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Pew College Society Student Conference

April 5th, 2003

The Magician's Bargain:

Science and Technology and The *Abolition of Man*

The war of truth has begun. We have not entered this war without warning. One of the major prophets to foretell it was none other than C.S. Lewis, who needs no introduction. In his book *The Abolition of Man*, he predicts the doom that is mankind's fate if the war of truth is lost. C.S. Lewis put forth a defense for the concept of Natural Law, or as he calls it the *Tao*, as the side to be allied with in the upcoming confrontation. He supports this side, not because its victory is certain, but because of what is at stake. Lewis feels nothing less than man's humanity is what is at stake. This book has its critics however. Many feel that Lewis is overly critical, even hatefully prejudiced against, Science and Technology. Lewis' views on Technology and Science are often misrepresented because of an ambiguity between the terms Technology and Science. A more careful interpretation of the text and the situation it describes makes Lewis' views less unclear.

The battle of truth, in which Lewis contends that

Science and Technology are major players, is based in the relationship between Fact and Value. The balance between these two concepts has shifted with the major idealistic shifts in point of view that our civilization has experienced. At first Value was strongly emphasized, then the focus of view changed to Fact. In our contemporary Post Modern society we have undercut the importance of both concepts. This belief in an objective natural truth and reality is what Lewis referred to as the *Tao*.

"Every civilization in human history has believed in the *Tao*. Ours is the first civilization in history that has abandoned the *Tao*, not just in practice (every civilization does that; it's called sin), but in theory, in belief. To the typically modern mind (and nothing more centrally defines the modern mind than this), objective reality no longer includes the moral dimension of good and evil. The "fact-value distinction" has become absolute. Facts do not include facts about values. Reality has been reduced to the scientific dimension of neutral, valueless fact. There is no longer anything outside ourselves and the products of our own minds to bow down to, conform to, or respect." (Kreeft 135)

This subjective point of view is contrary and unamicable to

the Scientific view. Science relies on the existence of an objective truth for it to discover. Without the truth to discover the pursuit of Science becomes unmotivated and really quite pointless. By denying this basic principle one turns Science from a tool of Rationality and Objectivity to a wonderful collection of superstitions. This returns us to the condition of the Pre-scientific Pre-Modern thinkers.

"Pre-Scientific ancients often made the mistake of trying to know the cosmos by intuition, myth, poetry, and mysticism instead of science. We moderns usually make the far deadlier error of trying to understand the self by science. They personalized the universe; we depersonalized the self. They thought even matter was spirit; we think even spirit is matter. They thought even things were persons; we think even persons are things. They worshipped the earth as the body of a god; we call psychology a science. Which mistake is more stupid and deadly?" (Kreeft 152-3)

The overemphasis of either Fact or Value has serious and deadly conclusions. The worth of Value is just as basic and necessary as Fact. While the Modern era regards the Pre-Scientific ancient as absurd in these theories it is

because of a basic conflict in worldview. The ancient here places his emphasis on value and the modern places his focus upon fact. Both extremes lead to problems. The Post Modern elevation of subjectivity undermines the importance of facts and values by destroying their objectivity, everything is subjective. Science depends on the absence of values to achieve its certainty. This undermines the whole of the object being analyzed. The values attached to the object are part of it. Oftentimes judgments are impossible to make without some use of values. Science attempts to be neutral but has a hidden set of values it can step back onto if needed, Naturalistic Scientism.

"Epistemologically, science depends upon a naturalistic philosophic presupposition that is linked with empiricism as the tool of verification. The method of naturalistic empiricism requires that we reduce nature to analyzable and manipulative quantities, suspend value judgments about it, and ignore its final cause. The fact is that this kind of ruthless analysis and abstraction leaves only an artificial object that is robbed of quality."

(Cunningham 47)

This leads to the disappearance of values, quality, and the intangible. Science, by placing all of it's faith in

empiricism, loses the very concept of faith. Nothing can have value without a distinct measurable quality attached to that value. Values become obsolete. While this purely Empirical Scientist feels that such things as values do not exist, there is no proof for him, Lewis felt very strongly about the concept of Objective Truth. If one looks at this circumstance from Lewis' point of view it is understandable why he feels so strongly about what is at stake. To Lewis it is this objective morality, the *Tao*, which separates the man from animals. The *Tao* is the cradle of man's humanity. "Animals are amoral; men are moral or immoral....Become amoral and you become a clever ape, which is what current Darwinian orthodoxy believes you are anyway." (Kreeft 137) By existing outside of the *Tao* man loses his humanity and becomes nothing more than a "trousered ape." This is the inevitable end Lewis sees to man's driven quest to conquer Nature. Man, through applied science, tries to master nature and when he feels that that is accomplished he will turn to next target, Human Nature. In conquering Human Nature man is conquered by Nature. In this situation in seems as if "freedom is slavery." This is the horrible doom Lewis predicts. That man in his wildly driven quest for the conquest of Creation he will lose everything. This is what Lewis has called the Abolition of Man.

The application of Science as a means to conquer Nature is what Lewis is so very much against. It is in this fashion that Science is a Abolitionist of Man. This form of Science however holds conflicting internal forces. Science is based upon finding the objective truth but in this quest for the conquest of Nature it is seeking not to discover the truth but to create it. The goals have changed. This is pointed out by Lewis in what Mr. Kreeft calls "the single most illuminating three sentences I have ever read about our civilization." (Kreeft 135)

"There is something which unites magic and applied science [i.e. technology] while separating both from the 'wisdom' of earlier ages. For the wise men of old, the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique." (Lewis 77)

The over application of a totally Faith/Value based View and a totally Reason/Fact based View are oddly the same. In the end Human Pride can turn the nobility of both astray. This can be seen in the progeny of both sides of the imbalance, Magic and Technology. Both of the progeny

take the original mission and flip it around, instead of discovering the nature of reality they seek to control it. It is this misuse of Science and Religion in this sort of view that Lewis is adamantly against. While Lewis has problems with Technology he has much admiration for Science. The difference is really in the motivation, goals, and point of view each has. It is really a difference in World View. Both acknowledge the same presuppositions initially but their differing views leads them apart. This is a magic Technology which is seeking to define the Truth instead of discover it. It is through this Technology, and not as we see Science, that Man is to be abolished. The destruction of values by this overarching subjectivity, which is necessary to recreate reality, will eat up mankind's humanity to fuel the fires of progress. Lewis is not against Science, though it may sound so. Rational thought seeking to discover the objective truth existent has a very important place in Lewis' mind. The tossing aside of value in order to seek the ability and power to redefine objective truth and reality is what Lewis fears will be our ultimate undoing. Lewis' critique of this Science comes in two points. First is a sort of "epistemological arrogance". Science has become all inclusive of the search for Truth. "...science

has been apotheosized in the twentieth century, and the popular scientific outlook accepts no limitations. Instead of being a way of knowing it becomes *the* way of knowing." (Cunningham 46) In our society we accept the irrational notion that a rational scientific method means of truth discovery is the sole tool for Epistemological Certainty. In this view there is no other way to understand anything for certain other than this method.

"That kind of epistemological arrogance leads to the unlimited application of science to all areas of life, including philosophy and religion. Modern science was tainted from its birth, Lewis contends, by the impulse to extend man's power to the performance of all possible things. Science shared with its twin brother, magic, the desire to subdue reality to the wishes of men. Increasingly the desire has been extended from the physical sciences to the biological, social, psychological, ethical, and now to the religious fields." (Cunningham 48)

This over application of Scientific Method is what causes the shift in point of view from Science to Technology. In applying this method of certainty to all fields of all things we undercut and annihilate the importance, the value, of Value. By this road we come to the Abolition of

Man. We have dangerously hindered our minds with this killing of Value. Without it we cannot conceive of the Tao. We lose all that quality, soul, intangibility of existence. Without Values we cannot perceive good or evil, we lose basis for action. Without the ability not only to perceive but to even just believe in the right and wrong thing to do how is one to decide what to do in any situation? This is the dilemma one feels without value. Lewis explained in his illustration of the man asked to die for his country the inability of rational action without a concept of right and wrong.

"Lewis states explicitly that he is not against science and technological development; nevertheless, he wants his audience to be aware that these things have their price. With more passion than consistency, he calls such development "the magician's bargain: give up our soul, get power in return". Another quick raid into the history of science supports his points. Both magic and science as we know it were part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' push to understand and control nature. Both magic and science are *scientia*, or knowledge, in contrast with *sapientia*, or wisdom. *Scientia* asks "how to subdue reality to

the wishes of men" and finds the answer in technology. *Sapientia* asks "how to conform the soul to reality" and finds the answer in "knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue". Science is not evil, but the founders of science, such as Bacon and Paracelsus, had mixed motives, and "[i]ts triumphs may have been too rapid and purchased at too high a price". Thus, Lewis accepts the natural sciences. But he vehemently resists the social sciences' notion that human beings must be studied objectively." (Myers 83)

Religion and Science are actually allies in this battle versus Magic Technologism. This battle for truth is based on world views and the answer to age-old epistemological question. Does man conform to reality or does it conform to him? Lewis understands that for reality to conform to man would mean existence to be subjective. Man, because he is not God, cannot will reality to change. Man is not separate enough from reality to change it without radically altering himself in the process. It takes an objective unchanging changer to realistically alter reality. To introduce the power of reality control to man puts us back into that awful condition where change is the only constant. In this world where the only thing not subject

to change is the constant of change we have a paradox. The only thing that exists is the changing, not even the objects that change. The only constant is change. This absolute statement defeats itself. If the only constant is change then does that not leave open the possibility of change to another objective. According to this absolute it is not absolute by the very same nature that it is.

Objective value cannot exist in this world where all things change. It is in this ability to know the objective reality behind the curtain that separates man from beast and man in his arrogance seeks to overcome his very nature, his final cause, to achieve nothing. Becoming Lewis' "trousered apes" is not the price of power. It is the punishment for abuse of power. Any power comes with responsibility. It follows that the power to know the truth comes with the responsibility to know the truth. In this sort of flailing conquest of Nature we are ultimately seeking not the power of truth but power over truth. When this power is gained, the losses make the victory totally pyrrhic.

The *Abolition of Man* is the truncated title of Lewis' work. Fully it reads: *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools.* What does this

battle have to do the English classroom of a high school or college? The answer is simply everything. "Naturalism and empiricism lead to a subjective or emotive view of ethics that denies objective value....In contrast, emotive ethics holds that all statements containing a predicate of value are statements of nothing more than the emotional state of the speaker, and as such are unimportant." (Cunningham 43-4)

Total Subjectivism makes education obsolete, after all whose truth shall you teach? Adjustment, indoctrination, and conditioning is all that is possible. Rational Science would find this repugnant. The lack of objective truth annihilates the Scientific Method. Today we can see Lewis' Conditioners and Conditioned in classrooms as teachers and students. With this attitude of subjectivity the school has become a ground rife with Post Modern dogmatic tolerance. "Rather than make dull students feel inferior, it provides vocational and hobby education for those who cannot learn mathematics, science, or languages." (Cunningham 56)

Students learn the values of their teachers, whether or not the teachers intentionally attempt to influence them. An individual's world view and perspective has a profound effect on everything they do. Teachers who do not believe in objective truth cannot teach it. The students are learning this mind set of

subjectivity. Lewis addressed this fact in the first section of the book where he discusses a contemporary textbook.

"...the authors teach the distinction between referential and emotive language as a way of leading students to scorn words expressing value judgments; they encourage students to treat emotions cynically and even suppress their own emotions; and they substitute ephemeral values for traditional ones."

(Myers 75)

The values that are being taught have no weight because their subjectivity defines them. A subjective value is a self defeating moral. Morality cannot exist without objectivity. We expect boys and girls to enter school and leave men and women instead we get "trousered apes" and "urban blockheads". As Lewis also stated they will become "Men without Chests."

Lewis' eerie story of the future he tells in his illustration of the World of the Conditioned and the Conditioners will be most apparent and first seen in the schools and educational facilities of the world. As ultimate subjectivity enters the minds of the world, thus making true education impossible, the schools will transform from a place of knowledge, learning and truth to

a place of re-education, adjustment, cultural indoctrination, and Conditioning. The school instead of being a place to heal the "ruins of our first parents" will become a Chest-Removal center. What will the schools, having no more objectives, concern itself with? The Conditioners will give the curriculums.

"[The student] becomes clay in the hands of the educational planners. Instead of requiring the student to read and remember what he has read and to cultivate individual tastes, education purposes to teach "appreciation" for the right books, the right art, the right ideas, and the right values. And the "right" responses are determined not by individual teachers but by a "culture-mongers central bureau" that tells teachers what they are to prefer and on what grounds. And the bureau keeps a sharp lookout for deviationists." (Cunningham 57)

The Lost Tools of Learning were not lost but hidden from students who would use them to think for themselves and form their own conclusions. Instead of swallowing everything as equally nonrelevent they would have a rational basis for the formation of their own opinions informed by objectivity. The problems of today's educational impotence is a direct descendent of this

schooling outside of the *Tao*. We "castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." (Lewis 26) Complaints of the lack of character in today's youth is common. Our culture is crippling the next generation mentally. They are becoming unable to see a whole dimension of existence. Man is having the humanity bred out of him. The schooling system is not challenging students to achieve a higher state of wisdom instead it seems merely daring them to be stupid.

So what is the solution in this mess. We cannot as the Pre-Modern Unscientific ancient embrace objective value and subjective fact. This sort of mysticism is the stuff of feel good 'fortune cookie theology' that accomplishes little and is virtually worthless. The Modern irrational allegiance to unmitigated rationality is just as absurd. In this light the Post Modern total subjectivity seems appealing. However, the misunderstanding of Fact and Value, Faith and Reason, does not undermine their actual worth. Just because one can have too much of something does not mean that one should have none of it. Instead of trying to create a world of total subjectivity let us instead rediscover the worlds of objective facts and values. At stake is the very thing that makes us what we are, are purest essence, our Humanity.

"We cannot take for granted our knowledge of what it

is to be human, says Lewis. It is the product of centuries of experience, reflection, suffering and dialogue with God. It is kept alive from generation to generation by example, custom, art and literature. If we lose it, in a very real way we lose our lives." (Goggans)

Epistemology is the real basis of education. To teach one must have something to teach, to think rationally one must have something to meditate upon, to be their must be something to be part of. Objective Reality and Truth are the real basis for our sanity and Humanity. Without it we are each a universe of different perceived laws unto ourselves. We are unconnected from each other and we lose all common ground. A subjective universe is pure chaotic soup. To live in an ordered civilized society we must have morals and concepts of right and wrong. In this subjective universe those still exist. The masses of Conditioned who believe in nothing objectively are told how to act by the just as inhuman Conditioners. The War for Truth is upon us.

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