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**ZAMYATIN'S *WE*: PERSUADING THE INDIVIDUAL TO
SACRIFICE SELF**

by

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of the requirements for the degree**

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Zamyatin's *We*: Persuading the Individual to Sacrifice Self

"The artistic aspects of the novel are excellent. Zamyatin has attained full maturity here—so much the worse, for all this has gone into the service of a malicious cause."

—Aleksandr Voronsky

Introduction:

Yevgeny Zamyatin would have told you that he was born in the wrong place at the wrong time. Early in his promising career, this Russian writer garnered comparisons to the local greats, including Dostoyevsky and Turgenev, among others, for his cutting prose and comprehension of the complexities of human life. And yet, like so many of his compatriots living in St. Petersburg around the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, his once-promising legacy has fallen into near-total obscurity in the western canon. His name has eluded even the most learned literary scholars of our day. In a certain way, however, such treatment actually comes as a credit to his groundbreaking work, for his obscurity has come not from lack of merit, but instead as a direct result of Soviet state censorship of his too-close-to-home intellectual activity. In reality, all Zamyatin dared to do was offer a possible answer to an age-old political question in a nation that wouldn't risk hearing it. The question: at what point do citizens refuse to accept government restriction of personal freedoms? That is, at what point do citizens lose faith in the notion that the authorities in fact know what's best for them? It's not hard to see how Soviet authorities were wary of the possible implications.

Zamyatin was the epitome of an anti-establishment author. His pursuits even earned him exile on three separate occasions: first, as a Bolshevik fighting the monarchy in the failed Revolution of 1905, again a couple of years later for returning to St. Petersburg illegally, and finally, following the *successful* revolution in 1917, as an activist fighting *against* the Bolsheviks he had so stalwartly defended. Still, he remained lively under duress. "If I have any place in

Russian literature,” he wrote in 1922, “I owe it entirely to the Saint Petersburg Department of Secret Police” (“Autobiography” 4). And though the man has passed relatively unnoticed through the annals of history, his chilling commentary on life under totalitarianism has lived on. His anti-utopian novel *We* has been cited as one of the most direct influences on George Orwell’s *1984*, today one of the most widely read and significant novels in all of western literature (Connors 107). Zamyatin’s work, however, goes a step further.

Zamyatin finished *We*, his defining work, in 1920. It first appeared in English in 1924, but it wasn’t published in his homeland until the *glasnost*’ movement of the late 1980’s, over a half-century after his death. Soon after its completion, it became the first book outlawed by the fledgling Glavlit, the Soviet ministry responsible for censorship. The novel also contributed significantly to the nationwide lifetime ban on publishing Zamyatin’s works that was established a few years later. The depiction of the oppressive “One State” (Единое Государство) simply struck a nerve with Soviet publishers, and it’s easy to see why.

The novel takes place in the thirtieth century A.D., approximately a millennium after the apocalyptic Two Hundred Years’ War, which obliterated 99.8% of Earth’s population and gave rise to the rigid, “perfectly mathematical” rule of the One State (*We* 21, 2). The protagonist, D-503 (all people are referred to as “numbers”), a male mathematician and chief builder of the spaceship *Integral* (*Интеграл*), becomes acquainted early on with the enigmatic I-330, a female number with sharp, white teeth, and an unusual penchant for shaking things up. It quickly becomes apparent that I-330 is one of the leaders of a clandestine group of revolutionaries plotting to overthrow the government from outside the Green Wall, the hulking barrier that surrounds the civilization. The narrative takes its form in D-503’s journal as I-330 attempts to guide him from his conditioning as a machine-like champion of the One State to become a soul-

driven human skeptic. A factor that truly sets the protagonist's journey apart from those in most anti-utopian novels, though, is the degree to which he continually vacillates back and forth between the two primary ideals of liberty and security. His is no easy shift in either direction.

We's popular legacy, if one can be said to exist, now resides solely in its direct influence on Orwell, who, unlike Zamyatin, wrote with the luxury of detachment from the sort of totalitarian regimes he so denounced. But there is much more to Zamyatin's revolutionary novel than simply a condemnation of totalitarianism or communism. Various critics on both sides of the Atlantic have laid the groundwork by aptly drawing out sophisticated biblical allusions, imagery analysis, and other threads meaningful to understanding the text. In addition, western critics have proposed connections with Soviet history. In fact, the novel contains remarkably accurate prophecies of life in the later Soviet regime, as well as the painting of a chillingly detailed and believable picture of the same. However, Zamyatin's greatest contribution with *We* lies in synthesizing the imagery, rhetoric, and prophecy with his own unique political views. This synthesis provides us with fascinating insight into some of western civilization's most ubiquitous political and philosophical questions, especially concerning the tender balance between personal liberty and state security, and the tipping point when citizens will no longer accept the erosion of freedom in the name of the "greater good." This is the true legacy of *We*—the one Zamyatin surely hoped would live on.

For centuries, the classic debate between the left and the right in political ideology has boiled down to this fundamental question of liberty and security. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson's ongoing dispute on the matter as members of President George Washington's cabinet laid the groundwork for the debate in the fledgling United States government. Hamilton's desire for a powerful central government nearly akin to a monarchy

formed the basis of the Federalist Party, and Jefferson, on the other hand, advocated an absolute democracy with virtually no governmental intervention, and on these grounds established the Democratic Republicans. The two parties in America have morphed significantly over the years, but the general divide has run along those same basic lines ever since. Indeed, it is a fundamental question of balance for governments that is as relevant today as ever, for it surrounds many dilemmas, such as: How may a government effectively fortify itself against the threat of revolution? Then, when faced with such a threat, how much personal liberty may a government revoke to ensure stability before going too far? By transporting us to a fictional world of our potential future, Zamyatin's *We* attempts a response to these very questions.

Suffice it to say that the One State went too far in its subjugation, eventually crossing a line and losing credibility among its citizens. However, perhaps more fascinating is the fact that it succeeded as a ruling power for centuries, simply by maintaining a pattern of voluntary subjugation that worked nearly flawlessly. Much can be learned from the methods of the authoritarian regime, and therefore it becomes necessary to explore the particular aspects of the One State government that made it so impervious to discontent.

A Justifiable Oppression:

Affixing a positive label to just about any aspect of life in Orwell's Oceania in *1984* is not terribly easy. In the One State, however, evidence of contentment is quite widespread among its residents. According to James Connors in his essay on *We*'s influence on *1984*, Zamyatin's "guiding principle" for the government of the One State is happiness, whereas the government of Oceania is built on pure evil (Connors 116). In Oceania, the Party's three slogans demonstrate this. As emblazoned on the side of the Ministry of Truth pyramid, they read: "War is Peace,

Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength” (Orwell 7). Citizens participate in Hate Week and daily sessions of the Two Minutes Hate in order to spur them to action (5, 13). In contrast, D-503 utters a far more innocent mantra for his own state: “Science progresses” (*We* 7). This distinction between the two nations is striking, and when it comes to raising a warning flag to readers about their own real-life governments, Zamyatin wins out here. Just as successful totalitarian regimes have done throughout history, the ruling power is driven by idealistic principles that garner the full support of most, if not all. This makes it much more difficult to label its conduct as inherently evil. Such a regime is infinitely more realistic, and therefore more effective as a didactic tool. Many of the most noticeable distinctions between the One State and Oceania meet this standard of plausibility in the real world. *1984* is somewhat of a stretch, but if we’re not careful, *We* could actually happen.

Of the idealistic principles and achievements attained by the One State, some are relatively characteristic of such regimes, at least in theory. D-503 mentions that somewhere in the thousand years of the One State’s existence, hunger was conquered (*We* 21). Likewise, the diarist boasts that the society has successfully “channeled all elemental forces,” thereby eliminating natural catastrophes (23). Numerous references are made to the joy of living in a clean, orderly society, especially as opposed to the “gloomy” Ancient House, a twentieth-century apartment building that has been preserved as a cautionary historical site (26). These ideals of satiation, safety, and order may be perfectly in line with the aims of totalitarian governments throughout history, but they must also be recognized as the possible founding ideals of a fairly traditional democratic, even benign state.

In contrast, certain ideals discussed within the One State are far from what would be expected in an archetypal totalitarian regime. First and foremost is the mention of individual

rights. Rights are initially mentioned in the novel in connection with the *Lex Sexualis*, a piece of legislation passed three centuries previous, which proclaims that “Each number has the right to any other number, as to a sexual commodity” (21). The morals implied in this particular act could be considered radical, but in its essence, it’s posited as an individual right. Likewise, each number is permitted Personal Hours, with which they may do as they please, go where they please, and so forth, without supervision (24). Obviously, the delineation of Personal Hours implies that such freedom is not the norm, but the fact remains that far more physical freedom exists here than in Oceania. Even in the home of Winston Smith and his fellow residents, the telescreen—the instrument through which the Thought Police may watch citizens at any time without their knowledge—cannot be turned off (Orwell 6). Oceania’s government is immensely cautious. On the other hand, residents of the One State are allowed to think for themselves, given the information provided them. The government’s power is secure enough to permit even that.

Other surprisingly progressive aspects of the One State include attention to education and the arts. In fact, each number is required to attend daily courses in the arts and sciences (29). One of the most engaging progressive features is the ideal of international, or in this case, extra-terrestrial diplomacy. Though no other organized nations or powers exist on the earth, at least to the knowledge of those in the One State, the society is making its first attempts to connect with other peoples via the spaceship *Integral*. In fact, D-503’s journal, which comprises the novel, is written explicitly *for* the “primitive” peoples that the One State explorers are sure to encounter on other planets. While the purposes of the *Integral* are admittedly to enforce upon a primitive society the glory that is the One State, or in other words, to bring them under submission, D-503 states on the very first page that though it is their duty to “compel (the savages) to be happy, . . . before resorting to arms, we shall try the power of words” (1). Surely, pointing out these scant

indicators of democracy would constitute a weak argument in justifying the goodness or modernity of the One State, but yet again the fact remains that these principles go far beyond those which exist in Orwell's Oceania, and they are particularly effective for the leaders of the One State in maintaining contentment, for they are not overtly oppressive. There is no obvious incitement to unrest or revolt.

Possibly the most notably progressive aspect of Zamyatin's One State is the honesty of the media. While Winston Smith's alterations of news reports and history rank among the most infamous atrocities committed in Oceania, each of the four noted news reports that appear in the *One State Gazette* are remarkably truthful. They could be described as examples of misdirection, and are sometimes aggressive, but there is no noticeable effort made by the newspaper to conceal the truth, let alone alter it. This is made clear through a report that appears early on in the novel: "According to reliable sources, new traces have been discovered of the elusive organization which aims at liberation from the beneficent yoke of the State" (35). Mere mention of the existence of an opposition force is foreign to *1984*. As tension with the revolutionaries heats up, we hear more about them: "There was a slight disturbance, caused by the enemies of happiness" (149). The newspaper may portray an obvious and expected bias, but that's the extent of the damage. Such is the case with history as well. In the novel's final inclusion of a report from the *One State Gazette*, leaders plead with the citizens to submit to their will, saying that the "historians of the One State ask for retirement so that they need not record disgraceful events" (179). This notion of the power to control the past, and hence the present and future, was one of the aspects of totalitarianism that Orwell feared most. Such a capacity is at the forefront of the atrocities of *1984*, as demonstrated by another of the Party's impudent slogans: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 32). But such is

not the case in Zamyatin's government. The media in the One State are bound by an obligation to report the truth, which is something rarely a part of totalitarian societies either in real life or in fiction. In fact, Connors has pointedly observed that there is "no evidence whatsoever indicating that the past which is available to D-503 has been emasculated or falsified" (111). Vigilant, free-thinking citizens will have to look elsewhere for signs of oppression, for they have little cause for suspicion here.

Not only do realistic, quasi-progressive tenets abound in the One State which aid in keeping the peace, while effectively masking the opposition, the government has additionally done a superb job of protecting itself from within by perpetuating the notion that the citizens already enjoy classic individualistic ideals. The degree to which individualism is actually possible within in the One State is negligible, but the important matter here is that the citizens are satisfied with what they have. In the Ancient House, D-503 says he feels "oppressed" by the relative disorder and freedom that existed in the twentieth century microcosm (*We* 28). He constantly longs for restriction in the physical and intellectual world. "The function of man's highest faculty," he says, "his reason, consists precisely in the continuous limitation of infinity" (65). The ideal of absolute mathematical order has become so ingrained in the mind of the protagonist, as well as, presumably, the minds of most of his compatriots, that he now feels actual oppression from that which stands in contrast to the One State's teachings. Later on in his journal, D-503 addresses his foreign readers directly, stating that they will obviously accept the "mathematically infallible happiness" brought to them by the *Integral*, because, "like children, you will swallow without protest everything bitter I shall give you" (1, 103). In D-503's mind, the notion of primitivism and childhood is equated with a blind acceptance of ideals, a trust in a future benefit from the provider, which justifies current discomfort. Citizens of the One State

conversely believe themselves to be mature adults, capable of, and entitled to, independent thought. In a similar vein, blind acquiescence even *within* the state is looked down upon only a few pages later, when D-503 says of I-330 that “She is stronger than I. I’m afraid I will do what she asks” (109). Strength appears again within the utopia as the ability to see the flaws in the opposing ideals of others, sticking with what one deems is correct. The citizens of the One State would revolt if they felt the need, but instead the majority in fact *believes the regime to be right*. They have no need to rebel, and the One State is secure from within.

This notion that the government of the One State has completely convinced its citizens as to its own superiority without forcible means is possibly the single most chilling aspect of the state in *We*. It has protected itself from the threat of inner turmoil, thereby guaranteeing its own control indefinitely. Not only do the citizens of the One State feel no particular stimulus to unrest, but the truth is that they’re actually *happy* in the culture of suppression that surrounds them. They’re happy because they have been persuaded to value the ideals behind the stability of state subjugation over the less predictable life of freedom. And all this has been done through simple state propaganda broken down into two classic rhetorical categories: logical, through mathematical reason; and spiritual, through Christian imagery.

Mathematical Rhetoric

The purpose of this section is not to state the claim that the One State employs mathematical propaganda for purposes of subjugation. Such is self-evident. Rather, this will be an opportunity to explore the nature of the regime’s rhetorical application of mathematical principles, and its subsequent effectiveness in the suppression of its citizens. Mathematics serve to galvanize the iron fist of the One State by allowing for the removal of ambiguity,

dehumanization of citizens, and justification of collectivism, each of which ultimately lead to the valuation of stability over freedom.

We is rife with mathematical imagery, much coming straight from the mouth of the protagonist, D-503, who, though famous as the chief builder of the *Integral*, considers himself a mathematician by profession (2). Perhaps due to his natural or intellectual bias, the journal of D-503 makes it quite clear that math pervades not only his own personal thoughts, but every aspect of life in the One State. In its employment of mathematical rhetoric, the regime designed a system of belief that is not easily refuted, for it isn't based on opinions or values, but absolutes. L. Brett Cooke notes, “[*We*] reminds us that mathematics and reason, in their proper use, are... inimical to fixed dogma and, as integral parts of human nature, are ultimately irrepressible” (149). Rather than the absolute mathematical truths chipping away at fixed dogma, as one might expect them to do, Cooke suggests that the “irrepressibility” of such truths also makes a system based on these absolutes ironically no different from the unyielding dogma which the system has supplanted.

D-503 states in his journal's third entry that “it is clear that the entire history of mankind, insofar as we know it, is the history of transition from nomadic to increasingly settled forms of existence. And does it not follow that the most settled form (ours) is at the same time the most perfect form (ours)?” (*We* 11). This most settled form of existence is recognizable in the scientific world and in *We* as entropy. If we take the Second Law of Thermodynamics as a guide, increasing entropy is in fact associated with progress. Zamyatin, however, took great issue with a force opposed to energy being called progress, especially as it relates to humanity. The hyper-focus on stability, or entropy, in fact, became a huge point of contention for him throughout his life, as he saw the laws of physics being cited as justification for social inaction and regression.

In a 1923 essay entitled “On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters,” Zamyatin coins the phrase “the entropy of thought,” which he says is brought about by the dogmatization of science, religion, and so forth (108). Citizens of the One State, being mathematically and scientifically minded, equate this entropy, or decreasing energy, with perfection. Stability, then, becomes a god, whereas images of instability, such as the cluttered apartments of the Ancient House, are given the label of “primitive.” Such permanence is expected in the mental and physical lives of the state’s inhabitants as well, essentially turning them to blind, emotionless robots. Who can refute this proven scientific/mathematical principle? According to the *One State Gazette*, “You are perfect. You are machinelike” (*We* 180). Just like other irrational elements of human nature and society, the citizens of the One State are “subjugated, i.e., organized and reduced to mathematical order” (21). D-503 wrote these words himself. Subjugation has become a positive attribute.

Now that the One State has proven that the entropy of thought is desirable, doubt or ambiguity among the citizens is no longer a worry, especially since the mathematical system employed by the One State government is based exclusively on simple, predictable principles. D-503 states that “*only* the four rules of arithmetic are eternal and immutable” (116, emphasis added). Arithmetic is, of course, an immensely useful tool upon which to base a stable system, for arithmetic contains no ambiguities or contradictions. One must wonder how different things might look in the One State if higher and more modern forms of mathematics, or even quantum physics were accepted as philosophical bases. Zamyatin’s association of the state with a now-overly-simplistic form of math was no accident. He was a naval engineer and well-acquainted with more complex forms. Such forms do in fact make appearances in the novel, most notably with the irrational square root of -1 that so nags at D-503 as a representation and reminder of the

illogical (39). In reality, rather than supporting the arithmetical system of the One State, such higher math instead undermines it. In fact, the I-330-led resistance often cites higher mathematical principles to support its *own* cause of overthrowing the state, further evidence of the state's simplicity. Cooke considers the One State to be a representative of Pythagoreanism, in which numerology not only “defined odd numbers as ‘masculine’ and even numbers as feminine,” as is the case in *We*, but also used math as a “basis of social ethics,” also a Pythagorean tenet (154). Indeed, D-503 says that “only the four rules of arithmetic are eternal and immutable. And only an ethic built on the four rules can be great, immutable, and eternal” (*We* 116). By disregarding higher forms of math within the One State, the leaders of the regime are able to wield effective control, deifying a system they fully understand. They have fixed all morality and ethics and fortified their authority by completely eliminating ambiguity.

Cooke continues, “Simple mathematics works as an illusion, one that prevents a direct perception of actuality” (L. Cooke 155). Indeed, such is the case in *We*. “No more of that confusion about good and evil,” the protagonist says, when comparing his own society to the cautionary tale of the conundrum that Adam and Eve faced in the garden (*We* 62). Such ambiguity sparks the necessity of human thought to sort out individual opinions—something the One State works tirelessly to fight. John Huntington agrees, noting that “in oppressive societies ambiguity serves as a camouflage: a statement able to be ‘mis-understood’ will be so comprehended by the proper readers” (129). In order to see to it that such confusion between good and evil does not exist, the state has devised a rather simple mathematical solution: assigning positive and negative designations (+ and – signs) to otherwise unscientific experiences and events, including people. Relatively early in the novel, D-503 notes that a man caught without a number badge has been taken to the Operational Section, the arm of

government responsible for torture and execution. D-503 then explains the historical development of the Operational Section, and that early dissenters compared it to the Inquisition. He says, “but that is as absurd as equating a surgeon performing a tracheotomy with a highwayman; both may have the same knife in their hands, both do the same thing—cut a living man’s throat—yet one is a benefactor, the other a criminal; one has a + sign, the other a –” (*We* 80). After the explanation, the assignation of the two signs ultimately acts as the final word. The difference between positive and negative is a universally understood mathematical principle within the society, and it leaves no room for middle ground. For the sake of the citizens’ sympathy, the nomenclature is also applied to experiences to which every individual can easily relate. Later on in the novel, the diarist writes, “Who doesn’t know that pain is a negative value, and that the sum of pain diminishes the sum we call happiness?” (134). The Operational Section is positive, and happiness is positive, so the Operational Section must bring happiness. It’s as simple as that. Such arbitrary assignations of value, enormously useful for leaders of the regime, are of course, solely the jurisdiction of those leaders themselves. Toward the conclusion of the novel, D-503 refers to the fact that happiness has always been marked with a plus sign (184). The decision between what is good for the people and what is bad for the people is not left up to the people. In this ultimate display of experiential mediation, *everything* is determined by the regime.

Though it may in fact be the leaders of the regime making the decisions, they succeed in removing their own responsibility in the eyes of the populace, presenting themselves as servants of a collective will. There exists a variety of instances wherein the One State points to the infallibility of the mathematical and scientific principles, even imbuing them with a sort of divinity. It’s not the leaders’ decision, it’s a higher law. Indeed, as Dostoyevsky’s *Underground*

Man puts it, “what would be the good of a ‘palace of crystal’ if there could be any doubt about it?” (Dostoyevsky 29). In fact, the crystal palace of the One State fully succeeds in the removal of its citizens’ suspicions. D-503 says early on that “State Science never errs” (*We* 14). Though it may be the state at the helm of decision-making, all decisions derive from infallible science, the guarantor of collective happiness. The protagonist displays the same principle taken a step further when he notes that “neither mathematics nor death ever makes a mistake” (101). Mathematics and the state are now one and the same. The question of whether or not the state completely represents the realm of the exact sciences is a question that does not seem to rise among the citizens at all.

The twelfth entry in D-503’s journal is the one that most clearly bridges the connection between mathematics and a higher law of governance in the One State. In it, the multiplication table is equated with the “ancient God,” except that the multiplication table is higher still, because it never errs. The journal says, “there are no happier figures than those which live according to the harmonious, eternal laws of the multiplication table” (67). Cooke points out that a similar type of religious devotion to math has indeed been practiced throughout history by different groups, especially among Europeans during the Italian Renaissance. Owen Ulph calls it the “Divine Logos” (90). The mathematical principles that were generally accepted at the time of the Renaissance were none other than arithmetic and geometry, largely products of Pythagoras, which, as we’ve discussed, are considerably easier to deify (L. Cooke 152).

In addition to the removal of ambiguity, the One State also utilizes math effectively in order to dehumanize its citizens and justify collectivism as the expression of a logical truth. Individual freedom is unlikely to be a desired thing if the individual does not even exist, and such seems to be the aim of the government in the One State as stability is once again glorified

by reducing people to mere numbers. Unlike other aspects of the futuristic regime that may be unfamiliar to primitive readers, D-503 never explains the fact that personal names have been replaced with identification numbers called State Numbers, which are printed on “golden badges on their breasts” (5). It’s intuitive. The word “numbers” not only replaces names of One State citizens, but also stands in the place of the words “humans” and “people” as well. Such words do exist in the novel, but only in reference to the allegedly lower forms of life not living under the current regime. This distinction is drawn very clearly in the journal’s twenty-second entry, during the daily walk prescribed by the Table of Hours. An individual breaks from the “rhythmic, Assyrian” ranks and D-503 says, “She was no longer a number—she was only a human being” (126). Later on, when the protagonist is finally introduced to those living primitive lives beyond the wall, he describes them immediately as people (155). Free people are marked with second-class terms. However, it’s still not entirely accurate to say that the numbers themselves are completely devoid of the idea of being—just *individual* being. Usage of the numbers for identification appropriately denotes people as nothing more than integers, parts of a whole. In an intrinsically collectivist statement, D-503 muses that “the natural path from nonentity to greatness is to forget that you are a gram and feel yourself instead a millionth of a ton” (115). Greatness includes entity, and entity is felt only as a part of a greater whole, or sum.

Attention to the welfare of the sum of State Numbers is pervasive throughout the text. Readers learn that the Two Hundred Years’ War is considered to have been “the victory of *all* over *one*, of the *sum* over the *individual*” (46). Indeed, the current residents of the One State have been completely indoctrinated to favor the society as a whole. In one of the most striking demonstrations of this, and one of the most striking statements of the entire novel, D-503 tries early on to grasp the base notion of non-mathematically regulated, free life. He writes,

Try as I may, I cannot understand it. After all, no matter how limited their intelligence, they should have understood that such a way of life was truly mass murder—even if slow murder. The state (humaneness) forbade the killing of a single individual, but not the partial killing of millions day by day. To kill one individual, that is, to diminish the sum of human lives by fifty years, was criminal. But to diminish the sum of human lives by fifty million years was not considered criminal. (13)

Through this sort of extreme collectivistic math, the One State easily downplays the importance of the individual and elevates the societal emphasis on state stability. This attitude is demonstrated later on when approximately ten to twelve numbers (the exact amount seems insignificant) are killed in a freak accident while working on the *Integral*. According to its builder, “ten numbers are less than a hundred-millionth part of the population of the One State; practically considered, it is an infinitesimal of the third order. Only the ancients were prone to arithmetically illiterate pity; to us it is ridiculous” (107). Pity, just as all other human emotions, can only be viewed logically, and therefore is once again reduced to mathematical order.

Individual human lives may be regarded as insignificant in the One State future, but due to the logical/mathematical principles that govern the land, individual human lives would be fairly empty by our standards, anyhow. The Table of Hours, a math and logic-based schedule which bears a tongue-in-cheek comparison to an ancient railway guide, dictates the activities of daily life, from the set wake-up time to the set meal time, to the set work time, to everything. With reference to the table, one can’t help but think back on the Books of Hours, medieval Catholic manuscripts replete with scripture and instruction for believers to follow in order to lead lives by the church’s standards. The goal of the One State’s Table, however, is nothing short of absolute unison, to transform each citizen into “a figure of steel” (12). It is important to note that

no evidence of force or coercion exists in imposing the schedule upon numbers. Rather, the specific figures and times on the Table come as results of mathematical studies on peak human performance. For instance, D-503 notes that the prescribed number of chews for optimal food digestion is fifty (102). The system, however, lacks consequences for infringement of such regulations. I-330 seems to have no problem whatsoever skirting the laws of the society, including much more substantial ones such as presence at work. Once again, the regime does not employ the use of force; it simply fails to recognize the individual, trusting that exclusion from collective action will be punishment enough. References abound in the text to numbers performing as machines, which notion is, of course, considered the ideal. It's what the Table of Hours is aimed toward, and it's what D-503 has in mind when he refers to the communal push to accomplish the "crystallization of life" (24). The One State is surely on its way there. Widespread utilization of mathematical logic by the regime has sincerely crippled the desire, and even the incentive for individual freedom. The great Benefactor himself admits it to D-503 near the close of the novel: "true, algebraic love of humanity is inevitably inhuman" (213). But his words have fallen upon deaf ears. To a number in the One State, this is far from a tragedy.

Christian Rhetoric

Zamyatin thought of everything. The usage of mathematical and logical rhetoric to subjugate society would hit home with new-age Soviet readers, while spiritual Christian rhetoric would resonate with the more traditional Russians. Likewise, the ruling power of the One State attacks humanity from both sides of the brain to ensure that one way or another, its bidding will be done. And so, as much as the One State utilizes math in its effort to emphasize stability and devalue individual liberty, it exploits just as much Christian imagery for the same purposes.

Richard Gregg notes in his essay “Dostoevsky, the Bible, and *We*,” that the biblical patterns throughout the novel “play a role of the first importance,” though he remains hesitant to draw any firm conclusions as to Zamyatin’s intentions toward religion (67). Zamyatin himself was known not to be a friend of the church, but so many positive references to religion abound in the novel that simply noting the existence of the references only complicates the issue of intent. Indeed, one must bear in mind the individual source for each allusion, for Zamyatin uses them for two different purposes. The first category of Christian allusions is comprised of those employed by the One State directed toward its own citizens, in order to justify the regime’s power and emphasis on stability. The second category is made up of those allusions employed solely by Zamyatin in order to glorify the *resistance* in the minds of his readers. These are not intentional references on the part of the speaker, D-503, or the One State, or anyone involved in the text except the author himself. We will examine both approaches presently.

Of course, the spiritual rhetoric coming from the One State must take on a different form than did the mathematical. In the regime, logic acts as the basis for all state decisions. “Reason must prevail” is the novel’s last statement, and it might as well be its first (*We* 232). It is the foundation of the state and life therein. The logical rhetoric that has been ingrained into the generations of numbers over the course of the millennium is enough to subjugate most. However, evidence of the evasive “soul” does make its appearance known throughout the society. The scissor-lipped doctor diagnoses D-503 himself with soul in the journal’s sixteenth entry. The disease is tied to imagination and considered “incurable” (89). The regime openly acknowledges the soul’s existence, and it is against *this* evil that the state wields its spiritual rhetoric, acting as an attempt to gather up those unconvinced by logic. This rhetoric, however, works toward the

exact same result as the mathematical—to lead the numbers once again to abandon their desires for individual freedom.

One can't help but notice that the utopian regime has been in power for approximately one thousand years, reminiscent of the biblical millennium, when Christ himself will allegedly reign over a perfect society. And in fact, the One State has its Christ. By far the most obvious way in which the One State uses religion to promote stability is through the deification of its leader, the Benefactor (Добродетель). Deification of leaders may be somewhat standard for dystopian works, but coming from the early days of the Soviet Union with Lenin and Stalin's cult of personality, perhaps it was all the more pertinent. In his first appearance in the novel, the Benefactor (whose title is always capitalized, as are all pronouns referring to Him) is introduced as "the one" (46). Later, he becomes "the Number of Numbers" (143). At the Unanimity Day ceremony, he descends as if from on high and is blatantly described by D-503 as "He, the new Jehovah, coming down to us from heaven, as wise and loving-cruel as the Jehovah of the ancients" (140). Despite constant espousal of the concept of absolute equality among all citizens, the Benefactor truly acts as an infallible, godlike leader. Speaking out against him is considered a sacrilege, a crime worthy of execution (47). His overwhelming support renders political instability virtually impossible. All logic aside, with one unanimously worshiped figurehead, the state is in prime position to make and enforce decisions. And who cares for individual freedom when the Benefactor understands so much better the needs of the numbers?

In addition to the deification of the Benefactor, the Pythagorean notion of divine math, as discussed in the previous section, provides the bulk of the One State-based references to higher power. While there is little need to repeat what has been said, it is indeed interesting to note that spoken references to the divine logos quite frequently assume biblical language. The

Pythagorean coupled with the Christian doubly establishes the One State's infallibility. D-503 refers at times to the "beneficent yoke of reason," and also of the state, wording reminiscent of the Bible (1, 35). Biblical yokes, appropriately, are most often described as "yoke(s) of bondage" (King James Bible Gal. 5:1). D-503 also later expresses the need to "atone" for his sudden involvement in the resistance movement (87). While this reference in particular would seem to support the notion of D-503 as a Christ figure, such a metaphor is not carried much further. There is too much vacillation on his part, and not enough authority.

More often than not, D-503 resembles the child spoken of by Paul to the Ephesians: "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (King James Bible Eph. 4:14). D-503 seems well aware of this, though. Far from claiming to resemble any sort of savior, the "hero" himself laments that he is instead "doomed to burn forever, to toss about" (*We* 83). Even if he was to be completely confident in the rightness of the resistance cause which he has joined, he still evidently believes that ultimate divine authority resides within the One State. Two distinct references within the novel even go so far as to claim the Christians as the One State's true predecessors. It seems to be a claim that many are familiar with, mentioned first by D-503 when he says, "In the ancient world [conformity] was understood by the Christians, our only predecessors" (128). Toward the end of the novel, I-330 explains that "entropy was worshiped as God by our—or, rather, your—ancestors, the Christians" (165). The major difference between the two statements lies in the fact that I-330 refers to the church pejoratively, and D-503 positively, and possessing of divinity. And as long as the protagonist believes this to be so, individual liberty will not matter to him.

Despite such references, pinning down any sort of linearity with the One State's or Zamyatin's allusions to Christianity is next to impossible. Indeed, Gregg points out two more

allusions to Jesus Christ himself in the character of D-503. Both come at the tail end of the novel, but are no doubt intentional. Attentive readers will note that the journal of the protagonist concludes with exactly forty entries, which number finds frequent application in the Old Testament, both in the forty years of the Jews' wandering in the desert, and the forty days and nights of rain surrounding Noah's ark. An even more pertinent reference, however, Gregg suggests, comes from the New Testament, when Christ himself experiences forty days of "temptation in the wilderness of doubt" (Gregg 66). Such a phrase could fully describe D-503's vacillations. In similar numerical fashion, when the builder of the *Integral* is being questioned by the Benefactor, who has suddenly assumed somewhat of a Pontius Pilate role, the victim reveals that he is in fact thirty-two years old, nearly the same age as Christ at the time of *his* questioning by Pilate and the crucifixion that followed (214). One can't help but wonder if the protagonist's age, in falling just short of the archetype, still hearkens on the idea of D-503 as a savior, but instead represents an expression of the diarist as more of a *failed* Christ figure. D-503 indeed falls short of becoming a savior in the One State, and surely Zamyatin doesn't mean to escort us all the way down that road, anyhow.

Besides, one may argue that the revolutionary I-330 carries more symbolic similarity to Christ, with her face "marked with a cross" (*We* 53). In fact, numerous examples in the novel exist in which the author glorifies the *resistance* with Christian imagery in order to appeal to his readers, just as the One State glorifies itself on behalf of its citizens. Zamyatin seems to be amusing himself with the very foundations of rhetoric, demonstrating with ease how conflicting forces may equally employ the exact same vocabulary in defense of their own opposing arguments. No, D-503's similarities to Christ are meant simply to evoke sympathy for the protagonist at the end of the novel. In fact, far more references exist which tie D-503 to another

famous archetypal Bible character grappling with life decisions in history's most famous utopia: the Garden of Eden. D-503 is Adam.

Much has been written concerning the parallels between the story of *We* and the story of the Garden of Eden from Genesis, and indeed, these parallels become increasingly significant in assessing some of Zamyatin's deeper motives in the novel. The similarities themselves are approached by the author sometimes with extreme subtlety, sometimes rather overtly. In fact, the primary characters' names themselves are echoes of their intended Biblical counterparts. Gregg notes that it would be impossible to name D-503 "A" for Adam, seeing as how all male numbers in the One State have names beginning with consonants. Therefore, Zamyatin simply used Adam's next letter—D (Gregg 68). Likewise, I-330 could have easily been written as E-330 instead, if in fact she is to correspond with Eve. However, Zamyatin, who spoke English well, chose instead to use the letter "I," which most directly corresponds with the Russian letter "И," which is the phonetic value that begins the name Eve in English (68). If this is difficult to believe, consider that in Bernard Guilbert Guerney's 1960 translation of the novel into English, the character is in fact known as E-330 (White 232). Also, consider that Zamyatin did the same thing with the poet R-13, whose state-glorifying poetry and other traits seem designed to correspond with Pushkin (P = Russian R), the famous Russian poet who fascinated Zamyatin (Gregg 68). Even more strikingly, though, consider the character of S-4711—Satan.

S, usually referred to by the letter alone, first appears in the journal's second entry, where he is described as "doubly bent somehow, like the letter S" (*We* 7). Not only does the name of Satan correspond to his name in both Russian and English, but he even "somehow" takes on the very shape of a serpent. S works in the Office of the Guardians, which group is hailed as second only to the Benefactor himself, but we soon discover that he actually plays a vital role in the

resistance movement. At one point during D-503's realization of this, he refers to S as an angel (66). This is extremely reminiscent of the biblical Lucifer, who himself was previously an angel in an exalted state before falling to his more famous one as a tempter of souls. Now he is described as having a devilish "double-edged smile" (35). And if this wasn't enough, his very number of 4711 shares a name with the classic German cologne, described at the time as the world's most famous—temptation, indeed (Gregg 65). The digits, incidentally, also add up to the wretched thirteen. S-4711 is a constant shady presence lurking around D-503, and in fact his character subtly, behind the scenes, becomes all the more central in upending the entire One State civilization.

The Individual Tipping Point

Just like Adam, D-503 is a model citizen, at least at the beginning. His assigned vocation as the builder of the *Integral* assumes his reputation as an obedient and worthy servant of the One State. It is evident that his job is an extremely important one, as shown when it exempts him from being immediately eradicated upon the discovery of his soul by the doctor (*We* 90). Therefore, we may assume that the protagonist's virtue is unchallenged by the state. If such a model representative citizen is to fall, we may also assume it to be analogous to the impending fall of the entire society, or at least an indicator that the entire society could follow close behind. Of course, such is the biblical tradition as well. As the *New England Primer* states, "in Adam's fall, we sinned all" (*New*). And this is precisely what happens.

D-503's individual tipping point may be discovered by following the same archetypal story of Adam and Eve which has already been alluded to so many times throughout the novel. Indeed, by using this story, Zamyatin provides ample hints as to the importance of otherwise

seemingly mundane occurrences. The scene is set at the beginning of the tenth entry, when D-503 receives a letter saying that I-330 has “registered” for a sexual hour with him. He arrives at her apartment soon thereafter and she lowers the blinds, indicative of the ensuing activity. But all is not as expected. I-330 reveals a bottle of something “poisonously green,” and it takes D-503 a moment, but he soon realizes it is alcohol (54). The forbidden fruit is revealed—appropriately, an agent of chaos and uncertainty. D-503 quickly responds in horror: “You know that everyone who poisons himself with nicotine, and especially alcohol, is ruthlessly destroyed by the One State” (55). I-330 then begins right away discoursing about that sly serpent, S-4711. She exclaims to her companion, “Imagine that he has discarded all the falsehood of clothes and stood among the people in his true shape.... Oh!” (55). So S-4711 has a true form that remains unseen by others, those who possess not the *knowledge of good and evil*. I-330 has partaken of the fruit and now sees him in his true form. D-503 understands that this has taken place already, that Satan has “embraced” his companion, as he says (55). The woman predicts that D-503 will soon partake of the fruit along with her, and before he can respond she has forced it into his mouth. Our protagonist has reached the point of no return.

Reaching this point was, for D-503, inevitable. One needn’t read far into the diarist’s entries to observe a sexual attraction to I-330, which feelings are unaccountable to reason, and indicative of his own animalistic side. Already by the second entry, the irritating X is part of his equation, throwing it out of balance forever. Immediately upon meeting her, D-503 makes his first reference to his unusually hairy hands—“an ape’s hands”—of which he is ashamed and hopes she won’t notice (6). For the rest of the novel, this beastly trait of his is lamented constantly in the company of I-330, as he attempts to account for his own animalistic, illogical

behavior in her presence. When she registers for the sexual hour, he is thrown into a frenzy, and when she offers him the alcohol, he is unable to refuse, despite his better judgment.

In attempting to describe his sensations after having partaken of the forbidden fruit, D-503 lets us in on the nature of life as a fallen man, as Gregg notes, using the language of a literal fall: “down, down, along an unknown, uncalculated orbit” (Gregg 63, *We* 56). D-503 then continues along the same uncertain lines, saying, “What followed can be described only approximately, only by more or less close analogies” (*We* 56). D-503 has just embarked on the unstable, non-subjugated life. He has truly discovered something impossible to reduce to mathematical formula. Soon thereafter, I-330 introduces him to life outside the garden, outside the boundary symbolized by the Green Wall. Now mortal, at the close of the entry, our hero admits, “I am perishing” (58).

For any readers who may have failed to comprehend the magnitude of the transgression D-503 has committed, the next entry in the journal contains a straightforward conversation between the protagonist and the poet, R-13, whose number also seems to demarcate him as a minion of Satan. The two speak on the subject of the ancient legend of paradise, or Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Completely unaware of what his compatriot has done, the poet begins describing the legend from the perspective of one still true to the One State:

Why, it's about us, about today! Yes! Just think. Those two, in paradise, were given a choice: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness. There was no third alternative. Those idiots chose freedom, and what came of it? Of course, for ages afterward they longed for the chains. The chains—you understand? That's what world sorrow was about.... Now everything is fine—we have paradise again. Again we are as innocent and simple-hearted as Adam and Eve. (61-62)

R-13's speech shows us that the One State has effectively utilized the archetypal legend of paradise, which so easily relates to their own society, to support their most central argument, pitting freedom and happiness against one other. The two cannot possibly coexist. The poet goes on: "The Benefactor, the Cube, the Gas Bell, the Guardians—all this is good... because it protects our unfreedom—that is, our happiness" (62). Of course, the reader knows that D-503 has now tasted freedom and can never return to the simple life he once knew.

Now that the magnitude of the event, this personal tipping point, is established, we may pose the question that Zamyatin himself surely hoped to explore: what does this mean for us as individuals? As has been discussed, the One State goes to great lengths to ensure that ambiguity is not felt among its citizens, that wondering about the future is neither necessary nor appropriate. But for a number of different reasons, this point of no return for D-503 is characterized principally by a true recognition of the unknown.

D-503's heart begins beating wildly as he approaches I-330's apartment on the fateful night. Questions about the unknown flood his mind: "What would she say? What was I to do a minute later? How could I find out, how calculate it...?" (52). He calls the beating of his heart, telltale sign of the existence of life, a "strange sensation," something he's evidently unfamiliar with, and then describes his ribs as "iron rods, constricting" the hot, living organ within (52). Not only does continued reference to his ribs, beginning here, conjure up immediate comparisons to Adam in this time just preceding the fall, but this imagery of a living, pulsing organism beneath a hard, machinelike shell becomes immensely prevalent during this time for D-503. Carl Proffer discusses this consistent image in terms of the "cold shell of logic encasing blazing energies and passions" (Proffer 97). D-503 sees it in the earth, the city around him, and even himself. The image appears many times over in the novel, but with much greater frequency when centered on

this experience of ingesting hot alcohol into a body numbed by reason. Human passions, however illogical, are breaking through.

Alcohol itself of course carries with it symbolic weight as an instrument of chaos, or the unknown. Once D-503 feels it within him, he applies the previous metaphor, saying that he sees himself cracking out of a shell. Then, another barrage of questions: where did the alcohol come from? What doctor? And then soon thereafter, he loses his inhibitions entirely, threatening people he doesn't know, biting through I-330's dress, raging until he winds up on the floor, "embracing her legs, kissing her knees, pleading" (*We* 57). His brutish animal self is fully released. The next day, after the sting of the alcohol has worn off, D-503's questions assume a more universal nature. He ends the entry, "If only I could know: Who am I? What am I like?" (64). Commission of the heinous crime of drinking has created a need to re-evaluate all that he has previously held dear, whether consciously or otherwise. Such inquiry into the nature of things previously unexamined characterizes well this point where D-503's actions can no longer be accounted for by reason, or therefore, the One State.

Fortunately for D-503, this instability that exists with recognition of the unknown can still be comprehended mathematically. As D-503 enters I-330's apartment, he notes again an observation he has logged before—that the lines on her face combine to form what appears to be a giant letter X. The first time he saw her, he saw "an irritating X, which I could not capture, could not define in figures" (6). As if suddenly enlightened as to what this could signify, D-503 says immediately upon noticing it again, "The wheel began to turn, the spokes ran together" (53). In the equation that is D-503's math-driven life, I-330 represents the ultimate X-factor. She is the unknown variable in an otherwise "equalized world" (Shklovsky 50). This incident of the partaking of the forbidden alcohol marks the true fusing of the two characters, the mathematician

with the X. By committing this unforgivable sin together, they will be intrinsically connected for the balance of the entire novel. From this point on, an unknown variable within himself, impossible to reduce to mathematical order, will plague D-503's equation indefinitely.

Zamyatin seems attracted to the notion that the advent of the unknown is what wakes us as individuals from complacent acceptance of the world around us. When everything is laid out in front of us with no effort required on our part, there is no need for worry, no catalyst to improve or change. We are easily manipulated. It's only when individual choices may realistically affect the outcome of our future that there exists any reason for an individual to think for him- or herself. According to Zamyatin, it is only because of the unknown that freedom becomes necessary. Of course, if the One State's inverse fraction is to hold true, that the sum of happiness decreases as freedom increases, the sort of happiness implied is evidently not a worthwhile goal. Indeed, D-503 mentions having been content in his machinelike former life, but now that freedom has entered the equation, he cannot get enough of it. In explaining this matter, Zamyatin seems to draw heavily on *Notes from Underground*, which influenced his work a great deal. In it, the Underground Man muses that "there really must exist something that is dearer to almost every man than his greatest advantages... for the sake of which a man if necessary is ready to act in opposition to all laws; that is, in opposition to reason" (Dostoyevsky 19). That something which is valued above all other things is revealed to be individual freedom, the power even to inflict "what is injurious to himself, what is stupid, very stupid—simply in order to have the right to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible" (24). D-503 never at any point suggests that the society which has raised him is evil or wrong. Simply, the existence of the unknown, which requires personal freedom, cultivates the desire for more and more of the same. The One State did well to

systematize life into predictable units. However, the unknown variable took hold of one of its most dedicated citizens, and it won't stop there.

The Societal Tipping Point

As was mentioned, D-503 never really does undergo a complete conversion to the advantages of free life. He continues to vacillate back and forth between freedom and stability until the end of the novel, when he fatefully submits to the Great Operation, or the excision of the imagination. Such is the anti-utopian novel. However disappointing it may be that this great citizen of the One State-turned-revolutionary has again succumbed to the regime in the end, there persists at the close of the novel a grand glimmer of hope. In the journal's closing fortieth entry, D-503, now a complete subservient robot of a man following the Operation, admits that "in the western parts of the city there is still chaos, roaring, corpses, beasts, and—unfortunately—a considerable group of numbers who have betrayed Reason" (*We* 232). Of course, he himself was vital in the facilitation of the chaos, but he doesn't remember that now. And though the I-330-led resistance movement has not yet succeeded, it has created a massive disturbance in the system.

While we as readers are not informed as to how exactly the resistance was originally born, or how it grew, some hints linger. More pressing, anyhow, is the related question of *when* it was born, *when* it began to pick up speed. At what point did people begin to decide that the regime had gone too far? At what point did they first put their foot down and oppose the erosion of their personal freedom? For D-503, it occurred when he ingested the forbidden fruit and could no longer predict the future. For the society as a whole, much the same is true. We know that the One State ruling regime has been in power for approximately a millennium, and we also know that the resistance movement is relatively young. Thus, it's not enough to simplify and say that

the regime went too far by imposing mathematical order on society. As we've discussed, the methods and the rhetoric employed by the government have been enormously effective, and not without good intention. Most people happily went along with it. Indeed, the One State was not intrinsically evil from the beginning. Zamyatin was quite deliberate about this matter, for no dystopian work is written without instructive intent, and the One State is precisely the sort of authoritarian regime that he feared was closing in on his own homeland. Zamyatin was originally a Bolshevik, just as his prototype, I-330, was in full support of the initial leadership of the One State. But eventually there came a tipping point when citizens could no longer accept the wearing away of their freedoms in exchange for greater security. And though it occurred well before D-503 began writing his journal, and possibly even before his and I-330's lives began, it's just barely within reach for us.

In fact, though we know nothing of the actual event from the text, we can with a degree of certainty from various hints conclude that the tipping point, when the leadership of the One State finally committed its fatal flaw, was the day it conceived the spaceship *Integral*. Of course, not only does the name *Integral* itself suggest to readers something of grave importance, but appropriately, it's a mathematical term as well, referring to "the calculus method for closely limiting what cannot be defined precisely" (L. Cooke 156). That sounds like a spot-on mission statement for the ship itself, which is being built expressly in order to "subjugate the unknown beings on other planets, who may still be living in the primitive condition of freedom" (*We* 1). In fact, the very idea of the *Integral* is an exaggerated representation of the precise shift that turned Zamyatin, a former Bolshevik, into a man so critical of the Communists that he began to devote his entire writing career to decrying them. Initially overjoyed by the revolution, Zamyatin was as supportive of the new ruling power as he could possibly be, up until he perceived a shift in focus

from the original revolutionary ideals to basic preservation of power. Back in the One State, with the *Integral* becoming the primary concentration of government resources, the regime is apparently no longer concerned with qualitative improvement. D-503 speaks often of his own state as a utopia, but surely the level of “mathematically infallible happiness” experienced there was not originally attained by quantitative expansion of the empire (1). And yet, the citizenry, conditioned to value stability over all else, hails the potential subjugation of other states as destiny. This quantitative colonization of primitive beings becomes a way to simulate meaningful qualitative progress when none actually exists. In the eyes of savages for whom the text of *We* is written, the One State is a great superior race, and every effort to impose order upon the lives of their subordinates maintains the façade that the great civilization is actually continuing to progress.

I-330’s desire for qualitative change corresponds with Zamyatin’s similar ideas most obviously during a conversation with D-503 in the journal’s thirtieth entry. Here, the revolutionary explains the very shift from revolution to preservation in terms that her new friend can understand. As she reveals the resistance movement’s plans to overtake the *Integral* during its test flight, she asks its builder for help. He responds, exclaiming, “Don’t you realize that what you’re planning is revolution?” (174). D-503 claims this to be absurd, because as “everyone knows,” the original revolution which gave rise to the One State was the last, and there can be no other (174). The X-faced revolutionary responds, equating the notion of a “final” revolution with the notion of a final number—a preposterous idea to the mathematician. But then, if the concept of infinity holds in math, why not in societies and revolutions? After all, it’s been made clear how much the state relies on correlation with mathematical truth. Zamyatin was, by the way, a known proponent of the idea of perpetual revolution, not unlike Thomas Jefferson (Huntington

129). I-330 says that infinite potential for future revolutions must exist for progress to be made. For if not, what next?

D-503's response to the question of "what next?" triggers another, even more central argument for Zamyatin and I-330. The protagonist blurts out, "There's nothing next! Period. Throughout the universe—spread uniformly—everywhere...." Such, of course, is the aim of the *Integral*. I-330 responds coolly, "that's exactly where it is—entropy, psychological entropy" (175). The builder of the *Integral* has unwittingly touched a nerve here, and given his author a stage on which to express some of his most deep-seated beliefs. Psychological entropy, which was touched on briefly in the section on mathematical rhetoric, was, to Yevgeny Zamyatin, the root of all evil. But this vapid state, this entropy, is yet another logical and terrible product of the shift from revolution to preservation, the shift symbolized by the construction of the *Integral*. This is what the resistance is truly fighting. We see familiar imagery in Zamyatin's essay, "On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters":

When the flaming, seething sphere [of revolution] cools, the fiery magma becomes coated with dogma—a rigid, ossified, motionless crust. Dogmatization in science, religion, social life, or art is the entropy of thought.... Instead of the Sermon on the Mount, under the scorching sun, to up-raised arms and sobbing people, there is drowsy prayer in a magnificent abbey. ("On Literature" 108)

Following the explanation of entropy to her friend, I-330 refers to the original framers of the One State and says, "they were right—a thousand times right. But they made one mistake. They later came to believe that they had the final number—which does not, does not exist in nature" (*We* 175). She admits that her own revolutionary movement, if successful, will eventually cool as well, but such is the cyclical nature of life. And then, as if to return us again to the pertinent

physical agent of the entropy, I-330 immediately reminds D-503 of her plans with the *Integral*, and departs.

In addition to the shift from revolution to preservation, qualitative to quantitative growth, and energy to entropy, the *Integral* project also represents the overstepping of bounds in that it forcefully aims to destroy opposition. The critic Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., reminds us that in fact, Marx, revered as a founding father of Soviet Union along with Lenin, and therefore for Zamyatin an indirect founder of the One State, believed that freedom could only emerge with the existence of opposition—any opposition (Csicsery-Ronay 244). Of course, freedom is not the aim of the One State, but Marx himself still advocated *some* form of competition. And this despite the fact that, as Csicsery-Ronay notes, Soviet science, just like One State science, was nothing more than a tool in the hands of the ruling power (237). But again, Marx was the revolutionary, not the preservationist so despised by Zamyatin. Finally, in attempting to defeat opposition via the *Integral*, the One State goes too far simply in that they've abandoned the wildly successful rhetorical warfare that has effectively subdued the entire population, and instead opted to impose order. Forceful compulsion to order is the one mistake the successful government in *We* had yet to commit, as it had been their policy from page one to use force only after the failure of words (1). The utilization of rhetoric is precisely what made the regime of the One State so chilling and effective. Force, according to Zamyatin, cultivates opposition. The *Integral* did it again. Just as we see Orwell's primary enemy through Winston Smith's job at the Ministry of Truth, we see Zamyatin's through D-503's work on the *Integral*. One can't help but wonder if D-503 would have been completely impossible to convert to the resistance had he not been so closely tied with the most overtly malevolent project in his society. One can't help but wonder if the resistance even existed in the time before the *Integral* became a reality. We will

never know for sure of such specifics, because fortunately, it's only a novel, but Zamyatin has left us plenty to ponder in terms of real-life issues.

Legacy

It was only three years after the completion of *We* that Lenin, the Bolsheviks' beloved leader, succumbed to a stroke, and an official by the name of Joseph Stalin ascended to power. Stalin's Benefactor-like thirty-year reign over the Soviet Union effectively oversaw the continuation and completion of the shift from revolution to preservation that Zamyatin perceived.

There's no doubt that Russia and the United States are separated by more than just oceans. Partly due to the fact that *We* has enjoyed existence in English far longer than it has in its own language, it has risen to a greater stature in the West. Surely its greater measure of support in the United States, though, is also a function of ideology. While American intellectual activity in the twentieth century has remained obsessed with individual liberty, and the value and triumph of one over many, contemporary Russia continues to vacillate between the opposing ideals of liberty and security. Current prime minister and former president Vladimir Putin has received overwhelming popular support during his rule in the post-Soviet era for enacting policy that, according to the West, has revoked and threatened individual liberties in Russia. This has come at a time when Zamyatin's homeland has seen political instability, but no major threat of uprising. Countries such as the United States have criticized Putin's policies excessively, while at home, he remains the most popular leader in decades.

If we in the United States are concerned with the erosion of our own personal liberties in times of crisis, Zamyatin's *We* tells us that we'd best be vigilant. A successful, sophisticated

regime will not merely conceal truth or alter history. Indeed, works such as *1984* have prepared us to despise precisely that brand of oppression. According to Zamyatin, however, successful authoritarian regimes will not merely keep us in the dark, but illuminate our minds as to why the leadership is infallibly right. Such regimes will teach us to value our safety, the status quo, with threats of a worse life rather than hope of a better one. They will seek to spread outwardly rather than improve inwardly. They will assume themselves above art and literature, products of imagination, independent thought, and the soul; in other words, censorship will prevail. Perhaps as soon as the next *We* is banned and the next Yevgeny Zamyatin bound to quiet his revolutionary voice, we may have cause for concern.

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