

Inviolable inner heart: the hopeful future of humankind as presented in 1984

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The dystopian novel 1984, written in 1948 by George Orwell, offers a startling prediction of the year 1984. Although that year has come and gone and many of the horrors depicted in the book never came to be, the novel still holds relevance to the future of society and the tendencies of human nature.

Winston Smith, simultaneously fatalistic and hopeful, represents the best and worst in human nature, and therefore the extremities of the possibilities of society. Within his mindset, both the relinquishing of all personal freedoms and the bright future of posterity are possible. Though ultimately doomed, Winston exemplifies the hopeful future of mankind through his struggle against both himself and the laws that govern him, proving that no matter how bleak a society is, there is always hope found in the basic nature of humankind. Winston's inner struggle is perhaps the greatest in the novel—he wants both to be safe and to be himself, to comply with the government because he knows nothing else, and to rebel with the vision of a brighter future. In the end, Winston's mind is no match for the government's technological and psychological powers, and he succumbs.

Although at first this may seem only a dour pronouncement of human fallibility, through closer analysis it becomes clear that Winston's demise is not complete, and that through any trial there is some amount of human nature left that rebels against control and conformity. At the end of the novel, Orwell reminds readers of the extent of Winston's internal struggles with an insight into Winston's thoughts: "it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself" (298).

Ironically, Winston's final submission to the government does not actually <https://assignbuster.com/inviolate-inner-heart-the-hopeful-future-of-humankind-as-presented-in-1984/>

involve the government; the final step is to submit to himself—the part that wants to be safe and conform to the government—and finally separate from his desire for freedom and a better future. That Winston was able to hang on to that last bit of himself for so long, however, offers hope for the future of humankind. No matter how physically and mentally damaged a person may become, an innate part of them resists.

Winston may not have had the personal strength to be the hero the people in 1984 needed, but such heroes, with the strength to defeat part of themselves for the better, undoubtedly exist and will succeed. In a memory (albeit a false one) of his childhood, Winston remembers playing Snakes and Ladders with his mother. Orwell describes young Winston “wildly excited and shouting with laughter as the tiddlywinks climbed hopefully up the ladders and then came slithering down the snakes again, almost back to the starting point” (296). This game metaphorically represents the fate of those who rebel against the party. Like Winston and other rebels, the “tiddlywinks” climb hopefully upward towards their goal, whatever it may be.

And just as certainly as most game pieces land on a snake and come sliding nearly all the way down, the government in 1984 catches most thought criminals and manipulates their minds to the point of submission, reversing all their forward progress and rendering them nearly incapable of moving upward again. Yet, as Winston remembers, game pieces slide down almost to the starting point, but never all the way there. And as explained in the example above, those caught by the government never truly lose the part of themselves that rebel and strive for a brighter future. If more and more

people rebelled against the government, despite the fact that they would be caught, the starting point, or grounds of society, would eventually be raised to the point of the brighter future all those optimistic tiddlywinks had imagined. Winston was ultimately unsuccessful in his personal goals, but through his actions, the power of human nature is clear: if people continue to rebel and challenge the government, even if they continue to fail, eventually an impact will be made, and their goals will be reached through their collective sacrifice. Winston's struggle against himself is arduous and often invisible—on the contrary, his resistance against the government is increasingly obvious, to readers and the government alike.

Winston is the epitome of a fatalistic character: he knows the consequences of his actions and is constantly aware of his inevitable fate. Yet despite his knowledge of all that is bound to happen to him, he works against the government and towards his goal of freedom and doing what is right, giving testament to the goodness of human nature and the hope for humankind within it. Winston resists the government to the last moments he can, proving to be stubborn in his desire for self-control and personal freedoms. Orwell describes the consecutive steps of Winston's eventual submission to the government, from his body to his mind, and eventually his heart. Winston reflects that " he had retreated a step further: in the mind he had surrendered, but he had hoped to keep the inner heart inviolate" (280). Simply that Winston believes in an inner heart gives proof to his rebellion against the government, which disregards any emotions other than national pride and hatred of the Party's current enemy.

Beyond the details of what he actually believes, merely the fact that Winston keeps trying to save any amount of himself from government control is admirable, and surprisingly relatable and applicable to most human lives. Throughout history, there have been few recorded instances of groups of people completely succumbing to a government's rule. Winston's resistance continues that trend, and it can be assumed that within the society portrayed in 1984 there are enough people like Winston to prevent the government's absolute control of humankind. And as explained above, if enough people resist, even in subtle ways, gradually society will change for the better, and the future of humankind will be brighter than the present. Winston is a product of the government—he barely remembers the few years he was alive before the current government's takeover—yet he has an innate sense of what is right and wrong, and strives to uphold those standards, though is ultimately unsuccessful.

As he tells O'Brien, "there is something in the universe—I don't know, some spirit, some principle—that you will never overcome" (269). Winston has never experienced what today might be called basic freedoms or a sense of morals, yet in his basic nature, there is a sense of right and wrong, of the values that make life worth living, and of his responsibility to uphold the morals in which he believes. Through that internal obligation, Winston represents the bright future of humankind: no matter how much individual freedom is taken away, no matter how powerful a government may be, and no matter how far society may plummet, the basic nature of all people is hopeful and strives to do what is right. Winston is ultimately unsuccessful and can be seen to represent the worst aspect of human nature simply

through his inevitable fallibility. However, he represents the best of humankind through his desire to do what's right, demonstrating the hopeful future of humankind no matter what trials are faced.

Winston Smith is a relatable character: he tries his best but is ultimately too weak to succeed on his own, he wants to make an impact but does not know how, and he fails his goals despite his best efforts. Although at the end of the day Winston is unsuccessful, he nonetheless represents the optimistic future of mankind through his struggles against himself and the government, the two most powerful forces in his life. Against himself, Winston struggles to control his most rebellious instincts, proving that even in the face of suppression and the threat of extermination, human nature strives towards a change and improvement, eventually resulting in a societal evolution for the better. Against the government, Winston resists to the last, attempting to safeguard the most private parts of himself against the control of the government. Even when it would be easier for him to submit to the government, he persistently holds on to his values and idea of what is right and wrong, demonstrating the inherent goodness of all people, and the bright future simply as a product of the desire for a better and more just world. Winston is the epitome of fatalism and in many ways a failure, yet his continuous resistance against the forces that attempt to govern him display the virtues and promise of the future of humankind.