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The Counterrevolutionary Thought of C. S. Lewis

Joshua Paladino

C. S. Lewis is not usually thought of as a political theorist. Yet Lewis's literary works, rather than divorced from politics, connect moral decline and political disorder, especially what he saw as the danger of technocratic rule in the postwar era. This article, looking both to Lewis's own writings and current scholarship, seeks to revise our views of Lewis as a political thinker. It argues that his writings demonstrate a persistent theme of counterrevolutionary opposition to the growing bureaucratic elite and scientific education of the postwar era. He provided critiques of technocracy, the state of exception, the authoritative teaching of humanitarian justice, and modern gender roles in marriage and society. Moreover, he called for spirited resistance to the modern state. A new ruling class, he hoped, could overturn the pieties of humanitarian justice and scientific democracy and replace them with retributive justice and traditional morality.

In his 1957 essay “Delinquents in the Snow,” C. S. Lewis warned that Britain was descending into anarcho-tyranny—a state where the government failed to protect citizens from crime while aggressively regulating ordinary freedoms.¹ Drawing on classical political theory, Lewis argued that such conditions could drive individuals to reclaim their natural right to self-defense, potentially spawning vigilante groups. While he advocated the formation of associations to resist a bureaucratic, anarcho-tyrannical regime, he rejected violent rebellion as a viable option in the modern context, arguing that the same criminals and technocrats who benefited from the old regime would end up co-opting the revolution for their own ends. He advocated, instead, for a counterrevolutionary strategy that aimed to cultivate opposition to the modern state and create a new ruling class to overturn the pieties of humanitarian justice and scientific democracy and replace them with retributive justice and traditional morality.

Lewis is rarely considered a political theorist, yet his writings reveal a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between moral decline and political disorder. His analysis

¹ C. S. Lewis never used the phrase anarcho-tyranny, but it accurately and efficiently summarizes his opinion about the British state after the world wars. The term comes from a 1994 article by Samuel T. Francis, “[Anarcho-Tyranny, U.S.A.](#),” *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* (July 1994), who defines it as “a kind of Hegelian synthesis of what appear to be dialectical opposites: the combination of oppressive government power against the innocent and the law-abiding and, simultaneously, a grotesque paralysis of the ability or the will to use that power to carry out basic public duties such as protection or public safety. And, it is characteristic of anarcho-tyranny that it not only fails to punish criminals and enforce legitimate order but also criminalizes the innocent.”

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of mid-twentieth-century Britain anticipated many contemporary concerns about the administrative state, criminal justice reform, and cultural transformation. This paper argues that Lewis developed a coherent counterrevolutionary strategy—not a program for immediate violent overthrow, but a framework for principled resistance to technocratic governance rooted in natural law and spirited opposition to injustice.

This paper examines Lewis's critique of technocracy and the state of exception, his opposition to humanitarian justice, his controversial stance on gender roles in marriage and society, and his call for spirited resistance to the political and social crises of his era. Lewis foresaw the dangers of a technocratic elite replacing traditional justice with rehabilitative measures, thereby fostering a regime that alternates between an anarchic state of nature, in which the state refuses to protect innocent citizens, and a tyrannical state of exception, in which the state punishes the innocent and promotes the rule of criminals.

The paper also discusses Lewis's reflections on arbitrary restrictions of property rights, such as in the Cichel Down and Pilgrim affairs, and the lingering state of exception following World War II, which he believed signaled a drift toward totalitarianism. Lewis's advocacy for retributive justice, his disdain for bureaucratic property regulations, and his call for spiritedness are analyzed as counterrevolutionary strategies to combat modern governance.

The resistance to anarcho-tyranny requires, at least in part, a revival of traditional roles in the family so that children's education in justice, which begins in the family, can be properly ordered. While Lewis never explicitly addressed women's political participation, his writings on complementary gender roles in domestic life suggest he may have envisioned similar distinctions in public life. However, this interpretation must remain tentative given the limited textual evidence and Lewis's explicit statement that he opposed removing women's legal equality. Given the difficulty surrounding Lewis's views on gender roles, a brief explanation here will clarify the direction of the argument concerning the fulfillment of male and female nature. Vera Gebbert, who corresponded with Lewis for over a decade, sent him a letter humorously stating that she had confused pregnancy for seasickness. In response, Lewis likened a woman's experience during pregnancy to a man's experience in war, connecting each gender's purpose and fulfillment to distinct spheres: "I am sure you felt as I did when I heard my first bullet, 'This is War: this is what Homer wrote about.' For, all said and done, a woman who has never had a baby and a man who has never been either in

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a battle or a storm at sea are, in a sense, rather outside—haven't really 'seen life'—haven't served."² However, Lewis clearly indicated that these roles can converge and blend for the well-being of both sexes if males and females fulfill their respective domestic and political responsibilities. In a letter to Sister Penelope, Lewis stated that "there ought spiritually to be a man in every woman and a woman in every man. And how horrid the ones who haven't got it are: I can't bear a 'man's man' or a 'woman's woman.'"³ These statements, along with others described below, support the argument that Lewis believed men should lead in the outer world while women should cultivate the home, though their duties can often be flexible, as illustrated in *That Hideous Strength* at St. Anne's, where men and women share domestic obligations and both engage in political operations.

Finally, the paper considers Lewis's Christian perspective on the limits of political action, his emphasis on both moderation and manly vigilance, and his suggestion that friendship serves as a bulwark against state power.

ANARCHO-TYRANNY, THE STATE OF NATURE, AND VIGILANTISM

Lewis wrote that Britain's political conditions had become "like that of the South after the American Civil War."⁴ Law and order had deteriorated to such an extent by 1957 that Lewis feared "that some sort of Ku Klux Klan may appear and that this might eventually develop into something like a Right or Central revolution."⁵ Vigilante societies, he predicted, might spring up to fill the vacuum created by the state's negligence of its primary duty of protecting citizens. These organizations might provide temporary relief as they justly reassert their right to punish violations of the natural law, but they would likely fail in one of two ways, according to Lewis. First, the state might rediscover its love of violence and summon all its forces against those who punish wrongdoing. The state, in other words, might find the strength to destroy the very citizens who want to prevent anarchy, suppressing the remaining citizens with the clarity, vigilance, and courage necessary to identify and punish infringements of the civil and

² Lewis to Vera Gebbert, March 23, 1953, in *Collected Letters*, ed. Walter Hooper, 3 vols. (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2009), 3:310–11.

³ Lewis to Sister Penelope, October 1, 1952, in *Collected Letters*, 3:158.

⁴ Lewis, "Delinquents in the Snow," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Hooper, in *The Timeless Writings of C. S. Lewis: The Pilgrim's Regress, Christian Reflections, God in the Dock* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1970), 510.

⁵ Lewis, "Delinquents," 510–11.

moral law. In this crusade against citizen-based law enforcement, the state would probably partner with criminals against the law-abiding. Lewis came to this conclusion based on his observation of law enforcement and adjudication in Britain. “Criminal law increasingly protects the criminal and ceases to protect his victim,” he wrote.⁶ Second, the vigilante societies might find that the government poses a fundamental threat to their safety, and, instead of satisfying themselves with enforcing the law in place of the government, they would resort to overthrowing and replacing it. But Lewis suggested that the second option, the right to revolution, would likely result in a similar government under a new guise because the criminals and technocrats who rule the current regime would embed themselves into the revolution. Lewis witnessed the early manifestations of anarcho-tyranny, a condition in which a totalitarian state’s unprecedented police and military power serves to prevent the enforcement of law and to protect criminals from punishment. He predicted that anarcho-tyrannical governance would strengthen and spread.⁷

Based on “classical political theory,” Lewis argued that the state’s refusal or failure to protect citizens means that “‘nature’ is come again and the right of self-protection reverts to the individual.”⁸ Unlike a traditional state of nature, however, the English government had not lost its power or will to punish; it had lost its will to punish criminals. Lewis warned that the state *would* punish a man with the audacity to enforce the traditional moral law with his own hand. In this modern state of nature, a totalitarian government with a full monopoly on force selectively allows or actively creates areas in which the law shall not be enforced, even if it requires violence to prevent citizens from enforcing the law. Under these twentieth-century conditions, a man cannot safely resume his right to self-defense in the same way that an eighteenth-century man could simply shoot a criminal who had invaded his property. Lewis wrote that if he had taken up his natural right to self-defense when “hooligans” stole “curious weapons and an optical instrument from his shed,” he would have been “prosecuted” more harshly than the boys who robbed him.⁹ Rather than acting alone, then, citizens must organize societies for collective protection, but these societies are likely to be infiltrated by the state or by criminals and then turned toward ideological purposes or incited

⁶ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

⁷ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

⁸ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

⁹ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

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to full revolution. Under classical political theory, according to Lewis, a man regains his right to protect himself, his family, and his fellow humans whenever the government fails to do so. Lewis argued that a government, like that in Britain, purposefully nurtures lawlessness as a trap for citizens; it wants citizens as individuals or within vigilante societies to reclaim the right to self-defense so that it can justify the steps necessary to bring about a police state that disregards the rule of law, protects criminals, and prevents citizens from enforcing the moral law.

Across his writings, Lewis identified four potential revolutions that Britain could suffer: a “Dictatorship of the Criminals,” which would devolve into “mere anarchy” because criminals cannot govern effectively; a “Right or Central revolution” that would arise to quell anarcho-tyranny but would likely exacerbate lawlessness;¹⁰ an oligarchic tyranny that would present itself as a “scientific planned democracy;”¹¹ and a “Left revolution” that would attempt to correct economic injustices.¹² Lewis understood these potential revolutions as interconnected manifestations of the same underlying intellectual, social, moral, and political crisis. These four types of revolutions all stem from the rise of technocracy. Technocrats—what Lewis called the Conditioners in the *Abolition of Man*—came to power after World War II, and they brought scientific planned democracy, or technocracy, to Britain and the West. Lewis wrote:

Again, the new oligarchy must more and more base its claim to plan us on its claim to knowledge. If we are to be mothered, mother must know best. This means they must increasingly rely on the advice of scientists, till in the end the politicians proper become merely the scientists’ puppets. Technocracy is the form to which a planned society must tend.¹³

Lewis defended politics against technocratic planning. He wanted politicians to retain their proper position in which they deliberate and decide about matters of justice and the common good. Today, politics proper has ended, and politicians merely implement the advice they receive from scientists.

¹⁰ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

¹¹ Lewis, “A Reply to Professor Haldane,” in *On Stories: and Other Essays on Literature*, ed. Hooper (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2017), 115.

¹² Lewis, “Meditation on the Third Commandment,” *God in the Dock*, in *Timeless Writings*, 431.

¹³ Lewis, “Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State,” *God in the Dock*, in *Timeless Writings*, 514.

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Then, from the scientifically planned democracy, anarcho-tyranny emerged. The technocrats viewed criminals as pathological, seeing them as victims of their environment, biology, or upbringing—patients to be cured rather than citizens to be punished. This lenient attitude toward crime, rooted in behaviorist theories about human nature, led to anarchy. Simultaneously, the technocratic desire to plan and organize society limited citizens' economic rights. Despite these increasingly despotic conditions, Lewis believed that political action under anarchic or tyrannical situations should focus on reversing the trends that contributed to the government's failure, rather than accelerating them or attempting to overthrow the state. He advocated for a moderate approach, suggesting that the government's opponents should neither spark a revolution nor passively observe as the state's failure causes a regression to the state of nature.

Lewis affirmed that the right to protection reverts to the people in a state of nature, but he avoided using the language of the right to revolution. In *C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law*, Justin Buckley Dyer and Micah Watson wrote that Lewis, following Locke, “agreed that when a government ceases to live up to [the law of nature], the people reclaim rights once given up, and they have moral justification for revolution.”¹⁴ Lewis would have accepted Dyer and Watson's formulation, but he stressed that citizens reclaim the right to self-protection, not revolution, in a passage about the possible rise of a vigilante organization. The advice against forming an organization to overthrow the existing government comes from a practical consideration about the nature of regime change, not a principled opposition to violence against state actors:

Revolutions seldom cure the evil against which they are directed; they always beget a hundred others. Often they perpetuate the old evil under a new name. We may be sure that, if a Ku Klux Klan arose, its ranks would soon be chiefly filled by the same sort of hooligans who provoked it. A Right or Central revolution would be as hypocritical, filthy and ferocious as any other. My fear is lest we should be making it more probable.¹⁵

The right of self-protection in the state of nature implies a right to revolution—a right to oust the current government by force and replace it with one that will punish criminals, defend

¹⁴ Justin Buckley Dyer and Micah J. Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103.

¹⁵ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 511.

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the innocent, and protect the nation from external enemies without entering into unjust wars. Lewis could have expounded on the right to revolution, but he chose to focus on the individual's right to protect himself against crime, not the people's collective right to depose their rulers. While the prediction of vigilante violence in England may appear like a "threat," Lewis clarified that he does not "wish for such a result" nor would he "willingly contribute to it."¹⁶

Instead, Lewis hinted at several counterrevolutionary tactics to prevent upheavals, including public-spirited resistance to crime and tyranny, the recovery of distinct roles for the sexes to reinvigorate politics while protecting the home, and the cultivation of manly friendships.¹⁷ Christians must participate in politics to oust the new oligarchy, which rules based on technical skill, and inaugurate a ruling class that will govern according to moral law by protecting property rights, avoiding unjust wars, and punishing crime.

THE CRICHEL DOWN AFFAIR, THE PILGRIM AFFAIR, AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

Lewis's analysis of property rights violations reveals how technocratic governance systematically undermines traditional sources of independence that citizens needed to resist state power. He wrote about the British government's increasing disregard for property rights, its refusal to punish crime, and its prolonged use of wartime powers without regard for the common good. In a letter to I. O. Evans, a British civil servant, Lewis mentioned two instances of economic tyranny: the Cricchel Down affair and the Pilgrim affair.¹⁸ In 1938, the British government compulsorily purchased more than 300 acres of the Cricchel estate for military purposes. The government promised to sell the land back to the owners after World War II. Instead, the military transferred the land to the Ministry of Agriculture, which refused to sell it and then rented it for a profit. The ministry eventually returned the land to its owners, but the event demonstrated the government's dishonesty and hostility to property rights. The Pilgrim affair followed a similar pattern, but it ended tragically. In 1952, the Romford Council compulsorily purchased Edward Pilgrim's land without his knowledge or consent. Five years earlier, Parliament had passed a law that authorized local governments

¹⁶ Lewis, "Delinquents," 511.

¹⁷ Lewis, "Is Progress Possible?," 514.

¹⁸ Lewis to I. O. Evans, December 22, 1954, in *The Collected Letters*, 3:547-48; Lewis to Jocelyn Gibb, February 1, 1958, in *The Collected Letters*, 3:911-12.

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to purchase land without the owners' consent for economic development. In this instance, the Romford Council bought Pilgrim's land to start a housing development. When Pilgrim learned that the council had taken his land, he contested the compulsory purchase, but the council denied his appeal. Pilgrim reported that the council built a high-rise apartment complex in the lot next to his home; the high-rise blocked the sun, forcing him to use electric lights during the day. He fell into depression and committed suicide in a tool shed on the property that the council had seized for the housing development.

Lewis wrote a short poem about the two events: "The weight of Crichel Down upon your backs / The blood of Mr. Pilgrim on your heads."¹⁹ This poetic response reveals the moral weight Lewis attributed to these seemingly administrative matters, recognizing them as symptoms of a broader assault on the foundations of free society. The persistence of wartime emergency powers provided the legal framework for this expansion of state control. These measures represented more than temporary expedients; they constituted a fundamental transformation of the British constitutional order that Lewis believed would prove difficult if not impossible to reverse through normal political processes.

Lewis saw these prominent cases as part of a British political trend where the government trampled on property rights and prioritized economic development over the rights of citizens. In a letter to an American discussing the economic policies of the Labour government after World War II, Lewis wrote: "Under the last government, things were much the same here—acute shortage of building materials, but plenty available for children's swimming pools, community centres etc. It is I think part of the modern totalitarian pattern of life—neglect the home, but let the community be luxurious."²⁰ As the government gets involved in economic development, it restricts citizens' right to develop their private property. Screwtape favorably compared the restriction of property rights in England to the totalitarian victories in "the Nazi and the Communist state."²¹ In England, Screwtape boasted, "a man could not, without a permit, cut down his own tree with his own axe, make it into planks with his own saw, and use the planks to build a tool-shed in his own garden."²² Lewis

¹⁹ Lewis to I. O. Evans, December 22, 1954, in *The Collected Letters*, 3:547.

²⁰ Lewis to Vera Gebbert, December 9, 1952, in *Collected Letters*, 3:259.

²¹ Lewis, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," in *The World's Last Night and Other Essays* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2017), 62.

²² Lewis, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," 62.

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also complained that the government had “chosen this period of rearmament of all possible periods to nationalize the steel industry.”²³ The war effort was over, yet the government had seized property against the wishes of the owners and the laborers, according to Lewis.²⁴ These restrictions appear minor, especially in contemporary Western nations, where citizens accept that the government exists to issue permits, build housing developments, and control major industries; however, Lewis warned his civil servant friend, Evans, about these early signs of tyranny. He wrote that a totalitarian impulse had crept into the British government, which might demand that civil servants enforce tyrannical edicts:

I don't think you have worse taste or worse hearts than other men. But I do think that the State is increasingly tyrannical and you, inevitably, are among the instruments of that tyranny.... This doesn't matter for you who did most of your service when the subject was still a freeman. For the rising generation it will become a real problem, at what point the policies you are ordered to carry out have become so iniquitous that a decent man must seek some other profession.²⁵

The violations of property rights during the Crichel Down and Pilgrim affairs—as well as the growing interventionism of the modern state—served as a warning to Lewis that tyranny would settle over Britain if its citizens could not smother it.

THE BRITISH STATE OF EXCEPTION

Lewis wrote repeatedly that the government had abused its wartime powers and refused to fully relinquish them after the war. He described the ongoing military state of exception in a 1958 article: “Two wars necessitated vast curtailments of liberty, and we have grown, though grumblingly, accustomed to our chains. The increasing complexity and precariousness of our economic life have forced Government to take over many spheres of activity once left to choice or chance.”²⁶ A brief comment from Mrs. Dimble in *That Hideous Strength* sums up Lewis's view of post-war Britain. The Dimbles had watched the N.I.C.E. confiscate property, send its henchmen to arrest and abuse citizens, and turn the quiet, safe town of Edgestow into a police state. Mrs. Dimble said she and her husband both thought that “it's almost as if

²³ Lewis to Vera Matthews, September 20, 1950, in *Collected Letters*, 3:54.

²⁴ Lewis to Vera Matthews, September 20, 1950, in *Collected Letters*, 3:53–54.

²⁵ Lewis to I. O. Evans, December 22, 1954, in *The Collected Letters*, 3:547.

²⁶ Lewis, “Is Progress Possible?,” 513–14.

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we'd lost the war."²⁷ Britain had supposedly won the war, but the government had not lifted its wartime measures. To make matters worse, Britain began to act as if its enemies from World War II had invaded and conquered the nation and then implemented their totalitarian system. The government, according to Lewis, justified the emergency measures—like compulsory property purchases and mandatory Home Guard drills—to deter the threat of Russian aggression after World War II.

Lewis expressed “a hope we shall get away without World War III this time,”²⁸ but in 1950 he worried that the Labour government would deceive the British people and push them into war: “The thought of such a war as that [would] be bad enough in itself: but the thought of entering it with such a government as England now has, is sheer nightmare. Have you any parallel to their imbecility? All rulers lie: but did you ever meet such bad liars?”²⁹ The government also refused to keep the public informed and instead allowed speculations about war to circulate without correction. “Does your government give you any information about the world situation?,” Lewis asked Edward A. Allen, an American, in a letter. “Ours steadily refuses to part with any, and consequently we live in a world of rumours and astonishing stories from the man who has a friend in the Navy or the Foreign Office or what have you.”³⁰ Unfortunately, Lewis did not have faith that the British soldiers would resist the government’s push toward war. They lacked both the information necessary to judge foreign affairs on their own and, as I will discuss below, the spirit necessary to resist the government’s calls for war. In a letter, Lewis wrote:

The other day I was listening to some working men talking in a pub. They were all of such ages as to have seen two wars and fought in one. One would have expected (and indeed excused) the attitude ‘Oh, not a third time! Three times in my life is too much.’ But there was not a trace of it. Merely a unanimous, and quite unemotional, view that ‘I reckon these Russians are going the same way as ‘Itler did’ and ‘We don’t want no bloody Appeasement this time’ and ‘The sooner they’re taught a lesson the better.’ Of course it is partly ignorance: they don’t know anything about the resources of the Russians. But then it was equally ignorance last time; they had no conception of Germany’s strength. But anyway, they’re obviously perfectly game.³¹

²⁷ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Scribner Classics, 1996), 74.

²⁸ Lewis to Mary Van Deusen, November 18, 1956, in *Collected Letters*, 3:809.

²⁹ Lewis to Warfield M. Firor, December 6, 1950, in *Collected Letters*, 3:67.

³⁰ Lewis to Edward A. Allen, July 21, 1950, in *Collected Letters*, 3:43.

³¹ Lewis to Warfield M. Firor, July 26, 1950, in *Collected Letters*, 3:44.

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The government would let the public speculate wildly about foreign affairs as it kept the nation under wartime regulations. Despite these tyrannical actions, the British people would willingly fight. They possessed the courage to fight but not to demand frankness and honesty from a propagandistic government.

The fear that the British government would never lift its emergency measures made Lewis's subconscious mind consider a violent overthrow of the state. In an article titled, "A Dream," Lewis wrote that he thought he heard an "influential person" claim that conscription would continue after the war, though not for military purposes.³² He later dreamed that he was sailing on a ship—the ship of state. He and his fellow owners—Britain's citizens and soldiers—willingly manned the ship to protect the nation against foreign enemies. They obeyed the orders of the "emergency petty officers."³³ Then they learned that the emergency petty officers planned to keep them as conscripts to transform the ship, not to fight a war. The officers would use the emergency military powers, which the people granted the state to effectively fight the world wars, to instead carry out a technocratic revolution. The officers said, "Now's our chance to make this the sort of ship we want."³⁴ Lewis and the other sailors said they would fight for security but not allow the state to diminish their liberties, so they grabbed "every one of the emergency petty officers by the scruff of his neck and the seat of his trousers and heaved the lot of them over the side" of the ship.³⁵ Lewis dreamed about the possibility of removing corrupt rulers from their military and political positions. He half-heartedly condemned his dreaming mind, calling it "regrettably immoral," yet he "could do nothing but laugh" at the "meddling busybodies going *plop-plop* into the deep blue sea."³⁶ The reluctant condemnation demonstrates the tension in Lewis's thoughts between the justice of removing tyrants and the injustice that typically accompanies violent revolution.

This dream sequence reveals the depth of Lewis's frustration with the perpetual emergency that characterized post-war British governance. The image of throwing the emergency officers overboard suggests that even Lewis's disciplined Christian conscience occasionally entertained fantasies of direct action against tyrannical authority. More

³² Lewis, "A Dream," in *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 41.

³³ Lewis, "A Dream," 43.

³⁴ Lewis, "A Dream," 43.

³⁵ Lewis, "A Dream," 43–44.

³⁶ Lewis, "A Dream," 44.

significantly, the dream illustrates his understanding that the wartime emergency had provided cover for a fundamental transformation of British government that extended far beyond legitimate security concerns.

ANARCHO-TYRANNY AND HUMANE PUNISHMENT

Lewis's concept of anarcho-tyranny describes a specific form of governmental failure that emerged in post-war Britain. Unlike traditional tyranny, which imposes order through oppressive means, or genuine anarchy, which represents the complete absence of government, anarcho-tyranny combines the worst elements of both conditions. While the technocracy controls citizens by taking their property for official reasons and keeping them under wartime restrictions, it also refuses to prevent crime and punish criminals who harm law-abiding citizens. Technocracy in practice is anarcho-tyranny because it exercises unprecedented control over the population while explicitly rejecting natural law conceptions of justice as the basis of its authority. Lewis expanded on this idea in "The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment." The state either refuses to punish crime or prescribes inadequate punishments while aggressively prosecuting citizens who engage in self-defense or vigilantism. Lewis wrote that in England's "present position ... the State protects us less because it is *unwilling* to protect us against criminals at home and manifestly grows less and less *able* to protect us against foreign enemies [emphasis added]."³⁷ The English government had lost the will to punish.

The state had not lost the strength to rule through an external cause: a foreign invasion, a domestic insurrection, a collapse in funds or personnel needed to govern, a natural disaster, etc. Its rulers became averse to punishment because they stopped believing in sin and wickedness, and so they began to treat crime as a social ailment. They thought pathological illness to be the sole or primary cause of crime.³⁸ A judge, whom Lewis called "The Elderly Lady," presided over the trial of the boys who robbed him. Lewis accused her of sharing the view of "Thrasymachus," who asserted "the interest of the stronger."³⁹ The Elderly Lady on the bench "enforced her own will and that of the criminals and they together are

³⁷ Lewis, "Delinquents," 510.

³⁸ Lewis, "The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment," *God in the Dock*, in *Timeless Writings*, 496.

³⁹ Lewis, "Delinquents," 509.

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incomparably stronger than I,” Lewis wrote.⁴⁰ Anarcho-tyranny emerged from a spiritual crisis, a crisis of the will. It was made possible by the prevailing opinion, held by the judge, that criminals should be treated compassionately because conditions outside their control led them to commit crimes or because the crime was basically harmless childishness—an unfortunate prank, not a deviation from the moral law. The judge shifted compassion from its proper object—Lewis, the victim—to the proper object of retribution—the criminals. Lewis suggested that the judge’s misplaced feeling of compassion not only turned the criminals into the innocent but also transformed Lewis’s righteous anger into a dangerous, sadistic feeling that might require the state’s benevolent treatment. Lewis’s desire for punishment even made the criminals into the victims because they became the object of his anger. Without traditional morality and retributive justice to guide the courts, Lewis foresaw the complete reversal of justice: the angered victim would become the patient, who needs to be cured of his spirited desire for justice, and the misunderstood criminal would fall under the state’s protection.

Few scholars have written extensively about Lewis’s views on criminal justice. Dyer and Watson stated that Lewis thought “government can and must punish wrongdoers” because it “has a duty to the protection of ‘property,’ broadly understood to include fundamental liberties and social relationships.”⁴¹ In *C. S. Lewis on the Final Frontier*, Sanford Schwartz mentioned in a footnote that Lewis had “proto-Foucauldian views” on punishment.⁴² There is a connection between their critiques of rehabilitation, but Lewis and Michel Foucault reached opposite conclusions.⁴³ Peter Karl Koritansky provided an accurate account of “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment,” but he focused on the argument’s theoretical strength rather than its application to politics. He argued that “retributive justice is intelligible and

⁴⁰ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 509.

⁴¹ Dyer and Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics*, 122.

⁴² Sanford Schwartz, *C. S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 193n30.

⁴³ Lewis and Foucault both considered rehabilitative justice a more totalitarian form of discipline and social control than retributive justice. Under the older view of justice, criminals would often receive brutal yet swift physical punishments. Under the new view, the state subjects criminals—as well as political and religious dissenters, including Christians—to surveillance and psychological manipulation. They both opposed rehabilitative justice because it implies totalitarian social control, but Lewis wanted to return to the idea that crime violates natural law and deserves punishment. Foucault asserted that societies punish criminals because they threaten the systems of social and political domination, not because they violate an objective standard of right and wrong.

defensible, but only when viewed through the lens of Thomistic natural law.”⁴⁴ In *Branches to Heaven*, James Como listed “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment” as an example of Lewis’s “unlikely opinions,” but Como did not say much else about it.⁴⁵ Instead, he used the opportunity to outline Lewis’s alleged liberalism: his opinion “that abortion laws may be very ill-advised; that obscenity laws are useless at best, as are anti-sodomy laws; that a truly Christian economic order would have more than a small bit of socialism in it...”⁴⁶ Como’s interpretation reflects a broader scholarly tendency to emphasize Lewis’s allegedly liberal positions on social issues, but this reading does not fully capture the complexity of Lewis’s political thought.⁴⁷ Kath Filmer critiqued Lewis’s social and political opinions, especially his ideas about women and punishment.⁴⁸ Commenting on the violent endings of *Peregrina* and *That Hideous Strength*, Filmer wrote:

Such scenes raise questions about Lewis’s own attitudes to violence; the theories contained in his essay denouncing ‘the humanitarian theory of punishment’ are applied to Fairy Hardcastle, who delights in nasty methods of brainwashing and reprogramming. But Lewis’s own theory of punishment, that is, according to desert, if not as articulated academically in a paper, is, at least as suggested in his fiction, equally nasty and inhumane.⁴⁹

The problem with this approach is that Hardcastle and the rest of the N.I.C.E. deserve their swift and violent ends; no criminal, even if death is due him, deserves the long, strange tortures of Hardcastle. Filmer’s hostile analysis hits the essential point that scholars of Lewis tend to downplay or ignore. She recognized that punishment according to the standard of moral law or just desert *is* nasty and violent, but often quick and exact. Lewis believed that only the old view of justice could prevent a return to the state of nature. Lewis’s support for retributive justice will be bloody, but it will avoid the humanitarian tools of reprogramming,

⁴⁴ Peter Karl Koritansky, “Retributive Justice and Natural Law,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 83, no. 3 (July 2019): 410.

⁴⁵ James Como, *Branches to Heaven: The Geniuses of C. S. Lewis* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1998), 115.

⁴⁶ Como, *Branches to Heaven*, 115.

⁴⁷ Chad Walsh, *The Literary Legacy of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 14. According to Walsh, Lewis’s stepson, David Gresham, stated that his stepfather had “an ultra-conservative political philosophy.”

⁴⁸ Kath Filmer, *The Fiction of C. S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 100.

⁴⁹ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 35.

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correction, or reeducation as well as the sadistic love of torturing and experimenting on criminals.

Lewis explained that the English ruling class's lost willpower to punish criminals has created the possibility of either anarchy or the rule of criminals, but true anarchy—the absence of rule—is unlikely because the modern state still has the power to rule, even if it uses that power against the innocent. True anarchy requires the breakdown of the state, but the state, in many ways, has more power than at any other time in history due to the new tools of technological and psychological control. The theory of humanitarian justice weakens the will to punish. It creates a poorly trained sense of just desert or a distaste for punishment framed as punishment. The theory of humanitarian justice replaces “traditional” or “retributive” justice with rehabilitative justice.⁵⁰ Grounded in the “Law of Nature” and the “Scriptures,” the retributive theory of justice states that crimes intrinsically deserve punishment, regardless of the criminal's psychological health or sickness.⁵¹ Lewis acknowledged that “the actual penal code of most countries at most times” fell far short of the Law of Nature and the Scriptures, but the “conscience of society” always dictated just punishments under the retributive theory.⁵² When punishment aims to give criminals what they deserve, “every man has the right to an opinion, not because he follows this or that profession, but because he is simply a man, a rational animal enjoying the Natural Light.”⁵³ The humanitarian theory, on the other hand, states that psychological illness causes crime, implying that treatment can cure criminals or deter them from committing future crimes. Criminals require treatment; they do not deserve punishment.

Under this theory, only psychological experts can prescribe methods to deter and cure criminals. Since proper treatment depends on technical knowledge, not on moral law, only professionals can express an opinion: “The Humanitarian theory, then, removes sentences from the hands of jurists whom the public conscience is entitled to criticize and places them in the hands of technical experts whose special sciences do not even employ such categories as rights or justice.”⁵⁴ Lewis argued that men as rational beings cannot comment on a

⁵⁰ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 496.

⁵¹ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 497.

⁵² Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 497.

⁵³ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 497.

⁵⁴ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 497–98.

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treatment's justice or injustice. Treatments aim at efficacy, not justice. Treatments depend on facts that ordinary men do not possess rather than on moral judgments that all rational men make. Lewis cynically asserted these arguments, concluding with the technocracy's sacred phrase, "*cuiquam in sua arte credendum*," meaning, "We must believe the expert in his own field."⁵⁵ In England, the "expert 'penologist' (let barbarous things have barbarous names)" and the "psychotherapist" have the sole authority to declare what deters and what cures.

The expert technocrats usurped a field that does not belong to them by right. They changed the political art of jurisprudence into a professional practice of psychological adjustment and criminal deterrence. The psychotherapists and penologists reject just deserts and thus the very idea of justice, so they can never judge; they can only measure and adjust:

It will be in vain for the rest of us, speaking simply as men, to say, 'but this punishment is hideously unjust, hideously disproportionate to the criminal's deserts'. The experts with perfect logic will reply, 'but nobody was talking about deserts. No one was talking about *punishment* in your archaic vindictive sense of the word. Here are the statistics proving that this treatment deters. Here are the statistics proving that this other treatment cures. What is your trouble?'⁵⁶

Lewis realized that restoring the government's willpower to punish would require the removal of psychological experts from the courts or at least restrictions on their authority. The "conscience of society," he thought, would punish criminals according to the sense of justice that all men possess, but the ruling class determines punishments without public input. The reversal of anarcho-tyranny requires a resurgence of willpower to punish, and this renewal depends on replacing professional expertise about curing and deterring with the people's judgment of right and wrong.

The humanitarian theory of justice arose in the "era of secure and liberal civilization," which has made men "offended by suffering."⁵⁷ The liberal society's hatred of suffering, which cannot truly be called mercy or humanity, eventually infects its sense of justice. The humanitarian theory's proponents believe it to be "mild and merciful," but Lewis saw it as

⁵⁵ Lewis, "Humanitarian Theory," 497.

⁵⁶ Lewis, "Humanitarian Theory," 497.

⁵⁷ Lewis, "The Pains of Animals," *God in the Dock*, in *Timeless Writings*, 415.

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cruel to victims, society, and criminals themselves.⁵⁸ The rehabilitation of felons means that they become patients of the state, subjected to treatment without their consent but purportedly for their own good. They become objects of social and psychological experimentation. They first lose the right to a “definite sentence” that resembles to “some extent the community’s moral judgment on the degree of ill-desert involved” and receive instead an “indefinite sentence terminable only by the word of those experts.”⁵⁹ And then, despite being spared archaic punishment and a definite sentence for their crimes, they face a fate worse than death-row criminals:

To be taken without consent from my home and friends; to lose my liberty; to undergo all those assaults on my personality which modern psychotherapy knows how to deliver; to be re-made after some pattern of ‘normality’ hatched in a Viennese laboratory to which I never professed allegiance; to know that this process will never end until either my captors have succeeded or I grown wise enough to cheat them with apparent success—who cares whether this is called Punishment or not? That it includes most of the elements for which any punishment is feared—shame, exile, bondage, and years eaten by the locust—is obvious. Only enormous ill-desert could justify it; but ill-desert is the very conception which the Humanitarian theory has thrown overboard.⁶⁰

A man sentenced to hang can go to the gallows in a struggle with his own conscience or with a prayer of repentance, while the patients of humanitarian punishment will face a psycho-spiritual struggle in a white room with a master in a white coat.

As psychotherapists torturously adjust mentally disturbed criminals for their own good, the courts give lenient sentences to lesser criminals, like the boys who robbed Lewis. The leniency toward low-level criminals teaches them to continue and perhaps escalate their crimes, leading to social disintegration. By treating robbery as a mere “prank,” as The Elderly Lady called it, Lewis thought that the judge had encouraged the boys to proceed “without any sense of frontiers crossed, from mere inconsiderate romping and plundering orchards to burglary, arson, rape and murder.”⁶¹ Anyone who attempts to stop these criminals in self-defense, however, will face a punishment more severe than the criminals themselves. The humanitarian theory of justice encourages leniency toward criminals while prohibiting self-

⁵⁸ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 496.

⁵⁹ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 498.

⁶⁰ Lewis, “Humanitarian Theory,” 498.

⁶¹ Lewis, “Delinquents,” 510.

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defense, but then this initial leniency eventually results in subjecting convicted criminals to experimental treatment as patients. The citizen becomes a subject or a foreign alien, which the government has no duty to protect, and the criminal becomes a patient with a pathological case, without rights, who will experience the cures that experts prescribe for him.⁶²

MARRIAGE, FEMINISM, AND SOCIAL ORDER

The transformation of family structures represented another front in the broader assault on natural authority that enabled technocratic control. Lewis understood that the technocratic assault on traditional institutions extended to the fundamental structures of family life, which provided the most important alternative source of authority to state power. His analysis of changing gender roles must be understood within this broader critique of modern society's rejection of natural law and traditional moral order. Lewis would admit that reversing the liberation of women alone would not restore political life to its former bearings in the natural law and retributive justice. The modern assaults on justice come from many angles; the insistence that the sexes are interchangeable is only one element in the modern state's ideological arsenal. As stated above, Lewis advanced the opinion that men become men through war and women become women through childrearing, but he also suggested that a proper balance of masculine and feminine traits makes a person whole. While he observed certain detrimental effects of women's emancipation on social and intellectual life, he did not advocate for reversing women's political rights. Instead, his concerns focused on preserving the complementary roles and separate spheres that he believed essential to social stability and human happiness.

Lewis's concerns about women's emancipation stem from the "effect" that it stifles conversations about truth, which must include conversations about justice, punishment, the common good, etc. There is no evidence in his writing that he strayed from that opinion, despite the hope among scholars that he would have repudiated it. While he did not suggest restrictions on women's political rights, he observed that rapid changes in gender roles contributed to the broader dissolution of natural authority that made technocratic governance possible. In his essay "Equality," Lewis called the idea of removing women's legal

⁶² Lewis, "Humanitarian Theory," 496.

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equality with men “wicked folly,”⁶³ and in “Modern Man and His Categories of Thought,” he stated that he does not believe women’s emancipation to be “a bad thing *in itself*.”⁶⁴ Instead, he merely argued that women’s emancipation has an “effect,” but this effect is more than an easily manageable social irritation; it “cuts us off from the eternal.”⁶⁵

Many writers and scholars have struggled to reconcile Lewis’s observations about gender roles with contemporary sensibilities. In *The American Conservative*, Grayson Quay wrote that Lewis’s epithet, “The Elderly Lady,” that he used to describe the judge in his robbery case reveals “subtle sexism” and “a lack of respect for women in positions of authority.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Como saw Lewis’s unpopular perspectives on crime, the role of government, and women in politics as out of character and thus something that Lewis would have presumably rejected once his emotions cooled. He described “Delinquents in the Snow” as one of Lewis’s “misfires”:

If there is anything I wish he had not written it is ‘Delinquents in the Snow,’ a fairly late essay, splenetic nearly to the point of tantrum; pardonable, I think, as it was provoked by the disturbance of the pain-ridden Joy, who was finally getting some sleep until the disturbance. This is a tonal impropriety.⁶⁷

Como interprets “Delinquents in the Snow” as atypical of Lewis’s usual temperament. This reading emphasizes Lewis’s ordinarily measured tone over his capacity for righteous indignation. However, this interpretation may not fully account for Lewis’s consistent concern with justice throughout his corpus. Lewis wrote extensively about the need for men to openly show their hatred of evil and hope for justice. Dyer and Watson wrote that Lewis thought “the presiding judge was far too lenient on the young criminals,” but they did not comment on the judge’s sex.⁶⁸ Scholars tend to consider Lewis’s attitudes toward women as unfortunate and uncharacteristic of his normal disposition. Lewis’s criticism of the presiding judge focused on her judicial philosophy rather than her sex, so drawing broader conclusions

⁶³ Lewis, “Equality,” in *Present Concerns*, 9.

⁶⁴ Lewis, “Modern Man and His Categories of Thought,” in *Present Concerns*, 75.

⁶⁵ Lewis, “Modern Man,” 76.

⁶⁶ Grayson Quay, “The Time C. S. Lewis Went Full ‘Get Off My Lawn,’” *The American Conservative*, February 10, 2020.

⁶⁷ Como, *Branches to Heaven*, 172.

⁶⁸ Dyer and Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics*, 98.

about Lewis's views on women in authority from this single case would exceed the textual evidence.

Dyer and Watson likewise moderated Lewis's views about women's effect on men's conversations. In a section about an essay by Lewis entitled "Modern Man and His Categories of Thought," they softened Lewis's indictment of "the emancipation of women."⁶⁹ They argued that the essay gives "a good synopsis of Lewis' views on modernity," possibly excluding his "thoughts on the emancipation of women."⁷⁰ In a footnote, Dyer and Watson asserted that Lewis "probably ... would have repudiated" his opposition to women's emancipation "later in his life" because of his relationship with Joy Davidman Gresham and his philosophical dispute with Elizabeth Anscombe. While this speculation is unprovable, it reflects the tension between Lewis's theoretical positions and his practical relationships with women who actively engaged in the academic and literary world. They note only the reflection that "the presence of women among men would impair the masculine mind's 'disinterested concern with truth for the truth's sake,'" but this description misses the vigor of Lewis's original presentation.⁷¹ Lewis did not argue, however, for a reversal of women's emancipation; he likely wanted to find a solution to women's emancipation through groups like the Inklings, which were exclusively male.

Lewis wrote "Modern Man and his Categories of Thought" for Bishop Stephen Neill, who wanted to understand the current obstacles to evangelism, but the discussion also gave practical considerations for reforming modern life, especially regarding feminism. The essay expresses the danger of women occupying male spaces. As women become freer, men become less free to be *by themselves*. Since "men like men better than women like women," unrestrained women will choose to spend more time with men, resulting in "fewer exclusively male assemblies."⁷² As more places include men and women, sexual instincts replace philosophical wonder, and thus young men engage in less "serious argument about ideas."⁷³ In mixed-sex spaces, the enjoyment of "wit, banter, persiflage, and anecdote" replaces "prolonged and rigorous discussion on ultimate issues," causing a "lowering of metaphysical

⁶⁹ Dyer and Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics*, 106.

⁷⁰ Dyer and Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics*, 106.

⁷¹ Dyer and Watson, *C. S. Lewis on Politics*, 106.

⁷² Lewis, "Modern Man," 75.

⁷³ Lewis, "Modern Man," 75.

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energy” and a declining concern “with truth for truth’s own sake.”⁷⁴ Not only do conversations become less serious, but Lewis noted that women’s concerns prevail in conversations:

The only serious questions now discussed are those which seem to have a ‘practical’ importance (i.e., the psychological and sociological problems), for these satisfy the intense practicality and concreteness of the female. That is, no doubt, her glory and her proper contribution to the common wisdom of the race. But the proper glory of the masculine mind, its disinterested concern with truth for truth’s own sake, with the cosmic and the metaphysical, is being impaired.⁷⁵

Women’s emancipation means men’s mental restraint—their separation “from the eternal” and enslavement to the “immediate and quotidian.”⁷⁶ The increased mixing of the sexes also causes problems for both men and women because it focuses too much energy on sexuality. In a letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, Lewis commented on how modern attitudes toward sexuality have worsened relations between the sexes. In earlier times, men and women could associate with each other without worrying about courting, but in the modern world the proper ages for courtship have gotten both too young and too old:

Yes, I too think there is lots to be said for being no longer young; and I do most heartily agree that it is just as well to be past the age when one expects or desires to attract the other sex. It’s natural enough in our species, as in others, that the young birds [should] show off their plumage—in the mating season. But the trouble in the modern world is that there’s a tendency to rush all the birds on to that age as soon as possible and then keep them there as late as possible, thus losing all the real value of the other parts of life in a senseless, pitiful attempt to prolong what, after all, is neither its wisest, its happiest, or most innocent period. I suspect merely commercial motives are behind it all: for it is at the showing-off age that birds of both sexes have least sales-resistance!⁷⁷

When men and women cannot have time alone, their intellectual strength wanes, their instincts reign, and they are prone to advertising; all these changes make them less concerned with “the other parts of life,” including art, literature, politics, and other liberal inquiries that release humans from the narrow ideological lens of the modern state.

⁷⁴ Lewis, “Modern Man,” 76.

⁷⁵ Lewis, “Modern Man,” 76.

⁷⁶ Lewis, “Modern Man,” 76.

⁷⁷ Lewis to Mary Willis Shelburne, August 1, 1953, in *Collected Letters*, 3:352.

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While Lewis defended male headship in marriage as necessary for family unity and external relations, he did not explicitly extend this argument to politics. Any connection between his domestic and political theory remains speculative. One of his lengthiest and clearest discussions of marriage came in a letter to Mary Neylan. In a point titled, “The *Headship* of the Man,” Lewis argued that the man and woman’s union implies a headship, that both Scripture and nature point to the husband as the natural and divinely ordained head, that wives do not truly desire authority over their husbands, that wives’ authority over their husbands would not produce good results, and that the headship of husbands does not imply tyrannical rule. Lewis began the section with an apology for having to speak plainly on a sensitive topic during a time of increasing women’s liberation: “I’m sorry about this—and I feel that my defence of it [would] be more convincing if I were a woman.”⁷⁸ Then, he rejected the egalitarian view of marriage as a partnership of equals:

You see, of course, that if marriage is a permanent relation, intended to produce a kind of new organism (‘the one flesh’) there must be a Head. It’s only so long as you make it a temporary arrangement dependent on ‘being in love’ and changeable by frequent divorce, that it can be strictly democratic—for, on that view, when they really differ, they part. But if they are not to part, if the thing is like a nation not a club, like an organism not a heap of stones, then, in the long run, one party or other must have the casting vote.⁷⁹

Lewis relied on several beliefs about marriage that “the majority of the British people” did not accept because they are not Christians.⁸⁰ Beyond Britain, “most contemporary States” rejected Christianity and particularly Christian sexual ethics.⁸¹ Instead, they believed in a “right to happiness,” a right to remain faithful to marriage vows only as long as both parties remain “in love,” defined narrowly as a continued feeling of intense erotic attraction.⁸² Against the opinion that marriage lasts only as long as the parties continue “being in love,” Lewis argued that the sacrament of marriage creates a new creature.⁸³ A marriage must have a method to resolve disputes. A dual headship would destroy the marriage’s unity.

⁷⁸ Lewis to Mary Neylan, April 18, 1940, in *Collected Letters*, 2:394.

⁷⁹ Lewis to Neylan, April 18, 1940, in *Collected Letters*, 2:394.

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 112.

⁸¹ Lewis, “The Humanitarian Theory,” 499.

⁸² Lewis, “We Have No ‘Right to Happiness,’” *God in the Dock*, in *Timeless Writings*, 516.

⁸³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 110.

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Furthermore, a marriage with the wife as the head, Lewis suggested, would not accord with nature, or even with women's natural inclinations:

That [the need for unity] being so, do you really want the Head to be the woman? In a particular instance, no doubt you may. But do you really want a matriarchal world? Do you really like women in authority? When you seek authority yourself, do you naturally seek it in a woman?⁸⁴

Lewis argued that male headship is logically necessary for a two-person association to function, that Scripture, reason, and nature point to the male as the head of the relationship, and that women's own feelings do not truly incline them to rule over their husbands.

In *The Taste for the Other*, Gilbert Meilaender summarized the first part of Lewis's argument against female headship in marriage by stating that Lewis thought "women themselves do not wish to be head."⁸⁵ Whether wives desire to be the heads of their households is "a purely empirical question," and "the opinion of women" might "have changed since Lewis wrote those lines."⁸⁶ In the letter to Mary Neylan, Lewis questioned whether she *naturally* sought female authority, and thus he based his claim on nature, not merely on wives' opinions. In *Mere Christianity*, where Lewis made the same argument, he wrote: "There must be something *unnatural* about the rule of wives over husbands, because the wives themselves are half ashamed of it and despise the husbands whom they rule."⁸⁷ The question of women's desire to rule over their husbands does not depend on "social conditions, which are certainly subject to change," as Meilaender suggested.⁸⁸ Even if women increasingly want to rule in marriage, the household, or politics, the growth of the desire does not make it right to exercise, good for the marriages, beneficial for nation, or even pleasant for women. Meilaender wrote that the "husband's headship is grounded in biblical revelation as well as in the character of human sexuality," yet the husband's headship is not based on "merit or worthiness" but on "the requirements of self-giving love" and "the dance of obedience."⁸⁹ The man's rule over the woman, however, is not simply to demonstrate "the

⁸⁴ Lewis to Neylan, April 18, 1940, in *Collected Letters Vol. 2*.

⁸⁵ Gilbert Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 146.

⁸⁶ Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other*, 145-46.

⁸⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 113 [emphasis added].

⁸⁸ Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other*, 147.

⁸⁹ Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other*, 157-58.

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hierarchical principle.”⁹⁰ Certainly, Meilaender can emphasize the “opaque and mysterious” qualities of hierarchy, but the argument for the husband’s headship does not require a diversion into the abstract metaphysics of the eternal masculine and the eternal feminine. It is much simpler than that. As Lewis wrote, husbands naturally rule over their wives because it will be good for the family and the nation:

Your phrase about the ‘slave-wife’ is mere rhetoric, because it assumes servile subordination to be the only kind of subordination. Aristotle [could] have taught you better. ‘The householder governs his slaves despotically. He governs his wife and children as being both free—but he governs the children as a constitutional monarch, and the wife politically’ (i.e. as a democratic magistrate governs a democratic citizen).

My own feeling is that the Headship of the husband is necessary to protect the outer world against the family. The female has a strong instinct to fight for its cubs. What do nine women out of ten care about justice to the outer world when the health, or career, or happiness of their own children is at stake? That is why I want a ‘foreign policy’ of the family, so to speak, to be determined by the man: I expect more mercy from him!

Yet this fierce maternal instinct must be preserved, otherwise the enormous sacrifices involved in motherhood [would] never be borne. The Christian scheme, therefore, does not suppress it but protects us defenceless bachelors from its worst ravages! This, however, is only my own idea.⁹¹

In the context of marriage, females typically do not relate to the outer world within the framework of equal and impartial justice to all.⁹² Lewis does not see this instinctual preference for one’s own as inherently bad. Rather, it is good that wives and mothers prefer their own husbands and children, even to the point of acting unjustly toward outsiders: “A woman is primarily fighting for her own children and husband against the rest of the world. Naturally, almost, in a sense, rightly, their claims override, for her, all other claims. She is the special trustee of their interests.”⁹³ Lewis employed a similar line of reasoning in *Mere Christianity*, and it is worth reiterating:

The function of the husband is to see that this natural preference of hers is not given its head. He has the last word in order to protect other people from the intense family patriotism of the wife. If anyone doubts this, let me ask a simple question. If your dog has bitten the child next door, or if your child has hurt the dog next door, which would you sooner have to deal with, the master of that house or the mistress? Or, if you are a

⁹⁰ Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other*, 158.

⁹¹ Lewis to Neylan, April 18, 1940, in *Collected Letters*, 2:395.

⁹² Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 114.

⁹³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 114.

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married woman, let me ask you this question. Much as you admire your husband, would you not say that his chief failing is his tendency not to stick up for his rights and yours against the neighbours as vigorously as you would like? A bit of an Appeaser?⁹⁴

Wives and mothers rightly and naturally prefer their own within the context of the household. Lewis did not explicitly apply this argument to political life, but it is necessary to rightly order the household—the strongest source of natural authority outside the state—to ensure that society and state function well. The recovery of traditional family structures represents an essential component of resistance to technocratic rule because strong families provide alternative sources of authority and meaning that could compete with the state’s claim to manage all aspects of human life.

SPIRITED RESISTANCE TO EVIL

The transformation of the British government into a technocracy stemmed from the complacency of a non-believing public. Lewis believed the people’s passivity could result in a complacent, slavish society or an unrestrained, resentful, and violent mob. In *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis claimed that Western society in its present state should fear the risks from continued passivity more than those from an increased hatred of injustice.

Lewis discussed the Jewish “spirit of hatred,” which could serve as an antidote to the British people’s excessive tolerance of injustice.⁹⁵ The anger, resentment, and hatred in the Jewish Psalms participate, according to Lewis, in something better than the toleration of evil: the recognition “that there is in the world such a thing as wickedness and that it is ... hateful to God.”⁹⁶ When the Jews see evil and rage erupts in them, they come much closer to God’s understanding of and feelings toward evil than the Pagans, who did not feel as “vindictive and vitriolic” toward evil and injustice as the Jews.⁹⁷ Yet, Lewis thought that the Jews, because their feelings more properly aligned with the hatred of evil, could fall into “bitter personal vindictiveness,” a “profoundly wrong” and lower sin than mere moral indifference.⁹⁸ Christians cannot condone that “festering, gloating, undisguised” hatred, but they can learn

⁹⁴ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 114.

⁹⁵ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2017), 23.

⁹⁶ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 38.

⁹⁷ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 32.

⁹⁸ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 30, 34.

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from hatred that is fierce in due proportion to an act's wickedness.⁹⁹ In an essay written around the same time, called *The Psalms*, Lewis called all "resentment ... wicked" and sinful.¹⁰⁰ The Pagans, by comparison, did not respond as strongly to evil and injustice. Their sentiments did not recognize the height of God's moral law, and thus they felt neither the proper moral outrage against evil nor fell victim to that outrage's improper manifestation. The Pagan sentiments toward evil failed to align with God and the moral law's perfect expectations, so their response to it never reached the Jewish depths of resentment. Lewis praised the Pagans' freedom from vindictiveness as "good in itself" but not a "good symptom" because it reveals moral indifference.¹⁰¹ The Jews had a clearer moral vision and "took right and wrong more seriously."¹⁰² The British people, having lost the Christian faith and the belief in right and wrong, needed a renewed moral center so that injustice would arouse them to action.

Walsh viewed the book as a commentary on the "spiritual use" of the Psalms.¹⁰³ The lengthy discussions of sin, hatred, and violence led Walsh to the conclusion that the "hideous Psalms ... help us to recognize the vicious emotions inside ourselves. This is therapeutic. We come to know ourselves better."¹⁰⁴ The thing Lewis wanted to avoid, according to Walsh, was letting the "surface meaning" of the Psalms "seduce people into sub-Christian states of mind."¹⁰⁵ These are states of mind where Christians hate evil with such conviction that they plot to destroy it. The thing Lewis wanted to convey, according to Walsh, was that "hate" is "most often the by-product of oppressive relations between individuals, classes, or nations. Such Psalms may teach us to see the consequences of our own manipulation and domination of others."¹⁰⁶ Walsh read *Reflections on the Psalms* as a therapeutic text meant to reveal authoritarian personalities and get them to explore and then reject their oppressive tendencies, but the work is a galvanizing text meant to rouse potential rulers to action.

The Jewish people's historically unique emphasis on hatred had an unexpected corollary: a pre-Christian ethic that commanded love for one's enemies. Lewis thought that the Greeks

⁹⁹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, "The Psalms," from *Christian Reflections*, in *Timeless Writings*, 257.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 33.

¹⁰² Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 35.

¹⁰³ Walsh, *The Literary Legacy*, 223.

¹⁰⁴ Walsh, *The Literary Legacy*, 223.

¹⁰⁵ Walsh, *The Literary Legacy*, 223.

¹⁰⁶ Walsh, *The Literary Legacy*, 223-24.

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and Romans lacked both the depths of Jewish hatred and the height of Jewish charity and humility. He quoted Proverbs 25:21, which foreshadows Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38-42: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."¹⁰⁷ A connection exists between Jewish righteousness and sinfulness. They exhibit "a cruelty more vindictive and a self-righteousness more complete" and more "fanatic and homicidal" tendencies "than anything in the classics," yet they "reach a Christian level of spirituality."¹⁰⁸ The descent into zealous hatred makes possible an ascent into charity. Their longing for justice, in some sense, must come out alongside murderous rage.

The Jews did not always respond to evil with appeals to reason; instead, the Jews forced evil men and nations to stop their wicked deeds. When faced with evil, the Jews turned to judges, a word which Lewis said "might also be rendered 'champions;' for though these judges do sometimes perform what we should call judicial functions many of them are much more concerned with rescuing the oppressed Israelites from Philistines and others by force of arms."¹⁰⁹ At some point, force must suppress evil, but men will not destroy evildoers if their misaligned sentiments never incline them to hate evil. Lewis wrote that the "knights in romances of chivalry who go about rescuing distressed damsels and widows from giants and other tyrants are acting almost as 'judges' in the old Hebrew sense: so is the modern solicitor ... who does unpaid work for poor clients to save them from wrong."¹¹⁰ Charity must guide Christians' proper responses to evil, but Lewis sought to revive a core component of ancient and medieval charity: the need for champions, judges, and knights who fight evil and restore justice. The British stopped celebrating knights who would disarm criminals and tyrants and instead placed their trust in technocrats who would prescribe remedies and plans to cure social ills.

Good men cannot express righteous hatred in the modern world, a condition that Lewis thought revealed moral decline and portended worse atrocities and injustices. He wrote that in "Ancient and oriental cultures ... Hatred did not need to be disguised for the sake of social decorum or for fear anyone would accuse you of a neurosis."¹¹¹ In an article on punishment

¹⁰⁷ Proverbs 25:21 (KJV).

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, "Psalms," 254.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 14-15.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 15. Lewis's father, Albert James Lewis, was a solicitor.

¹¹¹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 26.

and the natural law, Koritansky defended the idea that humans should feel angry when they see injustice. He wrote, “Aquinas considers the irascible, angry, or indignant response to injustice not as something to be overcome, but as something morally instructive in itself.”¹¹² According to Koritansky’s presentation of Aquinas, the inclination to feel angry about injustice is as natural as “the inclinations to eat, drink, and have sex.”¹¹³ In post-Freudian Britain, the mental health professionals had debunked all anger, hatred, and resentment as an irrational overflow from repressed sexual drives. Righteous moral indignation lost its place among the legitimate responses to wickedness; medicinal cures, behavioral correctives, and psychological therapies tried to eliminate or at least suppress the spirited soul’s desire to destroy evil. Lewis feared that “the spirit which cries for justice may be dying out.”¹¹⁴ He insisted that the Jewish “spark” that identifies and despises evil “should be fanned, not trodden out.”¹¹⁵

Lewis did not believe that righteous hatred—now treated as a disease—had disappeared in Britain or the West, but that the psychologists created a new, real repression. By debunking spirited opposition to evil, they repressed “hatred undisguised,” the “*natural* result of injuring a human being.”¹¹⁶ Human nature cannot tolerate evil, and men cannot hide their anger forever because “the natural result of cheating a man, or ‘keeping him down’, or neglecting him, is to arouse resentment.”¹¹⁷ Hatred emerges in the downtrodden because the unjust man “tempted them ... seduced, debauched them.”¹¹⁸ Although excess resentment makes men “devilish,” Lewis said, “we must also think of those who made them so”:

Their hatreds are the reaction to something. Such hatreds are the kind of thing that cruelty and injustice, by a sort of natural law, produce. This, among other things, is what wrong-doing means. Take from a man his freedom or his goods and you may have taken his innocence, almost his humanity, as well.¹¹⁹

¹¹² Koritansky, “Retributive Justice and Natural Law,” 433.

¹¹³ Koritansky, “Retributive Justice and Natural Law,” 434.

¹¹⁴ Lewis, “Psalms,” 258.

¹¹⁵ Lewis, “Psalms,” 259.

¹¹⁶ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 14.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 14-15.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, “Psalms,” 257.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 14-15.

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The natural response to injury and injustice—which Christ’s grace can temper—cannot be “disguised by self-deception” except by creating a “dangerous” situation. The danger comes from the buildup of surplus resentment, though Lewis would never earnestly use such clinical terminology. The “world of savage punishments, of massacre and violence, of blood sacrifice in all countries and human sacrifice in many” had not vanished from the Earth, according to Lewis, but had become “far more subtle,” and men are still “blood-brothers to these ferocious, self-pitying, barbaric men.”¹²⁰ Some men may let their resentment build until they become “really fiendish” or “an Inquisitor” or “a member of the Committee of Public Safety” and thus willing “to die for a cause” and “to kill for it.”¹²¹ Lewis predicted that repressed hatred would weaken man’s moral conscience, dam the spirit’s natural response to evil, and cause resentment to fester. The continued Western discipline of disguising hatred would make violent revolution more likely, but a return to undisguised, even public, hatred would contribute to the suppression of crime and tyranny.

An example demonstrates Lewis’s fear of the consequences of disguised hatred. He believed that it would let deception and tyranny reign. Lewis recounted a conversation that he had during “the Second War in a compartment full of young soldiers”:

Their conversation made it clear that they totally disbelieved all that they had read in the papers about the wholesale cruelties of the Nazi *régime*. They took it for granted, without argument, that this was all lies, all propaganda put out by our own government to ‘pep up’ our troops. And the shattering thing was that, believing this, they expressed not the slightest anger. That our rulers should falsely attribute the worst of crimes to some of their fellow-men in order to induce others of their fellow-men to shed their blood seemed to them a matter of course. They weren’t even particularly interested. They saw nothing wrong in it.¹²²

The great defect in Britain’s young men is their withered spirit, not excessive rage against injustice. The men did not see the “diabolical wickedness” in their rulers, recognize it as such, and forgive them nonetheless, which would have made them “saints.”¹²³ Instead, they saw it as “ordinary” or did not “perceive it at all,” and resentment did not even tempt them. In an article titled “Private Bates,” Lewis told a similar story about British soldiers who

¹²⁰ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 27.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 32.

¹²² Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 34.

¹²³ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 34.

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complied with their orders in World War II despite their belief that the government had lied to them about the enemy:

In the last few years I have spent a great many hours in third-class railway carriages (or corridors) crowded with servicemen. I have shared, to some extent, the shock. I found that nearly all these men disbelieved without hesitation everything that the newspapers said about German cruelties in Poland. They did not think the matter worth discussion: they said the one word ‘Propaganda’ and passed on. This did not shock me: what shocked me was the complete absence of indignation. They believe that their rulers are doing what I take to be the most wicked of all actions—sowing the seeds of future cruelties by telling lies about cruelties that were never committed. But they feel no indignation: it seems to them the sort of procedure one would expect.¹²⁴

Lewis believed that their “terrifying insensibility” proved that the young men “had no conception of good and evil whatsoever.”¹²⁵ British men had lost their connection to both the natural law and the “Supernatural,” which “opens” a “human soul ... to new possibility both of good and evil.”¹²⁶ A great danger exists in the modern sentiment that treats tolerance of evil as an outgrowth of “Christian charity.”¹²⁷ The Psalmists’ “relentlessness” against perceived wickedness comes “far nearer to one side of the truth” and closer to “sanity” than the “total moral indifference of the young soldiers” and the “pseudo-scientific tolerance which reduces all wickedness to neurosis.”¹²⁸

Lewis contrasted the British and Jewish attitudes toward evil and argued that the former’s passivity portends greater political disasters than the latter’s open aggression. Lewis quoted several verses in which the Jews “hated” their enemies, “hated” idolaters, felt “hate” for those who “hate thee, Lord,” and felt “hate” for God’s enemies.¹²⁹ The emphasis on hate “is an extremely dangerous, almost a fatal, game,” but, without it, society cannot preserve itself in moral virtue and peace.¹³⁰ The Jews could overcome their hatred with the advent of Christ’s grace, with the “Light which has lightened every man from the beginning,” and the British must return to Christ and their consciences to recover the right responses to evil.¹³¹ British

¹²⁴ Lewis, “Private Bates,” 54.

¹²⁵ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 34.

¹²⁶ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 36.

¹²⁷ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 37.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 37.

¹²⁹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 77.

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 78.

¹³¹ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 31.

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society eliminated ancient social conventions, like the once-obvious duty to prevent “a rascal,” “a liar,” a “tyrannical Jack-in-office,” a wife-beater, and a “celebrity” with “a most vile and mischievous life” from entering into respectable circles. Psychologists debunked irrational moral discrimination and exclusion, leading to “the general rule in modern society ... that no one refuses to meet any of these people and to behave towards them in the friendliest and most cordial manner.”¹³² Lewis warned that a society in which “rascality undergoes no social penalty” cannot be “healthy.”¹³³ Social exclusion should extend only to “‘very bad people’ who are powerful, prosperous, and impenitent,” not to “‘very bad people’” who are lowly like those to whom Christ ministered.¹³⁴ Lewis summarized the “new man” in Britain who had suppressed all open displays of hatred: “Like the psalmists he can hate, but he does not, like the psalmists, thirst for justice.”¹³⁵ Whereas the Jewish society may have had excessive outbursts of righteous anger, the British society will have nothing but passive aggression until wickedness reaches cataclysmic levels.

With tolerance and passivity as the sacred values of a scientifically planned society, British citizens would not immediately redress evils. They would not prevent them from cascading into civilizational threats. Lewis questioned whether “the great evil of our civil life” might be “the fact that there seems now no medium between hopeless submission and full-dress revolution. Rioting has died out, moderate rioting. It can be argued that if the windows of various ministries and newspapers were more often broken, if certain people were more often put under pumps and (mildly—mud not stones) pelted in the streets, we should get on a great deal better.”¹³⁶ Lewis thought the British people should stop letting a man receive “the pleasures of a tyrant or a wolf’s-head and also those of an honest freeman among equals.”¹³⁷ Reinigorating society’s men with spirited anger and resistance would come with “very great ... dangers,” but “the present tameness” threatens “very great ... evils.”

¹³² Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79.

¹³³ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79.

¹³⁴ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 80.

¹³⁵ Lewis, “Psalms,” 258.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79.

¹³⁷ Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79.

FRIENDSHIP AGAINST THE NEW OLIGARCHY

In addition to righteous anger, the British citizens needed friendships that would help them to resist the regime’s culture and build small, local centers of culture and political power. Lewis argued that pockets of friendship must oppose the technocracy. He wrote that friendship is “like an aristocracy” that creates a “vacuum across which no voice will carry.”¹³⁸ The first benefit of friendship is that it drowns out expert opinions and allows interests to develop organically. “Every real Friendship is a sort of secession, even a rebellion,” Lewis wrote.¹³⁹ This is “why Authority frowns on Friendship.”¹⁴⁰ To guard against the pride that comes with this rebellion, friendships must form from natural affection. As Lewis wrote, “We seek men after our own heart for their own sake and are then alarmingly or delightfully surprised by the feeling that we have become an aristocracy.”¹⁴¹ A friendship founded on shared interests and passions raises men to the “level of gods or angels.” Friendship approaches a type of divine political independence that acts as “almost” man’s “strongest safeguard against complete servitude.”¹⁴² Lewis even acknowledged that certain “forms of democratic sentiment are naturally hostile to it [friendship] because it is selective and an affair of the few.”¹⁴³ For this reason, scientifically planned states want to prohibit friendship “by force or by propaganda about ‘Togetherness’ or by unobtrusively making privacy and unplanned leisure impossible.”¹⁴⁴ Friendship serves as a “rebellion” against or “secession” from technocratic tyranny.

In “Lilies That Fester,” Lewis described the resistance to the elite in similar terms. The elite uses “*culture*,” an amorphous term that signifies the “art of simulating the orthodox responses.” Those who can imitate the right responses can join the elite. But Lewis considered culture “a bad qualification for a ruling class because it does not qualify men to rule.”¹⁴⁵ Instead, rulers need “mercy, financial integrity, practical intelligence, hard work, and the like.”¹⁴⁶ Lewis warned against indifference to the culture of the ruling class: “I don’t want

¹³⁸ Lewis, *Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1991), 82.

¹³⁹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 80.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 80.

¹⁴¹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 83.

¹⁴² Lewis, *Four Loves*, 59, 80.

¹⁴³ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 80.

¹⁴⁵ Lewis, “Lilies That Fester,” in *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, 45, 49.

¹⁴⁶ Lewis, “Lilies That Fester,” 49.

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retreat; I want attack or, if you prefer the word, rebellion.”¹⁴⁷ To attack the elite, men as individuals and as friends must free themselves from the “educational machine,” pursue “unsponsored, uninspected, perhaps even forbidden, readings,” and refuse the temptation to make “the right responses to the right authors.”¹⁴⁸ He called on “Christians” as well as “atheists and agnostics” to defy the elite culture that hates friendship and free minds because “it is going to strangle all those things unless we can strangle it first. And there is no time to spare.”¹⁴⁹

The restoration of law and order depends on the removal of the psychoanalytic elite and the inauguration of a new ruling class adhering to the traditional view of justice, but Lewis asserted that it might also require the English people’s willingness to punish their rulers. The retributive theory of justice demands a belief that crime deserves punishment, according to the law of nature, and that public opinion should shape the government’s concept of just deserts. Lewis thought that the English ruling class—“the intellectuals”—had abandoned the first requirement: “As a result, classical political theory, with its Stoical, Christian, and juristic key-conceptions (natural law, the value of the individual, the rights of man), has died.”¹⁵⁰ Right opinions about justice depend upon a well-educated elite, but the elite has abandoned traditional morality. The people’s ordinary judgment about right and wrong can help keep elite opinion within its bounds, but a new ruling class must be the driving force.

In his article on “Democratic Education,” Lewis wrote that education must primarily aim to teach “the boy who wants to know and who can know,” i.e., the spirited and intelligent children.¹⁵¹ Without their guidance, the people’s opinions about justice cannot save the nation. Democratic education “must, in a certain sense, subordinate the interests of the many to those of the few” so that it can “be a nursery of those first-class intellects without which neither a democracy nor any other State can thrive.”¹⁵² Returning to retributive justice and traditional morality demands the formation of new opinions in the ruling class or the creation of a new ruling class; a populist uprising by itself cannot save a democratic nation. The technocracy rejected the concept of just punishment and replaced it with expert treatment,

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, “Lilies That Fester,” 51.

¹⁴⁸ Lewis, “Lilies That Fester,” 43, 46.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, “Lilies That Fester,” 46.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis, “Is Progress Possible?,” 514.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, “Democratic Education,” in *Present Concerns*, 34.

¹⁵² Lewis, “Democratic Education,” 34–35.

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so neither the natural law nor the people's opinions about punishment could enter into the government's criminal proceedings. "On the old view," Lewis wrote, "public opinion might protest against a punishment (it protested against our old penal code) as excessive, more than the man 'deserved'; an ethical question on which anyone might have an opinion. But a remedial treatment can be judged only by the probability of its success; a technical question on which only experts can speak."¹⁵³ To remain faithful to its own principles, England's ruling class must ignore the people's protests and act upon its superior technical judgment. The people must either accept that their views do not merit the government's consideration, or they must find a new way to force the English oligarchy to obey the conscience of the people. A popular uprising against the ruling class can only be a starting point; eventually, the ruling class must transform its education and its opinions to give the state a chance to survive.

Lewis's scattered comments on political restoration suggest a preference for hierarchy over populism. While he believed that ordinary citizens retained natural moral reasoning about justice, he argued that lasting political change required intellectual leadership from a properly formed elite. Popular resistance could provide the moral energy and legitimacy for change, but without educated leadership committed to natural law principles, such resistance would either fail or devolve into the same problems it sought to address. The goal was not to replace expert rule with mob rule, but to restore the proper relationship between moral reasoning and technical expertise, with natural law (individual rights, just deserts, equality under the law, the rule of law, etc.) providing the framework within which experts could legitimately operate. The creation of a new aristocracy, which emerges from friendships that rebel from the regime's influences, is essential to that goal.

THE APOCALYPSE AND THE LIMITS OF POLITICS

Some of Lewis' writings include statements against tyrants and hooligans that sound violent and revolutionary. The view I have presented of Lewis might call into question his reputation as a political moderate. But his warnings against violent revolution are not insincere caveats. Lewis persistently opposed utopian revolution because he believed in Christ. In "The

¹⁵³ Lewis, "Is Progress Possible?," 513.

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World's Last Night," Lewis wrote that the doctrine of Christ's speedy and unpredictable return should discourage revolutionary political projects:

I can imagine no man who will look with more horror on the End than a conscientious revolutionary who has, in a sense sincerely, been justifying cruelties and injustices inflicted on millions of his contemporaries by the benefits which he hopes to confer on future generations: generations who, as one terrible moment now reveals to him, were never going to exist. Then he will see the massacres, the faked trials, the deportations, to be all ineffaceably real, an essential part, his part, in the drama that has just ended: while the future Utopia had never been anything but a fantasy.¹⁵⁴

Lewis's reasoning runs into the difficulty that the most fervent revolutionaries often reject the supernatural realm, the apocalypse, and the life of the world to come, hence their desire to precipitate violent regime change that brings heaven on earth. Atheist revolutionaries also deny Christ's final judgment of the world, so they believe that they risk nothing when committing crimes to bring about their ideal regime in which technology or a new political organization finally overcomes perennial human problems, such as exploitation, inequality, and poverty. Lewis argued against utopian revolutions based on the doctrine of the apocalypse, which constrains proper political action to a nearer horizon. There is no point in laying schemes to forcefully transform society. There is, however, a reason for organizing to stop the schemes of technocrats: the moral law and Christian duty demand it, and their rule will harm individuals, families, churches, and nations.

These reflections on the apocalypse would not restrain committed materialists, but a belief in the doctrine of the apocalypse should discourage Christians from pursuing utopian schemes. Lewis explained the proper Christian life that always keeps in mind an imminent yet unknowable end of the universe:

Frantic administration of panaceas to the world is certainly discouraged by the reflection that "this present" might be "the world's last night"; sober work for the future, within the limits of ordinary morality and prudence, is not. For what comes is Judgment: happy are those whom it finds labouring in their vocations, whether they were merely going out to feed the pigs or laying good plans to deliver humanity a hundred years hence from some great evil. The curtain has indeed now fallen. Those pigs will never in fact be fed, the great campaign against White Slavery or Governmental Tyranny will never in fact proceed to victory. No matter; you were at your post when the Inspection came.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Lewis, "The World's Last Night," in *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, 119-20.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis, "The World's Last Night," 120.

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While the prospect of the apocalypse and judgment should keep Christians focused on preserving good government, utopian revolutionaries pursue their pseudo-religious longing to transform society. The doctrine of the apocalypse puts Christians in a defensive posture, but they can plan ahead to thwart “great evil.” They can foresee prospective tyranny—as Lewis witnessed, envisioned, and then warned against a growing scientific tyranny—and lay the groundwork for counterrevolution against it. And Christians can offer the everyday goods of politics: a decent moral order, a military capable of defending the nation, and a government that punishes crime and protects the innocent. They pursue a government that manages and suppresses, but never eliminates, the permanent problems caused by the Fall.

Christians seemingly find themselves at a political disadvantage. These conventional political aspirations look pale in comparison to the utopian promises of communism or scientifically planned democracy. The hope of the end of injustice arouses revolutionary devotion, but men rarely conspire to bring about the competent administration of justice, the adherence to the rule of law, or other ordinary political aims. In a preface to *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, Lewis wrote, “Every revolt against existing civilisation and conventions whether it look forward to revolution, or backward to the ‘primitive’ is called ‘romantic’ by some people.”¹⁵⁶ He described Rousseau as an advocate of a “romantic” revolution that would restore mankind to its natural goodness. Communism allures prospective revolutionaries with its romantic vision of a stateless and classless society, and it keeps them with an assurance of the revolution’s inevitable success.¹⁵⁷ In arguing with communists, Lewis found that “they tend, when all else fails, to tell me that I ought to forward the revolution because ‘it is bound to come’. One dissuaded me from my own position on the shockingly irrelevant ground that if I continued to hold it I should, in good time, be ‘mown down’—argued, as a cancer might argue if it could talk, that he must be right because he could kill me.”¹⁵⁸ Romantic revolutionary dreams are inadmissible for Christians, yet the type of counterrevolution that Lewis described feels romantic in the sense that he calls Christians back to the political model of the knight, the judge, and the champion.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, in *Timeless Writings*, 156.

¹⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, 156.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis, “A Reply to Professor Haldane,” 106.

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Lewis thought that Christians should pursue ordinary goods in politics—morality, peace, and happiness—while they remain vigilant against tyranny and prepare to resist it. The necessity of being moderate and defensive, however, does not imply inactivity or indifference; instead, the opponents of tyranny must collaborate and machinate, not to spark a revolution, but to hatch “good plans to deliver humanity a hundred years hence from some great evil.”¹⁵⁹ For Lewis, these plans imply constant counterrevolutionary activity. In modern times, Lewis’s Christian counterrevolution would reverse the technocratic revolution by restoring property rights, opposing unjust wars, reviving spirited anger, reading good books with friends, resisting the culture’s education, and by pursuing other simple, though neglected, goals. Cognizant of the moral and prudential limits of politics, Christians must perform the commonplace work of punishing crime and preserving order while conspiring to derail current and future tyrannies.

CONCLUSION

This analysis reveals Lewis as a more sophisticated political observer than traditionally recognized, though one who never developed a systematic political philosophy. Lewis’s writings on crime, property rights, expert authority, and social order, when examined together, suggest a coherent set of concerns about the trajectory of modern politics rather than a set of explicit political reforms.

Lewis’s enduring insight lies in recognizing that a fundamental political question concerns the proper relationship between moral reasoning and technical expertise. His critique of what Samuel Francis would later term “anarcho-tyranny” anticipated contemporary debates about administrative overreach, criminal justice reform, the role of expert knowledge, the fallout from women’s emancipation and the sexual revolution, and the limits of political reform.

The counterrevolutionary elements that Lewis advocated—friendship as a form of cultural resistance, a return to a complementarian view of marriage, the cultivation of righteous anger against injustice, the defense of property rights, and the restoration of retributive justice—reflect an attempt to preserve space for moral judgment against the encroachment of purely technical solutions to human problems. His call for spirited

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, “The World’s Last Night,” 120.

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resistance was always tempered by Christian moderation and a recognition of the dangers inherent in both revolutionary violence and passive submission to tyranny.

Lewis's claim that expert authority would displace public moral judgment has proven prescient, even as the specific forms of expertise have evolved. Today, it is possible to say that expert authority has become a kind of public moral judgment. When the experts decree something, it is imperative to believe it as a sign of good character. Lewis's political writings, which are found in difficult-to-combine fragments, remind us, when considered on the whole, that the preservation of a free government, which rewards virtue and punishes vice, requires more than good procedures or enlightened policies; it demands citizens capable of righteous indignation, willing to form friendships that can resist intellectual, moral, or political submission.