance of the historical reality of Christ. As he pondered in his notebook at that time:

> I live in an age of varied powers and knowledge, Of steam, science, democracy, journalism, art; But when my love rises like the sea, I have to go back to an obscure tribe and a slain man

To formulate a blessing!

Where man is like a spark flying upwards into infinite space, God, wrote Chesterton, is everlasting; man is the “star unquenchable” but God is in him incarnate. “Let him dare all things, claim all things: he is the son of Man, who shall come in clouds of glory.”

A few years later Chesterton’s religious confidence was sufficient for him to pillory the “errors” of his age in a book entitled *Heretics* (1905). Its central argument was that Chesterton’s contemporaries—Shaw, Wells, Kipling, and others—had fallen victim to the fad of progress, a mad worshipping of change and all things new in the unfounded belief that they would assure social improvement. None of these “heretics,” claimed Chesterton, had established any ethical standards upon which to gauge progress:

Nobody has any business to use the word ‘progress’ unless he has a definite creed and a cast-iron code of morals....For progress by its very name indicates direction; and the moment we are the least doubtful about the direction, we become in the same degree doubtful about progress. Never perhaps since the beginning of the world has there been an age that had less right to use the word ‘progress’ than we.

Chesterton announced his own solution to such moral anarchy with the publication in 1908 of *Orthodoxy*. He, too, it was explained, had been a heretic, that is, sincerely trying to be original struggling to find a “heresy of my own.” But when Chesterton prepared to put the final coat of paint on his worldview, he discovered it was orthodoxy. It was not that these new, painfully chiseled truths were false, but only that they were not his: “When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed up by all of Christendom.”

In *Orthodoxy* Chesterton asserted that Christian theology, as expressed in the Apostle’s Creed, was the basis of sound ethics and the provider of a dual spiritual need, “the need for that mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar which Christendom had rightly named romance. For the very word ‘Romance’ has in it the mystery and the ancient meaning of Rome.” Chesterton’s answer to the heretics was a reaffirmation of traditional Christianity, which he discovered to be the foundation from which his own liberal sympathies and orientations had evolved.

*Orthodoxy* was also a defense of Chesterton’s belief in and commitment to liberal politics. His liberalism reposéd on the idea that the individual could reach his fullest potential in a democratic environment of limited government (“the most terribly important things must be left to ordinary men themselves”) founded on Christian religious traditions. Out of his understanding of history and psychology, Chesterton saw it natural for man to search for religion: “Christianity seeks after God with the most elementary passion it can find, the craving for a father, the hunger that is as old as the hills.”

Finally, for Chesterton Christianity provided the only solid base from which democracy could be justified, for it asserted the twin dogmas that all men are made in the image of God (even the poor), and that all men are tainted with original sin (even the rich). Chesterton’s spiritual resolution, then, was based

![An illustration by W. Graham Robertson from G.K. Chesterton’s The Napoleon of Notting Hill, London, 1904](image)
on his conviction that there was divine order in the world, a pattern revealed, as he said, in “the green architecture that builds itself without visible hands” but yet follows a design already drawn in the air by an invisible finger.\footnote{13} The admission of such a plan brought with it the recognition that someone else, some strange and unseen force, had designed the universe.

The final step in the resolution of Chesterton’s moral crisis was his conversion to Catholicism in 1922. Upon accepting the dogma of Rome, Chesterton simply was completing a journey started with Orthodoxy some fifteen years earlier, when he convinced himself that the Christian belief in a personal savior was the only means by which to maintain balance and sanity in the turmoil of the modern world.

Like Chesterton, George Orwell also was deeply troubled by the positivistic cults of progress and science fostered by some of the leading intellectuals of his day. Yet he was quick to see the negative effects of those who reacted against these trends, namely Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, T. E. Hulme, and T. S. Eliot, whose moods were too pessimistic and despairing. Orwell shared with Chesterton a belief in the liberal tradition and considered it desirable to restore what he called “the religious attitude.” But Orwell was unable to accept what Chesterton saw to be the truth of Christianity, mainly because he could not believe in his own personal immortality, nor, he was convinced, could others who had reached rational maturity (what Kant called \textit{Mundigkeit}). For Orwell, Christianity was a creed largely discredited by the onslaught of Voltaire and the philosophes of the eighteenth century. As Christopher Hollis has observed, Orwell rejected religion not because it was shown to be untrue but rather because it was incredible: “because the modern man was simply unable to believe in its assertions and it was an idle waste of time to drag him into the debate.”\footnote{14} On the other hand, Orwell appreciated the psychological and moral necessity of the Christian religion; he simply believed that the truth of its teachings was exhausted and that the world confronting twentieth-century man essentially was a meaningless one. Here was the nub of the problem: a decent society required the psychological glue of religion-unity was the needful thing. As a man of unusual intellectual integrity, Orwell had to find humanitarian reasons for carrying on the struggle: “We have got to be the children of God, even though the God of the Prayer Book no longer exists.”\footnote{15}

This was a daunting assignment. In his early years Orwell had great difficulty finding a place in the environment of privilege that engulfed him. This was particularly troublesome in his student days at St. Cyprians, where as a scholarship student he felt intimidated by the wealthier upper middle-class boys who enjoyed themselves at his expense. To survive in what he eventually discovered to be a moral vacuum, Orwell found an ability to endure within himself, an “instinct to survive” as he called it. It was this weapon, a courageous spirit to carry on and fight, as a secular humanist, for what was morally right, that enabled him to make his way through a world where Christian liberal values no longer seemed to have validity.

Various efforts have been made to show that Orwell was at heart a religious person of the Christian persuasion. Central to Orwell’s moral vision was an insistence on what he called “decency,” a word that James Connors has noted recurred with strategic regularity in Orwell’s writing from the mid-1930s until his death.\footnote{16} Orwell seems to have equated various positive attributes to the word, including such values as a respect for human life, compassion, honesty, freedom, and tolerance. Like Charles Dickens, Orwell believed that the repository of such virtues could be found in the ordinary people of England, the vast majority of whom “believe in common decency without the need to ‘tie it up with any transcendental belief’.”\footnote{17}

Stephen Ingle argues that Orwell recognized such humanitarian values had evolved out of Judaic-Christian traditions. These moral imperatives had not died out but lived on in the communities of ordinary working people.\footnote{18} Disagreeing with those who claimed that the writer retained his animosity toward religion, Ingle believes that Orwell’s thought continued to be shaped by Christianity, but he felt it inappropriate to admit as much.\footnote{19} Ingle sees Dorothy in \textit{A Clergyman’s Daughter} to be an autobiographical reflection of Orwell’s own religious position.
Although she forsakes her Anglicanism, Dorothy continues to live the life of a Christian. Taking Dorothy as a guide to Orwell's own moral vision, Ingle asserts that it was essentially Christian values that guided the lives of the ordinary, decent people Orwell so honored. Likewise, Orwell's notion of socialism, grounded on the principle of equality and respect for the individual, can also be linked to the basic Judeo-Christian virtues of decency and justice.

Many of Orwell's friends and acquaintances (W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Christopher Hollis, and Cyril Connolly) also noted his adherence to Christian morality. Auden wrote, “If I were asked to name people who I considered true Christians, the name of George Orwell is one of the first that would come to mind.” Spender saw Orwell to be “Christ-like,” a twentieth-century innocent English Candide.

There were a good number of Catholics who also tried to claim Orwell as one of their own. T. A. Birrell, writing in the Dublin Review in the autumn of 1950, asserted that in terms of “Chestertonian geography” one could travel to Rome by way of the road to Wigan Pier, for “[i]n this vale of tears we are all fellow travelers.” The culmination of such attempts to make Orwell into an unconscious Catholic can be found in the work of Christopher Hollis and his fellow conservative co-religionists associated with the London Tablet.

The problem with the claims for Orwell being fundamentally Christian and even Catholic in sentiment—irrespective of compelling literary analyses and his moralist life-style—is that they belie what he actually wrote on the subject. Orwell left the Anglican faith while a student at Eton (1917-21), and there is no evidence in anything he wrote that he ever again accepted the creed as his own.

On the other hand, Orwell lamented the collapse of Christian values, because the moral vacuum led to appalling consequences for the practice of politics. The dictators of the 1930s made a mockery of human values as they lied, cheated, and murdered their adversaries, while the craven moneygrubbers of capitalism trampled on any notions of decency by dehumanizing human relationships. In short, man, it seems, needed religion. It was not simply an opiate of the masses, a misunderstood sentiment attributed to Karl Marx. Marx’s line on the dope of religion needed to be put into context with the previous sentence of his comment: “religion is the sigh of the soul in a soulless world.” Orwell’s solution to the problem was to develop a secular basis for morality, essentially a new secular religion reposing on the dual virtues of what he called decency and the brotherhood of humanity.

There is even less of a case to be made for Orwell being Catholic at heart. Orwell’s writings abound with antipathy for Rome. He saw the Catholic Church to be a bastion of reaction, semi-fascist in ethos, and a major stumbling block to the realization of socialism. It was a religion, he believed, that kept its adherents in a state of arrested intellectual maturation. Evelyn Waugh’s abilities as a novelist, Orwell wrote just one year before he died, were seriously compromised by his religion: “One cannot really be Catholic and grown up.” The Church’s support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War permanently hardened his position to that of an obsessive anti-Catholicism. Yet despite Orwell’s well-publicized vitriol for Rome, many English Catholic luminaries paid him tribute as a fellow traveler. These Catholic writers generally dismissed his barbs as products of ignorance regarding their faith and instead highlighted those elements of his writings that resonated with Catholic positions, in particular Orwell’s anti-communism. As Douglas Woodruff, editor of the London Tablet, emphasized in his review of Homage to Catalonia, Orwell, in condemning the Spanish Reds, “joins hands with people at the other extreme of political thought from his own.”

His old friend Christopher Hollis, who had known him since their days together at Eton, made one of the strongest cases for linking Orwell with Rome. Hollis insisted that Orwell’s moral vision rested on a “subconscious Christian foundation” and equated his travels in the underworld of Paris and London with the comportment of “ascetical Spanish saints.” Hollis believed that Orwell may have given religion a more serious examination as an antidote to the secular moral bankruptcy of the day if international politics had not complicated his philosophical vision. The stumbling block was his personal experience in the Spanish Civil War. There Orwell saw the Catholic Church using its religious influence to support the fascist-style regime of Franco. Since Orwell’s driving mission was to battle privilege, and because the
Church used its vast political power to maintain privilege and was part of what he called the “Capitalist racket” in Spain, Orwell was therefore against the Church.\textsuperscript{29} Orwell’s encounter with the Spanish Civil War was his first and only intimate experience with a country that was Catholic. And from that moment on, argues Hollis, Orwell formed the view that Catholicism was an evil force. Never again would Orwell examine more critically how its rich traditions and beliefs may have resonated with his own.

Throughout \textit{A Study of George Orwell}, however, Hollis seems to have minimized the differences between Orwell and himself (and even these, he claimed, were owing to misunderstandings), emphasizing instead those areas where there was congruity in their views. The end result is a portrait of Orwell that shows him to be an opaque conservative Christian. John Rodden has shown that Hollis’ version of Orwell is essentially a projection of his own Chestertonian opinions and experiences as a partial “convert” to Orwell’s “doctrines.”\textsuperscript{30} As students at Eton, both writers were impacted by the legacy of Chesterton and Belloc. In fact, Hollis asserts that Chesterton had been a hero of Orwell’s youth, but, given his later experiences in Spain, this became a source of discomfort and embarrassment. Yet, he says, Orwell kept coming back to Chesterton.\textsuperscript{31} Ultimately Hollis converted to the Chestbellocian creed; Orwell went for socialism. The key to understanding Hollis’ Catholic image of Orwell, claims Rodden, “lies in his attempt to return Orwell to his Chestertonian roots—to his Christian ‘second self’.”\textsuperscript{32} In the final analysis, however, Hollis ignored two essential features, which fundamentally separated Orwell from Chesterton: a rejection of private property and his self-proclaimed atheism.\textsuperscript{33}

Yet to say that Orwell was not a convert to the faith of Christianity need not suggest that his social vision was antithetical to that of G. K. Chesterton. In fact, throughout Orwell’s scattered writings one finds a distinct admiration for Chesterton. Christopher Hollis, for instance, correctly notes that Chesterton and Orwell recognized the same villains: “the press lords, the film magnates and the bureaucrats, the advertisers and the masters of the party machines.”\textsuperscript{34} However, Chesterton’s persistent Catholic apologetics seem to have had the effect of blinding Orwell to the larger worldview that Chesterton defended. Orwell attacked religion with Voltairian ferocity.\textsuperscript{35} As was made clear in an article for the \textit{Parisian Review}, one of his consuming passions was to fight the intellectual tendencies of three literary cliques: the “Stalinist gang, the Fascist gang, and the Catholic gang.”\textsuperscript{36} What all three had in common was a reliance on a religious priesthood separated from the ordinary citizen and an adherence to dogma, distrust- ing and limiting the individual’s ability to judge matters independently. Any writer embracing these orthodoxies did so by suppressing his sensibilities and intellectual integrity. It was precisely on these grounds that Orwell condemned Chesterton.\textsuperscript{37}

The “orthodoxy-snifters,” as Orwell labeled those intellectuals who sold their careers to the cause of a particular dogma, were guilty of what he called the drunkenness of nationalism. This was different from the passion of patriotism, by which he meant devotion to a particular place and way of life without the jingoistic desire to force it upon other people. Nationalism, on the other hand, was aggressive and exclusive in nature. It was generally a blind and irrational attachment to a country, but it also had the quality of being “transferred” to a system of beliefs. The “nationalist” placed the object of his attachment above everything else, beyond good and evil, recognizing no other duty than to advance its interests. A popular form of such sentiment amongst intellectuals of the 1930s was that of communism: “a Communist, for my purpose here,” explained Orwell, “is one who looks upon the USSR as his Fatherland and feels it his duty to justify Russian policy and advance Russian interests at all costs.”\textsuperscript{38}

Orwell also identified other contending forms of “nationalism,” and although they were opposing currents of thought, they were bound together by a common principle. For him, the variety most closely corresponding to communism was political Catholicism. He identified G. K. Chesterton as its most notable exponent. Not seeing the complete Chesterton, Orwell could write: “Every book that he wrote, every paragraph, every sentence, every incident in every story, every scrap of dialogue, had to demonstrate beyond possibility of mistake the superiority of the Catholic over the Protestant or the pagan.”\textsuperscript{39} This superiority was not simply spiritual or intellectual, but, in the case of Chesterton, was translated into national culture entailing what Orwell called an “ignorant idealization of the Latin countries,” particularly France and Italy.\textsuperscript{40} Chesterton’s enslavement to orthodoxy, in Orwell’s mind, became most apparent when he turned to Catholic nations. Orwell could praise him for being a
“patriot” in affairs concerning Britain, greatly admiring Chesterton’s “Little Englander” politics and his condemnation of imperialism. But when he turned to international affairs, said Orwell, orthodoxy induced Chesterton to forsake his principles without being aware of it. A major characteristic of “transferred nationalism” was an indifference to reality, an inability to see congruity between a similar set of facts. Orwell could not understand how the man who saw almost mystical qualities in democracy would admire Mussolini after he destroyed representative government and freedom of the press, democratic ideals for which Chesterton had struggled so hard in Britain. Orwell also noticed that Chesterton had little to say against imperialism and the conquest of colored races when Italians and Frenchmen practiced it. “His hold on reality, his literary taste, and even to some extent his moral sense, were dislocated as soon as his nationalistic loyalties were involved.”

Orwell’s criticism of Chesterton for “drunkenness of nationalism” was conditioned by anti-Catholic bias and was both unfair and inaccurate. It is true that Chesterton was slow to condemn Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia in his journal G.K.’s Weekly, but this largely was due to the fact that he was on holiday at the time and also ill. However, when he did speak out on the issue it was not done with the vigor with which he had earlier criticized British imperialism during the Boer War. It was Chesterton’s opinion that Britain was hardly in a position to morally rebuke Italy, since the Victorian empire was far larger than Mussolini ever hoped to attain and was carved out by methods that even the most hard-boiled fascists would repudiate.

Chesterton, like Orwell, was disturbed at the expansion of government powers and had spoken out against the corruption of parliamentary politics by finance. When Mussolini first came to power, Chesterton, along with numerous others, saw fascism to be a reaction against these evils. Several writers associated with Chesterton’s circle believed that the Italian Fascists were putting into practice the principles of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum. However, with several in Chesterton’s circle, such sympathies were short lived. Ultimately and unequivocally, Chesterton himself denounced Mussolini’s movement because its destruction of a corrupt parliamentary government and secret financial and political cliques simply cleared the arena for a new kind of undemocratic, centralized power that was far worse than the evils it displaced. Fascism, argued Chesterton, was more lethal than other contending creeds because it lacked a “fixed moral principle” and was totalitarian. His position on fascism could be summed up quite succinctly: “The whole of the real case for Fascism can be put in two words never printed in our newspapers: secret societies. The whole case against Fascism can be put in one word now never used and almost forgotten: legitimacy.”

In short, Fascism was justified in smashing the Italian Parliament, but was never a satisfactory political solution because it rested not on authority but only on power. The irony that eluded Orwell was that Chesterton had criticized Fascism precisely because it was not democratic: Catholics could never accept Fascist government, with its insistence on the unquestioned sovereignty of the state, because it ultimately denied the dignity and liberty of the common man. In other words, Chesterton denounced Fascism for the same reason as had Orwell: absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely, thus undermining the possibility of an egalitarian social order.

The manner in which Orwell and Chesterton worked out their initial crisis in values as young men had a telling impact on the way they examined the political issues of the 1930s. Chesterton found sanity, balance, and wisdom by embracing the orthodoxy of Catholicism. Orwell spurned this kind of resolution because he felt it meant giving up one’s freedom to a party or ideology. The partisan discipline it demanded was too much for a temperament far more libertarian and secular than Chesterton’s. Becoming part of a party also meant committing oneself to the propagation of doctrine: “the mere sound of words ending in -ism,” wrote Orwell, “seems to bring with it the smell of propaganda.” In this respect Orwell played out the role of what has been called the “Julien Benda intellectual.” This was a writer who takes on the responsibility of being a truth-telling moralizer, an
intellectual who, in a transcendental way, strives to remain above the passions of politics, refusing to descend into its marketplace where he might compromise the ideal of abstract justice for a partisan cause. For Orwell, this did not mean that the intellectual had to avoid the political fray, only that when he did soil his hands in the mud of advocacy (distributing leaflets, lecturing in dingy halls, even fighting in civil wars), he should do so as a citizen, as a human being, but not as a writer. “But whatever else he does in the service of his party, he should never write for it. He should make clear that his writing is a thing apart,” something that must be done as an individual, an outsider, an unwelcome guerrilla on the flank of an army. \[46\] Chesterton, from Orwell’s cramped perspectives, was too much the “true believer,” too much the insider in his commitment to the orthodoxy of Rome. \[48\]

Behind these issues of political and institutional commitment, however, one finds striking similarities in Orwell’s and Chesterton’s assessment of what was wrong with the world. A revealing common ground of agreement was their libertarian misgivings about the slide rule socialism of the Fabian Society and its cult of the expert. \[49\] Orwell’s condemnation of these tendencies had a decidedly Chestertonian tenor to it. First, there was his objection to the Fabians’ efforts to force change on the masses from above, which was the starting point of Chesterton’s objection to English socialism. From the beginning, the socialist movement in England was dominated and controlled by middle-class intellectuals, most having no knowledge or understanding of those whom they were endeavoring to mold into revolutionary proletarians. In fact, many had contempt for the poor: George Bernard Shaw saw them as useless and dangerous and hoped they would be abolished. Chesterton recognized that Shaw’s interest in socialism had nothing to do with ameliorating the lot of the common people: rather, he saw collectivism (a word Chesterton used to describe socialism) as an efficient tool with which to bring order to the world. As a vegetarian teetotaler, Shaw, said Chesterton, was himself of incomplete humanity. This was especially clear in his approach to social problems, where he revealed himself more the economist than man: “Shaw (one might say) dislikes murder, not so much because it wastes the life of the corpse as because it wastes the time of the murderer.” \[50\]

One finds a similar vein of criticism in Orwell’s commentaries on socialism. When he observed the vegetarian, fruitjuice drinking, tract-writing type of socialist, with fuzzy hair and Marxist quips; Orwell quickly grasped the source of his inspiration:

The underlying motive of many Socialists...is simply a hypertrophied sense of order. The present state of affairs offends them not because it causes misery, still less because it makes freedom impossible, but because it is untidy; what they desire, basically, is to reduce the world to something resembling a chessboard. \[51\]

For this kind of socialist, revolution did not mean immersing oneself in and becoming part of the masses to bring on equality and justice; it meant, rather, a program of intellectual coercion which “we” the “clever ones” would impose upon “them,” the lower orders. \[52\]

Shaw, who envisioned the working classes as little more than children to be amused but disciplined, best typified this frame of mind. This was Shaw’s advice to his fellow Fabians: “never give the people anything they want: give them something they ought to want and don’t.” \[53\] Chesterton had contended that the Fabians were not working for a classless society but rather a planned society via the introduction of a bureaucratic form of socialism. H. G. Wells, for example, had complained that Marx’s notion of socialism was “unattractive to people who had any real knowledge of administration” and was grateful for the Fabian Society’s converting “Revolutionary Socialism into Administrative Socialism.” \[54\] WhatNeedled the slide rule socialists was the possibility of anarchism. In the words of Wells again: “In place of disorderly individual effort, each man doing what he pleases, the Socialist wants organized effort and a plan... That and no other is the essential Socialist idea.” \[55\]

Such thinking also betrayed a deep contempt for democracy which threatened the freedoms of not only Englishmen but also people of other lands. Shaw contended that “the world is to the big and powerful states by necessity, and the little ones must come within their border or be crushed out of existence.” \[56\] Sidney Webb, no less an imperialist zealot than Shaw, was convinced that the future would belong to “the great administrative nations, where the officials govern and the police keep order.” \[57\] The Victorian scramble for empire, raising its ugly head in the Boer Wars and which the Fabians saw to be inspired by “love of one’s country” and a natural part of the struggle for existence, was denounced by Chesterton as a perversion of patriotism. What these people meant by the love of country, claimed Chesterton, “was
“was not what a mystic might mean by the love of God,” but more like what “a child might mean by a love of jam.” Chesterton called for a “renaissance of true love” for one’s native land, which could only be discovered and cultivated through a better appreciation of Western civilization:

What have we done, and where have we wandered, we that have produced sages who could have spoken with Socrates and poets who could walk with Dante, that we should talk as if we have never done anything more intelligent than found colonies and kick niggers? We are the children of light, and it is we that sit in darkness. If we are judged, it will not be for the merely intellectual transgression of failing to appreciate other nations, but for the supreme spiritual transgression of failing to appreciate ourselves.58

Shaw and the Webbs were the progenitors of a new cult of the expert, celebrating the Fabian hero who would audit, analyze, categorize, test, and measure the social order to the officious standards of bureaucratic madness. Where Chesterton had chastised this crowd for perverting patriotism, home, and hearth, Orwell attacked their administrative brand of socialism for vitiating the ideals of nineteenth-century socialists like William Morris and John Ruskin. He reminded his readers that Morris’s and Ruskin’s equalitarian vision was not synonymous with centralized ownership and planned production, and that their democratic goals easily could be replaced by a hierarchy of experts whose growing powers increasingly would be necessary for social stability. This is the horrible tendency that materializes in the world of Nineteen Eighty-four, with its new aristocracy of bureaucrats, scientists, trade union organizers, and publicity experts ruthlessly imposing their will on everyone else. Another disconcerting characteristic of England’s slide rule socialists was their propaganda, which made a fetish of machines, consumerism, and material progress. The effect of this, argued Orwell, was to frighten away the very people to whom true socialism should appeal. Shaw’s and Wells’s celebration of the creature comforts that would accrue from the mechanization of the workplace produced a hollow hedonistic notion of socialism in which consumerism seemed to become an end in itself. All this was redolent of socialist propaganda about the rapid mechanical advance of the Soviet Union. In this kind of future all the work presently done by hand would be replaced by machinery. As Orwell feared, “everything that is now made of leather, wood or stone will be made of rubber, glass or steel; there will be no disorder, no loose ends, no wilderesses, no wild animals, no weeds, no disease, no poverty, no pain.”59 In short, it would be Huxley’s “Brave New World,” a society sustained by the narcotics of pleasure but purged of all traces of humanity. However, such “fat-bellied” notions of progress and sneering sentiments towards work were never part of true socialist doctrine, but because of the engineering mentality of the Fabians, it now was thought to be. As a consequence of this, Orwell believed that the inherent conservatism of the popular temperament was easily mobilized against socialism.

Orwell’s feelings about the centrality and significance of human labor were very similar to the positions of Marx, William Morris, and Eric Gill and his fellow Distributists (the followers of Chesterton’s social philosophy). For example, the Distributists condemned large-scale industrialism because mass production demeaned the laborer; it made work itself drudgery, eroded the quality of craftsmanship, and led to the alienation of the worker. The machine civilization advocated by English socialists would cancel out the human capacity for effort and creation. In the words of Eric Gill, industrial methods of production reduced the worker to a subhuman condition of intellectual irresponsibility: “It makes good mechanics, good machine minders, but men and women who in every other respect are morons, cretins, for whom cross-word puzzles, football games, watered beer, sham half-timbered bungalows and shimmering film stars are the highest form of amusement.”60 Orwell insisted that man was not, as
these vulgar hedonistic socialists had depicted him, “a
kind of walking stomach; he has also got a hand, an
eye and a brain. Cease to use your hands, and you have
lopped off a huge chunk of your consciousness.”61 The
logical end of this type of mechanical progress was to
reduce the human being to something resembling a brain
in a bottle.62

Central to Chesterton’s and Orwell’s critique of
English socialism was their mutual respect for what
Chesterton called “the old beer-drinking, creed-making,
fighting, failing, sensual, respectable man,”63 a person like
Charles Bowling, the endearing comic-postcard husband
of Orwell’s novel, Coming Up for Air. As Richard Rees
has observed, when Orwell denounced fruit juice and
Chesterton ridiculed tea, what they were both implicitly
condemning was the assumption of superiority on the
part of people who did not share the traditional tastes of
the common man. It was the assumption of superiority
rather than the nature of the drink that they objected
to.64 This sentiment, along with a fear of the abuse of
power, was at the core of Chesterton’s and Orwell’s assa
ults on the slide rule socialists. For them, the real en
emy was a network of intellectuals, philosophers, artists,
and scientists who warred against traditional values and
institutions, an elitist coterie driven by a genuine dislike
of the common folk.

Chesterton’s surrealistic tale of the slide rule so
cialists’ conspiracy to annihilate the ordinary man after
seizing control of the state can be found in The Man Who
Was Thursday, a tale which curiously opens in the year
1984. It is a time, much like what Orwell describes in
Nineteen Eighty-four, in which there has been a steady ero
sion in the sense of liberty and individual responsibil
ity. Gabriel Syme, an adumbration of Orwell’s Winston
Smith, acting as a common-sense rebel for sanity, even
tually exposes the conspirator’s distortion of objective
reality and wrecks the plot. On one level, The Man Who
Was Thursday can be seen as an allegory of Chesterton’s
own successful moral struggle to overcome the despair
and fin de siècle pessimism experienced in his Slade School
days. The Dickensian conclusion of the tale, which is in
sharp contrast to the foreboding sunset of the opening
pages, is framed by a sparkling dawn “breaking over ev
everything in colours at once clear and timid” and is meant
to symbolize Syme’s new hope, his victory over despair.
The difference, of course, is that Syme, who represents
the common man in a Christian struggle against the rich
and powerful, succeeds in his mission; the agnostic Or
well’s Winston Smith does not.65

Orwell’s sentiments concerning the common man were best revealed in his literary criticism and novels. One of his major objections to the literary revolution that had swept the 1920s was its writing style and cultural posturing that were beyond the ken of ordinary readers. Chesterton’s position essentially was the same. These were the writers (Eliot, Yeats, and Pound) who made a conscious effort to detach themselves from the vulgar mob. Like Orwell, Chesterton and his friend and colleague in arms, Hilaire Belloc, found their literary heroes in Jonathan Swift and Charles Dickens, writers who had contact with ordinary people and demonstrated a true love of humanity. As Chesterton complained, the moderns, such as Pound and Eliot, were “mystagogues” specializing in the art of obfuscation:

The cloud is their banner; they cry to chaos and
old night. They circulate a piece of paper on which
Mr. Picasso has had the misfortune to upset the
ink and tried to dry it with his boots, and they
seek to terrify democracy by the good old anti
democratic muddlements: that ‘the public’ does
not understand these things: that ‘the likes of us’
cannot dare to question the dark decisions of our
lords.66

Orwell’s literary criticism focused almost exclusively on the popular writers of the Victorian era. He saw them as part of a more tradition that appealed to a wide public audience, their prose and poetry featuring the cares and concerns of ordinary people. By contrast, the writers of the twentieth century were speaking to a narrower, almost closed world; and their concept of poetry as something intelligible only to a minority encouraged “obscurity and cleverness.” Moreover, these modern intellectuals somehow had drifted away from old middle-class values and habits; they had become enamored with abstractions and theoretical absolutes that had no connection with reality.

The opaque cultural disposition of the “moderns” was satirized by Orwell in Keep the Aspidistra Flying. The novel’s angry young man, Gordon Comstock, rebels against the god of money by refusing to take a job that will bring him into the bourgeois world. Finally, after being crushed by the steel grip of poverty, common sense wins out over idealism. Comstock compromises with reality and, for the sake of decency, takes on a thoroughly middle-class job with an advertisement agency. The con-
clusion of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* affirms Orwell's reverence for the culture of ordinary people. Comstock makes the pessimistic observation that his civilization is indeed ruled by the money god, but in the lives of the common folk the greed and fear of that world are mysteriously transmuted into something nobler:

The lower-middle class people...behind their lace curtains, with their children and their scraps of furniture and their aspidistras—they lived by the money-code, sure enough, and yet they contrived to keep their decency. The money-code as they interpreted it was not merely cynical and hoggish. They had their standards, their inviolable points of honor. They ‘kept themselves respectable’—kept the aspidistra flying.68

Orwell frequently made reference to what he called “Good Bad Books,” an idea he got from Chesterton, which meant books with few aesthetic qualities but which have stood the test of time, because they appealed to a wide, popular audience owing to the writers ability to make intellectual connections with the common people. For Orwell, the quintessential “Good Bad Book” writer was Charles Dickens, who, of course, also was one of Chesterton’s major, literary inspirations. As was the case with Chesterton, Orwell saw much of himself in Dickens and deeply admired the high-minded liberal values, which he personified. Both Chesterton and Orwell temperamentally were old fashioned like Dickens, respectful of the moral rectitude and sense of fair play that lay at the base of upper and middle-class values.

Orwell and Chesterton considered the self-consciously moralistic Victorian world a model of decency to be emulated by the modern age. Their commentaries on Dickens were remarkably similar. Chesterton praised Dickens precisely because he was popular with common people. This was due to a literary taste that was spiritually rooted in kin and community: “Dickens was not like our ordinary demagogues and journalists. Dickens did not write what people wanted. Dickens wanted what the people wanted. His power, then, lay in the fact that he expressed with an energy and brilliancy quite uncommon the things close to the common mind.”69 It was Chesterton’s book on Dickens that was largely responsible for reviving literary interest in this writer, his reputation among intellectuals having been temporarily eclipsed because of the elitist tastes of the Edwardians. It is interesting to note that where Chesterton had praised Dickens for the majestic ways in which he had created his fictional characters, ordinary Pickwickian people who became beautiful caricatures of themselves, George Bernard Shaw asserted that Dickens created characters who were grotesque caricatures of themselves mainly because that was how common people undoubtedly appeared to men of genius.70

Orwell’s and Chesterton’s analyses of Dickens reveal a strong moralistic streak that runs through their own political philosophies. Orwell’s basic political orientation, his fear of systems building and future planning, is projected in this observation of Dickens: “It is hopeless to try and pin him down to any definite remedy, still more to any political program. His approach is always along the moral plane.”71 However, he believed that Dickens had discovered the root of the social problem: how to prevent the abuse of power. Because Dickens’s criticism of society was almost exclusively moral (“If men should behave decently the world would be decent”) there was a notable absence of constructive suggestion in much of his writing. One finds a similar problem in Chesterton’s and Orwell’s writing as well. Since both were political moralists, their major task was to show what was wrong with the world. They could articulate very clearly the way people should behave and what was preventing them from being decent (the worship of money, greed, and power), but neither felt comfortable laying out specific plans for social reconstruction.

Social planning was especially repugnant for Chesterton: he was suspicious of politics—particularly political movements—distrusted power, and was obsessively opposed to all forms of system building. He had an essentially organic vision of society. Man’s customs and values were seen to have been shaped by the force of circumstances, and, like the branches of a tree, they were the product of slow growth through the seasons of time. But nowhere was it stated in clear terms how man would construct tomorrow’s world. Since there were no laws of history, how could the intellectual make specific predictions about the future social order? This explains Chesterton’s reluctance to fill in the details of his outline of sanity, namely, the Distributist state. It was more important to carry on the struggle against social injustices, and this is what Orwell and he found laudatory in Dickens. In Chesterton’s words, which Orwell frequently quoted, Dickens was not out against an institution but “an expression on the human face.” Dickens’s morality...
was fundamentally Christian in the way he sided with the oppressed against the oppressors. As Orwell put it, Dickens had the “face of man who was always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of man who is generously angry in other words a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are contending for our souls.”

The common man praised by Dickens and Chesterton assumes heroic roles in nearly all of Orwell’s fiction. For instance, Charles Bowling in Coming Up for Air is a lower-middle class, sensitive, sentimental, and intelligent person, whose conservative instincts convince him of the necessity to resist the homogenization of modern commercial life. Like Gordon Comstock and Winston Smith, Bowling is an old-fashioned rebel with nineteenth-century liberal values who refuses to be “streamlined” by industrial, bureaucratic society. Although Orwell appeared to become increasingly pessimistic in his later years about the possibilities of such people resisting the evils of the modern age with its new god of the state, he nevertheless believed that if there were any hope, it would be with the common people, the lower classes, who, as Comstock observed in Keep the Aspidistra Flying, did not lie down and die but out of some kind of inner moral vitality fought on for decency. A similar quality was at play in the tortured struggles of Winston Smith and is suggestive of the “proles” who inhabited the underworld of Nineteen Eighty-four.

Orwell’s major objective as a writer in the 1930s and 1940s was to sustain his version of socialism against the onslaughts of fascism, on the one extreme, and the intellectuals of the Left, on the other, those writers who sacrificed their independence of thought to the orthodoxy of Marxism. In Orwell’s mind the writers of the 1930s—W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Edward Upward, and others—had moved away from the despairing “twilight of the gods” mind-set of their 1920s predecessors into a boy scout atmosphere of “bare knees and community singing.” Unlike the Pounds and Eliots, this new generation was more conscious of itself as a group, being the product of public school-university-Bloomsbury conditioning. Although they forsook the Church, their loss of faith in nationalism and religion made it necessary for them to find something else to believe in, namely Marxism. To Orwell, this “Communism” of the English intellectual was nothing more than the patriotism of the deracinated. Nor were intellectuals of the 1930s equalitarian. Like their “mystagogie” mentors, the temperament was decidedly elitist, sanitized of working-class life and values. As is the case with all elites, these writers were prepared to impose their vision of socialism on the rest of society.

A distinctive feature of the communist Left was their style of thinking, which essentially was the same as those on the political Right who had either moved into the fascist camp or served as fellow-travelers. Neither would brook a heretic. In other words, criticism and independent thinking were not allowed. Orwell discovered this for himself when Victor Gollancz of the Left Book Club refused to publish Homage to Catalonia and Animal Farm and when the left-wing New Statesman turned down his articles on the Spanish Civil war, in both instances because he expressed inconvenient, unorthodox political opinions. The Right responded in kind. T. S. Eliot at Faber and Faber declined to publish Animal Farm because “we have no conviction ... that this is the right point of view from which to criticize the political situation at the present time.” At this juncture the term “totalitarian” had not yet become a household word, but Orwell was one of the first to recognize that the similarities between communism and fascism might be more significant than their differences: “the sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onwards is that they have wanted to be anti-Fascist without being anti-totalitarian.”

Orwell also attacked the Left because its propaganda was serving as a tool of Soviet foreign policy. Along with Franz Borkenau, Orwell was one of the first writers on the Left to recognize the totalitarian nature of Stalin’s regime. After narrowly escaping death in Spain, Orwell devoted nearly all of his energies to exposing the fallacies of the communist-supported Popular Front campaign, which in the Spanish Civil War actually had undermined the popular revolution in Republican territory.
By the late 1930s Orwell was becoming progressively preoccupied with the totalitarian tendencies of the political Right and Left and the mental and physical slavery they foretold. The writer who first anticipated Orwell’s fears was Chesterton’s friend and collaborator, Hilaire Belloc, whose book *The Servile State* (1912), which first sketched out the Distributist alternative, explained how the instability of capitalism and the disruption of socialism could lead to the reestablishment of slavery by a bureaucratic-managerial elite. There were other writers who impressed Orwell as well (Evgenii Zamiatin, Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler, and especially James Burnham), but Belloc’s book, which Orwell considered “prescient,” foretelling with astonishing accuracy what was presently happening, remained a central factor in giving shape to the nightmarish specter of *Nineteen Eighty-four.* As Belloc had prognosticated in *The Servile State,* Winston Smith’s world is a stable one, a collectivized collocation, which is not capitalist, democratic, or socialist: a place where the proletariat have no freedom but remain somnambulantly contented. *Belloc explained how a modern slave state could emerge from an industrial environment, but the totalitarian incubus that preoccupied Orwell’s imagination was not developing from a crisis in capitalism, as Belloc anticipated, but out of events transpiring in the Soviet Union, which Orwell had discovered from his own experiences in Spain and from reading writers such as Borkenau and Koestler.*

We have observed that Orwell, Chesterton, and even Belloc had much in common as they assailed the winds of the modern world in the cause of decency and the common man. In fact, Chesterton appears to have been one of Orwell’s favorite writers; his own essays and letters contain many endearing references to Chesterton’s courageousness, generosity of spirit, and sociological insights. Orwell’s socialist vision, much like Chesterton’s Distributism, had a singular libertarian quality to it. Indeed, Orwell had a close life-long association with anarchism. Returning from Burma in 1927 he declared himself an anarchist, rejecting the state as a legitimate framework for social order; he never effectively resolved this anti-statism in his subsequent writings. Orwell also had a deeply affectionate relationship with anarchists while fighting in Spain with *POUM* (*Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista*, the semi-Trotskyist, anti-Stalinist Marxist party). George Woodcock insists that right to the end anarchism was always a “restless presence” in Orwell’s mind and that he intended to develop the theory more fully in work he planned for the 1950s. Chesterton, too, demonstrated many anarchist tendencies during the pre-World War I years when he supported the syndicalist movement in labor circles. Distributism itself was close to several anarchist economic, social, and political positions.

As with most libertarian thinkers, Chesterton and Orwell, wishing to forsake the iron cage of ideology, shared an antiutopian frame of mind. Orwell, as he put it, felt uneasy getting away from the “ordinary world where grass is green” and “stones are hard.” Neither writer was comfortable with blueprints for the future, since this was to be the responsibility of those who would dwell there. Orwell was not preoccupied with the details of the new social arrangement he envisioned; after all, excessive planning encouraged bureaucratic hierarchy, inequalities, and institutional rigidity; he was more concerned with warning people about the political and psychological tendencies that threatened their future liberties. Like Chesterton’s and Belloc’s Distributist crusade, Orwell saw the necessity of a moral regeneration that would create the requisite conditions for political and social reform. Indeed, he once told his close friends that what England needed was to follow the policies articulated in Chesterton’s journal, *G. K’s Weekly.* Finally, Orwell’s and Chesterton’s visions focused on a social and political arrangement which would limit the powers of government and institutions over the freedom of action for individuals functioning in their own neighborhoods, labor, and familial associations. *They were committed to the virtues of a decentralized society, and advocated workers’ control of industry; Orwell, in his later years, even supported the back-to-the-land programs that were inspired by the Distributist movement.*

Where we find Orwell and Chesterton parting ways is in the paths they chose to mitigate the injustices of their age. Orwell, of course, categorically rejected the Distributist solution to the servile society, which hinged on a redistribution of private property. He opposed this on grounds that it was both impractical and not desired by the common man. It must not be forgotten that Orwell remained an intellectual of the Left, and as such was fully committed to a nineteenth-century, unorthodox version of socialism. Orwell’s notion of socialism did not
simply mean the nationalization and centralization of the means of production. Nor did it envision specific material improvements in the lives of the workers—indeed, he believed socialism would make life harder on the whole but much more meaningful and humane. Interestingly, this is exactly what the advocates of Distributism contended. What Orwell meant by socialism also was surprisingly close to Distributism: for him the central purpose of socialism was to establish liberty and justice as the guiding principles in society. Like the Distributists, Orwell believed that this could be sustained only if the inequalities imposed by the class system were eliminated. But as opposed to Chesterton, Orwell was convinced that in order to break this mechanism of exploitation, private property would have to be abolished. Any suggestion to the contrary, as offered by Chesterton and his co-religionists who supported the restoration of private proprietorship outlined in the papal social encyclicals, was doomed to failure, in Orwell’s mind, for the simple reason that personal ownership in itself generated inequalities and encouraged exploitation. Catholic and Distributist social policy called for the equitable redistribution of wealth, but instead of expropriating the rich man, said Orwell, they pleaded that he behave himself. The rich man is called to repentance but he never repents. Orwell could appreciate the moral principle behind Catholic attitudes towards property, but it could not be squared with economic justice. In Orwell’s view, Chesterton, like Dickens, was limited by his Victorian temperament, blind to the obstruction of private proprietorship. Thus, Orwell rejected Chesterton’s approach to social reform on the grounds that it meant accepting the continued existence of the foundation upon which the class system was built. The socialization of the means of production was a necessary first step for Orwell, without which no real reconstruction would be possible. Orwell’s call for revolution, however, was not of the radical variety; it was to be more of a “reconstruction” of England’s traditional parts. Chesterton would have agreed with Orwell’s vision of revolution, indeed, one can even imagine him writing Orwell’s lines:

It will not be doctrinaire, nor even logical. It will abolish the House of Lords, but quite probably will not abolish the Monarchy. It will leave anachronisms and loose ends everywhere, the judge in his ridiculous horsehair wig and the lion and the unicorn on the soldier’s cap-buttons... It will never lose touch with the tradition of compromise and the belief in a law that is above the State.  

The cultural criticism of George Orwell and G. K. Chesterton was based on a shared set of beliefs concerning individual freedom, the common man, and the evils of big government that were laced with libertarian, anarchistic, and populist sympathies. Orwell, for his part, was far more libertarian than Chesterton and could never merge his sense of independence with any loyalty to group or association, and, in this respect, he was more radical than Chesterton. As Stephen Ingle has observed, Orwell “was temperamentally unsuited to being a regular soldier in anybody’s army; he was an irregular fighting in his own way under his own command.”

Yet the similarities of Orwell’s and Chesterton’s respective critiques of culture suggest an affinity in spirit and values that transcends conventional political labels.

Notes

4 Chesterton’s Notebooks. In the keeping of Dorothy Collins, from Ffinch, G. K: Chesterton, 42.
5 Ibid., 42.
7 G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (London, 1908), 12.
8 Ibid., 10.
9 Ibid., 45.
10 Chesterton by this point had not yet converted to Catholicism, but his position on the imperative of
individuals taking responsibility for their own well being resonated with the Catholic principle of subsidiarity. As outlined by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the principle of subsidiarity established the guidelines for state power: the government had a responsibility to serve the public good, but not in such a way as to absorb those elements anterior to civil society, namely the individual and the family. Government should only provide auxiliary services to its citizens so as to supplement the efforts of individuals and their families to meet basic social needs.


19 The Anglican Church sanctioned both of Orwell’s marriages, and he insisted that he be buried according to its rites.


24 Hollis, on the other hand, contends that Orwell’s iconoclastic barbs at religion (in the New Testament, he claimed, my friends, if any, were Ananias, Caiphas, Judas and Pontius Pilate) were simply the product of schoolboy prankishness intended to shock and annoy his teachers (Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell*, 42).


29 Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell*, 93.


31 Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell*, 175.

32 Ibid., 372.

33 Hollis greatly admired Orwell and especially respected his opinions on the common man, collectivism, and the need for decency in human affairs.

34 Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell*, 169.


38 Ibid., 365.

39 Ibid., 365.

40 Orwell was not the only one to comment on this tendency. Several Catholic writers and a number of well-known Distributists (those who adhered to Chesterton’s socio-political philosophy) criticized the editors of *G. K’s Weekly* for uncritical support of Italy and Vichy France. See Donald Attwater, “English Catholic Fascists?” *Common-Weal*, 10 January 1941.


46 See Julien Benda, La Trabision des Clercs (The Treason of the Intellectuals), English translation, New York, 1928.
48 Indeed, even Christopher Hollis had to cede Orwell the point. He admitted that Chesterton’s deep Catholic faith obliged him “to take the side of every individual Catholic in any quarrel that might spring up,” whether that quarrel had anything to do with Catholicism or not (Christopher Hollis, A Study of George Orwell, 177).
49 By “libertarian” I mean the idea that the best kind of government is that which governs least. Libertarians advocate what is called the “minimalist state,” one which guarantees unrestricted personal freedom to life, liberty, and property, provided, of course, that in doing so the individual does not compromise the liberties of others. Although the main currents of libertarian thinking developed after Chesterton’s and Orwell’s death (essentially in the writings of Ayn Rand, F. A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and others), it certainly can be argued that their writings contained the “seeds” of libertarian ideas. A major inspiration for contemporary libertarian thought was The Freeman, a journal founded in 1950 by John Chamberlain, Henry Hazlitt, and Suzanne La Follette. The journal’s mission was to clarify the tradition of classical liberalism, which its editors saw to embody economic liberty, freedom of the market, and the subordination of the state to what Hayek called the “rule of law,” a concept that was not concerned with protecting particular interests but rather emphasized that all individuals be treated equally before the courts. The Freeman drew on Chesterton’s Distributist ideas in its anti-statist crusade for local autonomy and the decentralization of political power.
51 George Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier (London, 1937), 179.
52 Ibid., 180.
53 From Essays in Fabian Socialism, 119, as quoted in Alex Zwerdling, Orwell and the Left (New Haven, 1974), 34.
54 From New Worlds for Old, 261 as quoted in Alex Zwerdling, Orwell and the Left, 35.
55 From New Worlds for Old, 26, as quoted in Alex Zwerdling, Orwell and the Left, 35.
56 As quoted in Friedrich A. Hayek, The Road to Serfdom (Chicago, 1944), 143.
57 Ibid., 143.
58 G. K. Chesterton, “A Gap in English Education,” The Speaker, 4 May 1941.
59 Orwell, Road to Wigan Pier, 189.
62 Orwell, Road to Wigan Pier, 201.
63 Chesterton, Shaw, 67.
64 Richard Rees, George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory (London, 1962), 47.
65 Chesterton parted this world with a stronger sense of optimism than did Orwell. A comparison of the conclusions of The Man Who Was Thursday with Nineteen Eighty-four suggests much in this regard.
68 George Orwell, Keep the Aspidistra Flying (New York, 1954), 239.
72 Orwell, Collected Essays, Vol. 1, 460.
75 Orwell, Collected Essays, Vol. III, 236.
76 Chesterton’s The Napoleon of Notting Hill (London, 1904) was also a major influence on Orwell’s vision of Nineteen Eighty-four.
77 George Woodcock, 

78 It is interesting to note that Canada’s foremost anarchist intellectual, George Woodcock, has taken an interest in Chesterton because of what he sees to be Chesterton’s anarchist tendencies. For a further discussion of Chesterton’s anarchist affinities see Jay P Corrin, “Labour Unrest and the Development of Anti-Statist Thinking in Britain, 1900-1914,” The Chesterton Review, Part I, August, 1982; Part II, “The Case of the Daily Herald,” February, 1983; Part III, “The Middle Class Weeklies,” August, 1983.


80 Bernard Crick, George Orwell (Boston, 1980), 175.


82 For an elaboration on this issue see Orwell, Collected Essays, Vol. 1, 384-85.


84 Stephen Ingle, George Orwell, 23.